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Preaching the Gospel.

“Woe unto me, if I preach not the Gospel.” (1 Cor 9:16)

ALL will readily agree that Paul was particularly anointed to declare the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Lord instructed Ananias to go and comfort him and to restore sight to him, after he had been stricken down by the holy vision on the way to Damascus. The Lord said, “He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and children of Israel.” (Acts 9:15.) Paul took the place of Judas as one of the twelve apostles of Christ and of course had greater responsibility than any of us. He was so faithful in fulfilling his part and suffered greatly as a consequence, but he also had great comfort and joy in his service—rejoicing even in his great tribulation and in the fulfilment of the Lord’s promise to him, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” He was one of those who received many talents and gained many more, and at the end of the way had the assurance that a crown of life was laid up for him at the return of Christ for His Bride.

We have not the talents of Paul but we are reminded that in the Lord’s parable it was the servant who only had one talent, who failed to use it. Perhaps we are apt to feel, “O, I can do so little, I cannot do like Brother so-and-so, or Sister so-and-so. They seem to have talents and opportunities that I have not,” and so we may think the little talent we have not worth exercising. It would indeed be a sad thing if we were to receive the condemnation of the Lord like the “one talented man” instead of the welcome home, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.”

Ambassadors.

Every member in Christ is an ambassador—representative of Christ, and has a part to play in the truth service and caring for the other members in Christ. Where we go we must carry our message, we must manifest Christ’s spirit and remember “whose we are and whom we serve.” Jesus made this very plain, saying, “For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you;” “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me.” (Matt. 10:20; Luke 10:16.) If we could only keep this in mind all our moments every day, how it should help us “so to walk as he walked,” as John says.

It is important that we should know what our mission is—the purpose of our ambassadorship. Paul knew very definitely, and he could never have done such good service had he been uncertain as to what he was commissioned to do. It is essential for us also to find out what we are sent to accomplish. We should ask as did the Apostle, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

In Paul’s day there was no New Testament with its collected instructions of the Lord and the Apostles, and, as Paul was being commissioned for a new work entirely, he received instruction from Ananias and also by special revelations from the Lord, We are not sent to start a new arrangement but have our instructions from the New Testament how to carry on the work begun by the Lord and the Apostles.

There have been many people who have been led astray by impressions or imaginations of their own minds and have declared themselves particularly raised up for some special service. We have examples of these in our own day in fulfilment of the Lord’s prophecy and the Apostle’s words that, “Of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse

things to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:30.) “For there shall be false Christs and false prophets (teachers) and shall show great signs and wonders that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matt. 24:24.).

We are not, then, to accept the claims of anyone, of having some special Divine mission. The church at Ephesus was commended for having tried (tested) some who claimed to be apostles and were not—they found them to be liars. (Rev. 2:2 also Rev. 2:14, 15, 20.). We are not to be guided either by our own impressions or visions or claims of others. We must be guided by the Word of God which is sufficient that “the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work.” So we must beware of such teachers who would assume to make any change regarding our mission or work.

In John 17:17, 18, Jesus prays for His disciples—”Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” Then, after His resurrection, Jesus said to the Apostles, “As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” (John 20:21.) The fact is, that the Church is to carry on the work begun by Jesus, even filling up that which is left over of the afflictions of Christ. (Col. 1:24.).

In Matt. 28:19, 20, we have definite instructions regarding our mission—”Go therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the holy spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the age.” The mission of the Church is to evangelise—”Let your light so shine before men that they may glorify your Father in heaven.” “Ye are the light of the world,” and we must not cover up the light. (Matt. 5:14, 16.). The light that is given us is for the purpose of letting it shine out; we must “witness to the truth,” that the world may know that Jesus was sent of God to be the Saviour of the world, the light of the world. Jesus said to the disciples, “Ye shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” (John 15:27.). John suffered on the Isle of Patmos for the witness of Jesus which he gave. Those in Rev. 20:4 who are to reign with Christ are shown as “beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God.”

