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The Light of the World.

“The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His Wings.”—Mal. 4:2.

Earth's Gloom to be Dispelled.

WHERE is the pure light of the Gospel -of Christ? Was it not promised that it should lighten every man? Why has it not enlightened the world? Instead of the pure light, clear and strong pervading the world with its good tidings of great joy, bringing peace and goodwill to all, we find that the sun, which in the Bible represents the Gospel, has been darkened by human traditions and theories, and the moon, representing the Law Covenant, does not give her light.—“Blindness in part has happened to Israel.”

The light that shone in the teachings of Jesus and from Calvary has been trammelled and beclouded by false doctrines and church creeds of the dark ages, which absolutely contradict the Word of God. The foolish and cruel dogmas propounded by Rome have belied the Great Creator and pictured Him as a Demon taking delight in preserving His poor, sinful creatures alive in torture, instead of a God of Love, of wisdom and justice. Yet, that such development should take place was clearly taught by our Lord as well as by the Apostles.

Jesus spoke of how the “three measures of meal,” the pure truths He was providing would be corrupted by a woman (the Roman Church) putting in the leaven (false doctrine) thus corrupting the whole lump. Paul too had said that a great falling away (from the faith) would occur and the man of sin would be revealed and false teachers arise; and Peter said they would “bring in damnable heresies (doctrines) denying the Lord that bought them.”

So, to-day, it takes some digging in order to find out what is truth. “The god of this world has certainly blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.” “Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people.”

Where can we turn that we may enjoy the light of the pure Word of God and understand the great Divine purpose? There are a great many churches and classes of professing Christians and no doubt each thinks that it has the correct understanding of the Bible plan of salvation —the true gospel.

Each sect or party it would seem has some measure of light, some small portion of the “three measures of meal.” Even Roman Catholics have some measure of light, but oh, how little and all covered up with papal errors and priestcraft's forms and ceremonies. The statement of Revelation 18:22-24 is applicable to that system. “And the voice of harpers, musicians and of pipers (rejoicing in the truth) and trumpeters (proclamations of the gospel of Jesus Christ) shall be heard no more at all in thee. And the sound of a millstone (grinding the food for the truth hungry) shall be heard no more at all in thee (she is cast off from all Divine service). And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee. For thy merchants (who supported her) were the great men of the earth, for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.”

The Church of England may be rid of some of the errors of papacy, yet what truths are held are still covered up by so much of the papal doctrines of the dark ages and so much of sacerdotalism, forms and ceremonies and theories of hell, trinity, inherent immortality, etc., that the light of the gospel cannot but very dimly shine there.

The teachings of the Presbyterians, Methodists and other dissenting churches also, while somewhat freer from the forms, ceremonies and priestcraft still hold so much of the errors of the dark ages that they do not see the light in any clearness. They cannot comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of God revealed in the

great plan of the ages which He formed in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 3:9, to. Diaglott.)

Then, there are the smaller sects and parties such as Brethren, Pentecostals, Christadelphians, Seventh Day Adventists, etc. Each seems to claim to have the true perspective, the true light of the gospel and that their members are the TRUE CHURCH. Their claims are no doubt held in all sincerity, but will they stand the light of inquiry? As they all differ and in some respects contradict each other, they must necessarily all be in error but one even if one was alright.

How can we find the one true church? How can we find the true light which is to “lighten every man that cometh into the world.” Selkirk ends his beautiful poem saying: “The one TRUE CHURCH thou shalt not seek—seek then for evermore instead the one TRUE CHRIST, its Head.”

That would seem good advice, for if we find Christ who is “the way, the truth and the life” we shall be led into all truth, according to the promise—“When the spirit of truth is come, it will guide you into all truth.” If we desire the truth the Scriptures tell us we must dig for it as men dig for silver, or as the Apostle states, we must “study to rightly divide the Word of God.” “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isa. 8:20.) This was Luther’s motto and it is the only proper guide for the Christian.

The Word of God is our lamp, our source of light. We might try to examine each of all the various sects of Christendom and gather up what truth we might find in each, but it would be an endless task and waste of time when we can come direct to the fountain with hearts and minds ready to lay aside all preconceived notions as soon as we find them to be out of accord with truth.

