

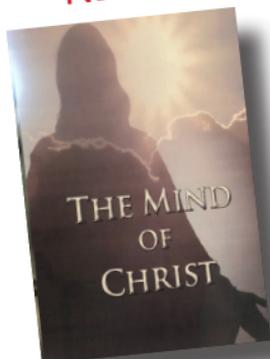
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Moral Standards

*“Who is wise,
and he shall
understand these
things? prudent,
and he shall know
them? for the ways
of the LORD are
right, and the just
shall walk in
them: but the
transgressors shall
fall therein.”
—Hosea 14:9*

THE TERM “MORALITY” IS taken from a Latin word meaning “manner, character, proper behavior.” Morality is further defined as “principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior.” Of concern to many today is the growing lack of recognition of these differences. More and more, that which in the past

may have been considered right or wrong, and good or bad behavior, has often lost these distinctions. In addition, those who continue to hold to former, stricter, standards of morality are accused of not being inclusive; of being “old-fashioned” and not keeping up with the so-called “progress” of modern thinking; or worse, condemned as being intolerant, extremists or even haters.

In conjunction with the above, and specifically with regard to the personal and intimate relationships between one person and another, numerous terms and phrases have come into regular use by government leaders, activist groups, the news media,

and among the general public. Such expressions as: LGBTQ; same-sex marriage; significant other; transgender; bisexual; gender identity; non-binary; and other related terms that we read and hear of today were seldom if ever part of public conversation in the past.

As Christians, what are we to make of this, and how should we respond? We answer that the Bible is to be the standard for the follower of Christ. In the opening chapter of the book of Genesis, we find the words, “God created man in his own image.” (Gen. 1:27) In the next chapter we read, “The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground, breathed life into his lungs, and the man became a living being. ... Later, the LORD God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make for him a companion that is a suitable match for him. ... so the LORD God caused a deep sleep to overshadow the man. When the man was asleep, he removed one of the man’s ribs and closed up the flesh where it had been. Then the LORD God formed the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. ... Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:7,18, 21,22,24, *International Standard Version*) In the course of time, however, this male and female pair fell from their created purity and sin entered the world.

Throughout the ensuing ages following our first parents’ fall into sin, many perversions of the relationship between man and woman became entangled in human society. Thus, centuries later in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul gave these

strongly worded statements: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” “Put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires.”—I Cor. 6:9-11; Col. 3:5, *New Living Translation*; see also Rom. 1:18-27

Our present responsibility as Christians, we believe, is to be guided by the Bible’s teachings regarding moral purity, both toward ourselves, and also as we speak to those with whom we come in contact who might question our beliefs, or who may have a receptive ear to the testimony of the Scriptures. Judgment of others’ personal standing before God, however, is not our responsibility at the present time. In this regard we are warned by Jesus, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” (Matt. 7:1) With these things in mind, let us examine some examples from the Word of God which provide lessons and guidance that may be of help to us, both as relates to our own walk, and as we also come in contact with others.

ISRAEL’S WAYWARDNESS

In our opening Scripture the Prophet Hosea addresses the words of Jehovah to the nation of Israel. God’s chosen people had fallen into a condition of national infidelity and a general departure

from God's favor. This lay heavily upon the prophet, and he sought to draw attention to their disreputable state and moral degeneration. The nation had become depraved through idolatry, and a reckless attitude toward moral values had resulted. Indeed, Hosea's own domestic troubles seem to have been permitted by the Lord to impress upon him the divine viewpoint of Israel's unfaithfulness to Jehovah.—Hos. 1:2-9; 2:1-13

As we examine Hosea's prophecy, we note his declaration that God had a "controversy" with the people of Israel in that there was no fidelity to their covenant relationship. There was no more kindness in their attitude toward God or their fellow man, and there was no "knowledge of God in the land." Their consciences numbed respecting God's laws and providences, the Israelites had forgotten about God and their need for him. (Hos. 4:1-6) Hosea, whose name appropriately means "salvation," was deeply concerned for the salvation, or recovery, of his people from their wicked ways. Thus, he warned them of the punishment that would surely come upon them if they failed to turn and repent. Later, in Hosea 6:1-3, the prophet pleads with his people to return to God and receive once again of his loving-kindness and forgiveness.

Hosea points out that debauchery, infidelity, and drunkenness were present not only among the people, but even in high places of authority in Israel as well. (Hos. 7:1-7, *NLT*) Such conduct would bring grave consequences if not acknowledged and corrected. This lesson may be applied not only to ancient Israel, but also to the people and nations of our contemporary society.

God's concern for his people, as a loving father for his own children, is also shown in Hosea's message. "I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy. For someday the people will follow me. I, the LORD, will roar like a lion. And when I roar, my people will return trembling from the west. Like a flock of birds, they will come from Egypt. Trembling like doves, they will return from Assyria. And I will bring them home again, says the LORD." (Hos. 11:9-11, *NLT*) As we ponder these words we are impressed with the mercy and tenderness of God toward the Israelites. God is also interested in the eternal welfare of all his human children, and through the agencies of his coming kingdom, "the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness."—Isa. 26:9

DAVID'S EXPERIENCE

The Scriptures speak of David as a man after God's own heart. (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) However, with all his attainments, wisdom, skill, sound judgment, and even his humility and reverence for God, the fallen human nature of this servant of God succumbed to evil and immoral temptations. On the surface, it seems hard to account for such sins in one with so strong a character.

David's transgressions, however, were likely not altogether sudden. There had most surely been missteps along the way. The process was gradual with a climax reached almost imperceptibly. David had likely become infected with the prideful attitude which in this world often attends power, popularity and success. As a result, he was, no doubt, greatly

oblivious to his own moral weakness. As king, his word was supreme, and the people of Israel waited to do his bidding. Triumph had attended him on the battlefield; his kingdom had expanded and was enjoying a new height of prosperity. Yet, in all this victory and exaltation, there lurked subtle temptations which he neglected to guard against.

It was in the midst of this outward prosperity, yet decline of inward piety, that David committed the dreadful crimes against God and man recorded in II Samuel 11:1-27, that being his illicit relationship with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband Uriah. The fallen human nature—how weak and prone to sin it is! How it will blindly lead those under its power to commit acts which in more sober thought would be shunned and despised. Thus it was with David, a man greatly beloved and honored by God, but yet he fell.

Thanks be to God there is such a thing as repentance and remission of sins. God sent the prophet Nathan to reveal to David his great transgressions and to reprove him, as recorded in II Samuel 12:1-12. Now realizing his guilt, there were but two courses before the king. One was repentance, confession, and reformation; the other, to denounce the prophet and use his royal power to punish one who presumed to reprove a king. The deep-rooted nobility of David prevailed, and with anguish of heart, he said, “I have sinned against the Lord.”—vs. 13

In this victory over his own pride and selfishness, David proved himself a greater hero than in all his previous victories and exploits in battle. In Psalm 51:1-17, David makes public confession of his sin, and of God’s great mercy and forgiveness. By his

words he exhorts all sinners to pray to God promptly for divine forgiveness, before their hearts become set in an evil course.

David's course is to be commended to all who have to any degree departed from the ways of the Lord. Furthermore, it is an example of how God will both mercifully educate and, in his kingdom, forgive all mankind who come to know and love his righteous laws. Of this time the prophet wrote, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."—Jer. 31:34

ADULTERY—JESUS' TESTIMONY

The decree, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," is one of the Ten Commandments of God's law as given to the people of Israel. (Exod. 20:14) In its most basic form, it prohibits defilement of the marriage contract between a man and a woman. Adultery was punishable by death. (Deut. 22:22) In the Old Testament, adulterers are also grouped together with murderers, treacherous men, sorcerers, false swearers, and those who oppress others.—Job 24:14,15; Jer. 9:2; Mal. 3:5

Our further attention is drawn to Jesus' words on this subject: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for

it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”—Matt. 5:27-29

The word hell that occurs in this passage is translated from the Greek *Gehenna*, which is a rendition of the Hebrew words for the “Valley of Hinnom.” This valley lay just outside Jerusalem and was used to burn garbage and other unwanted refuse. Fires were kept burning continually, and if the need arose, brimstone, or sulfur, was added to assist combustion. However, no living thing was ever permitted to be cast into *Gehenna*, and under Jewish law no creature was permitted to be tortured. (Jer. 7:30,31) Thus, it is symbolic of eternal death—nonexistence—but not torture. It was not until the Dark Ages that the unscriptural idea that *Gehenna* was a place of eternal torment crept into religious teachings.

In the foregoing passage Jesus teaches us by way of illustration that it is better to give up one of the members of our bodies than to lose life eternally. The lesson is one of self-control. It is more profitable for us to refuse to gratify the desires of the flesh—although these at times may seem to be as near and dear to us as our “right eye”—than to allow ourselves to be overcome and to lose the promise that has been offered Christians of a place in the heavenly phase of God’s kingdom.

