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## **“BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT”**

*(Ephesians 5:18)*

These words of the apostle Paul are addressed to the church of Christ, the saints; they do not apply to those who have a form of godliness only, but to those who have fully accepted the terms of the Lord's call, who have made the full consecration which alone brings any into the position of children of God. These are the only ones who have the Spirit of God, these only are begotten from above. But Paul would have us remember that it is not sufficient that we receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit, which comes to us at the very entrance of the narrow way. We should see that the Holy Spirit of God abounds in us more and more as we go on in our heavenward course. The little spark of the new mind should grow stronger and brighter day by day.

If this development does not take place, if we merely stand still, we shall soon begin to lose ground; but if we progress, the 'natural man' will gradually perish and the 'new man' will thrive. Christian development should be steady and continuous. We are to be more and more filled with the Spirit. Sometimes the Lord's children may say, "I do desire to be filled with the Lord's Spirit, but it seems as if my capacity is so small. I wish to have His Spirit in large measure, but I am unable to be what I long to be. I am not satisfied with my attainments." But if we are striving earnestly and prayerfully to become more like Christ, let us not be discouraged. Let us remember that if we keep filled to our present capacity, this very infilling will enlarge our capacity and then our earthen vessel will hold more of the Holy Spirit. This in turn still further enlarges our capacity; and so the expanding and filling goes on. Thus it is possible for us to be filled continually.

If it were an impossibility for us to be filled with the Spirit of God, the inspired apostle would not have so instructed us. To the truly consecrated child of God, this is possible, and not only possible but obligatory. But as there are ebbs and flows in the ocean tides, so with our sense of the Lord's presence with us and His smile upon us. We may not always realise His presence to a large degree, but the Lord's saints must learn to walk by faith, to trust Him and His abiding love and presence with us even through physical ill-health or unfavourable outward circumstances or conditions may at times make us feel downcast. We are to rejoice in the Lord, even though there may be for a time some heaviness of heart.

### **THE SPIRIT MANIFESTED**

Speaking of the glorious salvation of the church, the apostle Peter says, "Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations (testings), that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love; in whom, though you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:6-8) We can thus rejoice even in the midst of severe trials that cause pain and tears. There may be times when it will seem as though we are more filled with the Spirit than at other times, but if we are striving earnestly to daily walk with God, this will not really be the case, it may be only a difference of surface feelings. The true child of God should steadily progress.

The spirit or disposition of the world will seek to invade the dominion of the new creature, and the new creature must be on the alert to see that his or her mind and body are freed from everything that would not be in fullest harmony with God's Holy Spirit. Each one should seek to judge himself or herself in this respect. We may not judge one another, but we should judge ourselves. We are to see to it that the Spirit of the Lord is manifest in our words, our thoughts and our conduct. We should be able to do this more and more successfully, more and more continually, as we go in the way and grow in grace and knowledge. This we shall do if we are watching, praying, striving, day by day.

The Spirit of the Lord dwelling in us in fullness, as it should be, will cause our entire being to be so absorbed

by the principles of righteousness laid down in God's Word, to be so in love with the heavenly things, heavenly hopes, heavenly prospects, that everything else will be of no value to us. This will be more and more our blessed experience if we continue faithfully in the narrow way, if we "follow on to know the Lord."

If, on the contrary, we find ourselves making provision for the flesh, making worldly plans, if we find ourselves inclined to lay up treasures on earth instead of in heaven, we should be most concerned, and should ask ourselves whether we are deficient, whether we are neglecting the means of grace - prayer alone with God, study of His Word, meditation upon the glorious things to which we have been called, watching ourselves as to our growth in the fruits of the Spirit. If we find that we are controlled by the spirit of contention, we should ask ourselves, "Are we seeking to deal justly and equitably with others - to give them their rights and not to intrude upon them? Are we cultivating the love which is forbearing, forgiving and kind?" (2 Tim 2:24, Eph 4:31,32)

If we find after close introspection that we are in full sympathy with the Spirit of love, and can see that we are gradually developing this crowning fruit of the Spirit, let us rejoice; for we should greatly deplore the matter if it were otherwise. If we find that we are controlled by this Spirit of love, we may know that we are filled with the Spirit. This Spirit of love will enlarge our hearts and minds, making us broader and nobler day by day.

