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Reasoning Together

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”
—Isaiah 1:18

ONE OF THE ABILITIES OF the human organism that is unique as compared to other forms of life, whether plant or animal, is the ability to reason. Reason is defined by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as follows: “the power of comprehending, inferring, or thinking, especially in orderly

rational ways, ... proper exercise of the mind, ... the sum of the intellectual powers.” Our opening text suggests that this is a quality implanted in man by his Creator, because it exhorts us to reason together with him.

One might legitimately ask how we can reason together with God, a being whom none of us can physically see or hear, much less fully comprehend. To reason with the Almighty, and to do so in accordance with his plans, purposes, and character attributes, requires that we know something of him. In one sense, we can gain an understanding of

God by looking about us at the vast beauties of the heavens, and the natural wonders we observe daily on earth. (Ps. 19:1,2) In doing so, we learn to appreciate that there are certain laws of nature which govern these marvelous creations. The natural realm points out the power and wisdom of a being which is far beyond that which could be conceived by the human mind.

More is required, however, than knowing merely of God's great power and wisdom in order to reason with him. We must also appreciate something of his eternal plans and purposes as they relate to his created works, as well as his other character qualities which become manifest as a result of this knowledge. For example, if we view the beauties of creation around us, and ascribe them to an all-powerful and wise Creator, but at the same time believe that he plans to destroy the earth, we are forced to question whether such plans would be based on sound reasoning.

There is only one true and harmonious source for learning about God, his plans, purposes, and character. It is his Word, the Bible. By a careful and diligent study of the Scriptures, we are able to understand how God reasons—logically, orderly, thoughtfully. Based on this—an understanding of his Word—we are then enabled to have a proper foundation by which to come and “reason together” with him.

NONE RIGHTEOUS

Man's present condition is harmoniously described in both the Old and New Testaments. “There is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

“There is none righteous, no not one.” (Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Rom. 3:10-12) As plainly stated as these statements are, the trend of thought among mankind today is away from this scriptural viewpoint. Many theorize that human conduct is right or wrong only as it is compared with standards that have previously been established. To further accentuate this departure from God’s Word, the additional claim is made that one human being has as much right to set a standard as another, and that no one need be “conscience stricken” simply because of non-conformity to a previously accepted standard of behavior. This is a form of moral anarchy, a state of society in which every individual does as he pleases. In other words, this viewpoint means that there is no such thing as sin within the Biblical meaning of that term.

This viewpoint, in addition to being out of harmony with the Scriptures, is void of sound reasoning. For example, a man who over-indulges in drinking alcoholic beverages and wakes up the next morning with an unbearable headache, may not have committed a “sin,” as he considers the matter in his mind. The reaction of his body, however, does not agree. It shouts at him, as it were, that he has violated a law by which the human organism is kept functioning in an orderly and healthy manner. The modernist may call this the law of nature, but he should not forget that someone established that law. Whether or not he knows who it was, he realizes that his head and stomach protest in pain when he violates that law.

Some may try to convince themselves that human behavior is only relative, and that there is no real

sin. Yet, very few would venture to say that torturing human beings in prisons or concentration camps is not wrong. Rarely will many people believe that killing millions of innocent men, women and children, as is done in modern warfare, is a moral virtue. It would not be difficult to cite many similar illustrations of inhuman conduct which the vast majority of people would at once acknowledge to be wrong.

We should not have the thought, however, that only extreme acts, such as torture and murder, constitute sin. In an all-encompassing sense, all conduct which contributes to the unhappiness of innocent victims is wrong. One of God's commands stated, "Thou shalt not covet." (Exod. 20:17) When one covets that which belongs to another to the point that he will endeavor by dishonorable means to wrest it from him, that is wrong. It is wrong in the eyes of all decent, reasoning people, and it is wrong because it is a violation of God's law. It is sin!

MAN'S LIMITED RECOGNITION OF SIN

The reason these more flagrant violations of the laws of decency are acknowledged to be wrong even according to imperfect human standards—as also they are declared by God to be sin—is that man was created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26,27) To the extent man retains some of that image, he reasons to the same end. Less self-righteousness and more reverence for divine authority would surely help mankind to see the possibility that the violation of other laws referred to in the Bible is also wrong.

The Apostle Paul wrote that death has passed upon all, because "all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12) The downward course of sin began with Adam. It was

the violation of a simply stated law of the Creator which constituted man's original sin. The narrative does not provide all the details involved in that sin, but we know that Adam willfully violated a law under which he was placed by God, and that he reaped the penalty for sin, which is death.—Gen. 2:16,17; 3:17-19; 5:5

As we trace man's history from Adam, the wrongdoing of the race becomes more and more apparent. Selfishness is the one word which seems to best summarize the intents which have led to sin of every kind. We have oft heard the expression that we live in a "dog eat dog world." Indeed, such a policy has been the basis of practically all human behavior since the world began. This evil motive has manifested itself in all forms of injustice, unfair practice, graft, murder, and war.

All of this should be clearly recognized as sin, and thus confirm the truth of the Scriptures in declaring that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) Not all have been willful planners and perpetrators of sin, but from the vortex of selfishness which moves a dying world along from one form of wrongdoing to another, none are able wholly to escape. That is why the apostle explains that all have become sinners because Adam sinned. We have been "shapen in iniquity, and in sin" we were conceived, declares the prophet.—Ps. 51:5

PUNISHMENT FOR SIN

Another recognized principle of right is that those who violate established laws should be punished. In this also we see evidence of the image of God directing

the process of human reasoning. This principle is of divine origin, and we can reason together with him upon it. The Creator was the first to declare that there is a penalty attached to wrongdoing. This manifests itself in the laws of nature, in that when these laws are violated, calamitous results inevitably follow.

Adam and Eve might have died simply because they violated a law of God, even if they had not been told about it in advance. However, as a just God, he told them not to partake of a certain tree in the midst of the garden and warned that if they did so, they would die. This fact made them realize, and should also teach us, that the laws of God cannot be spurned with impunity, but that there is a penalty for sin, the ultimate end of which is death.

Since the days of Eden, man has been a sinner, and the penalty for sin has been falling upon each generation as it has started upon its brief span of imperfect life. From the cradle to the grave each individual of the fallen race has lived and walked “through the valley of the shadow of death,” knowing that there would be no reprieve, and no escape, from that sure destiny.—Ps. 23:4

The grim reality of a dying world has been tragic enough in itself. Yet, to plague the people still more there have been invented those theoretical visions of a terrible abyss of literal torture in which, it has been claimed, countless billions would find themselves after they were supposed to have died. How we thank God that this part of man’s thinking is not true. The Scriptures state the whole truth on the subject when they declare simply that the “wages of sin is death.”—Rom. 6:23

Instead of hinting that “wages” more severe than death is the punishment for sin, we are assured that a way of escape, even from this penalty, has been provided. In the same verse, after stating that death is the “wages of sin,” the apostle declares that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Scriptures also declare, “As in Adam all die,” all those who come into Christ “shall ... be made alive.” (I Cor. 15:22) If we ask how this could be, the Bible tells us that “Christ died for our sins.”—I Cor. 15:3

FURTHER REASONING

It is well that at this point we accept God’s invitation to “reason together” with him, as stated in our opening text. We have already acknowledged that punishment of wrongdoers is just. We have also concluded that the Creator has the right to require obedience to his laws, and to punish the disobedient. However, the divine penalty for sin is death. When man pays that penalty by going into the grave, he is unable to do more. Upon conviction of a crime, a man may pay a fine of one hundred dollars and then be free. Yet, when the fine of death is paid, there can be no freedom, for death takes all that man has, even life itself.

