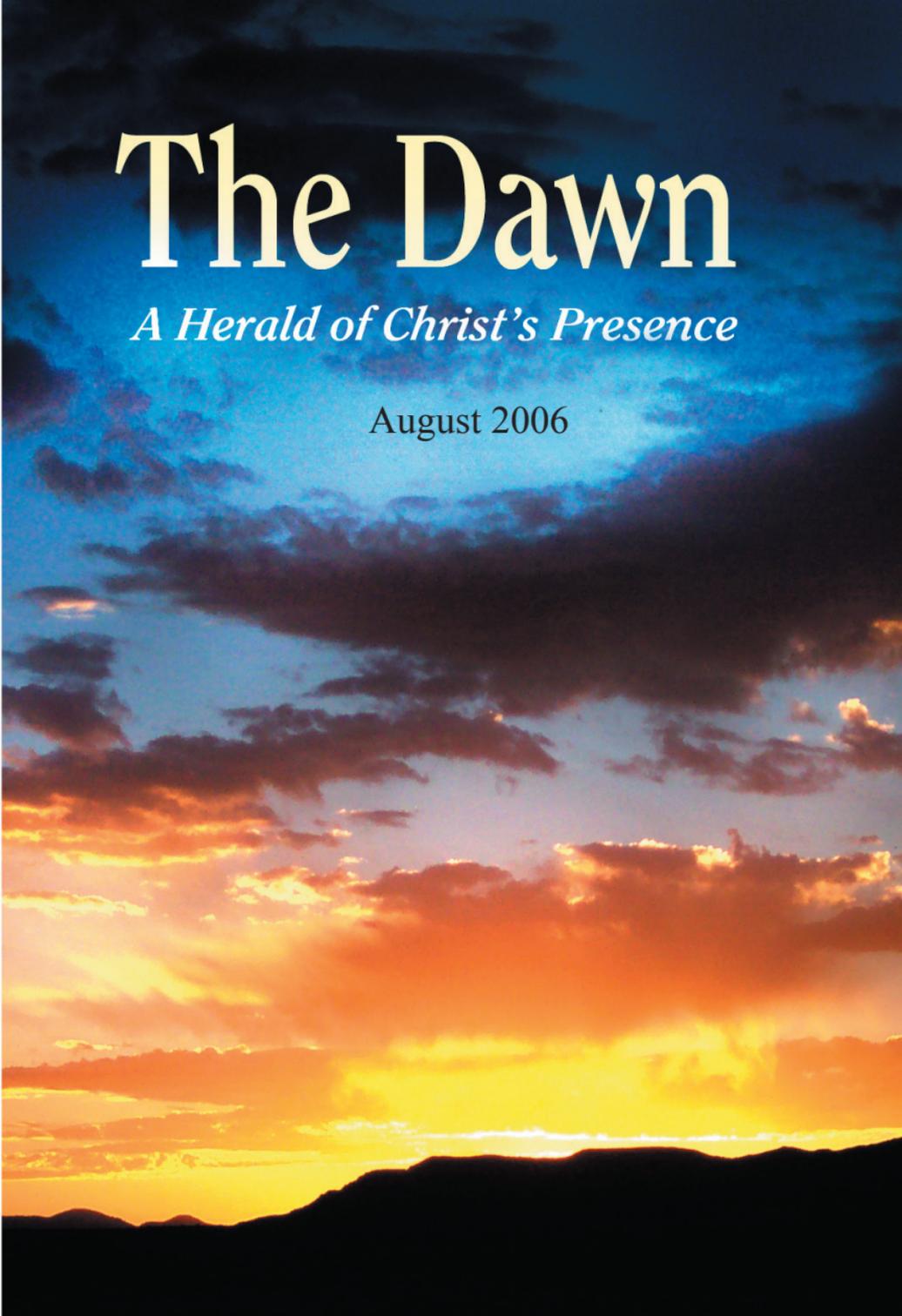


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Medo-Persia and The Islamic Republic of Iran

*“Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.”
—Isaiah 45:1,2*

THE PROPHET ISAIAH points forward more than one hundred and fifty years to the time when Cyrus would be commissioned by God to overthrow Babylon—the first world empire—and to establish the Medo-Persian Empire in its place. Having been raised up for this purpose, Cyrus would thus fulfill the promised release of the nation of Israel from their seventy years of captivity and desolation in Babylon.

ISRAEL’S RELEASE FROM EXILE

The Spirit of God was wonderfully manifested in the

outworking of events as they transpired during this historic period in the lives of the exiled Jewish people. “In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah (Jer. 29:10) might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.”—II Chron. 36:22,23

JEREMIAH’S PROPHECY

Jeremiah also wrote about the reason for Israel’s punishment and the purpose regarding their exile in Babylon. “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.” (Jer. 25:8,9) The prophet identifies Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, as the one God raised up to accomplish his punishments upon Israel.