However, we need to watch continually and pray; for there is constant danger otherwise that we may be tripped up or stumbled either by our own faults or those of others. We are never safe from being sidetracked unless we go often to the throne of grace. We cannot be filled unless we keep very close to the great Fountain from which our infilling comes. We must daily carry our earthen pitcher to this heavenly Fountain to be replenished, for we are leaky vessels. We are not to feel discouraged if we do not find in ourselves the rapid growth that we desire to see. Strong, sturdy trees that can withstand the fiercest storms are not developed in a day. Their growth is a slow steady process. We should show our loyalty to the Lord by renewed effort every time we fall. He is looking at us not to see if we are perfect in the flesh - for He knows that we are not and never can be - but to see whether or not we have the spirit of earnestness and loyalty which daily and hourly seeks to keep the body under and cheerfully take up the cross.

#### **"FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH"**

Christians are not to be like the worldlings who seek to drown their troubles and afflictions in pleasures, dissipations and frivolous diversions, but in every trouble they are to fly to the only true Source of solace and comfort and strength. This will drive away all anxiety and give them rest and peace even in the midst of trouble. Like the fabled halcyon bird, which built its nest and brought forth its young in the midst of the sea, the true child of God can be at rest even amid the billows and storms of life, and can prosper as a new creature and accomplish all the good pleasure of God's will.

This unwavering trust in the Lord, this abiding rest of soul, this zeal in God's service, is a matter of growth. "They go from strength to strength," the Psalmist declares of the inhabitants of Zion. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," said our Lord of such. (Psa 84:7, Mark 4:28) Notwithstanding the difficulties of life, these can continue to make melody in their hearts unto the Lord. They rejoice no matter what may be the outward earthly conditions. They can smile even through their tears, knowing that, according to His promise, all things are working together for their good. To attain this development is to be filled with the Spirit; each consecrated disciple of Christ should reach this plane.

A Christian writer has well said, "Wherever there has been a faithful following of the Lord in a consecrated heart, several things have sooner or later inevitably followed. Meekness and quietness of spirit become in time the characteristics of the daily life. A submissive acceptance of the will of God, as it comes in the hourly events of each day, is manifested; pliability in the hands of God to do or suffer all the good pleasure of His will; sweetness under provocation, calmness in the midst of turmoil and bustle; a yielding to the wishes of others (where there is no conflicting principle involved); and an insensibility to slights and affronts; absence of worry or anxiety; deliverance from care and fear - all these, and many other similar graces, are invariably found to be the natural outward development of that inward life which is *hid with Christ in God.*" (R 5912)

*"They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." (Psalm 84:7)*

O fill me with Thy fullness, Lord,

Until my very heart o'erflow

In kindling thought and glowing word,

Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show. (F.R.H)

# Christian Fellowship

*“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” “If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:3,6,7)*

Here it is stated that our fellowship as Christians is with the Father, with the Son and with the brethren. There is also fellowship in prayer and praise, in knowledge, in study and in purpose, in service, in joy, in sympathy, in hope and so on. According to Strong’s concordance, the word fellowship means - participation, partnership. A dictionary definition is - communion, intimacy, joint feeling or interest, joint participation. In the Bible, distribution of worldly goods or substance for the benefit of others is also spoken of as fellowship. (Rom. 12:13; 15:26, Phil 4:15)

All are familiar with the fact that fellowship implies kindred qualities of mind and heart. For instance, the generous love the generous, the noble and upright love the noble and upright, the honest love the honest, the meek the meek, and so on. But among the Lord’s people there are not many wise or great or pure from the natural viewpoint. Yet God’s love goes out to those who are not naturally noble and pure, but who are, however, rich in faith. Is this a contradiction to the general rule of fellowship? Can God fellowship with those who are so far below His own purity and goodness? God’s love to us as sinners was that of pity, of compassion, and of desire to lift us up to His fellowship.

