



Volume XXXIV. No. 7 MELBOURNE, JULY, 1951.

Price—Fourpence Halfpenny

The Three Great Covenants.

A CLEAR understanding of this subject is important to every Christian. The Covenants determine our relationship to God, as well as the nature and extent of the blessing which our Heavenly Father intends to bestow upon His children.

There are three great Covenants brought to our attention in the Scriptures — the Abrahamic, the Law and the New, the fulfilment or completion of which will witness the recovery from sin and death of all the willing and obedient of the human family, as well as the exaltation of the faithful few of the present age to joint-heirship with Christ in His kingdom.

In Scriptural language (Isa. 54:5), God is represented as being the “Husband” of these Covenants, and He is said to be the “Father,” while each Covenant is said to be the “Mother” of the particular class that is developed under it (Gal. 4:26-28).

The first, or Abrahamic Covenant was made with Abraham. It was a promise that his “seed should bless all the families of the earth” (Gen. 12:3). There were no conditions attached to this Covenant; it was sealed or ratified by God Himself with an oath (Heb. 6:13-18). There being no conditions and only one party concerned, there was therefore no necessity for a mediator (Gal. 3:20).

The second, or Law Covenant was made by God with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. It was a Covenant of life or death, blessings or cursings, conditional upon their keeping intact all the precepts of the law of God (Deut. 28:115). The mediator of the Law Covenant was Moses, who sealed or ratified it with the blood of bulls and goats (Heb. 9:19-21).

The third, or New Covenant will also be made with the nation of Israel (Jer. 31:31; 32:40). who will first participate in its blessings, and gradually the whole world of mankind will be included in it (Heb. 8:8-12). Christ is the Mediator of this Covenant, having sealed it with His own blood (Heb. 9:15).

The Apostle Paul throws much light upon this subject in his letter to the Galatians. Evidently those to whom he was writing had become more or less confused regarding the relative importance of, as well as their own relationship to, these Covenants. In chapter 4:22-26 he points out that the first two Covenants, the Abrahamic and Law, were typified by the first two wives of Abraham — Sarah and Hagar — that Abraham himself represented God. Although in this connection he had no occasion to refer to the third Covenant, we may safely assume that the apostle saw in it the third wife of Abraham, viz., Keturah, as a type of the New Covenant.

The apostle in this same chapter points out that Sarah’s son, Isaac, was typical of the Church of the present age, and Hagar’s son, Ishmael, typical of the nation of Israel. He says, “Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman; which things are allegorical, the women are the two Covenants. Hagar represents Sinai—that is the Law, and her son Ishmael answereth to the Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But (the new) Jerusalem above is (of) the freewoman, for she is our mother, so we brethren, as Isaac was. are the children of promise (Abrahamic Covenant), we are not the children of the bondwoman (Law Covenant), but of the free.” Thus in type the Law Covenant is represented as being the mother of Israel, and the Abrahamic Covenant, or promise, the mother of the Church.

The Abrahamic Covenant or promise is termed by the apostle the “Gospel” (Gal. 3:8), and he points out that those who were seeking to leave the freedom of the Gospel to seek salvation by the works of the Law were identifying themselves, with Ismael in preference to Isaac.

In other words, in their blindness they were sacrificing their relationship as heirs of God to ‘become bondservants, for as Sarah (the free woman) is superior to Hagar (the slave), so also ‘is the Abrahamic Covenant superior to the Law Sovereignty. In Hebrews 3:2-6 the apostle speaks of Israel as a “house of servants” under Moses, -and the Church as a “house of sons” under Christ.

Although the Abrahamic Covenant was confined in Abraham’s day, yet it did not become operative or bear seed till the beginning of the Gospel Age (Gal. 3:16). “That seed (promised in the Covenant) was Christ.” The barrenness of this Covenant for a time was also shown in the type of Sarah, who, though promised a seed, yet remained childless till after Hagar’s son was born.

The apostle tells us that Christ was the seed of promise; He was the one that God had in view when He said, “In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gal. 3:8).

The whole world lay under condemnation to death, and before any permanent blessing could come to the race, the death sentence must first be “removed, and God’s justice satisfied by a ransom. Adam; the one who sinned, forfeited a perfect life, and therefore the one who would redeem and bless the race must also have a perfect life, to give in exchange in order to satisfy the claims of justice against the first man.