During the earthly phase of God’s kingdom, divine laws will be enforced, but at that time assistance will be given to the people to enable them to attain perfection. Then it will be essential not only that all conform in outward appearance to the commandments but that the spirit and heart

condition also be in harmony with God. Our Lord will look into the heart of the individual and will judge accordingly.

THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

In I Corinthians chapter 5, the Apostle Paul addresses a situation involving immorality which he had learned existed in the church at Corinth. "Your glorying is not good," he wrote, indicating that perhaps the Corinthian brethren took pride in their false sense of brotherly love which was causing them to tolerate such a condition.—vs. 6

In the case of one offender in particular who had been called to Paul's attention, the apostle directed that the church should put him out from their fellowship, as he put it, "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (vs. 5) Paul spoke of this action as the purging out of "leaven" from their midst. Leaven in the Scriptures is always used as a symbol of sin in one form or another, never as a pure and wholesome influence.

That immorality should have existed at that time in a Christian congregation might seem strange, but not so much when we take into consideration the former habits of some in Corinth who had accepted Christ and attached themselves to his people. The Grecians in Corinth were predominantly heathen worshippers. Venus was a widely revered goddess. One historian has written, "The worship of Venus here was attended with shameful licentiousness."

The Mosaic Law was unique in its delineation of moral standards, and the Jewish people's adherence

to these set them apart from the gentiles around them. Practices such as those defined by the Law as immoral had formerly been a part of the idolatrous worship of many of the new converts. Thus, amongst those in the church at Corinth, immorality was perhaps not viewed with the same degree of repugnance as it would otherwise have been had the practices been less common in society at large. However, such things were contrary to the will of God, and, as noted in the account, Paul took strong action to correct the disorder.

Nevertheless, this inflexible stand taken by Paul against wrong was done in love. He reveals this in his second letter to the same church. (II Cor. 2:1-11) Paul was planning to visit these brethren, and he wanted nothing to mar the joy of the occasion. He commended the church for taking the action against the wrongdoer which he had urged. Furthermore, he considered that now the brother had learned his lesson, and to avoid overburdening him with too much sorrow, he now counseled the church that he be forgiven and returned to their fellowship. If they took this action, Paul explained, he would join them in it, believing that this also was the attitude which would be taken by Christ. Thus we see not only that Paul wanted wrongdoing to be corrected, but also the wrongdoer restored to favor and fellowship among the brethren and with the Lord.

ETERNAL LESSONS FOR ALL

During the present age, faithful Christians have dedicated their lives to following after Jesus by presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice which has been acceptable to the Heavenly Father. (Rom. 12:1)

These have been called from every nation of earth to be the elect members of the heavenly bride class.

Those who respond to this heavenly invitation are justified, or made right, in God's sight. (Rom. 3:22-24; 5:8-11) They are alert, not only regarding the basic moral precepts of righteousness, but of even greater importance, to cleanse themselves from secret faults of the mind and the heart. Realizing the necessity to guard against these beginnings of sin and to keep themselves in a cleansed and pure condition, they will go in prayer to the fountain of grace often to seek help in every time of need.

The sanctity of the marriage relationship is emphasized by the fact that the Lord uses it as an illustration of the oneness of Christ and the church, his "bride." Paul presents a wonderful lesson along this line, and in conclusion, says, "This [the marriage relationship] is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."—Eph. 5:22-32

In keeping with this illustration, the apostle wrote to the Corinthian church, saying, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (II Cor. 11:2) Christians who are faithful to Christ—even unto death—will be united with him in heavenly glory when the "marriage of the Lamb" takes place.—Rev. 2:10; 19:7

Paul also exhorted the church, saying, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." (I Cor. 6:19,20) The temple symbolism is used in the New Testament in two ways. One of them is in the above Scripture,

in which Paul refers to the fleshly body of each believer as a “temple,” the symbolic dwelling place of God through his Holy Spirit. It is God’s Spirit which assists the Christian in attaining, and maintaining, purity of heart, thought, word and action.—Rom. 8:11-13

The other “temple” picture used in the New Testament is presented by the Apostle Peter. He wrote, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood.” (I Pet. 2:5) Here each footstep follower of Jesus is spoken of, not as a temple, but as a stone being prepared to be a part of a spiritual “house,” or temple, of the future, a “habitation of God.” (Heb. 3:6; Eph. 2:19,22) Similarly, John the Revelator wrote, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.”—Rev. 3:12

This is in keeping with the teachings of the Bible that Christ and his church together, as the “seed” of Abraham, will be the channel through which God’s promised blessings will ultimately reach out to “all the families of the earth” during the thousand years of the Messianic kingdom.—Gal. 3:8,16,27-29; Rev. 20:6

In that kingdom of righteousness, all mankind will have had the opportunity to learn the needed lessons related to all aspects of sin and its disastrous results. Of that time, the prophet says, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. 11:9) Indeed, this is the “good and acceptable” purpose of “God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”—I Tim. 2:3,4, *New American Standard Bible* ■

God Foretells Destruction

Key Verse: “Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.”
—Isaiah 47:15

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 47:10-15

The penalty for disobeying this instruction would be death. (Gen. 2:9,16,17) When Adam disobeyed, God’s justice required the death sentence be carried out.—Gen. 3:17-19

Adam’s act of disobedience set in motion man’s continual battle with good versus evil, and between obedience and disobedience to the Creator. Yet, even at this very first appearance of sin and disobedience by man, Jehovah manifested his love and mercy with a hint of future redemption through a “seed” or offspring that would satisfy justice and bring about man’s release from condemnation. Speaking to Satan, who had appeared in the form of a serpent, God said: “I will make you and the woman hate

JEHOVAH’S PROMISE OF

life has always been dependent upon obedience. While obedience rightly leads to blessings, God’s perfect justice requires that disobedience will in like manner lead to death. The perfect life given to Adam was dependent upon obedience to divine instructions concerning the food provided for his sustenance. He was permitted to eat of every tree of the garden except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The penalty for disobeying this

each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring's heel."—Gen. 3:15, *Good News Bible*

In the course of time, God called the nation of Israel to be his special people. It was his desire that they be a nation above all others through obedience to the Law Covenant delivered to them through Moses. (Exod. 19:5,6) This covenant arrangement, through its various laws and ceremonies, would bring blessings for obedience and punishments for disobedience. Having been miraculously delivered from Egypt, the people enthusiastically spoke in one voice saying, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." (vs. 8) However, in their imperfect state none could render complete obedience to the provisions of the Law. Later, the Apostle Paul wrote, "All who depend on obeying the law are under a curse. It is written, May everyone who doesn't continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law be under God's curse." (Gal. 3:10, *New International Reader's Version*) Thus, the Law arrangement could not redeem mankind. However, Jesus, who kept all God's laws perfectly, opened up the opportunity for redemption for both Jew and Gentile.

Though the Law brought destruction instead of perfection, the Apostle Paul said that its real purpose was as a "schoolmaster" to lead Israel to Christ. (Gal. 3:24) He reminded them that Jehovah had long ago made a promise to Abraham of future blessings through his "seed, which is Christ." Paul further taught that those who belong to Christ are also counted as part of Abraham's seed and, hence, are "heirs according to the promise." (vss. 16,29) To be part of this "seed" of promise does not require perfection in this life, but obedience of heart intent and the development of spiritual fruitage. (John 15:8; Gal. 5:22,23) Let us take heed to the warning of our Key Verse, lest we fail of God's grace so abundantly manifested to us. May we be obedient, giving diligence to make our "calling and election sure."—II Pet. 1:10 ■

Salvation Promised

Key Verse: “*Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.*”
—Isaiah 49:8

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 49:1-13

to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”—Isa. 49:6, *New International Version*

In Isaiah 61:1-3, the prophet details some of the features associated with salvation which would be fulfilled through Christ. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and

THE WORDS “THE LORD hath called me from the womb” in verse one of today’s Selected Scripture indicate a predetermined vocation for Isaiah as God’s prophet. Similar expressions are used concerning others of God’s mouthpieces, but it was more eminently true of Christ, who was called to the great office of man’s redeemer. (Luke 1:26-38) Though Isaiah often prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in our lesson he proclaims salvation far beyond Israel. Looking down the stream of time to the redemptive work of Christ, Jehovah says through the prophet: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant

the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.” While this prophecy was primarily fulfilled in Jesus, we understand that it applies also to the anointed members of his “body.” This symbolic anointing of the Church is by means of God’s Holy Spirit, which flows down from Christ, the Head, to all the body members during this present Gospel Age.— II Cor. 1:21,22; I John 2:27

The Apostle Paul interprets the “acceptable time” found in our Key Verse as it applies to the anointed body of Christ. “As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says, In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.” (II Cor. 6:1,2, *NIV*) To this, the Apostle John adds, “This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.” (I John 4:13, *NIV*) Thus we understand by the words of the prophets and apostles that the body of Christ is assisted by the power of the Holy Spirit during the Gospel Age, its “day of salvation.”