Jesus is the Light of the world and the Church is the Pillar and ground of the truth. The mission of the Church is like that of her Lord, “to bear witness to the truth.” “Ye are the light of the world” said Jesus, and we are now to let our light shine and if faithful now we shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom, for the enlightenment of all mankind.

How little has the light shone. The world is yet in darkness and the people are in gross ignorance of God and His gracious purposes (getting worse rather than better). It is reasonable to ask why the light of Christ has not been more effective? This can only be understood by turning to the Word of God and learning of “the much diversified wisdom of God according to the plan of the ages.”

We then find that there has been no intention of having the light shine into every heart or of scattering all the works of darkness during this age. It was to shine into all nations as a witness in order to attract just a certain class—the elect—those who have ears to hear or eyes to see, according to what was predetermined from the beginning of the world, that there should be a church—the body of Christ, the Bride selected—a little flock to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom as “joint-heirs with Christ” to reign with Him for the “blessing of all the families of the earth.”

It is for this that the poor groaning creation is waiting. (Rom. 8:19-22) i.e., the “manifestation of these sons of God.” It is this to which the prophet refers when he says, “Then shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” That is the light that shall lighten every land, and all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest.

God has never left those who were feeling after Him and reverencing His name without some light, some indication of His great plan. Even when sin entered and darkness came as a result, a glimmering of light was given and those who inclined their hearts towards God and righteousness were enabled to grasp something of the Divine purpose. Abel evidently saw that only the shedding of blood could pay the price of sin and bring redemption. Seth, Enoch Noah and others walked with God in the light; then the light shone more brightly to Abraham and the patriarchs. •

In Moses’ day the Law Covenant was instituted and its light is referred to as the moon. In it the glorious things to come were shadowed forth in types and ceremonies of the tabernacle. David sings of the blessedness of the man meditating upon God’s law day and night and the prophets had visions of the Messianic Day when the darkness of error, superstitions and human traditions and sin and wrong shall be banished like the dawning sunshine banishes the darkness of night.

How beautiful are the poetic expressions of Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Psalmists and prophets. Time would fail for us to refer to all the portions of Scripture concerning the time when all ignorance, mental delusions and false teachings, papal and pagan, shall be scattered by the “bright shining out of the EAST even unto the. WEST”

Isaiah 42:16 reads, “I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, I will lead them in paths they have not known, I will make darkness light before them and the crooked places straight.” Isaiah 29:18, 19—“in that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness, and the meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”

But the light of truth—the knowledge of God’s great plan—was but dimly seen prior to the death of Christ. There the Lamb was slain—” The Lion of the tribe of Judah” gained the privilege of breaking the seven seals of the Book and revealing the wonderful purpose of God; what Paul calls “ the whole counsel of God.”

The light of the Law Dispensation was likened to the moon; it only reflected the light of the Gospel which is likened to the sun. It was from Calvary and Pentecost that the light began to shine as the sun. It was then that “ the Gospel was made manifest by the appearing of Jesus Christ who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light.” (2 Tim. I:10). This is the great salvation which first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him (Heb. 2:3). It was there and then that the seven seals of the Book of the great purposes of God were broken and the truth began to shine out in all its healing and reviving rays.

Not only was the way of life in Christ revealed, but the meaning of the types and shadows of the Law and its ceremonies and the words of the prophets and Psalmists were illumined and understood. Thus it was that Paul could “ declare the whole counsel of God “ relating first to the selection of the Church, and also to the poor groaning creation as a whole after the church is completed and taken to be with her Lord to shine as the sun in the kingdom.

The promise is that Jesus is the Light “ that shall lighten every man that cometh into the world.” But millions had already died without being enlightened and millions more have died and are still dying without having been enlightened—died in the darkness of heathenism, paganism, agnosticism. So all should be able to see that it has not been God’s will that the Light should shine into all hearts and minds during this Gospel Age. (Isa 14:24-27;

55: II.)

This age is the particular time, the “ acceptable time “ for such as the Lord our God shall call out of darkness into His marvellous Light; to come and present themselves as willing sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, in the merit of the Redeemer. This is very definitely stated in our Lord’s own words—”No man can come unto me except it be given him of my Father. “ “ No man can come unto me except the Father who sent me draw him. “ It is written, “ and they shall be all taught of God, every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me. “

Then, again, it is but a “ little flock to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom “ So the Light shines during this age not with any object of reaching all, but just such as the Lord shall call.

