



Volume 81 No.4 MELBOURNE, JULY/AUGUST 1998 **“WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION”**

(Phil. 2:12, 13)

In the two verses of the text, Paul is addressing the Church, and not the world. The world is not now on trial for salvation. This exhortation is applicable only to those whose sins have been forgiven, and who through Christ have been brought into a special relationship with God. Only these are able to appreciate the import of the apostle's words.

In the chapter from which they are taken, the Apostle Paul pays a beautiful tribute to the church at Phillippi. He refers in tender and loving terms to their obedience always to his instruction and counsel, not only when he was present with them, but likewise in his absence. He urges them to continued faithfulness and earnestness in this good way. He desires that they make still further progress in the Master's likeness, working out in themselves through humility and obedience the character development necessary, with fear and trembling, doing their part in the attainment of the salvation to which they had been called in Christ.

While addressed to the church at Phillippi the Apostle's words come down to us to-day no less forcibly. How wonderfully the Lord blessed the Apostle's writings, and used them for the benefit of the entire Church from Paul's day right down to the present time. They apply to all the sanctified in Christ Jesus. He reminds us, as he did the Phillippian church, that we are to "work out our salvation."

ACCEPTABLE WORKS OF FAITH

The question arises - Does this exhortation to work out our own salvation conflict with Paul's other statement, that our salvation "is not of works, lest any man should boast"? We reply: No, our salvation from death is entirely by faith. As fallen, human creatures we have no opportunity of doing any works that would justify us before God. Until we have been accepted into God's family no works that we could do would be acceptable. God, who is perfect, is not pleased to receive anything imperfect, either works or anything else.

But when we have received the forgiveness of our sins - not by works, but by faith - and have become sons of God, through consecration and spirit-begetting, then comes the time when we can do acceptable works; for we are then members of the Lord's family, and the Holy Spirit within us through this begetting now has an opportunity for expression in works of faith. In other words, as imperfect human beings, we cannot work out our salvation; but as new creatures we can do this. Phil. 4:13.

Being justified by the blood of Christ, and being called with the heavenly calling, we can do our share in this great work of our own preparation for our future station and glory. We do this by giving heed to the instructions of our Lord, by allowing His word to dwell in us richly, and following the example which He has set us. We can never attain perfection in the flesh; but from the beginning of our consecrated life, our heart, our intention, must be wholly loyal - God would not accept a halfhearted consecration - and day by day this heart intention must become more and more fixed in the way of righteousness. We are to continue the work of bringing our very thoughts as well as our words and doings into subjection, and enlisting our talents in the service of the Lord.

THE POWER OF GOD

It is encouraging for us to know that this warfare is not one which we must wage alone. It is God who has led us thus far, and provided for all our needs in Christ; it is He who has implanted in our hearts the desire to do His good pleasure, and He will continue to lead and help us and work in us by His word of Truth, if we continue to give heed to His counsel. The Gospel message is the "power of God unto salvation" unto every one who accepts it, and no greater stimulus can be found than the "exceeding great and precious promises" given to us, that by these we might become "partakers of the divine nature."

Our salvation is a salvation from death to life, from sin to righteousness. Moreover it is a transformation from human nature to divine. The first step to our salvation was the work accomplished by our Lord Jesus at Calvary - "He died for our sins." But the death of Christ alone was not sufficient to give us justification before God. No, a dead Saviour would avail us nothing. In order to help us out of our fallen state Christ must rise again from the dead, as the Apostle Paul states it - "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." 1 Cor. 15:17, 18.

So we see that the resurrection of Christ was a matter of vital importance. Christ must rise from the dead and ascend to the Father, there to present the merit of His sacrifice, before God could recognise us and justify us by faith. So Christ has appeared in the presence of God for us, and God has accepted our consecration, because Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, making our sacrifice acceptable to the Father.

It is only certain ones with whom God is dealing now; He is not dealing with the whole world at present; only those who wish to turn away from all sin and to gain a character of holiness like unto Christ are now being received of God and trained, disciplined and fitted for the great work of the future - the blessing of all the families of the earth. It is those, the "little flock" for whom God is seeking in this age, and the invitation has gone out - "If any man would come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me."