None such was found but the Lord Himself (Rev. 5:5). “In Him was life,” unforfeited by “sin. He gave Himself a ransom for all, and thereby proved Himself to be the true seed of promise and heir of the Abrahamic Covenant. But we are assured (Gal. 3:29) that this seed is composed of many members. In other words, Christ the seed, embraces not only our Lord Jesus but the various members of His body.

Our Lord became the seed at His consecration, when He offered Himself in sacrifice to God on behalf of the race. We must follow in His steps, ‘but, unlike our Lord, we, as part of the condemned race, have no life to offer; and before we can have any standing in God’s sight or offering that will be acceptable to Him, we must first be justified. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

But justification alone does not bring us into Christ, or make us members of the seed; it merely gives us a standing before God, free from condemnation. It brings us to the same standing as our Lord before His consecration, only that ours is a, reckoned perfection, whereas our Lord’s was actual. Then by following in His steps, and presenting ourselves a living sacrifice, as He did, we are begotten of the holy spirit, and reckoned no longer as human but as spiritual. We are now new creatures in Christ Jesus, members of the promised seed (Gal. 3:29). As the blessing of the race cannot come till the last member of this seed is added, we see that God’s purpose in this age is not the conversion or uplifting of the world, but to prepare a class—the, great “seed” -through which the blessings will come in the next age (Eph. 1:10; Rev. 22:17).

The Law Till Seed Should Come.

Throughout the Jewish Age, God’s promise to Abraham was more or less lost sight of, and it seemed as though Israel after the flesh was the true seed and heir of Abraham. But when Christ, the true seed, came, Israel was set aside, and the Law Covenant ended. The law was given till the seed should come, of whom the promise was made (Gal. 3:19; 2 Cor. 3:11; Col. 2:14).

The prophet Isaiah, speaking prophetically of the ending of the law, says: “Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away” (Isa. 50:1). Typically, this would represent Abraham addressing Ishmael, and saying, “Why did I send your mother away? Had I any occasion to divorce her? Or, did I require to sell her to one of my creditors?” These queries imply negative answers. Then comes the explanation, “For your iniquities is your mother put away.” Abraham found no fault with Hagar, but because of her son’s iniquity, in persecuting Isaac (Gal. 4:29), both mother and son were cast out (Gal. 4:30).

In the antitype, God found no fault with the law; it was perfect; nevertheless, because of the iniquities of the nation of Israel, in rejecting and persecuting the anti-typical Isaac, the Lord Jesus Christ, God cast off the nation, and made an end of their covenant.

The New Covenant In Type And Antitype.

Following the argument of the apostle in Gal. 4, showing Sarah and Hagar as representatives of the two Covenants, we may take the third wife of Abraham, Keturah, by whom he had many sons, as typically representing the New Covenant, under which all nations are to receive a blessing. It is interesting to note that in the type, Isaac inherited all of Abraham's possessions, conforming to the apostle's statement that the antitypical Isaac class are the heirs of God.

Abraham, however, gave gifts to all the sons of his other wives, representing in type the blessing of Israel and the world of mankind during the Millennium (Gen. 25:1-6). While Moses was mediator of the Law Covenant, we read that Christ is the Mediator of a better Covenant—the New Covenant (Heb. 8; 6, 7), and with Him will be associated the Church as members of His body.

A mediator is one who acts as a “go-between,” a middleman (medius—the middle), whose duty it is to bring both parties together, and to see that the terms of an agreement are faithfully carried out.

The work of the mediator under the New Covenant is represented in a threefold aspect—Prophet, Priest, and King. As prophet, he will enlighten the whole world, opening the blind eyes (Isa. 35:3-10); as priest he will, apply the merits of the sacrifice accomplished at Calvary on their behalf; and as king, he will rule in righteousness, compelling all to submit to the laws and regulations of His Kingdom, or suffer the penalty—death (Acts 3:23).

The Church of the present time requires no mediator to bring them into harmony with God; having accepted Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, they are justified by faith, but we still require the advocacy of the merits of the blood in order to cleanse us of our daily short-comings. “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

The Church does not participate in the benefit of the New Covenant, because the New Covenant will not be fully sealed nor come into operation till the last member of the Church is glorified. The apostle says: “We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” Had we been under the New Covenant, he could not have said this.