The extent of the punishment inflicted upon the Israelites is also recorded. “Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the

bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” (vss. 10,11) The prophet reveals the complete and extensive desolation that came upon the nation of Israel as a result of all their iniquities.

THE FALL OF BABYLON

Jeremiah also records God’s purpose as it relates to the ending of the seventy years of captivity, the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire, and the subsequent establishment of the second of four universal empires that would be raised up to accomplish the long period of subjugation over the Israelite nation. “It shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.” (vs. 12) Nehemiah wrote, “These are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city.”—Neh. 7:6

RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Isaiah foretold God’s promise to restore Jerusalem and to rebuild Israel’s Temple after their years of exile in Babylon. He said that it was God “That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places [wastes, *Marginal Translation*] thereof: That

saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”—Isa. 44:26-28

Although Jerusalem would be rebuilt and its Temple restored, after the Babylonian exile ended, Israel was destined to be a subjugated people under Gentile rule for many more centuries to come. It was the Divine intention that this punishment of servitude would be carried out, not only under the Babylonian reign but also by the Medo-Persians, until they were in turn overthrown by Greece. Greece, in turn, would be conquered by Rome.

CYRUS THE GREAT

Cyrus [Koresh] was the founder of the Persian Empire and the conqueror of Babylon by Divine purpose and design. He continues to be known as Cyrus the Great, which distinguishes him from his grandfather, Cyrus I. He had purposely been selected to carry out the second phase of universal dominion, its place in world history, and its relationship to the sons of Israel.

In our featured text (Isa. 45:1,2), Isaiah referred to Cyrus as God’s ‘anointed.’ The word anointed is a form of the Hebrew word, Messiah [*Strong’s Bible Concordance*, Old Testament word #4899. anointed, Messiah]. In this scripture, we understand the word to convey the thought that Cyrus would be raised up to act as God’s shepherd on behalf of the Jewish people at the time of their release from Babylonian exile. The prophet explains, “For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee

by thy name [Cyrus]: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.”—Isa. 45:4

Thus Cyrus the Great, who was most likely a worshipper of pagan gods, would be raised up by God and prepared to accomplish the Divine purpose as it related to the conquest of the Babylonian Empire. He would also set in motion the release of the Jewish people from seventy years of exile and desolation under the Babylonians. By this victory, Cyrus was thus instrumental in bringing to an end the domination of Mesopotamia and the Near East under Semitic rulership, and the establishment of the first dominant universal empire of Aryan origin.

In response to these great historic events concerning Cyrus, Isaiah also recalls, “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man [Cyrus] that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”—Isa. 46:9-11

THE ARYANS

The word ‘arya’ from which Aryans has been taken is a Persian word meaning ‘noble’ and, in a broad sense, is generally used to identify the culture of the ancient eastern semi-nomadic people who inhabited the Iranian plateau and the steppes of Central Asia. When these nomads began to migrate and expand into Eastern Europe, they took their culture with them. The term ‘Indo-European’ is thus used

in a collective sense to describe the ethnic background, religion, and way of life relating to the Aryan people.

During the period 2,000-1,500 B.C., the Aryans split into two major groups known as the Medes and the Persians. Cyrus the Great had united these two groups into what became the second world power, known as the Medo-Persian Empire. The Sassanid era from A.D. 224-640 was one of the most important and historically influential periods of Iran's history. It was during this time that the highest achievement of Persian civilization occurred, although the Medo-Persian Empire had lost its significance as the second universal power. This was a most important time in their culture, and it was the last great period before the Muslim conquest in the 7th century A.D.

THE ISLAMIC CONQUEST

With the overthrow of the Sassanid regime, A.D. 637-651, the Iranian people were gradually converted to Islam. Previous Persian influences were gradually absorbed into the new Islamic polity. After Prophet Muhammad's death in A.D. 632, most of what was considered Arab territory became united under the new religion and culture of Islam.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, Muhammad's homeland, the responsibility for maintaining order fell upon the sheik [chief], an office that was not inherited. The sheik was elected through the conferring of an oath of allegiance. Arabs held enormous contempt for the hereditary kingdoms of their Persian neighbors. This oath was pledged by every member of the tribe, and could be withdrawn if the sheik failed in his duties. Muhammad adopted the oath of allegiance

for converts to his movement, and the Muslim confession of faith became a new and distinct version of the Arab oath. It also became an important political tool after his death.

Muhammad had not chosen a successor, so there was uncertainty as to who should lead the people after his death. It was decided that a consultative assembly of Muslim elders should choose a new leader. A consensus was reached and Abu Bakr, became known as Khalifat Rasul Allah. After much discussion, the Party of Ali [Shiites] who had earlier opposed the motion, took the oath that allowed Abu Bakr to assume the role of leadership.