Here is where the love of God enters into his design to guarantee that his original purpose in the creation of man shall not be in vain. The ultimate destiny which he planned for his human creatures shall not be frustrated or annulled, not even by man’s own sin. Here again, we are invited to reason together with him. It was just and right that God inflict the penalty of death upon a disobedient race.

God's justice in this, however, enhances our appreciation of his mercy when we realize that it was he who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish [forever], but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

THE LAW OF SACRIFICE

In simple language the Bible tells us that Jesus, whom God sent to redeem the world, died for the people. (John 1:29; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 2:17) Modern thinking might have us believe that the thought of one dying for another is repulsive, and that such an idea originates in ancient superstitions regarding the demands of heathen deities, or of what is offensively referred to as the "tribal god" of ancient Israel. Let us not be misled by this false reasoning. Such thinking ignores and, perhaps, would like us to forget, that the highest form of nobility and bravery known and honored by men is that of one person dying to save another.

We laud this bravery whenever and wherever we see it manifested. Soldiers who die for their country are considered heroes. Those who in any way sacrifice their lives in order that others may live or enjoy life more abundantly, are properly considered the greatest benefactors of mankind. In this we see another reflection of the image of God with which the human creation was endued. When we properly appraise the virtue of sacrifice we are simply reflecting the character likeness of God in our thoughts and viewpoint. We naturally honor sacrifice and label it heroism because God is the author of this worthy principle. When we recognize this, the Biblical plan

of redemption for sin by means of sacrifice is seen to be both beautiful and understandable, as well as just and loving.

EARLY ILLUSTRATION

The earliest record of sacrifice is the narrative of Genesis concerning the offerings brought to the Lord by Cain and Abel. Without understanding what was involved one might wonder why God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's. However, God had a reason for this. When he sentenced our first parents to death he said that the "seed," or offspring, of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. (Gen. 3:14,15) In the light of subsequent revelations of God's plan for human restoration, this vague statement is seen to be a promise that the penalty for sin would one day be remitted.

God also reveals later in his Word that there can be no remission of sin without the sacrifice of life, symbolized by the shedding of blood. (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22) In the acceptance of Abel's flesh and blood offering God was pointing forward to a time when, through the sacrifice of a "lamb without blemish" which he would provide, man would be permitted to return to his lost estate. (I Pet. 1:18,19) Thus, as our opening text states, man's sins, though they are "as scarlet," are to be made "white as snow."

ABRAHAM OFFERS ISAAC

This thought of sacrifice is again brought to our attention in God's dealings with Abraham. To Abraham, God made the promise that through his seed "all families of the earth" would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) Many of the families of the earth were already dead when this promise was made.

Billions have died since. To bless these it is necessary that they be restored to life. Having died because they were sinners, the promise of their restoration implies that their sins are to be remitted. In connection with this promise God again illustrates his purpose to provide for the remission of sin through the sacrifice of his Son.

This illustration was given in a very unique fashion. Abraham was asked to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice. Having great faith in God's wisdom in asking him to do this, and also in God's power and willingness even to raise Isaac from the dead, Abraham proceeded to obey the divine command. Agreeing to the plan for sacrifice, Isaac was stretched upon the altar ready to be slain when an angel of God intervened, and a lamb was provided as a substitute.—Gen. 22:1-13; Heb. 11:17-19

When Abraham demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, a beautiful picture was provided concerning God's plan. Before the Creator's intention of recovering man would be realized through restoration to life, a loving father would voluntarily give up his son in sacrifice. Indeed, it was the Heavenly Father, the Creator and fountain of all life, who gave his only begotten Son to bring about man's release from Adamic condemnation.

DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL

Centuries later the descendants of Abraham were held in slavery in Egypt, and through Moses God wrought a miraculous deliverance for them. In connection with this there was the sacrifice of a lamb—the Passover lamb. This also pointed forward to a still greater deliverance—a liberation from slavery

to sin and death—and reminds us again that this release will be possible because of a sacrifice. It is the sacrifice of the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” and as Paul confirms, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”—John 1:29; I Cor. 5:7

Throughout the Old Testament the promise of a coming Messiah and Deliverer is oft repeated. The Israelites looked forward to the coming of this foretold King, this Ruler who would have authority over all nations and dispense to all people the blessings of peace and life which God had promised. Jesus came in fulfillment of these promises, but the expectations of the Jews were not immediately realized. They had failed to note the condition upon which their long-promised King would be exalted—that is, the condition of sacrifice.

JESUS CAME TO OFFER SACRIFICE

Jesus came to be the King of kings, but first he must be the “Lamb of God,” who would be offered in sacrifice to take away the sin of the world. The only way to bless those who are dead is to restore them to life. The race is dying because of sin, death being the wages of unrighteousness. If man is to be restored, those wages must be paid by another, and by one who is not under similar condemnation. In God’s plan, Jesus was this one who died, first for Adam, and through Adam, for the entire human race—his posterity. He gave his life that we, his followers, and all the world, might live.—I John 2:1,2; 4:9,10

Thus, in the symbolism of the Scriptures, we are told that though we may be stained as scarlet because

of sin, we can be as white as snow as a result of Christ's redemptive sacrifice. This is one of God's ways of telling us that the wrongdoing of our first parents, and the continued sin and selfishness of their offspring, have not thwarted his purpose in the creation of man. In the divine economy the sin which has slain the race has provided an opportunity for God's love to manifest itself through sacrifice. This makes it possible for the guilty to be released from Adamic condemnation, and freed from death through a resurrection of the dead.

How understandable and practical is this arrangement when viewed in the light of reason! With this viewpoint in mind we can read the Genesis record of the creation and fall of man and realize that only temporarily is the human race deprived of the symbolic "tree of life" found in Eden. (Gen. 2:9) In that arrangement we can see a miniature of the Creator's design for an earth full of perfect human beings, living happily and at peace forever.

VALUABLE LESSONS LEARNED

There has been immeasurable value in the experiences of suffering and death through which the race has passed. When awakened from death and given the opportunity to obey God's law, each member of the human family will be able to choose more intelligently the course he will take. From his past experience, man will be able to contrast the advantages accruing from obedience with the great loss resulting from disobedience.

