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## Rivers of Living Water.

(John 7:37, 38; Ezek. 47 :1-12).

(Convention Address).

HERE we have an invitation from Christ Himself to thirsty ones, to come and drink of Him and find complete comfort, refreshment and satisfaction—"he shall never thirst." But that is not all; it teaches much more than that. It is Jesus' ideal of what a Christian should be down 'here in this parched world, as also in the world to come. Everyone who is vitally connected to that great Fountain of truth and life becomes himself the centre of a spiritual influence. There is in him a power of life, which, when quickened by faith, flows forth as a river, carrying life and refreshment to others.

The occasion of this gathering, mentioned in our text, was the Feast of Tabernacles. The heart of the sentence is in the last word, "water." Water is an essential of life, plenty of water means life; absence of water brings suffering and sickness, dearth and death. The history of the world reveals that mankind has always clustered about the watercourses. Look at the rivers, seashores and lake edges, and you will see life, cities and fruitful fields.

Those men who heard Jesus speak would probably think of their favorite river—the Jordan. It is said that no valley exceeds in beauty and fruitfulness that of the Jordan and the hillsides sloping down to the edge of that stream. Now, plainly, Jesus is talking of something that may, through us, exert as decided an influence upon the lives of those with whom we come in contact, as water has exerted and still does on the history of the world, and as the Jordan does in that wonderful land of Palestine.

"If any man thirst." Thirst means desire, intense desire; it is perhaps the strongest word to express desire. Physical thirst will completely control your actions. If you are very thirsty you can do nothing till the gnawing desire is satisfied; one cannot read, study or talk. It is said that it is agony to be intensely thirsty; to die of thirst is extremely painful. Jesus used that word "thirst" to express interest desire. Are you thirsty? Is there a yearning down in our hearts for something we have, but desire in fuller measure? Yes, indeed, we have already drank of that life-giving stream, "My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst." Pitiable are they that need, and do not know their need. You know there is a special promise for thirsty ones—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." (Isa. 44:3). It is not only a present satisfaction, but a continual comfort flowing from Christ — "He shall never thirst"; "Of His fullness have we received and grace for grace."

Take notice of the quantity of water—"Rivers." Not a Jordan merely; that would be wonderful, but Jordans and Niles and Euphrates, etc.—"rivers of water." There is in the Christian a power of life everlasting, carrying with it influence and fruitfulness; it lives and flows in heat or cold, pain or pleasure. Now notice the kind of water, not like that water in the River Jordan but "rivers of living water"—"water of life as clear as crystal." you remember that in Ezekiel's vision the waters constantly increased in depth and that everywhere they went there was healing, abundant life, prosperity, beauty, food and a continual harvest the year round, and all because of the waters of the river. Truly they were indeed waters of life (in the vision), which will flood the earth over in the Millennial Day.

Now mark that little but very significant phrase "out of." It is not "Into," but "out of." All the difference in the lives of men lies in the difference between these two expressions. "Into" is the world's preposition; every stream turns in, and that means a "dead sea." Many, a man's life is simply the circumference of a dead sea, and the same is true of

many professing Christians, of whom Paul says, "Their God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (Phil. 3:19).

Jude also speaks of those who have once known the truth, who once drank of that life-giving stream, but had turned from it. "Clouds are they without water . . . raging waves of the sea." "They have hewn out cisterns that can hold no water." (Jer. 2:13).

But "out of," are the Master's words; His thought is of others. The stream must flow in and pass through if it is to flow out; it is judged by its direction and Jesus would turn it outward. There must be, nevertheless, good connections upward, and a clear channel inward, but the objective point is outward—outward toward a parched earth, to those who have a thirst and especially to where the trees of righteousness grow. But before it can flow out it must fill up. An outflow in this case means an overflow. There must be a flooding inside before there can be a flowing out, and bear in mind that it is only the overflow from the fullness within our own lives that brings refreshing to anyone else. However, someone may say, "I cannot hold much." Well, what if you cannot, you can overflow greatly though—this life-giving water is a running stream. There may be some little seedling nearby that is thirsty for a few drops, and that is exactly the Master's thought—"Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water!:"

