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Is Man Immortal?

“The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

—Genesis 2:7

THE THEORY OF INHERENT immortality alleges that when what we call death overtakes a human being, he actually becomes more alive than before it occurred. This theory is based on the supposition that somewhere within the human organism is an elusive, intangible, and invisible entity or intelligence called a “soul.” The claim of theologians is that this soul is immortal or “death proof.” Hence, when the body dies, this inner intelligence, or real man, escapes from its prison house of human limitations and is free to enjoy life forever on a much higher plane of existence, unless it has been a wicked soul. In the latter case, according to traditional theology, the soul must suffer untold agonies in a burning hell of literal fire and torment, or, at best, pass through a long period of suffering in purgatory before it can enjoy the freedom and blessings of heaven.

The expressions “immortal soul” and “undying soul” are so commonly used in religious conversation that their verity is taken for granted by most

who have not made an investigation as to their scriptural foundation. For this reason, it will be a distinct surprise to many to learn that these expressions are not found in the Bible at all. The traditional immortality of the human soul is purely a product of man's theories, and has no scriptural support whatsoever.

The word "soul" as used in the Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew word *nephesh*. Professor Strong's Bible concordance states that the word *nephesh* simply means "breathing creature," or, freely translated, that which is animated, or alive—a sentient being. The word is used in the Old Testament in connection with the lower animals as well as man. In Numbers 31:28, it is applied to such animals as "beeves," "asses," and "sheep." Thus, if we were to insist that the Hebrew word *nephesh*, translated "soul" in the Old Testament, means "immortal soul," then we would be bound to conclude that the lower animals also possess immortal souls—a conclusion that few would be willing to accept.

The word "soul" in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word *psuche*. We know that this word has exactly the same meaning as the Hebrew word *nephesh*, for the reason that the Apostle Peter uses it to translate the latter when he quotes from Psalm 16:10. The apostle's quotation is found in Acts 2:27, and reads, "Thou wilt not leave my soul [Greek, *psuche*; Hebrew, *nephesh*—sentient being] in hell [the grave, the condition of death], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Peter tells us that this is a prophecy concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus—that his soul was not left in death.

The word “soul,” and its plural, “souls,” are used in the Bible more than five hundred times, but in no instance is the thought even hinted that human souls are immortal. On the contrary, wherever the Bible discusses the subject of death in connection with the soul, it distinctly and clearly states that the soul, even as the body, is subject to death. For example, through the prophet, God said, “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezek. 18:4) In the New Testament, we read the words of Jesus, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [*Gehenna*—destruction].” (Matt. 10:28) Here, Jesus says that even those souls which go to the Bible hell are destroyed, not tormented.

In Matthew 26:38, Jesus is reported as saying, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” This is fully in harmony with the prophetic declaration concerning Jesus which says that his soul was made “an offering for sin.” (Isa. 53:10) Jesus’ soul died. Through that great sacrifice, the souls of all mankind are redeemed from death, and all, ultimately, will be resurrected from the condition of death.

Another interesting use of the Greek word *psuche*, or soul, in the New Testament is found in Acts 3:20-23. Here, we have a prophecy describing the work of restoration, or restitution, that will be carried on by the Messiah following his Second Coming and the establishment of his kingdom. We are told that then “every soul, which will not hear [obey] that prophet, shall be destroyed from among

the people.” Thus, both the Old and New Testaments emphasize the fact that human souls are mortal, subject to death, and that ultimately all wicked souls are to be destroyed in everlasting death—not preserved and tormented, as Dark Age creeds would have us believe.

FIRST HUMAN SOUL CREATED

Let us now review carefully the process by which the first human soul was brought into being, as this will help us to understand more clearly just what a soul really is. The scriptural account of this is given in our theme text at the beginning of this article. Note that the soul in this text of scripture is shown to be the result, or product, of a union of the body, or organism, with the breath of life—“man became a living soul.” This passage does not say, as many in the past have erroneously supposed, that God created man and then injected a soul into him. It declares, rather, that in the creation, man “became” a soul, which is quite different.

First, according to the record, the organism, or body, of man was “formed . . . of the dust of the ground.” This is scientifically in harmony with the facts as we know them today, as the body of man is composed entirely of the various chemical elements found in the earth. Then, into this organism, by the miraculous power of God, was imparted the “breath of life”—the animating power of the air which we breathe, and which is necessary to sustain life. The Hebrew word here translated “breath,” is *neshamah*, which, according to Professor Strong, literally means “breath.” The fact that it was breathed into the nostrils of Adam emphasizes the fact that

it was the breath. Certainly, the nostrils would be an unlikely place for an immortal soul to be located.

When the breath of life was blown into the nostrils of this first human organism, it became alive, or, as the text declares, "became a living soul." Thus seen, the soul is really that which results from the union of organism with the life-giving qualities of breath—the "breath of life." A simple illustration of this is the electric light. The bulb, with its internal vacuum, filament, etc., is not the light. Neither is the electricity that flows through the bulb the light, but the union of the bulb with the electricity produces the light. Destroy the bulb—corresponding to the organism—or cut off the electric current—corresponding to the breath of life—and the light goes out. That is, it ceases to exist, being extinguished.

It is the same with the human soul. When the body becomes impaired through disease or accident, to the point where it can no longer function sufficiently well to utilize the life-sustaining impulses of the breath of life, the soul, or life, of the individual "goes out"—it ceases to exist—it dies. Likewise, if for any reason, or in any manner, the breath of life is kept from the body, as in drowning, or asphyxiation, the life also ceases—the soul dies.

It should be borne in mind, in this connection, that the giving of life, the outward manifestations of which we are able to understand to some extent, is in the hands of the Creator. He is the source of all life on earth. It is not possible for man to form an organism, infuse it with some of the earth's atmosphere, and have it live. The literal air is

the breath of life both to humans and the lower animals, because it is the medium the Creator has used by which the life principle is communicated to all living things in the earth. This “life principle” comes only from the Creator—man cannot duplicate it. It is directly attributable to the almighty power of God, and is the only source by which human life exists.

As we pursue our investigation of this subject, we will discover that the Bible holds out a hope of future and eternal life for human beings, not because he originally put something into their organism which is immortal, but because he loves his human creation. The Creator proposes, through the resurrection, to again impart the life principle to mankind—to all who will obey his law.

THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY

As already noted, the expression “immortal soul” is not found in the Bible at all. The word “immortal” is used only once in the entire Bible, and in that one instance it is applied to God and not to man. We quote, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.” (I Tim. 1:17) In I Timothy 6:16, we have a passage similar to the foregoing in which the word “immortality” is used. This text is also speaking of God, and reads, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.” These two scriptural passages should definitely settle the question as to whether man, by nature, is an immortal creature.

The word “immortality” is used four other times in the Bible, and in each case it is descriptive of a future conditional reward for those who in this life walk faithfully in the footsteps of the Master. Here let us emphasize the fact, once again, that we are not attempting to prove that there is no future life for human beings. Rather, all hope of future life, according to the Bible, is based on the fact that there is to be a resurrection of the dead, not on the supposition that man is by nature immortal, and hence cannot die.

We will consider the four scriptures which refer to those whose hope is to be exalted to immortality with the Lord. Romans 2:7 reads, “To them [those in Christ] who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” This text shows that immortality is not now a possession of those in Christ, but rather that it is something to be sought after, through “patient continuance in well doing.”

In I Corinthians 15:53, we read, “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Here we are told that immortality is a quality, which, if it is ever to be possessed, must be “put on.” Clearly the Apostle says that now we are “mortal” beings. The next verse reads, “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

There is one other text in the Bible in which the word “immortality” appears, and that is II Timothy 1:10. It reads as follows, “But is now made manifest

by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” It is evident from this passage that no one prior to our Lord’s First Advent had even as much as an opportunity to strive for immortality, as the followers of Christ during this Gospel Age are encouraged to do. It shows, furthermore, that all hope of life and immortality is centered in Jesus and in his redemptive work.