Are we justified by any Covenant? No; we are justified by our faith in Christ. If Abraham and others of his day were justified by their faith apart from the New Covenant, so can we be; on the other hand, if we cannot be justified apart from the New Covenant, it follows that no one else could, which conclusion would be contrary to the records of Scripture. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness; now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed; (if we come under the New Covenant? No.) if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead (Rom. 4:3, 23, 24).

Was not Christ acting as our mediator when He died on our behalf? No. A mediator must be a mediator of some Covenant. Now, we are children of the promise which the apostle assures us had no mediator, because it was an unconditional agreement (Gal. 3:20).

By Christ's death and resurrection He established His right and fitness to be the Mediator. He has now the right to mediate by virtue of His sacrifice, but will not begin that work till after the sealing is completed, and the merits of the blood applied on behalf of the world. This, is in harmony with 1 Tim. 2:5, 6. “There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for, all, to be testified in due time”; also Hebrews 9:15;

Ransom and mediation are two different things. The ransom was the price paid to/ justice to redeem the race from death. Mediation is the work of restitution by which the world will be, gradually brought to perfection and harmony, with God during the Millennium.

It has been thought that 2 Cor. 3:6 teaches that we are under the New Covenant; but it does not say we are blessed by the New Covenant, but “that God has made us able ministers of the New' Covenant. The minister of a covenant is not the one who participates in its blessings, but the one who dispenses them. Moses was the minister of the Law Covenant by sealing and dispensing its blessings to the nation of Israel. The Christ—Head and Body—are the ministers of the New Covenant, sealing it, and dispensing its blessing of life and protection to the world in the coming age.

The chief point of 2 Cor. 3:6-16 is the contrast between the glory revealed through. Moses in the type, in the inauguration of the Law Covenant, and the more excellent glory that belongs—to the Church as ministers of the New Covenant, In short, it is a contrast between the passing glory, attached to the mediator of the Law' Covenant, and the permanent and far-exceeding glory associated with the mediator of the. New Covenant. As in the type the face of Moses shone (his glory” was revealed) when he came down from the mount of God a second time, so it is at the ,second presence of the Lord, when He comes down from, the mount of God the second time, that the members of the

Church will shine forth the, sun in a “glory that excelleth” that of Moses the type. But as yet this glory is ours only hey,, faith, so the apostle adds, “seeing then that we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech and faint not.” (2 Cor. 3:12; , 4: 1,-

Taking Away The First, Establishing ‘The? Second.

In Heb. 10:9 does the apostle teach that when the Law Covenant ended, the New Covenant took its place? No. The apostle is not discussing the Covenants in this connection. He is dealing with the typical and anti-typical sacrifices.

This is -very evident from the rest of the chapter. His, main point is to prove to the Jewish people that ; their institution of sacrifices was not a permanent arrangement, but that, according to their own I prophets, it would pass away and give place, to .. the better sacrifices. Having first shown that the • blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, (verse 4), he quotes the 40th Psalm (a prophecy, pointing to our Lord’s sacrifice of Himself). and says this is why, “When He cometh into the world, He saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.” “Then said He, lo, I come to do Thy will, O God (by sacrificing Himself). He taketh away the first (or typical sacrifices) that He might establish the second (and permanent sacrifice) .. . for by one offering (in two parts—Head and Body) bath He perfected for ever’ them that are sanctified” (v. 14).

Heb. 10:16, which is a quotation from Jeremiah 31:33, 34, refers to the days of Israel’s dis favour, during which time Israel as a nation was trodden down, and the dominion of the world given over to the Gentile kingdom. After those days of disfavour, God will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, and eventually with the whole world, under which His spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and all shall know Him, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.

The apostle’s argument is to show how convincing Jeremiah’s prophecy is. It says, “their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” His deduction is this, if their sins are at any time to be remembered no more, it amid not be under the typical sacrifices, for there was a remembrance of sins made every year, therefore the prophecy argues the introduction, at some time, of a new and permanent basis of satisfaction for sins. which the apostle shows was the sacrifice of Christ.

