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A Blessed Hope for Suffering Humanity

“We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for sonship, to wit, the redemption of our Body.”—Rom. 8:22, 23.

ONLY for a short time will any thoughtful person question the declaration of the Apostle that the human family, taken as a whole, is a groaning creation. He does not include the Church, for reasons which we shall see shortly, yet he points out that the Church also groans under present conditions. As we pass along the streets and hear the strains of music which occasionally come to us from public and private performances, as we hear the laughter and merrymaking and see the throngs going to theatres, expositions, games, etc., we might be inclined at first to say—there is a good share of the creation which does not groan much. But, as we look more closely at the facts as they come to us in the daily course, we find that much of the laughter is hysterical, and an offset to tears; that much of the music is paid for on business principles, to cheer and enthuse others, and some of it indulged in with the desire to drown care.

Similarly, those who attend places of amusement do so, not because they are happy, but because they are unhappy. Groaning in spirit, they are seeking something to drive dull care away—to assuage their disappointments and heartaches. We believe that the experienced in life will generally agree with us that childhood is life's happiest hour, and that with the coming of greater knowledge and responsibility, come cares, disappointments, heartaches and crosses to the world of mankind in general. Let us remember, too, that what we know of the world is in many respects the best, most favoured, and least burdened section.

Looking into the Bible, we are informed respecting the angels and the joys of heaven, and given to understand that no sorrow enters there, nor any tears, nor any dying. We inquire, did not the same God who created man create the angelic hosts? Why, then, should there be so wide a distinction, so wide a difference between the conditions on earth and in heaven, that our Redeemer should teach us to pray that ultimately God's Kingdom should come to earth and His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven? Why does He tell us that the faithful in the resurrection will be made like unto angels, neither shall they die any more? Why are we not like the angels now? Why do we die? Why are we sick? Why are we imperfect in our mental, moral and physical powers? Why are we deficient in our physical strength?

The answer to these questions requires superhuman wisdom. There must be a reason; otherwise, the same just, loving, gracious God would treat His human creatures, His human children, as kindly, as generously as His spiritual. Why is it that all of our blessings are of hope while all the blessings of the angels are

actual and present?

“God Looked Down and Beheld.”

Still seeking information, we inquire of the Bible respecting man’s condition, why it is as it is and how it came about. We note the prophetic declaration that God “looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those who are appointed to death.” (Psa. 102:19-21.) This is in full conformity with the Apostle’s statement, and adds the further explanation that the groaning is because man is a prisoner and under death sentence. But when did he become a prisoner? When did the death sentence come upon him?

The Scriptures answer that our race was sold under sin—became the slave of sin—and that the experiences of sorrow, degradation, imperfection and death are all parts of the wage of this great taskmaster, sin. The Apostle declares that “the wages of sin is death,” and personifies Sin and Death, representing them as the great monarchs that are now ruling the children of men. He declares that Sin and Death have reigned, and as a matter of fact we know that the whole race is subject to these monarchs. (Rpm. 6:23; 11, 21.) The tomb, into which both good and bad go, is the great prison-house where all are figuratively said to sleep, waiting for the morning of the blessed Millennial Day, when Messiah shall come, and shall deliver the captives from the chains of sin and from the prison-house, of ‘death, Sheol, Hades, the grave.

Mark the Redeemer’s words, “I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades (the grave).” (Rev. 1:18.) Note again the prophetic statement along the same line, referring to Messiah and the work of His gracious Kingdom, when it shall be established. We read, “I, Jehovah, have called Thee in righteousness and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee and will give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles—to open the blind eyes, to bring Out the prisoners from the prison; and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.” (Isa. 42:6, 7.) And again, “The Spirit of Jehovah is upon Me, because Jehovah bath anointed Me to preach the good tidings unto the meek; He bath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound.”—Isa. 61:1.