Those now being drawn to Christ are willing to suffer something for Christ's sake - for the Truth's sake. These are the ones of whom the Apostle speaks in Rom. 8:4, saying - "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." Christ demonstrated His perfection by keeping the law and now because we have accepted Him as our Saviour and are seeking to walk in His steps, the righteousness of the law is counted as fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The working out of our salvation is no small matter; only by the Lord's grace to help us could we continue the work to its completion. It calls for patient, steady, earnest effort day by day - a gradual bending heavenward of that which naturally tends toward things of the earth. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We must "put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of our minds; and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:22-24.

The Apostle's exhortation comes to us individually - "Beloved, work out your own salvation." We are saved by hope the Apostle says in another place. We are not finally saved as yet. We must work out our salvation. This is something which each one in Christ must do for himself or herself by the Lord's assisting grace. One cannot work out the salvation of another; each must work out his own salvation. The expression "work out," has a peculiar force and meaning. It suggests something that will cost us an effort - something that requires time, patience and perseverance.

Some have the erroneous idea that God does all the fashioning, and that His children are to be merely passive in His hand; but the Apostle Peter as well as Paul does not so express it (see 1 Pet. 1:13-16). Peter exhorts us not to fashion ourselves according to the former manner of our lives in our ignorance of God and His truth, but rather we are to strive to be holy in our manner of living (Revised Version). There is a work to be done in us and about us, and those who are not up and doing, but who passively sit and wait for the Lord to work miracles in their behalf are greatly deceived and have need to give earnest heed to the Apostle's injunction to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

In writing to the Romans (chapter 13:11,12) Paul says "that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 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." Even though we have been awakened from the sleep of sin there seems to be a danger that we may become somewhat drowsy concerning the wonderful salvation set before us. We must not allow ourselves to become "slothful in our diligence" but maintain our fervency of spirit in our service of the Lord. (See Rom. 12:11; Revised Version).

COPY-LIKENESS OF CHRIST

The Heavenly Father has predetermined that His New Creation shall all be copy-likenesses of Christ. The faithful overcomers must all be proved and found loyal to God and the principles of His Word. The Lord our God proves us to see whether we love Him with all our hearts. When we made our covenant with the Lord by sacrifice, we promised that we would live henceforth not for self, nor for the things of this world; but we would live for Christ - His will would be our chief concern; self would be denied and we would take up our cross daily and humbly follow in the steps of our Lord, who left us the example.

It is well that we examine ourselves from time to time to see to what extent we are carrying out our vow of consecration. Our Lord said, "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeit-

ing and drunkenness and cares of this life.” (Luke 21:34). How we need to take heed to ourselves - to examine ourselves, to criticise and correct ourselves; and to watch and pray continually so that we may walk more closely in harmony with the Lord’s requirements. This proper judging or examining of ourselves will assist us in the working out of our salvation.

In Heb. 3:14 the Apostle tells us that “we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” How important is this matter of faith. We will need to be strong in faith in order to be successful in working out our salvation for without faith it is impossible to please God. And then the Apostle Peter tells us that we will need to give all diligence to add to our faith, by which we are justified, virtue, i.e., real goodness of character; this can only come after we have made full consecration of ourselves to God; then knowledge, which apart from consecration might puff up the mind, but received into a humble heart will nourish and sustain; then moderation, control, the spirit of a sound mind is necessary to make proper use of the knowledge attained, and patience or the cheerful endurance of hardship, that we may be properly exercised by our experiences, and further developed in piety, godliness, sterling character, justness, a clear perception and determination to carry out that which is right - pleasing to God.

Brotherly-love must also grow; a love that loves God, must love also those who are begotten of God. “He that saith he loves God and hateth his brother is a liar.” (1 John 4:20). But while it is easy to love the brethren in Christ - to love them that love us - there is a further step into the likeness of Christ, for “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” We must love all men; yes, even our enemies. “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray (that is, not formally, but with desire for their good) for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven.” (Matt. 5:44,45.)

“GIVING ALL DILIGENCE”

We notice that the Apostle Peter’s exhortation - “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,” is similar in meaning of that of Paul who says - “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” The thought in both these texts is that there is a work for each follower of Christ to do in the matter of attaining the prize set before us. God is faithful who has given us the exceeding great and precious promises. He has made every necessary provision for us, and will sustain us all along the way, and indeed without His help we could do nothing, but the Lord will expect us to show our appreciation of His goodness by our earnest desire to cooperate with Him in respect of the high calling to which He has called us in Christ.

