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The Blood of Sprinkling

“When he seeth the blood . . . the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer . . . to smite you.”

—Exodus 12:23

HOW REFRESHING IT IS

for sincere students of the Bible to draw their minds away from the tumultuous, perplexing and often disheartening news emanating from the various political, social, and economic systems of today. At this season of the year, we especially rejoice at the privilege of focusing our mental vision upon the events associated with the Jewish Passover, instituted by God thirty-five centuries ago. Our interest centers especially in the slaying of the lamb, which preceded the week-long Passover Feast. The Passover lamb was slain on the 14th day of the “first month” of the Jews’ religious year. (Exod. 12:2,6) This year that date begins at sundown on Sunday, April 9th.

Many do not see the significance of these events, nor the need to consider them except on a cursory basis. Still others dismiss them entirely as fables and myths. How aptly then, does the Apostle Paul declare that the god of this world has blinded the

minds of many. (II Cor. 4:4) It must be admitted even by critics, however, that an event so prominently marked and so widely observed for this long a time must have foundation in fact. There must have been just such an occurrence in Egypt, else its widespread celebration for more than three millennia would be hard to explain.

THE TENTH PLAGUE

We are reminded that the Israelites were held in bondage by the Egyptians. When the time in God's providence arrived for their deliverance, their masters sought selfishly to maintain their captivity and refused to let them go forth to the land of Canaan. One after another, God sent nine different plagues upon the people of Egypt, relieving them of one after another when their king craved mercy and made promises, which he afterwards broke. The first ten chapters of the Book of Exodus provide a detailed account of these events.

Finally, Moses, the servant of the Lord, announced a tenth plague which would be the gravest of all. The firstborn in every family of Egypt would die in one night. From the home of the humblest servant to the palace of the king there would be great mourning. Even the firstborn of their cattle would die. As a result of this plague, Moses declared, the Egyptians would be glad to yield and let the Israelites go. (Exod. 11:1-8) Indeed, the firstborn in all of Egypt died, and Pharaoh urged the Israelites to leave, and to do so in haste, lest the Lord should ultimately bring death upon the entire people if he continued to harden his heart and resist the divine mandate.—chap. 12:29-33

The tenth plague, it was declared, would be common to the entire land of Egypt, including the part apportioned to the Israelites. They were to show faith and obedience by following God's instructions, so that their firstborn would be spared when the plague came about. In Exodus 12:1-13, it is recorded that in each house of the Israelites, on a certain day, they were to slay a lamb and sprinkle its blood upon the sides and lintels of their doorways. The flesh of the lamb was to be eaten that same night, with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. They were to have their staff in hand, shoes on their feet, ready for a journey, in expectation that the Lord would smite the firstborn of the Egyptians with death and make them willing to let the Israelites go. Paul states the result, that "through faith" Moses and the Israelites "kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them."—Heb. 11:28

GREATER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PASSOVER

The annual celebration, or memorial, of this Passover was the first feature of the Jewish Law which God instituted. (Exod. 12:14) Even today, the Passover is celebrated by Jews in all parts of the world, with a certain degree of respect, as they remember their deliverance as a nation from Egypt. Most, however, have never thought to inquire further into the true meaning of the celebration. Why was a lamb slain and eaten? Why was its blood sprinkled upon the doorposts and lintels? What reason or object was there behind these specific commands? Could not God have spared the

firstborn, and delivered the Israelites from Egypt, in some simpler fashion?

The harmonious testimony of the Old and New Testament provides the answer to these questions. Yet, even among most professed Christians, the depth of meaning of the types and shadows contained in the Mosaic Law is not understood. Thus, we further ask: Why can it not be discerned by all that the Passover lamb typified the Lamb of God, and that its death represented the death of Jesus, the Messiah? Why do so few understand that the sprinkling of the Passover lamb's blood symbolizes the imputation of the merit, or value, of Jesus' ransom sacrifice to the "firstborn" household of faith, the passed-over class? Why is it that still fewer appreciate the fact that, just as the entire nation of Israel was delivered from bondage as a result of the Passover, all of mankind—not just the firstborn class—will be delivered from their bondage to sin and death.

"Blessed are your eyes," who through faith see that Jesus was indeed "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (Matt. 13:16; John 1:29) How reassuring it is to know that the cancellation of the world's sin is effected by the payment of Adam's penalty by Jesus, the Lamb of God. How necessary also, is the realization that a satisfaction of God's justice must be made for the removal of this sentence to be effected. Thus, as the Apostles Paul and Peter declare, "Christ died for our sins," "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us back to God."—I Cor. 15:3; I Pet. 3:18

“FIRSTFRUITS” AND “AFTERFRUITS”

The Bible speaks of the consecrated followers of Christ as “the church of the firstborn,” “a kind of firstfruits,” and “firstfruits unto God.” (Heb. 12:23; James 1:18; Rev. 14:4) These references to “firstfruits” imply that others will ultimately be of God’s family—the “afterfruits.” Most professed Christians seem to have overlooked these Scriptures so far as making application of them is concerned. The general belief is that only those who are of the firstfruits will ever be saved, and that there will be no afterfruits. We notice, however, that the Passover was used to fulfill God’s purpose to save all the Israelites. In this picture, as a nation they represented all of mankind, who will be given the opportunity to come into harmony with God and be granted eternal life in the “promised land” of his kingdom.

Thus, we understand that two groups were especially blessed by means of the Passover. There was the blessing upon the entire nation of Israel, when they, by divine power, were miraculously delivered by God and led on a pathway across the channel of the Red Sea, eventually to reach the land of promise. That picture shows the ultimate deliverance from the power of sin and Satan of every creature who will come into accord with the Lord and desire to render him worship. Not an Israelite was left behind in Egypt, and none of mankind will be excluded from the opportunity of deliverance from sin and death.

The other group to be blessed by means of the Passover, and which we, as followers now of the Master, wish to especially focus on, was the firstborn of Israel. Only the firstborn were in immediate

danger of death, and the deliverance of all the nation depended upon the faithfulness and salvation of the firstborn. Applying this in harmony with the Scriptures, we see that only the firstfruits class, the church of the firstborn, are being spared now. They are being passed-over during this nighttime period of man's history by abiding "under the blood" of Jesus' sacrifice as the Lamb of God. Although all righteous and obedient members of mankind will eventually receive deliverance to an earthly land of promise, it is only the firstborn whose names are "written in heaven."—Heb. 12:23

GREAT BLESSINGS—GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

The antitypical firstborn class are those of mankind who, in advance of the remainder, have had the eyes of their understanding opened. They realize their condition of bondage, and the need of deliverance and of God's willingness to fulfill to them his promises. More than this, they are such as have responded to the grace of God, have made a consecration of themselves to him and his service, and in return have been begotten by God's Holy Spirit.

With these firstborn ones, it is a matter of life and death whether they remain in the household of faith under the blood of sprinkling. (I Pet. 1:2) For these to go forth from this condition would imply a disregard of divine favor. It would signify that, having enjoyed their share of the mercy of God as represented in the blood of the Lamb, they were not appreciative of it. Of such the Scriptures declare, "There remaineth no more sacrifice" for their sins. (Heb. 10:26) Their fate is symbolized in the destruction of the firstborn of Egypt.

We do not imply by this that the firstborn of Egypt who died in that night have no further opportunity for life. To the contrary, we understand that all these matters were types and pictures, foreshadowing the realities which pertain to the church of Christ during this Gospel Age. If we have tasted of the “good word of God,” and been made “partakers of the Holy Spirit,” and thus become members of the church of the firstborn, and then willfully fall away, it would be impossible for God to “renew [us] again to repentance.” Such complete and willful disregard of his mercy would result in our eternal death—second death.—Heb. 6:4-6; Rev. 2:11

The church of the firstborn, through the begetting of the Holy Spirit and the greater knowledge and privileges they enjoy, have much more responsibility than the world, and are the only ones during this nighttime period in danger of second death. Thus, this lesson of the Passover type applies to consecrated believers only. By and by, the night will have passed and the glorious morn of deliverance—the Messianic kingdom—will have come. The Christ, the antitypical Moses, Head and body, will deliver all Israel—all the people of God. All mankind will be given knowledge, and a full opportunity, to reverence, honor and obey the will of God.