Another may say, "I would like to be able to speak out fluently and be able to explain the truth." We are apt to be like Moses in Exod. 4:10-12, but the Lord does not want your gifts and ability as much as your personality as a channel. Then turn to Dent. 31, 32 and 33, and read the chapters in your spare time. This passage does not reveal one of slow speech and tongue then, does it? It fairly burns with eloquence. The Lord does not promise a new tongue, but, "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

You know in\_ past days, the baby days of our Christian experience (my own) when our faith was not very strong because we could feast only on the milk of the Word, we would come in contact with well rounded out Christians and would say, "I wish I was like so and so, he or she is a well established Christian"; not daring to entertain the possibility of being like the Master, Himself. But I find now that there are living illustrations He has given us in the Gospels that go down to the very edge of human inability; He goes down to the lowest so as to include all. What proved to be true in this case may prove true with you and me.

The case in mind is found in John 4:5-30, 39, and is that of a woman, ignorant, prejudiced, without social standing, even worse—of a bad reputation. She probably had less influence in her town than anyone, she was a very unlikely person to be used of the Lord to bring a message to others, however, she took the message, telling plainly and earnestly what she knew and believed, and a real revival began. The record is, "Many believed because of the word of the woman"; — a simple witness with wonderful results. She

had tasted a drop of that living water and it flowed on.

Next notice the source of the stream—"Out of his belly." It is usually understood that this means Out of his heart, or out of the midst of him. The Bible is always very exact in the choice of words. The blood is the life; the heart pumps the blood, but the stomach makes it. If you look at a book of physiology, and find a chart showing the circulation of- the blood, you will see a wonderful network of lines, spreading out in every direction, but all running through lighter lines into heavier, and still darker, until every line converges in the great stomach artery. And everywhere the blood goes there is life:

Now turn to a book of physical geography and get a map showing the water system •of some great valley, for instance, like the Mississippi, and you will find a striking reproduction of the other chart. Imagine now what is represented in this chart—hundreds of cool, clear springs, flowing into runs, brooks, creeks, large streams, river branches and rivers, and finally into the great river, the reservoir of all. Similar to the blood stream, everywhere the water goes there is life. The only difference between these two streams is in their direction. The blood flows from the largest toward the smallest veins; the water flows from the smallest toward the largest streams, but both bring life with its accompaniments of beauty, vigour and fruitfulness.

This is Jesus' picture of a Christian down here in this world. As the red streams flow out, propelled by the force- pump of the heart through a marvellous network of minute rivers, they take life to every part of the body, so, "he that believeth on me"—that is the vital connecting link with the great source of this stream of life — out of this supply of life within him shall go a flood-tide of life, bringing refreshing, cleansing, beauty and vigour everywhere within the circle of his life, even though he be unconscious of it.

There is a phrase in Joshua 3:15—"For Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harvest." When there was \_a flood in the river there was a harvest in the land. Has there been a harvest in our lives? A harvest of the fruit of the spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. If there has been a flood-tide :in our hearts, a filling-up from above until the stream had to find an outlet somewhere, then surely there has been a harvest. A flooding of the heart always brings a harvest in the life.

St. Paul reminded the Roman Christians (Rom. 5:3-5) that when the holy spirit has a free flow in the life and takes- possession of the heart there is love. "The love of God floods (Weymouth) our hearts"—there is a flood of love. Have you ever seen a flood? If so, you know something of its power. How the waters rush along cutting out new channels, widening old ones, washing down rubbish and often tearing away valuable property. It will rule the valleys and men stand back helpless. This pictures what the love of God will do when it floods our hearts. Love flushes the channel- ways of our hearts, often cleaning out some things we preferred keeping. It will tear with quite ruthless strength some prized possession from its mooring, and happy are they who. can say with Paul in Rom. 5, "We glory in tribulation, for tribulation worketh patience," and count them but light afflictions.

The using of this flood tide will put out some fires on the lower levels of our old natures. It will cut new channels and broaden and deepen old ones; it will sweeten and make fragrant. Have you noticed how luxuriant the growth • is where flood waters have stood and how great the harvest? So in the wake of this flood-tide of the love of God, there is sure to be an abundant harvest. Love flooding the heart will wash out the friction and grit. It does not dull the tongue but washes the bitter out of the mouth (See Prov. to: .1). It leaves one deaf and blind in some matters, but. much keener-sighted and alert in others. May we all know more of the power of this wonderful flood. And know it we can if we but yield ourselves fully to God and allow the holy spirit to carry on its work of cleansing and sanctification, "For this is the will of God concerning you."

