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How May Christians Work Out Salvation?

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:12, 13.)

IN examining this important subject of working out our salvation, it is essential to realise that these words from the Apostle Paul were addressed to Christians only. The terms “saints” and “Christians”, of course, are rightly used only for those who are fully consecrated followers of Christ. It is necessary to realise this, because in many quarters today the title “Christian” is used to describe anyone who shows a good spirit and who seeks to do good works, irrespective of their faith in Christ. This is too liberal an application of the word altogether, because the word “Christian” means “anointed one”—anointed by the holy spirit of God.

While our text in Phil. 2:12 exhorts Christians to work out their salvation with great earnestness, there are other Biblical passages which declare that salvation is a *gift* of God. That being so, some sincere people are rather puzzled.

One of these passages is found in Eph. 2:8-10—“For by grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves; it *is* the gift of God.” Yes, we rightly understand that there was no obligation on God’s part to save or recover anyone from death. When God pronounced the death sentence on our first parents, it would have been quite just of Him to allow Adam to go down into the death condition, and each generation to suffer the same penalty, without any thought of granting a future life, but God so loved the human family that He sent His own Son to be the Saviour of the world. So the salvation from Adamic condemnation was wholly by God’s grace or favour, and this wonderful *saved condition* was gained by the Ephesian Christians “through faith” we read. This impresses the thought that ignorance is no ground for salvation; it must be through faith in the sacrifice of Christ, and even this faith is not of ourselves, Paul says.

Our Lord’s words in John 6:44 help us in this connection. “No man can come to me,” He *says*, “except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” No-one can become a Christian except the Father draws to Jesus. This helps us to be sympathetic with those who have no inclination to be Christians, good people though they be. The Lord is not condemning them in the slightest, and what a wonderful portion they will have when the earthly kingdom is established. But God prompts or draws to Jesus during this Gospel Age those whom He sees are worthy to be drawn; thus God gives the faith to accept Jesus as their personal

Saviour—"it is the gift of God". "Not of works, lest any man should boast"--justification is a free gift, through faith.

In Romans 4:16-25 we have a wonderful presentation by the Apostle Paul describing the faith of Abraham, "who is the father of us all". Abraham's faith "was imputed to him for righteousness," and Paul continues from verse 23— "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Abraham had his faith established in God's promises, but if we have the same faith that Abraham had, we now have the privilege of exercising such faith in Christ as our Saviour, as we read in Romans 5:1.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our Lord illustrated the important matter of justification by the use of parables. One of them is found in Luke 19:13. "And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds (one to each), and said, Occupy till I come." That is, trade; with this till I come. All these ten servants received the same amount, a pound, picturing justification by faith. Each one received the same gift, the same quality, the same value; there was no difference shown to any of the servants. That is a clear picture of justification by faith; none can have pre-eminence above another in the sight of God. Yes, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Another interesting parable explaining this same matter of justification by faith is shown in Matt. 22:1-12. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." The wedding garment here pictured the imputed righteousness of Christ. It was the Jewish custom to provide white robes for all the guests at the wedding. All the guests would appear the same, a very good illustration of the righteousness of Christ covering His true followers so that they may appear acceptable to God. As noted in Rom. 5:1, all who are justified by faith have peace with God. The one guest who had not on the wedding garment in the parable, would picture those who, after accepting Christ by faith, go back into the world of unbelief, taking off the wedding garment, and thereby being exposed in their own unrighteousness. The wedding garment pictured the covering robe of Christ's righteousness; God looks at His faithful servants through the merit of Christ.

A present-day illustration of the wedding garment is the similar dress worn by students attending our colleges. Their uniforms are all the same. This prevents competition in dressing by the richer in contrast with the poorer. It is a very good arrangement that the students all appear the same. So in the matter of the righteousness of Christ, the provision is the same for the rich as the poor. All are on the same footing in the sight of God; all are covered by Christ's righteousness in gaining justification by faith.