FEEDING ON THE LAMB

The Apostle Paul positively identifies the Passover lamb with Christ Jesus, saying, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast.” He further admonishes that we partake of the “unleavened,” or pure, “bread of sincerity and

truth.” (I Cor. 5:7,8) We all need, Paul says, “the blood of sprinkling,” not upon our houses, but upon our hearts. (Heb. 10:22; 12:24) We also must eat the Lamb, that is, appropriate the value of Christ’s sacrifice, his example, and his words and actions, to ourselves. Thus, we not only feed upon Christ by faith, but more and more we put on his character and are transformed day by day into his glorious image in our hearts.—Rom. 8:29; 12:1,2; II Cor. 3:18

As the Jews fed upon the literal lamb, they ate bitter herbs, which aided and whetted their appetite for the lamb. We, too, have bitter experiences and trials, which God permits in our lives. These are to help in weaning our affections from earthly things, and in giving us an increasing appetite to feed upon the Lamb and the unleavened bread of truth. We, too, are to remember that here we are “strangers and pilgrims,” and should have staff in hand, girded for a journey toward the heavenly Canaan promised to the firstborn class.—I Pet. 2:11

Jesus also clearly identified himself with the Passover lamb. On the same night that he was betrayed, he gathered his disciples into the upper room, saying, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.” (Luke 22:15) It was in this setting that our Lord then instituted a new memorial upon the old foundation. His desire was that they no longer annually commemorate the typical Passover, but that they remember him—the true Passover lamb. Paul later reiterated Jesus’ words to this effect, that now they would annually observe a memorial of the antitypical Passover: “This do in remembrance of me.”—I Cor. 11:24,25

Those who recognize the Lamb of God, who in God's purpose had been slain from "the foundation of the world," and who gave his life as man's Redeemer, will see in this Passover season a sacred meaning that others cannot appreciate. (I Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8) Henceforth they will no longer celebrate the type, but will memorialize the antitype, for Jesus died as the Lamb of God, providing the blood of sprinkling for the church of the firstborn, and spiritual food for the household of faith.

NEW SYMBOLS

Jesus chose new symbols—"bread" and "the fruit of the vine"—to identify himself as the Lamb. (Matt. 26:26-29) By this he showed that his followers should no longer gather as the Jews had done previously to eat the literal Passover supper in commemoration of the deliverance in Egypt. Thenceforth Jesus' followers, in accord with his instruction, celebrated his death as their Passover Lamb every year. After the apostles fell asleep in death, a great falling away from the simple celebration which Jesus had instituted, occurred. During this period, known as the Dark Ages, the teaching that Christ was the Lamb of God continued. However, the celebration of its remembrance became polluted with error. No longer were the bread and fruit of the vine considered symbolic, but were now taught to be the actual body and blood of Jesus. No more was it kept as an annual Memorial, as Jesus instructed, but as a careless ritual, celebrated monthly, weekly, and even daily.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup," do so in remembrance

of Jesus' death. (I Cor. 11:26) Many have misunderstood these words to mean: Do this as often as you please. However, the words really signify: As often as you keep this annual observance, which is Jesus' desire, do it in remembrance of him—the true Passover lamb—rather than in memory of the literal lamb slain in Egypt. Thus, the importance of the celebration is shown to be centered on the one being remembered—Jesus, the Lamb of God. The frequency of its observance, however, need not deviate from the typical arrangement, which was once each year on its anniversary.

Some, who keep this celebration weekly, consider that they have Scriptural precedent for so doing. In the Bible, we read that the Early Church met together on the first day of the week and on such occasions had the “breaking of bread.” (Acts 2:42) It is a mistake, however, to confuse such breaking of bread with the Memorial supper, for the former were merely ordinary meals. There is nothing in the record to indicate otherwise. The “fruit of the vine” is not mentioned in connection with these, and the bread was not said to represent the body of our Lord. It was a cheerful custom in the Early Church to celebrate our Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week, and this practice helped to unite the bonds of brotherhood and fellowship. In many places the Lord's people still follow this custom.

DATE OF THE MEMORIAL SUPPER

In ancient times, the Jews used the moon in the reckoning of their time. Each new moon represented the beginning of a new month. The new moon which

came closest to the spring equinox was reckoned as the beginning of their religious year, the first day of the month Nisan, or Abib, as it is sometimes called. On the fourteenth day of that month, the Passover lamb was slain.

On the fifteenth day, the Feast of the Passover began. (Num. 28:16,17) This feast of seven days was a special time of joy which resulted from the first-born of Israel having been passed over. It well symbolizes the complete joy, peace, and blessing which every true Christian experiences from a realization of the passing over of his sins through the merit of Christ's redemptive sacrifice. All consecrated believers, therefore, have a celebration of this Feast of Passover in their hearts continually—the completeness of the matter being represented in the seven days.

What a great blessing it is to see this subject in its true light, and how important that we lay full weight upon the value of the death of Jesus, "once for all." (Heb. 10:10) Doing so, we can join heartily in remembrance on its anniversary, instead of at various other times and seasons, irregularly and without special significance. Each year, little groups of the Lord's people take heed to this subject, and delight in remembering the Master's death according to his request. As mentioned earlier, the date of this year's Memorial is after sundown on Sunday, April 9th. We anticipate that this celebration will once again bring special blessings to both heart and head, as we are drawn even more closely to our Master and Head, and to each other as members of his body.

SOBERING THOUGHTS

We recall the circumstances of the first Memorial. Jesus “took bread, and blessed it, and brake it.” He gave it to the disciples to eat, saying, “this is my body.” He then took “the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” This fruit of the vine, Jesus further explains, represents “my blood, . . . shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matt. 26:26-29) How precious are these instructions and Jesus’ simple explanation of the meaning of the Memorial emblems to those who are rightly in tune with the Lord.

We have a sobering reminder, however, as we think of the course of Judas. Though highly favored, he loved “filthy lucre” to the extent that he was willing to sell his Master, and was bold enough, even while his treachery toward the Lord was being exposed, to cry, “Is it I?” (Matt. 26:25; Tit. 1:11) The very thought that any who had companied with the Lord could thus lie to him and betray him to his enemies, causes a loathing of such duplicity. It should fill us with great caution, lest in any sense we would, for the sake of honor or wealth or any other earthly advantage, sell the Truth or any of its servants, the members of the body of Christ.

THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

The Master, in his conversation with the apostles, told them, “I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (Matt. 26:29) Our Lord was here contrasting two great days—the day of suffering and the day of glory. His First Advent was a day of suffering and

death as the man Jesus. His Second Advent is a day of glory, which will reach its climax in his Father's long-promised kingdom.

The cup, or fruit of the vine, which our Lord gave his disciples represented the work associated with his First Advent—that of providing his blood, the merit of his ransom sacrifice, so that mankind, beginning with his disciples, could be released from Adamic condemnation. Our drinking of that cup signifies two important blessings. First, it reminds us of Jesus' redemptive sacrifice as the only means by which we have a standing before God. Second, it exhilarates us, providing joy, gladness, and spiritual blessings that we could not otherwise enjoy. Prospectively, we also rejoice in the hope of drinking anew the cup of glory in the kingdom. Thus, drinking the cup is not to be thought of as a sorrowful occasion, but a joyous one. "Your sorrow," Jesus told his disciples later that same evening, "shall be turned to joy."—John 16:20

There is no record that Jesus drank of the Memorial cup. Indeed, he was perfect, and had no need to partake of the merits of his own redemptive sacrifice. Jesus did, however, drink symbolically of another cup. It was the cup of experience, suffering and ignominy. He spoke of this cup following his betrayal by Judas, saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11) Jesus' footstep followers are also invited to drink this cup of experience. "Are ye able," Jesus asks us, "to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" If our response is, "We are able," he assures us, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup." (Matt. 20:22,23) The contents of the Memorial cup,

representing the merit of the ransom, we do not share in except to drink it, appropriating its benefits. The cup of experience and suffering, however, represents the sacrificial walk of the entire Christ, Head and body members alike.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him . . . take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) We are all passing through the various experiences represented by this statement. We are to submit ourselves to these, crucifying the flesh, and growing as New Creatures. If we “suffer with him,” we will “be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:17) While our Lord had a great blessing in the obedience which he rendered to the Father, yet it was a trying time for him down to the last moment, when he cried, “It is finished!” (John 19:30) So it will be with us. We must endure faithfully all the experiences, trials and sufferings allowed by God’s providences, even “unto death.”—Rev. 2:10

The sufferings of Christ will be complete when his body members shall have all finished their earthly sojourn. Then they shall share his throne and partake of his glory and the cup of kingdom joys. This is the Lord’s promise to all his faithful saints. For the present, however, let us continue to abide under the “blood of sprinkling,” while feasting on the Lamb of God, the unleavened bread of Truth, and the bitter herbs of experience and trial. By doing so, may we thus be a faithful member of the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,” and “come unto mount Sion, . . . the city of the living God.”—Heb. 12:22-24 ■

God as Our Shepherd

Key Verse: “*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*”
—*Psalms 23:1*

Selected Scripture:
Psalms 23

AS WE CONSIDER THESE familiar words from the Psalmist David, our minds immediately contemplate the inner peace, comfort and assurance which lay in them. They speak directly of the Heavenly Father’s providential care as the greatest of all shepherds over his vast flock—all creation. We gain added strength and encouragement in the realization that God has appointed his son, Christ Jesus, to be the “good shepherd” of his sheep.—John 10:11,14-16

