



Volume XXIV. No. 4 MELBOURNE, 1st APRIL, 1941 Price—Twopence Halfpenny

Be Strong in the Lord.

(Convention Address.) (Eph. 6:10-18.)

PAUL'S letter to the Ephesians is surely one of the grandest books of the Bible. The presence of deep spiritual truths is a clear indication that the Church at Ephesus had made good and steady progress in the Christian course. Paul did not feel obliged to speak to them as unto babes, as had been the case in his writings to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 3:1, 2).

No, the deep spiritual truths in this letter to Ephesus are such as Paul presents only to the, fully consecrated. The central theme of his letter is the .New Creation—that the justified, by a consecration of their justified humanity when accepted of the Lord are begotten of the holy spirit to be new creatures in Christ. For such he says, "Old things have passed away," that is earthly hopes, aims and ambitions. Their earthly rights have been surrendered, and instead heavenly prospects received by faith, and waited for with the expectation that they will be received actually in the First Resurrection.

The first part of this book to the Ephesians relates to the philosophy of the change from human to spiritual, from humanity to membership in the New Creation. The last chapters point out the effects of the change, not only on the New Creature, but upon the mortal body, which the new mind must thereafter hold in control with more and more decision and ability as it grows stronger in the Lord and in the power of His might. What a grand example of a strong and steadfast Christian character was Paul! How earnestly he laboured in the cause of Christ! How zealously he grasped his opportunities for serving the brethren! How fervently he petitioned the Throne of Heavenly Grace that the heavenly mind might become fixed, that it might be said of each one that Christ dwelleth in our hearts.. (See Eph. 3:14-19).

As an experienced soldier of Christ, Paul well knew that everyone who had enlisted under the banner of the Captain of our salvation would need strength from above to enable him to gain the victory over the forces of evil. He well knew that before the end of the way was reached there would be many obstacles to overcome, many battles to fight against the world, the flesh and the adversary.

He closed his letter, therefore, by exhorting the Christians to put on all the strength they could to meet and overcome the evils with which they had to contend. He reminds us that it is only by the strength of the Lord we can hope for victory.

To be "strong in the Lord" is to be strong or courageous in His cause; to feel that He is our strength, and to rely on Him and His promises. The question arises, then, how can we be strong in the Lord and the power of His might? The Apostle says that in order to be strong, so that we may withstand the oppositions and trials of the way, we need to put on the whole armour of God. It will require faith and careful obedience to get this armour and keep it on continually.

The Girdle of Truth.

The first part of the armour brought to our attention by the Apostle is the "girdle of truth." We are to have our loins

girded with truth. The girdle is necessary to keep the armour firmly fastened to us, and is the emblem of diligence, or service. Remembering that the various pieces of this armour of God represent the truth in one or other of its applications to our daily experience, let us consider the significance of the girdle. It is this part of the armour that seems to symbolise our consecration to the Lord's service. We are thus reminded that if the truth is to give us proper protection, we must not hold it selfishly. We must allow the spirit and principles of the truth to so permeate our hearts and lives that we will feel constrained to tell it to all who have ears to hear the glad message of the truth. Is not this the reason why the truth is given to us? Are we not the chosen generation to show forth the virtues, the excellencies of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light? (1 Pet. 2:9.)

There are some Christians to-day who seem to think there is nothing more to do by way of witnessing the truth to others. They seem to think that all that is necessary is to attend to their own upbuilding. What a mistake this is.

They are missing a great blessing. Our experience is that those friends who are enjoying the richest spiritual blessing, and whose lives give evidence of rich development of the graces of Christian character, are those who are zealously engaged in the service of truth, telling it to those who have ears to hear the glad message of the coming kingdom. It is true that our efforts seem not to accomplish very much in these days, and it is not to be expected that we would find very many grains of wheat, but nevertheless we still have the message of truth to hold out. There are still those around us who may be comforted, still some who may be mourning in Zion, and still the poor, groaning creation needing the message of comfort and truth. Yes, the truth is to be used for the blessing of others. As we thus use it, its real value and glory will become more and more enhanced in our own minds and hearts.