Jesus before Pilate “witnessed a good confession” when He acknowledged that He was a king, and He said that He “came to bear witness to the truth.” This witness is to the world and it is that which brings ‘our persecution; we do not get “beheaded” for witnessing the truth to fellow members in the Christ. We are to carry on the work which Jesus commenced and do good unto all men as we have opportunity, but especially to the household of faith. That has always been the chief work of Christians as the Lord said to Peter, “Feed my sheep, feed my lambs,” but that does not mean that we are not to preach the gospel to every creature as we may have opportunity. The Prince of light and truth says, “Let your light shine;” it is the prince of darkness that would “blind the minds of them that believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into their hearts.” He it is who would delude and if possible deceive the elect and make them think that there is no further need to witness the truth to the world—that all we have to do now is to make our own calling ‘and election sure. There is surely danger of thus hiding our talent, putting our candle under a bushel, and the light will go out.

We are living in the day of religious deceptions foretold by our Lord. These deceptions are not those that have always been down the age—the allurements of the world and the flesh. These are still active and lead many away from the truth, but what the Lord referred to were deceptions such as might if possible deceive the elect. The deceptions to have an appeal to the earnest believer must necessarily have a religious garb, and an appearance of truth or advanced light, and there never has been a time when there were so many “false prophets,” so many claiming to have special messages of truth and light. We do well to heed our Lord’s warning and the Apostles’ exhortations that we “be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” (Heb. 13:9.). “Tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” (Eph. 4:14.).

This teaching that we should stop preaching the truth i.e., proclaiming it to the public, at a time when the poor world just needs the comfort and consolation which nothing else can bring to it, seems to be one of the strangest deceptions. It would be strange enough if any Christian should personally reach such a conclusion for himself, but stranger still when such would condemn those who still send out the light to reach any who may have an ear to hear.

The argument appears to be that we have reached the end of the Gospel call, that sowing has ceased, fishing has ceased, harvesting is now the work, that the “drag net” which has been cast into the sea all down the age has now been drawn to the shore and the good and bad fish are being separated. We agree that we have reached the time of harvest and of drawing in of the drag net. One in particular taught all this long ago but he did not cease to hold public meetings, indeed his work widened as the harvest proceeded. It was in his latter days that the newspaper work, Photo-

Drama work etc., were started, and he expected either that circumstances would come about that would make it impossible for public work to continue, or else that the truth would become popular and so there would be no longer any opportunity of suffering for the truth's sake. He had no thought whatever of ceasing to proclaim the truth in every possible way. Yet those who are teaching that it is wrong to hold public meetings or to try to teach the truth to the people profess that they are in harmony with this one's teachings, and denounce any who differ from his teachings except in such matters as they themselves differ.

We are reminded of the occasion when the disciples said that they found some, who were not following with them, casting out devils, and they forbade them. Our Lord said, "Forbid them not." It is for us conscientiously to teach what we believe, to declare the truth, however it may combat what others teach, and leave each individual to do the same. Each is responsible to the Lord and will receive reward according to faithfulness in letting the light shine.

The Lord has never left himself without a witness in the world. We, to be faithful followers of Christ and the Apostles, must continue to tell out to one and all as we have opportunity the glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, and to preach like the early disciples "Jesus and the resurrection." The Lord will direct the message as to whether it results in separating the wheat from the tares or whether it calls some even from the world into the light and comfort and joys of the truth.

The fan in the Lord's hand by which He separated the wheat from the chaff in the harvest time of the Jewish Age was the truth then due—the ending of the Law Dispensation and the commencing of a new age, the age during which the Church or spiritual seed of Abraham would be chosen. The message was, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

So, now at the end of the Gospel Age, the sickle that separates the wheat from the tares is the message of present truth (which the harvest messengers use to gather the elect from the four corners of the world), the presence of Messiah and that the new age of the Messianic Kingdom is at hand. This message has been separating the wheat to go into the garner and binding the tares in bundles for the burning, while it has also done a great deal in educating people in the understanding of the Divine purpose and giving hope and comfort, and in preparation for the "turning to the people of the pure language" that will turn the people to the Lord with one consent. Zeph. 3:8, 9.

