



Volume 79 No. 2 MELBOURNE, MARCH/APRIL 1996 “THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

As each year comes around, the Lord’s people ..have the privilege of gathering together to celebrate the memorial of the death of Jesus, their Saviour. It is profitable at such times to recall the solemn occasion when our Lord Himself instituted the simple way in which all who trust implicitly in His sacrifice for their salvation from sin may remember that sacrifice, given on their behalf but in God’s due time to benefit all mankind.

This is evidently the reason why it is God’s will for His people to commemorate the death of Jesus, for it is essential that we always keep before our minds the necessity for Jesus’ death and the fact that, only because of His death, we are now privileged to enjoy the hope of life through Him. Let us go briefly back to the typical arrangement that the Israelites were instructed to carry out in relation to the Passover; these instructions are recorded in Exodus 12.

The record tells us how the nation of Israel was delivered from the bondage of Egypt and particularly about the passing over of the firstborns of Israel during the plague of death which came upon Egypt, and which, as the last of the plagues, finally compelled Pharaoh to release the Israelites from compulsory servitude. For the Israelites to be spared from this plague of death, they were instructed to take a lamb for a sacrifice and sprinkle the blood upon the doorposts and lintels of their houses, so that their houses would be “passed over” on that night.

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats; and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening, and they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.” (Exodus 12:5-7)

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgement: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.” (Exodus 12:12-14)

The two points that attract our attention here are first, the “lamb”, and second, the “first borns”. The lamb was to be a male of the first year, without blemish, and it was to be killed on the 14th of Nisan. The Israelites were commanded to celebrate this memorial of the passover each year and it was for this purpose that the Lord and His disciples assembled in the upper room on that day, as recorded in the New Testament gospel accounts.

It was on this day (14th Nisan) that Jesus was crucified, thus identifying Him as the antitype of the lamb, without blemish, that was slain. John the Baptist who heralded the presence of our Lord at His first advent said of Jesus, *“Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29* The apostle Paul also speaks of Jesus as the Lamb of God in 1 Cor.5:7,8 - *“For even Christ our passover (our passover lamb) is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and • truth.”*

We note from Exodus 12:12 that only the firstborns were in danger of death, but the deliverance of all the Israelites was dependent upon their salvation. This was also typical of the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” of whom we read in Hebrews 12:23. It is the church of the firstborn alone that is being spared (passed over) during this gospel age. These have the blood of the Lamb - Jesus sprinkled not on the doorposts of their houses but upon their hearts, as we read in Hebrews 10:22 - *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed*

with pure water”

“Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:18,19. So, indeed, as we come together on these memorial occasions, we look unto Jesus as the “Lamb of God”. In Exodus 12, we noted that the lamb must be totally without blemish; so Jesus was the perfect One, “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.”

In the prophetic words of Isaiah 53:7, Jesus is described as being “brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” When Philip drew near to the man of Ethiopia, he was reading this and the following verse of the chapter. The account in Acts 8 quotes it thus - “In his humiliation his judgement was taken away; and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.” Our Lord did not resist those who were intent on taking His life. At his trial before Pilate, He said - “You could have no power at all against me, except it were given to you from above.”

Jesus further declared that no man took His life from Him, but He laid it down Himself, that is, He voluntarily gave his life in accordance with the Father’s will. “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father.” John 10:18. Again the Psalmist speaking prophetically of our Lord declares - “Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.” Psalm 40:7,8.

With this in mind, we rejoice to think of the great love of our Lord in giving His life so that we can, during this present age, have life through His sacrifice. We rejoice also in the so great love of the Father who gave His only-begotten Son to be our Redeemer, and we know in God’s due time this love will reach out to all mankind. “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.” 1 Timothy 2:5,6.

An account of the institution by Jesus of the memorial of His death is given in Matthew 26; in verse 26 we read - “As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body.” Evidently, when the passover supper was over, Jesus took some of the unleavened bread that was left and instituted a new memorial, a memorial that was to be kept in remembrance of Him. He was the antitypical Lamb that had been chosen three and a half years earlier to fulfil the picture seen in Exodus 12.

So when Jesus took bread and said, “Take, eat, this is my body” He meant that is represented His body. This pure and unfermented bread represented our Lord’s sinless flesh; leaven being a type or picture of sin was expressly forbidden to be used at the Passover season. Here it is good to read from John 6 -

“The bread of life is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” Verses 33-35.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.” Verses 47-51.