We are not under-estimating the importance of our own development. Far from it; rather our thought would be that our witnessing to the truth by word and printed page as we have opportunity is one of the very best means by which our own sanctification will, in God's providence, be accomplished. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that which withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Prov. 11:24, 25.)

It is along this line of service for the truth that Paul writes his words of encouragement to Timothy: "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee . . . for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.

Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. 1:7, 8; 2:1, 2.)

Let us not forget that we are servants of the truth; if we would stand in the day of testing and be more than conquerors it will be because by the Lord's grace, we have maintained the spirit of our consecration, the spirit of service, the spirit of Christ. (See Luke 12:35-37; 1 Cor. 15:58; Matt. 25:14-30.)

The Breastplate of Righteousness.

Next we have brought to our attention the breastplate of righteousness. This would seem to have reference not only to our justification by faith in the blood of Christ, but also to the outcome of that faith, namely, formation of Christian character. True faith in Christ and loyalty to Him will lead us to put the principles of righteousness, truth and holiness into our own hearts, our inmost being, "truth in the inward parts." This is what the Lord wants. It is for this He has called us; this development of the qualities of true Christlike characters is what is represented by our breastplate, and which fits us for service. It also serves as a protection against the fiery darts, the bitter words of our enemies

In 1 Thes. 5:8, the Apostle urges that we put on the "breastplate of faith and love." Here we see there are two parts of the breastplate. Let us put them both on. Let us hold fast our faith in the righteousness of Christ, and then put on His character. This implies a rich development of the fruits of the spirit of Christ, namely kindness, patience, love. What a protection this is to us! We think of Stephen and his beautiful defence of the truth, as we have it there in the seventh chapter of Acts. It is a wonderful picture of a faithful, loyal soldier of Christ, and what a defence of the truth he gave! Stephen surely had his breastplate well fastened on, as well as his girdle. He was active in witnessing, but with what love and patience. How zealous he was to serve the truth, yet how well equipped to present the truth. He prayed as he was dying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

Let us take a lesson from Stephen, that our zeal for the Lord and His truth be such that while even our kindest

presentation of the truth may arouse the opposition of others blinded by the adversary, yet may we have so much love in our hearts that it may serve as a protection to us, keeping us calm and sweet, even in the severest trouble. If we are able to overcome evil with good, if when reviled we revile not again, but rather do good and bless, then this will prove that we have our breastplate properly fixed, and we will all need it. Every consecrated child of God needs his or her breastplate, whether our warfare is of the public kind like Stephen's, or whether it is of the more private sort in our daily lives or more obscure ways of life. We cannot live a happy Christian life without our breastplate. Let us put on and keep on this great and important part of our armour, the breastplate of faith and love. In other words, let our faith and love for the Lord be so deep and abiding that we will always have His spirit. Let us be ready to give, when required, a soft answer that turneth away wrath, as well as refuse to partake of anything that would be contrary to the known will of the Lord. (Eph. 5:11; 2 Cor. 6, 6, 7.)

The Sandals of Peace.

Next, the Apostle urges the soldier of Christ to attend to the protection for his feet. He speaks of the sandals of peace. "Having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." If we would be of those who will stand in the day of testing, if we would preserve a patient, consistent and faithful walk with Christ, we will need to have our "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." What is the significance of this part of our equipment, and how does our appreciation of the use of the sandals assist us in our service for the Lord and truth, including the brethren? Remembering that this armour is only suitable for the fully consecrated, new creature in Christ, we realise that it is something which must have reference to our spiritual walk. We must be found walking honestly, consistently, not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Walk in life, in light, and circumspectly, not as other Gentiles walk. Walk by faith, in wisdom, and humbly before God.