WHAT IS DEATH?

Death is man’s greatest enemy. The Bible alone, of all the sources of information available to man, furnishes us with definite information concerning the future of those who are struck down by this dread enemy. God’s Word promises that a time is coming when there “shall be no more death,” and, furthermore, that those who have died shall live again. (Rev. 21:4; John 5:28) A knowledge of the Creator’s provision for a dying race should give real solace to those who mourn for their loved ones who have died.

Added to the awful specter of death itself, is the admitted uncertainty of most as to what lies beyond the grave. What happens to an individual the next moment after death occurs? Is that individual still alive in some mysterious way, actually hovering around the funeral home while his friends are gathered to mourn his passing? Has he departed to some unknown and beautiful place of eternal bliss? In the event that the deceased was not a Christian, is he now in the traditional regions of the cursed, where he is doomed to suffer

an eternity of torture in a hell of fire and brimstone?

Try as we will, we cannot dismiss these questions from our minds. Many may partially console themselves in the thought that at least many of their close friends and relatives who have died were of good character, faithful believers in Christianity as they understood it, and hence, according to their accepted beliefs, should now be happy in heaven. Yet, many have also had some dear friends, and probably relatives, who have died outside the sphere of orthodox belief and practice, and they cannot help wondering what has become of these. Are they now suffering, or are they happy?

SCIENCE HOLDS NO HOPE

Science tells us that there is no evidence of the continuance of human life after death occurs, so that as far as the life principle is concerned, man is no different than the lower animals. Thus, we conclude that the higher intelligence of the human species is not due to the traditional theory that man has hidden within him a separate intelligence called a "soul," or a "spirit," but to the fact that he was created a superior, a more refined organism than the animal creation, yet mortal.

Let us now note a few of the scriptural passages which show clearly that science is correct as far as the present condition of the dead is concerned. Ecclesiastes 9:5 reads, "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing." Psalm 49:10-12 is also to the point, reading, "He seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.”

After the transgression of our first parents, God said, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Gen. 3:19) David makes an emphatic declaration as to the condition of those who return to the dust. “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” (Ps. 146:4) There is no mistaking the fact that these words describe a dead person as being absolutely unconscious, even his thoughts having perished.

Note again the statement of the psalmist, “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth.” If a human being, as a conscious, living soul, was brought into existence by the union of the material body with the breath of life, as we have already shown by the Scriptures to be the case, it would seem reasonable that when these two elements are separated, life would cease. This is exactly what the text states, “In that very day his thoughts perish.”

Some may wonder about the “breath of life,” thinking perhaps this may be describing that traditional, mysterious part of our being that continues to live on after the body dies. Let us now examine a passage which describes the moment of death, showing exactly what becomes of the two principal elements which divine, creative wisdom has combined to produce human life. It reads, “Then shall the dust [body] return to the earth as it was: and

the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”—
Eccles. 12:7

The key to a proper understanding of this text is found in the word “return,” used with respect to both the body and the spirit. The body is said to return to the earth. This is because its elements originally came from the earth. It follows, therefore, that if the spirit returns to God, it must have been with God before it entered the human organism. If to be with God in this sense means to be in heaven, then it follows that if the “spirit” here referred to is a conscious entity, capable of enjoying life in a spiritual heaven, it means that every one of mankind must have been in that spiritual heaven before they were born, else it could not be said that they “return” there when they die.

WHAT THE “SPIRIT” REALLY IS

The Hebrew word here translated “spirit,” is *ruwach*. Professor Strong tells us that this Hebrew word *ruwach* means “wind,” or “breath.” It is the same Hebrew word that is translated “breath” in Genesis 7:15, where it is said to be possessed by the lower animals. We quote, “They went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath [*ruwach*] of life.” If the use of the word *ruwach* to describe the breath or spirit of life in human beings means that we have within us an intelligent entity of some sort that continues to live after the body dies, it also means that the lower animals inherently possess a similar intangible entity which can never die.

However, when we reason in harmony with the Word of God, all is clear. Genesis 2:7 declares that

God created man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The result of the uniting of the body with the breath of life is said to be that man became a living soul. Clearly, when the body returns to the earth, and the breath or spirit of life returns to its original source—to God who gave it—it leaves the individual in exactly the same condition as he was before birth—a condition of non-existence.

To settle this question even more definitely, we turn to Ecclesiastes 3:19-21, where the Hebrew word *ruwach* is again used. There it is said that the breath (*ruwach*) of both man and beast goes to the same place at death. “That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath [*ruwach*]; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward [to heaven], and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?”

The records of the New Testament on the subject of death agree fully with those of the Old Testament. Jesus indicated that the dead are in a condition of unconsciousness, which he likened to sleep. In John 11:11,14-46, we have a wonderfully revealing account of the sickness, death, and awakening of Lazarus, a dear friend of Jesus. Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus, were also friends of the Master, and when their brother was taken sick they sent word to Jesus supposing that he would come at once to their aid.

However, instead of going immediately to the bedside of his friend, Lazarus, Jesus tarried. After some time had elapsed, he said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." The disciples misunderstood this, supposing that Jesus referred to natural sleep. Then he said plainly, "Lazarus is dead." Later, at the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus addressed this dead one in a loud voice saying, "Lazarus, come forth." We are then told that "he that was dead came forth." There is not a hint here that Lazarus' "soul" was either in a heaven of bliss or a hell of torment. According to the record, he was asleep in death. This was the belief and teaching of Jesus.

In this account of the awakening of Lazarus from the sleep of death, we have emphasized the fact that the scriptural hope for life beyond the grave is in the assurance that there is to be a resurrection of the dead, rather than in the supposition that man possesses inherent immortality. The Apostle Paul fully agrees with this. In I Corinthians 15:12-18, he concludes that if there be no resurrection of the dead, "Then they . . . which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

In the book of Revelation also, we find the same uniformity of thought as to the unconscious condition of the dead. For example, the revelator says, "The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them." (Rev. 20:13) Note the fact that according to the text just quoted, those that are in the scriptural "hell" [grave] are declared to be dead. This means that they are not alive somewhere and being tormented. This text also reveals

that the hope of the dead is that they shall be brought out of hell [grave], and raised to life.

In brief then, the answer to the query, “Where are the dead?” is that they are now in a state of unconsciousness and non-existence. Further, all hope for life beyond the grave is centered in the scriptural assurance that, through the mighty power of the great Creator exercised by the divine Christ during the coming kingdom period, there is to be a “resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (Acts 24:15) Thus understood, the clear evidence of the Scriptures answers the question posed in our title in this way: No, man is not immortal! ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

NOVEMBER 1—“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”—Psalm 141:3 (Z. '04-23 Hymn 95)

NOVEMBER 8—“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.”—Exodus 20:7 (Z. '04-73 Hymn 196)

NOVEMBER 15—“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”—I John 2:6 (Z. '03-345 Hymn 57A)

NOVEMBER 22—“The zeal of thine house hath consumed me.”—Psalm 69:9 (Z. '98-112 Hymn 164)

NOVEMBER 29—“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised.)”—Hebrews 10:23 (Z. '01-119 Hymn 93)

Paul Before King Agrippa

Key Verse: “*He said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.*”
—Acts 26:25

