

The DAWN

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

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“Thus Saith the LORD”

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written.”
—Luke 24:45,46

THE EXPRESSIONS, “THUS saith the Lord” and “It is written,” are used nearly five hundred times in the Bible. Additionally, there are many similar expressions used, such as: “The Word of the Lord came unto me,” or “I, the Lord, have spoken it,”

calling attention to specific statements, messages, and lessons from God. It is as though the prophets, or other spokesmen, are telling us: “What I am going to say now is not my opinion, or of my own wisdom, but it is from God Almighty—it is he that is speaking, and these are his words.” These are wonderful expressions, and full of meaning for sincere students of the Bible. We have a reverence for God’s Word, and a “Thus saith the Lord” is the end of all controversy with us.

Such a basis for belief seems to be very simple. All we have to do is to prove everything by the Word of God. All we have to do is to accept what is in harmony with that Word, and reject that which

is not. However, it is not so simple as it seems. If it were, everyone would understand and agree as to what the Scriptures truly say. This, we realize, is far from the case. Because the interpretation of many of the most basic subjects of the Bible is so widely different among professed believers, we must conclude that much in the way of present Scriptural understanding constitutes false doctrine. Indeed, there are many false doctrines—“doctrines . . . of men,” “strange doctrines”—and each one is claimed to rest upon the Word of God. (Matt. 15:9; Heb. 13:9) Moreover, for nearly every false doctrine, there is a purported, “Thus saith the Lord.”

LEARNING TO PROPERLY INTERPRET SCRIPTURES

It is first important to understand that the Lord does not reveal his plans and purposes to everyone. The truths of the Bible are only made known to those whose hearts are in tune with him, and who are willing to “search the Scriptures” to discover what kind of God we have, and what are his plans for the future in connection with his Creation, animate and inanimate. (John 5:39; Acts 17:11) Thus, to determine what the Lord is saying, we must often dig beneath the surface. We need to analyze, compare and assemble, learning “line upon line; here a little, and there a little.” (Isa. 28:10) We must interpret and coordinate, and apply certain inflexible rules and guides. When in doubt, it is essential that we consider the preponderance, or weight, of evidence. We must also arrange according to the time elements of God’s plan, and not confuse one age and its work with another age and its work. Paul admonished,

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”—II Tim. 2:15

Above all, we are to remember that the Scriptures in their entirety declare the plan of God, and we must learn to interpret them according to his perspective and purpose. His plan is not subject to change at our whim. The prophet states: “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” (Isa. 14:24) We must learn to think as God does, remembering his invitation, “Come now, and let us reason together.” (chap. 1:18) It is also essential that we be filled with his Spirit of truth, and approach the Scriptures in that spirit—humbly, prayerfully, and reverently. We must be on guard against any form of willful misinterpretation, which could easily mislead and stumble others, remembering that the penalty for stumbling others is extremely severe. (Matt. 18:6) This is the great Creator’s sacred Word we are dealing with, and it is not to be handled carelessly or flippantly.

The study of the Scriptures is not done simply for pleasure, nor for the purpose of appearing scholarly. This is a serious matter. Reading again from the Prophet Isaiah: “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: . . . All those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” (Isa. 66:1,2) What humility and reverence is thus implied when considering God’s Word!

Paul said to Timothy, “All scripture . . . given by inspiration of God, . . . is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [that is, complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (II Tim. 3:16,17) This being the case, we are expected to pursue our study of the Scriptures in a methodical and workman-like manner, in order to be approved by God. This is what we must do in order to truly ascertain what the Lord is saying—in order that we may discern precisely, “Thus saith the Lord.”

A methodical, orderly, step-by-step study of the Bible, suggests that we may gain a greater understanding of its teachings by a topical consideration of its key doctrines. That is, in considering important elements of God’s Word—such subjects as ransom, resurrection, soul, death, and many others—we will be greatly assisted by taking all the scriptural testimony on each topic, in order to get a complete picture of its import and meaning in relation to God’s plan as a whole. This topical method of study also helps to bring consistency and harmony to subjects which may seem confusing or even impossible to understand when viewed only through a single, or narrowly focused, instance of Scripture. The psalmist said, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. . . . Order my steps in thy word.”—Ps. 119:105,133

DETERMINING CORRECT INTERPRETATION

Here is a suggested list which can perhaps assist us in determining whether our interpretation of

Scriptures is correct or incorrect. Let us ask these questions:

Does the proposed interpretation concur with our understanding of God's character attributes of wisdom, justice, love, and power?

Does it square up with the doctrine of the Ransom—Christ's life sacrificed as a substitute for Adam's forfeited life?

Is the Scripture correctly translated, or is it not found, in whole or in part, in earliest Bible manuscripts?

Does its context affect its interpretation?

To what age, or time period, in God's plan does the Scripture apply?

To what group of persons does it apply—heathen, faithful men and women, angels, others?

Is it a historical record, having already had its fulfillment in the past? If already partially fulfilled, does it have an additional, or completed, fulfillment in the future?

Is it to be understood in a literal manner, or is its meaning symbolic? Does it possibly have both a symbolic or pictorial significance, as well as a literal meaning?

Is the verse a statement of irony or a rhetorical question to illustrate a point, or is it a factual or straightforward expression?

Does it employ an archaic idiom not in use today?

Is its correct application suggested by partially fulfilled prophecies?

Does it teach something by inference rather than direct statement?

Does incorrect punctuation provided by the translators alter the true meaning?

Does the Scripture seem to conflict with other texts on the same subject? Is there more than one Scripture—another witness—to confirm the proposed interpretation?

From this long list of items which can greatly affect how we understand God’s Word, we can quickly see that often a correct interpretation is not an easy matter, simply gained by a casual reading of the Bible. In fact, a pure, accurate understanding of the Scriptures is gained only through a lifetime of dedicated study and reflection upon God’s great gift to us—his Word. Even then, a clear grasp will not be secured unless it is done in the proper spirit of humbleness and acquiescence to God’s will. In other words, the bestowing of the Holy Spirit by God to enlighten us is absolutely necessary to the understanding of his Holy Word. This “Spirit of truth,” Jesus said, is what will guide us “into all truth.”—John 16:13

Let us now look at some of the fundamental doctrines taught throughout much of Christianity which, at least on the surface, seem to have support from the Scriptures. Let us do so, however, by applying some of the foregoing tests, to determine what the Lord truly desires that we understand as his Word on these subjects. Thus, may we prove whether or not these teachings are, in fact, supported by a correct interpretation of a “Thus saith the Lord,” although with a casual glance there may appear to be little doubt as to their verity.

DO THE SCRIPTURES TEACH THE TRINITY?

One of the most prominently disseminated doctrines of Christendom is that of the trinity. God is

claimed to be triune—the union of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three persons, in one God. One expression of the trinity, used by many Christian churches since the sixth century, is the Athanasian Creed, which states, in part: “That we worship one God as Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance; For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.”

The above words are apparently insufficient, for the creed continues: “Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet they are not three eternals but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.”

Even the most enlightened mind must conclude that the above statements are so convoluted so as to be virtually impossible to understand, or to explain. As a result, most are content to simply say, “It is a mystery,” which is to be believed, for certain, but cannot be understood. Thus, forgotten are

Jesus' words to his followers that it was "given unto" them to "know the mysteries" of God's Word, and "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."—Matt. 13:11,16

Despite the great confusion of words in the above creedal statement, certain verses from the Bible are used to "prove" the teaching of the trinity. One such text reads as follows: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." (I John 5:7) Here, many will conclude, a clear "thus saith the LORD" is given. As further proof that Jesus, as a member of the trinity, is equal with God, another verse is cited. Concerning Jesus, Paul said, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." (Phil. 2:6) Another "thus saith the LORD" is here provided—what further proof is needed?

SCRIPTURES EXAMINED

Let us now examine the Scriptures which have been cited to prove that God is three persons, and yet only one God. The words of I John 5:7 certainly appear to be an unanswerable argument to support the doctrine of the trinity. However, since it is so contrary to reason, and we know God to be eminently reasonable, we suspect something is wrong with this understanding.

This is an occasion when it is appropriate to examine the Scripture in its original form. *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* is an excellent authority for this purpose. There, we find the text omitted, and a footnote which reads as follows: "This text concerning the heavenly witnesses is not contained in

any Greek manuscript which was written earlier than the fifteenth century. It is not cited by any of the Greek ecclesiastical writers; nor by any of the early Latin fathers, even when the subjects upon which they treat would naturally have led them to appeal to its authority. It is therefore evidently spurious." With these comments nearly all Bible commentators agree, and as attested by nearly every translation of the New Testament written in the past century and a half. We see, then, that these words do not constitute a "thus saith the LORD."