Why does the Apostle say we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling? Does the Lord wish his children literally to tremble with fear before Him? We believe the Apostle’s thought is that we should exercise great care in respect of everything pertaining to our heavenly calling. It is the most important thing in the world to us; and we should realise how great a privilege is ours as well as our responsibility to make the best possible use of the many favours and blessings so freely bestowed upon us.

As we consider Christ’s example, also that of Paul, what an encouragement their lives are to us along the line of earnestness of purpose in doing the will of God. Our Lord said “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work” (John 4:34). How earnestly He set Himself to know and do the Father’s will. Also Paul said, “For me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). He had no other aim in life but to do his Master’s will. So we want to have more of the proper reverence toward God - the holy fear of doing anything displeasing to Him - the earnest desire to have His approval and blessing.

“GOD WORKETH IN YOU”

The reason why we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling (with great carefulness) is, that it is God who is working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. The thought that God, the Almighty Creator of all things has chosen us, invited us and given us of His spirit to enable us to run the heavenly race should inspire us to zeal and diligence in the Christian way. God is working in us to cause us both to will and to do His good pleasure. The question is - How are we reacting to the influences of His spirit which are at work in us and around us?

Are we so fully appreciating the great love of God toward us (manifested in His Word, and also in the life and sacrificial death of our Saviour) that we are being constrained daily to yield our hearts and minds and all our powers in loving, willing obedience to His will? Are we earnestly watching to keep our hearts - our motives, as well as our thoughts - pure and in harmony with whatsoever things are just and honourable and good and true? Is the love of God more and more being shed abroad in our hearts; and is it our one aim to be changed into the likeness of the character of Christ?

If so, then we may well be glad that we are learning some good lessons in the school of Christ, and we can be assured that He who has begun the good work in us will also complete it, if we continue to follow on in obedience and trust. So may the good work go on in us; let us resolve that as each day comes around we will

strive to learn the lessons God is seeking to teach us; the lesson of patient submission to His will, the lesson of kindness and consideration for those around us and with whom our lives are linked; the lesson of trust and willing co-operation with God and with each other as members of the family of God. So, then, the working out of our salvation will be a labour of love. God, through His Word and Spirit will work in us while we work out by His grace.

(RJM:39)

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58)

GOD SPEAKS!

God speaks! So begins the epistle to the Hebrews, and without the customary apostolic greeting: and properly so, for the writer's qualifications and his blessing on his readers must be left unmentioned while God is speaking. He speaks to a people whose first great leader exceedingly feared and quaked when the voice of God once shook the earth, and from whose ranks arose those mighty men of word and deed of whom the world was not worthy. He speaks to a people who had heard his voice through many centuries; to a nation which could rightly claim that to them were committed the oracles. The old prophecies had not come by the will of man for often the will of man was contrary, nor did the prophets proclaim together, but spoke at sundry times when the burden of the Lord was upon them. Being of Adamic descent they died like their hearers, yet their words have not died, and they still speak to those who listen, and appropriate quotations are made in this epistle from their writings. The passage of time has by fulfilment of their prophecies revealed that for all their frailty they are truthfully referred to as holy men of God who spake as moved by the Holy Spirit.

But a great change of procedure is announced at the opening of this epistle. God is speaking again, and the new channel of truth is the greatest He could desire or find, or man need. We all know through whom He now speaks, but the apostle, apart from speaking of Him as the Son of God, does not immediately announce His name. He first mentions some of His glories and greatness, and when he has thus prepared the minds of his Hebrew readers, he declares Him, in chapter two, to be Jesus. He is not of sinful stock as the early prophets, yet his words do not abrogate the prophecies of his predecessors, for all spoke by the Spirit's direction. But this will emerge from the comparison - that if God had of old spoken through many faithful and is now speaking through one, His Son, then He must possess outstanding qualifications and virtues. He has; and the first seven chapters of Hebrews tell, among other things, how much better, how much greater is this faithful and true witness than the stalwarts of the past. Note how in those chapters, the faithful servants of old (the very ones revered in Israel) are one by one surpassed by Jesus the Son of God.