Jesus freely sacrificed His life for us. It was because our Lord was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners - free from sin, that He was able to become the Redeemer of Adam and his race. We can see that it was the pure undefiled nature of Jesus that He laid down and this we are privileged to partake of by faith. This opens up for us the way to eternal life.

The Matthew account of the institution of the memorial of His death continues- “And He (Jesus) took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” Matt. 26:27. The fruit of the vine, of which we partake, represents our Saviour’s life given for us, His human life, His soul poured out unto death on our behalf and of our recognition of His great sacrifice for us. By faith in that sacrifice, we are justified in the sight of our Father in heaven.

In 1 Cor. 10:16,17 the apostle Paul presents an additional significance to the taking of the emblems of bread and wine. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” The Diaglott translation renders it - “Is it not a participation of the blood of the Anointed Oneis it not a participation of the body of the Anointed One?”

This illustrates the great grace of God, that He is willing to receive us and make us joint-heirs with our Lord and Saviour if we have His spirit. That spirit which actuated Jesus was one of entire devotion to His Father’s will, even unto death, as we read in Hebrews 10:7 - “Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me,

to do Thy will, O God.” The same spirit must be in all those whom the Father accepts as members of the Body of Christ. Jesus made this clear, when answering the mother of two of His disciples who came to Him seeking prominent places in the kingdom for them.

His answer, recorded in Matt. 20:22,23 reads - *”Jesus answered and said, You know not what you ask. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with? They say unto Him, We are able. And He saith unto them, You shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with, but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give.”* This is what Paul is pointing out to us, that our Lord is the true bread which came down from heaven and that we are invited to be participants in the one loaf and in due time accepted by our Father for a place in the kingdom.

As the apostle indicates, when we break this bread together as a memorial, not only do we symbolise our Lord’s broken body but in a wider sense the breaking or the laying down of the lives of the members of the Church. The cup of the fruit of the vine symbolises the sacrificial life of Jesus, but it also teaches us that in becoming His disciples we accept His invitation to share His cup. Paul in Romans 12:1 again presents the thought in different words - *”I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service.”*

All the Lord’s people will have trials and temptations along the way and these will test us as to our being overcomers, as our Lord overcame. We should rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer reproaches for the name of Christ and to do what we can in the service of His truth. We feel at times that we can do so little but the hymn writer’s words remind us -

And so beside Thy sacrifice,
I would lay down my little all.
Tis lean and small, I must confess,
I would that it were not so small.
But then I know, Thou dost accept
My grateful offering unto Thee.
For, Lord, tis love that doth it prompt,
And love is incense sweet to Thee.

We are not to become discouraged but realise that whatever we do, if it is done in the right spirit, as unto the Lord, it will be counted in as part of that sacrifice we have pledged to make. Satan is ever active to discourage the Lord’s people. He succeeded in causing the fall of Judas through selfishness into betraying the Lord with a kiss. We remember how that Peter also, at this time, eager to serve the Lord but still impulsive and through momentary weakness led into denying his Lord, needed Jesus’ help and prayers.

We hear the Lord’s words of comfort and reassurance to Peter - *”I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.”* Luke 22:32. To remember this always may be of special help to us, as no doubt it was to Peter. He failed and denied his Master three times, but the Lord forgave him and later on he became one of the greatest of the apostles of the Lord. May this be also a lesson for us; let us search our hearts and rid them of all “leaven” and determine by faith to overcome any failings in our own lives.

As we read again the account of the last hours of our Lord’s life, it makes us sad to think of the ignominy and shame to which He was subjected. We recall His betrayal by one He had loved, His mock trial at the hands of the Jewish chief priests and the Roman governor, even the loneliness when even His own disciples forsook Him and fled, then the bearing of the cross on the way to Calvary and the anguish of the cross.

Gethsemane can I forget,
Or there Thy conflict see,
Thine agony and deep distress
And not remember Thee?

In calling to mind these sombre events, let us also remember that it was for the joy set before Him that our Lord endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down on the right hand of God. This joy is foretold in Jesus’ words in Matt. 26:29, where we read - *”I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”* Let us thank the Lord for this great hope; may it be an inspiration to each of us to serve the Lord acceptably and partake of the cup of joy with Him in the kingdom. Amen.