We have, however, in Philippians 2:6, a Scripture which appears to say of Jesus that he was equal with God, or at a minimum, did not consider it wrong to be so. He did not consider such equality as robbing God of anything, the verse seems to say. Here again, we sense that something is wrong, and ask whether such a prideful view of his position before God harmonizes with the totality of Scriptural testimony concerning the character of Jesus. Going back to the original Greek, we find that, in the *King James Version*, one small word has been added, and another one omitted. The insertion and omission completely reverses the meaning of the text. Thus, the expression "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," should properly be understood to say, "thought not by robbery to be equal with God." Accordingly, the *Diaglott* correctly renders the text: "Who, though being in God's form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God." A majority of other translations render the verse similarly.

With the correct understanding of this text and its meaning within its context, we have an important truth. Here the humble and obedient Son of

God, Jesus, is contrasted with the arrogant and disobedient Satan, who is quoted as saying: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: . . . I will be like the most High.” (Isa. 14:13,14) Thus, when properly translated and understood, instead of proving the equality of God and Jesus, these texts disprove it.

Let us get further insight on this subject by looking at additional Scriptures. Jesus said on one occasion, “I and my Father are one.” He also prayed on behalf of his disciples, “that they may be one, even as we are one.” (John 10:30; 17:21,22) How was Jesus one with the Father? It was in the same way that he prayed for his disciples to be one with him. In both cases he spoke of oneness in mind; oneness in purpose; oneness in sympathy and love; oneness in good works—in other words, oneness in character. That is why Jesus could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” (John 14:9) In other words, he was patterned after the Father, having the same character qualities. Yet, only a few verses later, he plainly stated, “My Father is greater than I.—vs. 28

Properly understanding the subject of the unity between God, his son Jesus, and his church, we are spared such irrationalities in our thinking as the following: That God himself was out of conscious existence for nine months after the conception of Jesus; That the child Jesus was God; That the man Jesus prayed to himself; That his agony and prayer in Gethsemane was a charade because he was asking for help from himself; That God died on the

cross himself and remained dead for parts of three days until he raised himself from the dead.

Finally, the doctrine of the trinity does not square with the ransom, which requires the sacrifice of a perfect human life in place of Adam. It is not in accordance with God's plan, which places Jesus in the future role of Mediator between God and man—another impossibility if he is God. The Scriptures state: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." "God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."—I Tim. 2:5,6; I John 4:9

Part 2 of our consideration of this subject will appear in next month's Highlights of Dawn article. In it we will examine two additional and well-known teachings of Christianity to determine their veracity in light of the truth of God's plan. May our desire always be, when studying God's Word, to have a "thus saith the LORD" as an "anchor, . . . both sure and steadfast."—Heb. 6:19 ■

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 Helen Boerner, Detroit, MI—July 1. Age, 96

Sister Joyce Achieng Manyala, Machakos, Kenya—
September 1. Age, 31

Sister Fern Berg, Newberg, OR—September 3. Age,
97

Sister Beverley Liebeck, Perth, West Australia—
September 3. Age, 75

Teach Me How

*Dear Lord, please teach me how
To aid the ones
Who seek to know Thee now
And be Thy sons.*

*Attempts of mine prove vain;
So help me, Lord,
To make Thy truth seem plain,
And God adored.*

*I shall but speak the words
You let me say,
And hope that they, like birds,
Will nest to stay!*

*I'll try to do my best,
And then some day
I know You'll do the rest
In Your own way!*

—Laura E. Kelsey

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

OCTOBER 6—“Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”—Luke 9:55,56 (Z. ’04-43 Hymn 296)

OCTOBER 13—“I will show thee my faith by my works.”—James 2:18 (Z. ’04-45 Hymn 306A)

OCTOBER 20—“Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”—Matthew 10:16 (Z. ’04-91 Hymn 260)

OCTOBER 27—“My times are in thy hand.”—Psalm 31:15 (Z. ’04-237 Hymn 186)

The Imprint of God

Key Verse: *“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”*
—Hebrews 1:3

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 1:1-9

PRIOR TO JESUS’ FIRST

Advent, God “spake . . . unto the fathers by the prophets,” but now “in these last days” he has “spoken unto us by his Son,” Jesus, who is described in our Key Verse as being the “brightness” of God’s glory and the “express image of his person.” (Heb. 1:1-3) The phrase “express image” is a translation from the Greek word *charakter*, which is defined as “an exact copy.” Indeed, during Jesus’ First Advent, he fully and perfectly represented the Father.

On the third day after Jesus died on the cross, God resurrected him from death and, referencing again our Key Verse, gave him a glorious position “on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” The Apostle Paul describes this in another place, saying that when God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he “set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” (Eph. 1:20,21) Jesus was worthy to be exalted above every other being, because he “loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.” (Heb. 1:9) He “purged” or

“made a purification” [*Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*] of sins, not only those of his followers who were waiting in the upper room at Pentecost, “but also for the sins of the whole world.”—Heb. 1:3, I John 2:2

During his earthly ministry, Jesus was delighted and faithful in doing the Heavenly Father’s will at all times, even unto death. In so doing, he demonstrated qualities which were in all ways an exact reflection of his Father’s character. The Scriptures plainly tell us that “no man hath seen God at any time.” (John 1:18; I John 4:12) Yet, on another occasion, Jesus said to Philip, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” (John 14:9) Jesus’ followers could “see” God in a representative sense. That is to say, Jesus fully represented God—in mind, purpose, and character—completely submitting his will to that of the Heavenly Father. Thus, in this sense Jesus could say, “I and my Father are one.”—John 10:30

Jesus prayed that his followers would also develop this same oneness with the Father, as recorded in one of his prayers, “that they may be one, as we are.” (John 17:11) Jesus also desired that all his followers throughout the Gospel Age would develop this same oneness. He continued his prayer, saying: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”—vss. 20,21

Each consecrated believer, in proportion to their faithfulness in obeying the instructions given in the Scriptures, gradually develops a character which becomes more and more in the image and likeness of God’s dear Son. Hence, they also grow to be copies of our Heavenly Father’s character. The Apostle Paul confirms this, saying: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose . . . to be conformed to the image of his Son.”—Rom. 8:28,29

Builder of the House

Key Verse: *“This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.”*
—*Hebrews 3:3*

Selected Scriptures:
Hebrews 3:1-6;
Matthew 7:24-27

IN HEBREWS CHAPTER

two, we are told that Jesus was “made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Heb. 2:9) In subsequent verses, Paul tells us that Jesus was made “perfect”—or complete—“through sufferings.” Thus, he was qualified to be a “merciful and faithful high priest,” and able to give help to his followers, as they go

through trials and tests. —vss. 10,17,18

Paul continues in chapter three, saying, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him.” (vss. 1,2) As these verses state, we should carefully consider the tests which Jesus endured before being highly exalted, to better understand why we too must be severely tried and tested, in order to later share in his glory. We have this promise: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:16,17

In our lesson, we see a distinction made between

servants and sons. Commands are given to servants without any explanation by their master. A servant “knoweth not what his lord doeth.” (John 15:15) Regarding Moses, Paul says that he “was faithful in all his house, as a servant.” (Heb. 3:5) A son, on the other hand, is privileged to know, understand, and be entrusted with parts of the work in his father’s house, and he does not need to be commanded or threatened in regard to these labors. More is expected from a son in his father’s service, and therefore he requires greater training and discipline than a servant. Because he was faithful unto death, our Key Verse points out that Christ Jesus is “worthy of more glory than Moses.” It is also the privilege of the consecrated followers of the Lord to become “sons of God.” “Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we.”—John 1:12; Heb. 3:6

None could be of the house of sons until Jesus’ sacrifice was presented to the Father and accepted by him. It is also important to remember that if we have become “partakers of the heavenly calling,” we are not better intentioned or less sinful by nature than were the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament. However, the opportunity of sonship came to us, and not them, because their day was not God’s due time for this phase of his plan. We do not have our own righteousness, but our sonship is through “the faith of Christ” and his redemptive work.—Phil. 3:9

At the present time our sonship is not finalized, but probationary, until “we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” (Heb. 3:6) The “hope” which we have should be held so fervently, deeply, and strongly, that it will influence our whole life. Let us, then, take joyfully every trial, persecution, and difficulty in this present life which God may permit for testing and developing our character, and say with the psalmist, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life.—Ps. 27:4 ■

The Great High Priest

Key Verse: *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”*
—*Hebrews 4:14*

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 4:14-5:10

also had need of forgiveness for their own sins. None of these imperfect, blemished, sinful priests was allowed to take “this honour unto himself,” but only those who were “called of God, as was Aaron.”—vs. 4