You know that a small plug in a pipe will stop the flow of a great quantity of water. The reservoir up yonder is full to overflowing of life-giving water, so keep the channel clear. It is so easy at the present time to get it choked. We have seen some good connections to the life-giving stream which later have become clogged. Why? A plug has been put in the pipe by themselves or someone else. Then some have endeavoured to cut their own channels, new and better they call them, but what sickly water lies in them. Sometimes it may be painful to clear out of our lives that which displeases the Master, but He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Now, to fit all this into the present life only would be missing much for which we are intended, as "rivers of life-giving water." While Christians are spoken of now as "wells of water," "rivers," "lights in the world," "salt of the earth," "living stones," "the temple of the holy spirit," etc., yet much joy and beauty would be missed if we did not see the larger fulfilment of these wonderful figures. We realise there is to be a grand future age of blessing and Ezek. 47:1-12 especially applies then. In this chapter in Ezekiel the waters issued out from under the door of the temple and constantly increased in depth and healing powers. Note Psa. 46:4—all the "rivulets" when brought together make glad the city of God (Acts 3:20, 21). Now is the time when the living stones are being prepared for the temple. Each stone must be shapen, squared and polished by such instruments and tools as the Lord may be pleased to use and then finally measured for the required size and fitted into place.

Again in Rev. 22, we have the same picture of a pure river of water, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb, not only making glad the city of God with its avenue of trees of life, but the leaves of them are healing and health-giving to the nations. In Ezek. 47, the river runs down to the "dead sea," healing its bitterness, causing life—humanity restored. You know how water will find its way into every corner and crevice, fill every place and overflow, so "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." The waters produce a multitude of fish; out of water fish will soon die, so it will be with those who refuse to drink of that water when "the spirit and the Bride say come." Rev. 22:17. We are now being prepared to gladden the city of God and in due time to make the parched desert a fruitful field, which will not only be a joy to us to pour out the water of life, but it will give joy also to those who will then "draw the water out of the wells of salvation." Then it will be seen by all why that "Rock" was smitten, that whosoever will, may drink of that flowing stream and have their thirst completely satisfied. Isa. 55:1-13.

## Peter's Pence affected by Sanctions.

Vatican Severely Hit.

LONDON, 30th December.

THE Vatican has been severely hit by the sanctions, according to the Rome correspondent of the "Daily Express." The remittance of Peter's Pence has been rendered impossible. As the Vatican does not possess separate banking institutions foreign money must pass through the Italian banks to which the financial sanctions apply.

The Cardinals' commission for the administration of Vatican property reported to the Pope recently that there had been a tremendous decrease in the Papal income, The Papal Nuncio at Berne has twice seen the Secretary-General of the League on the matter, and it is understood that his complaints have been passed on to M. Laval, who promised to endeavour to arrange that the Vatican shall receive special consideration.

The close financial links between the Vatican and Italy has given rise to reports that Italy is using the Vatican's "frozen credits" abroad with which to make purchases from non-sanctionist countries. The "Osservatore Romana," however, strongly denies that there is any arrangement between Mussolini and the Vatican by which Peter's Pence could be used to finance Italian purchases.

[Peter's Pence is the term applied to the annual voluntary contribution made to the Holy See by Roman Catholics.]—Melbourne "Age."

The above report is very significant and comes in full agreement with expectations in the close of this present evil world. (2 Pet. 3:10).

"It is great to be the friend to come in when all the world goes out."—Anon.

### PEOPLES PAPER.

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While it is our intention that these columns be used for teachings strictly in accord with the Lord's Word, we cannot accept responsibility for every expression, Used, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported.

A Cross (x) on the wrapper indicates that the Subscription to "Peoples Paper" is overdue.

## Convention News.

It is not easy to express in words a report that will adequately explain the assemblies of the Lord's people extending over four days, in which we were privileged to participate, over the Christmas season in Melbourne recently. Such Convention gatherings need to be experienced to be able to appreciate all the good things that the Lord bestows upon those who come in the right heart condition, seeking to give and receive a blessing, as they enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.