What privilege is ours to have been called “ out of darkness into His marvellous light,”—” translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son “ (Col. I:13) What opportunity is ours, if so be that we diligently seek to make our calling and election sure!

To Walk in the Light.

We remember how this opportunity first came to natural Israel—” the children of the kingdom.” Jesus said the children of the kingdom went into darkness because they failed through unbelief to recognise Him as the TRUE LIGHT. “ He came to His own and His own received Him not.” It was thus that the opportunity came to us Gentiles as Paul explains in Rom. 1, particularly verses 20-22.

Paul admonishes that we take heed to walk faithfully, otherwise we also shall fail. Some people think “ once in grace, always in grace”—that they cannot be lost, once they are saved. Paul’s words are contrary to this. We must walk in the light. Eph. 5:8-10,—” For ye were sometimes darkness but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: for the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.”

John says (I John I:5-8), “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that 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.” To walk in the Light, then, is to be clear of all darkness. It means that we shall hate the things of darkness; for light and darkness cannot subsist together; they are antagonistic to each other.

Then, as children of the Light, we must guard against any approach of darkness of anything that is out of accord with the light, either in doctrine or spiritual life. If we find our hearts hankering after the things of the world, or anything detrimental to our spiritual progress, it is time to come to the fountain of all light and grace, that we may have such supply of the holy spirit which illumines our hearts and minds so that we may be strong in the Lord and the power of His might, and have wisdom to avoid the by-paths of error and darkness and walk in the light and be sanctified by the

truth.

It is thus that we learn to know each other after the spirit—we can converse, “ speak often one to another “ regarding the Light, our wonderful hope for ourselves and for all mankind, of our experiences as we endeavour “ to walk in the light “ and so let our light shine to glorify our Father in heaven and to bring comfort and joy to others. This is the “ fellowship of kindred minds, which is like to that above.” Fellowship with the Father and with the Son and with one another in Christ.

The spectrum of the sun is likened to the influences of the true light. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all and those who have His spirit will manifest His character, His disposition, their rays of light will radiate towards all about them, bringing sunshine, comfort and healing to broken hearts and cheer to the despondent. The influence of love, joy and peace will be felt by all.

How we need to guard against anything that might dim our light, our shining. The prince of darkness is ever on the alert to blind our eyes and dim our faith and bring in some worldliness, something to appeal to our earthly nature and that would put our light under a bushel. If we as true diamonds would truly reflect the Lord’s spirit of light and grace we must keep the way clear- -O may no earth-born cloud arise To hide Thee from Thy servant’s eyes.”

The church is being chosen in order that she may shine with her Lord as the sun in the kingdom to be the “Light of the world” leading all the willing and obedient up the highway of holiness out of the darkness of sin into the Light of God’s love. So, we must begin shining now, even though the darkness comprehend it not.

In the new day the Light that shines out of the East even unto the West will scatter all the darkness of sin and ignorance and superstition for the promise is that “ the Light of the world “ shall enlighten “ every man that cometh into the world.”

“The Light shall lighten every land
And all shall see and understand,

The breadth and length and depth and height,
Of love divine and holy might.

No more shall human sect and creed
Becloud the human heart and lead

To slavery of will and mind,
Producing ills of every kind.

The light of truth shall shine abroad
Explaining God’s eternal Word,

Till every creature shall confess
His wisdom, love and righteousness.

Tis then that all shall know the Lord,
Confess His name, believe His Word ;

With heart and mind complete in peace,
Goodwill and joy shall never cease.”

Gradually all the works of the Devil shall be destroyed and every corner of darkness be made light and all shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth—for all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest. And when the Sun of Righteousness has completed the work of the Messianic Kingdom Age we read— Rev. 22:3, “ And there shall be no more curse but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it and His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no light there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun (the Gospel) for the Lord God giveth them light and they shall reign for ever and ever.” Rev. 21:22, 23—” And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Let Your Light so Shine.