Reason tells us that no other plan than the one outlined in the Bible can possibly save the human race from ultimate destruction. Reason also identifies the

Creator as the only one who could carry out such a plan, because its completion calls for a resurrection of the dead. The exercise of power necessary to raise the dead is no obstacle to God. He has, in fact, imbued his glorified Son, Christ Jesus, with this same power.—Matt. 28:18; John 5:25-27

Thus, when we read the Scriptures, we realize that the one who caused to be recorded the wonderful promises we find therein is abundantly able to fulfill them. Indeed, he will fulfill them in his own due time. We can be assured, therefore, that the destiny of man to live in peace, health, and safety forever upon earth is yet to become an accomplished fact. God's Word is sure in this regard. "Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD."—Isa. 45:18 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JANUARY 4—"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say on the LORD."—Psalm 27:14 (Z. '95-20 Hymn 313)

JANUARY 11—"His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."—Jeremiah 20:9 (Z. '01-151 Hymn 280)

JANUARY 18—"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."—Romans 12:11 (Z. '91-9 Hymn 309)

JANUARY 25—"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."—Matthew 6:34 (Z. '98-44 Hymn 110)

Another Year is Dawning

*Another year is dawning,
 Dear Father, let it be
In working or in waiting,
 another year with Thee;
Another year of progress,
 another year of praise,
Another year of proving
 Thy presence all the days.*

*Another year of mercies,
 of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness
 in the shining of Thy face,
Another year of leaning
 upon Thy loving breast,
Another year of trusting,
 of quiet, happy rest.*

*Another year of service,
 of witness for Thy love,
Another year of training
 for holier work above.
Another year is dawning,
 Dear Father, let it be
On earth or else in heaven,
 another year for Thee.*

*—selected, (can be sung to the tune of
Hymn #281, Hymns of Dawn,
“The Church’s One Foundation”)*

A Sincere Faith

Key Verse: *“Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.”*

—*Daniel 1:8, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
Daniel 1:8-21

were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Each was given a new, Babylonian name, as an attempt to get them to forget about their past lives as Israelites, and to think and become as Babylonians. (vss. 6,7, NASB) However, to these young Hebrews, their new names, as well as the request that they eat of the king’s food, served as a reminder of their nation’s servitude to Babylon. It is believed that the king’s food would have been first offered up to Babylonian gods, and eating these foods

WHEN BABYLONIAN KING

Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, he ordered that some of the “sons of Israel” be selected, “in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence . . . , endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king’s court.” These Jewish youths were to be taught the “literature and language of the Chaldeans” and given “a daily ration from the king’s choice food and from the wine which he drank.” They were to be educated for three years, after which they would enter the king’s service.—Dan. 1:1-5, NASB

Among the young men chosen

would have been seen as an endorsement of these false gods.

In our Key Verse we are told that Daniel decided that he would not “defile himself” by partaking of the king’s food and wine. The word “defile” here means to soil, pollute or stain. By not eating the king’s food, Daniel and his companions would be sure to not violate the laws which God had given to Israel. (Lev. 11:4-20) In this we find a lesson. The Lord’s followers are to keep from defiling the robe of righteousness given to them by following in the footsteps of Jesus. (Rev. 3:4) They are to keep themselves “unstained by the world.”—James 1:27, *NASB*

At first, the chief of the Babylonian officials did not agree with Daniel’s request, because he feared for his own life if he granted it. However, Daniel did not give up, and with faith in God, replied, “Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king’s choice food.”—Dan. 1:10-13, *NASB*

The chief official agreed to this, and after ten days Daniel and his three companions looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. The choice food and wine were taken away and they were allowed to eat vegetables instead. (vss. 14-16) What a strong and sincere faith each of these Hebrew youths must have had, practicing daily self-denial, in order to please God, even though it likely meant being looked down upon by the other young men who partook of the king’s food.

Jesus told his disciples: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) Here the word “deny” means to deny utterly. The grace of God teaches us “to deny ungodliness and worldly desires,” and to live self-controlled and upright lives in this present age, just as the four young Hebrews did.—Tit. 2:11,12, *NASB* ■

A Bold Faith

Key Verse: *“Then Nebuchadnezzar said, Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.”*
—*Daniel 3:28, New International Version*

Selected Scripture:
Daniel 3:19-28

another chance to obey the command to fall down and worship the golden image. He warned them, though, saying, “If you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”—vss. 13-15, *NIV*

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR had constructed an image of gold, and made a decree that as soon as music was sounded, all the people must “fall down and worship the image of gold,” and whoever did not would “immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” (Dan. 3:1-6, *NIV*) When the music sounded, all the people fell down and worshipped the image. It was told to Nebuchadnezzar, however: “There are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”—vss. 7-12, *NIV*

Although extremely angry, Nebuchadnezzar called for the three Hebrews and gave them

The three Hebrews had firmly made up their minds to follow the commandments God gave to Israel: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ... Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. ... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them.” (Exod. 20:3-5) They replied to the king: “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand. ... But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”—Dan. 3:16-18, *NIV*

The three young Jews had a bold faith which trusted in God regardless of the outcome. If God chose, he could deliver them from the furnace. However, if God’s providence saw fit to not deliver them out of this experience, they would still remain faithful to him, even though it meant certain death.

Nebuchadnezzar was furious when he heard their response. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded that his strongest soldiers tie up the three defiant Hebrews and throw them into the blazing furnace. (vss. 19-23) When the three young men were thrown into the furnace, they soon appeared to be unbound, and walking around unharmed. There was also a fourth being seen in the furnace with them, an angel of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar then called them to come out of the furnace, and saw that the fire had done them no harm whatsoever. (vss. 24-27) Surely, this was an incredible miracle!

Let us also develop a bold faith, so that when we face a difficult choice or experience, we will choose to obey God and his principles given in the Scriptures. This we should desire to do, even if it means we are ridiculed or unpopular, or if it results in unpleasant consequences. As the Apostle Peter tells us: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.”—I Pet. 4:12-13 ■

A Prayer for Obedient Faith

Key Verse: “O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”
—*Daniel 9:19, New International Version*

Selected Scripture:
Daniel 9:4-8, 15-19

Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. ... We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. ... For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”—vss. 16-19, *NIV*

One important lesson we can glean from Daniel’s example is our need to closely examine ourselves. We must acknowledge to God in prayer when we have disobeyed his principles either in our thoughts, our words, or our actions, and then seek forgiveness. The Apostle John wrote: “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and

DANIEL KNEW FROM JEREMIAH’S prophecy that the desolation of Jerusalem would last for seventy years. (Dan. 9:1,2; Jer. 25:4-14; 29:10) However, he was concerned that the sins of the Israelites, even during their captivity, might have made them unworthy to be set free at the end of the seventy years, so he earnestly prayed to God. (Dan. 9:3-15) Continuing his prayer, Daniel pleads with God: “Turn away your anger and wrath from

purify us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:8,9, *NIV*) We can pray to our Heavenly Father, and ask for forgiveness for our sins, because of the “atoning sacrifice” of his son, Christ Jesus.—I John 2:1,2, *NIV*

An obedient faith also requires us to turn away from sin—that is, to repent. To repent means to think differently and to make amends, especially from the heart. Repentance is mentioned numerous times in the seven messages given to the church in the book of Revelation.—Rev. 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19

Paul explains in detail the need for us to change. “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, ... as instruments of righteousness. ... What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey? ... You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”—Rom. 6:13-18, *NIV*

If we have an obedient faith, we will daily scrutinize our thoughts and actions, to see whether or not they have been in accordance with God’s principles. When we find that we have sinned by not completely following his precepts, we should seek for forgiveness from the Heavenly Father in prayer. We then should strive to more carefully apply the word of God in our daily life.