There must be a careful preparation of our own hearts before we can render assistance to others. The truth should exercise a sanctifying influence on our own lives, making us holy, and it should shine out through our lives to assist in bringing others to Christ. If we, either as individuals or as a class, should begin to say, "We have a good knowledge of the truth now, and our efforts to attract new interest do not seem to accomplish anything much, no one seems to want the truth and anyway it only brings persecution, so perhaps it would be best just to keep quiet, just to enjoy our meetings ourselves"—if we should adopt this attitude, what do we think would be the result? Would it please the Lord? Can we imagine the Lord, or Paul, adopting this attitude? Surely not! Surely it would be very displeasing to Christ, and would probably result in our loss of joy of the truth, if not of the truth itself. We should soon become like the Sardis Christians spoken of in Rev. 3, as having only a name to live. We would soon be quite devoid of spiritual life. (See Rev. 3:1-3.)

Having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace will mean careful and continued scrutiny of our words and ways, seeking to have our hearts in closer accord with the spirit of the gospel of peace. Only then can our service be acceptable to the Lord. To use another illustration, we must be true diamonds, gladly receiving and beautifully transmitting to others, both to our brethren and the world around us, the light of truth. This is our mission.

It was for this purpose that our Lord came into the world. (John 18:37.) "If the light that is in thee become darkness, how great is the darkness," both to the individual or the ecclesia which loses its light and the world around is deprived of the blessing of the light.

Let us look well to our sandals. The spirit of Christ, the spirit of the gospel of peace must be permitted to fill our hearts; this will help us over the rough, hard places and to endure faithfully to the end of our course. It will help us to be patient and gentle under trial and opposition. (2 Tim. 2:24, 25.)

The Shield of Faith.

"Above all taking the shield of faith." The word "above" here is the translation of the Greek word "epi" (upon). The thought is perhaps more correctly conveyed if we use the word "cover"—"to cover all take the shield of the faith."

The shield of the soldier in Paul's day provided a protection for the whole body, inasmuch as it could be turned quickly in every direction. It was attached by straps to the left arm. It was, therefore, a very important part of a soldier's armour. Surely the Apostle aptly used "the shield of the faith" to represent the protection that the faith, that is, confidence in God and in His promise, affords to the believer. How important it is for every Christian to be strong in

faith! The apostles prayed, “Lord, increase our faith,” and so each one of us must cultivate continually a good, strong faith in God and in His mighty power.

To this end we need to call to mind the many promises and assurances of God’s Word, and to meditate upon the many examples of faith contained in the Scriptures. A strong faith in God is not only necessary for our own welfare and progress, but will also be an encouragement to others. What a power there is in example! Let us have a strong shield, a firm, unwavering confidence in God that nothing can turn aside. Let us hold to our faith, even though we may have to stand alone. Job said,

“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” and David’s words were, “I will trust, and not be afraid.” Again, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to the called according to his purpose.” We can therefore wait patiently upon Him, and rest contentedly in His good providence.

The Helmet of Salvation.

This represents the protection for the Christian's mind, his intellect. A certain amount of knowledge is necessary for every Christian. Peter tells us that it is through the knowledge of God, that is, His character and plan, that all things pertaining to life and godliness have been given to us.

In 1 Thes. 5:8, Paul says we should put on "for an helmet the hope of salvation." It is through God's Word, the knowledge of the truth, that we learn His will, and receive instructions concerning our proper course. We need not only knowledge, but especially wisdom, understanding, so as to use the knowledge aright. How necessary is the spirit of a sound mind! "Blessed are the pure in spirit," the humble minded. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." "The meek will he guide in judgment." "The meek will he teach his way."

We see how right use or exercise of the knowledge of the truth does serve to protect the Christian. God does not give us the knowledge of the truth so as to show others how clever we are. Paul entreats, "This I say, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly." Only as we are little in our own sight can the Lord use us as instruments of blessing.

The Sword of the Spirit.

"The sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." In the hand of the literal soldier, of course, the sword was a weapon of destruction, but it does not follow that the Christian soldier should go about smiting others with the truth.

It is an offensive weapon, and we must use it to overcome the foes of truth and righteousness in our own hearts and minds. (See 2 Cor. 10:4, 5.) Our chief work is in ourselves. We must get our own hearts right with God, cleanse ourselves that we might be vessels fit for the Master's use. We must get the beam out of our own eye before we can assist our brethren. (2 Tim. 2:21; Matt. 7:3-5.)