All who are striving to follow in the footsteps of Jesus are identified as his sheep, and are to trust fully in the guidance of the good shepherd. (vs. 4) Such trust in our shepherd should help relieve us from many of the anxieties that the rest of the world finds itself encumbered with at the present time. We recall these comforting words of Jesus: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” (Luke 12:6,7) Though God may not hinder us from experiencing pain and suffering, he will be with us and help us endure these experiences, if we “trust in the name of the LORD,” and “stay upon” him.—Isa. 50:9,10

Our Key Verse says, “I shall not want.” David realized, and we should likewise, that the Heavenly Father, the great shepherd, stands ready to assist and overrule in

providing our needs, both temporal and spiritual. In doing so, God orders our life in such a way that we will not “want,” or lack, anything needful for our use in serving him and the cause of truth and righteousness. He leads us to “green pastures,” “still waters,” and into the “paths of righteousness.”—Ps. 23:2,3

We have a further promise from God to those who strive to walk uprightly: “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” (Isa. 33:16) Although we may properly understand this promise with regard to our physical needs, its primary focus is to be spiritual. As sheep of the Lord’s pasture, we have been provided with the bread of life, and the water of truth, by which we are to grow as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. Each day we should pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matt. 6:11) Here again, the most important meaning is spiritual. We should have a desire to daily feed upon the Word of Truth, knowing that it is by this that we will be sanctified, “meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”—John 17:17; II Tim. 2:21

The Scriptures warn us concerning those who may seek to “destroy and scatter the sheep” of God’s pasture. (Jer. 23:1) Other supposed shepherds, Jesus says, flee when they see a wolf coming, leaving the sheep to be hurt or destroyed. (John 10:12) Thus, we understand that only God and his son Christ Jesus are true shepherds, and can be entrusted with all our interests, temporal and spiritual.

To remain under the constant care of our shepherd, we must be desirous of his leading, as well as have a sheep-like disposition. Some of the special characteristics of sheep are meekness, the desire to be with the other sheep of the flock, and obedience to the shepherd. Sheep will listen intently to the sound of the shepherd’s voice, and will trust it implicitly. They will respond quickly to his call, and watch for his guidance. Let each of us keep close to our heavenly shepherd, that we might “dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”—Ps. 23:6 ■

God's Saving Love in Christ

Key Verse: *"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

Selected Scripture:
John 3:1-16 God's provision for man's redemption. The expression, "his only begotten Son," refers to Jesus from the very beginning of his existence. He was the only begotten Son of God from the time of his creation, but was not known as Jesus until he came to earth, having been made flesh. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) This "grace and truth," we are told three verses later, "came by Jesus Christ."

At the age of thirty, Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized, which symbolized the full and complete consecration of himself to do the will of the Heavenly Father. "Straightway coming up out of the water, he saw

WHAT A WONDERFUL

expression of love is given in our Key Verse. To realize that God, the grand architect of the universe, provided his son to redeem mankind from the curse of sin and death, is truly a blessed thing to contemplate. The Greek word *agape*, which denotes charity or benevolence, is used to describe the type of love that our text speaks of, and which prompted God's provision for man's

the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:10,11) He was then begotten of the Holy Spirit, the power and influence of God. Following his death on the cross, God raised him from the dead and exalted him to “his own right hand.” (Eph. 1:20) During this entire time, Jesus was the only begotten Son of God.

The message of God’s plan for man’s salvation through his only begotten Son is contained in his Holy Word. The Apostle Paul tells us that through Christ’s blood, we have “redemption” and “the forgiveness of sins,” and that this is “according to the riches of [God’s] grace.” (Eph. 1:7) Paul further states: “In the dispensation of the fullness of times,” God will “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.” (vs. 10) What a blessing it is to “comprehend . . . what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of God’s love, and to know “the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”—Eph. 3:18,19

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6) Only through the “ransom for all,” and the resulting imputation of the merit of the blood of Jesus upon the fallen race, can man be made acceptable to the Father and received again into his fellowship. (I Tim. 2:5,6) “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” (II Cor. 5:18) This reconciliation, or “atonement,” is the joint work and purpose of God and his Son. “We . . . joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”—Rom. 5:11

In due time, during the coming Messianic kingdom, mankind will have the opportunity to attain everlasting life on a restored, perfect earth. All in their graves will be awakened from the sleep of death. “The hour is coming, . . . when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”—John 5:25 ■

God's Love as Victory over Death

Key Verse: “*Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.*”
—**John 20:8**

Selected Scriptures:
John 20:1-10;
I Peter 1:3-5,8,9

THE EVENTS IN OUR LESSON took place on the third day from when Jesus died on the cross. The Scriptures record the following concerning the hours immediately after his death: “Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.”—John 19:41,42

Mary Magdalene was at the sepulcher twice on the morning of Jesus’ resurrection. The first time was while it was yet dark, accompanied by Salome and the “other Mary.” (Matt. 28:1) Observing that the stone had been removed from the entrance to the tomb, Mary Magdalene immediately left to inform Peter and John. (John 20:1,2) The other Mary and Salome remained for a short time at the sepulcher, then departed, having been instructed by an angel to inform others of the Lords’ disciples. (Matt. 28:5-8) Soon afterward Peter and John came to the tomb, having been informed by Mary Magdalene that Jesus’ body was missing.—John 20:3-7

Mary had evidently followed Peter and John back to the tomb, and this was her second visit there that morning.

She lingered as Peter and John departed. As she stood weeping just outside the sepulcher, she looked inside and saw two angels sitting. They asked her, “Why weepest thou?” She responded, “Because they have taken away my Lord.” (vss. 11-13) Then Jesus appeared to her, though she supposed that he was the gardener. After asking him if he knew where the body of her Lord had been taken, “Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”—vss. 14-16

Our Key Verse states that the disciple, believed to be John, “saw, and believed.” It would appear that his and Peter’s belief was not that the Lord had risen, but that Mary’s story was true—that Jesus’ body had been removed. Soon after this, however, they perhaps began to think of the words which the Lord had spoken respecting his resurrection on the third day: “They shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.” (Luke 18:33) Though they may have begun to believe in the possibility that he had risen from the dead, it was no doubt with much confusion of thought at first.

Looking back, we see that the death of Christ is the greatest event in mankind’s history, and his resurrection is of equal importance. The death of Jesus, without his resurrection, would have left mankind just as helpless and hopeless as before. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which . . . hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”—I Pet. 1:3

Through the love of God, he not only gave his son to provide the ransom price, but he also resurrected him. “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (I Cor. 15:20) Christ being the “firstfruits” of those who have slept in death implies that there are to be “afterfruits.” The Scriptures thus testify, “An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth.”—John 5:28,29, *New American Standard Bible* ■

God's Reconciling Love

Key Verses: *"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
—Romans 8:38,39

Selected Scriptures:
Romans 5:6-11;
8:31-39

HAVING A KNOWLEDGE

that God's love is available to us because of the wonderful provisions that he has made through his Son, Christ Jesus, should be very comforting. God has promised that nothing can happen to us, but what is good for our highest eternal welfare. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) To the true Christian, it should be a source of encouragement and strength to realize that the difficulties, troubles, persecutions, and perplexities of life are permitted to shape and mold our characters. Thus, it is our privilege to rejoice in all circumstances, and to give

thanks to God for all his lovingkindness.—Ps. 63:3

Not only should we desire to be inseparable from the love of God, but we should also have a deep love for our brethren, who have also been begotten by his Spirit. Jesus said, "These things I command you, that ye love one another." (John 15:17) By showing our love for others,

we grow in our love toward God and his son Christ Jesus.

God's love for us is related to his grace, or merciful kindness. "By grace ye are saved through faith; . . . it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8) The means of salvation which has come to us is not based on our worthiness, nor by any works on our part, but is a free gift from our Heavenly Father. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."—vss, 4,5

We can exercise confidence in God's love as we come to a knowledge of his plan, and especially of the glorious provisions for his consecrated children. He has a special interest in those who are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," and desires that they show his praises, having been called "out of darkness into his marvellous light." (I Pet. 2:9) Our response to this great privilege should be to develop a character that is filled with his spirit—the spirit of truth—and that is overflowing with thankfulness to him. We should follow Paul's instruction, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God."—II Thess. 3:5

The Heavenly Father requires the full cleansing of our will and our heart. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8) Also in his sermon, the Lord spoke of a special kind of love which would emanate out of a pure heart. This type of love is gentle, patient, long-suffering, not thinking evil of others, but trusting and kind toward all, and acts in accord with the Golden Rule.—Matt. 5:43-45; 7:12

With a knowledge of God's reconciling love shown toward us, and our subsequent exercise of love to others, we can claim the words of our Key Verse. Nothing will be able to "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Surely then, as Paul says a few verses earlier, "Since God is for us, who can be against us?"—Rom. 8:31, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* ■

God's Preserving Love

Key Verses: *"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."*
—John 10:14,15

Selected Scripture:
John 10:1-15

AS BROUGHT TO OUR attention in an earlier lesson, the Heavenly Father is the Great Shepherd over all his creation, and has appointed his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, to be a leader and guide of his sheep. In John's Gospel account, Jesus is presented in many ways: as the light of the world; a feeder of the hungry; a giver of the water of life; a healer of disease and supplier of human needs; the opener of blind eyes to understanding;

and now as the "good shepherd."