Our Lord personally preached from this text, and declared Himself to be the One who would fulfil this prophecy— who would release our race from its slavery to sin and its bondage to death. The assurance of the Word of the Lord is that we have Divine sympathy, and that a Saviour adequate to all the conditions has been supplied by the Heavenly Father, and that the world merely awaits the proper time for Him to act, to strike off these shackles, to unlock the prison door and to let all the prisoners go free from this condemnation.

Origin of Man’s Slavery to Sin.

A matter which is so general as to include every member of the race in this slavery to sin and death conditions is very noteworthy, and it is profitable that we hearken carefully to the Word of God for an explanation for it. The Apostle gives the explanation, saying, “By one man’s disobedience sin entered into the world and death as a result of sin, and thus death passed upon all men because all are sinners.” (Rom. 5:12.) Turning hack to Genesis we find the Apostle’s words abundantly supported by the history of Adam and his deflection from obedience to God and his rejection from Divine fellowship, including his expulsion from Eden, that he might be thus subjected to dying conditions because of his disobedience, his sift. There the slavery began; there the groaning and dying of our race had its start. The Creator’s words were, “Thorns and thistles shall the earth bring forth to thee; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou , till thou return unto the ground; for out Of it wast thou taken; for .dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.”—Gen. 3:18,-,19.

Nothing could be plainer, simpler, more easy of comprehension to those who had no human philosophy and smoke of the Dark Ages to becloud their vision. It is most evident that the groaning began with father Adam, and that it has continued ever since, as his posterity has lost more and more the perfection of the image and likeness of God in which Adam was created, and has become more and more depraved mentally, morally and physically, until now, “there’s none righteous, no, not one”; none perfect either in word or deed. (Rom. 3:10.) To will aright may be present with us, as the Apostle suggests, but how to perform all that we will is another matter. As he again declared, “Ye can not do the things that ye would.” (Gal. 5:17.) The difficulty is that the dying conditions have left us incapable as respects absolute good, and weakened as respects resistance of the temptations of the Adversary. The explanation is sufficient, as is no human speculation on the subject. Thank God that with the explanation, the Bible holds out before us the hope referred to—the hope of the deliverance of our race from this bondage of the prison-house.

Our context notes these facts, saying, “The creature (humanity) was subject to vanity (frailty, imperfection, weakness), not of its own will, but by reason of him that subjected it (by reason of Adam’s transgression).” Nevertheless, we read that this subjection to frailty was not without hope, a good hope, a great hope, a blessed hope, and this in the Bible is called

“The hope set before us in the Gospel.”

We note the context which declares that although the creature, mankind, was subjected to sorrow, imperfection, dying, through another — through father Adam—he is not without hope; for “the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (death) into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.” (Verse 21.) This is a remarkable declaration, for be it noted that it is not referring to the Church, the Elect, the Little Flock, but to the- creation, the- World in general. Do other Scriptures support this declaration that God proposes ultimately to deliver the human family from bondage to sin and death— from bondage to corruption? Yes, we reply, this was the very statement of the angels promulgated at the time of the announcement of our Saviour’s birth, “We bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people.”—Luke 2:10.

Moreover, the Scriptures give us a reasonable explanation,,not only of why ‘the reign of Sin and Death has been permitted, but of how and where their reign shall be annulled and humanity be delivered. The declaration is that the Lord Jesus paid the penalty for Adam, and that this works not only a release of Adam himself from Divine condemnation to death, but works also the release of all those who came under Divine- condemnation through Adam’s sin—the entire groaning creation. All the Scriptures, in speaking of the deliverance of the groaning creation, point to Messiah as the Divine Agency in effecting this deliverance. We have already quoted the declaration of Jesus and the prophets to the effect that He shall open the prison doors and .set the prisoners at liberty. We remember also the words of the angels on the subject of -good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people, that it was because a Saviour had been born—the anointed Lord, Messiah. Thus, all through the Scriptures, every hope of the race as respects deliverance from sin and degradation is based upon Messiah and His work—His sacrificial work, finished at Calvary,. and His work of glory during the Millennial Age, which will begin at His Second Advent.