“ He that hath seen me bath seen the Father.” So, we too must manifest the Father. If we have His spirit we cannot fail to reveal God’s spirit to others in our daily walk —the fruit, the result is, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Our own spirits get in the way—it is, so difficult to keep our own spirits down. “ He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.” But the holy spirit helpeth our infirmities, our weakness. God has promised grace and strength whereby we may overcome and keep our hearts clean and minds pure and wills surrendered to Him, so that His spirit, which is light “ for in Him is no darkness at all” can just shine through us, to His glory. “I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 8:12.

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The Day of the Lord.

IT is now over two years since the terrible conflict in Europe commenced, and what happenings have taken place!

A few years ago such onslaughts with mechanical weapons upon the defending armies of various countries, as well as the brutal assaults upon the poor, inoffensive, civilian population of great cities would have been incredible. What a terrible state of affairs exists throughout the earth when, within a little over twenty years from the last war (which it was claimed was a “war to end war”), a conflict upon so much greater scale is plunging millions of humanity into so much suffering, sorrow and distress as is evident to-day. Where is the boasted civilisation of yesterday? What value can be placed upon the numerous claims of a few years ago that mankind were improving greatly, and that through the efforts of the various systems of Christendom the world would be “won for Christ”?

The strangest part is that these claims are continued today, but how evident it is that the testimony of God’s Word has been ignored. The perpetuation of the religious systems seems of first importance with a great number of people, but it is fitting to ask: Is the Lord interested in perpetuating these organisations? And does He desire that these systems prepare the world to receive His Kingdom of peace and blessing, either in the near future, or at some later time? Our Lord’s own words: “When the Son of man cometh (at His second advent) shall He find faith on the earth”? at once impress how lacking in faith the majority of mankind would be at the time of His second advent.

Then, St. Paul tells us in 2 Tim. 3 that: “In the last days perilous times shall come,” and reading down this chapter who can doubt that we are living in the very time mentioned by the Apostle. Verse 13 reads: “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”

Further, St. Paul in 1 Thes. 5:1-4 reminds the Lord’s people that they “know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they (mankind in general) shall say: Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” How timely are these words to-day; they are not intended to cause distress or discouragement, but are really for the benefit of the “brethren” that they may be as fully acquainted with the outworking of God’s plan as He sees fit to communicate to them, both for their own encouragement and that they may witness to others concerning this “day of the Lord” and the blessings to follow.

To be fully informed of any important world event, even though it be in the nature of a severe judgment period, is certainly a great advantage, and the Apostle’s words: “Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief,” implies that just as in the days of Noah when the world in general “knew not” of the impending judgment at the time of the flood, yet Noah and his family had full confidence in the Lord’s promises and the ark He had told them to build; so, to-day, the Lord’s people have complete trust in all the precious promises, as also in their Ark, Christ Jesus, who will bring them safely through the troubled waters to the desired haven.

The term “the day of the Lord” is used by St. Peter to describe a similar period as that mentioned in the above passage from St. Paul. In 2 Pet. 3: so, we read: “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens (religious systems) shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also (earthly order of things) and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” This language undoubtedly shows that the Lord in His wisdom does not intend to preserve the present order of things, either ecclesiastical or earthly, but that the “sudden destruction” is necessary that His Kingdom of peace and blessing, which shall last forever, shall not in any way be hindered by man’s systems and desires in any shape or form.

The question respecting the fulfilment of the cry of “Peace and safety,” and whether “sudden destruction” is already being carried out, is of great importance, especially at the present time with the most terrible war of destruction going on between Germany and Russia.

Regarding the “Peace and safety” cry, a thoughtful review of the past twenty odd years will bring to mind the great relief that came to the world with the close of the World War 1914-18, the assurance being given that never again would the nations engage in such a conflict. Out of this desire for peace and safety emerged the greatest human institution of all time to preserve the peace of the world—The League of Nations. The majority of the nations of the world agreed that war would be a thing of the past, and any one nation violating the covenant of that League was to be checked completely by all the other nations. Then followed Disarmament Conferences, Peace Conferences, etc., and the almost literal fulfilment of the “peace and safety” cry, was heard throughout the world for some years.

Further, when some nations withdrew from the League of Nations and commenced in their own way to build up armaments, this also was done in the interest of peace (?)—all arming was to preserve the peace of the world. Even when the world situation was in such a precarious state in 1938, and the Munich Conference was held, the late Mr.