Some have thought from Matt. 26:28 and Luke 22:20 that the New Covenant ‘Was sealed and became operative when our Lord died. Had not the Church been arranged for in God’s plan. the New Covenant would have, undoubtedly, been ratified when Christ died, and immediately have been put into operation on behalf of the dying world; but, according to God’s purpose, as revealed in the Scriptures, He has arranged that the Church, the members of Christ’s body, should also participate in His death, as well as share in His resurrection. Our Lord indicated this when He said, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?” (Matt. 20:22). The apostle says the Church are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that they suffer with Him, that they may be also glorified together; and he goes on to state further in the same epistle (Romans) that each individual member of the body must be a living sacrifice. When the sacrifice is presented, the High Priest lays his hand on it, and thus it is written of the Church, “We are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” (Rom. 8:36.)

The Levitical sacrifices mentioned in Heb. 9 were ordained by God for the purification of earthly things, but the spiritual things (all things pertaining to the kingdom) are to be purified with better sacrifices than these (v. 23). We have already seen that the seed of Abraham is Christ and the Church (Gal. 3:16, 29) therefore, it will not be till the seed is complete (the sacrificing over) that the blessings will come to Israel and all the families of the earth under the New Covenant.

A Message from Sydney.

The following message has been received from the secretary of the Sydney Class:—"We have had a wedding in our Ecclesia, on 4th June last. Sister Sheppard was married to Brother McGrath, and now they are united in a bond of spiritual companionship to walk together the rest of the way here on earth. The legal ceremony was performed at the Registrar's office. Then we travelled to my home where a short service was held, about ten of the friends attending. First there was a brief address mentioning how much higher, spiritually, such a ceremony was than those in the world, and how much more, spiritually, was expected of the contracting partners. The symbol also of Christ and the Church was referred to and the polishing process that necessarily the partners must undergo, but that the reward would be high and the brilliance of these diamonds great in the end. Then a Brother asked a blessing upon the bridal pair, and we closed with hymn 230 (310 B.S. Hymnal) , the bridal hymn."

Notices,

It is expected that a Baptism Service will be held in Melbourne later this year, and any friends wishing to symbolise their consecration to God are invited to communicate with this office. Possibly a date could be arranged to suit any country friends desiring to avail themselves of this opportunity.

In view of the further expected increase in postage rates arrangements may be made to post out two months' copies of "Peoples Paper" under the one cover. Should this be adopted our readers will understand that one issue would be later in arriving and the next would be early.

FRANK & ERNEST TALKS Geelong, 3GL, 222 M. Sundays 10 a.m.

Sydney, 2KY, 294 M. ,, 8.15 a.m.

Perth, 6KY, 227 N. ,, 4.45 p.m.

PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

Why go to Church?

A LEAFLET was distributed in Melbourne recently with the above heading. There is no indication from which church denomination it came, but probably it represents the sentiments of most church systems, and clearly shows the lack of spiritual outlook amongst church leaders to-day, and fulfils the words of the prophet Amos respecting "a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."

The leaflet reads as follows:—"Our Church gave us Democracy, Trade Unions, Public Schools, Education,

Hospitals, the best in art, music, literature, and has always tried to lift the progress of the human ever upwards. It was the policy of the world, until Christ came, to leave the poor, the sick and the slaves well alone; if she is not doing other things as forcibly to-day, or the things we think she ought to be doing, it is because we are not in the Church to help her do so.

"We all agree that man is a higher creature than an animal, and if war and other injustices are ever to be done away with it will be by the spirit of Christ working through the Church. However sincere our friends may be who believe that man can make a set of rules to usher in a golden age with shorter hours, more money, all the luxuries, etc. (these are all right, quite right, and we should all do our bit in sharing in the responsibility to make it so), it is not everything."

The last paragraph of the leaflet reads:—"Certainly we of this age are as industrious as bees; life is lived to-day at a fast pace, with our aeroplanes, cars, etc. Caught in the ferris-wheel of life and the social swirl of events, we love it, every minute of it, but surely we can spend one hour of our time per week in the quietness and tranquility of the Church atmosphere and think of deeper things, so helping to keep alive the Church and all it stands for. As we all know, deep down, she is the greatest institution of all time for the peace and happiness of we humans. So come along next Sunday, mate; you will be very welcome."