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

The name Persia, which had identified the ancient Aryan people for many centuries, was changed during the years between the two World Wars. In 1935, Persia officially became “The Islamic Republic of Iran.”

In November 1979, Iran’s new leader Ayatollah Khomeini urged his people to demonstrate against the interests of the United States and Israel. He denounced the American government as “The Great Satan” and the enemies of Islam. The Iran Hostage Crisis was the result. From November 4, 1979 until January 20, 1981, a period of 444 days, student proxies, of the new Iranian regime, held 52 diplomats and other American citizens hostage. The crisis was a direct cause for the loss of Jimmy Carter’s re-election for a second term as President of the United States. The hostages were released twenty minutes after Reagan’s inaugural address that confirmed his presidency. The Hostage Crisis punctuated the 1st

Islamic Revolution in modern times. In April 1981, the Algiers Treaty was signed in which the United States agreed to not interfere politically or militarily in Iran's affairs, nor to allow the hostages to take any legal action against the Iranian government.

THE GROWING THREAT

When the United States and its allies encouraged the Shah of Iran to start up a nuclear energy program in the 1970's, they did not realize the present consequences of their actions.

Iran's nuclear program began to accelerate in the late 1990's to coincide with a developing independent press, and just before a reformist parliament was elected in 2000.

The reformists supported the program but intended to comply with Iran's international obligations. The United States, however, did not support the reformists and labeled Iran as a member of the "axis of evil," along with Iraq and North Korea. By 2003, it became clear that the reform movement had stalled, and that the international community began to take notice of Iran and its nuclear program.

During these past three decades, other nations, including some of Iran's neighbors—Israel, India and Pakistan—also engaged in nuclear programs. The situation has become increasingly dangerous and there is growing hostility between Iran and the United States. Recently, representatives from the United States, Britain, Germany, France, China, and Russia met to discuss the threat of Iran's program to develop nuclear weapons. All of these nations except China and Russia requested immediate action from the United Nations Security Council, and the

International Atomic Energy Agency, to force Iran to end its program.

A VOICE AGAINST ISRAEL

With the recent election of Iran's new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the eight-year reform government that preceded him came to an end, and he aroused international anger in a series of blunt statements that were directed against his neighbor Israel. In one of his reckless speeches, he said that Israel should be wiped off the map, or perhaps that it should be transferred from their present location in the Middle East, to a new location in either Europe or North America. He suggested that some European countries, or the United States, Canada or Alaska could give a portion of their land for a Jewish state. Furthermore, he said that the Holocaust, during World War II, was a myth that served as Europe's pretext for the very existence of the state of Israel.

Ahmadinejad's extremist and inflammatory comments reflect his intention to become the leader of the anti-Israeli campaign in the Middle East. It also underscores the reason it is so important that the international community work together to prevent Iran from any further development with their nuclear weapons program. Israel's Foreign Ministry spokesman reacted to his statements by accusing him of acting outside of international law. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and many world leaders, condemned his remarks.

DEFIANCE

Iran has insisted that its nuclear research complies with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty of

which they were a signatory, and that its program is designed solely as a means to produce electricity. The EU-3 nations—Britain, France and Germany—however, have joined the United States in calling for Tehran to be referred to the United Nations Security Council because of its outright defiance. The two other nations, Russia and China, have historically opposed the other members of the Council because of their close connections with Iran.

Russian and Chinese officials have endeavored to persuade Iran to give up their nuclear ambitions. Recently, however, Russian officials became angry that Iran had broken a voluntary moratorium and had announced their intention to resume uranium enrichment efforts which they believe could produce enough material to build a nuclear bomb in a few years time. Russia was unable to persuade Iran to accept a compromise proposal that would satisfy the United States and the EU-3, in which a joint Russian-Iranian project would enrich uranium in Russia. Iranian officials threatened to end all voluntary cooperation with the United Nations, including their allowing spot checks of atomic sites, if it was referred to the Security Council.

DANGEROUS TIMES

There has been much talk in recent months about Iran's underground nuclear facilities at Esfahan, and United States intentions to destroy them with deep, earth-penetrating weapons. Chris Ford, in an article "Time's Arrow: The Coming Nuclear Epiphany in Persia," *Washington Post* (April 20, 2006), refers to Semour Hersh's report in *The New Yorker*, (April 8, 2006). The report concerns United States plans

for a possible pre-emptive strike against Iranian nuclear facilities, and Ford says, “This strike includes a very viable nuclear option which was approved months ago, and is now in operation. The planes are already on continuous alert, making nuclear delivery practice runs along the Iranian border . . . waiting only for the signal from President Bush to drop their payloads of conventional and nuclear weapons on some 400 targets. And when this attack comes—either as a stand-alone ‘knock-out blow,’ or else as the precursor to a full scale, regime-changing invasion, like Iraq—there will be no warning, no declaration of war, no hearings, no public debate. The already issued orders governing the operation put the decision solely in the hands of the president.”