“The Liberty of the Sons of God.”

Adam, In his original perfection, was a son of God, as the ‘Scriptures declare (Luke 3:38), but he lost his sonship for himself and for all of his race and received instead degradation and bondage to corruption. The hope for Adam and for his race, then, in Christ, is deliverance from the power of sin and death into the liberty proper to them as sons of God. The entire Millennial Age, as the Scriptures show us, will be

devoted to this work of setting free the human- family from the various bondages of ignorance, superstition, weakness, heredity, and of bringing back all who will, by restitution processes, to the original image and likeness of God, and making them again human sons of God, like unto father Adam before he sinned, plus a large and valuable experience gained during the six thousand years of the fall, and also through the one thousand years of the raising up the Millennial Age, the Resurrection Age.

Note the Apostle's argument on this subject in a preceding chapter leading up to our text. After telling that sin entered by one man's disobedience and that it was communicated to all of the race, he declares, "For 'as by the transgression of one many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto many. For, if by the transgression of one, death reigned through the one, much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ.

So then, as through one transgression the sentence came upon all men to condemnation, even so through the one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as by the disobedience of one - man many were made sinners, so by ...the obedience. of one shall many be made. righteous." —Rom. 5:12, 15, 17-19, R.V.

How beautifully clear is this statement by the Apostle ! We wonder how it was that-we so long overlooked the true import of these words. We perceive that our eyes were holden and blinded 'by the unscriptural theory that when the Church,. the "little flock," the saints, should be selected, all the remainder of mankind would be condemned to an eternity of torture! Since we have gotten rid of that delusion, our eyes are opening more and more to behold the lengths and breadth. and heights and depths of God's great plan of salvation, which first deals with the Church during this Gospel Age and subsequently will deal with all the redeemed—all of the children of Adam condemned for Adam's disobedience, and bought with the precious blood of Christ, and to be justified from their condemnation and set at liberty by the great Redeemer when He shall in due time take unto Himself His great power and reign.—Rev. 11:1519,

Why So Long Delay? .

The question is frequently asked, why should God so long delay to bring these blessings to the world? If God's Plan indeed be higher and nobler than any of the plans and theories of men, why has it not yet been demonstrated? Why has He permitted the world to remain so long in its slavery to sin and death-4000 years and more before He sent the Redeemer—nearly 2000 years since that .Redeemer has purchased the world, and yet only a mere handful of the race. has, as yet, even heard of the only name given under heaven and amongst men whereby we must be saved? Why the delay? Does it not contradict God's claim of love and sympathy and power? If He has the love which longs to help the world, does He lack the power? Is He unable to accomplish His good purposes? Or, if He has the power, does He lack the love, the will?

The Scriptures assure us that the love of God is boundless, and that He has already accomplished for mankind a redemptive work at the cost of the life of our Lord Jesus. They assure us, too, that God's love is the same to-day as it was eighteen centuries ago, that Divine Power is almighty, and that it only waits for the proper time to come to exercise itself for the full accomplishment of the Divine will and for the full blessing of all the families of the earth, through the Messiah, the Redeemer.

The explanation of the delay is fully given in the Scriptures, which assure us that before the Divine Plan shall extend to the world for its blessing and uplift another work must first be accomplished; that God's purpose to bless Adam and his race is a restitution promise and that the Millennial Age will be "times" or years of restitution, uplifting their reign shall be annulled and humanity be delivered. The declaration is

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But before doing this, God purposed a work, if possible, still more wonderful, namely, the selecting of the Little Flock, the elect Church, who, instead of being restored to human perfection, will prove her loyalty to the Lord by her self-sacrifice, even unto death, and be granted a share with Christ in the First Resurrection—a change from earthly nature to Heavenly nature—far above angels, principalities and powers, like unto her glorified Redeemer and Head. This work of selecting the Church has been an important one, and has occupied a long period; and those who now have the privilege of becoming members of this elect Church and joint-heirs with the Redeemer cannot esteem the privilege too highly, but should with the Apostle, count that any loss or sacrifice would be as dross in comparison with the excellency of the blessings promised.