In the opening verses of our lesson, Jesus addresses the Pharisees by way of a parable, referring to one who would enter by a designated "door" into God's sheepfold. "He that entereth in by the door," he continues, "is the shepherd of the sheep." (John 10:1,2) Jesus is referring to himself in these verses as the "shepherd of the sheep," as pointed out later in our Key Verse. He gained this position by keeping perfectly God's divine laws, including all the terms of Israel's Law Covenant, which he was under, having been "made of a woman, made under the law."—Gal. 4:4

On account of Jesus' faithfulness, a way of approach to God was established. During the present Gospel Age, we come to him by repenting from sin, turning toward

righteousness, accepting the merit of Christ to cover our Adamic imperfections, and by making a full consecration of ourselves to do his will. This is the same process by which, at the present time, all prospective members of the Lord's flock may be counted as part of God's sheepfold. A key element to this is the humble appreciation of Christ Jesus as our Redeemer. He "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (I Tim. 2:5,6) By faithfully carrying out this vitally important purpose in God's plan, the Lord not only would become the "good shepherd," but would also be given sheep to nurture, develop, and protect.

These wonderful arrangements of the Father's plan are based on his cardinal attribute of love. The Scriptures give the assurance that "God is love. . . . And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. . . . and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (I John 4:8,16) Through the Heavenly Father's love, he "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (II Tim. 1:9) To this John adds, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins."—I John 4:10

In a further declaration of the preserving power of God's love, we recall these words of Jesus: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." (John 15:9,10) Let us constantly be reminded that to "abide" in God's love, we must follow his instructions to the best of our ability, realizing that "his commandments are not grievous." Thus, we can say in confidence concerning our Heavenly Father, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you."—Isa. 26:3, *English Standard Version* ■

The Jerusalem Council, and a Second Journey Begins

“A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”
—Galatians 2:16

AFTER PAUL AND BARNABAS had returned to Antioch, having successfully completed their first missionary journey, they found that there were now a good number of Gentile brethren in the church, although the majority still were Israelites. A large concentration of Jewish brethren who lived in Judea were continuing to observe certain features of the Mosaic Law. Some of these went to Antioch and began teaching the Gentile brethren that if they were not circumcised

according to the custom of Moses, they could not receive salvation.—Acts 15:1

Paul and Barnabas, elders in the class at Antioch, disagreed with this doctrine, and strong contention resulted. The Judean brethren felt sure they were right. However, Paul and Barnabas held firm to their conviction. Finally, the church at Antioch decided the only way to settle this controversy was through a conference in Jerusalem with the apostles and the elders, to which they sent Paul and Barnabas as representatives of their view of the matter. (vs. 2) Titus, a Greek convert who was also in Antioch at that time, went with them to the conference. (Gal. 2:1-3) He would be useful, no doubt, as an example of the great faith they had found among the Gentiles.

Paul and Barnabas traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria on their way to Jerusalem, telling the brethren there, who were mostly Jewish, about the large number of Gentiles who had come into the body of Christ. This news was of great interest, and it seems all who heard about their work rejoiced in its success.—Acts 15:3

JERUSALEM CONFERENCE

At Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas reported these same events to the congregation and the apostles. However, here the news met with a different reaction. Some of the brethren who came from the sect of the Pharisees insisted that it was mandatory for these new Gentile brethren to be circumcised, and to “keep the law of Moses.” This began a lengthy and intense debate, since Paul and Barnabas did not agree with this viewpoint. The Apostle Peter then reminded the brethren that he had been selected

by God several years before to open the way for the Gentiles. In agreement with Paul and Barnabas, Peter contended that the demand of circumcision among Gentile disciples was nothing short of tempting God. He asked, "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"—Acts 15:4-10

When Paul and Barnabas had an opportunity to speak, they endeavored to convince the gathering that the Gentiles were truly brethren. They testified that during their recent journey, they had witnessed the "miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles" by the power of the Holy Spirit. (vs. 12) The Apostle James, acting as chairman of the council, then summarized the discussion. He quoted from the Old Testament, in which God had foretold of the time when "all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called," would seek after the Lord. (vs. 13-17; Amos 9:11,12) James suggested that the Gentile brethren be asked to observe four items from the Law and nothing else: "That they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." (Acts 15:20) This was agreeable to those assembled, and they decided to send Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They were to deliver a letter to all the brethren from the apostles, elders, and all those assembled at Jerusalem, reiterating the conclusions of the conference. When the letter was read to the church at Antioch, all the brethren rejoiced.—vss. 22-32

Paul later wrote about this in his epistle to the Galatians: "I went up . . . to Jerusalem with Barnabas,

taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. . . . On the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised, . . . James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” (Gal. 2:1-9, *New American Standard Bible*) As Paul explains in this account, the apostles at Jerusalem agreed that their main task would continue to be with those brethren who came from natural Israel, the “circumcision,” whereas Paul and Barnabas would work more with the Gentiles, and mixed congregations of Jews and Gentiles.

PAUL CORRECTS PETER

Although it might appear that the matter was settled, some who had come from the sect of the Pharisees continued to press the issue. These were unwilling to give up their devotion to the Mosaic Law. Even Peter, for a time, was affected by these strong feelings. A short time after the conference

in Jerusalem, Peter went to Antioch for a visit. There he fellowshiped freely with Jewish and Gentile believers alike, until certain Jewish brethren arrived from Judea. Knowing their steadfast position on the Law, Peter withdrew from the hometown Gentile brethren for fear of damaging his reputation with the visiting Jewish believers. Paul knew this was wrong, and he confronted Peter about the matter.

Continuing in his epistle to the Galatian brethren, Paul describes the incident in these words: "When Peter came to Antioch, I told him face to face that he was wrong. He used to eat with Gentile followers of the Lord, until James sent some Jewish followers. Peter was afraid of the Jews and soon stopped eating with Gentiles. He and the other Jews hid their true feelings so well that even Barnabas was fooled. But when I saw that they were not really obeying the truth that is in the good news, I corrected Peter in front of everyone and said: Peter, you are a Jew, but you live like a Gentile. So how can you force Gentiles to live like Jews? . . . We know that God accepts only those who have faith in Jesus Christ. No one can please God by simply obeying the Law. So we put our faith in Christ Jesus, and God accepted us because of our faith."—Gal. 2:11-16, *Contemporary English Version*

After a period of about two years since Paul and Barnabas had returned from their first missionary journey, Paul's thoughts turned again to the Gentile brethren in the various classes they had established. He was concerned that they might have been visited by misguided brethren from Judea who would insist they be circumcised. Thus, he suggested to Barnabas

that they visit these brethren again and “see how they do.” (Acts 15:36) Paul, no doubt, also planned to take the letter drawn up at the Jerusalem conference and share it with all the brethren they would encounter.

PAUL AND BARNABAS DISAGREE

Barnabas thought well of the plan to retrace the steps of their first journey, which started at the island of Cyprus. He suggested that his nephew, John Mark, go with them again, as he had on their first journey. However, Paul remembered the fact that Mark had left them after going only part of the way on the former trip, and did not want to take him this time. There was such a sharp difference of opinion over the matter that Paul and Barnabas decided to separate. Barnabas took his nephew and sailed for his native land, Cyprus, and Paul took Silas by land northward into Syria, then west toward Cilicia.—Acts 15:37-41

Before proceeding with the account further, it is important to clarify this matter. We are not to think of the contention between Paul and Barnabas as making a rift between them which existed for the remainder of their lives. On the contrary, Paul loved Barnabas and wrote of him in his letters to various congregations as an example of faithful devotion to the Lord.

One mention of this is in the account previously quoted where Paul, several years later, wrote of his correction of Peter regarding the matter of fellowship with Gentile brethren. Paul indicates his sincere concern for Barnabas, who he said had been stumbled by Peter’s actions. (Gal. 2:13) Surely,

his concern was prompted by a great love for Barnabas, in spite of their earlier disagreement concerning John Mark.

Paul made mention of Barnabas again several years later in his first epistle to the brethren at Corinth. In this letter, Paul told the brethren that as apostles they had certain rights and privileges, “Or,” he asks rhetorically, “do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?” (I Cor. 9:6, *NASB*) His inclusion of Barnabas indicates that he was still faithfully serving the Lord, and Paul had loving respect for his service.