Citing additional words from Paul, we read: “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who love in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ... We have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.” (Rom. 8:5-13, *NIV*) May our prayers be not for selfish things, but rather that we might develop a more obedient faith. ■

A Strong Faith

Key Verses: *“The one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed, he said. Peace! Be strong now; be strong. When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.”*

—**Daniel 10:18,19,**
*New International
Version*

Selected Scripture:
Daniel 10:10-21

no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption. ... Then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.”—vss. 7-9

The man in the vision then spoke: “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have been sent to you. ... Do not be afraid. ... Since the first day that

IN DANIEL CHAPTER 10, the prophet records a vision he received from God which greatly troubled him. As a result, for three weeks he mourned, eating and drinking very little. (vss. 1-3) On the twenty-fourth day, Daniel saw what appeared to him as a “man clothed in linen,” with a belt of gold. The man’s body was like a beryl, his face was like lightning, his eyes like lamps of fire, his arms and legs like polished brass, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.—vss. 4-6

The men who were with Daniel did not see this vision, but they felt the ground quaking under them, and fled to hide themselves, leaving Daniel alone. Overwhelmed by this vision, Daniel wrote: “There remained

you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. ... Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future.” (vss. 11-14, *NIV*) Daniel replied: “How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe. Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed, he said. Peace! Be strong now; be strong. When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, Speak my lord.”—vss. 17-19, *NIV*

The angel gave strength to Daniel by touching him. God also “touches” us, giving us strength through his Holy Word. The psalmist wrote: “The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.” “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.” (Ps. 29:11; 46:1,2) Many other Scriptures are also given to boost our spiritual strength.—Ps. 18:1,2,30; 119:114; Matt. 4:4

By fixing our thoughts upon God, by reading and studying his Word, and by placing our trust entirely upon him, our faith will be strengthened and we will gain peace. The Prophet Isaiah said: “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD for ever, for the LORD ... is the Rock eternal.”—Isa. 26:3,4, *NIV*

When Paul experienced weakness by a “thorn in the flesh,” God said to him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” (II Cor. 12:7-9) For us too, God strengthens us in our weaknesses. Through these, we can realize that whatever progress we make in developing the fruits and graces of the Spirit, it is only possible by the grace of God and through the strength which he gives to us. (Eph. 2:1-10) Indeed, it is only by his grace, and through the strength he provides, that we can develop a strong faith, even “unto death.”—
Rev. 2:10

Consecration, Sanctification and Glorification

“It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”
—Hebrews 2:10,11

JESUS WAS FAITHFUL IN carrying out his Father’s will in accordance with the divine program for the reconciliation of mankind back to God. This has resulted in a special invitation being tendered during this Gospel Age to become associated with Christ in bringing blessings to all the families of the earth during God’s kingdom.—Gen. 12:3; Acts 3:25

In order for any of us to have the hope of participating in such a grand and glorious arrangement, we must make a full and unreserved consecration of ourselves to do the will of God. This is a

voluntary act. God does not coerce anyone into making such a commitment. Through the dissemination of the Gospel, many have heard the call and have availed themselves of the privilege of consecration, with the desire that the Heavenly Father might accept them as followers of Christ Jesus. It is important to recognize that no individual can be successful in this undertaking unless one has accepted God's will in his life as his own will, and has done away with self-will.

CONSECRATION—BASED ON GOD'S DRAWING

The Scriptures indicate that the making of an acceptable consecration is based on one being first drawn to God. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44) Several steps are involved with regard to God's drawing of individuals. They first recognize their undone condition, and that their life is not bringing them satisfaction. Looking toward God as a remedy for this, he begins to draw them to him. They begin to realize that through a relationship with their Creator a better and more soul-satisfying life might be theirs. As God's drawing power continues to be manifest, they begin searching diligently for a better understanding of his Word. When, through the providences of God, the "good news" of the Gospel is provided to them, and they have a hearing ear and a receptive heart, upon receiving the message, they are given a measure of understanding.

To the degree that they see their need for salvation, and come to appreciate the influence of others whose lives reflect godlikeness, they draw ever closer

to the Lord. They learn about the hope of the High Calling, and come to anticipate the joys of the kingdom and the prospect of a world that will be restored in the future under the reign of Christ. Then the desire to enter into a relationship with God awakens, so that they too might become part of the church that will bless the world when empowered from on high. Thus, they humbly respond to God's drawing in a favorable manner, and accept his invitation to make a full consecration of themselves to do his will.

Before making this commitment, however, prospective candidates who desire to be associated with Christ Jesus need to be educated as to what is required in order to be successful in following in his footsteps. The Master refers to "counting the cost" in advance of such a decision because it is a most serious matter. (Luke 14:26-33) Consecration will involve sacrifice, trials and testing, yet all of these Paul refers to as just part of a "reasonable service."—Rom. 12:1

BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."—Rom. 6:3-5

Here Paul is addressing the members of the church, and he reviews the process whereby they came into the body of Christ. It should be noted

that the focus is not upon water immersion even though that is the appropriate symbol for expressing such commitment. Rather, the apostle refers to the immersion of the human will into God's will as requisite for true discipleship as a follower of Christ. The Bible describes this "little flock" of believers as having the privilege, if faithful, of living and reigning with Christ a thousand years. (Luke 12:32; Rev. 20:4) One of their characteristics is that they are "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." While it is true that some saints were beheaded literally, all consecrated believers must be beheaded symbolically—that is, take direction only from their Head, Jesus Christ, and be obedient to his instructions as found in the Bible.—Eph. 5:23

SANCTIFIED CONDUCT

When we surrender our wills to the will of God and do Christ's bidding, it will dictate how we spend our time, our talents, what we will say, where we will go and what we will do. It will govern our entire being. If we have given our all, then it will be true that we are "dead" and our life is "hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3) That is our burial of baptism into Christ's death, and represents our renouncing of earthly aims, hopes and ambitions, and the putting on of sanctified conduct.

The Scriptures describe various elements of behavior which should reflect the lifestyle of believers who are being sanctified throughout their Christian walk. In one such passage, Paul says, "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring

one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.”—Rom. 12:9-12

GENUINE LOVE

In the foregoing verses, Paul’s first admonition is that we should “let love be without dissimulation.” This means there should be no pretense of love towards one another, merely existing as a veneer. Rather, there must be a heartfelt desire to serve each of the Lord’s dear ones on every occasion as we come in contact with them.

This quality reflects godlikeness in our beings because “God is love.” (I John 4:8) This manifestation of God’s character quality of love, which comes to us through his Holy Spirit, should lead us to appreciate the privilege we have of bestowing that same quality on one another. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.”—I Pet. 1:22

Let the thought of love for one another be ever present in our minds as we desire to see our Father face to face, knowing that all of Christ’s “body” members who prove faithful will likewise be in his presence. The spirit of this command was also emphasized by Christ near the close of his earthly ministry. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”—John 13:34,35

HATRED OF EVIL

Throughout the Scriptures we are reminded of the need to repel all inclinations towards impurity of any type. Paul states, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”—II Tim. 2:19

This matter of abhorring that which is evil implies that we will not seek merely to avoid doing things that are sinful, but rather will have such a hatred for unrighteousness in any form that we will not bring ourselves, as far as we are able, into contact with any form of sin or impurity. The more we see and learn of God’s plan and visualize the high standard which is required for life on any plane, the greater should be our endeavor to distance ourselves from any abhorrent or repugnant kind of activity or circumstance. God’s blessings which we receive daily should stimulate us to exercise greater vigilance in our lives in this regard, so that we will continue to further cultivate in our heart those graces of the spirit which are pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

Since it is our desire to be associated with Christ in the great work of helping to remove all traces of sin during God’s kingdom, let our attitude towards iniquity in any form imitate that of our Master. “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”—Heb. 1:9

CLEAVING TO THE GOOD

In this connection the thought should be that of becoming affixed to whatever represents godly

principles and righteousness. One of the most beautiful narratives in the Bible depicts the effect of godliness and goodness upon an individual who later had a prominent place in the genealogy of our Master when he came to earth. We recall that Ruth, a Moabite, was so impressed with the God and the religious influence of her mother-in-law, Naomi, she desired to stay with her. Ruth said, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."—Ruth 1:16

Ruth cleaved to something which she found to be good. We, as spirit begotten children of God, should desire to do no less. "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." (Phil. 4:9) Let us cling to the words of Truth that we receive and follow those practices in our lives that are set forth in the Scriptures.

