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A Voice Behind Thee.

(Isa. 30:19-21)

(Convention Address)

ALTHOUGH the words of our text were addressed to natural Israel and apply to the time when their long season of chastisement shall be at an end, nevertheless, there are helpful lessons here for spiritual Israel also.

We are glad there is to be a highway opened up for Israel, and for all mankind, the dead and the living. There is no such highway now; the way given to Christians now is a narrow way, beset by many foes; but the reward at the end of the narrow way is so much grander, leading to joint-heirship in the Millennial Kingdom.

The highway is a public thoroughfare. In Isa. 2:2 we read—"All nations shall flow unto it." Verse 3—"And many people shall say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain (kingdom) of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." In Rev. 21 this government is described as a city. The city is represented as having one street only —a public thoroughfare—a highway. There is one way only to eternal life, and Jesus said, "I am the way." We often hear people say, "All the various denominations lead to the same place," but the Scriptures do not support this wishful thinking.

As a body of consecrated people of the Lord we also are indeed favoured with a wonderful, comforting hope—a spiritual hope—and standing in a position from which vantage point we may look back over our past Christian experience and say with the Apostle Paul —"Now is our salvation nearer than when we (first) believed." (Rom. 13:11.) We can say also with David—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." (Psa. 23:6.)

We are convinced that the Lord has been, and still is, fulfilling His many promises of His Word to us, and for all who love Him in sincerity and truth. He is still faithfully guiding and instructing us in the way we should go; the voice from behind us is like a father walking behind his children, saying—"This is the way, walk ye in it"—not the other way, the popular way.

It is the voice of wise counsel and the kindly tone of it has arrested our attention and given us quiet and contented assurance. So David has said of his own experience—"Thy gentleness hath made me great." (Psa. 18:35.) Not great from the standpoint of this world and its attainments—philosophy, or possessions, or worldly learning; colleges and universities do not afford the education required for the development of God's elect.

By God's grace we have made a better choice, and experienced the enlightening and transforming power of God's holy spirit. We are disciples of Christ, learning in His school; we have heard the voice from behind us saying—"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; let not the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth loving kindness, judgment (justice R.S.V.) and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." (Jer. 9:23,24.)

We can glory that we know Him from this standpoint; once we did not know Him in this light. He has favoured us with a knowledge of His Plan of the Ages, formed in the anointed Jesus our Lord. We now see therein the exercise of His loving kindness, justice, righteousness, power and wisdom. These qualities will be more fully displayed in the age to

come, when every eye shall discern them,— “At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:10,11.)

These qualities have appealed to us now, and so the Apostle Paul says—”The goodness of God leadeth us to repentance.” (Rom.2:4.). Also the Apostle Peter declared that “God has appealed to us by his glorious perfections.” (2 Pet. 1:3, Weymouth and Diaglott). David also testifies to the perfection of God’s law, when he stated—”The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.” (Psa. 19:7-11.) This is indeed the right way—”Walk ye in it.” These instructions are profitable unto godliness.

Nevertheless, there are many strange voices calling from the right and from the left; these have come down to us through the ages and past dispensations; these had their beginning in the Garden of Eden, as recorded in Genesis 3.

In verse 8 of this chapter our first parents “heard the voice of God walking in the garden,” and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of God. No doubt they were accustomed to this voice; it was fellowship to them, for it was the voice of their Benefactor. But why did they hide themselves on this occasion from the presence of the Lord? Fear had entered their hearts; fear had its *beginning* there, and has plagued mankind ever since, and very acutely in these latter days.

Why did Adam and his wife hide themselves; why were they fearful? They had heard and taken the advice of a strange voice in the garden—the voice of the adversary, contradicting the voice of the Lord God. This strange voice said, “Ye shall not surely die, if ye partake of the forbidden fruit.” (Gen. 3:4, 5.) This is where the first lie was told, the first murder committed. Jesus reveals the character of the adversary in John 8:44. He says—”He was a murderer from the beginning (brought about the death of our first parents), and abode not in the truth (this implies he was once in the truth), because there is no truth in him *(suggests* total depravity). When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh **Ills,** own; for he is a liar, and the. father of it.