Our Key Verse tells us that we, too, have a high priest, one who has “passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” However, Jesus’ lineage was from the tribe of Judah, not from the tribe of Levi. (Matt. 1:2; Luke 3:33; Heb. 7:14) How then could Jesus become a high priest? The answer is given in these words of Scripture: “Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest.” Instead, God honored him, saying, “Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. . . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 5:5,6; 7:17; Ps. 2:7; 110:4) Melchisedec was both a king and a priest at the same time, but he was not a sacrificing priest. (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:1-3) Christ is now a glorified spirit being, declared

GOD RESTRICTED ISRAEL’S

priesthood to the tribe of Levi, specifically Aaron’s family. All Jewish priests were taken from his family lineage, and set apart to represent the people before God, offering for them “both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” (Heb. 5:1) In this arrangement, the priests were able to sympathize with the people, because they were subject to the same weaknesses, and

by God to be a high priest, according to the kingly “order of Melchisedec,” not after the sacrificial order of Aaron, who was never glorified as a king.—Heb. 5:10

By faith we recognize Jesus as our great High Priest in heaven, knowing that he is not a “high priest who is incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every respect like ourselves, yet without sinning.” (Heb. 4:15, *James Moffatt* translation) The sufferings which came upon the perfect man Jesus, were not because he was a sinner, but rather because he was a Son. It was our Heavenly Father’s will to test and prove the loyalty of “his only begotten son,” even unto the “death of the cross,” and although he was a “Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”—John 3:16; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8

At the present time, consecrated followers of Christ are considered prospective members of this new, “royal priesthood.” (I Pet. 2:9) As such, we must not expect to escape trials and difficulties similar to those Jesus endured. Only by being rightly trained by such experiences are we able to develop the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” of Christian character. (Heb. 12:11) When, at times, we may be overtaken by a fault, “let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in the hour of need.”—Heb. 4:16, *Moffatt*

Christ is no longer a man, having been “put to death in the flesh,” and resurrected as a spirit being. (I Pet. 3:18) He is now a kingly priest, having power and great glory. (Rev. 14:14) Soon, when all the prospective members of the “royal priesthood” have proven faithful unto death, and are resurrected to his own glorious likeness, the Christ, head and body members, will become King and Priest in glory to the world of mankind. They will reign to bless and uplift all the willing and obedient of mankind, who, under the enlightenment then available to them, will “learn righteousness” and draw nigh unto God.—Rev. 20:4,6; Isa. 26:9 ■

The High Priest Forever

Key Verse: “*He, on account of his continuing for the age, possesses the priesthood which changes not.*”

—**Hebrews 7:24**,
*Wilson’s Emphatic
Diaglott*

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 7:1-3,19-28

Melchisedec was both a king and a priest, and, from God’s standpoint, he was very highly honored. Indeed, even Abraham, who was called “the Friend of God,” and whose faith was “imputed unto him for righteousness,” paid tithes to Melchisedec, and was blessed by him.—James 2:23; Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:1,2

The name Melchisedec, as it is rendered in the New Testament, comes from two Hebrew words: *melek*, which means king, and *tsedeq*, which means righteousness. Melchisedec was “King of Salem,” which means peace. Thus, Paul calls him both a “King of righteousness” and a “King of peace.” He was, Paul continues, “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” (Heb. 7:2,3)

AS NOTED IN OUR PREVIOUS lesson, Paul, in the Book of Hebrews, refers to Jesus as a “high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 5:10; 6:20) In the seventh chapter many things are shown about Melchisedec which prove him to be a type of Christ. The Melchisedec priesthood, both typical and antitypical, is much greater in every way, than the Aaronic priesthood.

He was “without father, . . . mother,” and “descent” in the sense that he did not inherit the priestly office through family lineage, but it was given to him directly by God.

During the Jewish Age, God instructed Israel that their priests were to be taken from the tribe of Levi. However, God also had authority to exalt others to this office. He did so in the case of Melchisedec, and also with Christ, the antitypical Melchisedec. In the Aaronic order of priesthood there was a line of succession through direct descendants, but not so in the higher arrangement. Melchisedec had neither predecessor nor successor in his priestly office. In this respect, he was “like unto the Son of God,” Christ Jesus, who similarly is the only one in this highest of all priestly orders, and remains a “high priest for ever.”—Heb. 6:20

The Israelites were long accustomed to look to the Aaronic priesthood as the channel through which they would worship God and receive his instructions. However, Christ Jesus is high priest of a new order of priesthood, and his faithful footstep followers of the present Gospel Age will join him in this new arrangement. The work of this higher Melchisedec is a future one of glory, when Jesus and his body members—the church—will be installed as kings and priests. In this exalted position, they will rule and instruct the world of mankind in righteousness.—Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6

It was not God’s intention to have the Law Covenant stand perpetually, nor to allow its Aaronic priesthood to continue forever. (Heb. 7:18-23) It was God’s purpose to appoint Jesus a higher order of priest, as well as a king, long before he came into the world to be man’s Redeemer. The prophecies of the Old Testament give us this assurance. (Gen. 14:18; Ps. 110:4; Zech. 6:12,13) Let us look forward to the time when God’s “royal priesthood” will be the agency for bringing blessings to the world of mankind.—I Pet. 2:9; Acts 3:25 ■

Author and Finisher of Our Faith

Key Verse:
*“Looking unto
Jesus the author
and finisher of our
faith; who for the
joy that was set
before him endured
the cross, despising
the shame, and is
set down at the
right hand of the
throne of God.”*
—Hebrews 12:2

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 12:1-13

also “run with patience”—which means cheerful endurance and perseverance—“the race that is set before us.”

We are only able to do these things, our Key Verse states, by “looking unto Jesus.” Jesus is the “author,” meaning chief leader or captain, of our faith, because he willingly gave his life as a ransom for all mankind. Because of his ransom sacrifice, “a new and living way” has been opened during the Gospel Age, and “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” (Heb. 10:19,20; Col. 1:14) The “author” of our faith is “the firstborn among many brethren.” He is “the

IN VERSE ONE OF OUR LES-

son, we are instructed to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.” Some of these “weights” we must lay aside are the “cares and riches and pleasures of this life.” (Luke 8:14) Such things are not necessarily sinful, but they occupy our time and effort, and may crowd out our development of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Continuing in our opening verse, Paul says we must

not only strive to lay aside any such “weights” of this life, but

head of the body, the church, . . . the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”—Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18

Jesus is also “the finisher of our faith” The word “finisher” denotes completer. Jesus acts in this important role in the sense that he helps us in our trials and difficult experiences. During his earthly ministry, he said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” (Matt. 11:28,29) “Looking unto Jesus,” we see that he meekly and humbly gave up his own will to do that of the Heavenly Father, and he will assist us in completing the same task.

Paul counsels us to “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who . . . made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and . . . humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:5-8) Through the great example of our Master, we thus see how important it is to develop humility.

Our Key Verse says that because of the great “joy that was set before him,” it was a delight for Jesus to always do the will of his Heavenly Father. This attitude was prophesied of him by the psalmist: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” (Ps. 40:8) As his footstep followers, we too should develop a “delight” to do our Heavenly Father’s will, enduring our “cross, disregarding the shame.”—Heb. 12:2, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

“Looking unto Jesus,” we must pass through similar experiences as he did. Thus, like Paul, we have the prospect of being “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:17) Let us, then, “consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—Heb. 12:3

The Power of the Tongue

*“Death and life are
in the power of
the tongue.”*
—*Proverbs 18:21*

“THE TONGUE OF THE JUST is as choice silver: . . . The lips of the righteous feed many.” “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.” (Prov. 10:20,21; 15:4) “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; . . . For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil,

full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”—James 3:2-10

These texts and others emphasize that the tongue has tremendous influence. One cannot overestimate the power of words, either for good or evil. Nearly all the activities of the human race are initiated and brought to fruition through words, in one form or another. Additionally, through words which have been written in the Bible, God has revealed to us his great plan of the ages.

Through words, Satan has deceived men concerning the character of God. By words those who have learned to know something of the length, breadth, height, and depth of God’s character have endeavored to demonstrate their devotion to him. Using words, Satan has taught error concerning the great fundamental truths taught in the Holy Scriptures. Through words also, those who have dedicated themselves to knowing and doing God’s will have endeavored to enlighten others concerning the glories of the coming kingdom, when God’s will shall be done as fully in earth as it is in heaven.—Matt. 6:10

According to the pages of history, the tongue has sent many persons to their death, stirring in men the most wrathful passions to which humanity is subject. Conversely, the tongue has also moved men to achieve the highest and loftiest sentiments and ideals of which they are capable. Words have been used to encourage others to consecrate themselves to God, in order to serve him, desiring ever to know and to do his will.

THE TONGUE NOT FULLY TAMEABLE

As children of God, we should constantly pray and daily determine to make our words a blessing to all, and an influence for good. Yet, as quoted in the foregoing, the Apostle James says that man will always make mistakes with his tongue, unless he is a perfect man. Since none of us is perfect, it is important for us to realize our own limitations with regard to the use of this most influential part of our being.