Early in the first chapter we see the close association of the Son and His Father, so complete that He is spoken of as the reflection of the power, the character, the voice of God. But there are two facts in which the Son must necessarily differ from the Father, yet they also prove how glorious is the union of Father and Son, and they are, that it is the Son who by Himself purges our sin, and having done that great work sits down on the right hand of the majesty on high. This is the channel through whom the message of God now comes, and it will be noticed that this new prophet is also Priest and King. He excels all previous holders of these offices in that he possesses the power of an endless life, enough to fit Him for all Israel's and the world's many needs. That He holds this immortality is seen in this chapter by His gaining by inheritance a more excellent name than the angels.

The remainder of the first chapter has as its theme the proving of the Son's superiority to the angels, and ample quotation is given from the voices of the past, which look forward to His coming and faithful performance of His Divine mission; these in turn seal the old writers as prophets of God. The apostle propounds the question - to which of the angels said He at any time, "thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee." No answer is given, for there is none. His superiority to angels is so marked that the apostle uses that strong figure of speech - erotesis - where the unanswered question is more telling than any reply. Further quotations show the Son's work in the beginning of laying the foundations of the universe. Some of the work erected on those foundations will perish, but the founder will endure and bear a righteous sceptre in the coming kingdom.

Not to angels is assigned the great work of subduing the future habitable, affirms chapter two, yet it reasons that if the word once spoken by the angels was accompanied by severe penalties, we ought to give more earnest heed to the words which first began to be spoken by this new Voice of God, which God Himself has confirmed by gifts of the Holy Spirit. Great indeed must be the responsibility of the hearers now that the last

and greatest voice from God is speaking! Leaving the subject of angels, the apostle mentions the superiority of the Son to man. This may be an obvious truth, yet if we recall that the Son was once of high heavenly rank and became a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death or in other words that He might redeem mankind by dying for them, then His superiority to man can never be called in question. His superiority to the devil is apparent, for by the same act of death He will render him powerless.

Then the comparison changes. Through superior to angels and man in general, He is shown as better than man in particular from chapter three forward; and the first great man in the list of worthies is Moses, one of the faithful voices of the past. It will be remembered that Moses the servant of God and of Israel, the house of God, prophesied that he himself would be succeeded by another to whom they would hearken without fail; and thus he became a testimony or illustration of those things which were to be spoken after concerning Jesus the Son. But though Moses heard the voice of God and faithfully served the words to Israel, it was necessary for the house of God to be constantly prompted to loyalty by the insistent words, "To-day if ye will hear his voice." All know that the word preached did not profit, for it was not mixed with faith in them that heard, Then the apostle mentions two more leaders in Israel, Joshua and David; yet both failed to give rest to Israel. The word of God had come to Israel through such as these at sundry times and in divers manners with but little result, and the word of God being quick and powerful spoke again and said, "They shall not enter into my rest."

It will then be reasoned that now that God is speaking by his Son, who surpasses Moses, Joshua and David, we ought to give the more earnest heed. It is as though the writer was saying, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation and how shall we escape if we neglect?" Yet, the warning note of chapters 3 and 4 is tempered by the announcement of the new Voice of God being a faithful high priest Who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. So we may come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help. But we must listen to the voice.

The mention of high priest will remind Hebrews of their first and greatest, Aaron. He did not take the honour to himself, but was specially called for the post, as was Moses called to his service. In fact, each of these leaders of old time was called to his service, and it was proper that Israel should heed them in those days when they spoke from God; but their superior has come, the princely leader of salvation, the Son, and they must listen to Him. They had looked to Aaron as model high priest even as they saw Moses the great prophet, but both are succeeded by One, in whom combines each office held by Moses, Aaron, Joshua and David. When the apostle has compared one by one the leaders of the past with their one successor they must perforce accept Messiah. Again the writer points out their responsibility (in chapter 6), but again he has comforting words to speak for he is persuaded better things of them, even though he must speak strongly.