Seeing, then, that by grace or favour we are saved, that is from Adamic condemnation, through faith, and that this is the gift of God, what did the Apostle Paul mean in our text, that we should "work out our own salvation"? He undoubtedly refers to the second step which is essential for everyone to take who really desires to be a true Christian. The Apostle refers so clearly and beautifully to this second step, the step of consecration to God, in Rom. 12:1. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, unto God, which is your reasonable service." We note the Apostle's words are addressed to "brethren," those who are not yet saints, but believers, justified by faith in Christ; no longer sinners and aliens, but members of the household of faith, in fellowship with God but not yet consecrated to walk in the footsteps of Christ. We note also that the bodies of these justified brethren are "holy, acceptable to God," which means that they were ransomed, justified and therefore acceptable, otherwise they would not have anything to offer. They could not appear in the sight of God in their own righteousness, but now Paul says they are holy, acceptable to God, in Christ's

righteousness, accepted into God's family of sons, looking to the great Head Son, even Jesus, the Captain of their salvation. This secondary step and wonderful relationship with God is shown in Rom. 5:2—"By whom (Christ) also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

What a wonderful provision, then, is justification by faith in Christ's perfect sacrifice, enabling those who delight to accept the invitation to present their lives to God and become "new creatures in Christ," by being begotten of God's holy spirit, and at this point the real Christian life begins.

Eph. 1:13, 14 helps us so beautifully here. Speaking of our Lord, the Apostle says, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,

unto the praise of his glory." After we consecrated our lives on the basis of justification by faith, we were sealed with that holy spirit of God, sealed as one of God's own. What a lovely thought, that God has put His seal upon such; they are new creatures in Christ. Yes, even to begin with, these sealed ones have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. What a privilege to be in this sealed condition in the family of God, that we may by His grace seek to work out with Him this wonderful new life that the Lord has given us by His spirit

A similar exhortation to grasp the privilege of the invitation to walk in the steps of Christ by full consecration is found in 2 Cor. 6:1, 2. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain . . . behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." How often we hear this lovely Scripture: "sented with the thought that now is the *only* accepted time, now is the *only* day of salvation. Of course, the Apostle is not saying anything of that kind at all. He is saying that you who have now received that favour of God, or justification by faith, can you see the privilege now of entering into this salvation for the heavenly calling. He does not say it is the only opportunity, but this is a special day, the accepted time wherein God is inviting members to walk in the footsteps of Christ, that they may be with Him in His heavenly kingdom, to supervise a further day of salvation for mankind in the kingdom age. The exhortation of the Apostle is to appreciate that privilege of justification by faith by going on to consecration, to be a member of this acceptable class now being called out. This is the only day of salvation for the heavenly inheritance; therefore, "see that ye receive not the grace of God in vain".

For all who do accept the Lord's invitation to present themselves living sacrifices through Christ, the Christian warfare begins, and this means fighting the good fight of faith, as Paul tells us in 1 Tim. 6:12—"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." Yes, it is a privilege to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. Here we see the Christian's effort required. It is not just a relaxing condition in the love of God; we have to "lay hold" on eternal life. This again emphasizes the working out of our salvation. Our hearts and minds must be devoted to this energetically and fully; to lay hold on anything means to give it our whole attention, to be very earnest about it, for this is eternal life of the highest quality, the heavenly eternal life. "Whereunto thou art also called." Timothy and others of like precious faith were called to lay hold on it. Timothy had already professed a good profession before many witnesses. Continue to lay hold. This is another way of saying, Work out your own salvation.

From Rom. 12:2 we read—"And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Here we see something very definite for a Christian to do. After the presentation of the body as a living sacrifice, "be not conformed to this world." Be not influenced by the world's arrangements of any and every kind. Set

an example to the world. Do not go with the stream; that is not the Christian way at all. Be transformed, even if you are thought narrow-minded and bigoted; a one-track mind, perhaps. True Christians are often thought of that way. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds: We need our minds renewed day by day in the good truths of God's Word. We need to read and meditate upon these things daily; we need continually a re-intake of the lovely thoughts and truths that have given us such a start in the Christian life. We need to replenish day by day, that we may prove, experience, find out for ourselves; this is a personal matter. We may experience this wonderful acceptable and perfect will of God in our lives. God is working in us to will and do His good pleasure, so long as we are co-operating and allowing the infilling of His spirit to accomplish just what He desires along that line. It is very understandable that God will work in us only if we submit or commit our hearts and minds to Him for this very purpose, and this committing of our lives to the Lord brings about the desired results in working out our own salvation.

The matter of each Christian doing his part is revealed again in Eph. 2:10—"For we are his (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." We are God's workmanship, that is provided we walk in the good works He desires of us, to develop the Christian life. What a wonderful thing for God to condescend to work in us, moulding and fashioning us. The clay has to be pliable in the hands of the Potter; it has to be moulded according to the Lord's requirements. Sometimes we do not present very good results to the Lord; we have not taken in enough of His indwelling power, but allowed too much of the present evil world to influence us, and not allowed God's spirit to eradicate the things that would offend God. That is what we must do in working out our salvation; we have to eradicate those cross-grain things, the sour things, that we may be sweeter. The oil of gladness has a lovely lubricating influence that Paul spoke of in respect of our Lord. He said that our Lord was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows"; He had such a full indwelling of God's spirit. We also need the indwelling of the oil of gladness to take away the harshness that our natural disposition possesses. That will allow God to work in us to will and do His good pleasure.