We can only enter this Divine fellowship by accepting Christ as the sacrifice for our sins and ceasing to be sinners. Then we realise that God is our friend and we also become friends of others similarly regenerated, and as we grow by partaking of God’s Holy Spirit, we begin to love the brethren. There are two planes of fellowship, a natural plane on which people of like qualities are drawn together, and a spiritual plane on which those who may be unlike in natural qualities, but alike in spiritual hopes, aims and ambitions are drawn still more closely together by a new tie and a fellowship that binds not by fleshly ties but binds their hearts in Christian love and unity.

## THE FOUNDATION OF FELLOWSHIP

What then is the basis of Christian fellowship? The term Christian, from a Biblical viewpoint, is quite an exclusive one. What is necessary in order to become a Christian is clearly taught. Christians are they who not only believe that Christ is the Saviour, but have gone further than that and shown their faith by offering themselves by full surrender in consecration to God. They die to self and take up their cross and walk, even as Christ walked, in a new life. The basis of Christian Fellowship is a mutual relationship with Christ and through Christ with all who are in sympathy with Him, joined together as fellow members of His Body. There is at once a joint interest and feeling, a partnership, a participation in Christ.

In 1 Cor. 1:9, it is stated that God has called us into the fellowship of His Son. This is not something reserved only for the future, it begins already now. Paul in his letter to the Philippians said that he desired to know Christ, to realise deeply the power of His resurrection, and comprehend the fellowship of His sufferings. (Phil. 3:10); not a mere superficial knowledge of Him, but an intimate acquaintance through deep knowledge and experience. The same thought of fellowship is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:16,17, a fellowship, a participation in the drinking of the cup and the breaking of the bread.

Christian fellowship then is something deeper and stronger than mere fellowship of belief, because our Heavenly Father grants us to partake of things beyond our own nature. We fellowship with Him in His plan, for He has made known to us secrets that were hidden from generations in past ages. He promises us fellowship in His own Divine nature, meanwhile working in us to do His good pleasure as we work with Him to do His will. We might have a fellowship with all believers, but it would not be the full Christian fellowship, which is “fellowship in the mystery”. This is a fellowship of priests in the Holy, not with the Levites in the Court, who can come no further.

The Christian fellowship is a family fellowship, “for in love God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ”. (Eph. 1:5) “They are all of one (Father), for which cause Jesus is not ashamed to call them brethren.” (Heb. 2:11) Jesus did not need to grow into this fellowship, for He was always in fellowship with the Father, and there is only one way we can come into this family fellowship, i.e. by accepting the terms laid down by Jesus - faith and obedience.

In John 14:23, it is stated that both Father and Son will come to us and “take up their abode with us” if we keep His commandments. This is a very precious thought - a partaking of food together -lodging together. The same thought is given in Rev. 3:20, also Luke 12:37, and is especially applicable at the end of this age. Jesus will, if we respond, come in and sup with us, and will also spread a feast for us. Truly our fel-

lowship is with the Father and with the Son.

### **ESSENTIALS FOR FELLOWSHIP**

Seeing then that Christian fellowship is the portion of all consecrated believers, are there any further requirements for a permanent, workable and beneficial fellowship? How can we best answer this, seeing there are so many individuals and classes of persons who would all say they are consecrated Christians and yet if we asked what they believed we would find quite a variety of doctrines and practices? Is fellowship under such conditions likely to be either possible or profitable? We think it would be possible if all recognise certain essentials-

(1) There would need to be uniformity of faith, not in a humanly prescribed creed nor recognition of any earthly authority or control whose word must be obeyed as the voice of the Lord, not a seeing eye to eye on mysterious parts of scripture, types or symbols, but a unity of faith - one faith.