There seems to be only one more name in Israel to which they would cling now that each of their leaders has been superseded by Jesus, and he is the father of them all and to whom were given the promises - Abraham. As we would expect the apostle shows how he too is superseded by the same one. None of them is superseded in the sense that they have been discarded by God, but the new channel of God's word and promise and deed is so much better than they, great though they were, and most worthy to be revered in Israel. Abraham received blessing from one of unknown descent and whose appointment as high priest came not in the fashion that Israel was accustomed to. Abraham gave him tithes in acknowledgement of his honour. Consider how great this man was, for he was made like unto the Son of God and he received tithes of Abraham and therefore of Levi and the whole house of Aaron, who in their turn received tithes of all Israel. Of such rank is Jesus the Son of God.

The apostle begins the eighth chapter as though the previous seven chapters are given to describing the glories of this One High Priest, for he says, "Of the things we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest," greater than angels, than man, than Moses, than Joshua, than David, than Aaron and greater than Abraham. He it is through whom God now speaks, and we must give heed, for no better can ever be found.

(BSM)

"Finally, My Brethren."

*"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong, let all your things be done in love."
(1 Cor. 16:10.)*

With these stirring words the Apostle Paul closes his first Epistle to the Corinthians. That there was a necessity for each exhortation is manifest from a reading of the Epistle. The members of the Corinthian Church were already in danger of falling from their steadfastness. Their pride of strength was proving a weakness; they were beginning to doubt the very essentials of the doctrine of Christ, even denying the resurrection. The Lord's people at all times have needed exhortation to steadfastness of faith and practice, and they are not to

wait until someone is specially raised up for that work, but are to exhort one another daily, and “so much the more as they see the day approaching.” We, who live in the end of the age, specially require our minds to be stirred; and we trust that our present meditation on the Apostle’s word will be a stimulus to us, to watch, to be strong, and to be steadfast in the faith.

“WATCH YE”

This may be said to be the watchword of the New Testament. Our Lord specially commanded His disciples to watchfulness, for He well knew the need for care. There are two things about which there is the injunction to watch: one *for* which we are to watch, the other *against* which we are to watch. The consecrated followers of Christ watch for the return of the Lord; as He said: “Be ye like men who watch for their Lord when he shall return from the wedding.” They were to watch, for they knew not the day nor the hour when He should return from heaven. They also watch and pray lest they enter into temptation. They know that their adversary the Devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. *Against* him they watch, as for their life; but they watch *for* their Lord, whose return means salvation.

Two great spiritual powers are presented: the Lord fighting for His Church, and Satan, its great enemy, against it, bent upon its destruction so far as that may be possible to him. Why is Satan so malignant towards the church? Why is he its deadly enemy? Because of the peculiar and special place it has in the purpose of God; and because Satan knows that, sooner or later, those who are following in the footsteps of Jesus will share with Jesus in the power of the Kingdom. He hates them for the same reasons that he hated the Lord; and for self-interest he seeks their destruction even as he sought His. Besides this, the Church has occupied a peculiar place in the world. The repository of the Truth of God, Satan has tried to so corrupt it, that the Word of God might be rendered powerless; and how well he succeeded in that, we know. Humanly speaking, the corruption of the church has largely kept the world for a thousand years in dense darkness concerning God and His purposes.

In the old days of the prophets and kings of Israel, the policy of Satan was to entice and entangle the leaders of the people; for he well knows that the majority are ever willing to follow their leaders into either good or evil; “like Master, like servant; like priest, like people,” is one of the ruling principles of this present evil world. Satan well knew that if he could bring Moses, David, or Solomon into his enticements, he could do immense damage to the people. Thus it was, when Israel had a king or leader who feared the Lord, the people also feared the Lord and were prosperous; but when a wicked king ruled over them, they followed him into idolatry and incurred the displeasure of the Lord. In the days of our Lord the Pharisees and Scribes were the leaders of the people, to the hurt of the people. Satan had blinded their eyes, and through them had blinded the eyes of the people.

It was because they were the representatives of the Jewish dispensation that our Lord bade his disciples obey the Pharisees, for they sat in Moses’ seat. “But,” he cautioned them, “beware of their doctrine, their teaching.” The time was then at hand when God would require an account of their stewardship; and very soon this stewardship was taken from them, that it might be given to those who would bring forth the fruits thereof. The Pharisees and Scribes were dismissed as unworthy, and the disciples of Christ received that honour, as Paul intimated: “We are made stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). In turn, the truth was committed to the church, the faithful having become “the light of the world.” We, therefore, become the object of Satan’s malice and malignity.