It is helpful to note from various Scriptures how progress in the Christian way is stated sometimes to be wholly of the Lord, and in other places it appears to be wholly of the Christians themselves. In Rev. 19:7 we have a verse with reference to the Bride of Christ being made up. It says, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." This verse in Revelation is undoubtedly referring to the full cooperation of the members of the Bride of Christ with their Lord, allowing His spirit to work mightily in them and proving themselves overcomers, by His grace and strength. "His wife hath made herself ready." She has been so joyfully committed to the Lord; God has so dwelt in her by the holy spirit, and the co-operation has been so complete that it appears as though the Bride has made herself ready. It is a lovely thought when we see it in that light. As Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Yet he balances the matter by his further statement in Gal. 2:20—"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The Apostle was seeking to so couple together his own spirit and the Lord's spirit that they would be as one.

That is the lovely co-operation we see indicated between the Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus, and all the members who are going to be one with them. What a privilege, then, we have of working out our salvation by the indwelling of God's holy spirit!

There can be no doubt that the greatest help in the development of the Christian life, in addition to co-operation with the spirit of Christ, is the meditation and study of His Word. Paul's advice to Timothy along this line is good instruction to us also. 2 Tim. 3:14, 15 reads—"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith

which is in Christ Jesus.” What a privilege it is for children to be brought up in the knowledge and nurture of the Lord, to love the Lord and His Word. Timothy was reminded of the faith of his mother and grandmother. The importance of handing down the good impulses for the Christian life cannot be over-estimated. God takes hold of these trainings and uses them where the young hearts are responsive. Sometimes we do not realise how much we owe to parents. Sometimes we think it is all of the Lord, but looking back we can see how we were helped as children, and we should appreciate our parents. What a privilege for children today when they are encouraged in the lovely lessons of the Saviour, being thus protected from many of the snares and enticements of the world, the frivolities and allurements of this present evil world. These holy Scriptures lead us in the way of salvation, justification by • faith, then consecration, so that even the great salvation may be the privilege of those who can really respond to the Lord’s drawing power.

The Apostle’s message continues in 2 Tim. 3:16, 17—”All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” We find here all the instruction we need to understand the Lord’s will for us. We can be helped by godly men who have recorded their messages in accord with the teachings of the Lord.

From 1 Tim. 4:12, we read Paul’s further advice to Timothy—”Let no man despise thy youth ; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.’ These are lovely exhortations! “Be not conformed to this world,” do not follow the world’s pattern, but set an example for the Lord. We need to be separate from the world ; in it but not of it. “Be thou an example of the believers. . . . Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” Timothy was no doubt commended to the ministry by the Church. “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them ; that thy profiting may appear unto all. Take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine.” Take heed to our own motives and conduct and example, not only for ourselves ; “Continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” It is required that we commend the same message to others that the Lord has blessed to us. It is too good to keep, these good tidings of great joy. Not only the good tidings of the heavenly calling, but the restitution of all things. What a privilege and joy to know that beyond the great time of trouble, God’s wonderful blessings of the kingdom are in store for humanity ; if they could only appreciate that today, how it would soften down the strife and tension that is going on, with nation against nation. If they knew God has a plan to satisfy all their needs, what a difference it would make to the world today!

Rom. 1:16 helps us to see the power in the Gospel, surely. Paul says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” It is the power of God—meaning, of course, it is coupled with the holy spirit. The message of truth, blessed by the spirit of God, brings about salvation when gladly received into the heart. When the life is fully presented to the Lord, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation in the fullest sense. We see it is the only thing in life for us. It is “our reasonable service.” There could not be anything more reasonable; indeed, we have the privilege of walking in Christ’s steps, and being associated with Him in His wonderful kingdom to come.

It is fitting that Christians should think of themselves as stewards in the service of the Lord, as in 1 Cor. 4 from verse 1. “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” God has committed to us a stewardship—what a joy to be enrolled in the service of the Lord. It is required that we render our account, that the Lord may say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” What a privilege that will be, at the end of the way!