The sword is also a defensive weapon, and we must all stand firmly for the truth. Our Lord faithfully defended the truth, the Word of God was His defensive weapon. His reply to Satan's efforts to turn Him aside was, "It is written." The Lord lived up to the principles of the Gospel of God, He manifested the Father in His words and actions and teachings. His skilful use of the sword exposed the false teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Paul himself is another faithful example of a Christian soldier. He used the sword defensively and aggressively. He said (Phil. 1:17), "I am set for the defence of the gospel." Surely he fought a good fight, contending

earnestly for the faith under continuous opposition and persecution and imprisonment. Let us each, then, be courageous in using the sword, first upon ourselves. Let us not shrink when the sword of Divine truth convinces us of some defect in our own walk or way of thinking. No one is perfect, we all need instruction along some line or other. Let us be willing, anxious to be taught of God, and to take help and admonition when we need it from one another. Let us not forget our stewardship in respect of God's Word, the message of truth.

We must "preach the word, instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). We must "hold forth the word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" (Phil. 2:15, 16). We must "exhort one another daily and encourage each other along the way."

In conjunction with the armour the Apostle reminds us of the necessity and value of prayer—"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance for all saints." Someone has said, "Prayer keeps the Christian's armour bright." Prayer is indeed a wonderful privilege; without prayer to God we cannot expect to have the victory. When we come to God, let us draw nigh in spirit—with the heart, the understanding, the mind—whether the prayer be long or short. Without the spirit of prayer our petitions amount to nothing.

There is a difference, too, between prayer and supplication. The term "prayer" applies to any petition, great or small, whereas "supplication" means special, earnest desire for something, an entreaty with intense yearning, fervent longing. But whether it is prayer in the ordinary sense, or supplication, we should always come in the spirit, with an appreciation of the fact that we are entering into the presence of the great Creator, and that in thus doing we are enjoying a great privilege.

We should also “watch thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints.” Watching implies mental alertness. If we believe that the Lord has indicated that we should pray for the things we need, we should be on the alert to recognise when we receive them. We should acknowledge them accordingly.

Then, we should be persevering in prayer. Our Lord gives two illustrations of this—Luke 11:5-8 and 18:1-8. We have the reference there to the importunate widow, who persisted in her request and ultimately got what she wanted. This shows that God wants us to keep on praying, even when the answer does not seem to come. So this perseverance is essential in the sight of God. It includes patience, perseverance and interest. The Lord would prove us and develop us, for He wants us to be positive characters. So the prayer should be in the spirit, from the heart. We should watch thereunto with perseverance until the Lord can see we have come to that degree of development that will fit us for a share in the Kingdom. Clad in the whole armour of God we may well “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might”; yes, “strengthened with all strength according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness (Col. 1:11).

-Fight the good fight with all thy might,
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right;
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race through God’s good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.

Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide,
His boundless mercy will provide;
Lean, and thy trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

Faint not nor fear, His arms are near;
He changeth not, and thou art dear;
Only believe, and thou shalt see
That Christ is all in all to thee.”

Convention Notices.

Adelaide.

As announced last month, the brethren in Adelaide are holding their Annual Convention from Good Friday to Easter Monday (D.V.) , 11th to 14th April inclusive, at the R.A.O.B Hall, 48 Flinders Street (near Gawler Place), Adelaide.

Programmes and other information may be obtained from the Secretary, Mrs. H. H. Bartel 10 Forest Avenue East, Clarence Gardens, Adelaide.

Sydney

The gatherings notified last month to take place from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, 11th to 13th April inclusive, will be held (D.V.) at Child Study Rooms, 75 Liverpool Street, Sydney.

Further information and programmes may be procured from the Secretary, Mr. J. H. Thompson, 11 Macquarie Street, Hurstvine, Sydney.

Memorial Services.

Melbourne.—The Memorial of our Lord's death will be held on Wednesday evening, 9th April, at 8 p.m. (D.V.), at Excelsior House (3rd Floor), 17 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

Adelaide.—On Thursday evening, 10th April, at 8 p.m., the Memorial Service will be held (D.V.) at R.A.O.B. Hall, 48 Flinders Street (near Gawler Place), Adelaide.