This Convention was held at the usual meeting rooms of the Melbourne Class on the days of 25th, 26th, 28th and 29th December. Full afternoon and evening sessions were held with Bible Studies and Addresses, while Fellowship Meetings between added to the general benefits.

In the first place we are very grateful to the Lord for His blessings and over-ruling providence in connection with every feature of the gatherings, and also for making it possible for some visiting brethren to attend from other States and distant parts of Victoria. To these dear friends themselves we add our thanks, appreciating greatly their presence and help with the programme, involving the sacrifice of time and means.

The afternoon of Christmas Day found the friends gathered together in expectation of a feast of spiritual food, and it was early in evidence that none were to be disappointed. After the words of Welcome on behalf of the Melbourne Ecclesia to all in attendance, and the singing of appropriate hymns, followed by fervent prayers, the afternoon Bible Study in Col. 7:12-19 provided a very fitting exercise for heart and mind. Many beautiful thoughts were brought out on this fine passage of Scripture, beginning with thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for our present position of favour in expectation of the gracious inheritance, inasmuch as He "bath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son," on account of our faith. Our minds were then taken back to the time when our

Lord Jesus was created, and who as the Logos was the Father's Agent in the creation of all other beings and things, and lastly, Himself being raised to be the Head of the New Creation, because of His obedience unto death, "for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell."

Following the tea adjournment, a fellowship meeting- of "Praise and Testimony" was held, at which many messages of Christian love with passages of Scripture and hymns were received from the visiting members representing Classes and individuals in other parts. Also a goodly number of similar messages received through the post were read out from brethren situated throughout the Australian States, New Zealand and England. All these kindly greetings were very much appreciated by the assembled brethren, especially as we realised that so many, though absent in person, were present in spirit, and remembered us in prayer. The time allotted this meeting was then fully taken up with the individual testimonies of praise and thankfulness, and which proved of much encouragement and refreshing to all.

At the evening session a helpful and instructive address entitled "Obedience" was given by one of the visiting brethren. Space will not permit an explanation of the addresses here, but we are arranging to print some of them for the benefit of our readers. Thus, with concluding prayer the friends dispersed to their homes well satisfied and thankful for the first day of Convention.

The meetings on the following day were opened in the afternoon with praise and prayer, followed by a short address by one of our elderly brethren on the topic, "The Greatest Thing in the World," in which some very good thoughts were brought out on that beautiful chapter 13 of the 1st Corinthians. Next came the Bible Study in I Pet. 1 :3-8, enabling all present to enter into the discussions with much profit. From

this passage we were reminded again of the great mercy and goodness of God in begetting all the elect class to the wonderful hope in Christ Jesus, even to that inheritance which will never decay or fade away and which is reserved in heaven for those who so abide in the Lord that they are kept by His power and endure to the end. However, during the pilgrim journey, we were led to see that, “for a season, since it is necessary” (verse 6, Diaglott), many and varied are the trials encountered so that the faith of each one who will ultimately attain the great inheritance may so come through the fiery experiences as to be found unto praise and honour and glory of the Lord.

The fellowship meeting this day on “Helpful Thoughts from Favourite Hymns,” brought good response from almost every one present, and indicated how the thoughts in our hymns of thankfulness and praise to the Lord may constitute a very real portion of air worship and devotion to ‘Him. The addresses that followed and closed another happy day were given by three brethren on the Bible characters of “Peter,” “Daniel” and “Moses.” The lives of each of these godly men were reviewed and special occasions of interest were well presented which could not help but encourage and stimulate to greater zeal in our love and service for the Lord.

Assembling again on the afternoon of Saturday, 28th December, the opening- hymns and prayers were followed by a very spiritual address given by a visiting Brother, entitled, “The Lord’s Sanctuary,” and was most helpful. Bible Study on Psa. 63:1-8, then impressed what should be the attitude of all the “David Class,” who, having seen the Lord in the sanctuary, by faith, are not influenced by this present evil world “in a dry and thirsty land where no water is”--but press on sacrificing to His name and cause “because His loving kindness is better than life.” We were led to see, also, that at any hour of the day or night it is our privilege to lift up our thoughts to the Lord in meditation sweet, and thus to be seated in the heavenly places, resting in the shadow of His wings, and following close and attentive to His good will for us.