To clearly apprehend the reason why Satan so urgently seeks our destruction, is to get strength for our fight, and to gain assurance in our walk of faith. To become aware that we are constantly in the eye and mind of the enemy, means that we perceive that Satan knows of our call to heavenly honours, - and the fact of our being tempted should encourage us, for Satan troubles but little those who do not walk with Jesus. Now that the end of the age has come, and truth is being freed from defiling errors, now that the Lord is gathering His people together preparatory to the “Harvest Home,” the great enemy is doing his utmost to defile the Lord’s people, to destroy their faith, and to make them unfaithful stewards. At this time we need to take most earnest heed to our way, for the enemy “has great wrath, knowing that his time is short.” Not only as individuals, but as communities, we need special watchfulness, for the enemy takes much interest in church affairs. He is as desirous for its destruction now, as he was when he tried to drown it in the Galilean lake.

By watching against the enemy, not being ignorant of his devices, and taking heed to our lamp, we shall endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We shall watch against pride and all vainglory. The Corinthians rather boasted of their strength and of their liberality. They suffered a notorious evil-doer to have fellowship, instead of putting him out from amongst them. But whilst they were confident of themselves, Satan was getting an advantage, for some of them had gone wrong about the resurrection, actually denying its possibility. We need to watch both our faith and our practice. We need right doctrine as well as right living. Indeed, we cannot have one without the other; we cannot retain either unless we have both. How careful, then,

must we be to have the Truth, that we may be sanctified by it.

Our hearts should be specially guided, for *there* Satan makes particular endeavours, either by subtlety or by assault and battery. We have one safeguard, worthy indeed of the name, - "a single eye to the glory of God." Having no schemes or desires of our own we are not so liable to be tempted, and are at liberty to watch against the enemy. Two great spirit powers watch the Christian on his way: one, his Lord, watches over him for good; the other, his enemy, seeks to devour, and to destroy. One notes every desire for holiness and helps the pilgrim to attain; the other notes every little default, and marks with quick result every possible chance of harm. Because of this, the Apostle exhorts us to alertness of mind towards our enemy, and to quickness of discernment and sharp apprehension of that which would hinder the truth of Christ making free way in our heart.

"STAND FAST IN THE FAITH."

The first essential is to know the faith, to be *in* the faith, else how can one stand fast in it? What is the faith in which we must stand fast? How may we know we have it? Paul had no doubt on those points, and neither need we. He said: "if an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which I have preached, let him be cut off." In this Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul had just declared the gospel "wherein ye stand," - that Christ died for our sins, and that he was raised again, according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15: 1-5). That was the foundation upon which his good news was based upon that he built his teaching of a great anointed, the first fruits unto God. *This* is the doctrine in which he had just urged the Corinthians to remain steadfast, immovable. If we may say that the command, "Watch ye", is the watchword of the New Testament, we may also say that "Stand fast" is the special watchword of the Apostle Paul. "I live, if ye stand fast," he said to the Thessalonian Church (1 Thess. 3:8), and the thought is present and expressed in all his general epistles.

"Be ye steadfast, unmovable." What is the difference here? To be steadfast means that the word preached has appealed to the reason, that conviction has come, and, further, that the will has been put into motion. Here is a set definite purpose: the mind and the will in co-operation to hold fast that which has been proved to be good. This is in every way proper. "I believed, and therefore have I spoken," said the Psalmist; "we believe, and therefore speak," said Paul, and we echo the words. If God has blessed us with light upon our pathway, if the light of this gospel has come upon us, if our ears have heard the heavenly call, let us *assure* ourselves that there is nothing better anywhere else. Let us determine in our hearts not to turn away from the hope of the gospel.

To be steadfast in the faith means that we have realized it as such, and have accepted it; whereas, lack of steadfastness means that something has come between us and the hope we originally had; that we have allowed our sight to be dimmed by a wrong condition of heart; that something of "self" has intruded between us and the chiefest treasure we possessed. To be steadfast means patience in well doing; that the desire for excitement is being subdued, and that we are *content* with the providences designed by our Heavenly Father. To have this quality means growth in grace and in possibilities of service.