The Bible is careful to record, also, that in later years Paul leaned heavily on John Mark for his help in the ministry. While Paul was a prisoner in Rome he wrote to the brethren at Colossae, indicating that Mark was with him at that time. He concluded his letter by saying, “Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.”—Col. 4:10,11

Often when a problem or difference arises between brethren, those who hear of the difficulty tend to take sides, making matters worse. It is possible that many who sided with Paul in the original controversy may have retained negative feelings about John Mark. However, Paul stressed his warm sentiments toward Mark and instructed the brethren, as noted in the foregoing verse, that if he should visit them, they should receive him. Mark apparently did leave Rome, perhaps traveling to see brethren whom Paul instructed him to visit—being unable to do so

himself because of his imprisonment. The fact that Mark had left Rome for a time is made evident in Paul's final epistle, when writing to Timothy he said, "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." (II Tim. 4:11) The Bible is silent as to whether Paul saw Mark again before he died, but it is clear that he loved Mark dearly and considered him of great assistance in the work.

SECOND JOURNEY BEGINS

Paul's second journey, with Silas accompanying him, began with a visit to the churches in Syria and Cilicia where, no doubt, they shared the letter which they had brought from the Jerusalem conference. Continuing westward to Lystra and Derbe, they came to where Timothy lived. (Acts 16:1) Arriving at the home of Lois and Eunice, Timothy's grandmother and mother, Paul found that young Timothy had matured and was very active in the congregations of Derbe, Lystra and Iconium.—vs. 2

The brethren of these congregations commended Timothy so highly that Paul decided to have him join them in their travels. First, however, he had Timothy circumcised. (vs. 3) His mother was a believing Jewess, but his father was a Greek. This action by Paul might appear strange in view of the recent events in Jerusalem, where the agreement had been reached that believing Gentiles did not need to be circumcised. We must keep in mind, however, that Paul always went first to the synagogues to present the Gospel message. If Timothy were not circumcised, Paul would be hindered in dealing freely with Jews.

After being circumcised, Timothy joined Paul and Silas as they continued their journey to deliver the letter of the apostles to the various churches in Asia Minor that Paul had previously visited. The congregations they met with benefited a great deal from the news they brought and from their ministry. “So were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.”—Acts 16:4,5

HOLY SPIRIT’S DIRECTION

The special nature of the work of selecting a people for God’s name is emphasized in the events that followed. Paul sought to reach other prospective brethren in Asia, in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia, but in some manner God indicated by his Holy Spirit that he should not do so. The simple statement of the Scriptures is that they “were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.” (vs. 6) Likewise, when they considered going into a region to the north called Bithynia, they were again instructed by the Holy Spirit not to go. The account states, “After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”—vs. 7

It is important to recognize from these simple accounts that the Gospel message was not to be preached indiscriminately everywhere to find converts. Rather, we observe that the work was being carefully directed by God and his son Christ Jesus. Though unknown to Paul at that time, there was an urgency for him to go further westward, to Macedonia. This was revealed to him only when they reached the western side of Asia Minor, arriving at the port city of Troas. There Paul was given a vision

where he saw a “man of Macedonia” entreating him to “Come over . . . , and help us.”—vss. 8,9

We should not conclude that there were none of God’s people to be found in the other areas of Galatia, Phrygia, and Bithynia, and hence God bypassed them. Later Paul went to these places. (Acts 18:23) On this journey, however, it was necessary for him to help those who were then being prepared by God to receive the invitation to become members of the body of Christ. For the first time, and by the direction of the Holy Spirit, the search for God’s people would now enter the continent of Europe. ■

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 Pearl Lucille Oster, Bellingham, WA—January 21. Age, 96

Sister Elena Tannen, Brooklyn, NY—February 11. Age, 89

Sister Mathali Mary, India—February 19. Age, 83

Sister Evelyn MacAlister, Verona, WI—March 3. Age, 94

Brother Mark Wandire, Kenya—March 3.

Sister Eunice Abiaziem, Agwa, Nigeria—March 8. Age, 92

Sister Bonnie Buckles, Carthage, IN—March 16. Age, 93

Resurrection, Ascension, and Enlightenment

*“Touch me not; for
I am not yet
ascended to my
Father: but go to
my brethren, and
say unto them,
I ascend unto my
Father, and your
Father; and to
my God, and
your God.”
—John 20:17*

ON SUNDAY EVENING, April 9th, throughout the world many earnest followers of the Master will memorialize his death, and their privilege of receiving the benefits of his ransom sacrifice. They will do so by partaking of the emblematic “bread” and “cup,” as Jesus requested the apostles to do while in the “upper room” with him on the night before he was crucified.

One week later, on Sunday, April 16th, the professed Christian world will commemorate Jesus’ resurrection, which the Scriptures declare occurred on the “third day.” (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19) We note that there is a difference of a few days in the timing of these events. The date of the Memorial of Jesus’ death is calculated based on the actual day

of his crucifixion according to the Jewish calendar. This was on the 14th day of the month Nisan, which this year begins after sundown on April 9th. The commemoration of Jesus' resurrection on April 16th is based on a date set by the Christian world to always fall on a Sunday. The true reckoning of Jesus' resurrection in 2017, however, is four days earlier, and corresponds to the morning of Wednesday, April 12th.

Forty days after his resurrection Jesus ascended to his Father. Ten days thereafter, or fifty days after our Lord's resurrection, the Holy Spirit came upon the waiting disciples in Jerusalem. This was the Day of Pentecost—which means “fiftieth day.” (Acts 1:1-4; 2:1-4) These events—the death and resurrection of Jesus, his ascension to the Father, and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—were of vital importance in the outworking of God's plan of salvation.

An earlier article in this issue of *The Dawn* titled “The Blood of Sprinkling” gave special consideration to the meaning of the Memorial celebration as it relates to the death of Jesus as man's Savior and Redeemer. In the ensuing pages, we will focus our attention on the three other important events referred to in the title of this article. Surely, at this season of the year, when our hearts and minds dwell more particularly upon them, we are especially blessed by meditating upon the precious lessons of truth which are conveyed through these notable events of God's plan.

RAISED BY GOD'S MIGHTY POWER

We recall that meaningful prophecy concerning Jesus, in which he expressed confidence in God's

power, saying, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." (Ps. 16:10) The Hebrew word translated "hell" in this verse is *sheol*, which means "the grave"—that is, the condition of death. Jesus knew that to provide for man's redemption, he must go into death—*sheol*, the grave, the Bible hell. (Matt. 20:28; John 12:23,24) He had made no claim, however, of an ability to raise himself from the dead.

The Apostle Peter, speaking on the Day of Pentecost, quoted the above prophecy of the psalmist, and then stated emphatically, "This Jesus hath God raised up." (Acts 2:27,32) Paul, in confirmation of this, refers to the mighty power of God which was exercised to raise Jesus from the dead, and to exalt him to his right hand. (I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 13:4; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 12:2) He told the brethren at Ephesus that he was praying that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened to know the hope of their calling and "exceeding greatness" of divine power which was exercised in the resurrection of Jesus. This same power, Paul says, is also available to "us-ward who believe." (Eph. 1:17-22) By this enlightenment we can look at the things "which are not seen," but which are "eternal in the heavens."—II Cor. 4:18; 5:1

In Colossians 3:1-3, Paul says that if we are "risen with Christ" we would "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." To know that Christ was so highly exalted, and to be assured that we can attain to heavenly glory with him, is surely blessed to contemplate! Another reason we should be overjoyed to know that Jesus has been highly exalted has to do with our imperfections, and the possibility that we might be

discouraged by them. Paul says, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”—Rom. 8:34

SPIRITUAL THINGS NOT YET UNDERSTOOD

Happy though the disciples were to be assured that Jesus had been raised from the dead, it was not until after Pentecost that they understood this precious truth with respect to his making intercession for them in the presence of God. The wonderful bond of friendship Jesus’ little band of followers had developed with him was chiefly on a human basis. They did not yet understand spiritual things. They believed wholeheartedly that he was the Christ, and that he would establish the long-promised Messianic kingdom. In his miracles, they saw evidence of the many earthly blessings he would bestow upon all through the agencies of that kingdom.

When Martha met Jesus returning to Bethany after her brother, Lazarus, had died, she said to him, “If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” Jesus answered her, saying, “Thy brother shall rise again,” to which Martha replied, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Then Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life. . . . Believest thou this?”—John 11:21-26

Martha believed, as did Mary, because of the miracles they had seen him perform, and his marvelous teachings and gracious words which he spoke. Indeed, all the disciples believed that he was the Messiah. How thrilled they must have been

with the thought of being followers of one who had such inherent power that even a mere touch of his garment healed the sick! They loved their Master, but at first only affectionately so.