"The anointing which we have received of Him abideth in us and we all know it." If we have received this anointing we know it and also ought to know for what we are anointed. As many as are baptised into Jesus Christ have put on Christ. We have come into the Anointed and we turn to our Lord's words in Luke 4:18, quoted from Isaiah: "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

What a happy mission is ours! We could not have a happier message as we go forth as ambassadors of Christ. We have no desire to substitute any other message; our hearts are so much in tune with our King and His purpose that we would sound His praises, we would proclaim His message to every one who will give us the chance whether it be to only one or to a thousand. What the result may be is for the Lord to determine; He giveth the increase.

"Oh for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise
The glories of my God and King
The triumphs of His grace."

"These things I have written unto you concerning them that seduce you, but the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you." (1 John 2:26, 27.). So, let us realise our anointing to preach the gospel to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted and preach deliverance to the captives.

As ambassadors of Christ may we be content, gladly content, to present His message and properly represent our King in word, in deed and in spirit, so that it may be realised that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him; so that it may be seen by others "whose we are and whom we serve." "Let our light so shine that others seeing our good works may glorify our Father which is in heaven." "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days . . . He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap . . . In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or

whether they both shall be alike good.” (Eccles. 11:1, 4, 6.).

Passover Memorial, 1941.

According to the Jewish Calendar the 14th of Nisan falls this year on Thursday evening, April 10th, after sundown. This date will therefore be the anniversary of the institution of the Memorial of our Lord’s death and the appropriate time to celebrate in remembrance of Him. “Christ our passover (Lamb) is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast.”

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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.

The Berean Bible Institute. Its Work, Past and Present.

WHILE the majority of our readers are no doubt fully conversant with the work of the Berean Bible Institute, it is thought well, in view of present circumstances, and for the benefit of new readers and the interested generally, to state briefly and clearly the objects for which the Institute exists. This is deemed of special importance at this time, in view of the fact that it has come to our knowledge that some have thought the Institute was connected with another organisation or organisations. The following statements are therefore submitted, trusting that they may clear away any misunderstandings of the past:

The Berean Bible Institute was formed to be a centre of co-operation in service and fellowship for Christian people, particularly those enjoying the knowledge of present truth. (2 Pet. 1:12.) It exists solely for the purpose of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ—”The glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people,”—to assist any and all in the Christian walk and in the study of God’s Word.

The Institute is not and has never been connected with any other organisation or organisations in Australia or overseas. It is unsectarian, and makes no claim of authority, nor in any sense seeks to dominate the minds of those who become associated with it.

The teachings of the Institute as set forth in the monthly “Peoples Paper and Herald of Christ’s Kingdom” (now in its 24th year) and literature generally, are not claimed as being original in any sense; they are based wholly upon the Bible records—the words of our Lord, His apostles and prophets of the Old and New Testaments. The words of Jesus in John 4:37, 38, are taken as applying very fully in our case,—”Herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured and ye are, entered into their labours.” To enter into the labours of other true servants of the Lord, especially in this “harvest time,” the ending of the Gospel Age, is considered the greatest privilege possible in this world.

The Institute never solicits funds, but depends entirely upon voluntary donations from those sufficiently interested in the work of promulgating the present truth and able to render any financial assistance. There is no list of members connected with the Institute, but assistance is gladly rendered to all who desire that which the Lord has committed to our care. The following quotation explains this point.—”The Lord’s Church, the only one to which the name ecclesia, body or Church, is properly applicable, is so insignificant, so unostentatious, and comparatively so poor in this world’s riches, that it is not recognised nor recognisable from the worldly standpoint. It is neither man-made or man-ruled; nor are its members enrolled on earth, but in heaven. (Heb. 12:23.) Its head and bishop is the Lord, its law is His Word; it has but one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism; and it is built upon the testimonies of the holy apostles and prophets—Jesus Christ himself being its chief corner-stone.”