God’s promised salvation for all spoken of by Isaiah is dependent upon the body of Christ being completed, for the prophet says that the Lord will give “thee,” the entire anointed class, “for a covenant of the people.” Once complete, the Christ, head and body, will bring about for all mankind “times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:21) Let us, therefore, be faithful so that the body of Christ can be brought to completion, and thus bring about the end of “earth’s weary night.” ■

Zion Shall Prosper

Key Verse: “*Thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.*”
—**Isaiah 49:23**

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 49:14-23

enemies will be driven out before them. The psalmist, too, writes of God’s love for Israel, saying, “The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.” (Ps. 94:14) In the New Testament the Apostle Paul makes another affirmation that Israel will not be forsaken.—Rom. 11:1,2,25-27

Israel is still beloved by God and will have a prominent part in the Messianic kingdom, but they will not be the seed of blessing. “Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles.” (Isa. 49:22) The promised seed of Abraham was to come through Isaac. (Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:17,18) The Apostle Paul declares further, however, that Isaac was merely a picture of the true seed of promise, “which is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16) Thus, Israel and its Law arrangement, which traced their origins to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was not the means of salvation, but only a “schoolmaster” to bring Israel to Christ that they might be “justified by faith.” (vs. 24) Subsequent to Jesus’ First Advent, all

AFTER THE GRAND PROMISE of salvation in our previous lesson, we hear complaints from Israel, here called “Zion,” that Jehovah had forsaken them. (Isa. 49:14) Throughout the remainder of this chapter, Isaiah reassures them that they will not be forgotten. They will return to their land, and their

who are baptized into him and have faithfully “put on Christ” have become part of “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to promise.”—vss. 27-29

Isaiah’s prophecies, like many in the Old Testament, were a mystery when they were delivered, because they often spoke of future events in God’s plan which could not yet be understood. The Apostle Paul wrote, “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory,” and he continues by saying this “mystery” is revealed to us through God’s Holy Spirit.—I Cor. 2:7,9,10

As prospective members of the body of Christ, we should be keenly aware of the second part of our Key Verse: “They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” Paul testified, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (Rom. 1:16) To this, Peter added, “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” (I Pet. 4:16) What faithful son is not happy and eager to praise his earthly father? How much more should we, as sons of God, gladly sing praises to him. Let us so glorify our Heavenly Father with no hint of shame.

Another thought pertaining to the word “ashamed” is that of being unwilling or restrained in our service to God because we fear the ridicule or disapproval of others. This sense of fear was a stumbling block for many Jews steeped in the traditions of their fathers, which prevented them from coming into Christ. (Isa. 28:16; Matt. 21:42-44) As Peter explained, Jesus is “the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11,12) “Now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”—I John 2:28 ■

Comfort for God's People

Key Verse: *“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”*
—Isaiah 51:1

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 51:1-8

asks, “To whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” (Isa. 53:1) The Apostle John referred to this prophecy, saying that Israel as a nation was blind to Jesus despite the many miracles he performed, and their heart was hardened.—John 12:37-41

Paul was in a unique position as a Pharisee prior to becoming a “chosen vessel” to the Gentiles and to the “children of Israel.” (Acts 9:15; 23:6; Phil. 3:5,6) He knew why Israel failed in seeking after God, and in stating the reason he alludes back to Isaiah’s words: “Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God’s standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by

THE NAME ISAIAH comes from a Hebrew word meaning “Jehovah has saved.” With salvation comes hope, and with hope comes comfort. Known especially for his prophecies pointing to Jesus Christ, Isaiah speaks of him as God’s “arm” in verses 5 and 9 of our lesson. Two chapters later, again prophesying of Jesus, Isaiah

keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him. They stumbled over the great rock in their path.”—Rom. 9:30-32, *New Living Translation*

In a conversation with his disciples, Jesus asked them, “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered immediately, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus responded saying, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [a “piece of rock”], and upon this rock [the rock of Christ] I will build my church.”—Matt. 16:15-18

The church, as small individual stones, is built upon the solid foundation “rock” of Messiah and his redemptive work. Peter would doubtless have recalled this conversation when Jesus later spoke the parable of the householder to his religious critics recorded in Matthew 21:33-44. At the conclusion of the parable Jesus told the religious leaders of the Jews, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. ... Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

Peter later speaks of how the church is being built as a “temple” upon the cornerstone of Christ: “You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God’s temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor. And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple.” (I Pet. 2:4,5, *NLT*) May the words of Isaiah in our Key Verse strengthen and comfort us as we “follow after righteousness” and “seek the LORD,” looking “unto the rock” of Christ, our perfect pattern and guide, and from whence we are hewn. ■

The Perfect Will of God

“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

—Romans 12:2

MUCH IN THE APOSTLE

Paul’s epistle to the Romans has to do with the manner in which a Christian may show himself approved in God’s sight. Faith in the shed blood of the Redeemer is emphasized as one of the first essentials of an acceptable walk with God. It is not enough,

however, that we merely receive of divine grace through Christ’s redemptive work. To walk with God in this age means additionally to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and those were steps of self-sacrifice. (I Pet. 2:21) Hence, we must give ourselves in sacrifice upon an altar made acceptable by Jesus’ blood. It is this that the apostle emphasizes in the verse just preceding our opening text, saying: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1

It is one thing to present ourselves in consecration to God, with the understanding that our lives are to be sacrificed in his service, yet quite another to faithfully fulfill our covenant with the Heavenly Father even unto death. We cannot know at the time of our consecration all that this may involve. It is necessary, then, to always maintain an attitude of full surrender to the will of God, and to resolutely and enthusiastically take each step as it is revealed to us through his Word and by his providences. (Luke 14:33) We are not to make a consecration to do God's will, and then merely continue the ordinary routine of life as though nothing had happened. After presenting our bodies living sacrifices to God, we should then earnestly seek to determine how he wants us to cooperate in consuming that sacrifice. Renouncing our former worldly ambitions and goals, we are to "prove," that is, examine and scrutinize, "that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God," and then endeavor to the best of our ability to carry it out.

One of the first things we should learn with respect to the divine will is that we are not to be "conformed to this world." We have been called out of the world and, therefore, can no longer be conformed to its ways. Now, instead of drifting along in the stream of selfish, worldly pleasure and ambition, we are to change course and go against the downward flow which surrounds us. Instead of any longer being conformed to the ways of the selfish world and the sinful flesh, we are to be "transformed." This transformation, Paul says, is by the "renewing" [Greek: renovation] of our minds; that is, by acquainting ourselves with the divine will

and steadfastly endeavoring to do it. The world is made up of fallen human beings, hence its pursuits, pleasures and spirit appeal to our fallen flesh. For this reason, it is easy to be conformed to the world, but it is a genuine struggle to be transformed in mind, heart and action so that we become servants of God instead of servants of the world or of our fallen flesh.

PROPER ESTIMATE OF SELF ESSENTIAL

The apostle does not leave the subject of mind renewal and consequent transformation of character in the realm of mere principle. Rather, he proceeds to give us practical suggestions of how it should affect our lives and what it actually means to know and do the perfect will of God. Continuing, he says: “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”—Rom. 12:3

The word “For” at the beginning of verse three places an important relationship between what precedes and what follows it. We are to be transformed in order that we may be enabled thus to know the will of God and, therefore, to do it. “For” we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. At first it may seem as though there is no special linkage between these two thoughts, but actually there is a most important connection. By this sequence of argument, the apostle is reminding us that we cannot make progress in learning and proving God’s will until we recognize our own lack of worthiness. If we attempt

to understand God's will from the viewpoint of how important we are concerning his purposes and service, we will fail to be pleasing to him.

This strikes right at one of the fundamental differences between the general spirit of the world and that of the Christian. From the worldly standpoint, most consider it necessary to advance themselves and promote their interests and to have others help them to that end. In order, therefore, to ensure their elevation many deceive themselves into an exaggerated sense of self-importance and do all they can to induce others to feel the same way toward them. Furthermore, this is considered quite proper in the world, where the grace of humility is often considered an evidence of weakness.