James also says we can put a rudder on a ship and steer it, or put a bit in a horse's mouth and control that strong animal. To illustrate this in our day, by having a steering wheel on an automobile, we may, for example, easily direct it to an ecclesia meeting or a convention. Thus, whether it be steering a ship, controlling a horse, or driving an automobile, man encounters scarcely any trouble at all. However, when it comes to controlling the tongue, that is very different. "The tongue can no man tame," James states emphatically.

This does not mean that since we cannot control the tongue there is no use in trying. Rather, James' argument is that the tongue can be a wonderful servant, but that it only gives utterance, for good or for evil, based on the thoughts of its master. Thus, we are the masters of our tongues, even though, because of imperfection, we cannot fully control and steer them toward good.

"OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART"

Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (Matt. 12:34; Luke 6:45) This does not literally apply in every instance, because there are slips of the tongue which certainly do not

come from the depths of our hearts. Nevertheless, for the most part, we talk about the things with which our hearts are filled—things that are uppermost in our thoughts. Therefore, it is proper to say that our words indicate what is in our minds, and over a period of time, our heart condition.

As children, a doctor might have said to us, “Let me see your tongue.” It seemed he could determine certain things about our general condition of health by doing so. How similar it is along spiritual lines. Our tongues give an indication as to whether our heart and overall spiritual health are good or poor. As children of the Lord we want to be spiritually healthy. The Scripture says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23) One of the important “issues of life” is the proper control and use of our tongue, and here we are admonished that we have a work to do in this regard, by diligently keeping our heart in a proper condition.

GOD’S WORD PROSPERS

According to Isaiah 55:11, God sends forth his Word to “accomplish that which” he pleases, and which “shall prosper” in us if we permit it to regulate our thoughts and lives. The Word which “goeth forth out of” his mouth is the sacred Scriptures. Paul said, “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work. (II Tim. 3:16,17, *Revised Version*) God’s Word, however, can “prosper” and make us “complete,” only if we keep our hearts

with all diligence. Only by so doing will we be able to use this servant that the Lord has given us—his precious Word—for “every good work.”

The Word of God that will prosper in us, if we permit it to control us, has both a letter and a spirit. It is true that some know the letter of the Scriptures, and let us thank the Lord that we know some of the letter of the Word. However, it is far more important that we know both the spirit and the letter of God’s Word. We are to serve God “in newness of the spirit,” and not merely “in oldness of the letter.”—Rom. 7:6

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Paul also admonishes us, “Be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18) It is by the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit that we let his thoughts fill our hearts so that we can keep them with all diligence. By so doing, the fountain from whence come our words will be sweet. Continuing his discussion of the tongue, James writes further, “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.”—James 3:11-13

If our hearts are filled with the Spirit; if they are overflowing with the love of God; if they prize the fact that the Lord has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light; if they are filled with an appreciation of the heavenly calling; and if they are filled with thanksgiving for God’s tender love and

care as manifested in the providences of our lives—then we will give utterance to such heart motivations, because “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

On the other hand, if we do not do this, our hearts might soon become corrupt and selfish. If they are not filled with the Spirit, they will be filled with something else. They may even be filled with those things which are not lovely—which emanate from the spirit of our fallen flesh or from the world. If our heart is filled with these other things, the tongue will, likewise, give evidence of such thoughts.

A SERVANT

The tongue is a servant. The question is, whom is it serving? It is possible that at times, if we permit it, if we are slack, and if we do not keep our heart with all diligence, it might serve the world, the flesh, or even our great Adversary, the Devil. The tongue can also serve the New Creature. (II Cor. 5:17) The New Creature desires to please God, and to know his will so that it can more properly serve him. How important it is, then, that our tongue be a servant of the New Creature.

The Scriptures also admonish us, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” (Ps. 141:3) The psalmist here suggests a watchfulness before one speaks. If we set the watch before the words reach our lips, it will most assuredly help us in our endeavor to use the tongue as a proper servant.

A LIFELONG BATTLE

The tongue will often demonstrate that we are imperfect. Indeed, the mind, which in many ways

influences our words, is a continual battleground. Due to our fallen condition, we will lose battles in the mind from time to time. Such losses will, no doubt, manifest themselves in less than wholesome and uplifting words or actions. In one extreme example from the Scriptures, we recall the instance when “the devil . . . put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray” Jesus. (John 13:2) Satan planted a thought into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. Judas’ mind and heart failed to fight against it, and as a result he suffered great loss. The important thing for us to keep in mind is that if Satan could put it into the heart of Judas to commit such an act, he can also put evil thoughts into our hearts. That is why we must fight, using the entire armor of God, against this wily and dangerous foe.—Eph. 6:11-18

Satan has various methods, and the Bible says “we are not ignorant of his devices.” (II Cor. 2:11) The Devil can put it into the hearts of the brethren to desire to judge one another. At first this seems strange. We know that the world does not like us, and that, similarly, the Devil is our greatest enemy. On the other hand, we know our brethren are those who have been called out of darkness into the light. (I Pet. 2:9) We understand that our brethren have the same desire to serve the Lord as we do. They may not all serve in exactly the same way, nor be of the same temperament. Nevertheless, they are fully consecrated and devoted to serving God, and doubtless the most blessed hours we have ever spent have been in fellowship with those who enjoy “like precious faith.” (II Pet. 1:1) Even so, how often Satan has successfully tempted us to use our tongues as instruments of criticism of our brethren.

We know that Satan tried to win the battle with our Lord Jesus when he tempted him in the wilderness. (Matt. 4:1-11) Victory on the part of the Lord was gained simply by saying, “It is written”—quickly, tersely, to the point. Thus, when such thoughts come into our minds, particularly as we may harbor criticism toward our brethren, let us reject them, as Jesus did, with “It is written.” “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”—Matt. 7:1,2

LOOK FOR THE GOOD

It is interesting to think of some of the things that man finds very difficult to achieve. If you look through a magnifying glass at a pencil that has just been sharpened, it still looks blunt. A needle appears to the naked eye to be extremely sharp, but here again, through a magnifying glass it, too, may be blunt and rough-edged. By contrast, think of the thorns of a rose bush. Even under magnification, it is remarkable how sharp and how precise they are in their formation. The difference, of course, is in the maker. While God can form and create all things perfectly, we cannot even put a perfect point on a needle.

We mention the above examples to show that, if we are looking for flaws and imperfections in one another, we will most certainly find them, just as a magnifying glass will show the bluntness and jagged edges of a pencil point or a needle. The Scripture says, “He that hath a froward heart findeth no good.” (Prov. 17:20) Although not a Scripture, someone has also wisely said, “You can never find the straight if

you are looking for the crooked.” If our hearts are hindered from seeing the good, pure and beautiful character qualities of our consecrated brethren, we will be constantly vulnerable to the evil suggestions of the Adversary. Most importantly, we will lose the battle if we do not root out of our heart those things which we should not permit to reside therein.

The Scriptures tell us that “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov. 4:18) We should rejoice in the privilege we have of discussing with one another the light of present truth, and thereby grow in grace and in knowledge. In doing so, however, we should always look at each other as New Creatures. If we view each other in this manner, as the Lord does, we will not see the flawed, stumbling, imperfect human ways with which each one of us is born.

DEEDS VERSUS WORDS

If Satan put it into our minds to steal from our brother and we succumbed, it would not seriously harm him, because no matter what we stole, it could be replaced. If the Devil should induce us to burn down someone’s home, it could be repaired or rebuilt. However, when it comes to hearsay, rumors, hints, suggestions, gossip—which are all words—evil results from these are very difficult to rectify, or erase from the mind. If we do these things it is an alarming indication that we are losing the battle which takes place in the mind. “He that soweth discord among brethren,” the Bible states, “doth the LORD hate.”—Prov. 6:16,19

Although it might appear that more damage could be done by evil deeds than by evil words, it is not

so. A blow might break or bruise the flesh, while a word might break or bruise the heart. The way we are constituted, flesh wounds heal easily, while heart wounds sometimes bleed a long time, and often leave a scar. Let us think soberly concerning these things.

A BLESSING

It is a blessing that we have the ability to talk with others, especially our brethren. The Lord is wise, however, in telling us about what we should not talk, and also about what we can talk. “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.” “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.”— Lev. 19:16; Prov. 16:28

By contrast, we read: “My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.” “Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.” “All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.”—Ps. 71:24; 105:2; 145:10-13

This is the use to which our tongues are to be employed. This is to what they have been dedicated, and this is the way in which we have the privilege of exercising them. The Lord has endowed us with the faculty of speech. It is a wonderful privilege to use that faculty in harmony with his will.