Selected Scripture:
Acts 26:19-32

TODAY’S LESSON COMMENCES in Caesarea where Paul had been a prisoner for two years. The Jewish rulers had sought Paul’s death because of what he taught after he became a follower of Jesus Christ. When allowed to testify before Agrippa, the Roman governor of that area, Paul expressed gratitude for being allowed to present his case before someone who was conversant with the customs and questions which related to the Jewish people. (Acts 26:3) After attesting that he had been faithful to the Jewish religion from his youth, Paul asserted the reason for his being brought to trial. “Now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”—vss. 6-8

In the continuing narrative concerning his life prior to his conversion, Paul expressed his relentless campaign against those who followed the Christian faith. However, while he was in route to Damascus to arrest

Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment, Paul explained, he had a transforming experience. He was blinded at midday by a great light from above, and he heard a voice asking, “Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me?”—vss. 9-14

Next, Paul summarized the commission he had received after hearing the voice of the risen Lord, Christ Jesus. It included the fact that he was to testify and be a witness of what he had seen. Additionally, Paul was especially to minister to the Gentiles concerning the means by which they would receive forgiveness from their sins. As a Gentile, after hearing but not understanding all these things, Festus accused Paul of being crazed because of his much learning.—vss. 15-24

In our Key Verse, Paul told Festus he was not mad, but was simply declaring the truth concerning God’s plan of redemption for all mankind. Paul then appealed to King Agrippa, by asking whether he believed the prophetic testimony concerning Christ as the promised Messiah. Without waiting for Agrippa to answer, Paul concluded, “I know that thou believest.” (vs. 27) Although the *King James Version* renders Agrippa’s response, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (vs. 28), the *Revised Standard Version* suggests his sentiments were more likely, “Do you think in this short time you are going to make me a Christian?”

Paul’s faithfulness in declaring the importance of Christ’s death and resurrection, even to those who could not accept this truth, is a powerful example to emulate by all who are consecrated followers of the Master. The only solution for present difficult and perplexing conditions on earth is the establishment of God’s kingdom in the not too distant future. That will be the time when this scriptural promise will come to pass: “I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.”—Hag. 2:7

■

Paul Sails for Rome

Key Verses: *“The centurion, . . . commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.”*
—Acts 27:43,44

Selected Scripture:
Acts 27:1,2,33-44

FOLLOWING HIS HEARING

before Agrippa, Paul was placed in the custody of an officer named Julius. Along with other prisoners, he then began a voyage by ship to Rome, where eventually he would have an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Their first day at sea was rather uneventful, and Paul was allowed to visit the brethren at the port of Sidon. After departing from Sidon, the captain changed the course of their intended journey because of the contrary nature of the winds. Then, at Myra, the prisoners bound for Rome were transferred to a larger

ship from Alexandria that was bound for Italy. For many days, travel was slow because of the heavy winds and because winter was approaching. Paul warned the crew they should tarry at a location called “The fair havens” until the weather became more favorable, lest the ship be destroyed and the lives of the passengers be placed in jeopardy. Although Paul had much experience with shipwrecks (II Cor. 11:25), his advice was ignored, and the decision was made to proceed onward to the larger port city of Phenice and spend the winter there.—Acts 27:3-12

Not long after their departure from “The fair havens,” a fierce storm arose with such a powerful wind that the sailors were unable to steer the ship. It was feared that the vessel would be broken to pieces. The men aboard the ship were terrified for their lives as the storm continued for many days. Paul, however, gave assurance that no lives would be lost of any on the ship, only that the ship itself would not survive, but be destroyed.—vss. 14-26

Several days later, the sailors sensed that they were drifting toward land and, in order to prevent the ship from running aground, they dropped anchors into the sea. Some of them were plotting to get to the shore in a small boat, but Paul reported this matter to the centurion and warned that unless they stayed on the ship the rest would not be saved. The centurion instructed the soldiers aboard the vessel to cut the ropes that were attached to the boat so it could not be lowered into the water, and everyone was forced to remain on the ship. Shortly before dawn, Paul encouraged everyone to eat some food to strengthen themselves. He offered a prayer of thanks to God and the two hundred and seventy-six people aboard ship partook and became more cheerful. Eventually the ship ran aground, and it began to break apart.—vss. 27-41

It was only then that the centurion gave the instruction that all were to leave the ship, in accordance with Paul’s instructions. Our Key Verses indicate that, either by swimming or using the wreckage from the vessel, everyone escaped and ultimately reached land safely.

The narrative of this lesson should provide comfort to devoted Christians who submit to God’s overruling providence in their lives, as was the case with Paul. May we experience the confidence of the Father’s presence to sustain us through life’s adversities, whatever they may be. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”—Isa. 26:3 ■

Paul Ministers in Malta

Key Verse: *“It came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.”*
—Acts 28:8

Selected Scripture:
Acts 28:1-10

FOLLOWING THEIR SHIP-wreck (see lesson for November 11), the entire crew and passengers, including Paul, reached shore on the island of Malta. “When they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita [Malta]. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.”—Acts 28:1,2

The inhabitants of the land were called barbarians because they did not speak Greek, but rather Phoenician. In any event, they were very hospitable to their sea-soaked visitors instead of rushing out to attack and slaughter them as unwelcome invaders. Paul was quite active in helping to serve the needs of everyone. He gathered sticks for a fire so that the entire company might be warmed and dried following their ordeal. It must have been rather startling for the islanders to observe a viper animated by the heat suddenly fasten itself upon Paul’s hand. They reasoned at first that Paul must have been a criminal, possibly a murderer, who, having escaped from the perils of the

sea, would now receive divine justice and die from the poisonous bite of the viper. When he shook off the serpent and suffered no ill effects, their reasoning abruptly changed, and they concluded that Paul must be a god.—vss. 3-6

There was a man named Publius who was the chief ruler on the island of Malta. He owned considerable property in the area and provided gracious accommodations for these stranded guests for three days. (vs. 7) Our Key Verse reveals that the kindness of Publius did not go unrewarded. Paul learned that his father was ill and he went to him, prayed for him and healed him.

When the news of this miracle spread throughout the island, during the three months Paul and the others remained there, many of the sick inhabitants were brought to him and all of them were cured. The people of Malta demonstrated their appreciation to Paul, and also to Luke who accompanied him, by showering them with gifts that would be useful when they resumed their voyage to Rome.—vss. 9,10

It is interesting to note that there is no record of Paul preaching the Gospel message concerning the heavenly kingdom either to his companions who had traveled with him aboard ship, or to the residents of Malta. This reminds us that during his earthly ministry, our Lord indicated that not everyone who would eventually receive salvation would be part of the present sheepfold or heavenly class. (John 10:16) There would be other sheep that would have the opportunity to receive blessings right here on earth during the “times of restitution.”—Acts 3:21-23

As believers and followers of the Lord, it is not our privilege at this time to actually heal the sick as was done by our Master and Paul at the dawn of the Gospel Age. Let us, however, seek to bless all those we come in contact with by telling them of God’s wonderful kingdom that will end this weary night of sorrow, sickness, sin and death that afflicts mankind.—Gal. 6:10; Ps. 30:5 ■

Paul Evangelizes in Rome

Key Verse: *“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.”*
—Acts 28:28

Selected Scripture:
Acts 28:23-31

EVENTUALLY PAUL REACHED his intended destination, Rome, where he was allowed to live in a private house. As a prisoner, however, he was continually chained to a Roman soldier who kept watch over his activities. In accordance with his practice of witnessing about Christ, Paul invited the prominent Jews to visit him so he could recount the circumstances which led to his being in Rome.—Acts 28:17-19

Although the Jewish rulers professed not to know anything about Paul, they wanted to hear more about his Christian faith which had been proclaimed widely. On another occasion, a larger number of Jews visited Paul, and he took the opportunity to tell them more about God’s kingdom. He attempted to persuade them that Jesus was their promised Messiah, quoting from Moses and the prophets. Some of Paul’s hearers believed that Jesus was God’s Son while others did not.—vss. 20-24

Despite Paul’s teaching, and in view of his disappointment that the Jews as a whole rejected his message, in our Key Verse Paul announced that he was, therefore, taking the good news of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and expressed an assurance that they would receive it. In

any event, his two years of house arrest were most productive in that he had many visitors and he expounded the word of God to all who came.