Sydney.—The Memorial will be held in connection with the Convention in Sydney on Good Friday evening (D.V.) at the address under the Convention notice.

To Readers Overseas.

In view of the fact that mails are now uncertain and fail to arrive from time to time our oversea brethren are advised to keep a copy of all particular items mentioned in correspondence, and especially the numbers of Money Orders or Drafts forwarded. This information could then be sent later should acknowledgment of any previous communication not be received from this office within reasonable time.

Notice.

It is expected (D.V.) that the office of this Institute will be closed from 5th April till after the Easter week-end. Friends desiring literature, etc., at this period are asked to send their orders in early for attention.

PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

Published by the Berean Bible Institute,

19 Ermington Place, Kew, E4, Melbourne,

Victoria, Australia.

(Monthly) 2/6 (60 cents) per annum, post paid,

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.

In Remembrance of Christ, Our Passover.

WHILE the Lord's true people require no reminder of the significance of the Passover season, inasmuch as they are ever seeking throughout each year "to keep the feast," in spirit and truth, yet the loving request of our dear Master on the night in which He was betrayed and as He instituted the Memorial of His death, to "do this in remembrance of me," is so gladly observed at each anniversary by all who regard this celebration as a solemn and sacred privilege in commemoration of Him, who, "though He were rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."

As we approach the time of year once again that corresponds to the close of our Lord's life of sacrifice on earth, our hearts, then, while ever full of thanksgiving are more particularly lifted up to our loving heavenly Father in responsive gratitude; firstly, for the gift of our dear Redeemer, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace," and secondly, that we should be so highly favoured as to be called unto the fellowship of His dear Son, both now in walking in His steps of sacrifice and later in association with Him in the heavenly Kingdom.

It is always helpful in meditating upon the deep significance of our Lord's Memorial to realise how God so wonderfully pictured the redemptive work for mankind in the deliverance of His ancient people, Israel, from Egyptian bondage. It was there that the firstborns of Israel came so prominently into the picture, when, after centuries of servitude, it was arranged by the Lord that the slaying of the typical Passover lamb and applying of the blood on the doorways of the homes of the Israelites was the means of sparing the firstborns of Israel, when the same class amongst the Egyptians were slain, and also prepared the way whereby all Israel successfully journeyed across the wilderness and through the Red Sea to safety.

The typical lamb which was slain by each household of Israelites and whose blood protected the firstborns within, during that particular night in Egypt, undoubtedly pictured "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." However, it is clearly revealed that the whole procedure at that first Passover in Egypt was so arranged that one class, the firstborns only, needed to be covered by the blood of the typical lamb to save them from death on that eventful night. So, in the antitype, the Scriptures show that during this Gospel Age, pictured by the one night in Egypt, only the firstborn class have received full benefit from the sacrifice of Christ, "the Lamb of God"; these only have passed from death unto life by begetting of God's holy spirit, following their justification by faith in His blood, having been so highly favoured on account of their willingness to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Just as all Israel were delivered from Egypt by their great leader, Moses, on the morning following the passing over of their firstborns, so all mankind will be delivered from this world of sin and death by the greater than Moses, even Christ and His saints, in the glad morning of the new dispensation, following the complete passing over of all the firstborns, "redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."

In view of the fact that the firstborns of this Gospel Age have been comparatively few in number at any time since our Lord's first advent and that to these alone are the precious things of God revealed, it is not surprising that much confusion exists in Christendom concerning the Lord's Supper. Yet, how beautifully simple are our Lord's words, when, following the usual Jewish Passover feast, He took the bread and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Likewise the cup—"This is My blood of the new covenant; drink ye all of it." In explanation, our Lord meant that His followers should no longer keep the annual Jewish Passover and kill the literal lamb, but rather the emblems He gave would represent His body and His blood and by appropriating these to themselves His people would, by faith, be justified in God's sight by His perfect humanity offered for their sake. How significant are His words—"This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