"KINDLY AFFECTIONED"

This admonition implies that we should have those attitudes and thoughts for our brethren that would be helpful towards their spiritual advancement. It is as though Paul is underscoring further the matter of being loving, for without the development of perfect love, none of us can be acceptable to God. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."—I Pet. 3:8

In I Corinthians 13, there are several references to the love which we are to manifest. In some of those verses Paul speaks about the negatives, that

is to say, those things which we should avoid. These include such things as evil surmising, envying, behaving improperly or becoming easily provoked. (vss. 4,5) On the positive side the apostle speaks about those things which we would expect in terms of love welling in our hearts. It “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (vss. 7,8) The sum of all the Christian graces is love, and much of what Paul says in this chapter, as well as other passages of Scripture, addresses the development of this attribute.

PREFER OTHERS, NOT SELF

This is an important aspect of the sanctification process developing in our lives as it relates to the quality of humility. The spirit of self is deeply engrained within us from a natural standpoint. As we mature spiritually, our concern also must be upon other consecrated believers who are likewise striving to make their calling and election sure.

Since we recognize that the body of Christ is made up of many members, it should be our desire that the spirit of unselfishness is fostered within us. We are to genuinely take pleasure in seeing the spiritual growth, advancement and prosperity of others, even if we ourselves may be failing along one line or another.

We should be of such a mind that we would not seek to condemn others or point a critical finger in a judgmental manner at their shortcomings which we may perceive. If God has begun a work in any of us, he will surely finish it if we are faithful in doing our part. (Phil. 1:6) It is our responsibility to cooperate wholeheartedly in assisting *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) our brethren, at whatever cost, towards making their calling and election sure. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."—Phil. 2:3

The foregoing text is not an exhortation to false modesty. On the other hand, if we are properly disposed and have spiritual discernment and humility, surely we should be able to discern, especially among those within our immediate fellowship, brethren who have some qualities which far exceed certain attributes of our own. This thought then should keep us humble and in the proper attitude of mind so that we can be acceptable to our Heavenly Father.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS"

This exhortation addresses all of the affairs of life in which we are engaged, both from a temporal, and more importantly, from a spiritual standpoint. We should do all of these things as unto the Lord. With such an attitude in our hearts, we will be very careful as to what we have our hands do.

There will be responsibilities which involve family obligations, those of the ecclesia, and also individual opportunities for service to the Lord's cause in one way or another. Consecrated believers must be zealous in all their affairs of life. A passage of Scripture that is addressed to the Laodicean church is reminiscent of the time in which we presently live. "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not

that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”—Rev. 3:16,17

Each of us who has received God’s spirit must demonstrate that we are not taking the special privilege that we have for granted. We should not be “coasting along” in a way that does not manifest serious effort in making our calling and election sure. While the thrust of this text relates to the spiritual aspect of our lives, we are not to be slothful in any of our affairs, even with regard to temporal matters, and we should be diligent in doing all that our hands find to do.

With regard to spiritual concerns, we must be sure that there is no lukewarmness in our carrying out of these responsibilities. Rather, we must zealously direct our efforts in the service of the Lord in the promulgation of his truth, and the edification and encouragement of our brethren.

FERVENCY IN SERVING THE LORD

The Apostle Paul was eminently qualified to write about the kind of fervor of which God would approve. As we read his testimony in the Bible, we might concede that conditions today are somewhat different than they were when he was founding the early churches. Nevertheless, the spirit which made him labor to such an extraordinary degree is most worthy of our reflection.

“Are they ministers of Christ? ... I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been

in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. ... If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.”—II Cor. 11:23-30

We may believe that we are doing the very best that we possibly can. However, after considering the foregoing passage, we might reevaluate ourselves and consider whether we can do something further to demonstrate our appreciation for the privilege of discipleship.

“REJOICING IN HOPE”

Despite the vicissitudes of life, including trouble surrounding us on a global scale as well as stressful circumstances we encounter daily in our personal lives, our attitude should be vastly different towards such events from the world. In general, mankind is unaware that such conditions are temporary and will be eradicated when the body of Christ is complete and God’s promises for mankind are realized. (Rev. 21:1-4) May the following meditation be a source of strength as we await the time of future blessings for all.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”—Phil. 4:4

“We cannot have too many rejoicing Christians, nor can they rejoice too much, if they rejoice in the

Lord. This rejoicing is not necessarily boisterous, nor of necessity the reverse. It implies serenity, happiness, peace, pleasure of soul, however, and does not mean that noisy demonstration is essential, as some seem mistakenly to think. ... The only ones who can rejoice always are those who are living very near to the Lord, and who can feel always their oneness with Him, and that His protection and care are over them, and that His promise is sure, that all things shall work together for their highest welfare, as New Creatures.”—*Daily Heavenly Manna*, February 26

“PATIENT IN TRIBULATION”

Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit. As consecrated believers we are to cheerfully endure the adversities and afflictions that are permitted to come upon us. The English word “tribulation” is derived from the Latin *tribulum*, which refers to a machine that was used for cleaning wheat and removing the husks or the chaff from it. We can thus see that it is for our good to have tribulation, because it enables us to remove the dross, that the gold might be refined.

The Scriptures affirm we will not be permitted to be tested beyond what we can bear. (I Cor. 10:13) Our Heavenly Father will direct our trials to the intent that they will help us to be rid of those things which pertain to the fallen human nature, and that our New Creature will grow and develop towards maturity. It is for this reason that we are told to set our affection upon the things that are above and not those that are here on earth. (Col. 3:2) “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [trial]: for

when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”—James 1:12

“INSTANT IN PRAYER”

One of the greatest privileges we have as consecrated believers is access to the Heavenly Father through prayer. Coming often and tarrying at the “throne of grace” are indispensable to our Christian development as we seek guidance in our Christian walk. (Heb. 4:16) How wise and loving is God in responding to our proper petitions. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”—Luke 11:13

We should also remember our brethren in prayer, as the apostle has admonished. (Col. 4:2,3) This means we should pray for our brethren in their efforts of spreading the Gospel, as well as prospering other activities in their capacity as servants of God. Prayers which seek only self-interests could not be acceptable to the Heavenly Father, for we are all part of one body.

One of the advanced evidences of discipleship was given by our Master. “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Matt. 5:44) When we can do this heartily, without rancor, bitterness, vindictiveness or railing in our being, we surely will have reached a most favorable standing with the Heavenly Father.

THE GLORIOUS OUTCOME

Such was the kind of love that the Master had for all mankind. He gave his life willingly, even for

his enemies who opposed him, and who in God's kingdom after their awakening will be ashamed and mourn as they recognize the one whom they pierced. Let us, as followers of Christ, leave such a legacy that we truly walked with God, and did not retaliate against our enemies.