From the worldly standpoint, it would appear essential to appraise ourselves rather highly lest we be considered a defeatist and possessed of a broken spirit. This philosophy assumes that we must believe fully in ourselves and our ability, otherwise we can never succeed in this world of rivalry and competition. With such a philosophy it would only be natural for us to think of ourselves very highly, and, therefore, to do all we can to have others think of us in the same way. This philosophy and its spirit, however, though prevalent among many in the world, should find no reception in any of those purporting to be the people of God.—Gal. 6:3

The apostle knew that one of the most important evidences of transformation from the spirit of the world to the spirit of God should be the renouncing of one's self-importance. When we get the Lord's viewpoint in this matter, we will realize that if we think of ourselves in any sense as being worthy, in

our own right, of God's blessings or of promotion in his service, we are thinking of ourselves "more highly" than we should. Paul suggests that what we need to do is to "think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Elsewhere we are told that "by grace" we are saved, "through faith." (Eph. 2:8) If our sober, self-appraisal, is based upon what we are through faith, it means our recognition of the fact that apart from the grace of God we are nothing. This means that if we think of ourselves as being important and indispensable, we are, to that extent, blocking the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives. Whatever of favor God bestows upon us is by his grace, and not because we merit it. God accepts our service to him as an evidence of our appreciation, through faith, of his love and grace, but we cannot obtain that grace by our own works.

MANY MEMBERS

Having reminded us that we are to have a humble, sober estimation of ourselves, and that all the privileges we enjoy are by his grace, then the apostle proceeds to show that knowing and being faithful to the divine will involves a recognition of the fact that we are not to be isolationists in the divine arrangement. There are "many members" in the body of Christ, and among these God has graciously determined a place for us. In this arrangement we are all "members one of another." It is God's will that this should be, and for us to ignore it, or to go contrary to it, would mean that we are not being transformed, and not properly proving what is the acceptable and perfect will of God.—Rom. 12:4,5

A proper recognition of the fact that we are “members one of another” is largely dependent upon not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. The worldly viewpoint is one of self-interest, self-promotion, irrespective of the welfare and interests of others. The Christian viewpoint, by contrast, is that of interest in the “many members”—a concern for the welfare of the body, regardless of individual advantage. It is only, therefore, as we develop interest in and love for the brethren of Christ that we are glad to count ourselves insignificant as individuals in order that the body as a whole may prosper.

This constitutes a real test of the measure to which our hearts and minds have been transformed from the ways and spirit of the world to the spirit of Christ. We sometimes sing, “O! to be nothing, nothing, Only to lie at his feet,” but how do we feel when the Lord takes us at our word and permits us to reside humbly at his feet for a while? Perhaps we are inclined to say that if the Lord invites us to lie at his feet and be nothing, we will gladly do it. However, if, through other causes, we are humbled or set aside, we may be tempted to fight for our rights.

As Christians, however, we should recognize that there are no outside causes that can shape our experiences or our destiny. We are wholly in the Lord’s hand, and all that we have and are, are by his grace and overruling providences. (Lam. 4:2; Isa. 64:8) Nothing can happen to us unless God permits it, and whatever he allows is for our highest spiritual welfare. (Luke 12:6,7) We may have planned some service for God and the truth, and then became ill. The first inclination of the flesh

may be to lay the blame on someone or something. Difficulties more complex than becoming ill may also interfere with what we have planned to do for the Lord. We may feel like blaming individuals, even fellow members of the body, for standing in our way, but this should not be. If others are indeed to blame, we can safely leave the matter in God's hands. For ourselves, however, we should recognize that whatever our experiences may be is all by divine permission, and whatever God permits is for our best interests and in the best interest of the body as a whole. Our readiness to acquiesce to the divine will in all these experiences will be in proportion to the measure of our faith in God's grace and in our genuine interest in the "many members," of which we are striving to be a part.

If we have made a proper appraisal of ourselves, and truly recognize that it is only by God's grace that we are in the body at all, then our faith should accept without any mental reservations whatever experiences divine wisdom may permit. If, on the other hand, we still have some of the worldly spirit of getting ahead and of being esteemed highly in the eyes of others, we will undoubtedly find it hard when things do not go our way. Let us, rather, capture the true spirit of sacrifice and recognize that we have covenanted to give up our own will completely, figuratively "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." (Rev. 20:4) Thus, we will not mind what God's providences may permit now, just so long as they help us to prove what his "perfect will" is for us.

The entire earthly life of a Christian is one of preparation for future service in glory. It is a life of

humble sacrifice, together with the peace and joy of spiritual attainment. We are to look for opportunities to serve even in our humiliation. In addition, often by divine providence, we are permitted to experience special trials in order to first be humbled and thus prepared for some particular service. God has dealt with many of his servants along this line. Moses, for example, whom God used mightily, was permitted to go into obscurity for forty years prior to the time his service for God began.—Exod. 3:1; Acts 7:29,30

Moses, by natural qualifications and education was well prepared for the Lord's work forty years before he was called to enter it. However, there was a further development necessary which was accomplished in exile and obscurity. It was a humble position, indeed, tending his father-in-law's flocks, but the Lord did not forget Moses, and when the time came, he was brought forth into prominence as the leader of God's people. (Heb. 11:23-29) There is no occasion to fear that the Lord will forget us when the time comes for him to use us in his service. We may, in our weaknesses, forget each other, but the Lord will never forget. Often, we may long to serve the Lord more than we do, and perhaps we fret at the restraints that hold us back. Let us rather make sure that we are properly using the little privileges of service that are already ours, meanwhile leaving larger opportunities in the Lord's hands, to give us when his wisdom deems best.

GIFTS OF GOD'S GRACE

In Romans 12:6 the apostle explains that the "many members" have "gifts differing according to

the grace that is given to us.” Then he enumerates some of these gifts, such as: prophesying; ministering; teaching; exhorting; ruling; giving; and showing mercy. It is important to note that these gifts are all manifestations of God’s grace. (Rom. 12:7,8) It must be assumed, therefore, that not only the gifts, but the opportunities of using the gifts in the divine service, are also by God’s grace.

Furthermore, it is quite possible to miss opportunities of service through a failure to give heed to the instruction not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. A failure along this line may cause us to overlook the smaller privileges of service while looking for and seeking after the larger opportunities. God’s dealings with his people are based on the scriptural principle that one who is faithful in that which is least will also be faithful in that which is much. This being true, it may be that the larger opportunities we crave are being held back until we have proved faithful in the little things.—Luke 16:10

Paul’s list of the many ways in which God’s people are able to serve him, and his admonition to faithfulness in the use of all these gifts of divine grace, indicate that it is the Heavenly Father’s will that all of his people serve. The Christian life is therefore not merely one of passive humility in the Lord’s hands. It is that indeed, but it is also a life of activity in the divine cause. (Mark 10:43-45; Gal. 5:13; James 2:15-17) It is a life of activity, however, that must be based upon a proper humility before God. There can be no acceptable service to God apart from this. Conversely, it is also impossible to exercise true humility before God without being

thoroughly engaged in laying down our lives in his service, because this is what he has bidden us to do. In fact, to refuse to do what he has asked of us in the way of service would prove that we are not humble, but that we think more highly of our own opinions than we ought to think.

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

No matter what opportunity of service divine grace may give to us, we should seek to use it faithfully. Faithfulness in the use of such a gift is the true test of our appreciation of it. However, it is along this very line that the spirit of the world may tend to creep in, so that we may ignore the little service as being of no consequence, while our hearts are set on doing something big for the Lord. The widow's "two mites" did not accomplish anything great for the Jews' treasury, but her faithfulness in doing "all" she could, when what she had was so very little, did much for her in that it brought her the Lord's commendation, which "maketh rich."—Mark 12:41-44; Prov. 10:22

We should not despise "the day of small things." (Zech. 4:10) If we have the gift of oral witnessing to a large group, let us be faithful in its use, but let us be just as happy to witness to one person, unnoticed and unknown, as we would be to hundreds or thousands. One of the greatest sermons the Lord preached was to the woman of Samaria at the well. Jesus could speak to the multitude, but he was also happy to comfort the ones and twos. If we are following in Jesus' footsteps, we will be more concerned with the degree of our faithfulness in service than we are in the size of our opportunity to serve.

Many years ago, there was the case of a sister in Christ who had spent a number of years in direct service to the Lord. During that time, she suffered injuries that curtailed her ability to serve as she had previously. She was an invalid for some period before finishing her course in death. During that time, she made the acquaintance of a lady who, after a time, became somewhat interested in the Gospel message. Just a few days before the sister's death, she received a message that this friend was coming to see her. The sister decided that she would make one last effort to help this acquaintance come to a better understanding and appreciation of the Truth. She asked her nurse to bring her two Bibles and two hymn books. When the friend arrived the sister held a meeting with her, in which they both joined in reading the Scriptures, singing and praying.

On the surface, this was not any great service for the Lord. It did not compare with the sister's earlier life of active service when she was used to point out the way of truth to many, but it did represent the faithful use of the "mite" of strength and opportunity that God's grace still permitted her to enjoy. How the Lord must have looked down with joy upon that sister, who, although her body was frail and no doubt racked with pain, yet was keeping it on the altar of sacrifice, and with it praising God until the offering was consumed.