But the naked truth is manifest everywhere, as is stated in Gen. 2:17—”In the day thou eatest thereof (of the forbidden tree) thou shalt surely die.” The plain truth is that death reigns over all, and this is painfully manifest everywhere. Satan, back there, laid the foundation of the false theory, the immortality of the soul—”Ye shall not die,”- -and later he added to this the doctrine of eternal torment; for, it is implied, immortal souls must live on somewhere. Satan, back there, laid the foundation of all future errors, misrepresentations, false doctrines opposed to the Scriptures and misrepresenting the character of the Creator.

Today, after about 6000 years since that contradicting voice uttered that lie, nearly all Christendom and all heathen nations believe there is no death, but life continues on after the body dies, they say. Strictly speaking, the body does not die. We speak of many inanimate things and say they perish, become useless; our garments perish, we do not say they die; the body returns to dust (perishes) from whence it was taken. Even though the body can be preserved, and recently human bodies were discovered in freezing temperatures in good condition, and had been so for a considerable time, yet in warm temperatures these would perish. However, no one would say that those bodies died, but the persons died, represented by the bodies. It was the union of the prepared body with the breath of life that produced the sentient being, the living soul.

The Lord did not address the body but the living soul, or being He had made when He declared — “In the day thou (Adam), eatest thereof (disobey my command) thou shalt surely die.” The living soul, Adam, in due time ceased to exist. “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” (Ezek. 18:4) Adam was a soul; the Lord did not put a soul within him, as many people seem to think, and so the Apostle Paul understood it—”As it is written, (he refers to the Genesis’ account for the record of man’s origin). The first man Adam was made a living soul.” (1 Cor. 15:45.) “Man became a soul”—Gen. 2:7.

“The wages of sin is death” is the declaration of the voice behind us. This has never been disproved; Adam was not threatened with eternal torment if he disobeyed. No, Satan appears as a teacher of truth and tries to prove that life continues after death. For the wicked this would mean life in torment forever, according to this erroneous teaching, but the doctrine of eternal torment does not lead to repentance; nevertheless, this error is preached, and in spite of this threat wickedness and irreverence has increased alarmingly, as can be seen by the daily newspapers. errors, wrong teachings concerning the Creator do not sanctify; only the truth of the Scriptures can sanctify the life, and Satan knows this. He does not want people united to the Creator; neither does he want people to appreciate the benevolent character

of the Creator. Through this one act of disobedience on the part of Adam, sorrow, evil, pain, sin and death entered, and was permitted by the Creator for a wise purpose for a limited time, and upon this tiny planet, our earth.

The voice behind us has also told us how the Creator will remedy this, and He is working according to His plan formed before the foundation of human society. His foreknowledge. enabled Him to plan in advance, and from time to time in various ages and dispensations He has communicated His purpose to such as have had faith and obedience. “The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence him, and he will show them his covenant.” (Psa. 25:14; Amos 3:7.) The things written aforetime were written for our learning, and we are able to discern that the majority of the prophecies are fulfilling, with a few yet to be fulfilled.

The voice of prophecy is behind us. Its voice has become clearer and more distinct; through the enlightening influence of the holy spirit we see more clearly the outcome of the present distress of nations, and its relationship to the second advent; both events go together—the second advent of Christ is the cause of the present distress of nations.

The prophetic voice predicted clearly all the events connected with the Lord’s first advent. It was the voice of prophecy, the voice behind the New ‘Testament writers, which enabled them to see Jesus’ birth, mission, miracles, His betrayal, His arrest, the manner of His trial and the nature of His death and resurrection as the means of identifying Him with the prophecies—to recognise Jesus as truly their Messiah, the Son of God. To them, at that time, the Old Testament Scriptures were very much up to date, even though these predictions concerning Jesus’ first advent were recorded hundreds of years before. The light travelling down the ages shone upon this advent; the voice spoke and the light clarified.