(Memorial Address JBH;1984)

Chosen Lessons

Psalm 25:12

In the way that He shall choose
He will teach us;
Not a lesson we shall lose,
All shall reach us.
Strange and difficult indeed
We may find it,
But the blessing that we need
Is behind it.
All the lessons He shall send
Are the sweetest,
And His training in the end
Is completest.

(F.R.H.)

Millennial Truth

PART 1 - HOPE FOR ALL MANKIND

We often speak of the Plan of God, or the Divine Plan of the Ages; a basic and fundamental part of that plan is the doctrine of Millennial Truth, the millennial hope for all mankind. If we do not understand about the millennial age and the great work that is then to be accomplished, we do not really understand the whole Plan of God.

The Gospel Age believer's hope is a Heavenly one, as it says in Phil. 3:20 - "*our citizenship is in heaven*" (NIV) As such, we have a deep appreciation of our calling and the great privilege that we have been offered. But it is also a great joy to us to know that, in the fullness of time, the Plan of God will afford an opportunity for all of Adam's family to benefit - during the Gospel Age a Heavenly calling, during the Millennial Age an opportunity for all the willing and obedient to live forever on a perfect earth, restored like the Garden of Eden.

How wonderful to know that those who have not come in under the High Calling arrangement will have this hope. This is truly a Plan that brings honour and glory to our Heavenly Father. Indeed it is only by an understanding of His Plan that we can fully appreciate the character and love of our great Creator. We might apply the words of the Master to ourselves - "*Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear*" Matt. 13:16.

It would seem that once the apostles and early Christian fathers fell asleep, the understanding of Millennial truth was lost sight of by the many, and it is only during the last hundred years or so that the gospel of the Millennial Age kingdom has again been preached to any extent. We think of our Lord's words in Matt. 24:14 - "*This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*"

Mainly during the centuries of the gospel age, it has been the heavenly phase of the kingdom that has been preached; now at the end of the age, many voices are proclaiming that the earthly phase is near at hand. It would seem that this is what our Lord had in mind - it is after the gospel of the millennial kingdom is preached in all the world for a witness that the end comes. We can take our cue from the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray - "*When you pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*" Luke 11:2.

This most certainly has never been achieved as yet. From a worldly point of view, there would seem little hope of its ever being achieved. With each passing year, conditions on earth deteriorate further. Will God's will ever be done on earth as it is in heaven? The answer to that question is "most certainly!, there has never been any doubt. We could not imagine for a moment that Jesus would ask His followers to pray for something that was out of harmony with the Plan of God, something that never could be accomplished. The Millennial Age will surely and fully accomplish it.

We have a very clear definition of just what comprises the gospel in God's words to Abraham, as quoted in

Gal. 3:8 - *“The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.”* As we know, it is not until the Millennium that all the nations are to be blessed. The Lord’s people of the Gospel Age are the first to receive the blessing of Abraham, then, as part of the seed of blessing, we will assist in dispensing the blessing to all the world in the next age.

As already noted, the gospel of the Kingdom has been widely proclaimed over the past one hundred years or so from the platform, on radio, television and the printed page and there would be few in the western world who have not heard of the coming thousand year kingdom. We cannot tell just how many believed the message, but we remember that it is being preached as a witness. When those who heard awake from the sleep of death on the resurrection morning, in the kingdom, it will not come as a surprise, they will recall that they had been told about it.

To us, it is surprising that there are still many who cannot accept and appreciate the truth of the earthly phase of the kingdom, for we have a great wealth of evidence for it from God’s word in both the Old and New Testaments. We are familiar with these scriptures, but as the apostle says in 2 Peter 1:12 - *“I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth.”* We are all leaky vessels and need to be put in remembrance of these things from time to time. Also, we love to think about, and talk about, these precious truths that are so dear to our hearts.

Some would tell us that at our Lord’s return this planet will be burnt up. Let us see what the scriptures say, realising that they can also quote scripture to support their view, but only by giving a literal application to symbolic passages. To do this, of course, makes it impossible to harmonise the scriptures, or to make sense out of the Bible. A good place to start any enquiry is always the beginning, in our case that is back at the time of the creation of our first parents and their placement in the Garden of Eden.