A Question Meeting for fellowship on this third day of Convention proved helpful also, giving opportunity of, free expression on the questions handed in and which were summed up nicely by the chairman. The evening session was again taken up with addresses, though one Brother to speak. was unavoidably absent. The Bible character, “Jacob,” was well explained, many good lessons being impressed to us from his life. Another visiting Brother then spoke on the topic, “Walk about Zion” (Psa. 48: [2, 13), and many very fine thoughts and illustrations were given to impress the necessity of a pure and noble life and which did not fail to add much encouragement, as we journey on to the heavenly Zion. The friends seemed loath to part after such a happy and profitable day again.

Then came the final day of the gatherings, and after appropriate praise and prayer the afternoon Bible Study in Rev. 20:1-6, engaged our attention. In this highly symbolic passage our minds were directed to the close of this age, when “He shall come whose right it is,” to take the Kingdom, together with the faithful overcomers who reign with Christ 1000 years. Before the Lord could reign it was seen that the great Adversary must be bound, completely restrained, that he should deceive the nations no more. However, it was pointed out that the process of binding may cover a period of time during our Lord’s presence, as indicated by the many deceptions to-day, which show that the evil one is seeking by every possible means to hold continued sway, as permitted during this “present evil world.” The fact that the nations are still being- deceived seemed to indicate that Satan is not yet fully bound, but He who has the “key” of authority and the restraining “chain” will not fail to accomplish all His good pleasure in due time. Most of the study centred round the first three verses, there being time only for concluding thoughts on the remaining verses in which the overcoming saints, those “beheaded for the witness of Jesus” are pictured having part in the first resurrection—entering into the joys of the Lord and reigning to uplift poor, fallen humanity throughout the Millennial. Age.

After the usual evening tea the fellowship on “Helpful Thoughts from the Convention” was a further

profitable session, as the brethren brought to mind many of the treasures of thought given out by one and another during the season, together before the Lord. At this time also, the Convention message contained in Col. :12, 13, and 2 'Tim. 3:14, together with our Christian love, was passed on to the visiting friends to take back to their brethren in other parts, and now we ask all dear friends everywhere to accept the same from the Melbourne Christmas Convention, 1935.

This brought us to the Closing Address, given by a visiting Brother, entitled "Rivers of Living Water," which was a fitting and much enjoyed message at the close of a most refreshing season. There was yet the closing Love Feast and final hymns, "Blest be the tie that binds," and "God be with. you till we meet again," with concluding prayer of thankfulness for all rich blessings and supplication for continued grace and strength for all dear brethren the world over.

Passover Memorial, 1936.

The 14th of Nisan (Jewish date) falls this year on Monday, 6th April, commencing at sundown on the previous day. Sunday evening, 5th April, after sundown; would therefore be the anniversary of the institution of the Memorial, and the appropriate time to celebrate by all consecrated members in Christ.

## The Jewish National Home

Development Exceeds Forecasts.

SIR Herbert Samuel, in a Lucien memorial lecture at University College, London, described as poor minded the allegation that the Balfour Declaration favouring the creation of a national Jewish home was a violation of a pledge given to the Arab leaders.

“In 1920 I took up office as the first British High Commissioner in Palestine,” said Sir Herbert, “and the work of building the complete edifice of a modern State commenced. From the outset the Arab question was the Predominant feature, and it was plain to me that the establishment of a Jewish national home must be conditioned, not only by the existing rights of the Arab population, but also by constant and active care on the part of the mandatory power for their economic and cultural Progress. Development in Palestine had exceeded all forecasts.”—’Liverpool Daily Post,’ 26/11/35.

# Oldest Manuscript of New Testament

Found in Manchester.

A RAGGED piece of papyrus, measuring 31in. x found among a pile of musty manuscripts at the Rylands Library, Manchester, has been proved to be the oldest New Testament manuscript in any language dating from the second century.

It is 200 years older than the Codex Sinaiticus, and the earliest witness of the Gospel of St. John, varying slightly from the text of the present accepted version.