This same voice still speaks clearly and truthfully to us today; the light reveals and shineth more and more unto the perfect day. A few students of the Scriptures, godly men, have lived ahead of their generation; one of these who wrote about eighty years ago foresaw the things we are witnessing today in the distress of nations—the present perilous times and end of the age. He was at that time referred to scoffingly as a prophet of woe. Living and preaching ahead of the times he was much misunderstood and persecuted by the generation then living, but his opponents’ booklets written in opposition to his teachings make strange reading today, now that we are witnessing events he foresaw in the prophecies pertaining to the end of the age.

As late as 1913 the Paris Peace Conference went dawn in history as a World Peace Conference, and later still, in 1920, the League of Nations was hailed in some quarters as “the political expression of God’s Kingdom on earth.” These events, it was said, made it almost impossible for one nation to go to war against another. Still later, in 1928, there was the Kellog Peace Pact and still more recently it was announced “Peace for our time” — but this was short lived. Now we have the Atlantic Pact, but all these fail to bring about peace and security. But the light shining down the ages is focused upon our day, the end of the age, and the voice behind us announces — “Then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.” (Matt. 24:21, 22.)

Godly men have heard the voice of prophecy in advance of the majority of people, and have announced its message and its implications. The prophetic voice of the inspired Word of God is still very much up to date; events are rapidly coming to pass, one upon another. The voice behind. us, the voice of prophecy and the voice of woe are more meaningful today than ever—not peace and safety, but destruction is announced—and now mankind is truly fearful of it.

Some of these prophecies are a thousand and more years old. Take one as an example --Daniel 12:1-4 “At that time shall Michael stand up and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even

to that same time.... Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” This prophecy is approximately

2550 years old. He would be a foolish man who would venture to say that there is no evidence of fulfilment. It is the increase of light and knowledge that brings about the trouble with which this age closes.

This voice of prophecy concerning our day began fulfilling about 100 years in the paste though not so distinct then as ‘nowadays. Nevertheless, it was heard in the distance, in the end of the 19th century; it has now become louder, and mankind seem to sense the possibility of destruction. A piece of history may illustrate this. During the Indian Mutiny in 1857, at the siege of Lucknow, when the few British in India were attacked by Indians many were massacred; a remnant held out in the town of Lucknow, but the position became hopeless. A Scottish, girl among them had a dream; she heard a sound which others could not hear—the sound of bagpipes of the Scottish Regiment approaching in the distance. “Can ye no hear them?” she said. “The bagpipes, can ye no hear them? the Campbells are coming.” Sure enough later they arrived and great was the joy.

For several decades the end of the age has been announced; some have heard the announcement and recognised the signs of the end, but the majority of professing Christians are dull of hearing. The announcement was not that the end was coming, but that we are already in the end, and are now approaching the final climax. A few all over the world have heard the glad tidings of the near approach of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, and dissolution of the old order is under way. The voice of Scripture has in our day become nearer and louder. Zeph. 1:14 states—"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty men shall cry there bitterly."

The second advent of Christ and the end of this evil dispensation are being announced; signs of the second advent of Christ are present, as we read in Luke 21:26—"Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of the heaven shall be shaken." This has meant an increase of joy and gladness to the defenders of the faith. Luke 21:31—"When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

To others it is the voice of alarm. Joel 2:1-3 reads — "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand. A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains; a great people and strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth; the land is as the garden of Eden before them and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them." This prophecy reminds us of similar words from the Apostle Paul in 1 Thes. 5:3—"Sudden destruction cometh upon them . . . . and they shall not escape."

The voice of prophecy is behind us in the sense that these things were predicted hundreds of years ago; nevertheless, it is very much up to date. Its warning is very clear—"This is the way, walk ye, in it," i.e., take heed to its light. Zephaniah 2:3 gives sound advice, —"Seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

Those who do stand on higher ground are represented in the Scriptures as standing upon a sea of glass mingled with fire (with judgments). Read Rev. 15:2-4. The spiritual • vision of those who have gotten the victory over the beast and his image (counterfeit Christianity) is very clear as to the events transpiring in the world today and the final outcome. These are standing at the very end of this age and looking beyond to the glorious Millennial Day—the light shineth more and more unto that perfect day. The celestial city is in view, as the poet has stated it:

"Come all ye saints to Pisgah's mountain,
Come see the view beyond the tide;
Millennial Canaan is before us,
Soon we'll sing on the other side."