“THE USE OF EDIFYING”

The Heavenly Father has saved us by grace through faith, and has given us of his Holy Spirit. (Eph. 2:8,13,18) He has kept us from falling, and asked us to love one another and manifest that love in our attitudes toward one another. (Jude 24; John 13:34,35) Therefore, let us keep in mind what James was endeavoring to tell us—that the only sure way of controlling the tongue is by keeping our hearts pure and filled with the desire to talk about the mighty acts of God.

Our conversation will thus “be good to the use of edifying.” Our words will “minister grace unto the hearers.” (Eph. 4:29) Let us each, therefore, keep our heart with all diligence, knowing that out of it will flow the words of our mouth. Citing again the words of our opening text, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” May God give us the tongue of a consecrated person, that we may know how to speak words of encouragement and comfort. “A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!” “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”—Prov. 15:23; 25:11 ■

*Come, thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart a song to raise,
Streams of favor, never ceasing,
Call for notes of heartfelt praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet
Grace to gratitude doth move.
Praise thy grace, I glory in it!
Grace so full of matchless love.
—Hymns of Dawn*

“He Has Given Us”

“He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.”

—II Peter 1:4, New International Version

THE PROMISES OF GOD

play a very prominent role in our Christian life. They are so powerful that in our text the apostle indicates that by yielding to their blessed effects we will attain the divine nature. Even at this present hour, we are being prepared and made ready for exaltation, if faithful unto death, to the highest plane of existence in God’s universe. In Hebrews 4:1, the Apostle Paul urges us to be on guard so that we do not “come short” of any of the promises which the Lord has made on our behalf. Practically all of God’s promises have conditions attached to them, and failure to comply with these is what Paul describes as “coming short.” It is our faithful compliance with the conditions attached to God’s promises which will qualify us to be partakers of the divine nature and to have an abundant entrance “into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:11

God’s promises are of value to us only in proportion to our faith in them, and as we demonstrate that faith by obeying his precepts. God is pleased

when his people actually believe what he has promised. Concerning Abraham, we read that he “staggered not at the promise of God; . . . but was strong in faith.” Being persuaded by his belief that God was able to perform that which he had promised, and by demonstration of his conviction through obedience, Abraham’s faith was “imputed to him for righteousness.”—Rom. 4:20-22

We too, are justified, or made righteous, in the sight of God by our faith in his promises, particularly those which give assurance that we have been “redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ,” from our sinful condition inherited from Father Adam. (I Pet. 1:18,19) Thus Paul says, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5:1) This must be a living, working faith, which does not waver at the promises of God, but compels us to take a course in life consistent with our professions of faith.

Many and varied are the promises which assure us of our acceptance with God, through Christ. An abiding faith in these promises is essential if we are to be made partakers of the divine nature. We know that by birth we are sinners, as we read in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.” (*New American Standard Bible*) Every day we are in close contact with our imperfections. In addition, there are those around us who know about them and may not hesitate to keep us reminded of them. Our great adversary, the Devil, also knows our weaknesses and uses them to discourage us. (I Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11-13) Indeed, he hopes that we will give up running “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling.”

(Phil. 3:14) If, however, our confidence in the promises remains firm, we will not fear, for God has said, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.”—Isa. 54:17

The phrase, “their righteousness is of me,” is a blessed assurance! If we can grasp the full meaning of this promise, we will realize that even with our imperfections we stand justified before God, and that there is no condemnation from him. A proper recognition of this fact should keep us humble, ever remembering that our own “righteous acts are like filthy rags.” (Isa. 64:6, *NIV*) We must also realize that the pure, white “robe of righteousness” which God sees as we stand before him is not our own, but Christ’s righteousness. (Isa. 61:10) This is confirmed by Paul in his letter to Titus, where he writes: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of the regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”—Tit. 3:5,6

This does not mean that we can be careless about our imperfections. We must be continually on guard so that the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of the Lord is allowed to accomplish the needed work within us. There must be a sincere desire for righteousness on our part, in spite of our inability to measure up fully to the standard of perfection held before us. However, if we are sincere in our efforts, we should not be discouraged, for the promise is: “Blessed is he whose transgression is

forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”—Ps. 32:1,2

Even the grace of God which grants us forgiveness and provides our standing of righteousness before him is not unconditional. We must believe, and this is not merely a mental realization of the truth pertaining to the death and resurrection of Jesus, but a wholehearted acceptance of him as our Savior, which manifests itself in a full surrender and consecration to do God’s will. (Rom. 6:11-19) We then, must actually walk in Christ’s footsteps, guided by the instructions of the Scriptures. John wrote: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, . . . the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin.”—I John 1:7

“HE IS FAITHFUL”

It has been said that much of the distress of today’s troubled and deteriorating world is caused by broken promises. Human promises are not always intentionally broken, but circumstances arise which make it impossible to fulfill them. Man is not the master of his own destiny. He cannot foresee the future, nor can he judge even his present ability accurately. As a result, he often finds it impossible to do what he has promised. This is not true with God.

Paul writes concerning God that “he is faithful that promised.” (Heb. 10:23) We can depend upon the integrity of God. “I change not,” he says, and with him there “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17) There is no need for God to change his mind. He can foresee

every circumstance which may arise, and is fully able to meet it. God is faithful to his promises, and always implements them in keeping with the richness of his grace and in harmony with his eternal purposes.

Have we ever been disappointed in our family, friends, neighbors, associates, or coworkers in the work place? Many of us, perhaps, have had experiences along this line. At times we may even become disappointed in some of our brethren in Christ—our spiritual family. These experiences might tend to be discouraging, but God permits them for a purpose. He wants us to lean more fully upon him rather than trusting in the will of the flesh. It is on these occasions, especially, that we should turn to God, and do so with full assurance that “he is faithful that promised.”

“THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE”

Paul speaks of those “who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Heb. 6:12) Thus, in order to claim the promises for our very own we must demonstrate an active faith in them, and patiently endure whatever trials the Lord may see we need in order that our worthiness of the promises might be manifested. The fulfillment of many of God’s promises belongs in the present life, while others apply to our future inheritance beyond the veil. When the apostle speaks of those who “inherit the promises” he apparently has in mind both our present and our future inheritance.

We may properly ask: have the promises themselves really become ours, or do we just read them in an impersonal manner as though they do not

actually apply to us? Our answer is important, because it is not until we are able to see in the promises of God a personal assurance of his blessing, that they become truly effective in molding our lives into his likeness. Only by claiming and making them our own can these promises prepare us to become partakers of the divine nature.

CLEANSE OURSELVES AND FOLLOW JESUS

Paul admonishes us that if we have “these promises” we should “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” and to then perfect “holiness in the fear of God.” (II Cor. 7:1) This is a similar thought to that expressed by the Apostle John when he wrote, “every man that hath this hope”—the hope based upon the promises of God—“purifieth himself.” (I John 3:3) We might reverse this thought and say that the evidence of the possession of the promises, and of having truly inherited them, will be a purification of character. The conditions attached to the promises, enumerated by Peter in the verses following our opening text, guarantee that this will be the case. —II Pet. 1:5-11

One of the fundamental needs of every consecrated believer is to be guided in the right way. We all have anxious thoughts from time to time as to what the will of the Lord is for us under certain circumstances. To choose the right way is often difficult to determine. We want to believe, to do, and to be exactly what the Lord would wish, and to keep ourselves in a “cleansed” condition of character. However, while we should be sincere in always searching out the right way, let us remember the additional promise that the Lord will shed light

upon our pathway, and that we need not walk in darkness. Jesus said, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”—John 8:12

We note the important condition attached to this promise—“He that followeth me.” This is a crucial test, for we must be prepared to follow Jesus. The pathway he took was a difficult one. It was a way of sacrifice and suffering which ended in a cruel death on the cross. He has invited us to “take up [our] cross daily,” and follow him. (Luke 9:23) A consecration which is pleasing to God involves the acceptance of this invitation, and to carry it out is a lifetime task. However, there is no other condition upon which we may expect to be given the “light of life” to guide our steps in ways pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

There are few circumstances in the Christian life in which the example of Jesus will not indicate the course we should take. However, to follow in his steps will not always be the easy way. Our fleshly mind will reason that we should choose a way that is less unpleasant, and more conducive to our well-being along earthly lines. There may be times when such a choice would be pleasing to the Lord, but if he indicates his will to be otherwise, there should be no hesitancy in choosing the more difficult way. In doing this we will be following in the Master’s footsteps, and will be assured that we are walking in the light. Then we can claim the precious promise: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.”—Ps. 32:8