To be unmovable means that we have so rooted our conviction in the will that we will not move ourself or be moved by others. How happy they whose faith and purpose are "fixed, unmovable, secure!" They are always a source of strength to others. But each of us must attain to this, or we are not over-corners against all that can be brought against us. Our victory will be over the seductions of the world, and over the wiles and snares of the Devil. To be unmovable does not mean to have a dull, sullen temperament, but one quickened to discern good and evil; quick to perceive the value of the Truth, and to say, "Now have I found the ground wherein, sure my Soul's anchor may remain," -there to remain though the mountains be moved into the sea.

Feeble though the Lord's people are, in Him they are strong, so strong, that *no* power can break them. No powers of evil, however fiercely hurled against them, can move them. Lack of study is one of the chief causes of failure on this line. We require constantly to attend to the concentration of our mind on the means that the Lord has provided for us. He is strong who *reads* much, and who *meditates* on the Word.

"QUIT YOU LIKE MEN."

How do men acquit themselves? Sometimes very ill indeed. But the Apostle has an ideal before him. He is thinking of a strong character - a "manly" man. There are many qualities associated with manliness, but two prominent ones will serve to illustrate - Courage, and Dignity. Courage is needed, because the fight is long and furious. The enemy is mighty and never relaxes his purpose. The Christian's walk is contrary to the course of this present evil world. The necessity for conviction and courage is apparent. But never were the sterling qualities more necessary than at present, for *now* the fight against the Truth grows furious. "Only be thou strong and very courageous," said the angel to Joshua, and we may take the word to ourselves, that we fail not in the day of battle. Dignity is another feature of a manly character. When the enemy comes in like a flood we should not get scared; nor when he attempts to attract our attention by some new thing, should we get excited.

But how frequently has it happened that something new or different has so engrossed our attention, that for

a time we have forgotten the more important things. The mature mind finds in the toys of childhood nothing to claim its attention; nor should we allow the things of the immature *mind* to divert us from our intention to become conformed to Christ-likeness. Moreover, we should keep the dignity of Christian manhood, even though attacks are made upon us. It is not always possible to keep dignified if a terrier is barking at one's heels; but in the *spiritual* world we can do this; yea, even though a roaring lion be against us, we can go on unmoved.

“BE STRONG.”

“How easy to say it, but how difficult to get strength,” says one. Strength of faith, strength of character, resolution of will, and a feeling of assurance, are the things longed for by many of the Lord's people, and their need is felt by all. How may I get strength? The Lord answers “Let him take hold my strength.” The Lord is ever the source of our strength, but its possession depends upon our faith and determination. The only way the believer can get strength is by his faith, by believing that God will be his help in every time of need. He puts faith in the promises, acts upon his faith, and then comes the necessary strength. The Lord has given us, not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of *power*: Let all feelings of fearfulness of whatever description (save the fear towards God) be put aside as of the evil one, and let us stand before God in all confidence of His acceptance.

Let us not fear concerning the Lord's work, nor concerning our own salvation. He who is for us is more than all that can be against us. The work will prosper because He has purposed it. David said: “The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?” When his enemies came against him, they stumbled and fell. If a *host* should arise against him, he would have no fear; and if *war* were made against him, then would he be *confident*. His confidence rose as danger increased.

Let us in these times of stress take heed to our ways. Having proved the value of Truth for ourselves, having seen its effect upon others, and perceiving that by it our hearts have been filled with joy and gladness and our lives brought into full consecration to the Lord, we cannot do better than heed the injunction - Stand fast in the Faith; Quit you like men; Be strong. Let us watch that no man beguile us; and in our watching and contention for the faith, let us obey the last part of the exhortation - “Let all your things be done in love,” and with the gentleness of Christ AMEN.

(JH: 1909)

TRUST

“God guide you in the darkness and the light
Of days unknown,
And make the path that lies before you bright
With all the joy and peace He gives His own -
The joy which is the strength of those who wait
Beside His feet,
And find - though earth be dark and desolate -
Each cross is crowned with compensation sweet.
And learn in brighter hours that still the heart
May look above
And find in His own life a better part;
A perfect happiness; a perfect love.
A peace which only comes to those who lie
At rest and still -
While all the changeful earth life passes by -
Within His Holy and unerring will.”