In all of this we can take a lesson that a change in our circumstances does not necessarily mean we should become inactive, even though we may have to find different ways of serving the Lord's cause. For those who are physically able but isolated, personal study, listening to recordings, corresponding with other brethren and witness activities through advertisements, tracts or obituaries are all profitable forms of service in addition to publicly declaring God's plan to others as opportunity is presented. For those who are aging, or otherwise unable to do much of the foregoing, perhaps they might only be able to listen to recordings, receive visitors or be an example of steadfastness and cheerful endurance under adversity. Their greatest service may simply be remembering the brethren in prayer—being in this way “companions of them” who are able to be more actively engaged in the Lord's service.—Heb. 10:33

As long as we have our faculties we can always pray for one another, and judging from the expressions of those who have requested an interest in prayers on their behalf, they have received grace and strength on many occasions from the prayers of brethren of “like precious faith.” Nevertheless, we are all responsible for doing what we can. The Lord will reward us for our faithfulness in serving his cause to the best of our ability.

May Paul's recorded legacy serve to inspire us toward faithfulness even until the very end of our course. Thus may we receive the promised reward and be able to say with the apostle, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”—II Tim. 4:7,8 ■

Confession

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

—I John 1:9

THE SCRIPTURES TELL us, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) One might then ask, “What should I do about my sin?” To address this question, we begin by reading the Apostle John’s statement in I John 4:9,10 about the greatest gift ever given: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” God sent his son so we might have life through him—“The man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all.”—I Tim. 2:5,6

This Gospel message had been delivered many times already. Most likely John felt compelled to repeat it not only to fortify what had been preached earlier, but also to warn the disciples against false prophets and doctrines which threatened the very necessity and meaning of Jesus’ sacrifice.

In the same context as the verses quoted above, John gives a warning. His words, given to those in

Christ living near the end of the first century, parallel Jesus' prophetic warning to those living at the end of the Gospel Age. Let us compare their statements. John's warning is recorded in I John 4:1-3. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." John's warning to the brethren of his day to "believe not every spirit" and to "try the spirits" meant that they were not to believe the teachings of everyone who claimed to have the "spirit" of God, but to test those things they were taught by comparing them to God's Word. For example, John said that God's Word clearly testified that his son Jesus had come in the flesh, and if any teaching denied that truth, it should be considered as being of the spirit of antichrist—that is, in opposition to Christ.

Jesus' warning is recorded in Matthew 24:3-5, 23-25. "As he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming [presence], and of the end of the world [age]? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. . . . Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it

not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.”

Note the similarities between these two warnings of Jesus and John—terms mentioned such as “false prophets,” “false Christs,” “try the spirits,” “take heed,” and “spirit of antichrist.” Man’s fallen, sinful spirit has more often than not gotten in the way of his faith in Christ. In John’s day, the Greek philosophers took the teaching of “liberty” in Christ (Gal. 2:4), and tried to expand it into a concept of salvation based more on man’s abilities than on his faith in God. The worst of these philosophies was Gnosticism, which taught that salvation was based on man’s knowledge, and credited Jesus to be no more than a good teacher who failed to go far enough in releasing the Jews from the bondage of the Law. It was this type of spirit also which John was warning against during his lifetime.

Jesus’ prophetic warning is particularly applicable to our day. While today’s false teachings are varied, they share the same general idea of man’s ability to obtain his own salvation, of which John warned the brethren in his day. For example, beginning in the 1960s, the New Age movement began teaching that “God is within us”—each one possesses a little of God sufficient to develop ourselves as fully as we desire, and capable of carrying out our own salvation. Additionally, many churches today are increasingly proclaiming “great signs and wonders” in missionary work, feeding of the poor, helping many overcome alcohol and drug dependency, mending broken homes, providing financial security, and

other great works. We do not criticize these noble efforts and the limited good they have accomplished. However, we note that one of the effects has been the same as in John's day—an elevation of man's importance and a decrease of God's importance in providing man's salvation and recovery from the terrible effects of sin.

A recent *Time* magazine article on this topic spoke of baby boomers returning to the churches, but on their own terms and with many of their own ideas of what Christianity should be. The author pointed out that, as a result, many churches have become almost indistinguishable from many "self-help" groups, and concluded with the statement that all these efforts would fail spiritually as long as church-goers replace "the glorification of God with the gratification of man." This is the same spirit of opposition to Christ which John warned against.

How can we protect ourselves from these and other threats which teach in opposition to Christ? How do we resist the temptation to replace "the glorification of God with the gratification of man?" The Apostle John has given us a very practical and essential tool to ward off these false doctrines that would in any way minimize the ransom price paid by our dear Master on the cross, with the words of our theme text: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—I John 1:9

From the statements of John quoted thus far, we conclude that confession is an important tool to help us resist the spirit of opposition to Christ—antichrist. Let us consider John's words on this

subject more closely, and examine the importance of confession in our consecrated walk.

WHO SHOULD CONFESS?

As we consider “who should confess?” we must understand to whom John is speaking in our theme text. While it is true that all have sinned, and that confession is always a proper response to one’s sinful condition, it is quite evident from the context of John’s words that he is not speaking to sinners in general, but directly to the footstep followers of Christ. Note these words from earlier in the same chapter: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”—I John 1:1-4

Whose joy can be full in this present evil world in which we live except those who have been begotten by the Holy Spirit, those who understand God’s plans and purposes? Clearly, the world in general does not enjoy this fullness of joy today. The world is consumed in a spirit of fear, distress, and greed. Likewise, most of today’s churches do not enjoy this fullness of joy because they are so consumed in earthly affairs. If these words of John were applicable to sinners in general, it would give the

impression that there is no difference between those in Christ and the world. It would nullify the need to deny ourselves and follow Jesus according to the terms of the divine call—“Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.”—Ps. 50:5

Additionally, if applicable to sinners in general, some might mistakenly conclude from John’s words that it is impossible to commit further sins after past sins have been forgiven by our gracious God. However, such is not the case, and our reliance on God continues in every step of our life, as Paul reminds us, saying, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (II Cor. 4:7) It is evident, then, that John is speaking, not to the world in general, but to those who would become the sons of God.

It is important that we understand why confession is needed in our life as a child of God, and the purpose of confessing our sins. We turn to the testimony of David and Solomon on this point. David wrote these words, saying, “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’; And You forgave the guilt of my sin.”—Ps. 32:1-5, *New American Standard Bible*

David was eager to serve God and quick to seek forgiveness when he erred. We find three important points regarding confession in this beautiful account: 1) Without confession David suffered and there was no fullness of joy (vss. 3,4); 2) Confession preceded forgiveness, meaning it is a prerequisite. (vs. 5); 3) God's forgiveness was a blessing that led to fullness of joy (vs. 1). We see that confession was an important element in David's relationship with God and his service to him.

Solomon also had experiences with regard to confession, and provides similar words, as recorded in Proverbs, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." Prov. 28:13, *NASB* Here we see the same three thoughts as David had expressed—hidden sins are detrimental to our well-being; confession leads to forgiveness; and forgiveness is a blessing from God, here expressed as "compassion".

If confession leads to forgiveness, we should want to know more about it. Let us consider Paul's words concerning forgiveness as he recalled the details of his conversion before Agrippa. "I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness

of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”—Acts 26:15-18

There are two points worth noting here. First, Paul was sent to the Gentiles to turn them from darkness to light. Second, the purpose of his mission to provide the light of truth to these was that they might be granted forgiveness of their sins and be given the opportunity of receiving an inheritance.