If we are faithful, our journey from consecration through our walk of sanctification will lead to an unspeakable outcome for us personally. We will receive the fruitage of our labors, resulting in glory, honor and immortality, as well as the privilege of assisting in the blessing of the entire human family.—Rom. 2:7; Gen. 22:18 ■

*O soul of mine, be calm, be still,
Submit thyself to God,
In all thy ways yield to His will,
Nor faint beneath the rod.*

*O soul of mine, like potter's clay
Within the Master's hand,
O let Him mold thee day by day,
Till faultless thou shalt stand.*

*O soul of mine, have faith, believe,
Nor count the cost of strife,
Fight on, faint not, thou shalt receive
At last the Crown of Life*

—*Poems of Dawn*

OBITUARIES

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

Brother Ivan Phillips, Clearwater, FL—Dec. 4.

Examining and Keeping the Heart

*“Keep thy heart
with all diligence;
for out of it are the
issues of life.”
—Proverbs 4:23*

THE START OF ANOTHER year is a most appropriate time, we believe, for each of God’s consecrated children to sincerely and soberly examine their heart condition, as to its conformity with the principles laid out in the Scriptures. The Bible clearly teaches that the attaining of eternal life is possible only through the merit of the precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:21; 6:23) From this standpoint, life is a gift of God. This gift, however, is available only to those who believe, and belief must be of the heart. Paul wrote, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”—Rom. 10:10

The word “heart” appears in the Bible about 800 times, and in most instances it is used in a symbolic sense. In describing the various heart conditions which are possible, many expressions are used. In various passages of the Old and New Testaments, the Scriptures speak of such things as: heart integrity; a heart that fainteth; a hardened heart; a willing

heart; a heart that is discouraged; a grieving heart; and a heart that is filled.

The Bible also speaks of: blindness of heart; astonishment of heart; hearts that are melted; glad, merry and rejoicing hearts; hearts of understanding; singing hearts, and sorrowful hearts. Also mentioned are clean hearts, and hearts that are strengthened. There are enlarged hearts, lonely hearts, and burning hearts. Broken and contrite hearts, and singleness of heart, are likewise identified in the Scriptures.

It has been suggested that the heart is the seat of our affection. This thought is in harmony with many Bible passages referring to the heart. A more comprehensive thought would be that the heart embodies what we truly are, in contrast with what we may outwardly appear to be. The Christian will endeavor always to have his outward demeanor conform to his inward heart sentiments. However, because of the imperfections of the flesh there will be mistakes of word and deed which do not reflect what we really desire to be. How thankful we should be that the Lord does not judge his people according to what can be seen and heard by man, but that he is able to look upon the “hidden man of the heart.”—I Pet. 3:4

We are reminded of this in connection with Samuel’s anointing of David to be King of Israel. Samuel made his selection from among the sons of Jesse, choosing his eldest son Eliab. However, the Lord said to Samuel, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”—I Sam. 16:7

FIXED, ESTABLISHED, PREPARED

Psalm 57:7 reads, “My heart is fixed, O God.” The word “fixed” has the thought of being established. We are to be prepared to meet all the experiences of life, not in our own wisdom and strength, but in the wisdom and strength of the Lord. This heart preparation is one of our daily needs. We are fortified through our study of God’s Word, and by noting and taking to heart the wonderful promises by which he assures us of his loving care in all the affairs of our lives.

Study of the Scriptures will also equip us to know and do the Heavenly Father’s will in the various circumstances of life. We are not to study the Word with the thought of finding justification for the direction in which we want to go, but to be guided in the Lord’s ways. This will test our sincerity of heart. As Christians, we have dedicated our all to the doing of our Heavenly Father’s will, and doing his will is often difficult and costly. If we are to be ready to accept his providences, our study of his Word must be with a genuine desire to have his precepts and principles come into our hearts more fully each day.

Our hearts are also readied for the experiences of life through prayer, especially that which reflects an earnest desire to know and to do God’s will. Thus, through prayer and the study of the Word our hearts are prepared for all the various experiences of life. If our hearts are properly schooled, we will rejoice in the sunshine of our Heavenly Father’s smile. If, at times, storms are permitted to come upon us through his providences, we will accept these experiences also as being from him, with the full assurance that

he knows exactly what is best for us as New Creatures. If we have learned to trust God's wisdom, we will not be discouraged by our trials, but will endeavor to use them as a means of drawing nearer to the Lord.

STEADFASTNESS

Paul wrote, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." (Heb. 3:12-14) Here it is indicated that an unbelieving heart might very well manifest itself by a tendency to waver in steadfastness for the Lord and for the Truth.

Seemingly Paul had good reason to write in this way to the Hebrew brethren, for elsewhere in his epistle he indicates that they were to some extent wavering. Later in his epistle he exhorted them, saying, "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves [in your hearts] that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."—Heb. 10:32-36

That the apostle should urge the Hebrew brethren to call to remembrance the former days suggests that they had lost some of the zeal they then had, and were not now so willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. The reason for this was a loss of confidence. He said they needed patience, or perseverance, that they might more faithfully do the will of God, and thus receive the fulfillment of God's promises to them.

How wonderful is the Lord's testimony to certain brethren in the church at Thyatira: "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." (Rev. 2:19) The Lord knew this of these brethren because he could look into their hearts, and know them as they really were. What a wonderful commendation he gave them! Instead of losing their first love, instead of falling away from their steadfastness, they had increased in love, faith, patience and works.

Why should this not be so with us? As we continue in the study of the Word, and in prayer, we should become better acquainted with the Heavenly Father, and all his glorious attributes. This should increase our faith in him and our love for him. This, in turn, should lead to an increase in our works of faith and labors of love. (I Thess. 1:3) Rather than loving the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren less, we should be loving them more. Rather than slackening our work in the vineyard, we should be increasing it to the extent of our opportunities and abilities.

THE LORD HELPS

As Christians we know of the many promises of the Scriptures which assure us of the Lord's help

in our every time of need. (Heb. 4:16) However, these promises are not fulfilled on behalf of any who are not sincere in their heart devotion to the Heavenly Father. The Bible states, “The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”—II Chron. 16:9

It is vitally important to have a sincere heart toward God, for it is on the basis of what we really are that he is judging us and fulfilling his gracious promises on our behalf. As Paul states, “The word of God ... is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12) This would be a frightening thought were it not for our realization of the Lord’s mercy. We have the assurance that he knows we are but dust and takes into consideration our fleshly imperfections. Knowing this, we can have confidence, for we are assured of God’s justice and his love, as he deals with us on the basis of the Redeemer’s blood.

Our concern should be that our professions of love for the Lord and for his cause are genuine, and that they are a reflection of our true selves. The Apostle John wrote, “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” (I John 3:18,19) Loving the Lord and his people merely in “word” and in “tongue” are not enough to warrant the Heavenly Father’s inclusion of us among those upon whom he is showering his rich blessings. Rather, our love must be in “deed” and in “truth.” That is, it must be a genuine love springing from a heart that is completely devoted to God and to the doing of his will.

DECEIVED HEARTS

James gives us one clue as to how we know that we love in deed and in truth rather than merely by word and tongue. He says, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” (James 1:26) Here is a very searching text, which suggests the possibility of self-deception. This means that while we may have concluded that we are very sincere in our devotion to God, we could be wrong, and that one test would be the extent to which we bridle our tongues and keep them under control, particularly when speaking of the Lord’s people.