In view of the present national emergency and certain issues before the minds of people generally, both in this and other lands, it seems well to state here that the teachings of this Institute encourage due respect for the government under which we live, by the Lord’s providence, and for the flag which represents the government. In other words the saluting of the British or Australian flag should in no sense be understood as an act of worship. The Bible clearly teaches that Christians should be respectful to the government under which they live, and especially should this be so

in the British Empire where so much freedom of worship is granted in contrast with many other countries of the world.

This proper respect and law-abiding attitude should not be interpreted in any way as being contrary to God's injunction, "Thou shalt not kill." The words of Jesus, "For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," (Matt. 26:52) are in full agreement, and set an unalterable standard for all who would be His true disciples. In time of war our government may not always exempt those opposed to war from participating in it, although gracious provision of this kind has in the past been made under British law for those who sincerely believe war to be unrighteous. However, should the Lord's people be called on to do military service they would be obliged to obey the powers that be, and should consider that the Lord's providence had permitted the conscription and that He was able

to overrule it to the good of themselves or others. Yet it would be quite proper to register their objection to warfare with the right authorities, pointing out from the words of Jesus, that while they were loyal and law-abiding citizens, yet their consciences could never permit them to take life. Usually, this course would procure, if not exemption from service, at least a transference to the medical or hospital section, but if compelled to serve in the ranks and to fire their guns the followers of Christ need not feel compelled to shoot a fellow-creature.

It is our sincere belief, based on the testimony of the whole of God's Word, that peace and happiness can only be brought about in the earth by the kingdom of Christ. That our Lord did not desire His people to fight to bring in His kingdom is shown by His words in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world (age); if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now is my kingdom not from hence." This shows that Christ's kingdom was not set up at His first advent, rather He came to save mankind,

"to give His life a ransom for many." Likewise, Christ's followers are to walk in His steps, to lay down their lives in His service, sacrificially, and thus gain a place in His heavenly kingdom. Then, when mankind has learned sufficient lessons in the sinfulness of sin, with wars and the terrible experiences of the reign of death brought about by selfishness on every side, Christ's kingdom shall be established on earth, for the blessing of the whole human family. (Zeph. 3:8, 9; Micah 4:1-4; Rom. 8:22, 19-21; Rev. 21:3-5.

Convention News.

Melbourne.

THE four-day Annual Convention arranged by the friends in Melbourne and held on December 25th, 26th, 28th and 29th was a very helpful and encouraging time for all in attendance. On these occasions of "mountain-top" experiences, being lifted up to things above by the blessings received from on high, the first and continual thought is to render praise and thanksgiving to the Giver of every good thing, who, in answer to the prayers of the brethren, before and during the assemblies, did indeed fulfil the promise through the prophet Malachi: "Prove me now herewith, . . . if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

It is fitting to mention just here, that the brethren at this Convention in desiring and praying for the Lord's blessing, were also fully mindful in prayer for other dear members who were unable to be present, as well as for those in distant lands where the dark night is fast settling down and where gatherings of similar nature would at this time be impossible. All were commended to the God of all grace and comfort for their keeping and blessing through the fiery experiences, that their faith fail not, but rather "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

The presence of the visiting friends once again added greatly to the benefits received; it was certainly a great pleasure to have brethren in attendance from four of the Australian States. The zeal and earnestness thus shown in coming long distances to assemble in Convention was encouraging indeed, and by the many expressions as the gatherings drew to a close it was evident that all were richly repaid with spiritual good things for any sacrifice of time and means to be present. Most of the visitors were accommodated in the homes of the brethren, thus allowing further fellowship in addition to the Convention proper. The work of the Sisters of the Melbourne Class in thus caring for the needs of the visiting members both in their homes and at the Convention was no small contribution to the success of the occasion, by the Lord's overruling providence.

Opening the Convention with the words of welcome from the Melbourne brethren, the thoughts were based on the beautiful passage from 1 Peter 1:2-8, in which the wonderful high-calling is presented in all its beauty. The great privilege of having been called to be of God's elect, "through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," was impressed, as well as the comforting assurance that all who continued in full confidence in the Lord would receive the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

The prayers of the brethren and appropriate hymns of praise preceded the Bible Study for each of the afternoon sessions, and the passages of Scripture considered throughout the Convention are as follows:—Psa. 51:6-13; 1 John 2:18-28; Luke 21:25-36, and Phil. 3:12-16. The study of these portions of God's Word was very instructive and helpful, providing much scope for thought, the majority of the friends entering into the discussions with that earnestness and love for the truth which is so good to see amongst the Lord's people.