There is, of necessity, the need for growth in the Christian way. The very thought of transformation indicates a gradual change. It follows, then, that at the beginning of the Christian way we may be somewhat influenced by the worldly viewpoint in connection with all our endeavors to know and do

God's will. However, as we "grow in grace" we should be able to recognize more clearly that being humble before God and being faithful in the little and obscure opportunities are the things that really count.—II Pet. 3:18

This is true irrespective of the nature of the gifts God's grace may have imparted to us. Take the gift of exhortation, for example. We should all possess and use this faithfully. We can all exhort one another to faithfulness, even if it is only by the example of our own conduct and manner of life. There are very few of us who do not have an occasional opportunity to speak a word of exhortation to a fellow traveler in the narrow way. Are we faithfully using these opportunities, even if, at times, it may be out of season for us to do so? On the other hand, are we overlooking the privileges that daily may be ours, while waiting for a spectacular opportunity that may never come?

The same may be said of any or all of the gifts of God's grace. Faithfulness in their use should be concentrated mostly on the small things. Take the matter of "giving," as mentioned by the apostle. The whole Christian life should be one of giving. We are to give our time, our strength, our talents, our means, our all. Our giving starts when we respond to the Lord's invitation, "My son, give me thine heart." (Prov. 23:26) When we give our hearts, our motives, and our affections to the Lord, we become his, to serve him with our whole being forever.

Having given all to God, he instructs us, through his Word, how we are to then give to others. We are told that we are to provide for our own, for example, and this we must do. (I Tim. 5:8) We should not use

this as an excuse, however, to hold back from the Lord that which should be given directly to him. It may, and frequently does, require considerable time to take care of the obligations which the Lord's will imposes upon us with respect to our earthly obligations, hence there is often very little left to give directly in the service of the Heavenly Father. In view of this there may be a temptation not to give the little that may be possible.

What is true with respect to the giving of time may also be true along other lines. We could be tempted to say, "I wish I had a large sum of money to put into the Lord's work," but would we put it into the work if we had it? The answer is found in the measure of faithfulness we display in giving the "mite" that is currently within our power to give. When examining our own hearts to determine how faithful we would be in the use of large opportunities, let us be sure we are faithful in the small things. If we wish that we could give all our time and strength to the Lord, he will determine the depth and sincerity of that wish by the measure of zeal with which we give to him the little time and strength that is presently our privilege to give. If we hold back from rendering even the smallest service to him just because it is small, we may not be entrusted with the use of the larger opportunities.

SINCERE IN LOVE

In Romans 12:9 the apostle says, "Let love be without dissimulation." The Greek word here used has the thought of sincerity, without hypocrisy. The love mentioned is primarily for God, but automatically should embrace all of God's people, the

“many members” in the body. The emphasis thus placed upon the sincerity of our love is another reminder of the transformation that should be going on in our hearts and lives. There is a great deal of veneer in the world which feigns an interest in others, but often the motive is a selfish one.

The motive back of Christian endeavor and activity should be sincere and wholehearted, influencing all that we do. That motive, moreover, should be one of genuine love for God and for his people. It should not be mixed with any degree of selfishness, or self-interest. With this fact the apostle couples the admonition, “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” One of the greatest evils in God’s sight is that of hypocrisy, and one of the principal elements of what God considers “good” is sincerity. The robe of Christ’s righteousness covers our unwilling imperfections, but that provision does not cover the sins of hypocrisy and insincerity.

The apostle continues throughout the remainder of Romans, chapter 12, and on through chapters 13, 14, and much of 15, mentioning one detail after another of that which is involved in proving what is the perfect will of God. Those details explain the Christian’s proper attitude toward both brethren and enemies. They point out our proper attitude toward the world and toward earthly governments. They cover, in fact, practically every aspect of the Christian life. To acquaint ourselves with these instructions, and to have our lives molded by them, should be our earnest desire and effort.

It is in doing this that we are separated more and more from the world and its spirit, and are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Thus,

we are having worked out in our lives the will of God as it pertains to the manner in which we are to continue presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to him. It is interesting, and important, to note that in all the details of God's will for the sacrificing Christian found in the Scriptures, outside of legitimate temporal responsibilities, there is nothing said about protecting self-interests; but much said about sacrificing self in the interests of others, and for the glory of God.

It is this, the denial of self, the blessing of others, and the glory of God, that constitutes his "good, and acceptable, and perfect will" for us who have presented ourselves in sacrifice to him. It is vital that we have a working knowledge of the divine will for us, else we might put forth much effort in supposing that we are serving God only to discover that we had been "as one that beateth the air." (I Cor. 9:26) Let us, rather, be faithful to our calling, that the richness of our lives may be in the realization of God's grace, and in the hope of partaking of his glory.—Rom. 5:2 ■

Rewards of Faith

*Faith soars into the realm of God
Where there is perfect peace;
There the heart is calm, contented,
All earthly strivings cease.*

*The unseen things the eyes behold,
All mysteries unfold,
The riches of eternity
Excel all earthly gold.
—Carol K. Hindle*

The Sword of the Lord

*“The three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.”
—Judges 7:20*

THE SWORD IS ONE OF the most ancient weapons used by mankind, and it continued to be one of the chief instruments of warfare until the invention of gunpowder. So important was its place in the battles of ancient nations that the term sword became practically synonymous with war. In the symbology of the Scriptures this fact is recognized, and it is in many

instances employed in the prophecies of evil that would come upon nations through wars to be waged against them. Thus for example, in the expression, “by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence,” “by the sword” refers to capture or destruction in war.—Jer. 14:12

The sword is an instrument of destruction, and by analogy, in the hands of a nation’s army, it symbolized their strength. A nation with a large army,

wielding many swords, was considered capable of subduing its enemies, thus maintaining its position of superiority and power. This, in a general way, is the background of thought associated with the Bible's symbolic use of the term sword. The scriptural phrases "sword of the Lord" and the "sword of the Spirit" do not refer to literal weapons of steel, but rather to the power of God which he employs to destroy those things which are out of harmony with his will—the enemies of righteousness.

The first time the word sword appears in the Bible it is used to symbolize a provision made by the Lord to prevent fallen man from returning to the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 3:24) This was before man himself had invented the sword, and we might wonder why it was used thus as a symbol before its later, more common meaning was attached to it. In this instance it represents a preventive measure, rather than destruction. It is translated from the Hebrew word *chereb* which, in addition to the common meaning of a cutting instrument, can also be defined as a "drought" or "desolation."

Although this Hebrew word *chereb* is used in the Old Testament more than four-hundred times, one of the very few instances when it could be translated "drought" without doing violence to the context, is in Genesis 3:24, where it is first used. Here it is spoken of as a "flaming sword," and it is used to describe God's arrangement to keep man from returning to the Garden of Eden. It could, in this one case, be given the meaning—"drought." Perhaps the Lord prevented fallen man from receiving the benefits of the garden simply by withholding moisture from that section of the country by use of

a “flaming sword [drought, resulting in desolation] which turned every way.” This might well explain the apparent disappearance of the garden paradise in so short a time.

This original meaning of *chereb* also gives significance to the picture of desolation and blight that is often presented in the Scriptures when reference is made to the effect of the sword. A land, or country, that suffers the ravages of the sword is often described as being utterly wasted. Thus are the enemies of God and of righteousness represented under the withering power of the symbolic “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”—Eph. 6:17

“THE SWORD OF THE LORD, AND OF GIDEON”

One of the early instances in the Scriptures where the Lord is associated with the symbolic use of the sword is in the account of Gideon and his small company of three hundred who defeated a vast army of Midianites. Here it is referred to as “The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.” (Judg. 7:18,20) This is clearly a symbolic use of the term, for neither Gideon nor any of his little group of men carried swords in their attack against the host of Midian.

In this remarkable account we are given an insight into some of the important ways in which God’s “sword” is used in the destruction of his enemies, and the fact that he makes it possible for his people to join in the battle with him. This latter thought is suggested by the Apostle Paul when he tells Timothy to endure as a “good soldier of Jesus Christ,” and urges him to “war a good warfare.” (II Tim. 2:3,4; I Tim. 1:18) Paul knew, and every faithful follower of the Master has learned, that in

order to be a “good soldier” it is necessary to “endure hardness,” and not become encumbered with the affairs of this world.

In considering the experiences of Gideon in connection with the defeat of the Midianites, one of the first lessons we observe is that the Lord does not depend upon the power of numbers in order to accomplish his purposes. To impress this point upon Gideon, he caused him to reduce his army from thirty-two thousand to the insignificant number of three hundred. (Judg. 7:2-7) Gideon sensed that God was thereby letting him know that only by his wisdom and power would it be possible to defeat the mighty host of Midianites.