God created a beautiful garden with every kind of luscious fruit, with flowering trees, no doubt with sweet-smelling flowers and shrubs, everything that was pleasing to the senses and appetising to the palate - paradise conditions. He created the first man and woman, perfect in every respect, mentally and physically, no doubt, the most handsome man and beautiful woman to have walked this earth. We are told in Gen. 1:31 - *“God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”* Very good would mean that everything was perfect.

Let us now look at God’s instructions to our first parents in Gen. 1:27,28 - *“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air; and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”*

Note that the Hebrew text says *fill* the earth, rather than *replenish* it. This passage clearly shows God’s purpose for the great bulk of the human family, which was, that this planet be fully populated with happy, healthy, perfect people, created in His own character-likeness, a character of love, towards each other and towards their Creator.

Our Heavenly Father has supreme power and we can have absolute faith that what He has planned will be fulfilled to the letter. We have confirmation of this again in Isa. 45:18 - *“For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited; I am the LORD, and there is none else.”* If the earth were to be destroyed, that would mean that it was created in vain. The wise man, Solomon, says in Eccl. 1:4 - *“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever.”* Such passages reaffirm God’s instructions to Adam and Eve to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.

Through the disobedience of our first parents, all of their descendants have, to a greater or lesser extent, developed sinful tendencies. Before they can finally inherit the restored earth, they must be brought back to the character-likeness in which mankind was originally created. Those who are proud and arrogant, puffed up with their own importance, will need to learn a new way, must become meek, as we are told in both the Old and New Testaments. Psalm 37:11 reads - *“The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”* (See also Matt. 5:5) What a blessing for this strife and war torn world it will be to experience an abundance of peace, what a change it will mean from the conditions that have existed for much of its history.

Let us now consider a passage of scripture which shows the accomplishment and final fulfilment of all that these scriptures have foretold, namely, the parable of the sheep and goats recorded in Matt. 25:31-46. In the parable, a contrast is being made between those pictured as sheep and goats. The nature of the latter, the goats, is stub: born and willful, not easily lead; these picture those who prove incorrigible, who have not profited from the favour shown to them and have wilfully refused to amend their ways. Any who fall in to that category will not be allowed to live on into the ages of eternity.

It is not God's desire that any should have to be destroyed, rather He desires that all should come to repentance, as we are told in 2 Peter 3:9 - *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* If this is God's desire, could He not bring it to pass? We cannot doubt that He could, but only by violating His own plan, that is, by taking away mankind's freedom of choice and taking control of their minds.

In the Millenium, God will virtually say to mankind, just as He did to Israel, as recounted in Deut. 30:15 - *"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil."* In effect, God will be saying, the choice is yours, accept all the help that is being offered to you, learn and obey my perfect ways, and receive everlasting life; or, if unwilling to do so, go your own way and reject the offer of life.

The nature of the sheep is directly in contrast to that of the goats. The sheep are meek, docile, easily led. How fittingly they picture the meek who are to inherit the earth. *"He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matt. 25:33,34) This is Millennial truth; here we are shown the great work of that age completed, the meek have inherited the earth and it is now filled and permanently inhabited, just as God intended it to be.

From this passage, it would seem that the Garden of Eden previewed the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for mankind. As we saw before, God's instruction to Adam and Eve was to fill the earth and subdue it. (Gen. 1:28) Subduing the rest of the earth was man's part of the work; God had started it and the Garden of Eden was the pattern to follow. God does not do for man the works that he can do for himself. We all have a far greater appreciation of those things which we are able to create for ourselves, the work of our own hands. So it will be in the Millenium - God will provide the suitable climate, all the instruction and help required, the assistance of the Holy Spirit, mankind will do the work.

We need to note particularly the first verse of the parable of the sheep and goats, because this gives us the time setting. The verse reads - *"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory."* This shows clearly that the parable refers to the judging of the world, not of the Church. When Christ sits on the throne of His glory, the Church is already complete at that time and sharing His reign. (Rev. 3:21) - *"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."*

Many see the selection of the Church as an end in itself, they can see no others being saved. On the surface, our Lord's words in Matt. 7:13,14 might seem to support that view. The verses read - *"Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* Compared to earth's billions, there have indeed been but few saved during the Gospel Age.