This reminds us of one of our Lord's parables, that of the unjust steward in Luke 16. From verse 9 we have the lesson for ourselves — "I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; that when ye fail (a better translation is, 'when it fails') they may receive you into everlasting habitations." The Lord is saying, Make friends with the goods you have of this present evil world. Make friends with it, so that when it fails, when the present order disintegrates and money is thrown in the streets, then they, to whom you have made friends with it, will receive you into everlasting habitations. In other words, if we are making friends with God and our Lord Jesus now, when this present order fails and we finish our course, we will be received into the kingdom with them.

Writing to the Romans 13:11, 12, the Apostle Paul reminds them of the approaching end of their salvation. He says, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep ; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." If any of us have been in a measure sleeping, intoxicated to any extent by the things of the world, it is surely high time to awake out of sleep. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." We can perhaps at times appear almost like other people of the world in our doings. In the parable of the sower, the cares of this life interfere with the growth and production of the fruitage. Let us be awake, alert and zealous for the Lord and His truths. As a steward, it is required that we be found faithful. Our salvation is nearer than when we believed. These exhortations are good for us, to stir up our pure minds by way of remembrance, to cause us to remember that we are a separated people. God wants us to be ever alert in our service for Him and His cause.

How important it is to preserve our first love, as indicated in our Lord's message to the Ephesians in Rev. 2:2-4. How sad was the reproof — "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." In the church at Ephesus there was everything manifest but their first love. What an exhortation to us! It was that first love that brought us to the Lord. We were so thrilled in knowing the Lord and devouring His truth—the wonderful plan of the ages. How is it with us today? Is it still the joy and rejoicing of our hearts? We must preserve our first love for the Lord ; He is the altogether lovely One, and He will help us to keep ourselves in His love and care as we commit our lives fully to Him. "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." May we allow Him to do that each day and each hour as we press on in the narrow way that leads to eternal life!

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The White Stone Given The Overcomer

“To him that overcometh will I give . . . a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it.”—Rev. 2:17.

IN ancient times the Greeks and the Romans had a custom of noting and perpetuating friendship by means of a white stone. This stone was divided into halves, and each person inscribed his name on the flat surface, after which the parts of the stone were exchanged. The production of either half was sufficient to ensure friendly aid, even from the descendants of those who first divided the stone. A similar custom was sometimes observed by a king, who would break a white stone into two parts, one of which he would retain and the other part give to a special ambassador.

That part could be sent to the king at any time and would ensure aid. Thus the divided stone became a mark of identification.

Rev. 2:17 seems to refer to this ancient custom. The white stone signifies a precious token of the Lord's love, and the new name written in the stone suggests the Bridegroom's name. The statement indicates a special acquaintance with the great King of kings, secret between Himself and the individual. The overcomers are not to be recognised merely as a class—the Bride class—but each will have the personal favour of the Lord. Of this no one will know save himself and the King. There is an individual and personal relationship between the Lord and the overcomers, who may be said to receive the mark of identification—the anti-typical white stone—now, in this life.

This mark is the sealing of the holy spirit by which the Lord identifies the overcomers. While this is said to be a part of the final reward of the Church, yet from the very beginning of our experience we have this personal acquaintance with the Lord. The full seal of the holy spirit will be given in the Resurrection, when we receive the new body. Then we shall have the complete knowledge of the name by which we shall be known to the Lord and He to us forever.

The Gift of Wisdom.

(Convention Address)

“WHENCE then, comes wisdom, and where is the place of understanding? It is hid from the eyes of all living.” “God understands the way to it, and he knows the place thereof.” “Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.” This really amounts to the perfect fulfilment of the Law, beyond the normal reach of Adam’s sons. “Oh that God would speak . . . and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom.” So cried the prophet in a past dispensation. In their quest for wisdom they came to a blank wall. “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him ; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him.”

With the coming of Christ things changed for the better, as far as mankind was concerned. Now indeed, light has been shed on the Scriptures which are able to make one wise unto salvation, for Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom, justification, etc. This could be described as the heavenly wisdom, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. This wisdom, like faith, is a gift of God, from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. But this gift of wisdom is different to many other gifts from God, inasmuch that before it may be enjoyed it is withheld from all but those who are prepared to ask for it. It is not like the sun that shines, the rain that falls, on just and unjust ; not like the wonderful air we breathe, available for righteous and unrighteous; nor like the fruitful seasons providing food for saint and sinner.