We now return to John’s discourse and consider our need of cleansing, and its relationship to confession and forgiveness. “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”—I John 1:5-10

John makes it very clear that we are all sinners in need of cleansing, stating that if we claim to have not sinned we are liars! If we are to be considered as walking in the light, and cleansed from all unrighteousness by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, then, according to the apostle’s words, confession is required. We will be partakers of these blessings “if we confess our sins.”

(Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31)

WHAT SINS TO CONFESS?

John states in I John 5:16 that there two kinds of sin which, in particular, can apply to the Lord's people at the present time. He says, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." The second of these sins, the "sin unto death," is willful sin against light provided by the Holy Spirit. Jesus speaks of this type of sin in this way, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."—Matt. 12:32

Paul confirms this principle in Hebrews 10:26, which reads, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Because we are free moral agents and not banned from making such a treacherous and terrible choice, John says we are not to pray for those who commit this sin. They have made their own choice, with full knowledge against the light of the Holy Spirit.

The other sin John mentions is a "sin not unto death." These are unintentional sins, faults, and shortcomings of our flesh that we all are guilty of and battle constantly throughout our walk in the narrow way. John says we should pray for one another concerning these types of sin, that we might be encouraged and grow spiritually from our mistakes. This also clarifies for us which sins we

should confess—not the sin unto death (which one would likely not think of confessing anyway), but sins “not” unto death. We should confess the faults and shortcomings of the flesh, in which we all share, and which the Apostle Paul once described in himself with these words: “The good that I would [do] I do not: but the evil which I would not [do], that I do.”—Rom. 7:19

Notwithstanding the scriptural testimony previously cited, some may reason that the body members of Christ cannot sin, as John seems to state in I John 3:6-9. “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born [begotten] of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born [begotten] of God.”

We should note two points in these verses. First, the sins spoken of in these verses are of the willful kind, not unintentional. This is shown by John’s statement that they are “of the devil,” that is, they are willful even as Satan’s sin was willful “from the beginning.” The second point we note is that the true child of God cannot commit such willful sin as long as he continues to abide under the begetting power of God’s Holy Spirit. Being begotten of God, he is opposed to all such sin.

Part of our battle to develop as spirit-begotten New Creatures comes from this dual aspect of our

being, as we currently have “this treasure in earthen vessels.” (II Cor. 4:7) This begotten New Creature—the new heavenly will and mind—currently resides in an earthly, imperfect body. The spirit-begotten will does not sin because it is from God, but as long as we are in these earthen vessels, we continue to commit the unintentional sins of the flesh. These are the sins John tells us we are to confess. These are the sins we speak of when we pray, “Forgive us our sins and shortcomings.”

This duality of sin, willful versus unintentional, and the fact that the child of God has a spirit-begotten mind or will, residing in a fallen earthly body, raises an interesting question. Can an unintentional sin become willful? If an unintentional sin is later recognized, but not repented of, and not rectified, is it then willful? Are we then sinning against the Holy Spirit by omitting proper repentance and rectification? It would appear from John’s words that this is indeed the case. Sincere, heartfelt confessions would be of even greater necessity to correct such a course.

Especially important along this line is our dealings with the brethren. Because “we walk in the light [with our brethren], . . . [and] have fellowship one with another” (I John 1:7), we must first know who our brethren are. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21) In other words, actions speak louder than words when determining who are to be considered as brethren. Jesus further says, “Who are my brethren? . . .

Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother.”—Matt. 12:48,50

In dealing with the real or, at times, perceived sins of our brethren, we should consider Jesus’ advice on the matter, as recorded by Matthew, “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell [*gehenna*—destruction]. Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”—Matt. 5:21-24, *NASB*

These are very serious words. Jesus is here saying that God will not accept our offering if our brother has something against us. He is further saying that the offender has the responsibility to reconcile the transgression, and that this is required before we can once again present an acceptable offering to our Heavenly Father. We should, therefore, frequently ask ourselves if we have fully reconciled with those we have transgressed against. Here again, confessions are required. Let us then be very careful in all of our thoughts, words, and deeds directed toward our brethren.

TO WHOM IS CONFESSION MADE?

According to some scholars, the practice of confession and absolution in the traditional church systems is based on John 20:22,23. From the *New English Translation*, we read, "Then he breathed on them, saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit!' If you forgive any man's sins, they stand forgiven; If you pronounce them unforgiven, unforgiven they remain." The church systems took these words to authorize setting up the practice whereby confessions would be made to a priest, as if they had acquired this gift long ago given to the Apostles. This practice became yet another fear and control tactic of Satan to keep the church congregation in line with the doctrines of the clergy. The verses quoted above authorized only the Apostles to forgive sins, as one of the special gifts which was conferred on them at Pentecost. Aside from this authority, granted exclusively to the twelve Apostles, the Scriptures do not authorize any such form of confession as traditionally practiced in the churches.

On the contrary, we should always direct our confessions to our Heavenly Father, not through a priest or any human agent. God has provided us with a much better avenue through which to approach him. The Apostle John says, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (I John 2:1) These words tell us that our Advocate, Jesus, represents us to the Father because our sins are against God. That is a very sobering thought, but thanks be to him that God has provided his Son to act as our advocate before him! Jesus is the

“propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins.” (vs. 2) If we ask, he will impute his merit with such sufficiency to cover all of our defects—but we have to ask. If we do we can have complete confidence that our confessions will result in our total cleansing.

We are to remember that sin is sin. We should take them all to the LORD in prayer, even the ones that slip our minds, or those that we may not recognize. Such apparently happened in David’s life on occasion, as he confesses in Psalm 19:12, saying, “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.” As his children, we received spotless robes of righteousness when we consecrated to do God’s will. If we stain this robe in any way we need to seek cleansing as quickly as possible. We must not let the stain set in.

In summary, we should consider confession as a valuable tool provided to help keep us humble, remembering our need of the ransom price provided by Jesus’ death on the cross. Confession is a key to a healthy spiritual life based on four basic principles: 1) Concealed sins are detrimental to our spiritual well-being; 2) God is pleased when we come to him for forgiveness; 3) Confession leads to forgiveness; and 4) Forgiveness is a blessing from God. May the Lord help us to use confession along with all of the other tools he has given us to make our calling and election sure. ■

“The LORD is merciful and loving, slow to become angry and full of constant love. He does not punish us as we deserve or repay us according to our sins and wrongs. As a father is kind to his children, so the LORD is kind to those who honor him.”

Psalm 103:8,10,13, Good News Bible

Patience

—Part 2—

Endurance and Constancy

“Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience.”
—II Peter 1:5,6

IN LAST MONTH’S ISSUE of *The Dawn*, we considered the first two elements of the grace of patience—Forbearance and Longsuffering. In the second of our two-part consideration of this important subject, we will now focus attention on the third and fourth aspects of patience—Endurance and Constancy. Compared to forbearance and longsuffering, “endurance” and “constancy” take the grace of patience to a significantly higher level of development within the Christian character, presenting new challenges and difficulties to us due to our fallen nature.

ENDURANCE

Described briefly, endurance is patience in all the experiences of life. This phrase—“all the experiences of life”—provides a clue as to why endurance is a significant step above both forbearance and

longsuffering. As discussed in last month's article, forbearance and longsuffering are most often directed toward the conduct of others, and demonstrate a proper patience to those who may say or do things in opposition to us. These attributes are to be developed in us—just as they are found in God and his son, Jesus—and evident in our dealings with all mankind.