The three addresses each day from the brethren were most profitable and refreshing to all, each speaker contributing much to the upbuilding of the assembly by calling to mind the precious things of God's Word on each of the subjects presented, which were as follows:—"Psa. 112:4," "Watch and Pray," "Imagination," "Constant Obedience," "Psa. 84:1," "God Changeth Not," "The Wisdom from Above," "Discipleship," "Deceptions in the Christian Way," "Ambassadors for Christ," and "Be Strong in the Lord." It is hoped that a number of the above addresses will be printed in the "People's Paper" in coming issues.

During the fellowship sessions two very enjoyable Praise and Testimony Meetings were held, at which various brethren spoke concerning the Lord's leadings and guidance over the past year; these more heart to heart expressions drew the brethren more intimately together, as no doubt the experiences of one very often fitted the case of others to a great extent. These were truly meetings of praise to God in acknowledging His loving care in past times, and it was readily expressed that the same confidence would be placed in the Lord for the days ahead, with the desire to serve Him even better than in the past, by His grace and strength. A Question Meeting also gave opportunity for discussion on a number of questions handed in during the Convention, and the answers received from the friends generally, seemed to clear away some difficulties on various portions of the Scriptures.

On the first day of Convention the visiting brethren gave a number of messages of Christian love and helpful Scripture citations brought along from their home classes. Similar messages of love in the Lord were sent by brethren not represented in person at the gatherings and all these kind and loving salutations were highly appreciated. The Convention message chosen and sent by those members present to their home classes, and to the brethren generally, is found in Luke 21:34-36, 28; as also the warm Christian love of all assembled in Convention was included with the passage of Scripture.

The closing sessions of a most encouraging season came all too soon, and yet it was realised that to properly appreciate all that had been presented over the four days, some time of quiet meditation would be most profitable. So, with the usual Love Feast and beautiful hymns, "Blest be the tie that binds" and "God be with you till we meet again," the closing prayer of thankfulness to God and committing of all interests into His loving care and guidance brought to conclusion one of the most blessed seasons of refreshing, the happy memory of which will no doubt long remain with all present for their encouragement in the days ahead. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Canberra.

THE following report from our brethren at Canberra explains the happy season of refreshing experienced over the New Year week-end: "We commenced our sessions at 2.30 p.m. on Friday, January 3rd, with the brethren from Sydney and a sister from another State in attendance. The time allotted for the study on Psalm 23 (14 hours) was not too long by any means. Many fine thoughts were brought forward, and many more could have been advanced had we more time. How comforting it is to realise our Father's watchfulness and care over us at all times!

"In the evening, messages were read from other brethren and we felt that their prayers were ascending to the Father on our behalf, just as the burden of our prayers is that they also may be blessed with the richest favours that God so graciously bestows. Following quickly came the Symposium—'The Way, The Truth, and The Life,' by three brethren. It was interestingly shown how Christ filled these parts—'In Him we live and move and have our being.'

“On Saturday the Bible Study was in Col. 1:10-12. Again the time was none too long and much discussion centered around the points under consideration. After tea the Testimony Meeting took up our attention, the theme being ‘How I received the Truth,’ the thought being that our attention would be directed to the various ways the Lord has used in reaching His children and so encourage us to ‘Sow beside all waters.’ Following the Testimony Meeting a helpful address was given on the Ransom. This was followed by another Symposium—Faith, Hope and Love,’—by three brethren.

“On Sunday morning our usual service was conducted and the subject of the address given was, ‘What shall I render unto to Lord?’; a subject appropriate to this time of the year when we take stock of our progress and recount the Lord’s favours throughout the past year. Oh! for grace that our efforts may be redoubled to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

“In the afternoon, after the usual praise, prayer and consideration of the Manna Text for the day, we had our Question Meeting. There were six or seven questions that kept us busy for the afternoon; some very interesting viewpoints were advanced and a profitable time was spent together. After tea another Praise and Testimony Meeting was held, in which all joined, the theme being ‘The blessing or value of the truth to us.’ It seemed good to prompt the brethren along these lines at a testimony meeting and their response was encouraging to us all.