When Jesus was taken from them and crucified, their sorrow was deep and bitter. It seemed that all their hopes, which had been centered in him, were frustrated. It is no wonder, then, that when Mary Magdalene discovered the empty tomb, and reported to Peter and John that his body had been stolen, they hastened to see for themselves. (John 20:1-3) What a miracle it surely must have been for her, crushed in spirit by disappointment at not seeing the body of her Lord, to then hear “Mary,” and realize it was Jesus who stood before her and called her by name. She cried, “Rabboni; which is to say, Master,” and apparently sought to embrace him.—vss. 15,16

“TOUCH ME NOT”

It must have seemed strange to Mary Magdalene when Jesus responded, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” The word here translated “touch” comes from a Greek word meaning “to attach,” and is used in both a literal as well as figurative sense in the New Testament. This word is used where reference is made to individuals “touching” Jesus or his garments to being healed, and in accounts which tell of his touching various ones in connection with his miracles. (Matt. 8:3,15; 9:20; Luke 6:19) In these cases a literal touch seems to be implied.

It is this same Greek word that John uses when he assures us that when one is begotten of God, “that wicked one toucheth him not.” (I John 5:18)

In its use regarding the Adversary's touch, while the result is the opposite—being as it were the touch of death—it is seen to have a figurative meaning. Satan is not able to touch, or “attach,” himself to the mind and character of those begotten by God's Holy Spirit, so as to influence their efforts to faithfully carry out the terms of their consecration to God.

Throughout their association with Jesus, the disciples, including Mary, had witnessed the “touch” of his presence—his words, kindness, understanding, and love. He had called them his “friends.” (John 15:15) The disciples’ “attachment” to the Lord was deep and abiding, yet, with their limited understanding, it was still mostly an earthly tie. Mary, now suddenly realizing that Jesus was no longer dead, but alive, and standing beside her, reached out to attach herself to him. She desired to never again be deprived of the blessings of his presence. This was a natural response, but it was merely a human blessing which she sought.

Jesus told Mary the reason she should not attach herself to him, saying, “I am not yet ascended to my Father.” That is, he would not be in her presence much longer, for he would soon ascend into the heavens. The risen Lord then told Mary to go to his brethren “and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” Mary did not understand the meaning of these instructions, nor the reason for her not then enjoying the “touch” of the Master's presence. Nevertheless, she did as Jesus asked, and gave his message to the other disciples.—John 20:18

Jesus told his disciples the night before his death that he was going to his Father, and that then

he would send the “Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit”—the “Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father.” (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13) Thus, when Mary carried the message to them from Jesus saying that he had not yet ascended to his Father, they probably remembered his promise, but still they would not comprehend its meaning. It would not be possible for them to do so until after his promise was fulfilled and they had received the Holy Spirit to enlighten and comfort them.

FROM EARTHLY TO SPIRITUAL

Jesus’ response to Mary on that resurrection morning was a way of saying that his relationship to her, and to all his disciples, was now to be on an entirely different basis. No longer were they to think of him in terms of human friendship, nor merely as a mighty one to heal physical diseases and infirmities. He was saying, in effect, that from now on, the blessings to flow out from him to his followers would be accomplished through the Holy Spirit, and this Comforter could not be sent to them until he had ascended to his Father.

Mary and the disciples were to learn that their relationship to Jesus was no longer to be on a human basis. While he miraculously appeared to them a few times after his resurrection, at the end of forty days, he ascended to his Father, as he had promised. Now, their relationship to him would be by faith, and through the enlightenment and comfort of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul later wrote of the new spiritual standpoint from which Christ should be viewed by his followers once they are Spirit begotten, saying, “From now on we regard no one from a

human point of view [according to worldly standards and values]. Though we have known Christ from a human point of view, now we no longer know him in this way.”—II Cor. 5:16, *The Amplified Bible*

Even before Jesus ascended to his Father, his limited association with his disciples between his resurrection and ascension was designed to help them realize that a great change had occurred. They soon comprehended that they were no longer going to be with him and enjoying his companionship in the same manner as they had before he was crucified. While he was doubtless invisibly present with them most of the time during those forty days, they saw little of him, and each appearance in their midst was so different from the others that they were unable to become familiar with him as a human being.

At the same time, the fact that he could appear and vanish at will, even when they were behind closed doors, would help them understand that he was no longer hampered by fetters of flesh. This, together with his announcement that “all power” had been given to him both “in heaven and in earth,” would help to prepare them for what the Holy Spirit later fully revealed. (Matt. 28:18) While he had been put to death in the flesh, he had been made alive in the Spirit—or, as Paul states it, a “quickening spirit.”—I Cor. 15:45

Perhaps now they began to vaguely realize the meaning of what the Master had said to Nicodemus when he explained that those who are “born of the Spirit” can go and come as the wind—that is, with great power, yet invisibly. (John 3:8) When Jesus was with them in the flesh, he no doubt became

weary at times. Hanging and suffering on the cross, he said, "I thirst." (John 19:28) Now, however, although they saw little of him, there was nothing in his demeanor to indicate that he was in any way subject to human limitations or experienced any physical suffering.

JESUS ASCENDS

Jesus' last visit with his disciples was most impressive along this line. After telling them that they would receive power through the Holy Spirit, he instructed them to be his witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Then, as they watched, "he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." (Acts 1:8,9) This, they knew, was something far beyond the ability of a mere human to accomplish.

"They looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up." (vs. 10) What a dramatic climax this was to the series of experiences through which they had passed during the forty-three days since their Master was arrested and put to death. Two angels appeared after Jesus had ascended, and they asked the disciples, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" (vs. 11) The angels did not wait for a response. They knew that these men were now so overcome by their mixture of emotions, and so utterly unable to comprehend the meaning of the events to which this was such an amazing climax, that they were unable to answer.

Then the angels explained, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into

heaven.” (vs. 11) It is the “same Jesus” whom they had seen go into heaven, who would return at his Second Advent. He was the same loving and understanding personality with whom they had been associated during his entire earthly ministry. He had the same righteous character, and was still engaged in the fulfillment of the same plan of his Father’s authorship. Now, however, he was no longer a human being whose physical touch healed the sick, or who they could attach themselves to in a human fashion.

While still in the flesh as a human being, Jesus said to his disciples, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51) The risen Jesus, who appeared to them during the forty days following his resurrection, was a highly exalted spirit being. This Jesus could enter the room while the doors were closed and locked, and could appear and vanish at will. He could be with his disciples for forty days without being seen except as he appeared to them, and then be miraculously taken up into the heavens and disappear from their sight. However, after his ascension, Jesus would never be seen again by the natural eyes of the world, nor by the natural eyes of his followers. (John 14:19; I John 3:2) Indeed, his return would be unknown by mankind in general. Only his brethren would be aware of it, not by their natural sight, but rather by watching for the “signs” that Jesus had given to his disciples, which would indicate his presence at his Second Advent.—Matt. 24:3-47

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

After Jesus’ ascension, his disciples returned to Jerusalem as he had instructed them, and abode in

an “upper room” where they “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” (Acts 1:12-14) It was not necessary for them to tarry long, for in ten days the Master’s promise to send the Comforter—the Holy Spirit—was fulfilled. It was under its enlightening influence that they could fit the experiences of the previous weeks into a pattern that was understandable and inspiring. It was by this same power of the Holy Spirit that Peter could preach his stirring sermon in which he pointed out the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. It was a sermon so powerful that 3,000 were caused to be “pricked in their heart.”—Acts 2:37,41

Among the women who had tarried at Jerusalem, and were also recipients of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, was undoubtedly Mary Magdalene. She now understood why the risen Lord had told her not to become attached to him because he had not yet ascended to his Father. She knew that his ascension was necessary in order that the Holy Spirit might come upon them. How much more precious and enduring, Mary realized, were the blessings her Master was now able to shower upon her and all his brethren, than were possible while he was in the flesh.

Instead of laying hold of his physical being in the hope of obtaining virtue and strength, Mary knew that she could, through prayer, go “boldly unto the throne of grace,” there to “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16) Through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, Mary and all

of Jesus' disciples would rejoice in the spiritual fellowship with the Father and with the Son which had been made possible by his death, resurrection, and ascension.

PEACE AND COMFORT RECEIVED

Before his crucifixion, Jesus had said to his disciples, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, . . . shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."—John 14:26,27

Beginning at Pentecost, the disciples experienced the fulfillment of this promise. They were puzzled and discouraged for a while when their Master was crucified. However, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as a Comforter sent from God, they now had peace. It was a peace born of confidence in the Father's wisdom and love in caring for them. This "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," would keep their "hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:7

GOD'S PLAN REVEALED

The power of the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of their understanding to behold the glory of God as it is revealed through his loving plan for the redemption and salvation of both the church and the world. It called to their remembrance the wonderful words of life which Jesus had ministered to them before he was crucified, and reminded them of his promise that those who left all and followed him into death

would have “treasure in heaven.” (Matt. 19:21) They now knew what that treasure was.