The valuable document was found by Mr. C. H. Roberts, a Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, who is in charge of the ancient manuscripts from the Rylands Library. He told the Daily Mail: "It is written in Greek, and it is likely that it came originally from the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus, in Upper Egypt. It was this site which Dr. B. I. Grenfell and Dr. A. S. Hunt excavated for the Egypt Exploration Society, and where, in 1897, they found a famous document giving new sayings of Jesus.

-The papyrus, in the form of a Greek codex or book—as opposed to the commoner 'roll' form of ancient documents, comprises only verses 31 to 33 and verses 37 and 38, of Chapter 18 of St. John's Gospel, but its importance is out of all proportion to its size.

"This is undoubtedly the earliest known fragment of any part of the New Testament in any language. It varies slightly from the present version, and the variation constitutes no material difference in meaning between the two texts.

"The fragment evidently belongs to the first half of the second century, and its real significance lies in the fact that

St. John's Gospel, hitherto regarded as the latest of the Gospels, was known so far afield as Upper Egypt, so soon after the beginning of the Christian era."

1700 Years Old.

Dr. Henry Guppy, librarian of the Rylands Library, said:

"It was probably written before the ink of the original had dried. It was certainly written in the early part of the second century, or even, perhaps, in the last part of the first century."

The fragment includes the famous passage in which Pilate asks Jesus:—"Art Thou the King of the Jews?" and also:—"What is truth?"

Sir Frederick George Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, and author of the Catalogue of Greek Papyri in the British Museum, said:

"I have little doubt that it does in fact date from the second century after Christ, possibly from the early half of the century.

Of Vital Importance.

"To my mind, the vitally interesting part of the discovery is that it would appear to correct a widely held view as to the date when the Gospel of St. John was written.

“Naturally, the only way of arriving at the date of the fragment is by an examination of the writing, but several eminent experts on ancient manuscripts are satisfied that it is correctly described.”

Mr. Roberts, in his examination of the manuscript, has had to adopt similar methods to those used by modern handwriting experts in providing evidence of the authorship of disputed notes.—Melbourne “Sun,” 2nd Jan., 1936.

# The Apostle Peter

(Convention Address).

Of the twelve Apostles of Christ, perhaps there is no more interesting character than Peter, and probably, too, he is the most helpful. His life is interesting because we find that, although he made many mistakes, some of them small and others big, our Lord showed that He had a great amount of confidence in him, perhaps more than He had in any of the other disciples. We find his life helpful because although he was naturally weak he filially overcame this. It may be that we can see in ourselves the same weakness, or somewhat similar to Peter's, or perhaps we can see it in another, but what gives us great encouragement is to know that we, too, can overcome as did Peter, in the strength of Christ and by allowing the holy spirit to have full control.

Peter's mistakes can all be traced to two perverse elements of character, namely, he was naturally very impulsive and also he was afraid of the disapproval of men. His impulsive nature often caused him to act very quickly; often he acted rightly, but there were times also when in his excitement or in fear of men, he acted wrongly. Yet, even from the first time Jesus spoke to him, He seemed to see in Peter one who some day would be great, one who would be amongst the staunchest of His followers.

Our Lord's words to Peter and his brother, Andrew, were, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men," and to Peter He added, "Thou art Simon, son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas." Cephas is the Hebrew word for Peter, and means a stone. Jesus did not change his name because he was at that time anything like a stone, but He knew Peter's heart was right; He saw in him honesty and sincerity and knew that he was one in whom His teachings and the holy spirit would make a great change.

In the three and a half years that Peter was with Jesus we cannot see that he became very strong. Jesus often found it necessary to reprove him, but we find also that He very often commended him for his faith and wisdom. On one occasion, we remember when Jesus asked His disciples who they thought Him to be, Peter at once answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (See Matt. 16:16-18)—"Thou art Peter (a stone), and upon this rock (this foundation rock or truth that he had just confessed, namely, that Jesus was the Christ) will I build My Church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it, and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," etc. No doubt Peter wondered at this promise, probably he felt rather elated. It showed that the Lord had great confidence in him, whatever the meaning of His words, but strange to say a very short time afterwards he was severely reproved by the One whom he had just previously confessed to be the Son of God. This incident cannot be explained better than in the exact words from Matthew's Gospel—(see Matt. 16:21-23). Poor Peter! His love for Jesus had caused him to attempt to place before the Lord a suggestion that may have saved Him from trouble, but the Master, knowing that His suffering and death were necessary, refused to hear him, and gave a severe reproof.