No one can predict the final outcome of world events as they are unfolding during the closing years of this age, and the completion of the church. The present crisis in Iran, however, brings our attention to a very dangerous situation at the present time. Apostle Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, spoke of perilous times that would come about during the final days of this present Gospel Age. He wrote, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” (II Tim. 3:1) We are witnesses of the increasing violence that is taking place throughout the world as evidence of the closing scenes of this age.

PREPARE FOR WAR

The Prophet Joel was moved by God’s Spirit to provide a glimpse of this present time. “Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare [sanctify, *MT*] war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into

swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.” (Joel 3:9,10) The prophet points to the spirit and willingness in which men are ready to die as martyrs for a misguided cause, and the degree in which suicide bombers sanctify war and violence. ‘Let the weak say, I am strong.’ This attitude, and the defiance with which it is stated, describes the present crisis and the near inevitable collapse of all worldly institutions. We watch the events of our time with increased interest, and realization that Christ’s kingdom will soon assume control of the human family’s destiny.

THE GREATER CYRUS

Cyrus, king of Persia, who conquered Babylon and set free from bondage the typical people of Israel, represents our Lord, as the “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev. 19:16) Babylon felt secure behind its massive impregnable walls, enormous gates, and ample provisions stored against any threat or siege. Cyrus and his army from the east diverted the waters of the Euphrates River and overthrew the mighty capital city of Babylon. The city was not only overthrown, but also the entire empire, together with all of its great power, influence, and idols of silver and gold.

Mystic Babylon is also described by the Revelator, “Upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” (Rev. 17:5) The apostate church system, including its many divisions, is also destined to fall together with all of its riches, influence, and false teachings. Of her, it is also said, “The water [Euphrates] thereof was dried

up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.” (Rev. 16:12) “All nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.” (Rev. 18:3) “She saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.” (vs. 7) The greater Cyrus will bring an end to all of earth’s corruption and deception represented in Babylon, and will set free the entire family of man who have been held bondage under the Divine sentence of sin and death. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

AUGUST 3—“Separate yourselves from the people of the land.”—Ezra 10:11 (Z. ’99-203 Hymn 57A)

AUGUST 10—“If there be any consolation [comfort] in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”—Philippians 2:1,2 (Z. ’04-296 Hymn 166)

AUGUST 17—“Quench not the Spirit.”—I Thessalonians 5:19 (Z. ’03-25 Hymn 260)

AUGUST 24—“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”—John 17:11 (Z. ’03-77 Hymn 230)

AUGUST 31—“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”—Daniel 3:17,18 (Z. ’99-172 Hymn 360)

A Persian Fable



A Persian fable says:

One day

A wanderer found a lump of clay;
So redolent of sweet perfume,
Its odors scented all the room.

“What art thou?” was his quick demand,
“Art thou some gem from Samarcand,
Or spikenard, in this rude disguise,
Or other costly merchandise?”

“Nay, I am but a lump of clay.”

“Then, whence this wondrous perfume—say!”

“Friend, if the secret I disclose,
I have been dwelling with the rose.”

Sweet parable! And will not those
Who love to dwell with Sharon’s Rose,
Distil sweet odors all around,
Though low and mean themselves be found?

Dear Lord, abide with us, that we
May draw our perfume fresh from thee!

—Selected

What Is My Calling?

Key Verse: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”*
—*Luke 4:18*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 4

PEOPLE OF ALL AGES MAY question their ultimate goals and purpose for being. How and where does one find clear direction for their life? In exploring that question, Christians must also ask, What is my vocation—what is God calling me to do and to be? Jesus provided an example when he declared his calling to be a ministry of compassion to those who live in poverty, in bondage, in oppression, and with disabilities. His teachings should help us to see the importance of having sympathy for others who are suffering, and will lead us to look for ways to be of service.