After that victory had been gained, and Israel was freed from the aggressors, the people wanted Gideon to rule over them, but he replied, “I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.” (Judg. 8:23) Gideon realized that the people’s desire to have him as their ruler was based on the false assumption that he had defeated the Midianites. He wanted them to know that the real conqueror was Jehovah, and so he said to them, “the LORD shall rule over you.”

Gideon learned well the lesson that only by divine strength can victories be won by his people over the Lord’s enemies and their enemies. Have we learned that lesson? The foes of spiritual Israel are not people, nor literal armies equipped with weapons of carnal warfare, but they are, nevertheless, real and formidable. (Eph. 6:12) How important it is that no matter how strong we might feel to fight these enemies of the New Creature, we should look to the Heavenly Father for guidance in

the struggle and lean upon his sustaining arm of strength to keep us from falling.

One of our principal enemies is our own fallen flesh. Allied with our flesh is the world, and the prince of this “present evil world,” the devil. (Rom. 7:18; Eph. 2:2; Gal. 1:4; I Pet. 5:8) It would be impossible for even the strongest Christian to fight victoriously against these unrighteous allies without the wisdom and strength furnished by the Lord. No wonder we tremble when we think of self. However, when we look away from self and to the Lord we are “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) How else could Gideon have defeated the Midianites except God had helped him, and how can we hope to be conquerors, except it be through divine power and assistance?

THE LORD GOES BEFORE US

Before the battle against the Midianites began, Jehovah instructed Gideon to go down into their camp and listen to their conversation. He did this, and heard one of them telling a dream. This dream was interpreted by the Midianites to mean that they would be defeated by Gideon. They said, “This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.” This was enough to reassure Gideon. Returning to his own little company of soldiers he said, “Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.” —Judg. 7:9-15

How often in our experiences as New Creatures do the providences of God enable us to “arise” with courage to press forward in the good fight of faith!

This is not because we suddenly discover strength of our own. Rather, it is due to the fact that the Lord gives us an experience by which we are reminded anew that his grace is sufficient for us, that his strength is made perfect in our weakness, and that he will overcome our enemies for us if we but keep close to him by obeying his instructions.—II Cor. 12:9,10

Sometimes the Lord fights for his people in ways unknown to them, preparing victory in advance; while they, by trying to cross those proverbial “bridges” before they come to them, perhaps tremble with fear over the outcome of that which the Lord has already made a certain victory for them. God favored Gideon by letting him know that the enemy had been weakened by fear, and with their morale so low, they were in no fit shape to resist, even though the attacking army was small. Gideon was thus assured that the battle was the Lord’s and that victory was sure. The Lord does not always thus favor his people by letting them know the manner in which he is fighting for them. However, we can be sure that he is doing so, and “faith can firmly trust him, come what may.”

In the interpretation of the dream which Gideon overheard, reference was made to his sword—“the sword of Gideon.” The Midianites were also made aware of the fact that they would be delivered into the hand of Gideon by the God of Israel. This gave an indication to Gideon as to at least part of the strategy he should use against the enemy, for he arranged that at a certain time, and upon a signal from him, his little army was to shout, “The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.” This was in keeping

with what the Midianites were expecting; and being convinced of defeat, they became panicky and began fighting one another.—Judg. 7:19-22

Here we have an important lesson. Gideon and his little army did not use literal swords in this attack. Hence the term is used symbolically to describe the manner in which the wisdom and power of God operated to defeat the enemies of his people. The only “weapons” they used in this particular strategy were trumpets, torches, and earthen pitchers. (vs. 16) Through this strange combination of articles the power of the Lord—his sword—operated to rout the Midianites.

THE TRUMPET AND TORCH

Fundamentally, the great battle in which spiritual Israelites are engaged is one between darkness and light, error and truth. Jesus, prefigured by Gideon, is the “light of the world,” and he commissioned his followers that, as his representatives, they also were to be the “light of the world.” (John 8:12; Matt. 5:14) However, the darkness “hateth the light,” and Satan, the prince of darkness, musters all the hosts of sin in battle array against the Lord’s “little flock” of footstep followers.—John 3:19,20; Acts 26:18; Luke 12:32

We are provided with an “armor of light” to protect us against the “wiles of the devil,” and one of the pieces of that armor is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:11,17) In the picture furnished us in the account of Gideon, this symbolic sword is represented by the twofold illustration of trumpet and torch. In the illustration we are reminded that it is only as

the trumpet gives forth a certain sound, and the torch is displayed, that the forces of darkness and evil are defeated. This suggests that the Truth only becomes powerful as we trumpet it forth and let it shine by being “an example of the believers.” (I Tim. 4:12) Truth merely shut up within us will not overcome our enemies, nor make us conquerors in the good fight of faith.

BROKEN VESSELS

The third item Gideon provided for his little band of warriors was the earthen pitcher, and this played its important role only by being broken. The vessel was used to conceal the light of the torch until Gideon gave the signal for the attack. The three hundred soldiers were divided into three groups of one hundred each, and deployed on different parts of the hill overlooking the valley where the Midianites were camped. Gideon took his place with one of the groups, and his instructions were that all the men were to do as he did, the plan being that he would blow his trumpet and at the same time break the earthen vessel that covered the torch. The men with him would do the same, and when the other two groups heard the trumpets and saw the lights, they also were to blow their trumpets and uncover their torches. Finally, they were all to shout, “The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.”—Judg. 7:16-18

The strategy was most effective. Only captains in ancient armies, it is said, blew trumpets and carried torches. Thus it would have appeared to the Midianites that Gideon commanded a tremendous host, one large enough to require hundreds of captains. This, together with the information in the dream

that Gideon and his God would defeat them, caused consternation in the ranks of the enemy, and they began fighting one another and thus fell an easy prey to the little company of attackers.

One never tires of recounting this intriguing narrative of how God enabled so few to defeat so many. However, the important thing to us is not the account itself, but the lessons it conveys to us as spiritual Israelites, followers of Christ Jesus. Perhaps one of the most important of these is that of breaking the earthen vessels to permit the light of the torches to be seen by the enemy. This might well represent self-sacrifice needed in order that the light can shine out. The symbolic sword of the Lord is effective against our enemies only in proportion as our self-sacrifice causes the light of truth to shine forth in a dark world.

The trumpet of the Gospel message must also be sounded. The shout of Gideon and his three hundred, “The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon,” was merely an interpretation of the significance of the trumpets and the torches. In our case, it is the sword of God’s Word, the Bible, that is made effective in our good fight of faith as we proclaim it and cause it to shine forth. In order to do this, our earthen vessels must be broken and emptied of self, made of use to our Lord and Master, Christ Jesus.

All the various parts of the Christian’s armor, as outlined by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:10-17, represent the weapons of our spiritual warfare from one standpoint or another. Most of these are for defensive purposes, to protect us against the attacks of our enemies, but the “sword of the Spirit” is for offensive use. It is the sword, God’s

Word, that we use to fight against the forces of evil, both “within” ourselves and “without,” referring to external oppositions, which seek to defeat us in our walk with God.—II Cor. 7:5

Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, and his “little flock” of footstep followers, are prophetically represented as saying of the Heavenly Father, “He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me.” (Isa. 49:2) Here we have the assurance of divine protection as we use the sword of truth by showing forth, both by word and by example, the message which our God has given to us and with which he expects us to overcome our enemies—the spirit of the world, our fallen flesh, and our great adversary, Satan.

A “TWO-EDGED” SWORD

The Apostle Paul speaks of the Word of God as being “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12) We are given a similar thought in II Corinthians 10:4,5, where we read, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

Thus we are reminded that one of the New Creature’s enemies is our fallen flesh, and that we are expected to turn the sword of the Spirit inward, symbolically speaking, in order to subdue and to

bring into captivity those earthly propensities which war against us as spiritual Israelites. For this purpose the sword is very suitable when properly used. Self seeks to be recognized and to have its way in almost every experience of life. Its reasoning is most subtle, and only by applying the principles of righteousness to every situation will we be able to keep our flesh under control. It is with self that the Christian's warfare begins. "He that ruleth his spirit," the Scriptures state, is better "than he that taketh a city."—Prov. 16:32

The Christian warfare, however, does not end with self. The flesh may try to make us believe that it does, and thereby cause us to avoid letting our light shine. This false notion is one of the "high things that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," one of the "reasonings," as rendered by *Young's Literal Translation*, the purpose of which is to circumvent the will of God that we should lay down our lives in the service of the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren.