(2) A recognition of the clear and essential teachings of the Word of God would also be necessary. Unity on essentials must be maintained, but liberty on non-essentials be granted to all.

We would of course, have fuller fellowship with those who see many points of truth as we do than we would with those who see only the fundamentals, but we must receive in fellowship those who have taken the necessary steps in harmony with the first essentials and have as much fellowship with them as possible. We do not fellowship with each other because of non-essentials, nor because of personalities, but because of each being justified and consecrated and living lives in harmony with the fundamentals of the Word. "If we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1 John 1:7)

There is another essential without which there could be no profitable fellowship. The Christian is to have no fellowship with darkness or error; but is to do more, "rather reprove them". (Eph. 5:11); also noting 2 Cor. 6:14, "What fellowship has light with darkness?" A further essential to helpful fellowship would be as stated in Rom. 8:9, "If any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Those not having the spirit of Christ have nothing in common with the consecrated Christian, there is no fellowship of love.

### **FELLOWSHIP IN UNITY OF THE SPIRIT**

In Eph. 4:1-3, it is stated that each should walk worthy of His calling, but also endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. Christian fellowship is thus spoken of as a unity of spirit, a participation in Christ's anointing - a fellowship of love. The Spirit of Christ will manifest itself prominently in brotherly love, and must be a special feature of Christian fellowship. When mutual love becomes established among brethren, there comes a sense of rest and naturalness in each other's company, which is the very essence of fellowship.

A Christian writer has expressed this thought as follows:- "O the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pour them all right out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness blow the rest away." This is the abiding condition of friends of Jesus, no necessity for reserve or hiding in this absolute confidence born by the certainty of high unselfish love. Let us then endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit, then there will be much building up of each other, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep.

We believe that all will agree that these four essentials are necessary:-

- (1) That all be consecrated to God.
- (2) That there be uniformity of faith in the Word of God.
- (3) That all be aiming to walk in the light.
- (4) That all possess the spirit of Christ and of brotherly love.

### **HOW IS FELLOWSHIP MAINTAINED?**

In the maintenance of Christian fellowship there is, as already stated, a call for effort by each and all. All should endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit, and follow after things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. (Rom. 14:19, Heb. 10:24,25) Fellowship cannot be maintained, except self and self-will be kept under, and in its place be developed the mind of Christ, as pointed out in Phil. 2:1-5. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Psa. 133:1) Nevertheless there will be tests also in connection with fellowship, as stated in 1 Peter 4:12, "Think it not strange of the fire among you." (Diag.) Trial will come among us because of our inherent weakness, conflict with other members' viewpoints or lack of judgement; but fellowship is not a theory, it is a condition which no amount of discussion can bring about or hinder.

In nature, birds of a feather will flock together, so it is with the Lord's people (Matt. 24:28) Creed fences or obstacles are no barriers to those who desire and will have fellowship. Satan, however, will attack the spirit of fellowship and misconstrue that which is good and beautiful. What shall we do then? Be rightly exercised by it and stand up to our experiences. We remember how Peter disfellowshipped himself from Jesus, denying that he knew Him, but this was turned to good account by Jesus, who had prayed for him. We learn by experiences not to flee from difficulties, but seek the Lord's help and guidance.

Think of those who have stood their tests, the steadfast, patient, plodding Christians, through good report and through evil report, so different from those who have not stood their test, have been discouraged and lost fellowship. If we are sure what God's way is, then we get His blessing in His way. If we take a way that is not His way then we are the losers.