The Lord Jesus had been divinely commissioned by the power of God to fulfill the Gospel message, which would bring “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” (Luke 2:10) As stated earlier in our verse, Luke 4:18, Jesus is declaring to us his call to ministry, and is applying the words that he read in the synagogue at Nazareth, on the Sabbath Day, to himself. Turning to the prophecy from which this quotation is taken, we read there, “The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto

the meek.” (Isa. 61:1) Jesus was thus anointed to complete his work when, at 30 years of age, he had reached the perfection of manhood, having presented himself to the Father a living sacrifice. He was baptized by John at Jordan, and it was because of this anointing of Jesus, that he bore record, saying, “I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:32-34) In the same sense, we read again, “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” (Isa. 11:2) Similarly, the same Spirit in Christ is referred to as the ‘Spirit of Christ,’ ‘the mind of Christ’—“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 2:5

What does it mean to have the mind of Christ? It implies that we are to be teachable, loving, kind, considerate, and humble. To be humble-minded will help us to learn more about our loving Heavenly Father, and of his will in our lives. (John 4:34; 5:30) We should then be prepared to focus our minds on doing the best that we can each day to live a life which is pleasing to him. One of the qualities necessary for us to be acceptable to the Father is an eager desire to please him. Just as our dear Lord Jesus did in his life, our calling is to do the will of God. It is for us to follow the leadings of the Lord, and to accept them. Our strong desire should also be to work at having the character-likeness of our Master. “Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you.”—Col. 3:16

We further see from our lesson that Jesus was compassionate, and demonstrated sympathy toward others. This was shown on many occasions, such as is recorded in the verse, “When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them.” (Matt. 9:36) Jesus was moved to sacrifice his time and strength on behalf of others. Our attitude should be similar. We should be willing to deny self by sacrificing the flesh and its interests, and thereby participate in Jesus’ ministry of compassion. ■

Hope for Healing

Key Verse: “*He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.*”
—**Luke 8:48**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 8

FAITH IS AN ESSENTIAL element of Christian character. “Without faith it is impossible to please him [God].” (Heb. 11:6) The Lord Jesus gave us a wonderful example of the importance of having a strong faith, when he rewarded this woman by healing her. As we recall from the account recorded, beginning

with Luke 8:43, she had been sick for twelve years, and had spent all of her livelihood on physicians without any results. In simple faith, and reliance upon the testimony of Christ, she came to Jesus, so fully assured of his power that she did not wait even to call attention to herself. As the multitudes thronged around Jesus, she said; “If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.”—Matt. 9:21

It is evident from our lesson that when people desperately seek healing and wholeness, they may simultaneously experience hope and despair. The close relationship between faith and healing can be found in Jesus’ words, ‘thy faith hath made thee whole.’ It is also evident in Jesus’ challenge to Jairus, to have and maintain faith in the crisis of a dying daughter, when this miracle was immediately followed by another, still more wonderful miracle, the raising of the dead to life.

We read, “Behold, there came a man named Jairus, . . . and he fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought him that he would come into his house; For he had one only

daughter, . . . and she lay a dying.” (Luke 8:41,42) Since the crowd was so large, Jesus could not get to the house, and the girl died. Verses 50 to 52 tell us that when Jesus heard about it, he said, “Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. And when he came into the house, . . . all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.” Jesus knew that she was dead. However, as in the case of Lazarus, our Lord referred to death as a sleep. (John 11:11-14) Jesus then “took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. . . and she arose.”—vss. 54,55

Those who believe in Christ, believe the testimony which God gave concerning his Son through Christ’s own teachings and the mighty works which God displayed through him, to the end that men might confidently believe and have hope. Our Lord Jesus was rewarding their faith and gave them evidence of his mighty power.

To believe Jesus in those days, when his marvelous works astonished the people, and the beauty of his character impressed so many, was most reasonable upon those of simple hearts, who desired only to know the truth of God and to obey it. We read, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence [realization] of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1) Our hope finds a foundation—finds in faith—a basis or understanding because it rests on a Divine promise. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” (Eph.2:8) The evidences—the foundation of faith in Christ—are just as reliable today as they were then. In our own lives, we should seek to see how well we are striving to develop a strong faith, and to demonstrate it in our daily experiences. We should give thanks to God for being such a wonderful, loving Heavenly Father, who, though so far above us, desires our love and confidence. We should also be thankful for Jesus’ ministry of compassion at work in our lives. ■

Stretching Our Love

Key Verse: *“He answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”*
—*Luke 10:27*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 10

OUR LORD HERE IS QUOT-ing from the Old Testament, and is making a reference to the Divine Law. (Deut. 6:4,5) Heavenly wisdom was certainly shown in this wonderful, comprehensive statement regarding love, that Jesus gave in response to the question, “Which is the first [greatest] commandment of all?” (Mark 12:28,29) Love for God was referred to as the chiefest of all commandments, and nothing else could be added to it. We should daily be seeing more clearly the force of this expression—‘love is the principal thing.’ The Bible tells us, “God is love.” (I John 4:16) He is also referred to as the “Father of lights,” and mercy, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. (James 1:17) The true and living God is to be recognized and have first place in our heart. We will then be compelled to be anxious to do those things which would be the service of our God, as a demonstration of our love. It should lead us to a desire to see to what extent we are loving God, and keeping the Father’s law; for, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.”—Rom. 13:10