THE FATHER LOVES

At times, the pathway in which the Lord guides us will seem hazardous. We may find it lined with enemies seeking to injure us. We do not need to fear, regardless of how weak we may appear to be in the face of those who oppose us. Peter wrote: "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (I Pet. 3:13) The "good" which we endeavor to follow is the will of God—namely, that we take up our cross and walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Jesus did nothing but good, and no harm came to him spiritually. By this we mean that while it is true that he was persecuted, his name was cast out as evil, he was falsely accused, given a mock trial, sentenced to death, and crucified, no harm ever came to him as a New Creature. (Isa. 53:3-5,10-12; Heb. 12:2) These experiences were permitted by his Father for his good, to test his worthiness, and to train him for the high office he was to occupy in God's arrangement for the blessing of all the families of the earth. The same will be true with us if we, like him, follow "that which is good." Our pathway will not be an easy, effortless one. Enemies will try to oppose our progress. We will experience weariness and pain, but as New Creatures in Christ Jesus we will not be harmed. (II Cor. 5:17) Of this we can be certain, for the Lord has promised it. As the Apostle Paul wrote: "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil."—II Thess. 3:3

To realize that those experiences in life which perplex and hurt are not evidences that the Lord has deserted us, but is permitting them for our good, helps us to bear up under trial. (Rom. 8:28;

I Cor. 10:13) Even so, however, we feel our weakness. Our courage will waver at times, and we need to be on guard that we do not become “wearied and faint” in our minds. (Heb. 12:3) Indeed, if we were left to fight our battles alone, we would be certain to fail. The Father’s love will not permit this, for once again he has promised: “Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.”—Ps. 31:24

Surely then, we need the courage which the promises of God give to us. Peter writes that we should “think it not strange” when fiery trials are upon us. (I Pet. 4:12) It is at such times that we need to recall the reassuring promises of God: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire [of trials], thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”—Isa. 43:2

HOLD STEADFAST TO THE END

No one enjoys trouble. The thought of a carefree life without problems, doubts, and trials is alluring to the flesh. Yet, even those in the world never fully attain to such a life. We know that being a Christian, and sacrificing time and strength and means as we lay down our life in the service of the Lord, results in additional trials. Therefore, at times when the burden seems particularly heavy, we might be inclined to wonder whether or not it is worthwhile. It is then that the Lord reminds us of the glorious inheritance which will be ours if we continue faithful. We will be “made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto

the end.” (Heb. 3:14) To be a “partaker of Christ” means to live and reign with him—to share his glory, and be a partaker with him of the divine nature. Jesus said, “Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.” “Because I live, ye shall live also.”—Mark 8:35; John 14:19

In the writings of the apostles, we are given many precious promises, all of which are provided to help us maintain our steadfastness “unto the end.” A sampling of these is found in the following texts: “Being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.” “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—Tit. 3:7; II Tim. 2:11; Col. 3:4; I John 3:2

OUR FUTURE WORK

Being coworkers with the Lord now is a great honor. We have a peace and joy of mind and heart which the world can neither give nor take away. There is, however, a still greater work awaiting us if we continue faithful, even unto death. That future work will also be in association with Christ, reigning with him as kings and priests to bless all the families of the earth. (Rev. 20:6; Acts 3:25) We are favored now to have heard the call of God to follow in the Master’s footsteps, and have received the assurance that if we present our bodies a living sacrifice the Lord will accept us and give us grace

sufficient for our every time of need. (Heb. 4:16) God's promises to us, however, go far beyond the present: "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will . . . give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves . . . , and their pastures shall be in all high places."—Isa. 49:8,9

Let us never have any doubts about the keeping power of God, for he has promised never to leave us, nor forsake us. (Heb. 13:5) His is an abiding love and care for us, even as it was for Jesus, who said, "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." (John 16:27) One reason the Father loves us is that he purposes to use us together with Jesus in his kingdom. It is for this glorious future reign that the Father is preparing us, if we continue faithful to him.

It is in keeping with this that the glorified Jesus promised: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—Rev. 2:26; 3:21

"THAT THROUGH THEM"

It is "through" these many promises of God that we are made partakers of the divine nature. It is through their encouragement, their authority, their inspirational power in our lives, and our own

faithfulness to all the conditions attached to them, that we will attain this hope. As we press on in our walk with the Lord, we continually need the strength of which these promises assure us. There is no possible circumstance in our Christian experience in which God has not promised to be with us, and to supply our need. “The LORD . . . forsaketh not his saints.”—Ps. 37:28

Although we have the many promises of God provided to us, it is essential to remember the conditions pertaining thereto. This is true even when we seek the throne of grace to claim the promises. It is only if we “abide” in Christ, and if his words “abide” in us, that we have the privilege of asking for what we need as New Creatures, in order that we may be directed and nourished as we journey on in the narrow way of sacrifice. (John 14:13; 15:7) For those striving to comply with these conditions, how blessed are the words: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, . . . Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised.)”—Heb. 10:19-23

ADD TO YOUR FAITH

Our faith rests upon the promises of God, and if our faith is to be strong and to increase, we will need always to be on the alert to meet the conditions of the promises. This will result in what Peter describes as adding to our faith the qualities of

moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. If these things are in us, and increasing, Peter explains, we will not be “useless nor unfruitful” in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. If we do these things, we will “never stumble,” and an “entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied” to us.—II Pet. 1:5-11, *New American Standard Bible*

Verse 5 of the above passage states that we must use “all diligence” in the adding of these various character qualities to our faith. It will not suffice to be halfhearted or part-time runners for the prize. We will not be able to divide our interests between the things of God and the things of the world, nor between the interests of the New Creature and the interests of the flesh. Paul wrote, “This one thing I do.” (Phil. 3:13) This is the only approach to the Christian life which will result in victory. It is the only attitude of heart in which to be if the Lord is to make good his promises to us. We cannot afford to be unduly concerned about even our temporal needs. The Lord knows about these, and promised: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matt. 6:33

What a blessed prospect is assured to us by the Heavenly Father’s wonderful promises. Truly the Lord has given us “good doctrine,” so that we “forsake . . . not” his law. (Prov. 4:2) Let us yield ourselves to its transforming influence, so that we are made ready for that blessed entrance into the kingdom, where “we shall be like him,” and “see him as he is.”—I John 3:2 ■

Danger in Spiritual Pride

“Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

—I Peter 5:5

Preface: This month marks the one-hundred-year anniversary of the death of Brother Charles T. Russell, a “faithful and wise servant,” who was used by the Lord to provide “meat in due season” to the household of faith. (Matt. 24:45) One of his final writings, published just one month prior to his death, was an article concerning the dangers of spiritual pride. (R5955) Its sobering and heart-searching words are of great importance to the Lord’s consecrated people, and are just as applicable today as when they were written a century ago. In remembrance of Brother Russell’s faithful ministry, as well as of this subject’s vital significance, we are pleased to republish these words of wise counsel. We have had to abridge the article for space, but trust that nothing has been lost of meaning and force of his admonitions. May they find a lodging place in the forefront of our mind and heart.

PRIDE IN ANY form in God's human creatures is a dangerous thing. The proverb is well attested, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov. 16:18) Surely, very few people have anything of which they might justly be proud. Some who hold their heads high with the pride of a haughty spirit, as though they were especially created out of some preferable "dust of the earth," have really nothing to boast of as to ancestry. A very few generations back are generally sufficient to silence such boasting.

It is also not wise to boast of riches, lest thereby someone ask how the riches were accumulated and by whom, and whether they were honestly obtained. Pride of education is not appropriate, either, for education in general signifies the learning of what other people have found out or have written as history. Those who would boast of great education have need of humility, lest it be found that the very thing that they are boasting about has been disproven by later researches. Scientific books of the past will not pass muster today, nor their theories stand in the light of present knowledge. Thus, if it were right for one to boast of knowledge, he would need to be very careful to keep up to date.

Pride of one's beauty or physical appearance is scarcely to be excused. The beauty of form and feature came by heredity, and the parent, rather than the child, might have some reason for pride. Pride as respects clothing and adornments is also foolish. The maker of the fabrics or the ornaments might have some reason for pride in their handiwork, but surely the wearer does not. He is merely appropriating to himself the skill and labor of others.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE WORST OF ALL

The pride which is merely foolish or somewhat hypocritical in this present world becomes a very serious matter indeed if it invades the heart and the life of the child of God. Why do we make such a difference? Why say that spiritual pride would be so very dangerous in one of the Lord's saints, whereas it would be little more than foolishness in the world? The difference is that these are God's special ambassadors in the world, who must become copies of God's dear Son if they would ever attain to the glory, honor and immortality to which they have been invited by the Lord.—II Cor. 5:20; Rom. 2:7

When they gave themselves entirely to the Lord in consecration and were justified from sin through the imputation of the Redeemer's sacrifice, and were thus introduced into the family of God and begotten of the Holy Spirit, it meant a great change for these. (Rom. 5:1-11; 12:1,2) Old things passed away, and all things became new. (II Cor. 5:17) These, and these alone, are on trial during this Gospel Age for eternal life or death. Of all their temptations and beguilements, the sin of spiritual pride is probably one of the most dangerous of all. In proportion as it enters in, the Spirit of the Lord departs, and the spiritual health of the individual declines. This spiritual sickness, unless curbed, would lead eventually to Second Death, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."—James 4:6

The Apostle Peter evidently had this besetting danger of spiritual pride in mind when he wrote, using nearly identical language as James, the words of our opening text. Then, in the verse following, he added: "Humble yourselves therefore under the

mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” (I Pet. 5:6) Likewise, the Master taught: “Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”—Matt. 23:12

A SYMPTOM OF THIS SOUL-SICKNESS

How may we know spiritual pride? One of the most sobering things in this connection is that those who have spiritual pride very rarely are aware of it. They sometimes have forms of godliness, which not only may deceive others, but also deceive themselves, hindering them from seeing the spiritual pride which is working and which others may more readily see.