Chamberlain returned to Great Britain with the words: "Peace has been saved for our time," and the newspapers took up the matter enthusiastically, declaring: "he has given us peace." All are aware that within a few months the situation was as serious as ever—the time had come when peace could not be preserved; treaties and agreements were of little consequence, ambition was allowed to go to its full length and millions of mankind were once again at war with each other.

If, then, the events of the past twenty years or so have not completely fulfilled the words of the Apostle, it would seem that they have contributed largely to that end; even if there should be a lull at some time in the great conflict of to-day (which at the present does not seem likely) and another cry of peace goes forth, it would be but a very shortlived hope for humanity, for the "sudden destruction," the final whirlwind of trouble, must follow within reasonable time, whether or not there be another cry of "peace and safety."

While in one sense it may be right to regard the present war as a part of the "sudden destruction," yet it would seem that the main fulfilment would be when the "four winds of the earth" (Rev. 7:1-3) are let loose. That these "winds" are not yet blowing is evident, but undoubtedly the present war phase is preparing the way for the greatest upheaval in human history, described again by the Revelator as "a great earthquake." (Rev. 16:18.) This would seem to be the "sudden destruction" mentioned by the Apostle, and which, thank God, shall be the last great trouble to be experienced on this earth. (See Mat. 24:21.)

The Apostle Peter gives a timely exhortation following his words concerning this "day of the Lord" when he said: "Seeing then that all these things (pertaining to the symbolic heavens and earth) shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness," and our Lord spoke of the same time in Luke 21:28, 36—"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

The Lord is my Shepherd.

JEHOVAH is my shepherd, is the Prophet's sentiment, and our Lord's explanation of the matter further is that the great Shepherd's Son has been given full charge of the sheep. (John 10:1-16). Not all mankind, however, are sheep, or have the Shepherd's care. In the present time only those who have heard the Shepherd's voice and responded to His call to become His sheep are of His flock, and His Word on the subject is that it is a little flock, to whom it will be the Father's good pleasure eventually to give the kingdom in joint-heirship with His Son, their "Chief Shepherd." Then will come the time referred to by our Lord when "other sheep" will be found. The entire Millennial age, with all the forces and blessings of the heavenly kingdom, will be devoted to the finding of the other sheep. Our Lord's words are—"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold (not of the little flock of this Gospel age); them also I must bring (in due time to a knowledge of the truth and to the full privileges of sheep), and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16). Eventually all of God's creatures on various planes of being shall be recognised as one family of God, as it is written of our Lord, "In whom the whole family of God both in heaven and in earth are named." (Eph. 3:15). And again, "He shall gather together in one all things in Christ both in heaven and on earth." (Eph. 1:10). However, though it may be interesting and helpful and profitable to understand something of our great Shepherd's generous plans for the future, our interest centres chiefly in the little flock of the present time, to which alone this lesson refers in many of its particulars.

An interesting description has been given showing the difference between the shepherds of sheep in olden times in Palestine and the care of sheep as is known to us of the present day. This is an important point to be remembered, as it was the eastern shepherd who illustrated our heavenly Shepherd's care for His little flock. This description by one is as follows:-

"An Eastern pasture is very different from the narrow meadows and dyked hillsides with which we are familiar at home. It is vast and often practically boundless; it has to be extensive, for the greater part of it is barren—in fact, the Hebrew word for desert and for pasture is the same. The most of it consists of dry, stony soil, out of which, for the great part of the year the sun has sucked all life. In this monotony the breaks are few, and consist of paths more or less fitful, gorges or thickets where wild beasts lurk, and oases of pleasant grass and water. Now in such a landscape of mirage, illusive paths, lurking terrors, and infrequent herbage, it is evident that the person and character of the shepherd must mean a great deal more to the sheep than it means to sheep with us. With us a flock of sheep without a shepherd is a common experience: every day we may see them left to themselves in a secure field or scattered over a side hill, with a far-travelling wire fence to keep them from straying. But I do not remember ever to have seen in the East a flock of sheep without a shepherd."