The apostles knew and taught that we may hope to live and reign with Christ, conditional upon dying sacrificially with him, and that we will be made like him and see him as he is. (II Tim. 2:12; I John 3:2) They recognized, however, that this glorious heavenly reward would not be attained until the Master returned, so his promise that he would “come again, and receive” them, and all his people, unto himself, was the basis of a most blessed hope.—John 14:3

Moreover, the apostles clearly understood and taught that their hope of life eternal depended upon the resurrection of the dead. They knew also that all mankind is lost in death unless there is a resurrection. They saw that by Jesus’ death, and his resurrection by the Father, assurance was provided to both the church and the world that, through him, all will have the opportunity for everlasting life, either in the heavenly or earthly phase of God’s kingdom.—Matt. 6:10

These truths were clearly understood in the Early Church. Today, they flood our minds and inspire our hearts, as once again, in a special way, we call to remembrance he who said he was the “resurrection, and the life.” (John 11:25) Jesus could not be held in death because his Heavenly Father used his mighty power to break those bands asunder. Let us rejoice in the assurance that he who was made alive in the Spirit, and appeared in the presence of God for us, has now returned, and soon, if faithful, we will be with him and see him as he is. ■

God's Love and Care

“God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, . . . But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; . . . they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”
—Isaiah 40:28-31

THE APOSTLE PETER wrote, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (I Pet. 5:7) How reassuring are the many texts of Scripture which affirm the fact that our loving Heavenly Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, is abundantly able to care for his people. He is all-powerful, and is never weary. He watches over us, and his ear is ever open to our cries for help in time of need. “No good thing will he withhold” from those who love him sincerely, and who have devoted themselves wholly to his service.—Ps. 84:11

We heartily claim these and many other promises of the Bible, knowing that they are surely true. Yet, amid

a hard experience or fiery trial, it is sometimes difficult to fully realize God's care, or seize upon his many promises. The mind of the flesh may entertain the thought that, for some reason, or by happenstance, our Heavenly Father is not altogether aware of what we are going through, or that he is not guiding the experience for our ultimate good. We may even feel, if only for a moment, that he has left us to our own devices in the experience. Such thoughts can be most disturbing to us, and will assuredly add much to the mental distress associated with the trial.

At such times, more than at any other, we are to realize that the opposite is the case. No matter what may appear to us on the surface as a lack of care or understanding on the part of God toward any experience, we know that such cannot be so. Quite the contrary, it is likely in these very moments that his guiding hand is closest to us, and that his loving care is bearing us up the most. It is most critical, therefore, that we come to a full appreciation of this, and lay hold of the promise, "The LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."—Isa. 59:1

GOD SEES AND HEARS

Man was created in the image of God, but we do not understand this to refer to a bodily image. However, in order that we may grasp to some extent the unlimited capabilities of the Creator, the Scriptures refer to his various senses of sight, hearing, and smelling. By this use of language, we can understand that our Heavenly Father knows our feelings, and is sympathetic to all our needs, and

will, through his unlimited agencies, care for us. The psalmist inquired, “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?”—Ps. 94:9

God does indeed see and hear his people. We quote again from the Psalms: “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. . . . The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.” (Ps. 34:15,17-19) In verse 7 of this Psalm we are informed that “the angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” This is an indication of one of the means God uses in the care of his people. Jesus spoke of the angels, and said that they “always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 18:10) Thus, they have an accurate knowledge of the Heavenly Father’s will for each of his people, and can shape divine providences in their lives in exactly the right manner for the accomplishment of his will.

This, however, calls for a right attitude of heart and mind on our part. The Lord’s delivering power is exercised only on behalf of those who are of a “contrite spirit,” and of a “broken heart.” The proud of heart, and those who resist his providences in their lives, have no assurance that God’s ear is always open to their cry. We also should not expect that his power exercised on our behalf will necessarily deliver us from all our trials and difficulties. The Lord in his wisdom may see that certain hardships, whether

mental, physical, or both, are among the experiences we need in order to be more fully developed as New Creatures. While he may not remove these trials from us, we are assured that he will provide strength to bear them.—Ps. 29:11; Rom. 8:28

LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

On the other hand, God's faithful people are assured of ultimate deliverance from all their afflictions. This is the deliverance which will be theirs in the first resurrection. It is important, therefore, that in noting the Lord's providences in our lives we maintain this long-term perspective, which is his viewpoint. Our Heavenly Father is not working in us merely for the accomplishment of what might be his good pleasure for today or tomorrow. Rather, he is preparing us for the work of the future, when, if faithful, we will have the privilege of living and reigning with Christ.

The Apostle Paul presented the proper viewpoint in this connection when he wrote that our "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (II Cor. 4:17) If we are of a contrite spirit, and fully submissive to the manner in which God is working in us, then we will realize that whatever our trials may be, they are to be considered as momentary "light afflictions" in comparison with the eternal "weight" of glory which they are helping to work out in us. Moreover, the Lord knows exactly how to shape our schooling to accomplish his purpose in our lives as New Creatures.

In Psalm 101:6, we read, "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with

me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.” Here again we are reminded that it is only those who faithfully serve the Heavenly Father who are the objects of his special care. These, he declares, “dwell with me.” How precious is the thought that if we are endeavoring with all our energy to know and do God’s will, it means that we are dwelling with him. This is where we should always delight to be. The psalmist, in another place, spoke of dwelling in “the secret place of the most High,” and of abiding “under the shadow of the Almighty.”—Ps. 91:1

GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE

God’s love for his people and his watch care over them can be seen in a more wonderful light when we take into consideration the exercise of his foreknowledge. We read, “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” (Ps. 139:16) Earlier in this Psalm, David declared that he was “fearfully and wonderfully made.” (vs. 14) It is quite possible that David is representative here of Jesus, the Head of his church, and that the “members” known even before they “were fashioned,” are the members of the body of Christ.

Whether the reference be to the natural body, or to Christ and his body members, the lesson is the same in that it reveals the infinite wisdom of the Creator. He is always able to know in advance the outcome of the mighty works which he sets out to accomplish. This foreknowledge on God’s part does not in any way destroy our free will. Our finite

minds could not determine what another would do tomorrow unless we controlled his actions, and compelled him to take a certain course. God, however, can know what we will do without controlling our actions. This is because his mind is infinite, and discerns that which goes beyond our comprehension. The best we can do is understand the meaning of what is taking place in our lives today, and those experiences of the past. Many of the Lord's people can look back in their lives and note the wonderful way in which God was overruling their daily lives, even before they knew him. How much more abundantly is this true of his wonderful providences since we dedicated ourselves to the doing of his will.

God's wisdom was shaping our affairs, even as we were being drawn to him, when as yet we possibly had little knowledge of him, or of his plans and purposes for us or for the world. We can trace his leading which brought us in contact with the Word of truth, with Jesus and with the brethren. After we made a full consecration of ourselves to do his will, his providences in our lives became still more outstanding. To realize this is to strengthen our faith, for we should find it easy to believe that he who led and blessed us in the past will continue to do so. Thus, the darkness which may surround us today will, in his due time, be dispelled, and once again the sweet smile of his presence will be revealed, though, in truth, it was always there.

Proverbs 15:3 reads: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." This is most comforting, for it assures us that no matter where we are, or what our circumstances

might be, God sees both the good and the evil. That is, he knows the circumstances which are favorable to us as New Creatures, and sees the evil influences which are arrayed against us. This means that God is always aware of the difficulties which confront us, and of any efforts which might be made by the Adversary to hinder our progress in the narrow way. We are assured in his Word that God will use his power so that no evil will befall us as New Creatures. —Ps. 91:10

DAVID AWARE OF GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

In moments when our faith might not be as strong as it should be, we might temporarily wonder if the Lord really knows about the complexities of our trials, and is caring for us in each situation. However, we have the assurance of his Word that he sees in every place, understands every situation, and is abundantly able to care for us regardless of what the circumstances may be. David, a man after God's own heart, was assured that the Lord was with him in every event of his life. Let us consider his testimony in this regard.

“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassedst my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into

heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [Hebrew: "the grave"], behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."—Ps. 139:1-12

David beautifully emphasizes the fact of God's love and care for us, regardless of what situation or place in which we might find ourselves. Even if we fear that our mistakes may have taken us away from our Heavenly Father and his care, we can still be assured that he leads us, and that he upholds us, when we ask for forgiveness and guidance. If conditions seem dark around us, and we are uncertain of the direction in which we should go, we can be assured that the darkness is as the light to our Heavenly Father. He is never confused by the situations in our lives which seem so complex, and which may baffle and perplex us.