The above reveals a sad but very true picture of the hopes and ambitions of leaders and members in the church systems to-day. The appeal in the leaflet for people to spend "one hour per week in the quietness and tranquility of the Church atmosphere, so helping to keep alive the Church and all it stands for," is pathetic indeed. The implication is, that by so doing a person is a Christian and is quite all right, which is most deceptive. Again, the claim that "if war and other injustices are ever to be done away with it will be by the spirit of Christ working through the Church," is equally deceptive and erroneous. The fact that the leaflet is so devoid of spirituality confirms the Scriptures and experience that the spirit of Christ has been withdrawn from the church systems for some considerable time. War and other world troubles are certainly to be done away by the Lord (Psa. 46:9, 10; Micah 4:1-4, etc.), but this will not be accomplished until the present world-order, including the church systems, goes down in ruins, to make way for the Kingdom of Christ. The Apostle Peter declares of "the day of the Lord," that "the heavens (ecclesiastical systems) shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also (earthly order of society), and the works that are therein shall be burned up." However, Peter ends with a very hopeful and encouraging outlook for the Lord's true people, when he continues—"Nevertheless we, according to God's promise, look for new heavens (Christ and His Church in glory) and a new earth (new earthly order of society), wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Pet. 3:10, 13.)

No wonder that the Lord is calling to His people during this harvest time of the Gospel Age—"Come out of .her (Babylon — Mother and daughter systems) my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." (Rev. 18:2-5.) We may be sure also, that all the Lord's people giving heed to His call to come out of Babylon, through His Word and spirit, would be expected to stay out, and not compromise in any way with the rejected church systems. Rather, they will feast upon the precious truths of God's Word with others of the Lord's people, or alone, if in isolation, and thus have their Lord's blessing and approval, and be true guides to others who may also be hungering for the truths of His Word.

Working Out Our Salvation.

(Phil. 2:12. 13. Convention Address.)

PAUL is here addressing the church, not the I world. The world is not now on trial for salvation. This exhortation is applicable only to those whose sins have been forgiven, and who through Christ have been brought into special relationship with God. This class alone is able to appreciate the import of the Apostle's words.

In the chapter from which our text is taken, the Apostle Paul pays a beautiful tribute to the church at Philippi. He refers in tender and loving terms to their obedience always to his instruction and counsel, not only when he was present with them, but likewise in his absence. He urges them to continued faithfulness and earnestness in this good way. He desires that they make still further progress in the Master's likeness, working out in themselves through humility and obedience the character - development necessary, with fear and trembling, doing their part in the attainment of the salvation to which they had been called in Christ.

While addressed to the church at Philippi, the Apostle's words come down to us to-day no less forcibly. How wonderfully, the Lord blessed the Apostle's writings, and used them for the benefit of the entire church from Paul's day right down to the present time. They apply to all the sanctified in Christ Jesus. He reminds us as he did the Philippian church that we are to "work out our salvation."

The question arises: Does this exhortation to work out our own salvation conflict with Paul's other statement, that our salvation "is not of works, lest any man should boast" ? We reply, No. Our salvation from death is entirely by faith. As fallen human creatures we have no opportunity of doing any works that would justify us before God. Until we have been accepted into God's family, no works that we could do would be acceptable. God, who is perfect, is not pleased to receive anything imperfect, either works or anything else. But when we have received the forgiveness of our sins—not by works, but by faith—and have become sons of God, through consecration and spirit-begetting, then comes the time when we can do acceptable works, for we are then members of the Lord's family, and the holy spirit within us, through this begetting, now has an opportunity to show itself, to do some works. In other words, as imperfect human beings, we cannot work out our salvation, but as new creatures we can do this. (Phil. 4:13.)

Being justified by the blood of Christ, and being called with the heavenly calling, we can do our share in this great work of our own preparation for our future station and glory. We do this by giving heed to the instructions of our Lord—by allowing His Word to dwell in us richly, and following the example which He has set us. We can never attain perfection in the flesh, but from the beginning of our consecrated life, our heart, our intention, must be wholly loyal—God would not accept a half-hearted consecration and day by day this heart intention must become more and more fixed in the way of righteousness. We are to continue the work of bringing our very thoughts, as well as our words and doings, into subjection, and enlisting our talents in the service of the Lord.

It is encouraging for us to know that this warfare is not one which we must wage alone. It is God who has led us thus far, and provided for all our needs in Christ; it is He who has implanted in our hearts the desire to do His good pleasure, and He will continue to lead and help us, and work in us by His Word of truth, if we continue to give heed to His counsel. The Gospel message is the "power of God unto salvation" unto everyone who accepts it, and no greater stimulus can be found than the "exceeding great and precious promises" given to us, that by these we might become "partakes of the divine nature."