### **THE BLESSINGS OF FELLOWSHIP**

What helpfulness is derived from Christian fellowship? We might answer this by another question, What benefit does a person get in the gathering of live coals together in the fireplace? **He** or she soon gets comfort and warmth out of the glowing coals. So in the gathering together in Christian fellowship there is that comfort of love and fellowship of hope, a sympathy in suffering, a strengthening of faith, patience and humility, a stimulating joy, a lightening of care, and a sharing 'of spiritual food. Just as live coals separated from the mass would soon grow cold, so those straying from the fellowship of Christians would be in danger of growing cold or lukewarm, missing much of development and instruction and stimulation.

Neither should fellowship be regarded merely as a duty, which we owe to other fellow-members, but should be regarded as a precious privilege, not with the thought only, "How much can **I** get there", but also "How much can I help in the giving". Why should we meet together? So that we might have spiritual fellowship. Why should we consider the word of God? So that we might grow in grace and knowledge and love, grow in preparation for the fellowship in the everlasting future. May the Lord help us to appreciate more and more His Divine fellowship. (P.P. 8/32)

#### **The Glad New Time**

There are coming changes great  
In the glad new time;  
Trust in God, and watch and wait  
For the glad new time;  
Mountain fears shall prostrate lie,  
Vales of hope be lifted high,  
Trembling earth embrace the sky,  
In the glad new time.

There shall meet the great and small  
In the glad new time;  
Love shall be the Lord of all  
In the glad new time;  
From the mountains shall descend  
Hearts of old that could not bend,  
And the poor shall have a Friend  
In the glad new time.

We shall lift oppression's load  
In the glad new time;  
We shall bear the cross of God  
In the glad new time;  
We shall seek the valleys deep  
Where the weary strive or sleep,  
And convey them up the steep  
To the glad new time.

There shall be a joy in heaven  
In the glad new time;  
And God's resting shall be given  
In the glad new time;  
For His Sabbath shall be found  
When the skies have touched the ground,  
And the valleys shall resound  
With the glad new time.

(These lines were written by George Matheson, who, during his college career, suddenly became blind; he, however, studied on, and became a distinguished Scottish preacher. He also wrote the beautiful hymn - "O love that will not let me go.")

## **KEPT IN PERFECT PEACE**

*"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. 26:3).*

'This thought is very precious to us as New 1 Creatures. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding," is to rule and keep our minds and hearts (Phil. 4:7). We are to count the things of the present life as not worthy of comparison with the glories of eternity. And so the Apostle says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). When our minds are stayed on the Lord, and we take the proper view of our experiences, we can sing with the poet:

"No storm can shake my inmost calm,  
While to this Refuge clinging."

We have peace, no matter what the outward conditions may be. The trials and difficulties of life come to the Lord's people mingled with joys - the rain and storm, then the sunshine. They enjoy all righteous pleasures that are in harmony with their consecration. They learn to cultivate patience in trial, knowing that patience works out experience, and experience works out more and more that hope which maketh not ashamed (Rom. 5:3-5).

So, then, it is to the Christian that our text brings the assurance that when God gives quietness, none can make trouble. They "shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake," said the Master, but then we are to "rejoice and be exceeding glad." "Let not your heart be troubled" (Matt. 5:11; John 14:1)

### **NECESSARY PROVING**

Our Heavenly Father designs that various kinds of trouble shall come upon us, that these may develop and prove our characters. It is a part of the Divine Plan to permit us to have experiences of affliction (Psalm 119:67, 71, 75; 34:19-20). So when we see God's people in trouble or trial today we are not to say that God is against them. We are each to demonstrate our willingness to suffer according to His will, and often to suffer unjustly. Our Lord set us an example of cheerful, patient, submission to God's will. We are to walk in His footsteps. We have the examples of the Apostles, when trials and difficulties and persecutions came upon them; and the example of other saints all down the Age.