Endurance, although including proper conduct in our relationship with others, also takes into account a whole new realm of experiences—those which do not involve others directly at all, but those experiences of life which are ours personally to live through, each and every day, and each and every moment of our Christian walk. Endurance is developed through the entire array of life's experiences which, in God's providence, he sees that we need. In particular, and as the word implies, the development of endurance comes through difficult experiences—the trials, testings, and temptations that we face in the narrow way. How true it is that if we only had pleasant experiences, and never had trials, it would be impossible to develop endurance. We know, however, that God in his wisdom sees the need for our having a mixed cup of experiences—many blessings to be sure, but also the necessary trials, so that, among the other benefits we gain from trial, endurance can be developed.

The Greek word used in the New Testament for the endurance aspect of patience is the same word as is used for the fourth and final aspect—constancy—which we will discuss later in this article. It is *Strong's* #5281, *hupomone*. When examining the meaning of this word, there are two distinct

thoughts given—one emphasizing endurance, and the other emphasizing constancy. *Strong's* and *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* use the following synonyms to describe the endurance element of *hupomone*: bearing calmly, holding fast in trial, hopeful endurance, and cheerful endurance.

We can see from these synonyms that they mark endurance as an especially high aspect of patience. Forbearance and longsuffering were defined mostly by how patience is exercised toward others in an outward manner. Endurance, however, shows a level of patience which is a quality of inward character development—that of cheerfulness, hopefulness, holding fast, and calmness—when going through the trials of the narrow way. Endurance will, of course, manifest its development in words and actions, just like forbearance and longsuffering. In its purest and highest form, however, endurance is all about inward character.

As there was a connection between forbearance and longsuffering (see last month's article), there is also a connection between longsuffering and endurance. In Colossians 1:10,11, Paul speaks of both, directing his words to us: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience [*hupomone*—endurance] and longsuffering with joyfulness."

The last two words of these verses—"with joyfulness"—provide a key for our understanding. The longsuffering Paul mentions may not be especially joyful to exercise, according to the flesh.

However, the patience, or endurance, here mentioned can only come about if we accept all our experiences, even the trials, with inward joy—cheerful endurance. Both longsuffering and endurance are necessary. We must show longsuffering, ideally doing so with a loving attitude, but we must also endure joyfully the difficult experiences of life. Notice that Paul said in verse 10 that these qualities are necessary in order for us to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.”

JOB, AN EXAMPLE OF ENDURANCE

As we consider the endurance aspect of patience, our minds turn back to the experiences of Job. The Apostle James speaks of his great endurance, saying, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience [endurance] of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”—James 5:11

Why did James say that “we count them happy” who endure, and then speak of Job, who went through such terrible trials? How could Job have been “counted happy” to endure such things as he did? The answer is in the phrase “the end of the Lord,” which means the end result of the Lord. Job saw by faith the end result that the Lord would have for him and all mankind—a resurrection from the dead. With calmness and with confident hope, he prayed to God, “O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave [death], that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change [resurrection] come.

Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.” (Job 14:13-15) By keeping focused on the goal—the “end of the Lord”—we, as Job, can be counted happy as we endure the difficulties of life, and exercise cheerful endurance even in the most severe trial.

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONY

James also speaks of endurance in the first chapter of his epistle, saying, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [trial]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (James 1:12) As James spoke of the endurance of Job and his faith to see the end result of the Lord’s dealings with him, here he does the same concerning us, saying that by properly enduring trial, we shall receive the crown of life. This crown of life, James says, is promised only to those who love the Lord supremely, and show their love by humble obedience to his will, even under difficult circumstances and endurance of trial.

Paul also speaks concerning the need for our development of endurance. He exhorts the church with these words, “Rejoicing in hope; patient [enduring] in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.” (Rom. 12:12) *Young’s Literal Translation* renders the verse as follows: “In . . . hope rejoicing; in . . . tribulation enduring; in . . . prayer persevering.” Paul here relates endurance to both hope and prayer. Truly, what better thing to focus our mind on in tribulation, enabling us to endure, than the hope of our calling. Likewise, what better practical method for maintaining that endurance than

communion with God in prayer, and perseverance in doing so. These are keys to achieving the “endurance” level of patience.

Just as Paul mentions longsuffering (vs. 4) in his famous discourse on love in I Corinthians 13, he also speaks of endurance. He says that love “Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (vs. 7) Notice in this verse that Paul says love requires both forbearance—“beareth all things”—and endurance. Thus, according to Paul, the first three aspects of patience—fornbearance, longsuffering, and endurance—all play an important role in the development of love.

Paul commended the Thessalonian brethren for their endurance, saying, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope [endurance of hope, *Rotherham Translation*] in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” (I Thess. 1:2,3) The three scriptures we have quoted from Paul have all mentioned our hope as well as endurance. Indeed, keeping focus on our hope is critical to our successful development of endurance—hopeful endurance.

JESUS’ EXAMPLE

Paul provides a further lesson with regard to endurance by first reminding us of those of past ages who faithfully endured. He then points us to Jesus, our ultimate example of endurance. We read, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses [those of past ages such as Job and others who endured], let us

lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience [endurance] the race that is set before us, 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. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—Heb. 12:1-3

Paul says that Jesus “endured the cross.” This was not just the literal cross at Calvary, but it was the entire three and one-half years of his sacrifice—full of testings, trials, and sufferings—all of which he faithfully endured. Jesus also endured the “contradiction of sinners against himself.” The word “contradiction” means opposition. Thus we see that Jesus not only endured faithfully his cross of experience, he endured faithfully, and with the proper attitude, the opposition of others. Paul says Jesus endured these things “for the joy that was set before him.” His mind was fixed on the hope set before him, and this caused him to endure hopefully, joyfully, cheerfully. Paul then tells us to look “unto Jesus” and to “consider him.” He is our perfect pattern and standard of endurance in trial and testing.

CONSTANCY

The Christian’s desire should be to reach a level of spiritual maturity in which forbearance, long-suffering, and endurance, are all being carried out faithfully, and to the greatest degree possible, continuously, over the long-term course of our walk.

To the extent such is the case, we have, to that degree, reached the fourth and highest level of patience—constancy. Patience, as described by constancy, means that these attributes and traits have become so deeply embedded in our character that they become almost automatic, are ever-present, and never-changing.

As previously noted, the endurance and constancy aspects of patience both come from the same New Testament Greek word: *hupomone*. A few synonyms suggested by *Strong's* and *Thayer's* which stress constancy are continuance, steadfastness, perseverance, and a permanent setting of character. Although translated from the same Greek word, we can perhaps draw a distinction between endurance and constancy in this way. Endurance is developed through individual experiences, one built upon another, and applied properly for the purpose of spiritual growth. Constancy is achieved through these combined experiences and their proper application over a long period of time during the Christian walk. Whereas endurance signifies a means whereby we may attain spiritual growth and maturity, constancy signifies that a measurable level of spiritual growth and maturity has indeed been attained.

JESUS' AND PAUL'S WORDS

The Scriptures provide us with numerous exhortations concerning the goal of achieving constancy. It is fitting that Jesus, our perfect example, made several statements about patience as it relates to constancy, for surely he had this high level of patience in his character. For example, he said, "He

that endureth [Greek, *hupomone*] to the end shall be saved.” (Matt. 10:22) Here we have endurance mentioned, but combined with the additional words, “to the end.” This tells us that our endurance must continue throughout our entire Christian walk—to the end. This is constancy.

We find the words of Jesus again along this line in Luke 21:19, “In your patience [Greek, *hupomone*] possess ye your souls.” Possessing our souls, that is, our New Creature being, with patience also points to constancy. *Moffat* translates the word for patience in this verse as “steadfast.” It is by steadfastness over the long-term in our Christian walk that patience truly comes into full “possession” of our being. This should be our goal, according to Jesus’ words. This is constancy.