It is from other Scriptures, especially from the writings of Paul, that we see very clearly the secondary or deeper meaning contained in our Lord's words, and which explain the true meaning of the term "firstborn." Just as Christ was "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20), because of the sacrifice of His perfect humanity and begetting of the spirit to the new nature, so all who will be members of "Christ the firstfruits" (1 Cor. 15:23), must also sacrifice their reckoned perfect humanity "a living sacrifice unto God." So we read in 1 Cor. 10:16, 17—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (common-participation) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (common-participation) of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we

are all partakers of that one bread.” How favoured, indeed, are all who are thus constrained to sacrifice with Christ (2 Cor. 5:14), and being begotten of the holy spirit become members of the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” (Heb. 12:23.).

Much has happened in the world since the last Memorial season; some of our dear brethren have finished their earthly course, and in this we rejoice; others have been through most trying experiences in the war areas, and still others are having their trials in different ways. To all still walking in the footsteps of Christ, His words would apply— “These things (pertaining to the life of sacrifice) I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

While momentous days are no doubt at hand in connection with the closing scenes of this dispensation, how encouraging is the thought that shortly all the firstborns unto God shall be “passed over,” the “marriage of the Lamb” having taken place, and with the plagues fully spent upon mankind generally, the glad morning shall dawn, bringing blessing and deliverance, and only those worthy of death shall be destroyed in the “Red Sea,” the second death.

Whether our brethren be alone in isolated places, or able to gather in twos and threes or larger assemblies, let all take the opportunity at the anniversary of our Lord’s death of celebrating “in remembrance of Him,” as also indicating their own pledge to continue walking in His steps of sacrifice, faithful unto death, by His grace and strength.

—Lord, I would follow Thee
In all the way
Thy weary feet have trod;
Yes, if I may,
Help me the cross to bear,
All Thy fair graces wear,
Close watching unto prayer,
Following Thee.-

Constant Obedience.

(Convention Address.)

ON previous occasions it was pointed out how necessary it is to develop completely the elements of Justice and Love. This developing would be accentuated by obeying our Lord's new commandment. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." If we were to love, and that is also to assist and help the brethren to the extent of sacrifice as He did for us, then we would be developing in our own hearts and minds an appreciation of justice and love that would be very helpful; and speed up the , development to the greatest possible degree.

Without this sharpening action of enduring persecution for the truth and righteousness, by sacrifice, the process of developing the required character would not be so rapid. The trials and tribulations that we have to endure as soldiers of the Cross help us very considerably in our development, and as a result we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Those who in the future age will be required to have the Lord's law written in their hearts will have a much longer period of time for their change of heart to take place. During that time it will be necessary for them to learn to love the Lord perfectly, to desire His character and to develop it; that is, along the lines of justice and love—to love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love their neighbours as themselves. The thought of loving their neighbour as themselves is emphasised in the Golden Rule.

In our association with this Rule we should ever bear in mind our Lord's words, that if we love them that love us, what thanks have we. This would indicate that in our operation of this rule we should take the initiative and not depend on others doing good toward us in the first place and then we would reciprocate, but rather we should bless those that curse us and do good to those who despitefully use and persecute us. It is not what people may do to us, but what we may be thinking and doing to them, that is of great importance to us.

That is one way in which the meeting together and associating with one another would help to develop our hearts and lives in that very necessary element of character.

Then, the more we come into contact with brethren, also the worldly, the greater is the friction that exists, and if we receive these trials and tribulations in the right way, we are developing along the right lines, being rightly exercised by the experiences that come upon us, just as the chiselling of precious stones is necessary that they should shine forth in their purity and brightness.

So we come to the thought that while we are associated with disobedience in, the world at the present time, we are assisted to develop obedience in our own hearts quickly, if we receive it in the right way. Now we read that "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The gift of life, of course, is dependent upon our obedience. We remember that in the Garden of Eden Adam was disobedient, and although it may seem a very small transgression to disobey in such a small manner, yet the great penalty that came upon Adam was death. Adam had been disobedient and the sentence was, "Dying thou shalt die."