Here in Rev. 15 these are represented as having their harps, i.e., the Word of God, and they sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb—the harmony of the Law and the prophets and the Gospel—saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty Thou art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgements are made manifest."

Passover Memorial, 1958

The anniversary of the institution of the Memorial of Christ's death falls this year on the evening of Thursday, 3rd April, agreeing exactly with the Easter season this year. While the Lord did not request that the Remembrance of His death be kept on the exact date each anniversary, the brethren arrange their services as near as possible, in keeping with the spirit and sacredness of the occasion.

Memorial Services.

Melbourne —Sunday, 30th March, at 6.30 p.m., at Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond.
Adelaide.—Sunday, 30th March, at 6.30 p.m., at Master Builders Rooms, 17 Waymouth Street, Adelaide.
Perth.—Thursday, 3rd April, at 8 p.m., at 100 Harbourne Street, Wembley, W.A.
Sydney.-Thursday, 3rd April, at 7 p.m., at 87 The Boulevarde, South Strathfield. (Visitors should leave Strathfield Station on the left side coming from the city, and 87 is on the right of Boulevarde, only 10 minutes walk, or the 4th bus stop from the station).

Adelaide Easter Convention.

This announcement is to advise that the Adelaide brethren are to hold their usual Convention this year (D.V.), from Good Friday to Easter Monday, April 4th to April 7th, in the Master Builders Rooms, 17 Waymouth Street, Adelaide, and they extend a cordial invitation to all friends who may be able to attend these gatherings in the Lord's name. Further particulars from the secretary, Mrs. H. Bartel, 10 Winston Avenue, Clarence Gardens, Adelaide, S.A.

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Wholesome Counsel.

(Prov. 16:22, 23).

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov. 16:25.

IT is a solemn warning against self-deception —against pursuing a course of conduct which is radically wrong, being opposed to the spirit and intent of the divine law, and yet which may be made to seem right by a line of false reasoning, suggested by the will of the flesh, and apparently founded upon the Word of God, yet denying its fundamental principles of righteousness. The delusions of Satan also greatly help along such deceptions, and thus the blinded one is urged along in a course which seems to him to be right, but the end of which is death.

Christians should above all things guard themselves against the folly of this way. To do this, let us ever remember that, even though through Christ we have a reckoned standing of justification before God, the human heart which we still have is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9), and that it requires constant watching and purging to enable us to put into practice the Apostle Paul's rule, "In simplicity and godly sincerity, have your conversation in the world." (2 Con 1:12). To do this requires humility, sobriety, godliness. If the heart be puffed up with pride, or ambitious for vain glory, or if it be selfish, or in any measure intoxicated with the spirit of the world, then beware, for there is great danger of getting into that way that seemeth right to a man, because blinded by his own perverse will or fleshly mind.

The best safeguard which a Christian can have against the snares of Satan, is that understanding which is here (vs. 22) described as a "well-spring of life unto him that hath it." Such understanding is not merely that of the head, but of the heart. specially; for, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," and "out of the heart are the issues of life." If the heart be wrong, the head will seek to justify it, and in so doing will pervert judgment and truth. Therefore, take heed, and "keep thy heart with all diligence."

Not only will the "wise and understanding heart" keep the feet in the paths of righteousness, but also "the heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips" (verse 23), so that he shall speak forth "words of truth and soberness," words of wisdom, of kindness and of love. How important that the fountain should be sweet, that thus the stream that issues from it may be healthful and refreshing to all within the range of its current! Truly, "pleasant words (of wisdom, of counsel and of loving kindness) are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones (in that they refresh and comfort and stimulate courage, and thus fortify the soul and strengthen it to noble deeds)." Verse 24.

How different is the picture of the ungodly man! (verses 27-29). "An ungodly man diggeth up evil (apparently finding a morbid satisfaction in searching for it), and in his lips there is a burning fire. A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends. A violent man enticeth his neighbor, and leadeth him into the way that is not good. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips, he bringeth evil to pass." Thus, as Isaiah says, "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isa. 57:20, 21.)