Note again that the Apostle shows that while both the world and the Church groan, they are waiting for different things. We are waiting for the deliverance of our Body (not bodies in the plural); we are waiting for the deliverance of the Church as a whole. Some of the members have gone before, but finally the entire Body of Christ, which is the Church, will be completed. Then we shall see our Lord, and will be with Him and share His glory, a united Church, a united Body of Christ beyond the veil. For this we wait, we hope, we pray.

But the world, the groaning creation, knows not of the Divine Plan. Its groaning is of a hopeless character; but we may know what God has provided for mankind even though the world be blind and in ignorance of this. We know that through the Christ, during the Millennial reign, all the families of the earth will be blessed with recovery from death, and with enlightenment and restitution assistances to righteousness and eternal life, and that only the incorrigible will die the Second Death.

And so the Apostle says that the groaning creation is "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." We are the sons of God. As the. Apostle says, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be (how glorious); but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2.) We see, then, that the world's hope is in the glorified Church, whose glorious Head is the Redeemer Himself. When this Church shall be exalted in Millennial glory, the world's time of blessing will begin. Then all the groaning creation shall be liberated and have the opportunity of coming out of the corruption of death, mental, moral and physical, and into liberty and

perfection, of life as the sons of God, all of which privileges have been secured for them through the merit of the precious blood.

How glad we are that the true light is shining from the Divine Word, as well as throughout the realm of nature ! How glad we are that we no longer must think of the Church alone as the subjects of salvation, and the world as a whole the subjects of everlasting condemnation! How just, how reasonable, how loving, are the Divine arrangements! To see these things should draw our hearts near to the Lord in appreciative love, and we should worship with the greatest devotion One whom we thus see worthy of praise and adoration.

Let us, whose ears and eyes have been blessed of the Lord, respond with all gratitude and humility, not merely with outward praise of our lips, but also with our hearts, let us confess His loving kindness and tender mercy; and let this appreciation more and more sanctify our hearts and separate us from the world, its aims, its selfishness. Let us fight a good fight against sin, especially in our own mortal bodies; for even though the imperfections of the flesh be not counted against the New Creature, begotten of the spirit, nevertheless, the fact that we possess the spirit of the Lord should lead us more and more to desire that perfection which is most pleasing and acceptable to Him, and to strive, therefore, to the extent of our ability; not trusting to the attainment of that perfection, but relying upon the merit of that great Atonement Sacrifice, offered once for all and sufficient for the sins of the whole world.

Melbourne Christmas Convention.—

The brethren of the Melbourne Class desire to inform all interested friends that they are arranging (D.V.) to hold the Annual Convention over the holiday period again this year

A hearty invitation is extended to all able to attend, this early announcement being made for the benefit of visiting friends. Further information will appear in later issues.

Booklets for Witness Work.

“Where are the Dead?”

“A New Dictator—the Only Hope for Humanity.” “Times of Refreshing and Christ’s Return.”

“The Offerings for Sin.”

The above four booklets are now supplied at the rate of 1/6 per dozen, post paid.

“Some of the Parables”—.6d. per copy; 2/9 per half dozen; 5/3 per dozen, posted.

“The Plan of God—in Brief” —.6d. per copy post paid. “Christ’s Return.”

“Hell, Death, Spiritism”—4d. per copy; 2/6 per dozen, posted.

“God and Reason.”

“The Day of Jehovah.”

“Hope Beyond the Grave”—.5d. per copy; 9d. for two; 4/- per dozen, post paid.

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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,

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How much we need the Kingdom

ONCE again the world is stunned by the clash of arms—such armaments, such weapons—in the air, on the land, on the sea and under the sea. How much we need the Kingdom, “the desire of all nations,” although the nations as yet know not where to look for the relief from oppression. The Apostle says, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:19, 22.) “To as many as received Hire gave He power (or privilege) to become sons of God.” (John 1:12.) “As many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God,” etc. (Rom. 8:13-17.)