All these gifts are available freely, without money and without price, no charge made by the Giver; in fact one is compelled to accept them. The earth yieldeth her increase; there is good food and drink, good sense, sight, hearing, smelling, etc., ours to use and enjoy, gifts already in our possession without asking for them. How we receive and employ those gifts is another story. If we employ them wisely, “this man is blessed in his deed.” If we choose to employ them foolishly and find ourselves floundering it would not avail much to ask for added wisdom when all that is necessary is to correct foolish behaviour. But of this gift of wisdom, the subject of this discussion, there is a reservation attached to its possession. Of those for whom it has been reserved, each one is obliged to ask for it.

James sets it out—”If any of you lack wisdom, let’ him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” Those not needing any, along with those who have enough, *do not ask*. Automatically they exclude themselves from a rich heritage. People indifferent about gifts seldom put them to good purpose. They stow them away in some- out of the way place, out of sight. If wisdom is employed in the daily problems weightier trials will not seem so formidable. No trial can successfully be endured ; no lesson can be learnt, without wisdom. “God giveth liberally,” but not to all those who do ask. The motive for the request is considered, and if it is found selfishness would be served, “they ask amiss” and might well wonder why they do not receive.

There are two important qualifications necessary before the gift will be bestowed: faith—”let him ask in faith, nothing wavering”—in conjunction with a sense of lack. Where there is a conscious sense of lack, self examination is always under consideration. In the morning we ask for wisdom to guide us through the day ahead. But there may be no lack apparent covering that day’s experiences. It is a different story at the close of the day ; reflecting, we see where we have erred, where we may have done better—many places in the day’s activities, with maybe one huge blunder weighing heavily in Our assessment of folly versus wisdom. Faith may now take a bold step ; we have the requirements necessary to ask for the gift, confidently expecting an answer, a favorable answer, that some portion of the gift of wisdom will now be granted. It is no haphazard, no routine request, this asking for wisdom; it is a living faith and a consciousness of lack that assures the suppliant of a liberal supply.

Normally, among people generally, the last thing one would find would be an admission of deficiency in wisdom.

Let anyone dare suggest to another, “That was not a very wise thing to do,” he immediately interprets it as an accusation of foolishness, and strong resentment is voiced. How many of us over the past twelve months have specifically asked God for wisdom? If requests have been made, it is an acknowledgement of foolish behaviour. If no requests have been made, there has been no lack ; no lack, no request ; no request, no receive. A main reason for stocktaking is to discover shortages. If an account of the shortages is not known how can deficiencies be rectified? Guesswork is not good enough ; inspection is necessary, close, careful scrutiny is demanded. “Whoso *looketh* into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed”—a liberal amount of wisdom is guaranteed such an one.

No one could refer to Wisdom and not think of King Solomon. Universally acknowledged the wisest of Adam’s sons, whence cometh this wisdom of his, thought of as being supernaturally endowed? “To him that hath, more shall be given.” A previous and, in this case, generous possession of wisdom being put to use qualifies for more. “He giveth wisdom unto the wise” (Dan. 2:21), those wise enough to exercise what they already have.. Most people would be familiar with some of the marvellously wise things done by Solomon. It would be very interesting to hear answers to the question, “What was the wisest thing Solomon ever did?” Our reply would be, when he requested the gift of wisdom above every other consideration. He *wisely* asked for “a wise and understanding heart, wisdom to govern this great people.” He already had enough, as his request shows, of wisdom to value above everything, an increase of the same gift, to help him govern. God was so pleased with his desire that He granted benefits Solomon had not asked for; wealth, power, length of days—all given without request. David had left untold wealth and materials for his son for a certain project. But how could David’s will be executed without the gift of wisdom? Solomon was one who could truly and sincerely say “Amen” to Job’s appraisal of the value of Wisdom. (See Job 28:12-19.)

Yet Solomon with all his wisdom, failed to take his own good counsel. Of the many causes contributing to his failure, without doubt one was the inability to take criticism. He would pursue his own sweet way, excusing in himself all manner of folly. How true his own words in Eccles. 10:1. The apothecary was one who manufactured sweet and precious ointment. This ointment, in containers, was placed on shelves to await buyers. Sometimes a few flies were trapped in the stickiness and died in the ointment. The precious ointment was not only spoiled, but emitted a stinking savour. “So doth a *little* folly him that’s in reputation for wisdom and honour.” A little folly in one of good reputation becomes a great blemish. True wisdom is true honor. It gains a reputation likened to precious ointment: pleasing, valuable. This kind of reputation, like the sweet-smelling ointment, is obtained with great care and difficulty. Both are rendered valueless, repulsive, obnoxious by a few dead flies in one case and a little folly in the other. A little folly at any stage in consecration, even at the end of a long and faithful service, should it be left unattended, could foul the whole effort. With the ointment, ingredients and labor were both lost. Instead of a sweet-smelling savour, a repulsive tainting of everything connected with it, even the name. Faithful .and loyal service do not guarantee immunity from the effects of folly any more than good works can atone for indiscretion. “Oh that God would speak and show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which *is*.”