If we feel that our attendance at meetings, our reading and studying daily of the Scriptures, our distribution of many tracts, or our circulation of so many books, are matters to be boasted of, then we must take care! Such a disposition to boast is an indication that we would be in danger of catching spiritual pride. These are all good, laudable, and proper activities. We should feel an appropriate degree of thankfulness that we find ourselves able and willing to do things so reasonable, proper, and in harmony with the divine will. However, any disposition to boast of the matter should lead us to a careful scrutiny of thought, and of the motives lying behind these activities in the Lord’s service.

We are not meaning to say that it would be improper to give a testimony in which these activities might be brought forward as an encouragement to others, or as a humble witness that we love the Lord and are anxious to serve him. What we are

cautioning against is a spirit, or disposition, to boast of anything that we might be or do as the Lord's children. Indeed, we have nothing whereof to boast. If we gave all of our goods to feed the spiritually poor, all our time to circulating the Gospel message, and all of our energy to the honoring of the Lord's name, we should feel that, having "done all those things, . . . We are unprofitable servants. (Luke 17:10) That is, we merely found an opportunity of showing a little of the devotion of our hearts in acknowledgment of the numberless blessings we have received at the Lord's hand.

STILL FURTHER SYMPTOMS

Another form of the disease of spiritual pride manifests itself in an overcritical attitude of mind. One may attend a testimony meeting, or a study, and feel that he hears no good testimony but his own, or hears no proper answer except his own to any of the questions of a study. One may even feel that the elder chairing the meeting does not really know how to do so. These should all be considered dangerous symptoms of spiritual pride.

This is not to say that these things might not possibly occur. Under such circumstances, it would be proper for us to give attention, and be well informed, that we would see quickly any unscriptural proceeding, or any instance of very poor judgment that would be a hindrance to the effectiveness of the meetings. It would be proper, too, if ever we saw that the best interests of the class were not being served, and if, after waiting patiently for a while, we found that they were not likely to be corrected, to call attention to the matter in a meek and quiet

spirit, and in the most effective and least demonstrative way. In all such cases, we are to remember: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory,” but all things should be done to the glory of God.—Phil. 2:3

Here too we need to be careful, lest we begin thinking that everything which harmonizes with our ideas is to the glory of God, and that whatever does not harmonize with our viewpoints could not be pleasing to him. Wisely the apostle wrote: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools.” (Eph. 5:15) We do well to note the meaning of this word “circumspectly”—that it signifies close scrutiny on every hand, especially as respects thoughts, motives, intentions.

“BE NOT MANY OF YOU TEACHERS”

The Apostle James wrote, “Do not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive a severer judgment.” (James 3:1, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) As we have pointed out, all of the Lord’s people are especially susceptible along the line of spiritual pride. However, there seems to be a special danger surrounding all who become in any manner identified as “teachers” in the promulgation and ministry of the Truth.

It is a special privilege, indeed, to tell out the message of God’s grace to all who have a hearing ear. How thankful we are that this is not, as it was once supposed, the exclusive privilege of a designated clergy class. The Lord declares that all who are his consecrated people and who receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit have, through it, the anointing to “preach good tidings unto the meek,” and to “bind

up the brokenhearted.” (Isa. 61:1) We are glad of this privilege, which includes even our private conversations with family, neighbors, and friends. What an honor it is to be God’s ambassadors, and in his name to tell of the coming kingdom. What a joy is ours to speak of the great provision God has already made through the death of Jesus, and of how the kings and priests of his kingdom are now being called out of the world, experiencing a change of nature in preparation for their future work.

Old as the message is, it is new and wonderful, if rightly presented, so as to awaken astonishment in the honest-hearted who hear. They wonder, perhaps, how this ordinary man or woman ever came to understand and to so beautifully portray these wonderful things. They may give us a hint of their surprise. Then, however, comes a danger-moment for developing a symptom of the disease of spiritual pride. With just a little swing of the mind, we may feel self-honor that we know about such things when the great mass of mankind has not the remotest conception of them, and that even most of the most talented ministers of the Word of God are ignorant respecting these truths.

The proper attitude, as all will agree, is that the Lord’s people should feel greatly humbled, instead of exalted and heady, in respect to the opportunities for telling the Truth to others. We should feel our unworthiness. We should realize that the message is not ours—that we have merely heard of it ourselves—that it is really God’s plan, and we are honored as his servants to tell it out. If, however, we allow an impression to be given that it is by any wisdom or skill on our part that the beauty of the message is

seen, then to that extent we are taking glory to ourselves which belongs to the Lord. In this, we would be doing injury to ourselves proportionately by failing to demonstrate our worthiness to be used by the Lord in the present and in the future. Rather, the wonderful opportunity of speaking as ambassadors for the Lord, to tell of his greatness and plan, should humble us with the thought that he has privileged us to be used in communicating this most wonderful message.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THIS SIN

The Bible gives many illustrations of this sin, but we choose a most conspicuous one. Moses was a holy man of old, beloved of the Lord, noble, self-sacrificing, and a prophet. He served God and his people faithfully and wonderfully for forty years. Yet, Moses fell victim to the sin of self-assurance—a form of spiritual pride. Strangest of all, he is noted in the Bible at the beginning of his career as having been “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”—Num. 12:3

Moses, at the beginning of his experience as a servant of the Lord was very meek and humble. However, near the conclusion of his life, he was hindered from entering the promised land as a punishment for demonstrating spiritual pride, when he should have given the Lord the glory. We recall the circumstances. Moses, as the Lord’s special servant, had led Israel out of Egypt across the Red Sea into the wilderness, in route to Canaan. He performed, by God’s direction, several miracles on the journey. One of them was the smiting of the rock when the people were thirsting for water. God

directed him to strike the rock with his rod, and from it flowed an abundant stream of water for the refreshment of the people.—Exod. 17:1-6

According to the Scriptures, that rock was a picture of Christ. (I Cor. 10:4) It was by God's arrangement that this "Rock of Ages" was smitten. By this smitten rock, the water of life would eventually flow from Jesus to all of Adam's race. However, the first to benefit from this are those who would become Israelites indeed. They would come out of symbolic Egypt—out of the world, out of sin, out of the kingdom of the Adversary—into obedience and fellowship with the Lord.

Nearly forty years after the smiting of the rock by Moses, during which Israel had journeyed in the wilderness, waiting for the time to come that they might be permitted to enter Canaan, they once again came to a place barren and devoid of water. The account of this experience is recorded in Numbers 20:1-12. The people cried to Moses. He, in turn, went to the Lord on their behalf as to what should be done. The Lord's answer was that Moses should speak to the rock, which previously he had smitten, and that water would come forth. During the forty years in which Moses had dealt with the Israelites as a father with his children, he had likely gained a great deal of self-assurance. Having passed through such experiences, it would seem hardly possible that Moses could still be the meekest man in all the earth.

Neglecting the command of the Lord, Moses went to the rock and, rather than speak to it as God had commanded, smote it, not once, but twice, shouting to the people: "Ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (vs. 10) In his weakness, and in

his frustration with the people, Moses took the glory of this miracle to himself instead of ascribing it entirely to the Lord. Soon he realized the great mistake he had made. Yet, the Lord on this account denied him the privilege of going into the land of Canaan, granting him instead merely the opportunity of seeing it from across the River Jordan, and burying him there.

We might wonder whether the punishment laid upon Moses was too harsh, but that decision rested in the all-wise hands of the Lord. More importantly to us, from this illustration it is clear that spiritual pride and self-assurance are very displeasing in the sight of God. Indeed, we cannot draw any other conclusion from this great lesson, written for our admonition.

A WORD OF CONSOLATION

If we feel that we have done much worse than Moses—been more self-assertive, much less careful to honor the Lord, or have manifested much more spiritual pride—for our comfort let us notice that the punishment of Moses was severe because it was part of a type. The first smiting of the rock typified the crucifixion of our Lord. The unauthorized double-smiting of the rock in the second case typified the crucifying of “the Son of God afresh,” and putting him “to an open shame,” as described by Paul in Hebrews 6:6. The latter smiting of the rock represented public, open repudiation of Jesus and the merit of his shed blood, and the preventing of Moses from crossing Jordan into Canaan typified the cutting off in Second Death those who willfully deny the blood which bought them. Because this is a

picture, we are not to think that Moses will never come into “Canaan” or receive the promises of God. Neither has Moses died the Second Death, but this was merely illustrated and shown in his experiences.