But blessed is the man that hath learned the right ways of the Lord, and walketh therein with a perfect heart. Such a one, unlike the wicked, who go about digging up evil, delights himself in doing good, and in speaking forth the words of truth and soberness. He is slow to anger, and studies carefully how to rule his own spirit, which is surely a great work and worthy of the ambition and effort of every Christian. (verse 32.) How blessed (verse 31) are the closing years of a long life, devoted to this most worthy end of ruling one's own spirit in harmony with the principles and precepts of the Word of God, when, as Mr. Whittier has beautifully expressed it:—

“All the jarring notes of life Seem blending in a psalm,

And all the angles of the strife Are rounding into calm;”

and when the hallowed influences of ripened Christian graces are manifest to every beholder. Truly “the hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness.” But if not, it is but a monument of folly and its ripened evil fruitage is most undesirable.

The statement of verse 33 is to the effect that God’s overruling power takes cognizance of even those things which men may regard as mere chance, and that nothing can come to pass without His knowledge and permission, and that eventually all things will be overruled to the accomplishment of His purposes.

Pilgrim Way Ended.

Towards the close of February our dear elderly Sister Blaby of Melbourne finished the pilgrim way after a long life in appreciation of the Lord’s wonderful plan of salvation through the sacrifice of our dear Saviour.

Our Sister Blaby had lived in the country of Victoria for a considerable time, and after coming to Melbourne to live with her daughter and family for the past sixteen or more years our dear Sister had not contacted many of the brethren on account of being a semi-invalid. However those who knew her best can testify to her gentle and loving disposition, and sincere appreciation of the truths of God’s Word.

Though having reached the age of 961 years and the earthly vessel becoming weary and worn out, yet there was the same spirit of devotion and patient submission to the Lord in evidence, and which was lovely to see. While almost too weak to speak in the last days of the earthly life, the words — “Our Father” — gave evidence of the hope and trust our dear Sister held of being taken “Home” to be forever with the Lord.

Sincere sympathy is extended to all the bereaved members in the family circle as the life of a devoted ‘Christian mother, grandmother and great grandmother is brought to a close, and the words of the prophet seem so fitting in these days of the harvest of the Gospel Age—”They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” (Mal. 3:17.)

A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.—Prov. 29:23.

A humble heart is a vessel of all graces. It doth better the soul and make it holy, for the soul is never fitter for God than when it is humbled. It is a fundamental grace that gives strength to all other graces. So much humility, so much grace; for, according to the measure of humiliation is the measure of other graces, because a humble heart hath in it a spiritual emptiness. Humility emptieth the heart for God to fill it. If the heart be emptied of temporal things, then it must needs be filled with spiritual things; for nature abhorreth emptiness, grace much more.—Sibbes.

Building-Praying—Keeping

(Jude 20, 21).

(Convention Address)

THIS text from the Apostle Jude conveys an idea which is common among the New Testament writers. It is used by Paul and also by Peter. This great and important work of gaining a character similar to that of Christ's is likened to the work of producing a building. When the construction of a vast building is planned, a great deal of care and attention must be given to the foundation. Sometimes great concrete pillars are required and they go down to the solid rock, in some cases many feet below ground level. This is necessary to support the great weight of the building.

Now, our building has a firm foundation. (1 Cor. 3:9-11.) Yes, faith in the ransom-sacrifice of Jesus Christ is all-important. Then we must see to it that our faith is of the right kind. We must have a faith like that of our father Abraham. We must have an obedient faith—a faith which leads on to full and complete surrender of heart and mind to God. (Eph. 1:13.)

Our Lord said that those who heard His words, and obeyed them not, may be likened to a man who built his house upon the sand, a building which will not withstand the strain and testings. How different is the case of the man who hears the Master's words and exercises obedient faith in them. (Matt. 7:24-27.) He is likened to a man who builds upon the rock foundation. "On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." The Apostle Peter makes it very clear that this matter of building refers to the development in ourselves of a Christ-like character. (See 2 Pet. 1:5-7, Rev. Ver.)