One of the ways in which the enemy of our fallen flesh can be slain is, as represented in the Gideon picture, through breaking our earthen vessels to let the light shine out. As this is done, we will also be assisting ourselves in the battle against our other enemies, the spirit of the world and Satan. By being engaged in letting our light shine, our victory over the world and the Adversary will be in preventing them from diverting our attention, or from beating down our courage to fight the good fight of faith. In the overall picture, however, every member of the church, beginning with Jesus, our Head, has been engaged in a battle which ultimately

will result in the destruction of the “present evil world” and of Satan, its prince, and establishing in the earth the divine rule of righteousness.—Gal. 1:4; Rev. 20:1-3,10,14; II Pet. 3:10-13

This is one reason our battle is called a “good fight of faith.” (I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 4:7) We cannot now see these formidable enemies falling down before us. Seemingly evil continues to triumph. However, by faith in God’s plan we know that when we enlisted in the army of the Lord we took our stand on the side in which, ultimately, truth and righteousness will triumph everywhere. We as individuals will not know the tremendous power that is being exerted against the bulwarks of Satan until we gain, through faith, our own victory and have been given an abundant entrance into “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—I John 5:4; I Cor. 15:57; II Pet. 1:11

THE HIGH PRAISES OF GOD

Psalms 149:5-9 depicts the “little flock” army of the Lord, particularly in this end of the Gospel Age, making effective use of the sword of the Spirit, here spoken of as a “twoedged sword,” and speaking the “high praises of God.” No matter from what standpoint we view the divine purposes, they certainly reflect the praises of our God. The Apostle Peter speaks of showing forth “the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) To do this, we need to break our earthen vessels in order that the light which has shined into our hearts may be seen by others. Thus, the trumpet tones of truth, sounding the praises of God, become the sword of the Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, and to us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) We might think of the "kings," the "people," and the "nobles" mentioned in Psalm 149:7,8 as representing the various sinful elements of the world under the rule of Satan, and that we are victorious when we "overcome the world," as Jesus did. We think, however, that more than this is implied in the psalmist's prophecy, for it is clearly one that applies to the end of the present age, and the preparations being made for God's kingdom of righteousness, which will replace the "present evil world."

The church at this end of the Gospel Age is commissioned to wait upon the Lord, and to declare that all the kingdoms of this world are being brought down, and all present human rulership will soon come to an end. How thankful we are, however, to have the additional privilege of proclaiming God's kingdom of peace, joy, health and life, which will supplant the old sinful order, and be under the righteous reign of Christ and his church.—Zeph. 3:8,9; Rev. 20:6; 21:1-5

Thus, as the consecrated people of God, our part in this final struggle of the ages is simply that of proclaiming the great plan of God, the "gospel of the kingdom," for the emancipation of the world from the slavery of sin and death. (Matt. 24:14) By doing this faithfully, we are blowing the trumpet of truth, we are holding high the torchlight of the kingdom message, and we are shouting, "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon."

How blessed is the peace of mind and heart which is ours to enjoy in the knowledge of the Lord's certain

victory! The battle is his, not ours. He has outlined every strategic move we are to make. He has provided us with an armor of protection against our foes, and has put his twoedged sword of the Scriptures into our hands. If we use this faithfully, following the example of the “captain” of our salvation, our share in the victory of the Lord will be certain. (Heb. 2:10) In order to participate in this victory, however, we must press on in the battle. Our part in the struggle will not be complete until our earthen vessel, broken to let the light shine out, is completely consumed—until we have been “faithful unto death,” that we may then receive “a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10 ■

OBITUARIES

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to their family and friends in the loss of these dear ones.

Sister Florence Trzyna, Chicago, IL—November 21.
Age, 100

Sister Maria Bobek, Krakow, Poland—March 5. Age,
94

Sister Halina Idas, Poznan, Poland—April 14. Age, 96

Sister Helena Kubic, Nowy Targ, Poland—April 29.
Age, 83

Sister Krystyna Grzesiuk, Swidnik, Poland—April 30.
Age, 90

Brother Redvers Green, England—May 3.

Sister Gabriella Jaeger, Vancouver, BC, Canada—
May 3. Age, 96

Brother Joseph Morton, New Haven, CT—May 3.
Age, 68

Sister Anne Kutscher, Detroit, MI—May 11. Age, 101

The Master's Touch

“Behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”
—Matthew 8:2,3

THE HAND IS USED IN THE Scriptures as a symbol of power. The touch of the hand is a small exercise of power. Let us notice a few Biblical accounts of the wonderful things that were accomplished by the Master's touch, and consider them to be illustrative of the manner in which we are being dealt with by the same loving and gracious Lord, of whom the poet wrote:

“Thy touch hath still its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall.”

LEPROSY—SYMBOL OF SIN

Our opening Scripture recalls the occasion on which the touch of the Master's hand healed one who was plagued with leprosy. Much more common in ancient times than today, the disease of leprosy is caused by a long-term infection which can lead

to damage of the nerves, skin, eyes and respiratory tract. This damage may result in the lack of ability to feel pain and can lead eventually to the loss of parts of a person's extremities due to repeated injuries or infection.

Leprosy is used in the Scriptures as a symbol of sin. Just as leprosy can result, over time, to damage or loss of parts of the body, so sin eats away at the heart, the mind, the character, and other sensibilities of the human frame. Over the course of a lifetime, without the healing power of the Great Physician, sin's effects will result in a growing separation from the Heavenly Father and his righteous principles and precepts.

Not all the lepers in Israel were cleansed by Jesus during his earthly ministry. (Luke 4:24-27) During the present Gospel Age, although Jesus by the grace of God tasted death for every man, not all have yet benefited from this precious sacrifice, but only one here and one there, a "little flock." (Heb. 2:9; Luke 12:32) However, the coming Messianic kingdom is to bring a still fuller manifestation of divine grace. The "sin of the world" will be taken away, and all mankind will have the opportunity to be fully healed from the "leprosy" of sin and its terrible effects which have plagued humanity since the fall of our first parents in Eden. (John 1:29; I Cor. 15:21,22) The earth, man's home, will likewise be once more a holy place, forever cured from the effects of sin.

FEVER'S DEBILITATING EFFECTS

In another record of the touch of the Master's hand, we read, "When Jesus was come into Peter's

house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."—
Matt. 8:14,15

In the human body, fever, or the rising of the body's internal temperature, is a mechanism which is triggered to fight off many kinds of infection. In most instances, fever goes away within a couple of days once its purpose has been accomplished. However, in cases where the underlying infection or disease is more serious, fever may not have its restorative effect. The results in such cases can be very serious, and possibly deadly.

This may well illustrate the fevers of pride, anger, temper, and passion that afflict the human family. The world has never been in a more feverish condition than it is today. The terrible and deadly infections caused by sin are recognized by most people. However, man is unable to rid himself of these because the "feverish" qualities noted above are the exact opposite of the healing balm of humility, kindness, mercy, and love, which are the only remedies for the world's present infection resulting from sin. What mankind needs is the Master's touch.

Fever in the symbolic sense might also denote a condition of unrest. The touch of Jesus will eradicate this and bring us spiritual rest and peace. The Scriptures describe it as "peace with God" as we lay hold of the Lord by faith, and "the peace of God" in our hearts as we surrender ourselves fully to walk in the Master's steps. (Matt. 11:28-30; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7) May our prayers for this blessing be those expressed by the poet:

“Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.”

OUR EYES OF UNDERSTANDING

“As they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David. ... And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.”—
Matt. 20:29-34

This miracle of Jesus well illustrates the opening of the eyes of our understanding by the power of God’s Holy Spirit. Here, the Master’s touch gives us the ability to view and appreciate with the eye of faith things actually not seen as yet, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (Eph. 1:18; II Cor. 5:7) Some may think that their eyes can be opened by worldly education or through their own efforts. However, repeated endeavors along these lines through the centuries have shown that this is no more possible than for one born blind to open his own eyes and see.

On one occasion the Master cured a man’s blindness by making clay and placing it upon his sightless eyes, after which the man washed in the pool of Siloam. (John 9:1-7) This is a beautiful

illustration of the method the Lord frequently uses in opening the eyes of one's understanding by means of human instrumentalities, illustrated here by "clay," as a way of conveying this great blessing. Such healing may be well illustrated by the secretions of our Lord's mouth, "full of grace and truth," mixed with some dust of the earth, denoting the poor earthly talents of the Lord's followers.—Eph. 4:11; John 1:14

This method has been especially used at this end of the Christian age in connection with the message of the Gospel which has gone out world-wide. A "faithful and wise servant," together with many other fellow servants, has been favored to share in these works which the Master foretold would be the privilege of his faithful followers to perform. (Matt. 24:45-47; Luke 12:37) The eyes of many have been opened as a result. Furthermore, a much greater prospect set before the Lord's people is that, if faithful unto death, it will be their blessed privilege in the coming kingdom to open the eyes of the billions who have been both physically as well as mentally blind.—Isa. 35:5

After Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at Jordan, his eyes of spiritual understanding were opened to see in detail the many features of God's will for him. This understanding had two important effects. First, he was sanctified by the understanding and carrying out of his Father's will. (John 17:17-19) In addition, he went throughout all the cities and villages of Israel, proclaiming the coming kingdom of God. (Matt. 4:17; 9:35; Mark 1:15) This shows the two principal reasons why our mental eyes have been anointed with the eye-salve of truth: first,

that we apply its sanctifying effect toward the growth of a Christlike character; and second, that we might witness to the “gospel of the kingdom” to the extent of our ability and circumstances.—Matt. 24:14

SPIRITUAL FOOD MULTIPLIED

On another occasion, seeing the hunger of the multitudes, Jesus said to his disciples, “How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”—Matt. 15:34-38

Here the seven loaves and few fishes were multiplied sufficiently to feed a multitude of over four thousand, again as a result of the Master’s touch. So, on a still higher plane, the same gracious power has caused the spiritual food of truth to be multiplied that it might reach and fill those throughout the earth who seek answers and comfort during these perilous times. Through the printed page, radio, television, the Internet, and countless forms of electronic media, the glorious Gospel message has, and continues, to reach those hungering for the Word of God.