Doubtless as the Prophet David penned this Psalm, his mind went back to his father's flock and to his own experience as its shepherd, concerning which we incidentally have the mention that while protecting it he slew a lion and a bear. Under heavenly inspiration the prophet pictures the Almighty One as the great caretaker watching over and protecting from harm all whom He recognises as His sheep. Nothing can be farther from the sentiment of this prophecy and illustration than the growing prevalent sentiment which recognises Jehovah God as the shepherd and father of all mankind, and which is frequently voiced in the words, "Fatherhood of God, and brotherhood of man." This view ignores man's will and also ignores the Lord's Word, which declares that there are goats and wolves as well as sheep; that while some have become children of God, it is through faith and "adoption," and that many from the divine standpoint, so far from being recognised as children of God, are referred to as "of your father, the devil, for his works you do." (John 8:44). Originally our race, represented by father Adam in sinless perfection, was recognised as related to Jehovah, but the breaking of this relationship by man's wilful disobedience and departure from God is clearly recognised in the Scriptures, so that none are recognised as sons of God to-day unless they have been begotten again, begotten from above. Nor is it our hope that any in the future will be recognised as sons of God or as sheep of the Lord's fold except as they shall heartily renounce sin, and, being granted knowledge of divine grace, shall heartily accept the same and "follow on to know the Lord."

Applying the psalm to the little flock, all of its provisions fit most minutely. Because the Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not want. Those who are proper sheep will submit their wills to the Shepherd's will and trust wholly to His guidance, and so doing are relieved of that anxious craving so common to the children of the world and which is never satisfied, but the more it gets, the more it wants. The Lord's sheep appreciate the heavenly things more than the earthly and their wants in this respect are more than supplied when they accept by faith the divine assurance that

No good thing will He withhold
From sheep which stray not from His fold.-

They have given up every earthly interest in exchange for the heavenly, and, realising their own insufficiency and lack

of judgment, they are trusting to the Lord to grant them such experiences, leadings, trials, difficulties, blessings, etc., in this present life as will be for their highest good, and as would work out for them a share of the glorious things of the future to which, they have been, called. The wants of this class are not of the kind after which the Gentiles seek, and for which they are anxious and strive. They in their hearts rejoice in the sentiment expressed by the poet, "Jesus has satisfied, Jesus is mine."—Matt. 6:32.

Although the experiences of the Lord's sheep include many trials in the parched wilderness of sin, yet he graciously gives the merciful experiences in cases of divine favour. These are not always accompanied with immunities from trial as the world would view the matter, but certainly are seasons of rest and refreshment—to such an extent that the Lord's sheep may truthfully say that they have "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" ruling in their hearts, notwithstanding outward trials, difficulties, perplexities and adversities. Which of the Lord's sheep has not found such green pasturage of spiritual refreshment in his private devotions and studies of divine things? Which of them has not experienced similar refreshment and rest and nourishment from the Master's provision that His sheep shall not forsake the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is—for the study of the Word, for prayer, for testimonies of the Lord's goodness and mercy? All these opportunities and privileges, whether personally experienced or whether they are yet only in the mind through the medium of the printed page, are provisions made for the sheep by the great Shepherd. Those sheep which find no enjoyment in such privileges and blessings and refreshments have reason to question their faithfulness in following the lead of the Shepherd. And those sheep which, finding such opportunities, decline to use them, thus give evidence of lack of harmony with the Shepherd's gracious intentions and wisdom.

The "still waters" are contrasted with the rushing torrent of the mountain slope—still, not in the sense of stagnancy, but rather smooth flowing. At the latter only could the sheep receive proper refreshment. So applying the thought to the little flock, we find that the great Shepherd leads us away from the strifes of worldly ambition, from greatness and power and riches and honours highly esteemed amongst men, but does not lead us to stagnancy—rather to spiritual ambitions which bring with them a restfulness and refreshment of soul obtainable from no other source. The streams of truth and grace are living, but comparatively quiet, waters. As the Prophet intimates, these are to be found by the sheep alone; to find them requires the leading of the spirit. Let us give diligence to His voice, remembering His Word—that His sheep hear His voice and follow Him. Let us discriminate, discern His voice, with its truthful accent, so different from the voice of error. Strangers true sheep will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers. They do not like its money ring, or its worldly ambition ring, or its priestcraft tone, or its contradiction of the spirit of the divine message and method.