It is evident that the selection of the Church, the elect, during the Gospel Age (that is, since John the Baptist, until now) is almost completed. Then, and not till then, will righteousness and truth prevail and peace be established, for this Church class, the believers of this Gospel Age are to be associated with Christ in His Kingdom (Rev. 3:21) the object of which is to bless all nations (Gal. 3:8, etc.).

The Scriptures as a whole help us to understand how it is that God can allow these terrible things to happen on the earth. God is love, He is full of mercy and truth, but He is also wise and just. Justice condemned the human race to death on account of sin and God then withdrew His protection and kind providence from man. Mankind chose its own course and Divine wisdom has seen that it is better the lesson should be learned that there is no life worth living, apart from Divine providence and care, and that only by obedience to Divine requirements can this be enjoyed.

For 6000 years God has permitted man to go his own way. “He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, winking at their ignorance.” (Acts 14:16; 17:30.) Only when extremes were reached and when it was necessary has God interfered with the usual course. Nothing will be allowed to hinder the progress of His great Plan of the Ages, the purpose of which is the redemption and uplift of all the willing and obedient.

Many may be puzzled that God allows such terrible slaughter, such cruel barbarity, such misuse of the great increase of knowledge and opportunities of education as now exist which could be of so great blessing to all the world. But God can and will “cause even the wrath of man to praise Him and the rest He will restrain.” “He slumbers not, nor sleeps,” and in His own wise time He will command peace, and the humbled, human family will be ready to obey and look to God to help them out of all their troubles. We are assured that the cries of the oppressed will “come up before the Lord of Sabaoth.”

In Exodus 3:9 the Lord said to Moses, “The cry of the children of Israel is come up unto Me, and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.” Israel had been allowed very severe experiences in Egypt, but when certain lessons had been learnt and in His own wise time the Lord wrought such a mighty deliverance for them by the hand of Moses that has never been forgotten. That deliverance was a figure of the greater deliverance of Israel from a later oppression when in due time the people should be gathered again to their own land and be received once more into Divine favours. (Jer. 31, especially verses 31-33; Ezek. 16:60-63.) That deliverance from Egypt not only pictures the greater deliverance of Israel from all the countries in which they have been scattered and oppressed but it pictures the even greater deliverance of all the “poor groaning creation” from all oppression of the reign of Satan, sin and death, by the greater than Moses, even Christ.

The events of our clay all indicate that the time has arrived when the Lord will take up the cause of His people, the cause of truth and righteousness and the punishment of the nations.--1-sa. 26:20, 21. Verse 9 of this chapter tells us that then, “when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth the people will learn

righteousness.”

Just how far the present spasm of cruel suffering, death and calamity may lead to the crisis of the great time of trouble prophesied in Dan. 12:1, we may not say, but there can be no doubt that it is related to it. It is doubtless one more spasm leading to the final cataclysm which will end this present evil world (age).

Our Lord’s instruction is that when we see the things of which He spoke, which indicate His second presence and the end of the world (age), we should lift up our heads, we should recognise that He is again present in the world and is dealing with His people and preparing to establish His Kingdom and that our (the Church’s) deliverance into His likeness, to be where He is and see Him as He is, is near. (1 John 3:1-3; John 14:2, 3.)

Even amidst the sorrow and gloom of present conditions we may rest in confident faith that the Almighty “will make even the wrath of man to praise Him,” and to work out some further feature of His great plan and purpose. How good it is to know that when “the present evil World” breaks down in the fiery time of trouble, that a new age will dawn, a world to come “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (2 Pet. 3:10-13.)

Christ shall be King over all the earth in that day. Satan, the present prince and instigator of evil influences, will be bound and Christ, though no more visible to human eyes than Satan is, will be the King that shall reign and prosper. “With righteousness shall He judge, the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.”—Read 11:1-9; Psalm 72.

The Rewards of the Righteous.