Trouble is not necessarily a sign of the disfavour of God. On the contrary, we know that "many are the afflictions of the righteous," and that "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The truth will cost them something. Faithfulness to the Lord will cost them much. As the Apostle says, "If ye be without chastisement (discipline, training), then are ye bastards and not sons" (Heb. 12:8). If God gives peace of heart, who can upset the one who is thus in harmony with God, in whom this peace of heart is ruling?

This, then, is the greatest blessing of all. He grants this peace to those who are faithfully striving to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. We have a Refuge, which none but His own can know. No harm can reach us within this shelter; no storm can shake us from our moorings, for we are securely anchored to the Rock of Ages. "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

"What though my joys and comfort die!

The Lord, my Saviour, liveth;  
What though the darkness gather round!  
Songs in the night He giveth.  
No storm can shake my inmost calm,  
While to that Refuge clinging;  
Since Christ is Lord of Heaven and earth,  
How can I keep from singing?"

(P.P. 8/31)

### **The Master's Touch**

In the still lute the music lies unheard;  
In the rough marble beauty hides unseen.  
To make the music and the beauty needs  
The Master's touch, the Sculptor's chisel keen.

Great Master, touch us with Thy skilful hand,  
Let not the music that is in us die,  
Great Sculptor, hew and polish us, nor let,  
Hidden and lost Thy form within us lie.

Spare not the stroke! Do with us as Thou wilt!  
Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred;  
Complete Thy purpose, that we may become  
Thy perfect image, Thou our God and Lord!

(Author unknown)

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## **Learning Righteousness**

*"When Thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."*  
(Isaiah 26:9)

The prophet Isaiah is believed to have lived in the 8th century B.C. and to have prophesied during the reign of five kings. The first was Uzziah during whose prosperous reign he received his vision of the glory of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and received his call as a prophet. The last, it is thought, was Manasah, the renegade king, whom tradition says had Isaiah cruelly put to death

His utterances are characterised by (1) the denunciation of national sin and unrighteousness, (2) the upholding of God's standards of righteousness, (3) the proclaiming of God's holiness and power and concern for his people and (4) visions of Messianic sufferings and reign. So in verses 8 and 9 of Chapter 26, from which the text is taken, the prophet describes the yearnings of his own heart, and those of like mind in Israel, for return to the old paths of service and obedience to Jehovah. Having himself been granted a glimpse in vision of the utter purity and glory of the Lord, his soul is restless for return to personal and national response to God and His perfect laws.

Isaiah 26, verses 8 and 9 read - *"Yea, in the way of Thy judgements, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee. With my soul I have desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early; for when Thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."* We can picture the prophet in his nightly meditation grieving for the waywardness of his people, their indifference to their God and their rejection of His commands. Isaiah seems to have moved in court circles and no doubt by day would be busily engaged on important matters,

but in the quiet night watches, how his heart would long to see God restored to His rightful place in the nation.

The prophet realised that the judgements of Jehovah, when truly accepted by individuals or nations, lead to the establishment of righteousness, of justice, of peace and of the only true joy. Well would he have echoed the Psalmist's words - *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgements 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 is great reward."* (Psa 19:7-11)

So under the inspiration of God, the prophet looks down the ages to a time when mankind will learn righteousness. No doubt, he would see this as applying to his own people first, but he extends it to the inhabitants of the whole world. In the light of other scriptures, his message clearly points us to God's great judgement day for all mankind. Paul in his address on Mars Hill speaks of this day - *"The times of this ignorance (of God's character) God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all, in that He raised Him from the dead."* (Acts 17:30,31)

But what manner of judgment did Isaiah have in mind? Certainly the passing of judicial sentences does not in itself conduce to righteousness in fallen mankind, rather the thought is that expressed in Isaiah 28:17, where through the prophet God declares - *"Judgement will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet."* This pictures the setting up of perfect standards, based on love, mercy and truth, the establishing of guidelines and clear paths for people's feet. The same prophet refers to this as a highway of holiness in Isaiah 35:8, a way where wayfarers, however weak and unskilled at the outset, will safely pass over.