"He restoreth my soul." The Prophet does not refer to a restoration of body or of physical health, but a restoration of soul, being. Some of the Lord's most precious saints have been weary and faint and troubled—even the dear Redeemer fainted under His cross, and was neither kept whole or made whole miraculously on the occasion. The application of the Prophet's words to the Christian experience would make these experiences, called restoring of soul or being, to correspond with our justification to life. All our lives were forfeited under the divine sentence, and by faith a complete restitution or restoration of soul is granted to the believer, that he might have something to offer in sacrifice to the Lord, "holy, acceptable" (Rom. 12: x), and that in this sacrifice service he may walk in the footsteps of the good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. Thus are the true sheep led in right paths, in proper paths, advantageous to their spiritual development, though frequently trying and difficult to them according to the flesh.

This favour and blessing and opportunity comes to them not for their own sakes or worthiness, but through the Lord's grace—"for His name's sake." The whole world is walking in the valley of the shadow of death. Mountain tops of life, of affection, were left by the race six thousand years ago, when father Adam fell from his harmony with God to the plane of sin and death.

The valley of sin carries with it the shadow of death, the penalty of sin. In the broad road the whole human family still walks; and even though the Shepherd leads His flock upward, and in the reverse direction from the course of the world, nevertheless, according to the flesh, they are still in the world, in this valley of the shadow of death. However, the true sheep, hearing the voice of the good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep, have learned to be neither careless and indifferent as are some, nor to be in fear and doubt and perplexity as are the majority. These on the contrary fear no evil. They realise indeed that the penalty of sin is upon the race, but they realise also that divine love has provided a redemption. They realise that the whole world is going down to sheol, to hades, but that God has made provision that the good Shepherd shall deliver His little flock from the power of the grave in the first resurrection, and that subsequently all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and shall come forth to a full, fair, reasonable, proper judgment—the testing respecting their willingness to be His sheep and to follow Him and to attain everlasting life through Him. The sheep of the little flock fear no evil because of the Lord's favour, because He is with them, on their side, and has shown His favour in the redemption price already paid. He is with them, too, in His Word of promise—His assurance that death shall not mean extinction of life, but merely, until the resurrection, an undisturbed sleep in Jesus. What wonder that these can walk through the valley of the shadow of death singing and

making melody in their hearts to the Lord, calling upon their souls with all that is within them to praise and laud and magnify His great and holy name, who loved us and bought us with His precious blood, and has called us to joint-heirship with our dear Redeemer.

“His rod and his staff, they comfort me.” As the Shepherd’s crook was used to assist the sheep out of difficulties, to defend it from its too powerful enemies and to chasten it when inattentive, and as all of these uses of the rod were for the sheep’s interest and welfare, so with the Lord’s little flock and their Shepherd and His rod of help, defence and chastisement. The true sheep learn to love the providences of the Shepherd and are comforted by them. Knowing the Shepherd’s power and His watchful care, they realise that all things are working together for good to them because they are His sheep. Why should they not be comforted, strengthened, encouraged?

The Psalm diverges here and leaves the figure of the sheep and the Shepherd; adopting instead the illustration of a mighty lord who spreads a sumptuous feast for his humbler friend. In olden times an active hospitality meant much, and for a nobleman to receive one as his guest meant responsibility for his safety; and so the thought is that we, as the Lord’s people, are accepted of Him, counted as friends, are made to sit down to a bountiful feast, secure from the enmity of those who would injure us—secure from the great adversary and all the wicked spirits in high places mentioned by the Apostle (Eph. 6:12)—secure so long as we are under the care of our great friend, our Heavenly Father. The bounties of our table may indeed include some earthly good things, better or worse than those of the natural average man; but all of these, whatever they may be, accepted with joy and thanksgiving, are appreciated by those who recognise them as part and parcel of the bounties of the friend above all others.

All religious people make more or less claim to spiritual food, and the various parts and factions of christendom especially boast that they have much advantage every way, and that their tables are spread with divine truth, promises, etc., food from which they claim to receive their strength. But what a variety of these tables there are and how different are the viands, doctrinally. The food on most of them seems to have been spoiled in the preparation. Some of it is sad, some of it is sour, and much of it is musty. For the most part it originated in “the dark ages,” and the dear friends who sit down to these tables find that they have little appetite for such food, and we do not blame them. Rather, we would attract their attention to the generous, bountiful supply of divine truth which the Lord himself is dispensing to the household of faith, “things new and old,” but all of them pure, sweet, delicious, grand. This table is open to all those who love the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul and strength—better than they love houses or lands, parents or children, husband or wife, lodge or society or sectarian system or self.