Paul also encouraged the church concerning the goal of achieving constancy. He wrote to the brethren in Rome, encouraging them to be among those “who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) Here the same Greek word *hupomone* is translated “patient continuance.” Those seeking for glory, honor, and immortality, Paul says, can only achieve these goals through patient continuance—a lifetime of faithfulness in patience. This, also, is constancy.

In his last epistle, Paul encouraged his “son” Timothy with these words, saying, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” (II Tim. 2:12) The word translated “suffer” is here again *hupomone*, the Greek word for patience. The *Bible in Basic English* gives a more accurate thought. “If we go on to the end, then we will be ruling with him.” Going on to the end, continuance in our endurance, will gain us

the victory and a share in Christ's reign of blessing. This, too, is constancy.

Paul similarly stresses patience over the long haul of our Christian life with these words, "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36) *Moffat* gives the thought of constancy in his translation, phrasing the first part of the verse: "steady patience is what you need." Doing the will of God, as Paul makes mention of, is the lifetime work, the essence of our consecration, and will be critical until our dying breath. One of the keys to success in doing God's will, and thus receiving the promised inheritance, is steady patience. Here, again, is constancy.

We noted earlier, with regard to endurance, Paul's commendation to the Thessalonian brethren in his first epistle to them. Paul also commended them in his second epistle, this time in regard to constancy. "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure."—II Thess. 1:3,4

The "patience and faith" demonstrated in "all" their persecutions and tribulations, along with their "charity," or love, toward each other, gives indication that these brethren were well on their way to this highest mark of patience—constancy. It is not coincidental that the last word in this verse, translated "endure," takes us back to the first aspect of patience, because it is the Greek word for

“forbearance.” So here in this verse, Paul makes the full connection. The persecutions and tribulations in which we exercise forbearance, as the Thessalonian brethren did, if further developed into longsuffering, and then endurance, combined with faith and love, will eventually lead us to constancy—patience in its highest form.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Constancy and its various synonyms, such as patient continuance, steadfastness, and perseverance, can perhaps be summarized by drawing on a familiar analogy. Our Christian walk is a multitude of different kinds of experiences. We say that some experiences put us on the high mountaintop of blessing, while in other experiences we feel as though we are deep in the valley of trial. Still many other experiences seem to be between these two extremes, coming to us on the various plateaus of daily life. Achieving constancy does not diminish the mountaintop joys, nor does it eliminate the valley experiences. What it does do, however, in the spirit of our mind, is to keep us, as New Creatures—the inner man—from feeling as though we are on a roller coaster. As we have seen through the Scriptures, this attainment requires time, spiritual maturity, and much faith. It requires success in forbearance, longsuffering, and endurance—multiplied by the full complement of experiences and lessons learned in the Christian walk.

There are perhaps no better scriptures with which to conclude our discussion of the grace of patience than James 1:2-4. These verses show the need of, the working of, and the result of, adding this

all-important element to our character. They read, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [trials]; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect [complete] work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting [lacking] nothing.” Let us strive toward this goal, that patience will indeed have its perfect and complete work in us—completeness in forbearance, long-suffering, endurance, and constancy—to the end of our course. ■

*If on a quiet sea toward home I calmly sail,
With grateful heart, O God, to thee
I'll own the favoring gale.*

*But when the surges rise, and rest delays to come,
Blest be the tempest, kind the storm,
Which drives me nearer home.*

*Soon shall the waves and storms all yield to thy
control; Thy love will banish all alarms
And darkness from my soul.*

*Teach me, in every state, to make thy will my own;
And while the joys of sense depart,
To live by faith alone.*

—Hymns of Dawn

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 Stella Slavich, Dallas, TX—September 22.
Age, 89

Brother Ray Buchheit, Columbus, OH—October 6.
Age, 65

“O Give Thanks unto the LORD”

*“O give thanks
unto the LORD; for
he is good: for his
mercy endureth
for ever.”*

—*Psalms 136:1* **WHEN DAVID OFFICIALLY** became king over Israel, his first executive act was to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. The ark had been separated from the Tabernacle for seventy years. This space of time covered all of King Saul’s reign and Samuel’s service as a judge in Israel.

The return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem from Abinadab’s house in Baalah of Judah (also known as Kirjath-jearim) represented the return of God’s favor to Israel and the return of his presence among them after a long absence. The joy of the occasion was manifest in the magnificent procession of thirty thousand men with music and song. The procession climax came when the ark reached its destination and David sang his song of thanksgiving to God. The song began with these sentiments: “Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.” It concludes with the same sentiments: “O give

thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.”—I Chron. 16:8-34

This last expression was typical of David’s feelings toward his Creator. In the Book of Psalms it is found in several places. The 106th, 107th, 118th, and 136th Psalms open with these identical words. Although the *King James Version* uses beautiful phraseology in describing the great God of all the universe—“For he is good, for his mercy endureth forever”—some of the force of David’s description of God is lost in the translation. The *Revised Version* says, “O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.” The *Contemporary English Version* in a similar way says, “Praise the LORD because he is good to us, and his love never fails.”

It is particularly noteworthy that this last portion of David’s expression of love and appreciation for God becomes a refrain that is repeated over and over in the 136th Psalm as David relates the great and wonderful deeds of God. He concludes with thanks again when he mentions last of all, “Who giveth food to all flesh, for his steadfast [eternal] love endures forever.”—vs. 25

Those who have been privileged to know God in this present day should, like David, appreciate the goodness of God more and more. We should call to mind daily how he “loadeth us with benefits,” and give thanks. We should pause each day to think of God’s great deeds. Our wise, loving, and kind Father in heaven has thought of us in preparing this earth for habitation. The temperature is just right. The pressure doesn’t vary more than a fraction of an atmosphere. Water, food, and clothing are available

for most of mankind. It is sad to say, however, that the great majority of mankind does not give a second thought to God, much less thank him for all of these benefits.

People today seem to have lost that disposition or attitude which was present in the pilgrim fathers who came to this land many years ago. The pilgrims had to eke out an existence from a hard and rocky soil, but they succeeded. With much effort and professed faith in God, they brought forth a rich harvest. The most beautiful part of this story, which we rejoice to recall, is that they remembered God, accounting him as being responsible for these blessings, and setting aside a special day of thanksgiving to God.

The holiday which is observed in this nation this month is a most remarkable and a most wonderful holiday. It, at least in a small way, stirs people to remembering that there is a God and to have reverence toward him. Yet, this remembrance of God is waning. Since the first celebrations of Thanksgiving in this country by the pilgrim fathers, many of our government leaders and presidents have made special Thanksgiving Day proclamations. We note these specific instances. In 1676, one hundred years prior to our nation's independence, the first official governmental proclamation of Thanksgiving was made by the governing council of Charlestown, Massachusetts. The proclamation was the equivalent of about a page and a half of this magazine, and contained 21 direct or indirect references to God. It also concluded with a quotation of the entire 96th Psalm.

Over one hundred years later, in 1789, President George Washington gave the first presidential proclamation of a day of Thanksgiving. It was similar in length to the one given in 1676, and contained 12 references to God. President Abraham Lincoln likewise issued a similar-length proclamation in 1863, containing 7 references to God. Last year, President Barak Obama's 2011 Thanksgiving Day proclamation, also of similar length, made only 1 reference to God.

Thus it is not surprising to us when we observe that Thanksgiving has become a day of feasting, and most people think of food more than of God on that day. They forget that the day was designed to remind people in this nation of their wise, loving, just, and powerful Creator, and to give him thanks. The question could be asked, "Why are people in this country not like our pilgrim fathers, having the spirit of thankfulness?" One answer might be that the problems and perplexities, suffering, sickness, pain and death—which affects everyone—overshadows the people's thoughts of God's goodness. Another answer might be that most people are selfishly engrossed in their own pursuits, or that the great Adversary of God, Satan, has blinded the minds of men. Yet another answer may be that they are imperfect and forget so easily, failing to exercise their reasoning powers with regard to God's goodness.