Our salvation is a salvation from death to life, from sin to righteousness. Moreover, it is a transformation from human nature to divine. The first step to our salvation was the work accomplished by our Lord Jesus at Calvary. "He died for our sins." But the death of Christ was not sufficient to give us justification before God. No, a dead Saviour would avail us nothing. In order to help us out of our fallen state, Christ must rise again from the dead, as the Apostle Paul states it—"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Cor. 15:17, 18.) So, we see that the resurrection of Christ was a matter of vital importance. Christ must arise from the dead and ascend to the Father, there to present the merit of His sacrifice, before God could recognise us and justify us by faith. So, Christ has appeared in the presence of God for us (the church), thus opening the way for our justification by faith, and also our consecration—His righteousness making our sacrifice acceptable to the Father.

It is only a certain class which God is dealing with now. He is not dealing with the whole world at present, but only those who wish to turn away from all sin and to gain a character of holiness like unto Christ are now being received of God and trained and disciplined and fitted for the great work of the future—the blessing of all the families of the earth.

It is this special class, the “little flock” that God is seeking in this age, and the invitation has gone out, “If any man will come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me.” Yes, the class now being drawn to Christ will be made up of those who are willing to suffer something for Christ’s sake, for the Truth’s sake. These are the ones of whom the Apostle speaks in Rom. 8:4, saying, —”That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.” Christ demonstrated His perfection by keeping the law, and now, because we have accepted Him as our Saviour and are seeking to walk in His steps, the righteousness of the law is counted as fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

When our Saviour’s merit was imputed to us, all our past was forgiven, our blemishes covered, the Father accepted the offering, and our High Priest sacrificed us as justified human beings. At that moment we were begotten of the Father by His holy spirit, “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.” We became embryo New Creatures, who were then to grow and develop day by day until, in due time, we would be born as spirit beings on the divine plane, if faithful unto death.

The working out of our salvation is no small matter; only by the Lord’s grace to help us could we continue the work to its completion. It calls for patient, steady, earnest effort day by day --a gradual bending heavenward of that which naturally tends towards things of earth. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We must “put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of our minds; and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. 4:22-24.)

The Apostle’s exhortation comes to each one individually,—”Beloved, work out your own salvation.” Our salvation to the heavenly calling is not completed yet. The new life is begun in us, and this new life is to grow, to develop, in all the graces of patience, self-control, godliness, brotherly-love, etc. So our Lord warns us, “Take heed that no man take thy crown.” (See Heb. 3:1-4 ; Rev. 3:1, 2, Diaglott.)

We must work out our salvation. This is something which each new creature in Christ must do for himself or herself by the Lord’s assisting grace. One cannot work out the salvation of another. The expression “work out” has a peculiar force and meaning. It suggests something that will cost us an effort—something that requires time, patience and perseverance. Some Christians have the erroneous idea that God does all the fashioning, and that His children are to be merely passive in His hand; but the Apostle Peter, as well as Paul, does not so express it. (See 1 Pet. 1:13-16.) Peter exhorts us not to fashion ourselves according to the former manner of our lives, in our ignorance of God and His truth, but rather we are to strive to be holy in our manner of living. (Revised Version.) There is a work to be done in us and about us, and those who are not up and doing, but who passively sit and wait for the Lord to work miracles on their behalf, are greatly deceived and have need to give earnest heed to the Apostle’s injunction to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

In writing to the Romans (chapter 13:11, 12), Paul says, “that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” Even though we have been awakened from the sleep of sin, there seems to be a danger that we may become somewhat drowsy concerning the wonderful salvation set before us. We must not allow ourselves to become “slothful in our diligence” but maintain our fervency of spirit in our service of the Lord. (See Rom. 12:11, Revised Version.)

The Heavenly Father has predetermined that His New Creation shall all be copy-likenesses of Christ. The faithful overcomers must all be proved and found loyal to God and the principles of His Word. The Lord our God proveth us to see whether we love Him with all our hearts. When we made our covenant with the Lord by sacrifice, we promised that we would live henceforth not for self, nor for the things of this world; but that we would live for Christ. His will would be our chief concern; self would be denied and we would take up our cross daily and humbly follow in the steps of our Lord who left us the-example. So it is well that we examine ourselves from time to time, to see to what extent we are carrying out our vows of consecration. Our Lord said, “Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life.” (Luke 21:34.) How we need to take heed to ourselves—to examine ourselves, to criticise and correct ourselves; and to watch and pray continually so that we may walk more closely in harmony with the Lord’s requirements. The proper judging or examining of ourselves will assist us in the working out of our salvation.