“As surely as sparks fly out of flint being sharpened, man is born into trouble.” All people have problems and trials—no one can avoid them. Some even court danger, rushing in where angels fear to tread. Wisdom is an elusive commodity in most lives. Why ? Could it be we expect a similarity of action and reaction; a sameness of behaviour pattern? Do we forget God never makes two things alike? If we could remember the diversified ways in which His spirit operates, we would be able to discern the diversified operation of Wisdom. The gift of wisdom will differ in its prescription for each individual. If the

requirements of wisdom could be printed on cards for distribution, each member would have a card differing from his neighbour's; no two cards would be alike, nor would they be transferable. Each card would be like the white stone in Revelations, having a particular and personal character.

What Christian is there who does not fall into divers temptations? (Trials.) He does not *fall in*, but *falls into*; for- some unexplainable reason we become aware of a predicament and wonder why it has been placed on our doorstep. This is a case for wisdom. And because these trials are as many as they are varied, a constant surveillance is necessary.

“Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.” This recommendation confirms the idea that a request for wisdom comes

AFTER its lack is painfully apparent. One in this state would be emotionally disturbed, and for that reason more prone than otherwise to waver and doubt, and be discouraged. Remorse retards an unwavering faith. Yet the gift of wisdom is conditional on this faithful approach to the problem. Jesus insisted on some healing occasions for this unwavering faith,—“Believest thou that I am able to do this?” We may even be asking for wisdom to overcome a trial similar to one or more earlier experiences. Can it be remembered how, as scholars, we came before a teacher a second or third time for the same kind of offence? What happened? “What, you again? It's time an example was given that will stop this nonsense.” It is a consolation to know that nothing like this happens when we come before God, conscious of our lack, never doubting His mercy, even should we be appearing a second or third time on the same kind of mistake. Unlike the school master and natural men who chide one another for their folly, “He upbraideth not.” And there should not be a doubt or waver that in coming to Him for help that we imagine a sense of disadvantage—He giveth to all men, • liberally, more than enough for the occasion. Yet it is logical that, with each repetitive mistake a greater lesson must be learned as more wisdom would not be required to overcome an enlarged predicament. A wise man learns from the experiences of others; a fool from his own. Better to be a fool and learn by some means than be so blind as refusing to recognise corrections. The matter of our care should be the matter of our prayer. God invited us to be humbly free with Him, and in prayer unburden our care. Then an unwavering faith may find He works miracles in His providences. The deliverance we ask for in the Lord's prayer (But deliver us . . .) may come, like so many deliverances instanced in the Word, by using the gift of wisdom. (See Prov. 2:1-11.)

(To be continued)

Melbourne Christmas Convention.

The' brethren of the Melbourne Class extend a cordial invitation to all friends able to attend their Annual Convention to be held this year (D.V.) on December 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th, in the Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond. Further information from the secretary—Mr. J. B. Hiam, 16 Kennedy Street, South Oakleigh, S.E.13, Victoria.

The Best Order

A man of high character but ordinary education was addressing a roomful of schoolchildren, and he said to them: "All of you know the verb which says 'I am, thou art, he is,' and all of you know that verbs in English, French, German, Italian and Latin run in that way. But do you know that that is a very bad way for a verb to run? Do you know that the old Hebrew people arranged their verbs the other way round, 'He is, thou art, I am'?"

Then he added: "That is the way to look at life. Say to yourself, looking up to God, 'He is.' Then look at your neighbour, and say, 'Thou art.' Last of all think of yourself and say, 'I am'."

One who heard this story was so struck by it that he sought out a Hebrew scholar and asked him if it were true that the Hebrew verbs were conjugated in that way.

"Yes," said the Scholar. "But why do you ask?" And when told what the man had said to the children, he exclaimed: "Well, I have been studying Hebrew for forty years, and it never once occurred to me that Hebrew verbs have that wonderful and beautiful signifi-ance."

That is the way to think and to live. First God, then your neighbour, then yourself.

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