Adam represented the whole human race, and all down through the ages disobedience has been growing to a more or less extent; at first there was the sowing and since then the crop has been growing—increasing and increasing right through the period from Adam until the present time. Now, what is the position evident in the world at present? We see national anarchy much before us. There is disobedience as far as nations are concerned. One nation has overrun other nations, without thought for their rights as individuals or nations. The whole intention seems to be to gain power, with the thought that if they can overrun the world they will have sufficient power and authority to bring all mankind to their feet to serve them for their own aggrandisement, just as happened in other great empires that have passed away in times gone by. It is evident that in the case of Babylon, Greece and Rome they used their power for their own national

glory, and at the present time the same thought is evident in the nations. As far as Germany is concerned her avowed intention is to use her conquered people as slaves for the aggrandisement of herself.

The present international anarchy is but one step towards complete anarchy among the whole human race. We have had brought to our attention in recent years very many instances of anarchy in the sense that treaties that have been

signed have been treated as scraps of paper. There is no restraint put upon nations if they have the power, or think they have, to cast aside the obligations and take advantage of those who are less prepared to defend themselves. This is anarchy in an international sense.

Now, the Bible pictures conditions that will exist throughout the world in a similar way, indicating that every man's hand will be against his neighbour, and against his brother, that a man's foes shall be those of his own household, that brother would give up brother, or the son the father, or any, other relatives, so that they themselves might receive temporal benefit. This state of affairs would be anarchy or disobedience in the extreme. It is the harvest in a community sense, of Adam's first act of disobedience.

It is evident that anarchy is developing to a more or less extent in the minds of the people at the present time. They disregard law, as indicated by the increase of wickedness throughout the world, and it is brought to our minds by Jesus that "iniquity shall abound" (Matt. 24:12) as the Kingdom draws near. Jesus also said, "Will He find faith on the earth?" at His return. "Men shall be lovers of themselves rather than lovers of God."

So is brought to us a great object lesson of the necessity of developing in our hearts 'and minds a sincere love for God, and a desire to measure up to His requirements. We should be followers of Christ in that we delight to do the Father's will, even to the extent of sacrifice and death, even the ignominious death that He endured, that of the Cross, when men accounted His goodness as being evil.

We see here the obedience of Jesus being tested to the greatest possible degree, and we remember He said that the servant is not above his master, and so we should ever be prepared to learn obedience in the same manner as He. By being afflicted and suffering for righteousness sake our obedience to the principles of truth and righteousness would be firmly and quickly established. We remember our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, that He was tempted and tried in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Then we have the Apostle's words, that "We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy spirit that is given unto us." Note also the words of Jesus in Matt. 5:11, 12.

The thought of constant obedience is emphasised when we consider the laws of the land in which we live. Now the over-riding authority is the Federal Government; then we have the State Governments, and there are also local governments, and governing bodies such as the railways and tramways etc. All these have laws which must be obeyed. These laws are made for the simple working of social intercourse generally, and for the betterment of the nation in a social way. Some of these laws, of course, apply only locally; others are more general, and others embrace the whole Commonwealth. In our association with the powers that be, it is necessary for us to constantly obey these laws, or we meet with the limb of the law. On being called upon to give an account of any disobedience, we are hailed before the Court and penalised as is thought proper according to the measure of disobedience.

I wish to emphasise here, that it is necessary for us to constantly obey these laws. It is not sufficient that we obey them for a day or a week or a year, but should do so throughout the entire period of our association with them. While we are dealing with the railways we must be subject to the by-laws that govern them; while we are in any particular local governing area, we must be subject to the by-laws operating there. And the same thing applies as far as Federal and State laws are concerned; in all these things it is necessary for us to constantly be on guard lest we infringe the law.

A similar procedure operates as far as God's law is concerned. There is the supreme law that we have to observe all the time; this is given by God Himself in the Commandments. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." That this is God's requirement alone is shown in the text, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" There is a wealth of meaning in these words, and they embrace all that is necessary as far as our dealings with God are concerned, covering also our dealings with mankind, that we should love mercy, desiring for ourselves mercy of God. In walking humbly with God it is to be our object always to be in that attitude of heart wherein we can worship God as being the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and so have that humble attitude of heart that is necessary for the correct appreciation of all His requirements.