-And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever. ”—Dan.12:3.

IN considering who are the wise here referred to, we are forcibly reminded of Paul’s significant inquiry -- ”Where. is the wise? Where is the scribe (who boasts of his wisdom) ? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching (i.e., the preaching of this foolishness) to save them that believe.” (1 Cor. 1:20, 21.) And these believers are the truly wise ones to whom our text refers.

Those who so thoroughly believe the testimony of God as to yield themselves fully to His will are wise indeed. They have prudently chosen that good part which shall not be taken from them. In this present evil world, it is true that, like their Lord, they have tribulation, but if they endure it as good soldiers, faithful unto death, their eternal reward is sure. The reward promised is beyond this vale of tears, and the valley of the shadow of death. Then those who suffered here, meekly bearing the reproach of Christ; who took up their cross daily and followed Him; who nobly adhered to the principles of truth and righteousness, and faithfully conformed their lives thereto; who delighted themselves in the Lord, and daily meditated His law; who devoted themselves faithfully to the doing of His will, sacrificing their own—these shall by and by shine forth as the sun, as the brightness of the firmament, in the Kingdom of their Father.

O, weary ones, look up; sad hearts, be glad; for even now your deliverance is nigh, even at the doors! Soon the sorrows of this earthly pilgrimage will be ended, and your glory will appear.

It is a very noticeable fact that the nearer we approach to the consummation of our glorious hopes, the opposition of the powers of darkness grows more and more severe, as well as more subtle, and those who walk by faith alone must indeed have a very strong faith to be able to wage a successful warfare to the end, and win the victor’s crown of glory. To this end, dearly _beloved, let us keep these precious promises of God ever in mind. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

While this glory that excelleth is to be manifested by- and by in the overcoming Gospel church, there is a lesser, but nevertheless a great glory to be manifested in all the lovers and doers of righteousness in all ages past. Faithful Noah, a preacher and doer of righteousness; faithful Abraham, with whom the Lord’s Will was always paramount; faithful Enoch and Elijah and Moses and Aaron and Joshua and Caleb, and a host of others, of whom the world was not worthy, shall by and by gleam forth in the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God, as “Princes in all the earth.”

When righteousness is finally established in the earth, and men have learned to appreciate the pure, the beautiful and the good, when generous love shall have displaced all selfishness, then indeed will the good deeds and blessed influences of those who., in the midst of sin and wickedness, sought to turn many to righteousness, come into remembrance and receive from all men their just reward of appreciation and praise. They shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

How refreshing the prospect of the glorious consummation of the Divine plan! Let us rejoice and be glad, and daily strive to prove ourselves worthy of the glory promised to them that love God, to the called according to His purpose.

“Come, Lord Jesus.”

“O Master, Blessed Master, it is hard indeed to know
That thousands round our daily path misunderstand Thee so!
Despised and rejected yet, no beauty they can see,
O King of Glory and of Grace, beloved Lord in Thee.”

“O Saviour, precious Saviour, come in all Thy power and grace,
And take away the veil that hides the glory of Thy face!
Oh! manifest the marvels of Thy tenderness and love,
And let Thy Name be blessed and praised all other names above.”

FH.R.

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The Messengers of God.

"He shall give His angels (messengers) a charge concerning thee, to guard thee in all thy ways. Psalm 91:11 .

IN the midst of the "perilous times" of this "evil day," and of the warning voices of the Holy Prophets and Apostles pointing out snares and pestilences and subtle dangers on every hand—and in the midst, too, of a realising sense of the actual existence of such evil besetments and perils—how precious to the saints are the assurances of Divine protection and care and personal love!

Evidently the person referred to in our text as giving a charge, or message, is Jehovah, the Heavenly Father. The Prophet David is prophesying in respect of some person, then future. That person was primarily, we believe, the Lord Jesus Christ, and secondarily, all those whom He has accepted as members of His Body throughout this Gospel

Age--the Messiah class, Head and members. The words imply a special care of God over -this class. All through the Scriptures they are referred to as those whom God specially loves and specially cares for. Our Lord Jesus is the Only Begotten, the well-beloved Son, and all those who are His members are peculiarly loved. Jesus said to some of His faithful disciples, "The Father Himself loveth you."