It is strange that those so highly favoured of the Lord and recognised as His guests and fed at His table should be hated by enemies! It would seem strange to us if it were not for the assurance of the Master himself, that whoever will live godly will suffer persecution in this present time, and for the illustration of this in the Master’s own experience, that it was the professedly godly, influential, great and nominally religious that persecuted Him to death. We are not surprised then, to find that our table is spread in the midst of enemies that now surround us on every hand.

The anointing of the head of the guest with oil was a part of the hospitality of olden times. The antitype of this with us is the outpouring of the holy spirit upon all this class—this little flock, the body of Christ, of which He is the Head, Chief, the Shepherd, the Leader.

The fulness of the cup, running over, has a double signification. It is a cup of joy and a cup of sorrow, and in both respects it overflows. He who would partake of the joys of the Lord must also partake of His cup of suffering; we must suffer with Him if we would reign with Him. But we count the sufferings of this present time as not worthy to be compared with the glories that shall be revealed in us, and hence we are enabled to rejoice in tribulation, so that as the tribulations will overflow the rejoicing likewise overflows, and with the Apostle we can say: Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice!

The goodness and mercy which we anticipate beyond the veil has its beginning here already and is thus to be appreciated. Whoever knows nothing of the joys of the Lord in the present time will evidently not be prepared for the joys of the Lord in the Kingdom, whatever blessings and joys he may attain to under the administration of the kingdom during the Millennial age. There is then joy and rejoicing granted to the Lord’s faithful ones, not a momentary matter connected with their first acceptance of the Lord and their consecration of themselves to Him. The goodness and mercy of the Lord is not to be looked back to as a thing of the remote past, but is to be recognised and appreciated as a thing of the present. Day by day God’s goodness and mercy follow us, refresh us, strengthen us, bless us.

The highest hope to which we dare aspire is that of final union with our great Shepherd, our Heavenly Father, and the good Shepherd His Son, in the heavenly state, in our Father’s house on high, one mansion or plane of which is intended for the little flock, separate and distinct from the mansion or plane provided for the restitution class of the Millennial age. The end of all our highest ambitions will be attained, and far more than realised, when we shall be like our Lord, see Him as He is, and share His glory in the Father’s house.

Our Part and God's.

(1 Thess. 5:16-18, and Phil. 4:6.)

Pray without ceasing Oh list to His Word
And "With praise and thanksgiving make known to the Lord
The desire of thine heart." Praise opens the gates
And releases the flood-tide of blessing that waits
To flow like a river down over your heart.
Pray without ceasing—that is YOUR part
"Pray without ceasing—the Father above
Looks down on His people in pity and love,

Longing to help them, but doubt intervenes
While unbelief raises a curtain that screens
Our lives from the sunshine. Don't harden your heart.
Pray without ceasing—that is YOUR part.
Pray to Him simply, unmindful of forms,
Praise when the sun shines and pray when it storms.
Think of your blessings and tell Him of these—
The joy of the flowers, the birds and the trees.

Show Him your gratitude, open your heart
Bidding Him enter—that is YOUR part.
Keep the lines open between you and God,
Accept His discipline, acknowledge His rod,
Learn all life's lessons and show you believe
In His love and His mercy and you will receive
Blessings abundant, peace in your heart
And all life's necessities—that is HIS part.

How often we grumble and scold and complain
And wonder why sorrow and suffering remain.
We set up a barrier love cannot cross
And then blame the Father for trials and loss.
The fault is our own. Go open your heart
And let Him possess it—that is YOUR part.
Pray without ceasing—"How can I? - you say,
"In the hustle and bustle and speed of our day."

There is never a time when the Lord cannot hear,
Faith keeps the line open and love lends an ear.
So pray while you're working. Just open your heart
And tell Him your troubles—He will do HIS part.
He will lift you tenderly, soothing your pain,
Will comfort and shield you, True wealth you will gain
When you yield to the Father, leave all in His hands,
Cast away doubt with its shackles and bands,
Tear down all barriers, open your heart,
And then God can help you--that is HIS part.

—L.K.P.

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