In Heb. 3:14 the Apostle tells us that “we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” How important is this matter of faith. We Will need to be strong in faith in order to be successful in working out our salvation, for without faith it is impossible to please God. And then the Apostle Peter tells us that we will need to give all diligence to add to our faith (by which we are justified) virtue, i.e., real goodness of character; this can only come after we have made full consecration of ourselves to God; then knowledge, which apart from consecration might puff up the mind, but received into a humble heart will nourish and sustain; then moderation,

control, the spirit of a sound mind is necessary to make proper use of the knowledge attained; and patience, or the cheerful endurance of hardship, that we may be properly exercised by our experiences, and further developed in piety, godliness, sterling character, justness, a clear perception and determination to carry out that which is right, pleasing to God. Brotherly-love must also grow; a love that loves God, must love also him that is begotten of God. "He that saith he loves God and hateth his brother is a liar." (1 John 4:20.) But while it is easy to love the brethren in Christ, to love them that love us, there is a further step into the likeness of Christ, for "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." We must love all men; yes, even our enemies. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray (that is, not formally, but with desire for their good) , for them which despitefully use you ,and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:44, 45.)

We notice that the Apostle Peter's exhortation—"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," is similar in meaning to that of Paul's, who says—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The thought in both these texts is that there is a work for each follower of Christ to do in the matter of attaining the prize set before us. God is faithful who has given us the exceeding great and precious promises. He has made every necessary provision for us, and will sustain us all along the way, and indeed, without His help we could do nothing, but the Lord will expect us to show our appreciation of His goodness by our earnest desire to co-operate with Him in respect of the high calling to which He has called us in Christ.

Why does the Apostle say we should work out our salvation with "fear and trembling"? Does the Lord wish His children literally to tremble with fear before Him? We believe the Apostle's thought is that we should exercise great care in respect of everything pertaining to our heavenly calling. It is the most important thing in the world to us, and we should realise how great a privilege is ours, as well as our responsibility, to make the best possible use of the many favours and blessings so freely bestowed upon us.

As we consider Christ's example, also that of Paul's, what an encouragement their lives are to us along the line of earnestness of purpose in doing the will of God. Our Lord said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 3:34.) How earnestly He set Himself to know and do the Father's will. Also Paul said, "For me to live is Christ." (Phil. 1:21.) He had no other aim in life but to do his Master's will. So we want to have more of the proper reverence toward God—the holy fear to do anything displeasing to Him—the earnest desire to have His approval and blessing.

The reason why we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling (with great carefulness) is, that it is God who is working in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. The thought that God, the Almighty Creator of all things, has chosen us, invited us, and given us of His spirit to enable us to run the heavenly race, should inspire us to zeal and diligence in the Christian way. God is working in us, to cause us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. The question is: How are we reacting to the influences of His spirit which are at work in us and around us? Are we so fully appreciating the great love of God toward us (manifested in His Word, and also in the life and sacrificial death of our Saviour) , that we are being constrained daily to yield our hearts and minds and all our powers in loving, willing obedience to His will? Are we earnestly watching to keep our hearts—our motives as well as our thoughts—pure and in harmony with whatsoever things are just and honourable and good and true? Is the love of God more and more being shed abroad in our hearts, and is it our one aim to be changed into the likeness of the character of Christ? Can we say with the poet

"My highest place is lying low
At my Redeemer's feet;
No real joy in life I know,
But in His service sweet."

If so, then we may well be glad that we are learning some good lessons in the school of Christ, and we can be assured that He who has begun the good work in us will also complete it, if we continue to follow on in obedience and trust. So may the good work go on in us. Let us resolve that as each day comes around we will strive to learn the lessons God is seeking to teach us; the lesson of patient - submission to His will; the lesson of kindness and consideration for those around us and with whom our lives are linked; the lesson of trust and willing co-operation with God and with each other as members of the family of God. So then the working out of our salvation will be a labour of love. God, through His Word and spirit will work in us while we work out by His grace. (1 Cor. 15:58.)