The Lord Jesus then proceeded beyond the question posed to him by the lawyer, when he declared that the

second commandment stands related to the first—namely, ‘Thou shalt love . . . thy neighbour as thyself.’ He divided the law into two parts, just as on the two tables of stone given to Moses by God on Mt. Sinai. (Exod. 31:18) Our Lord was showing to us that one part related to God, and man’s obligations to his Creator; and the second part related to man’s responsibilities toward his fellow man. We must note also that it is second only to the previous statement of the love to God. Jesus was actually recalling the words from Leviticus 19:17,18, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, . . . but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” We are further told, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (I John 4: 20) The person who loves his neighbor will not intentionally injure him in act, word or thought. It is important for us to keep this test clearly in our hearts and minds.

A further question was posed to Jesus, “Who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29) If we look at the example of the good Samaritan from verses 33-36, we should come to the realization that every one is neighbor to every other one. We recall from the account that a priest and a Levite passed by an injured man who had been left on the side of the road by thieves. A kindhearted Samaritan, common and despised by the priestly class of Jews, stopped and helped the injured stranger. This unselfish act of compassion saved the man’s life.

Through the story of the good Samaritan, Jesus taught that a neighbor is one who, ignoring all the racial and ethnic barriers, shows mercy and love to another. We are to express our love for our neighbor by being thoughtful and considerate of his welfare and interests, and helpful to him as far as it is in our power to do. ■

Building Community

Key Verse: *“The lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”*
—*Luke 14:23*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 14

The Pharisee had done something of the very kind with respect to not expecting something in return in inviting Jesus and his disciples to dinner. He well knew that they were poor and would not be able to ask him in return. The Lord Jesus was giving suggestions along the line of humility on the part of guests, then to entertainers concerning how they might show hospitality to others. The Lord wished to show his host how in inviting himself and his disciples he had really performed a gracious act. A work of charity (love) and mercy, done with the proper motive, will be sure to have a blessing in the future.

We read, as recorded in verse 15, “When one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom.” This comment, probably made by one of the apostles and spoken with a reverent spirit, turns our focus to the future

THIS LESSON IS A CONTIN-uation of our Lord’s remarks made at the home of the Pharisee when he counseled his host concerning being rewarded for doing good deeds. The Lord said, “When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours. . . . But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.” (vss. 12,13)

blessings to come to those who also “waited for the kingdom of God.” (Mark 15:43) The reference to eating bread in the kingdom, would signify being on good terms with the King, and he likened God’s kingdom blessings to a great feast. This is really a common illustration throughout the Scriptures. “A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, . . . well refined,” is the Prophet Isaiah’s description of the blessings which the Lord has in reservation for the world of mankind.—Isa. 25:6

In verses 16-22, our Lord’s parable pictures a great feast. On the day of this feast, servants were sent to notify those already invited to come promptly to the feast. Contrary to all precedent, these guests declined, asked to be excused, literally ‘begged off.’ It was really a shameful, selfish act to allow the host to expect them to come, and then at the last minute to not attend.

Our natural tendency is to put ourselves first, but this makes it difficult to form and function as any kind of essential community. Community can be defined as the condition of living with others, with having friendly association, and fellowship. We may ask, How can we recognize the importance of self-esteem while avoiding self-centeredness and how can we affirm individual worth while maintaining community?

Jesus taught that we need to see things from a new perspective: we need to view ourselves with humility, but graciously accept the recognition and esteem offered by others. “He that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” (Matt. 23:12) Humility is essential to all who would be God’s people, and it is the underlying principle of a Christian character. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” (Rom. 12:10) We are all part of the family of man, and should demonstrate humility, love, and sympathy toward one another. Jesus was the perfect illustration—humbling himself, first to become a man; and then, when a man, becoming “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—Phil. 2:8 ■

God's Rule in the Affairs of Mankind

*“By me kings reign,
And rulers decree
justice. By me
princes rule, and
nobles, All who
judge rightly.”*
—*Proverbs 8:15,16,*
*New American
Standard Bible*

A JUST AND LOVING HEAVENLY Father has allowed fallen man to rule over the affairs of the human creation during the long and tragic course of their history. Man had broken the covenant relationship that had been established with God as re-

corded by the Prophet Hosea. “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But they like men [Adam, *Marginal Translation*] have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.” (Hos. 6:6,7) Having thus severed that relationship with their Creator, man was destined to suffer the consequences of his own proud and selfish actions.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

During the early period of the world's history, the Israelites were set aside to serve as a typical people under God's special providence. The Apostle Paul explains this relationship when he was invited to speak in the synagogue, during his stay at Antioch in Pisidia. (Acts 13:14,15) "Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan [Canaan], he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis [Kish], a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years."—vss. 16-21