We would not think of slandering God. Yet, because of self-deception, we might conclude that it is perfectly proper to speak evil of the Lord’s people. How do we measure up to this test? Do we find ourselves engaged in speaking negatively of our brethren? Our hearts should be so filled with the love of God and love for his people that we find it distasteful to cast such reflections upon them. Do we find ourselves saying that a brother is going out of the truth simply because he does not see eye to eye with us on every detail of Scripture? The love of God in our hearts should prompt us to leave our brethren in the Lord’s hands. Meanwhile, we should do all we can to uphold the banner of truth that others may be helped to see the way of the Lord more clearly.

Jesus stated the matter very clearly and bluntly when he said, “Everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated. But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.” (Matt. 15:17,18,

New American Standard Bible) As a rule, we talk about those things which seem the most important to us. If we have allowed our hearts to become corrupted, then we will delight to talk about those corrupt things. This will further add to our own corruption of heart, and might well defile others.

Jesus said that by our words we are justified, and that by our words we are condemned. (Matt. 12:37) God knows our true heart condition even if we were to say nothing. However, when we express ourselves, others can discern our character, at least in a measure. If they are Christians, they know that speaking evil is not right, and that speaking the truth in love is a reflection of that which is good within. (Luke 6:45) Thus, words from the good treasure of our hearts lead to righteousness and life.

We read in Jeremiah 17:9 that the heart is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” This is true of all of us by nature, for we are members of the sin-cursed and dying race, and it is a lifelong struggle to purify the heart. It can be done only through prayer and earnest study of God’s Word, and with his help. Hence, our earnest prayer at all times should be, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” (Ps. 51:10) Indeed, God does help as we cooperate with him through a sincere use of his Word. Through the Scriptures, the Heavenly Father is speaking to us. Only as we listen and obey will the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit “create” that “clean heart” within us which we so much desire.

THE LORD EXAMINES

We have noted the possibility of deceiving our own hearts, which simply means deluding ourselves.

However, nothing that we can say or do will deceive the Lord, so it is well to seek his assistance in the examination of our hearts. The psalmist did this, saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts." (Ps. 139:23) It may take courage to make a request like this of God. Not only will he answer our prayer, but in his loving providences he will overrule in our affairs to remove any impurities of heart which he may find, and sometimes these providences may be in the form of trials.

The Bible speaks of sorrowful hearts, and at times we may well feel mournful because of our trials. It is at such times that we can comfort one another. The source of our comfort is the Lord. Paul wrote, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."—Phil. 2:1,2

HEARTS ENLARGED

To the church at Corinth, Paul wrote, "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." (II Cor. 6:11) It is a serious thing for the literal heart to become enlarged, but Paul was speaking of his symbolic heart, of his inward feelings of determination to continue laying down his life for the brethren at Corinth and elsewhere.

Speaking of his own experiences in the ministry, and what should be the attitude of all the consecrated, Paul wrote in the preceding verses, "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults,

in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” (vss. 4-10) These were the realities of the Christian life which led Paul to exclaim to the Corinthians, “Our heart is enlarged!”

BROKEN HEARTS

The psalmist wrote, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” (Ps. 34:18; 51:17) A broken heart is the opposite of a stubborn heart. A contrite spirit is a spirit of humility in the light of one’s own weaknesses and shortcomings. Hearts that are proud and hard are not fit soil for the operation of the Holy Spirit of God. Such hearts resist the Spirit, or as Paul symbolically states, they “grieve” the Spirit.—Eph. 4:30

What a reassuring promise God makes to those who are of a contrite spirit. “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isa. 57:15) How wonderful it is to realize that God dwells with those who are humble

of heart, and whose chief desire is to know and to do his will. He dwells with us by his Spirit, through his Word. He dwells with us through his people, who, as they live up to their privileges, help to comfort and revive us when we are downhearted and discouraged.

This rich blessing of God's presence is ours only if we keep our hearts with all diligence. God does not dwell with the evil-hearted, or with the hard-hearted. He dwells only with those whose hearts have been strengthened through faith, and who apply themselves diligently to their privilege of obeying his words and precepts. It is thus that they are kept humble, pure and rejoicing.

It is such rejoicing and enlarged hearts that find themselves fully in accord with those blessed sentiments of humility and obedience so beautifully stated by David: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."—Ps. 19:7-14 ■

Statistical Report

For the year ended September 30, 2017

THE DAWN IS pleased to provide this annual report to our readers. It has been a privilege to be engaged in the work of spreading the Gospel message throughout the world during the past year. We greatly appreciate the cooperation of many brethren in these efforts. As you read this report, we believe you will rejoice, as we do, that the Lord has given evidence that it is his will for the Truth to still be spread during this present Harvest period by the many means available to us. Accordingly, we are happy to report that our efforts in this work have continued during the past year.

During 2017 the Dawn was able, by the Lord's grace, to increase its witnessing expenditures in several categories compared to the previous year. These increases comprised both domestic and foreign activities, including the categories of radio, pilgrim service, distribution of literature, and other foreign witness work.

In total, the Dawn's operating expenses in 2017, excluding contingencies, were 14% below budget. We had a net operating loss, excluding bequests and investment income, of (\$461,147), compared to a 2016 loss of (\$498,838). The table following provides details of revenue and expenses for the 2017 fiscal year:

Income	Receipts	Expenditures
Revenue (excluding bequests and investment income)	<u>\$119,594</u>	
Expenses		
Radio (domestic)		\$ 75,724
TV (domestic, includes spots and recordings)		20,675
Radio and TV (foreign)		34,100
Internet and Other Media		87,030
Pilgrim Service (domestic and foreign)		28,035
Other Foreign Support		20,013
Shipping/Mailing (domestic and foreign)		89,652
Outside Printing		7,457
Shop Operating Expense		28,028
Plant Operating Expense		140,538
House Operating Expense		<u>49,489</u>
Total Expenses		\$580,741
Less Income	<u>119,594</u>	
Net Operating Loss	<u>\$(461,147)</u>	

We have budgeted to increase witnessing expenditures in 2018 by an aggregate of 21%, excluding contingencies, but to limit to no more than \$400,000 any reduction in total cash and reserves during the year, including contingency spending. Further increases in witnessing expenditures, beyond the planned increase noted above, will be considered if additional opportunities arise, and for which necessary resources are available.

We rejoice that the Gospel message, first preached by our Lord and the apostles, is still being declared today, and that we continue to have the privilege of sharing in that work. Indeed, the “most holy faith ... once delivered unto the saints” is still proclaimed by faithful “workers in the vineyard” who are willing to sacrifice time and energy witnessing it far and wide.

The Dawn utilizes many types of media to proclaim the Gospel message—television, radio, commercial spots, audio and video recordings, the internet, digital electronic media, YouTube, and a variety of magazine, almanac, and other media advertising, as well as our large inventory of printed booklets, books and tracts. The Dawn web page is very active and brings in many appreciative replies from around the world. The importance of these cumulative efforts is attested by the fact that many responses continue to be received. The Dawn processed over 8,000 individual orders for literature during the past year from responses received by phone, email, the internet, and regular mail. Individually, these ranged from orders of just one booklet in some cases, to orders for hundreds of pieces of literature in others. In addition, orders from various ecclesias around the country were processed during the year.

We continued our overseas and foreign language witness work during the past year. *The Dawn* magazine is available in nine foreign languages, either printed or online. The English *Dawn* continues to be printed in India for our brethren there. Counting all languages, *The Dawn* currently has over 7,500 subscribers worldwide. In total, our literature offerings—*The Dawn*, booklets, and books—are now available in twenty-two languages, either in printed form or on the Dawn's web site. We would like to express heartfelt thanks to all those who provide assistance with the translation work into these various languages.