“Then followed the Bible Study in Eph. 2:19-22. We traced the temple building from the ‘Corner-stone,’ or foundation stone, to the completed structure and visualised its service in blessing all mankind. What a wonderful temple! What a wonderful result! Time sped along quickly and we were ever needing the reminder that there were other items still on the programme. After the study there was a short farewell address taken from 2 Cor. 13:11,

Finally, brethren, farewell, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.’ Partings are never pleasant when they have such happy memories.

“Our sessions ended with a love feast and the singing of the hymn ‘Blest be the tie that binds.’ There have been expressions of the Lord’s rich blessing during the whole of the Convention. The friends here feel themselves richly repaid for the effort involved and hope that the benefit will be permanent to all concerned. Our parting message to the visitors was Rom. 12:9-12. So, our first Convention came to a close; the Lord was true to His promise and blessed the small company.”

The Wisdom from Above.

(James 3:17.)

(Convention Address.)

SOLOMON, the wise man, said, “Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding.” We would all agree that wisdom is essential for the carrying out of any plan successfully. There are two kinds of wisdom, earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom. The wisdom after which the natural man seeks is mainly of a selfish kind, but the wisdom from above after which the Christian seeks is, or should be, for the purpose of developing character.

There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge means mental enlightenment, but wisdom means knowledge and the capacity to put it into due use. Perhaps we could illustrate the matter this way—We may have knowledge of how a house is built, we may even have a good knowledge of the plans and specifications of a certain building, but to build the house is an entirely different thing. It requires the builder to do the job; or we would say, it requires one with wisdom, or the capacity to put the knowledge of the plans and specifications into due use.

Now we are all builders; each of us has his own character to build and we have the wonderful assurance that we have the right foundation on which to build—“Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” So we see that wisdom and not knowledge is the principal thing for the Christian, but both knowledge and wisdom are necessary to carry out a plan.

‘We are often told that our heavenly Father has both wisdom and knowledge. In Rom. 11:33 we read, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding

out.” The Apostle Paul wrote these words respecting God’s great plan of the ages which will in due time include all the human race.

In God’s plan there are four outstanding divine attributes --Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power. While it is said •by the Psalmist that “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne” (Psa. 89:14), yet in God’s plan we would say again that “Wisdom is the principal thing.” It was wisdom that foresaw the fall of man through inexperience; it was wisdom that placed man in the hands of justice and permitted him to experience sin and the penalty inflicted for 4000 years before love was fully manifest. So we read, “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son.” (Gal. 4:4.) Herein was manifested the love of God in that “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,” (Rom. 5:8) and still wisdom sees fit to permit mankind as a whole to continue its downward course of degradation, in sin and death, while the “little flock,” the elect of this Gospel Age, is being taken out from amongst mankind and developed to be joint-heirs with our Lord. So, by this we see that, in God’s plan, wisdom controls the other attributes, even love itself.

The Apostle Paul, when speaking of the progressive steps necessary for the Christian to take on his journey to the heavenly goal, says “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and deliverance.” Here we are told of a wisdom that a Christian needs even before he becomes justified. It is a wisdom one gets through a dependence upon God for guidance and not upon human agents. We are told that “No man cometh unto the Son except the Father which sent him draw him,” (John 6:44) and thus, one is led to realise his own sinful condition and the need of redemption. One is led to understand that this can be gained only by the acceptance of the Lord as his Redeemer and that through His blood there is forgiveness of sins. This is the beginning of heavenly wisdom and those who are drawn to the Son in this way eventually reach the position where they put no confidence in themselves and their own wisdom, but in the Lord Jesus Christ who •of God is made unto us wisdom.