THE RULE OF JUDGES

During the approximate 450-year period of what the apostle in this passage of scripture designates the 'time of judges,' the Israelites ruled their people under Divine supervision by an autocratic form of government. This was equitably administered under the providential hand of God in proportion as those in authority remained loyal and obedient to him and his supervision. During this time, each of the twelve tribes managed its own affairs with the heads of each tribe constituting a system of judgeship concerning everyday affairs. The separate tribes remained in a

loose union with one another because of blood relationship and a common language. “When the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.”—Judg. 2:18

The Divine promise to the sons of Israel was that as long as they would walk in the statutes of the Divine Law they would be God’s special people and receive his care and blessings in all of their temporal affairs. However, if they should neglect him and his commandments, they would receive his chastisements of pestilence or captivity until such a time as they would repent from their wrong doings. In such cases of repentance, they were assured that God would raise up deliverers who, as his representatives, would provide them with the necessary instruction and guidance.

THE RULE OF KINGS

The Israelites grew dissatisfied with judges ruling over them, and demanded to have a king that they might appear like other nations on the world scene. They were warned, however, that their proud desires would not be a lasting and satisfactory arrangement. This came to pass when Israel’s elders approached Samuel, who was an elderly man and about to turn the judgeship over to one of his sons. (I Sam. 8:1-4) They said unto him, “Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.”—vss. 5,6

Samuel immediately sought God's help by going to him in prayer, which was a proper response to the elders' request. "The LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which I have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them."—vss. 7-9

DAVID AND SOLOMON

God thus allowed a limited period of time for the Israelites to have a king to rule over them as his representatives on earth. Some of their kings were noble leaders of their people and were obedient to the commandments of God; while others, less noble and with proud and rebellious hearts, were neither loyal, nor obedient, to God. David was one of Israel's most beloved kings. "David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king."—I Chron. 29:20

The scriptural account then adds, "They sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings unto the LORD, on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel: And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they

made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the LORD to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.”—vss. 21,22

Solomon became the new king after David. “Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.” (vs. 23) We note with interest that David and Solomon are both referred to as sitting on the ‘throne of the LORD.’ This arrangement thus provided for God’s overall provision and purpose for his typical people Israel, and for his long-term purpose for the ultimate recovery and reconciliation of the fallen human family.

A SELECT PEOPLE

As a distinct people, the Israelites had been chosen by God to serve him, and they had received much blessing in every way by his providential care. The Apostle Paul, a very prominent Jew, described this select relationship in his epistle which was written to the brethren at Rome. In that letter, he said, “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”—Rom. 3:1,2

God had delivered the Israelites from their long centuries of Egyptian bondage by miraculous means. Moses had been selected to represent them and he was later given the Law of God to deliver to them. We read, “Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and

brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” (Exod. 19:3-6) These were words with deep meaning that God spoke to his servant Moses, and subsequently through him to the entire nation of Israel.

THE REWARD FOR OBEDIENCE

Further instructions were also given to these people who had been set aside for special religious service. “Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD. If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.”—Lev. 26:2-6

THE TRIBE OF LEVI

The family of Levi was one of the twelve tribes that comprised the nation of Israel, and they were given exclusive rights in connection with Jewish religious life, the Tabernacle and its priesthood. They were separated by God for a special purpose and to serve as a means to bless and instruct the

remaining eleven tribes. This selection is brought to our attention by Moses during the exchange that took place between Israel's firstborn that had been brought out of Egypt, and their subsequent acceptance into the tribe of Levi. The scriptural record explains this very important step in God's dealing with his people. In the Book of Numbers, we read, "The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD." (Num. 3:44,45) Here the record states that all of the firstborn of Israel, including even their cattle, were exchanged for this acceptance as Levites.

THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION

During the transaction that took place, it is of particular interest to note that there were 273 extra firstborn over and above the 22,000 Levites that were being exchanged. The scriptural account says, "All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand." (Num. 3:39) Provision had to be made to include the total number of firstborn who exceeded the available number of Levites, who were only 22,000.

The scriptural record explains this provision, "For those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll,

after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs:) And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons.” (vss. 46-48) The price for each of the 273 extra firstborn that needed to be redeemed was five shekels.