The development or building up of the Christ-like character in the members of the body of Christ is a very important work. It requires nearly 2,000 years to accomplish this great work of changing the warped and marred, and more or less ignoble and selfish hearts and minds of the believers into the pure, unselfish, lovely and lovable qualities which are displayed in the glorious Head of the Body of Christ. Of course, as far as the individual members are concerned, this great work of transforming or building up a Christ-like character must take place within the limits of one's lifetime; it may be 10 or 20 years, or even 60 or 70 years, as the case may be.

The building up of the Christ-like character in the New Creation is said by Paul to be the work of God. (See Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13; 1 Cor. 3:9.) Our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be the "beginning of the creation of God." (Rev. 3:14.) Our Heavenly Father is the supreme Architect of the Universe, but in the accomplishment of His gracious designs He is pleased to use various agencies. The Heavenly Father's chief agent in the development of the church is His well-beloved and only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. By His faithfulness in taking man's nature, and laying down His life in sacrifice, even unto the cruel death of the cross, our gracious Redeemer has gained the privilege to be Head of the New Creation: He is also the grand Example provided by the Father as a pattern for His body members. (Eph. 1:20-23; 2:20-22.)

As God's Foreman, or right-hand man, our Lord Jesus has a very special relationship toward the New Creation as a whole, and toward each member in particular. (See Eph. 5:23.) Christ is the Head of the church, being Himself the Saviour of the Body. (Verses 25-27.) God also has other means which He is using to build up the Body of Christ. (See Eph. 4:11-16.) Here we have a list of agencies which God is using in His work of building up His New Creation. (See also Eph. 4:4-6.)

In 1 Cor. 12:12-27 the Apostle shows that all the various members of the Body need each other. It will not do •for one member to say to another—"I do not need your help." The hand cannot say to the foot, "I have no need of you." All Christians have frailties and weaknesses of the flesh, but, notwithstanding these, the Lord has graciously covered the defects and imperfections with the robe of Christ's righteousness, and made us scented in the Beloved. God loves His children because He sees in our hearts the desire to do His will. He sent His Son to die for us, even while we were yet sinners. (See Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4-10; 1 John 4:7-12.) If God so loved us, we ought to love one another. In 2 Thes. 3:5 Paul prays that the Lord may direct our hearts into the love of God. We surely need divine help to direct our hearts into an understanding and appreciation of this great love of God.

The Scriptures show that the church is God's "workmanship"; she is God's building, God's "temple." This is true of the collective aspect; then it is true also that each individual member is a "temple of the holy spirit." (1 Cor. 6:19.) There is a work of preparation to be done in each individual member of the New Creation, and the Apostle Paul shows that we each have the privilege of co-operating with God in this matter. (See Phil. 2:12.) Yes, with God's help, and *by His* grace, and under the direction and guidance of His holy spirit through the Word, we are to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," i.e., with great carefulness. We are to be very careful to see that our efforts are in

line with the directions of God's Word. (See 2 Pet. 1:5-7.)

Let us keep in mind the word of wisdom in Psa. 127. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." What an amount of wisdom, patience, faith, love and humility of heart and mind is required, and we find we get the necessary lessons and disciplines in our day by day experiences. How much waiting on God is needed to bring us into line with the requirements of the great Divine Architect. It surely takes time and much of the Lord's grace to develop in our hearts the meekness and gentleness and Christ-like love necessary to qualify us to become associates of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our text speaks of "praying in the holy spirit," and it may truly be said that there can be no real, proper building of Christ-like character without prayer. Prayer is one of those God-given privileges designed to assist the pilgrims in the narrow way. Almost the last command given by our Lord to His disciples was— "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matt. 26:41.) Again He said in Luke 18:1-8—"Men ought always to pray and not to faint." Our Lord's example provides us with a very forcible lesson along this line. He was a man of prayer, and let us remember, too, that He was an absolutely perfect Man. He had an absolutely perfect mind and heart; He also enjoyed the fulness of God's holy spirit, yet He saw the need of spending much time alone with God.