The strait gate and the narrow way are the entrance to the High Calling. Those so called have been given exceeding great and precious promises; to qualify for this high position that has been offered, we must prove our faithfulness under difficult and adverse conditions, indeed a narrow way. We can contrast this narrow way with the highway of holiness of Isa. 35:8 - *"A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those, the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."*

What a contrast we have here, a great highway made so easy that even fools shall not stray. Here we have two passages that are totally contrary to each other; on one hand an extremely hard and difficult way, so difficult in fact that few can find it, on the other hand a highway leading to life, so easy that all who wish to, may find it with ease. It is only by an understanding of Millennial truth that we can make consistent sense of these passages. If we read the whole of Isaiah 35, we see that it is a Millennial setting. When we place these passages in their right time periods, they are completely harmonious.

But what about the broad way that leads to destruction and the many that go in that way? We must bear in mind that only the Church is being saved during the Gospel Age, these alone have passed from death unto life by accepting Jesus Christ as their Saviour. All others die in the lost condition; their death would be eternal, except for the grace of God in giving His only-begotten Son as a Ransom sacrifice, guaranteeing a resurrection for all.

Translators would naturally tend to translate Matt. 7:13, 14 according to their own understanding of the Plan of God, and as we know, Greek words can have different shades of meaning according to their settings. The Greek word used for "destruction" in these verses is "apoleia", for which Young's Concordance gives just one meaning, that is, "loss". Vine's Greek Dictionary gives several meanings, but he commences his comments by saying "the word indicates loss of well-being, not loss of being". This may well be the thought here, rather than destruction.

Jesus' words here seem clear, He is simply saying that during the Gospel Age the bulk of mankind remain

in the lost condition, and only a few are in the saved condition. The lost will be found in that future Millennial Day. (Convention Address - JGT:1995)

(Part 2 of this article - MILLENNIAL TRUTH -THE LAST DAY - will appear in a later issue of Peoples Paper.)

A Preview of the Kingdom

Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society: not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.—Revelation 21:4.

Christ our Example

“For even hereunto were you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” 1 Peter 2:21.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

It is the same apostle Peter whose words are quoted above who urges upon his Christian brethren that they “give all diligence” to make their calling and election sure. It is also he who, in that same epistle, admonishes, *“If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.” 1 Peter 4:16.* Indeed, the disesteem, the frowns, the reproaches of the world - humanity around us (and even of professing brethren) still may cast their shadows across the pathway of the sacrificial Christ; for darkness, spiritual blindness, still afflicts the children of men, while they wait for that “morning without clouds”. Are we distressed and troubled in spirit because we cannot have our friends and acquaintances understand why we have chosen “the way of the cross”? We have only to remember that it is a most difficult thing, indeed impossible for the natural man to understand why those accepted into Divine favour should be called to a life of sacrifice, trial and suffering. In order to understand this matter, it is necessary to take God's viewpoint; and this cannot be accepted unless one has faith based upon knowledge of the Divine plans and purposes.

How clear it is that all through the Gospel Age the Lord's invitation to this High Calling has been extended chiefly to those in humbler walks of life. Those who have access to the splendours, riches and luxuries of this world are generally so engrossed and overcharged with these that they have no ear for the heavenly treasures, as saith our blessed Lord, *“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10:23)* In the footsteps of our Saviour by way of the cross is, in substance, the sum of the Christian's Calling as he or she journeys through this world.

Truly the narrow way is seen to be a way of death, yet leading to life, as our Master declared, *“Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life” (Matt. 7:14)* But in order that it shall terminate in life to us, the power, influences and agencies of life must work in us. These all centre in the office and work of the Holy Spirit; for by this we are begotten again unto the hope of life with Christ as partakers of His glory and throne. Thus, while in the narrow way of self-sacrifice and self-denial, the disciple of Christ is undergoing the death process of the various earthly human propensities - desires, aspirations, affections, etc.; meantime, the Spirit of God, through the Truth, is quickening, making alive, those heavenly propensities - desires, aspirations, affections, that belong to the new life. (Col. 3:1-4) This is the process of regeneration or making alive, as it is also the sanctification - setting apart through the begetting of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

It is in view of the present urgent necessity of sober watchfulness and attention to the Will of God regarding us that the apostle Paul calls upon all who are to any extent intoxicated and stupefied by the spirit of the world, saying, *“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Eph. 5:14.* Put away self-will, cleanse your hearts of secret pride, and awake to the issues of this solemn hour, of being filled with the Spirit of God, and of looking to Him for the light that will surely follow, with its blessed, invigorating and health-giving influences. That the Lord's disciplinary providences are an important factor in the process of Christian development and the maturing of the spiritual character, we are fully assured. The Divine purpose is to bring us into close personal touch with our Master, so that there is constant reliance upon Him.