So, then, if we have this knowledge and can grasp the fact that through Christ’s obedience we may be accepted of the Father, our sins being laid upon Him, and His righteousness or merit reckoned as applicable to us for a robe of righteousness, in this way we are said to be justified and if we continue to look to our heavenly Father for guidance we will be led to see the wisdom of making a full consecration to the Lord and thus Jesus will be made unto us sanctification. But it is wisdom that controls the entire course.

Now, in this third chapter of James, the Apostle is telling us about wisdom in the use of the tongue. He says that there is practically no limit to the use of the tongue, either for the furtherance of the truth and consequently of doing good to others, or of speaking evil and doing harm to others. He also tells us that we can bless our heavenly Father with the same tongue with which we can curse men. By cursing men the Apostle means to do harm to others by speaking injurious words of them, explaining further that this is not heavenly wisdom, but is earthly—sensual, devilish. So the lesson is really not against the use of the tongue, but against the evil influence or power we may exercise upon others by any wrong words spoken.

Verse 13 says, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” We have seen that wisdom and not knowledge is the principal thing. While knowledge is necessary for the growth in Christian graces it has the tendency to cause one to boast and to use his tongue only to display his knowledge. The Apostle Paul says, “Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up.” (1 Cor. 8:1.)

Then, again, we are to grow in grace as we grow in knowledge, the Apostle Peter tells us. What is really necessary is wisdom, or the capacity to put knowledge into due use. If one has put the knowledge given to him by the study of God’s Word into use, it will be shown by his good works, but the one who has not put knowledge into proper use will always be striving to put himself and his ideas in the front.

How beautiful are the words of verse 17, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” Wisdom is pure. No doubt we all desire to be pure, but to be so would mean to be perfect, which is impossible while we are in this earthen vessel. However, we can have pure intentions. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God,” are our Lord’s words, and it is indeed encouraging to know that we can have pure motives and intentions, and if our hearts are in the right condition our imperfect works are supplemented by the perfect or pure works of our Lord. So, then, a pure heart is the mainspring of a Christian. If the heart is not pure it will be shown by the words, as our Lord saith, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

The Christian who has accepted the call of this Gospel Age and has a good knowledge of God's plan of the ages is very highly favoured because he has an understanding of the glorious character of God and also of our Lord Jesus. Our Lord Jesus being actually pure, His words and works were pure and so He is a perfect example for us to copy. So, if our motives, our intentions, our hearts are pure it will be shown by the use of the tongue, for the tongue is the index to the heart, and we will be on the right track to make further progress in the Christian way.

Wisdom is peaceable. Wisdom in the use of the tongue is essential if we would live peaceable lives. Our Lord said again, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God." The Apostle says that wisdom is

first pure, then peaceable, and so the one who has a pure heart, which cannot be discerned by others, will manifest this outwardly by these other characteristics of peaceableness, gentleness, mercy, etc.

Again, the tongue is the main member which disturbs peace; there is no way in which strife or trouble can be more quickly stirred up than by a heated word or by speaking evil of another; and so it calls for much wisdom in controlling the tongue if we would be peacemakers. The Apostle Paul says (Heb. 12:14), "Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." So it is necessary to have peaceful habits whether we are at our daily work, in our homes, or at our Bible classes.

We must remember that the Apostle James was speaking to Christians, to those who had made some progress in the Christian way, and it would seem that for him to give such advice shows that peace does not always reign amongst Christians as it 'should. But if we take the admonitions of the Apostles they shall help us all develop more and more of this characteristic—"Follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another." "Speak evil of no man." "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Romans 14:19; Titus 3:2; Eph. 4:29.)

Wisdom is gentle. Gentleness is a fruit of the spirit that should be cultivated by all who profess to be followers of Christ. It seems to be closely associated with peaceableness, because a person with a cultivated, gentle nature will seldom stir up bitter feelings or strife in another, while one who is abrupt or careless in his speech will find that his or her words and ways will very easily cause trouble, especially with those who are not spirit begotten. Gentleness is very necessary when presenting the truth to others. The truth presented in an abrupt or heated manner will seldom take root; but, on the other hand, how effective it is when presented in a gentle, kindly manner, with well chosen words. The Apostle Paul says, "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." (2 Tim. 2:24, 25.) Our Lord was gentle; He never spoke abruptly, coarsely, or gave an hurried answer even under the severest trial. So let us copy our Lord and it will help us to be gentle.