Our Lord gave His disciples some directions concerning prayer. (See Matt. 6:5-15.) Also in Matt. 7:7-11 Christ urged His disciples to earnest perseverance in prayer. Note the-thrice repeated exhortation — "ask," "seek," and "knock." Observe how He uses words which mean almost the same thing, and each time repeats the promise so distinctly,—"Ye shall receive; ye shall find; it shall be opened unto you." Our Lord desires that we grasp this lesson — "Everyone that asketh receiveth." Our Heavenly Father is more willing to give the holy spirit to those who ask than are earthly parents to give good things to their children. (See Luke 11:13.)

In Mark 11:24 we have another encouraging exhortation from the Master, —"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." In order that our prayers shall be acceptable to God, we must come before Him with reverence — "Our Father which art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name." Our first thought is to be not a selfish one concerning our own or other's need, but "Thy Name, Thy Kingdom, Thy will be done."

Then follows the requests for supplies, for mercy and grace, and protection and guidance, etc. For our prayers to be acceptable to God they must be to His glory, in full surrender to His will, in full assurance of faith, in the name of Jesus and with earnest perseverance.

Our Lord gave us some very important and definite promises in respect of prayer. (See John 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23,24,26,27.) In regard to these wonderful promises of our Lord, we need to keep in mind that they are made to His disciples; we should say, to His fully consecrated footstep followers. These, having submitted their own wills to God, and having accepted the guidance of His holy spirit, have learned that there are certain blessings which the Lord is willing to bestow upon us. In this connection, see John 5:14, 15.

Our prayers to be acceptable to God must express reverence for Him, and submission to His will. We must be abiding in Christ, and our prayers must be offered in full assurance of faith. (See Heb. 11:6.) Then when the answer seems to tarry, we must have perseverance; for a lesson in perseverance see our Lord's words in Luke 18:1-8. We must not allow the seeming delay in the answer to our prayers to cause us to lose faith; the very delay helps to exercise our faith and patience, and makes the answer more sweet and precious.

The Apostle Paul, in his beautiful letters to the various churches, has recorded some fine examples of prayer. (See Eph. 3:14-21; Col. 1:9-11; 1 Thes. 3:9-13; 2 Thes. 1:11-13.) Then, this grand servant of God, the great Apostle Paul, shows his humility and lowliness of mind when he earnestly requests the brethren to remember him in their prayers. (See Rom. 15:30, Eph. 6:18, 19; Col. 4:2-4; 2 Thes. 3:1,2.) It seems impossible to over-estimate the value and importance of prayer. Let us remember the Apostle's injunction to—"Pray without ceasing." We can keep our hearts in the attitude of prayer, and cultivate an attitude of mind which is dependent upon the Lord. (See Phil. 4:6.)

As we give earnest heed to the Scriptural injunction to "build ourselves up in our most holy faith," and make full use of our privileges of prayer, we will find that this very exercise will tend, by God's grace, to "keep us" in the "love of God." As children of God we do want to have more of the true spirit of sonship. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Example and Elder Brother, said, "I delight to do thy will, 0 my God." We want to have a larger measure of the spirit of Christ, the spirit of sonship, the spirit of willing obedience. We have some wonderful promises from our Lord in John 14:21,23; also John 15:10. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love," etc. Here we see that the spirit of obedience is necessary in order to the enjoyment of the love of God and Christ.

In this connection let us look at our Lord's words in Matt. 5:43-45. Our Lord tells us to "love our enemies, and do good

to them that hate us that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." Also in 1 Pet. 1:14 we are urged "as obedient children" to co-operate with the Lord in exercising ourselves in the ways of holiness, in all our manner of life.. Again in Eph. 5:1,2 we have the exhortation to be "followers of God, as dear children," etc.

The latter part of Jude 21 has these words —''looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." If we would enjoy the blessing of mercy from the Lord, we will need to cultivate and exercise this quality in all our intercourse with our brethren and with our fellow creatures in the world around us. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (See also Col. 3:12-14; Phil. 2:1,2; also "Manna" text and comment December 14.)

May the Lord help us and bless us each one and prosper the work of His grace in our hearts, and cause us "to increase and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men," that thus we may be developed in all the graces of His spirit and "be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

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