The faithful disciple of Christ is earnestly entreated to give ALL diligence in the devotion of the mind, the heart with all its longings and affections, in the direction of encouraging and building up the “inner man” in

all those qualities of the spiritual likeness of Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-7) It is in this connection that the disciple is warned against the intrusions of the world and its spirit, for yielding to these adverse influences is sure to result in retarding the work of the Spirit and in repressing the spiritual life. Says the beloved John, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”* 1 John 2:15,16.

The experiences, failures and trials of God’s people throughout the Age teach us that, only as they give strict adherence to the apostle’s foregoing advice, will they be sure of being kept in a state of safety and nearness to the Lord. To yield to the spirit of the world in any degree, or to enter into its schemes, its plans, its methods, is sure to expose the Christian to the influence and power of the worldly spirit.

KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD

No devout student of the sacred Word can fail to be familiar with the many solemn assurances that the Christian’s walk through this world is ever and always in contact with severe testings and fiery buffetings of the adversary. The apostle Peter says again, *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.”* 1 Peter 4:12,13. Some very edifying thoughts in this connection have been left to us, and these follow.

“It is worthy of notice here that special reference is made, not to the tests of intellectual belief brought about by the presentation of false doctrine, but to reproaches and persecution for Christ’s sake, either for adherence to His doctrines or conformity to His righteousness, for the apostle adds, *“If you are reproached for **the name of Christ**, happy are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.”* He warns us to take heed only that we suffer not as evil-doers, *“yet if any man suffer as a Christian (that is, either for loyalty to Christian principles or Christian doctrine) let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf”* 1 Peter 4:14,16.

“The prophet Daniel also says that particularly in this time of the end, *“many shall be purified and made white and tried”*; and Malachi compares the trials of this time to the “refiner’s fire” and to “fuller’s soap”, which are designed to **refine** and **purify** the Lord’s people. The apostle Paul urges that we fight the good fight of faith, and patiently endure afflictions to the end. (1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 2:3) and many are the words of consolation and blessed comfort offered by the Psalmist and others to the tempest-tossed and suffering people of God. See Psa. 77:1-14, 116:1-14, 34:19, 31:24, 2 Thes. 3:3.

“Are you then, dear Brother or Sister, hard pressed on every side with temptations to doubt that God’s protection, love and care are yours, that His precious promises belong to you? Have you grown discouraged and disheartened? Do the foes seem too many and too strong for you? Do the reproaches come with crushing weight, and do the clouds hang heavy over your seemingly defenceless head? Ah, it is just here that FAITH must claim her victory! Is it not promised, *“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* 1 John 5:4? It is your faith that is on trial now.

“In calmer days when the sun of favour shone brightly upon you, you were quietly laying the foundation of a knowledge of the Truth, and rearing the superstructure of Christian character. Now you are in the furnace to be proved: summon therefore all your courage; fortify your patience; nerve yourself to endurance; hold fast to your hope; call to mind the promises, they are still yours; and *“cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”* Heb. 10:35. *“In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”* Isa. 30:15. *“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him”* (Psa. 37:7) and faith has gained her victory.

“Then in due time the Lord’s hand will be recognised in making all things work together for good to you according to His promise. The **proof of your faith**, says Peter, *“is more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.”* 1 Peter 1:7.” (R1823)

LIGHT ON THE PATH

The sun never sets in the land of delight,
Where love’s glorious impress is given;
And brighter we shine as we walk in the light
On the pathway that leads up to heaven.
The burdens of earth-life are lighter today
As we lean on His life-giving Word -

For the joy of the Lord is our strength on the way,
 And His smile is our precious reward.
Our praises ascend as sweet music to join,
 Then mingle and swell round the throne,
From the fetters of earth to love all Divine,
 That seals us forever His own.
We're waiting to hear it, the summons to come,
 To share in the glory prepared;
Whether waking or sleeping, we'll reach to our home,
 With each broken tie healed and restored.

(Author unknown)

NOW I TRUST HIM

And now I trust Him for His grace
Which meets so perfectly my place;
And peace through every trial flows,
Because I know that Jesus knows.

(F.R.H.)