In another Old Testament passage, the same word as is translated "righteousness" in the text is translated as "that which is altogether just" (Deut 16:20). What a wonderful prospect of perfection will the learning of this sort of righteousness mean for all mankind in the age to come. Through the centuries, there have been glaring inequalities and injustices among individuals and nations, but in God's new world, all will learn only that which is "altogether just". There will be equal opportunity for all; wealth, status, education, pedigree, will avail nothing. The invitation will go forth to all who will then be ready to hear, when - *"the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, . . . and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."* (Rev 22:17)

There will be no racial or social barriers - *"they shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest."* (Heb 8:11) There will be the one gracious reward of everlasting life on a restored earth for all who will learn righteousness in that day - life purchased by our Lord for all at Calvary. But we might well ask, can we be sure that the nations will really learn and love righteousness? So far, as a whole, they have shown very little inclination to do so and in Verse 11 of the same chapter as the text verse, the prophet seems to ponder whether even God's intervention will have any real effect and whether the wicked will ever change, but he is assured that "they shall see, and be ashamed for envy toward Thy people."

How this will come to pass the prophet has already proclaimed in Isaiah 25:6-9 - *"In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined; and He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."*

We know that in that day of which the prophet speaks, the great adversary of God's people will be restrained, and the message of God's so great love will permeate each willing heart and mind. Thus it will be that the grand promise given to Abraham so long ago will be finally fulfilled and through His seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Paul makes it clear that Christ Himself is first of all that seed, and that the Church of this gospel age are also by faith Abraham's seed and joint-heirs with Christ. (Gal 3:16,29) These will have part with him in that work of helping the nations learn righteousness in that promised time of blessing, which the scriptures indicate will start with Israel. The plans of God for the age to come however richly provide blessings for all people, including the abolition of all sorrow and sighing and finally even death itself.

The Lord's people are even now being prepared for their share in the work of instruction in righteousness, as foretold by the prophet Daniel speaking of that time - *"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"* (Dan 12:3) While we rightly look forward to that glad day, we need to realise that we ourselves here and now need daily to be learning more and

more of our Heavenly Father's righteousness, to be more closely conformed into the character likeness, of His dear Son, our Lord and Saviour, of whom it was foretold - *"I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation, lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord Thou knowest I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation."* (Psa 40:8-9)

Not only should we be learners of righteousness but preachers and doers in our daily lives, showing forth His praises, seeking to bring every thought and word and deed into harmony with God's perfect will. Like the instruments of a great orchestra, each of us needs to be coming more and more into closer harmony with our Master's example of righteousness. When the period of our preparation and tuning is finally completed, we may then be fit for the shedding abroad in the age to come of the glorious message of God's love and His perfect righteousness towards all mankind, so that, in turn, all the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness and enjoy the blessings prepared for them by their Creator for ever.

### **Life Abundant**

O God, in restless living  
We lose our spirits' peace.  
Calm our unwise confusion,  
Bid Thou our clamour cease.  
Let anxious hearts grow quiet,  
Like pools at evening still,  
Till Thy reflected heavens  
All our spirits fill.  
Teach us, beyond our striving,  
The rich rewards of rest.  
Who does not live serenely  
Is never deeply blest.  
O tranquil, radiant Sunlight,  
Bring Thou our lives to flower,  
Less wearied with our effort,  
More aware of power.  
Receptive make our spirits,  
Our need is to be still;  
As dawn fades flickering candle  
So dim our anxious will.  
Reveal Thy radiance through us,  
Thine ample strength release.  
Not ours but Thine the triumph,  
In the power of peace.  
We grow not wise by struggling,  
We gain not things by strain.  
We cease to water gardens,  
When comes Thy plenteous rain.  
Oh, beautify our spirits  
In restfulness from strife;  
Enrich our souls in secret  
With abundant life.  
H.E.F.