WISE AND HARMLESS

When Jesus was apprehended the night before his death, one of his disciples thought it was necessary to defend his Master. The account states that the disciple, who was Peter, “smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he

touched his ear, and healed him.”—Luke 22:50,51; John 18:10,11

We can be fairly certain that as a result of Peter’s rather reckless use of the sword, the hearing of the injured man would be seriously impaired. Similarly, some have perhaps had their spiritual hearing injured by an unwise use of the sword of the Spirit on the part of over-zealous disciples. All so injured, need the Master’s touch in order for their hearing to be fully restored. As disciples, therefore, let us be sure that in the giving forth of the Gospel we are “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”—Matt. 10:16

OUR LIPS TOUCHED

As Jesus came to the Sea of Galilee on one occasion, the record states: “And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.”—Mark 7:31-35

The poor man here brought to our attention was deaf as well as having an impediment in his speech, and the power of the Master’s touch was again manifested to heal him. Frequently the Lord’s people have, in a spiritual sense, an impediment in their speech. They are unable to speak the Lord’s message as clearly as they would like to do. We need, therefore, to come into that condition of full

consecration and submission to the Lord's will, that his touch may be experienced.

This symbolic touch does not make orators of many of us, but it does make it possible that we, in one way or another, are able to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (I Pet. 2:9) We recall Moses, the servant of God, was slow of speech, but the Lord's providence overcame this difficulty by providing Aaron as a mouthpiece. Today, the many forms of communication available are a wonderful assistance to God's people who may be slow of speech in effectively presenting the glorious Gospel of the kingdom.

LITTLE CHILDREN BLESSED

“They brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”—Luke 18:15,16

This beautiful illustration shows that even young children can experience divine blessing as a result of the Master's touch. In view of this, how important it is for Christian parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Many can testify to blessings that have continued throughout their entire life as a result of experiencing the Master's touch in their very early years! Truly the wise man said, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”—Eccles. 12:1

THE DEAD AWAKENED

In Luke 7:11-15 we read this account concerning Jesus: “And it came to pass the day after, that he

went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”—Luke 7:11-15

Could we imagine a more beautiful spectacle than the giving back of this young man to his widowed mother—her only son, and possibly her only support? As a spiritual counterpart to this during the Gospel Age, one here and one there have experienced an awakening to “walk in newness of life,” developing new hopes, ambitions and goals. If faithful unto death, these will have part in the “first resurrection” of all who wholly live unto the Master.—Rom. 6:4,5; Eph. 1:12-14; Col. 3:1-4; Rev. 20:4,6

In view of the gracious works accomplished during the present Gospel age resulting from the Master’s touch, what marvelous things may be expected when the arm of the Lord is laid bare to all people in God’s coming worldwide kingdom of righteousness and peace! Then all the blind eyes will be opened, and all the deaf ears unstopped. (Isa. 35:5) All that are in their graves will hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth; for he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death.—John 5:28,29; I Cor. 15:25,26

In order to experience the blessed results of the Master's touch, we need to do our part by keeping in close communion with him. Like so many who sought to be healed during his earthly ministry, let us press through the crowd of confusion and doubt, and stay as near to him as possible, by faith, that we might receive the healing "touch" of all the divine promises.

"In the still lute the music lies unheard
In the rough marble beauty lies unseen:
To make the music and the beauty, needs
The Master's touch, the sculptor's chisel keen.
Great Master, touch us with Thy skillful hand;
Let not the music that is in us die!
Great Sculptor, hew and polish us; nor let,
Hidden and lost, Thy form within us lie!
Spare not the stroke! Do with us as Thou wilt!
Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred;
Complete Thy purpose, that we may become
Thy perfect image, Thou our God and Lord!" ■



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WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 2—“I am determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”—I Corinthians 2:2 (Z. '95-116 Hymn 116)

JUNE 9—“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”—John 16:33 (Z. '95-207 Hymn 119A)

JUNE 16—“No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”—Hebrews 12:11 (Z. '96-44 Hymn 273)

JUNE 23—“He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”—Matthew 13:23 (Z. '96-99 Hymn 134)

JUNE 30—“In the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, ... Gather the wheat into my barn.”—Matthew 13:30 (Z. '00-234 Hymn 232)

The Way of Peace

*Lean not upon the arm of man, for it is frail.
Place not our trust in self alone, for self will fail.*

*But cast ourselves and burdens down
at the throne of God;
Then arise in joy,
to tread the road that Jesus trod.*

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”—I Peter 5:7

—Laura E. Kelsey

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are routed through the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn. Their visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.

T. Krupa

Germany:

Karlsbad	June 1
Oldisleben Gotha	2
Korbach	3-6

The speakers listed below are invited by individual classes, or their services have been arranged by their home classes:

T. N. Alexander

Online Broadcast of Convention	
Vancouver, BC	June 11,12
Portland, OR	18,19

R. Charlton

Online Broadcast of Convention	
Delaware Valley, PA	June 5

A. Fernets

Online Broadcast of Convention	
Vancouver, BC	June 11,12

R. Goodman

Online Broadcast of Convention	
Delaware Valley, PA	June 5

L. Griehs

Online Broadcast of Convention	
Vancouver, BC	June 11,12

T. Krupa

Online Broadcast of Convention	
Vancouver, BC	June 11,12

P. Mora

Online Broadcast of Convention	
Portland, OR	June 18,19

D. Rice

Online Broadcast of Convention	
Delaware Valley, PA	June 5

Let the teaching concerning Christ remain as a rich treasure in your hearts. In all wisdom teach and admonish one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and sing with grace in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, and let it be through Him that you give thanks to God the Father.
—Colossians 3:16,17, Weymouth

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 5—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Griehs. Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 11,12— WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact B. A. Smith. Email: baselus.net

ABA/IGBERE CONVENTION, June 12—Contact P. Ekeh. Email: peterudochieke@gmail.com

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 18,19—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Wojcik. Email: janetlwojcik@gmail.com

NEW BRUNSWICK CONVENTION, July 2,3—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact D. Lucas. Email: eeglewing@aol.com

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 2,3—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Siwak Farm, RR 1, Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8. Contact B. Siwak. Phone: (306) 960-5526 or Email: bswk77@gmail.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 16-20—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

SOUTH AFRICA CONVENTION, August 12,13—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Isife. Phone: +2348035220141 or Email: johnisife@yahoo.com

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 15-19—
Beskidzki Raj Hotel, Zawoja, Poland. Contact M. Davis.
Email: lmkdavis@earthlink.net

**SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 2-5—WILL
BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact J. Chris-
tiansen. Email: jrchristiansen@comcast.net

**NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 3,4—WILL
BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact G. Pas-
sios. Email: gpassios11@verizon.net

**GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 24,25—
TENTATIVE ONLINE ONLY**—Contact K. Osterman.
Email: kenosterman@gmail.com

**AUSTRALIAN QUEENSLAND CONVENTION,
September 30-October 2—WILL BE BROADCAST
ONLINE ONLY**—Contact R. Charlton. Email: rand-
scharlton@gmail.com

**WEST NEWTON FALL CONVENTION, October 8,9
—IN PERSON ONLY**—West Newton Lions Club, 507
Pittsburgh Street, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact L.
Mlinek. Email: lisa.mlinek@aol.com

A Psalm for Giving Thanks

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

Know that the Lord, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts
with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!*

For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

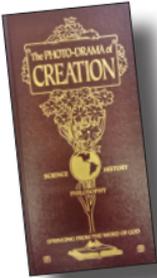
and his faithfulness to all generations.

—Psalm 100:1-5, English Standard Version

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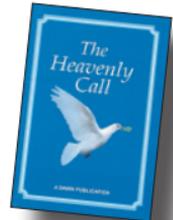
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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD

—peculiarly “his workmanship”; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people”, and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

of consecrated believers in Christ’s atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “in due time.”—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be a “partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet.1:4

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God’s witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 55