However, we find this same disciple enjoying the love and favour of Jesus. We remember that it was he, in company with James and John, that Christ took with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration, and it was the same three whom He took with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane to keep watch, on the night of His betrayal. It was also Peter and John whom our Lord sent before Him into Jerusalem to prepare the Passover.

We are told of another incident in which Peter and Jesus were the chief actors. The disciples were on the sea in a boat, the water being very rough and the wind boisterous, when they saw Jesus coming to them walking on the water. We can well imagine the wonder of those in the boat at seeing their Lord walking on the sea, but it was only Peter who spoke, it was only he who thought of going on the water to meet Jesus. His joy and amazement at seeing Jesus were too much for him; he could not wait, but cried, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee on the water," and when the Lord had bid him come, he tried. For a

moment his faith was strong and he kept up, but soon he became afraid and began to sink. Then his first thought again was to call for the Master's help, and we read that "Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, saying, Oh, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" This shows again Peter's impulsiveness, but it indicates also that he was a man of action, a trier, and one who had comparatively a great amount of faith. It was partly because of these virtues that Jesus trusted him on so many occasions, and also because he was the oldest of the Apostles and the one who acted as their leader and spokesman.

Perhaps Peter's character is revealed to us at no time as favourably as it is in the events that took place at about the time of our Lord's death. Shortly before Jesus was betrayed by Judas, Peter expressed his determination to follow Jesus to the end, even though it would mean death. "Though all men be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended," were his words. Jesus said to him, "Verily, I say unto thee, before the cock crow thou shalt deny me." But Peter was quite confident and said, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." He seemed determined to carry out his promise, for that same night when Jesus was being taken prisoner, he drew his sword in his Lord's defence and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, and also followed Jesus into the court where He was to be accused and tried. Yet, strange to say, only a few minutes later, this same man denied that he had ever known the Lord, and that three times.

It was not because Peter had changed his mind and decided to turn against Jesus that he denied Him there in the court where he had gone with John. He loved his Master or he would not have been there at all, but it was just on the spur of the moment, when popular opinion had declared Jesus to be an imposter that Peter's strength failed him. On being asked if he was not one of Christ's blinded and misled followers he declared that he never knew Him. Peter still had in him the fear of the disapproval of men. However, we read that just as he had denied the Lord the third time the cock crew, and Peter remembered Christ's works,

"Before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice." Jesus now thought of Peter and turned and looked at him. It was not a look of anger or of disdain, we may be sure, but a look of loving sympathy. We can well imagine the thoughts that Hooded Peter's mind at that moment; he remembered his good intentions and his rash promises; he remembered the Lord's words and realised that he had failed. When he saw the Lord's loving eyes looking at him it was too much for him, and he "went outside and wept bitterly." Yes, he had a tender and loving heart, and his intentions were good, but he had been tried on a weak point and had failed sadly. The Adversary had entrapped him on the very point of his boasting, he had been too sure of his own ability, too confident of his loyalty, but just one look from the Master had gone right to his heart, and he learned a lesson that he never forgot.

No doubt Peter wondered if he would ever have the opportunity to express his sorrow to Jesus, and when He was risen from death and had shown himself to His disciples we may be sure Peter longed for a chance to tell Him. Before the opportunity came for him to express his regret in words the Lord assured him of His forgiveness, and continued favour .of feeding His sheep (John 21).

We all remember the occasion in this last chapter of John's Gospel, and doubtless will agree that the Lord's reason for asking Peter the question three times "Lovest thou Me?" was to remind him of his thrice repeated denial. It was a very gentle reproof on the Lord's part, and no doubt Peter's tender heart was touched again, for on being asked the third time he seemed grieved and answered, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Yes, Jesus knew all things; He knew that Peter loved Him knew that it was not lack of love that caused the denials; He knew that Peter was too sure of himself at that time, and now asked the question three times to remind him of his weakness. We may be sure that this had the effect of humbling the Apostle in his own eyes.