The charge given to the angels we would understand to have a very broad application. The Apostle Paul assures us that the angels of God are ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto and to serve those who shall be heirs of salvation, the saved ones of this Gospel Age. Yes, all of these, because believers in Christ, because at heart faithful, because fully consecrated to the Lord and begotten of His spirit, are the special and happy objects of His grace, Ministered to and served by the invisible messengers. Our Lord Jesus sets forth practically the same thought in His declaration. "their angels do always behold (have access to) the face of My Father." The Master's words seem to imply that one or more of these angels have charge over the consecrated ones, the Very Elect.

Our Lord uses a different figure of speech from that of the Apostle, as though He would assure us that these messengers would not be delayed in caring for our interests. They would not be hindered by more important Heavenly business, but would at once have direct access to the Divine presence and attention, so that our interests would have all needed consideration. Our Lord would have us realise that we are of the House of Sons, under Himself the chief Son, hence no time is lost in bringing our interests to the Father. Our interests have first place. our angels have always access to the Father. Before we speak, He knows our minds. Before we realise our own necessities, He has made provision for them, A. wonderful watch-care has been arranged. It is hard for us to understand how the Almighty God can give such particular care and attention to our needs. Instead of being puffed up that God has manifested such loving consideration towards us, it should make us feel how little we are, how unworthy of such blessings.

Although the Father makes such use of Heavenly messengers, this by no means invalidates the thought that the Lord's earthly children are frequently used of Him as ministers, servants, the one of another. Indeed, we may be assured that the invisible messengers are required generally to act through human instrumentalities. Of this we have illustrations in the Harvest work, supervised by our present Lord and His Heavenly hosts, yet in the main carried on by members of His Body in the flesh.

The Apostle Paul has stated that the Lord makes His ministers, or servants, a flaming fire, and intimates to us that any and every agency and power that Divine providence uses is a part of that care over His people. (Heb. 1:7.) In other words, every agency used of God—whether it be fire or electricity or man, or whatever--would be a -messenger of God. And whatever would not be to His praise and work out what He chooses, He is able to restrain—as He tells us (Psalm 70:10).

Overcomers Developed by Trial.

These angels are to “keep thee in all thy ways” -- not only in all the affairs of the Church, both individually and collectively, but also in all times; they were kept during the Dark Ages as well as at other times. But this care will not keep us from temptation. None can be of this elect Church unless they have trials. In order to have the overcoming qualities of heart they must have the tests. But the Lord’s promised grace is to be with them for their assistance—not to overcome for them, but to sustain them. His grace is sufficient for us. He does not make up for a poor will; but He does make up for imperfect bodies. If the will is poor, He does not want such in His elect Church. He wants His people to be strong in will—nothing doubting—overcomers.

The next verse of the Psalm from which our text is taken proceeds to say that these messengers which have a charge over the affairs of the Church, Head and Body, will keep the feet from stumbling. In a general way we might apply the term “feet” to some members of the Body all down, in all times of the Age; as we might say, for instance, one member is a hand, and one a foot, etc. The Church, resting on those “feet” members all the way down, throughout the Gospel Age, will be guided aright; they will not be allowed, to stumble; for, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet. and a light unto my pathway.” Thus they would be enabled to surmount the difficulties in their path.

So all down through the Gospel Age the messengers of the Lord have helped His people over all of their trials. But this reference to the “feet” seems especially applicable to the last members of the Body of Christ.

Christ’s Presence a Stumbling Stone.