Wisdom is easy to be entreated, i.e., it is easy to approach, or easy to reason with. This is really a wonderful characteristic. The worldly-wise are often those who think they know everything, and if one wishes to reason with them along almost any line, they press their view to the extreme. But the wisdom from above is different; it is moderate in its views, yet we would say, firm in principle. In speaking to others, especially along the lines of the truth, it is a great advantage if one is moderate, not an extremist, and can view matters from the standpoint of another. If so, it makes it much easier to help another. But if one is haughty and hard to approach or reason with, it will not get far in helping others. Wisdom will acknowledge the good even in an opponent.

Full of mercy and good fruits. Our Lord said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." For us to exercise mercy towards others we must realise and appreciate the mercy that has been shown to us by our heavenly Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. If this is not realised, how then can we be merciful or sympathetic towards others? So, then, to be merciful towards others, it must come from a pure heart, a heart cleansed through a realisation of God's mercy toward us. Our Lord in another place said, "If ye do not from the heart forgive one another, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." So it must, be a genuine mercy and not a feigned one, and must cover from sight and so far as possible blot from memory the failings and weaknesses of others, else it cannot hope for forgiveness and blotting out of its own shortcomings. The good fruits mentioned are the fruits of the spirit which are sure to proceed from the heart that is pure, peaceable and gentle.

Without partiality would mean that we should have the same interest in all of God's children. (Read James 2:1-6.) We would say that wisdom does not respect persons. Even in our assemblies we should have just as much interest in the

poor as the rich, in the weak as the strong, and even in those who may seem to lack wisdom as with those possessing a greater amount of development along this line. God is no respecter of persons and it is really a lack of wisdom if anyone has the spirit of partiality in his heart.

Last of all, James says, wisdom is without hypocrisy. We remember our Lord gave us a good illustration of hypocrisy when referring to the Pharisees and scribes in Matt. 23:27, 28. This is a terrible and sad condition revealed in these words, and shows the heart completely out of accord with righteousness, and yet by the outward appearance, perhaps by the use of the tongue, smother up the real desires and motives of the heart. This is not heavenly wisdom but is earthly, and shows that Satan still has control over hearts in this condition.

No doubt we all lack wisdom in some way or other, and perhaps we realise it more when we come to see what should be the outcome of it, when rightly used in our lives. But we have the assurance by the Apostle James that "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5.) So, if we find ourselves lacking in wisdom along any line we should not lose time in going to the throne of grace and there by prayer ask our Father to enlighten and instruct us in the right way.

We are told again by the wise man, Solomon, that "The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." And further, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths." It may be that we have not put all our trust in our Father's care, to give us help and strength in every time of need, and so the very act of going to the throne of grace should have a stimulating effect upon us.

There are three ways in which we can gain wisdom—by instruction, by observation and by experience. We read in Prov. 1:7 again, "The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Again, in chapter 8:33, "Hear instruction and be wise." So then, if we do not heed instruction from God's Word we will find that God will give us experiences, and sometimes they may be severe and trying, to develop us that we may ultimately gain the character likeness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Sweet-Brier Rose.

Beside my cottage door it grows,
The loveliest, daintiest flower that blows,
A sweet-brier rose.

At dewy morn or twilight's close,
The rarest perfume from it flows,—
This strange, wild rose.

But when the raindrops on it beat,
Ah, then its odours grow more sweet
About my feet!

Oft times with loving tenderness
Its soft green leaves I gently press
In sweet caress,—

A still more wondrous fragrance flows,
The more my fingers firmly close,
And crush the rose !

Dear Lord, oh, let my life be so,—
Its perfume when the tempests blow,
The sweeter flow !

And should it be Thy blessed will
With crushing grief my soul to fill,
Press harder still.

And while its dying fragrance flows,
I'll whisper low, "He loves and knows
His crushed brier-rose."

—Gertrude W. Seibert.

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