However, the Master's words to Peter, "Feed My sheep," assured him that he was still acceptable to God;

they assured him that he was still counted as one of the Apostles, and the events which followed show us clearly that he was not only an Apostle, but one of the chiefest of them—he still continued to be the<sup>^</sup> chief speaker, and we find him still acting as their leader. Only a few weeks after he had denied the Lord we find him diligently attending to the Lord's business, and taking the lead in selecting another to take the place of Judas Iscariot. Although we know that He was not quite right in doing this, as the twelfth Apostle (Paul) was later chosen by Christ, it shows his zeal and energy.

But the greatest change in Peter's life took place a few days later, when he, in company with many others, received the holy spirit on the day of Pentecost. We find him there standing up boldly and addressing the Jews, quoting the Scriptures to prove that Jesus was truly the Christ, accusing them to the face of killing the Messiah, and telling them that God had raised Him from the dead. So forceful was his preaching that we read that many of the Jews who had assisted in bringing about the death of Christ were "pricked in their hearts," and asked Peter, "what shall we do?" His answer was, "Repent Ye and be baptised every one of you for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the holy spirit," and as a result of this great man's preaching three thousand were added to the Lord's ranks in one day (Acts 2).

This reminds us of Jesus' promise to Peter some time before his denial, namely, "I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." On this occasion Peter used the first key and threw open the door to the Jews and from that time many entered the kingdom. Then three and a half years later we find he unlocked the door for the Gentiles. He it was who was sent to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, to explain to him that he and all the Gentiles may enter the kingdom by faith in Christ (Acts 10).

After the spirit was given Peter was bold in preaching the Gospel; he learned what it meant to take up his cross and follow Christ. He was taken prisoner, and was persecuted and afflicted, but through it all he was strong in the Lord, and very often his accusers were converted by his teachings. Peter performed many miracles, too, healing the sick and blind and lame, but always giving the glory to Christ.

However, even after the Apostle Peter had received the spirit he was not infallible; he still was desirous of the approval of men, for, although he had preached that there was no difference between the Jews and Gentiles—that they were all acceptable to God through faith in Christ (Acts. 15:7-9)—he later, through fear, dissembled and refused to eat with the Gentiles. This error God at once corrected through the Apostle Paul, who kindly but firmly "withstood him to the face." (Gal. 2:11-14). Still it is quite noticeable that Peter's two epistles show no trace of wavering on the subject of equality of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, nor any fearfulness in acknowledging the Lord. It is plain also that St. Peter had no ill-feeling against St. Paul for reproving him, but speaks of his brother Apostle as one greater than himself as, "our beloved Brother Paul." (2 Pet. 3:15, 16).

Oh, that we all could take reproof as did Peter; that we could look upon all of life's experiences as from the Lord, and see in them such as will cause us to grow more and more like our Lord Jesus. The experiences of Peter's life had the effect of humbling him in his own eyes; so truly was this so, so truly did he look up to Christ, that tradition tells us, when he was ordered to be crucified by Nero, by his own request he was executed head downwards, thinking himself unworthy to be put to death in the same manner as his beloved Master.

So, we see Peter, a man with a quick, impulsive nature, always loving but wavering; now defending his Master at his own peril and again disclaiming and denying Him; now boldly preaching the truth and again compromising with Jewish prejudices, calling for the faithful reproof of Paul, but at the same time humbly receiving it.

Therefore, brethren, if we have weaknesses of our own let us not be discouraged, let us with more determination put our shoulder to the wheel as did our faithful brother and Apostle, Peter; and if we see in

another a weakness or a fault, or even small offence or sin, let us not be harsh, let us not condemn another, for our Lord did not reject Peter because of his sins. Peter's heart was right, and if we, like him, can look up and say from our hearts. "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee," then we, too, are acceptable to God.. May our aim ever be to build up and not to discourage another who may be trying just as hard as ourselves to please God. Let us be triers like Peter, trying to overcome our own weaknesses and helping others to overcome theirs, and we can overcome as did Peter. He overcame finally, for the risen Lord Himself declared his name to be written with the other Apostles in the very foundations of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God. (Rev. .

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