Hope and Life After Death booklets were reprinted and sent during the year to funeral homes throughout

the United States, and to ecclesias as well. Brethren in Italy, in cooperation with the Dawn, are in the process of translating the *Hope* booklet and funeral home order packets for distribution in their local areas. They are also updating the translation of various booklets from an older Italian dialect to the modern Italian spoken by most people in Italy today. As completed, these will be available for printing and also added to the Dawn's website.

In 2017 the Dawn continued its internet keyword advertising on Google and Microsoft for 39 booklets in English, 12 booklets in Spanish, 8 booklets in French, and 3 booklets in German. During the past year, the number of "clicks" to these keywords, which brings the user to the Dawn's ad page for viewing, was over 355,000 for all languages combined. The viewing of these ads generated over 5,700 mail responses for booklets during the past year. In addition, booklets either downloaded or read online as a result of the same ads are estimated to have numbered close to 40,000, although exact totals in these categories are not presently available from our internet service provider. Ads and booklets in additional languages are planned for implementation during 2018.

In 2016, a new book, *Searching the Scriptures*, was printed and bound. *The Book of Books* was reformatted and a new printing done in 2017. Another book we are working toward producing in 2018 is, *The Mind of Christ*, which will be printed and bound in a similar fashion as *Searching the Scriptures*. Reprinting of other existing booklets and printing of new literature will continue to be done as the need arises and manpower resources are available.

The Dawn's YouTube channel, "The Dawn Magazine—Monthly Video," is now in its fourth year of operation, and has grown in popularity as a method of presenting the message of Truth. Currently there are 59 videos posted on the channel. During the past year, the videos were viewed over 3,500 times, for a total of nearly 20,000 minutes. Viewership came from 90 different countries during the year, with the largest numbers coming from the United States, Canada, India, United Kingdom, and Australia.

During the past year, the activity of the Dawn Pilgrim service continued to provide opportunities to visit many isolated brethren and small ecclesias throughout North America. In addition to domestic Pilgrim service, two trips were made overseas in 2017. One of these was to Germany and the other to Africa, in which four countries were visited—Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda and Ghana. These trips included visits with hundreds of brethren. The Pilgrim department plans to continue its expansion of this important service in the coming year.

We continue to reap the benefits of a revamped printing process implemented in the spring of 2016, which included the purchase of a new printer and booklet maker. This has resulted in being able to print and make into booklet form *The Dawn* magazine and other printed material more quickly and efficiently, with fewer problems and machine breakdowns than previously.

At the Dawn Plant in 2017, we replaced all of the first floor exterior windows, the old ones having been in place for several decades. Understandably, the new windows are much more energy efficient, resulting in

less cost for heating and cooling. At the Dawn Home, we recently completed some small renovations and repairs to the exterior and interior of the house.

We could not carry on the work of spreading the Gospel message without the tireless help of many brethren, whether they be located onsite at the Dawn Plant, or work remotely. Currently there are nearly 25 brethren in the United States and Canada involved in various aspects of the work, including print and electronic production, translation, clerical, media advertising and production, editorial, proof-reading, maintenance, and other activities. There are also many brethren overseas who assist with the work abroad. Some of these are in Australia, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Africa, India, the Philippines, and Brazil, to name a few.

In summary, we are thankful for the many willing hands and hearts of brethren throughout the world which have assisted directly and indirectly with the work of the Dawn during the past year. Without this help, the work could not continue. We are excited about the prospects for 2018, and rejoice in the continued privilege of bearing witness to the Truth given to us by our Heavenly Father. We ask for your prayers on behalf of the work of the Dawn, as daily we seek to proclaim the Gospel message throughout the earth, and strive to be good stewards over the opportunities which God's providence has made available to us. ■

2018 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Thursday, March 29, 2018.

General Convention Bulletin

July 14-19, 2018

THE 2018 GENERAL CONVENTION will again be held at the facilities of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. Air conditioned hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style air conditioned apartments with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities will be available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge if both beds are occupied.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the room and meal cost of those from ages 13 through 17 will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid at the door.

The convention theme text is taken from Philip-
pians 3:14, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." A dialogue session will feature a discussion of current forces, trends and events in the world which will ultimately lead to God's intervention in the affairs of men and the establishment of his kingdom upon the earth. A special discourse will consider the lesson, "Shining as lights in the world," based on Philipians 2:14-16.

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707

E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 13, 2018				
Saturday, 14th				
Sunday, 15th				
Monday, 16th				
Tuesday, 17th				
Wednesday, 18th				
Thursday, 19th				
Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals <input type="checkbox"/> or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts) <input type="checkbox"/>				
Check: <input type="checkbox"/> private bath or <input type="checkbox"/> shared bath <input type="checkbox"/> double occupancy <input type="checkbox"/> single occupancy <input type="checkbox"/> interested in APTS				
Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)				
Address:				

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

R. Goodman

Phoenix, AZ January 13,14

T. Krupa

Phoenix, AZ January 13,14

H. Montague

Phoenix, AZ January 13,14

D. Szarkowicz

Phoenix, AZ January 13,14

*To the work! to the work! O ye servants of God!
Let us follow the path that our Master has trod;
With the balm of his counsel our strength to renew,
Let us do with our might what our hands find to do.*

*To the work! to the work! let the hungry be fed;
To the fountain of life let the weary be led.
In the cross and its banner our glory shall be
While we herald the tidings, Salvation is free!*

*To the work! to the work! in the strength of the Lord;
And the smile of his face shall our labor reward
When as kings and as priests over earth we shall be,
Making known unto all that Salvation is free!*

*To the work! to the work! there is labor for all;
Soon the kingdom of darkness and error shall fall,
And the name of Jehovah exalted shall be
In the loud swelling chorus, Salvation is free!*

*Toiling, on, toiling, on, toiling on, toiling on,
Let us hope, and trust,
Let us watch, and pray,
And labor till the work is done.*

—Hymns of Dawn, #309

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.

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

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, January 28—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91605. Contact T. Parkinson. Phone: (818) 288-2765 or Email: tipark77@gmail.com

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 16-18—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Blvd., Sacramento, CA 98521. Contact K. Freer. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

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

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

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

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

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 6—West Hartford Senior Center, 15 Starkel Road, West Hartford, CT. Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone: (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 14-19—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. See pp. 59-61, this issue, for registration.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 8-12—Szczryk, Poland. ul. Wrzosowa 28 A, 43-370 Szczyrk. Website for complete information: www.biblestudents-conventions.com

“I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.”—Psalm 71:16

The tears and sorrows and battlings in strife against the world, the flesh, and the devil are all very necessary in the present time; and we should neither hope nor expect to be crowned as victors without passing through such experiences. In the battle we learn not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; we learn of our own weaknesses and imperfections and our need to walk closely with the Lord, if we would keep our garments unspotted from the world. We learn also to trust his grace, and that “our sufficiency is of God.” We learn that “greater is he who is on our part than all they that be against us.” We learn that the victory that overcometh the world is neither the strength and perfection of our flesh, nor merely the strong resolution of our minds, but the latter helped and strengthened by him who assures us that his strength can be perfected in our weakness.

—Songs in the Night, January 10