God knows and understands all our needs. He is sympathetic to our every ache and pain, whether they be heartaches or bodily pains. We may not be able to see his hand immediately in every changing circumstance of life, but by faith we can know that his providences are directing us, his mighty power is sustaining us, and he will not permit us to be tested above that which we can bear. If our burdens become too great, he will provide a way of escape. —I Cor. 10:13

JOB'S EXPERIENCE

In Job's response to his experiences, we have a wonderful example of faith in God's love and care. Job did not know why the Lord had permitted such severe trials to come to him. Everything in his life which he treasured, and which he had accepted as having been given to him by God, was removed, even his health. Although he did not understand, Job continued to believe that the Lord knew all things, and would overrule his experiences for his good. While passing through these deep valleys of sorrow, Job explained his search for God, saying: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."—Job 23:8-10

This is a true description of trials which God permits to come to all those who are faithful to him. The purpose they serve is to test our fidelity to the Lord, and our faith in the fact that he knows exactly what is best for us as New Creatures. Indeed, we have all searched for our Heavenly Father in trials which have come upon us. Job says that he looked in every direction, symbolically describing his attempts to understand the meaning of the calamities which had come upon him, and why God, whom he trusted and had served faithfully, had permitted them.

At the time Job was passing through his severely difficult experiences, he did not comprehend their meaning, nor "perceive" God in them. However, his anchor of faith held secure. He remained assured

that while he could not see God in his experiences, the Lord could see him. His conclusion was, "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." He knew that God was testing him and understood all about his trouble, and that if he maintained his faith and his integrity he would pass the test, and come forth as something of value.

Job trusted the Lord even though he could not understand why his providences seemed to harshly frown upon him. His faith enabled him to be convinced that God's love and care were being manifested in his life, even when his reasoning on the matter would lead him to believe otherwise. The Apostle Peter describes such a situation as "the trial of your faith," which, he explains, is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire."—I Pet. 1:7

The means by which we can trust in the Lord, as Job did, and know that he is caring for us, regardless of circumstances which might indicate otherwise, is our faith in his ability to see beyond the immediate present. God is shaping our experiences in a manner to accomplish the ultimate purpose he has in mind for us in his great plan of the ages. When we remember that his design for us is that we might attain "glory and honour and immortality," and a place of joint heirship with Christ in his kingdom, we will realize that the trials of the present are not worthy to be compared with the glories of the future. (Rom. 2:7; 8:17,18) The Lord is allowing these experiences to test our fidelity to him, and to develop in us the fruits of righteousness. Hence, we can rejoice in his love and wisdom

which permits them, and continue to believe that he is caring for us in every detail of life.

GOD'S CARE OVER US

The psalmist wrote: "The eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." (Ps. 33:18,19) There is little in this "present evil world" that is favorable to the sustenance and growth of God's consecrated people. (Gal. 1:4) We could well say, as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, that we are surrounded with famine conditions which, apart from God's love and care, would lead to our death.

Our loving Heavenly Father watches over all our interests and makes every provision to deliver us from anything which might harm us as New Creatures. Among his provisions, he supplies spiritual food from his Word. He provides the fellowship and comfort of his people—our brethren. In his love, he permits only such experiences as will best serve to accomplish his divine purpose. He can even turn unfavorable circumstances into growth for the New Creature, if we put our trust in him, and allow him to work in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure." —Phil. 2:13

The fact that we may feel weak and inadequate for the tasks before us merely gives our Heavenly Father an opportunity to use his mighty power on our behalf. As our opening text declares, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." When Paul prayed for the removal of his "thorn in the flesh," and his request was not granted, he accepted God's will in the matter,

explaining that the Lord said unto him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." To this Paul added, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—II Cor. 12:7-9

It is indicated by our theme text that even those who by nature are usually strong, sometimes become faint and weary, and that even young men "shall utterly fall." This emphasizes that even those who might be inclined to think they are strong are not really so when it comes to walking in the narrow way. None can maintain their faithfulness to the Lord, and their zeal for his cause, without divine help. There are too many opposing forces arrayed against the children of God for any of his consecrated people to suppose that they can gain the victory except as they wait upon the Lord, and look to him always for "grace to help in time of need."—Heb. 4:16

How blessed is the assurance of our opening Scripture: "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; . . . they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." It is to be counted a privilege to wait on the Lord, to know that in his own way and time he will provide strength, and to recognize his love and care in all the circumstances of life. Indeed, the circumstances of life which seem most difficult for us may, and usually are, evidences of his great love, for he knows our needs better than we do. He will see to it that when the need is for bitterness, it will be supplied, in proper measure. He will also provide sweetness in portions that fill our hearts and lives with joy.

The Apostle Paul admonished us to consider Jesus, who endured such "contradiction of sinners against

himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” (Heb. 12:3) We know that our Heavenly Father loved his Son, Jesus. We also know that Jesus never displeased his Father—yet he did suffer. He was permitted to die on Calvary’s cross. The Father did not deliver him from these ordeals, but gave him strength to bear them. Thus, we are to think of Jesus, and remember his prayer in which he affirmed that the Father loves us even as he loved him. (John 17:23-26) Let us rejoice in the richness of the Father’s love, and not faint when his love permits trials which are difficult for the flesh to bear, for he knows just what is best for us.

“O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” Jesus said to Peter when he became fearful of the storm which was swirling about them. How quickly that storm was calmed when the due time came. (Matt. 14:30-32) So it is with the storms in our lives. They cannot harm us as New Creatures, but will help to increase our faith as we note God’s power in bringing us through these tempests of the soul. May our faith continue to increase in our Father’s love and care, enabling us to trust him fully until he brings us all the way into that “desired haven” of perfect rest and peace beyond the veil.—Ps. 107:28-30 ■

2017 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Sunday, April 9, 2017.

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

J. Dolan

Cameroon, Africa April 5-12

Douala, Doume Convention,
Paki, Kabila, Kumba, Bertuoa

Kenya, Africa April 13-19

Various Classes, Bungoma
Convention

Uganda, Africa April 20-26

Bugiri, Mutungo, Mengo
Convention, Rusaka, Wakiso

Ghana, Africa April 27-May 8

Kumasi, Accra, Cape Coast,
Dunka-on-Offin, Ayanfuri,
Atobease, Famanyo, Wunshen,
Arikuma, Amofo, Adesu

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

D. Christiansen

Albuquerque, NM April 14-16

R. Goodman

Detroit, MI April 1,2

B. Montague

Detroit, MI April 1,2

T. Ruggirello

Albuquerque, NM April 14-16

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

APRIL 6—"If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."—I Peter 4:16 (Z. '96-166 Hymn 106)

APRIL 13—"Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."—John 6:53 (Z. '99-51 Hymn 325)

APRIL 20—"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."—Luke 16:10 (Z. '03-407 Hymn 277)

APRIL 27—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Philippians 2:5 (Z. '02-265 Hymn 150)

CONVENTIONS

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

DETROIT CONVENTION, April 1,2—Quality Inn of Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48083. Contact P. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588 or Email: nemeshfp@aol.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 14-16—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

NTAK OBIO AKPA, NIGERIA CONVENTION, April 14-16—Ntak Obio Akpa, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Convention Theme: I Peter 1:10-12, Hebrews 11:40

METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, May 6,7—Brighton Community Center, 555 Brighton Street, Brighton, MI 48114. Contact J. Kienast. Phone: (248) 496-5611 or Email: jenkienast@gmail.com

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 7—Holiday Inn Hotel, 620 Wells Road, Orange Park, FL 32073. For room reservations, contact the hotel. Phone: (904) 562-7407. Deadline for special room rates is May 4. Other information, contact C. Hughes. Phone: (904) 781-0506 or Email: clanky3@att.net

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 27-29—Alta Villa Banquets, 430 N. Addison Road, Addison, IL 60101. Contact J. Farrell, 310 S. Lambert Road, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137. Phone: (630) 469-9511 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 27,28—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. For room reservations (subsidized rate of \$55/night ending

April 23), contact N. Nekora. Phone: (310) 454-5248 or Email: npnekora@aol.com. Other information, contact T. Parkinson. Phone: (818) 288-2765 or Email: ti77park@gmail.com. Please place LABible in subject line of the email.

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 4—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 16-18—Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97220. Phone: (503) 281-2500. Contact B. or C. Hislop. Phone: (503) 691-2699 or Email: bwhislop@aol.com or claudiahis@aol.com

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 1-3—Siwak Farm RR1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK Canada S6V5P8. Contact A. Siwak. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or Email: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

EAST SASKATCHEWAN CONVENTION, July 7-9—Sturgis Community Hall, Hwy. #9, Sturgis, SK, Canada. Contact N. Paley, Box 1522, Canora, SK S0A0L0. Phone: (306) 563-5441 or Email: thepaleys@sasktel.net

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 15-20—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. For registration, contact E. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

NIGERIA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 25-27—Central School Obudi Agwa Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu, #24 Fayemi Street Coca Cola Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: 2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com