Then Jesus elaborated this law that God requires us to keep, and He also gave us a new commandment, "That ye love one another as I have loved you." This was not given in God's law in the first place, but is an added requirement for

those who would run in the race for the prize held out at the present time.

After our Lord we have the exhortations given by the Apostles to help us in understanding and keeping the perfect Law of Love. They elaborate those principles, and are very necessary to us, so that we may be more particular in our observance of the commandments that were given to us by God and by Christ.

At the present time we have the by-laws, as we might term them, of the Ecclesias for their own good government, and the establishment of law and order among themselves. If we have a complete appreciation of all these things it may help us to develop within ourselves constancy in love and justice more and more completely.

It would be well for us to consider the development of character in association with constancy, being constantly obedient. Let us consider the exhortation, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." (Phil. 4:5). Always having this before our minds would help us to develop the spirit of a sound mind. It is not in the best interests of a Christian to have the highest sentimental feelings at one moment and then to be depressed to the lowest degree later. So if we strive to be moderate in all things, not only in the individual but in our general outlook in life, it will help us to attain that even balance of Christian character that is necessary to permit us to exhibit justice at all times. If we are carried away by the experiences of the moment we might be tempted under some circumstances to be unjust; then, if we are depressed and do not try to be moderate in our feelings at another time, again justice and love might be infringed and we would be doing injury rather than doing good. It would be a very good idea if we could divert our exuberance of spirit into a reservoir for practical use at some future time when it would be needed, just as the waters of an overflowing river are used to water the desert and bring forth desired blessings at will.

Not alone should we be moderate, or sober, regarding our outlook in life, but also in our judgment of others. This implies the necessity on our part of seeing both sides of a question before coming to a decision. Alas! how prone we are to judge on half, or less, of one side, without taking the trouble to look at matters from another's viewpoint, or even looking at them from God's standpoint. It would be hard indeed for us to determine whether another's actions were intended to be wrong, or were the result of a biased outlook due to the frailty of fallen human nature. How deceptive is the flesh! It delights to go the easy way of imputing evil to the pure, and justifies its action by saying, "I heard it on good authority," whereas only one part or side was heard. We all do well to heed the Master's words in Matt 7:1, 2. What a reminder this is that we should be moderate,, we might also say generous, in passing sentence upon others.

But while we are thus being ever obedient to the precept of our Master regarding others, the scrutiny of our own hearts should be remorseless—"Purge out the old leaven," says the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 5:7, and again, "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." 2 Cor. 4:16, 17. We see, then, the necessity of being ever on the alert lest we fall into the temptation of judging others too harshly and ourselves too lightly.

"Constant obedience!" How necessary for us, that we may be overcomers, yea, more than overcomers through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. It develops our characters along the right lines. By being tried in the fire the gold is purified, the silver is refined; by enduring hardness or privation the good soldier is proved. By submitting to the chiselling process the temple stones are prepared for a useful edifice, and by purging ourselves from iniquity we are made vessels for the Master's use. It is not by ourselves or in our own strength that we are able to be overcomers, but we have access to all the required assistance, and are urged to make the utmost use of it. To the Apostle Paul when he sought the removal of his thorn in the flesh the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12:9. How often do we sing

"Precious promise God bath given To the weary ones who try Treasure to lay up in heaven 'I will guide thee with mine eye.' "

Then, there are the examples of the prophets of old (read Heb. 11:32-40), not forgetting Him who left us an example that we should follow in His steps. (1 Pet. 2:21-25). Also, we are assured that the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them (Psa. 34:7). Jesus says of them that they "do always behold the face of My Father in Heaven" (Matt 18:10).

So, dear friends, let us apply ourselves well to this lesson, not alone in the ways that have been mentioned, but in every sense in which we may encounter the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the adversary, that we may be perfected in our obedience to Him who will reward us at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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Printed by Hickling & Powell Pty. Ltd., Lygon St., East Brunswick for Berean Bible Institute, Ermington Place, Kew, Melb. E4.