However, lest we expect too much of mankind today and be condemning rather than understanding, let us analyze an incident that took place during our Lord Jesus' ministry on earth. The incident has a forceful lesson on the "natural" tendency for

people to forget to be thankful because of sin, selfishness, and the influence of the Adversary. The incident is recorded in Luke 17:11-19 and reads as follows: "It came to pass, as he [Jesus] went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

It is amazing that only one leper had enough gratitude and thoughtfulness to return to Jesus and to give him thanks when all ten of them found themselves healed of their leprosy. We should not conclude that the other nine lepers did not have faith. Rather, they lacked thoughtfulness, appreciation, and gratitude.

All ten lepers had faith because they did as Jesus bid them, and were on their way to the priests in an unclean condition, expecting a miracle to happen. Indeed, a miracle did happen. As they went, they were cleansed. In the Mosaic Law, if a leper was healed of his disease, the priests of Israel had to approve and verify his cure before he could be reinstated

into society. Specific rituals had to be performed before this was possible, as recorded in Leviticus, chapter 14. The fact that these lepers went to see the priests (before their leprosy was healed while they traveled) means that they had faith. Only one, however, had gratitude; and “He was a Samaritan,” Luke said, to the shame of Israel.

When Jesus began his ministry, he spoke to the people of Nazareth, “Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus [Elisha] the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” (Luke 4:27) Jesus was implying that he would not be accepted in his own country, by his own people, and that because of this, God would have to go outside of the nation of Israel to select a “people for his name.” The cleansing of Naaman and the cleansing of the Samaritan has significance. Both were outside of Israel’s circle of favor, and both were extremely grateful for their cleansing.

There are many lessons and pictures in this incident of the ten lepers. One of the principal lessons is that the footstep followers of Christ are pictured by this thankful Samaritan. As the Samaritan had gratitude and thankfulness, so also those in Christ must have gratitude in their hearts. These, being a mixture of “Israelites indeed” and Gentiles is aptly pictured by Samaritans, who in natural life were a mixture of Israelites and Babylonians.

Leprosy denotes sin, and those who are healed of leprosy, symbolically speaking, are those who receive the benefits of the ransom. So also, those receiving these benefits say, in the words of the Apostle Paul, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift,” (II Cor. 9:15) in appreciation for their cleansing from

the leprosy of sin. Romans 6:23 reads, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." In this season of thanksgiving, we can ask ourselves, "Are we glad that we have the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord?" Thanks be to God!

"In every thing give thanks," admonishes the Apostle Paul, "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (I Thess. 5:18) Notice how earlier Paul says in I Thessalonians 4:3, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." This implies that every experience which we receive for our edification and sanctification is also to be received with thankfulness. We are not only to be thankful for the pleasant experiences—the joyful experiences—but also the difficult and trying experiences.

We are to be concerned about one another's welfare and to hold each member of the body of Christ in the bonds of love. As the Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 1:3, giving us the example, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." Let us be thankful for all of our brethren in the narrow way, and let us pray for one another. This is gratitude, appreciation, and a thankful spirit in full operation.

We also should try to do good, and thus provoke thankfulness in others, as well as have the spirit of thankfulness ourselves. In the experiences which the Apostle Paul had in prison at Rome, the Philippian brethren were helpful to him, inspiring him to write, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." (Phil. 1:3,4) The spirit of thankfulness abounded in the Apostle Paul, and the mere thought of the wonderful Philippian brethren caused him

to be ever so thankful. Paul continues to write in this epistle, “Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.” Paul was not only moved to prayer through remembrance of the Philippian brethren, but also he found it a real joy to pray for them.

Would it not be wonderful if this attitude displayed by the Apostle Paul was found everywhere in the world? To answer this question, let us go back again to the time when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem, as recorded in I Chronicles 16, and when David sang his song of thanksgiving. (vss. 8-34) In that event and in David’s song of thanksgiving, we have a prophecy of a still greater event to come. In Revelation 21:3, we read, “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” Bringing the ark back to Jerusalem was intended to be a fore gleam of the blessed millennial kingdom of Christ, when God will be reconciled to men through the Christ. In this picture, David represents the Christ, and Israel represents the world of mankind. The song of thanksgiving sung by David will be taught to all mankind and sung by them in gratitude and appreciation of their Creator. This will be the true thanksgiving holiday that will be observed worldwide.

Now, only a few have the spirit of thankfulness and gratitude. However, then, in that kingdom, this spirit will be everywhere as God will “pour out” his “spirit upon all flesh.” (Joel 2:28) “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.” Praise ye the Lord! ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. Balko

Delaware Valley, PA
November 11

M. Davis

San Diego, CA November 9-11

L. Griehs

New Haven, CT November 4

K. Humphreys

San Diego, CA November 9-11

H. Montague

New Haven, CT November 4

P. Mora

San Diego, CA November 9-11

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CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 4—Westwoods Italian-American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. M. Suraci. Phone: (203) 430-5770

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 9-11—Alliant University, 10455 Pomerado Road, San Diego, CA 92131. For accommodations at Alliant University, contact B. Bach, PO Box 323, Alpine, CA 91903. Phone: (619) 445-4879 or E-mail: bbach1@cox.net. Other information, contact R. Rice, 13084 Treecrest Street, Poway, CA 92064. Phone: (858) 486-0381 or E-mail: robin.rice@gmx.com

JERSEY CITY CONVENTION, November 18—Loyalty Lodge, 1912 Morris Avenue, Union, NJ 07083. Phone: (908) 688-9842. Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (718) 961-4437, (917) 554-2348 or E-mail: sandykoterba@gmail.com

IBADAN CONVENTION, December 1—Place of Fellowship, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. E-mail: egbucaje@gmail.com

CHICAGO NEW YEAR CONVENTION, December 29,30—Addison Park District, 120 E. Oak Street, Addison, IL 60101. Contact L. Manzuk. Phone: (630) 660-1874

AUSTRALIA CONVENTION, January 25-28—Wilkin Baptist Camp, 57 Noble Street, Anglesea, Vic. 3230, Australia. Contact G. Smith. E-mail: graemedawn@gmail.com

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 15-17—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact J. Freer, 8012 Vintage Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Phone: (916) 879-4655

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 2-4—Howard Johnson Hotel, 230 West State Road 436, Altamonte Springs,

FL 32714. Hotel reservations, phone: (407) 862-4455. Specify "Florida Bible Students" for special rate. Deadline for special rate is February 18. Other information, contact E. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

GREATER NEW LONDON PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 10—Society Road, East Lyme, CT. Contact V. Grillo. Phone: (860) 823-7099 or E-mail: millennialview@sbcglobal.net

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 16,17—Quality Inn-Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48083. Hotel reservations, phone (248) 689-7500. Specify "Detroit Bible Students" for special rate. Other information, contact P. Nemes. Phone: (248) 649-6588

Our hearts o'erflow in prayer and praise

*To thee most gracious Lord,
That thou hast opened up our eyes
To understand thy Word.*

*That thou has sought us out to run
This narrow heavenly way.*

*O lead us by thy Spirit, Lord,
For this we daily pray.*

We're thankful for our blessings too.

*We never should complain,
For even trials are stepping stones
That bring us lasting gain.*

*Sometimes discouragement comes in
To hide our face from thee.*

*'Tis then, we pray, grasp tight our hand
That we may closer be.*

*With gratitude and courage then,
O let us follow on.*

*By faith we see the prize in sight
As we behold the dawn.*

—Poems of the Way