We should not think, either, that brethren who may have manifested spiritual pride and done things in their own name, rather than in the name of the Lord, have thereby committed the sin unto death. We are, however, to realize that a terrible danger goes with spiritual pride, and that, if persisted in, without reform, it would surely put such a one in jeopardy of Second Death. Realizing this, how sober-minded and careful we should be, not only in the eradication of every symptom of it we might find in ourselves, but also in being watchful lest we should spread such a contagion to others in the household of faith.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE—PREVENTION AND CURE

We have already intimated the difficulty in connection with the treatment of this disease when once it gets hold. One of the chief features of the difficulty seems to be that the disease has a destroying effect upon the conscience. The mind becomes more or less insensitive to the simple principles of the Golden Rule, and even the still higher law of our Lord’s “new commandment” to love the brethren. (John 13:34,35) The ignoring of these principles might be manifested in attempts to force our own will on the ecclesia, whether it be in the election of its servants, the ordering of its meetings, or in some other way.

Concerning this important arrangement, decision-making authority resides with the ecclesia. If and

when an elder or other member of the class attempts to twist or turn or alter this, he is not doing to others as he would desire to have done to him. He has a right, as one member of the ecclesia, to his own opinion of the Lord's will on any matter. He has the right to express his judgment. He has no right, however, to hinder others from the expression of their judgment. Every such interference is a violation of the Golden Rule as well as of the law of love. It is even a violation of the First Commandment—to love and honor God—for it is setting aside the divine arrangement provided for such matters.

Where an elder or any other member of the ecclesia persists along such lines, in defiance of Scriptural principles, by coercing or cajoling the ecclesia to the doing of things his way, the effect is the perversion of his own mind. His conscience becomes clouded and blind to righteousness. Whoever so violates his conscience repeatedly, by ignoring the principles of right and wrong conduct clearly set out in the Scriptures, is undermining and severely weakening his standing before the Lord.

Conscience is the scale by which we weigh the various things presented to our judgment to ascertain right or wrong, justice or injustice, truth or falsehood. Depending on the individual, this scale may be a very coarse one or a very fine one. The Christian, especially if he has been long in the school of Christ, should have a very sensitive conscience. From the Word of God, he should be able to draw the weights by which he would balance all the questions of the affairs of life, and determine with great accuracy that which is right or wrong, and what would be pleasing or displeasing to the Lord.

The impairment of that scale is the great danger in every sin, and it seems to be especially so in respect to the sin of spiritual pride. Nothing much can be done in proper service to the Lord until the scale be rectified.

How important it should feel to all of the Lord's people to keep their consciences thoroughly just. How unwilling we should be to ever take advantage of one of our brethren, or of anybody, either in business, in personal matters, or in ecclesia decisions. As a child of God, the thought of the slightest infraction of justice on our part should ring the loudest bells of alarm in our heart and mind. We should ask, "Could it be that I who have enlisted in this cause of justice should be found sympathetic with injustice? Could it be that I could close my eyes to anything in my own conduct in the nature of injustice? Can it be that I am violating my own conscience and shall be liable for all the consequences?"

To rectify such a wrong course would mean the reestablishment of the principles of justice in our hearts and minds with a carefulness proportionate to the results involved—life or death everlasting. As justice shall begin to be reestablished in our minds, it will begin to once again regulate our words and acts. Gradually, we will begin to see how grossly we had violated this principle, and how spiritual pride had almost destroyed our future prospects in the kingdom. To us would surely come hearty repentance and thorough resolutions for the future.

NECESSITY FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

How shall we safeguard ourselves against spiritual pride, knowing as we do its insidious character

and evil influence? How may we know that we are keeping ourselves in the love of God and not straying in a direction toward spiritual pride?

Prayer seems to be vital in this regard. As the Lord's consecrated people, we should first go to him at the opening of each day, and ask for Divine wisdom and supervision. Then, through the day we should seek to live in accordance with that prayer. At the close of the day we should conduct a self-inspection as respects the things done, the things neglected that should have been done, and the things done that should not have been done, in accordance with our vows of consecration to the Lord. If these reckonings at the close of each day with the Lord continue, and if they are done honestly by a conscience that is in proper spiritual balance, we may surely expect that, in harmony with the Lord's Word, we will be keeping ourselves in the love of God. (Jude 21) We will be growing in grace, in knowledge, and in love, and the "wicked one" will not touch us.—I John 5:18

Let us also not forget that, while we are to exercise great leniency in viewing the words and deeds of others, ascribing only good intentions where they are professed, we are to scrutinize with all of our might our own hearts and intentions. Such a careful examination, weighing of thoughts, words and deeds, would be very unsatisfactory to a person who was not wishing to be in accord with the Lord. If, however, we have made a covenant with the Lord and are striving to be faithful to that covenant, we will find such a course to be a great blessing, comforting to our hearts at the time, and strengthening to us for the future. By the Lord's providences it will be fitting and preparing us for a place in the heavenly kingdom. ■

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, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.

J. Freer

Miami, FL October 31

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

T. B. Alexander

Estes Park, CO October 7-9

M. Balko

Pittsburgh, PA October 1,2
Atlanta, GA 16

D. Christiansen

Detroit, MI October 30

O. B. Elbert

Pittsburgh, PA October 1,2

J. Freer

Orlando, FL October 29,30

R. Goodman

Grand Rapids, MI October 8,9
Jacksonville, FL 23

R. Gorecki

Agawam, MA October 2

L. Griehs

Agawam, MA October 2

T. Krupa

San Luis Obispo, CA
October 15,16

P. Mora

San Luis Obispo, CA
October 15,16

D. Rice

Orlando, FL October 29,30

R. Sconyers

Atlanta, GA October 16

B. Sweeney

Pittsburgh, PA October 1,2

T. Thomassen

San Luis Obispo, CA
October 15,16
Chicago, IL October 23

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CONVENTIONS

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PITTSBURGH AREA CONVENTION, October 1,2—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact G. Balko, 308 Burger Street, West Newton, PA 15089. Phone: (724) 771-0139

AGAWAM CONVENTION, October 2—Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA. For accommodations, contact M. Wardak. Phone: (413) 789-6198 or Email: mtwardack@verizon.net. For other information, contact A. Gonczewski. Email: aga49@yahoo.com

COLORADO CONVENTION, October 7-9—YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, CO. Phone: (888) 613-9622. Mention “Colorado Bible Students 2016” when making reservations. Contact D. Moss. Phone: (303) 238-4936

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, October 8,9—Kenowa Hills Middle School, 3950 Hendershot Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49544. Contact T. Malinowski, 5609 Buttrick Avenue SE, Alto, MI 49302. Phone: (616) 868-0313 or Email: malinowski.tjm@gmail.com

SAN LUIS OBISPO CONVENTION, October 15,16—Masonic Hall, 859 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401. Contact M. Allard. Phone: (805) 773-2962 or Email: medlallard@juno.com

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 29,30—South Seminole Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 831-2098 or Email: jkuenzli@cfl.rr.com

DETROIT/METROPOLITAN DETROIT JOINT CONVENTION, October 30—Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road, Pleasant Ridge, MI. Contact

G. Zandler. Phone: (248) 399-8843 or Email: ngzandler@wowway.com

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 6—Westwoods Italian-American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. Suraci. Phone: (203) 248-3793 or Email: annasuraci@comcast.net

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 25-27—Alpine Community Center, 1830 Alpine Boulevard, Alpine, CA 91901. For reservations, contact B. Bach. Phone: (619) 249-5238 or Email: bbach1@cox.net. For other information, contact K. Klepin. Phone: (619) 258-9169 or Email: kmklepin@cox.net

IBADAN END OF THE YEAR THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, December 3—Ibadan place of fellowship, #24 Fayemi Street Coca Cola Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: +234 803 333 9949, +234 808 214 6621, +234 809 857 8588 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com, egbucajetan1@yahoo.com

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 14,15—Drury Inn, 2335 W Pinnacle Peak Road, Phoenix, AZ 85027. www.druryhotel.com. For reservations, phone: (800) 325-0720. Reservations must be made by Dec. 19 to guarantee reduced room rate. For information, contact J. Zardja. Email: janellzardja@gmail.com

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 17-19—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact K. Freer, 8012 Vintage Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

*Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in him always, and feed on his Word.
Make friends of God's children;
help those who are weak;
Forgetting in nothing his blessing to seek.
—Hymns of Dawn*