The text seems to imply that the feet members at this time would be in a position of special trial, and be as a stumbling-stone. And this calls to our remembrance that the Lord foretold this, saying, “He shall be . . . for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.” (Isa. 8:14.) This stone was stumbled over in the end of the Jewish Age. (1 Peter 2:8.) The Scriptures set forth that Jesus is the Way. The Lord is a Stumbling-Stone in the pathway of many. These passages do not refer to the world. It was not the Gentile nations that stumbled over Jesus at His First Advent, but it was some of the Israelites who were there stumbled. And the text implies the stumbling of some Spiritual Israelites because of the coming of the Lord in a way totally different from what they had imagined. So we believe that there are very many good Christian people to-day who are stumbling over Christ’s appearance. They thought so and so; they imagined so and so. And all is so different from what they had imagined and expected that it is just as it was in the end of the Jewish Age, when the rabbis stumbled.

The question is, why should not the angels have charge over all good people, so that they would not stumble? Is not this the promise? We answer that the promise was made to all who are of the elect class. But in order to remain members of this Body, they must all stand the trial. It will be a test. Are they willing to have the assistance of the angels--messengers? Are they willing to surmount these difficulties and to remain in the way ?

One class will be in a condition to receive the trials in the proper manner; another class will be so self-confident, so overcharged with the cares of this life, and so lacking in spiritual development, that they will not be ready to avail themselves of the services of the angels. This is because God uses as His messengers some whom the world will not be ready to receive.

Parallelism Between. Jewish and Gospel Ages..

In the Jewish Age the Lord used some whom the scribes, the doctors of the Law and the chief priests could not accept at all. If He wanted to use agents, or channels, or messengers, to teach the people, why did He not choose the learned scribes or the pompous Pharisees of that day? Why did the Lord use as His messengers men who had been fishermen, tax-gatherers — persons whom the learned would think entirely unfit as instructors, or teachers? We recall that in the end of the Jewish Age it was written of two of them (and perhaps of all of 'them). that the people perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men (Acts 4:13). How could it be that God would pass by some of the most learned of that day? "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight." (Matt. 11:25, 26.)

So to-day the Lord is using agencies, messengers, that are not acceptable to many whom they approach. And while these are making up their minds to believe, slow in this because overcharged with the cares of this life, the elect company will be made up. Then the others will say, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." But the Lord will declare that He cannot recognise them as members of His Body, the Elect. They will not have shown the spirit of meekness, gentleness, patience, love necessary to give them a place in this Body. So it will be only the Body members who will be lifted up by the messengers and carried safely through the trials and difficulties which will be permitted to test the love, loyalty and obedience to the will of God, of all who have made with Him a Covenant of Sacrifice—even unto death.

Items of Interest.

"A Blessed Hope for Suffering Humanity."—

The article by this title, appearing in this issue of "People's Paper," is expected to be ready in tract form in the course of a few days. All our friends able to use these to advantage are invited to order according to requirements. Other tracts also available are: "A New Dictator—The Only Hope for Humanity"; "Upon the Earth Distress with Perplexity"; "Why Sorrow, Sin, Death and Evil are Permitted"; and "When Christ is King."

"The Ten Camels."—

Appreciation of these Bible Stories is expressed by a number of friends in their correspondence recently. The following extracts are samples:—"We were pleased to receive the two copies of 'The Ten Camels.' It is nice to see, at long last, some effort being made to record the story simply, that a child may understand; to re-tell so that childish minds may appreciate the truths that have made us so glad. The little book contains a wealth of good news; enough information surrounds the story of each camel to warrant an illustrated series of booklets."

"We were glad to have the copy of 'The Ten Camels' and it is a very nice little hook indeed, both in its get up, binding, etc., as well as in the matter contained. So far as I have read I think it is splendid. It would do all the Lord's people good to read it. We trust it may be much blessed in the homes of the friends and be a means of comfort and help to many, young as well as older ones. We would like another copy, please."

Subscriptions to Periodicals.—

Owing to the recent adverse exchange rates, an increase in price of subscriptions sent through this office for periodicals from U.S.A. is unavoidable as from 1st September. The prices may vary from time to time, the increase at present being 1/- to 1/3 for each subscription.

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