The scriptural record concludes the transaction, as we read, “Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites: Of the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: And Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.” (vss. 49-51) Each one of the 273 firstborn was bought with a price. The Apostle Paul, writing from a new and different perspective many years later, pointed to the grander scale for which all mankind will ultimately rejoice. He explains, “Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”—I Cor. 6:20

GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

The wonderful provision and purpose of God began to take on new meaning and perspective for his people. “Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” (Exod. 25:8,9) The very focus of Israel's religious life was centered in their Tabernacle. In this scripture, God had made it known to them that they enjoyed a very special relationship with him,

and that he would dwell with them. He said, "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God."—Exod. 29:45,46

For God to symbolically dwell with the camp of Israel, there would be certain restrictions and obligations imposed upon them. "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel." (Num. 35:33,34) The camp of Israel was thus God's typical holy ground. "The LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."—Deut. 23:14

Israel's priesthood, together with its religious service, included many important functions. The house of Israel also served in a typical fashion with far grander meaning toward the eventual outworking of God's plan of redemption and reconciliation. That long-term plan includes the salvation of the entire fallen human race. Israel's Tabernacle arrangements typify those who are presently walking in "newness of life" as New Creatures in Christ, and are being called by God to share in a higher purpose during this Gospel Age.—Rom. 6:4

The tribe of Levi was authorized and instructed by God to carry out the service of the Tabernacle and its arrangements. The importance of the Levitical

tribe as a typical people is thus demonstrated. “There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”—Exod. 25:22

GOD’S PROPHETS

The prophets of Israel had been moved by the Holy Spirit of God to record many wonderful prophecies, including the meaning and purpose concerning our Lord Jesus and his earthly ministry. After Jesus’ violent death, and his resurrection, we have his own words of explanation in this connection. “He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”—Luke 24:25-27

Luke also records Jesus’ further words to his disciples. “He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.”—vss. 44,45

DISOBEDIENCE AND CAPTIVITY

Because of Israel’s disobedience and lack of respect for God and their special relationship with

him, they were taken into captivity by Babylon and their kingdom was destroyed. "Thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:25-27) There were four successive Gentile powers that subjugated the people of Israel after the overthrow of their kingdom by Nebuchadnezzar and his army during the reign of Zedekiah.

Daniel, when he was asked to give an interpretation of the king's unusual dream of an image with head of gold, breast of silver, thighs of bronze and legs of iron, told Nebuchadnezzar that he was represented by the head of gold. (Dan. 2:38) The Babylonian Empire was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire represented by the breast of silver; Greece in turn by the bronze; and the mighty Roman Empire by the image's iron legs. Although they returned from Babylonian captivity seventy years later, Israel had proven themselves unfit for any further exaltation in connection with universal dominion. They have therefore suffered through long centuries of trial, exile and, in recent times, the holocaust.

THE DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS

In another of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams in which Daniel was given the understanding to interpret, he saw a tree that provided sanctuary and protection for the earthly Creation. It was cut down, however, leaving the roots for a new growth at a later time.

Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar that the tree represented man's dominion over the earth, and that the destruction of the tree symbolized that loss of dominion. The king was also told that he represented that lost dominion and that he would live like a beast for seven years. This became a prophecy foretelling the beastly nature of Gentile rulership that would last for a period of seven times, or 2520 years. This is spoken of as the 'divine right of kings.' Daniel wrote, "This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers, And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes."—Dan. 4:17, *NASB*

The 'times of the Gentiles' was permitted by God as a period of punishment upon his typical people Israel. This prophetic measurement of their period of punishment thus serves as a measuring rod in the grand purposes of God. This was a period of seven times. "If ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins."—Lev. 26:18

The Prophet Hosea spoke of their being cast off from God's favor when he wrote, "My people are destroyed [cut off, *Marginal Translation*] for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."—Hos. 4:6

During the future 'times of restitution,' the people of Israel will be enlightened by the wonderful word of Truth, and be given ample time and opportunity to turn from their ways of disobedience and seek the blessings of life in Christ's kingdom. ■

Work Out Your Salvation

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”
—*Philippians 2:12,13*

OUR SCRIPTURAL REFER-

ence can actually be viewed as having two parts. God’s part is to provide the way, the truth, the life—the means—and our part is to use the means, and then attain the prize. God works in us through Christ, while in his strength we work out our own salvation.

GOD’S PART

One should immediately recognize that his good pleasure is to provide you with a way to obtain salvation. This would be accomplished through the giving of his only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus. He died on the cross to take away the sins of the world. (Col. 2:14) As we continue with our study, it is our intention to show that these scriptures are not an exhortation to the world of mankind in general, but are made solely

to the church of Christ alone—sons of God through consecration and Spirit begetting. It points out that we cannot, either with works or study, attain to the calling of the New Creation. However, after we have come into God's family through Jesus, good works show that we have been accepted. Our Father wants our desire to be pleasing to him in thought, word, and deed. The carrying out of good works shows that we are leading a life pleasing to our Father. The Scriptures show us that God does not purpose to take us to glory regardless of our own endeavors. That the exhortation is to work, to labor, and to strive toward the mark that is set before us, is so apparent here. "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

No scripture implies that we can be independent of our Lord. The perfect work of Christ is the basis of our own work. A faith that says Christ will save us as sinners no matter what type of daily life we lead, is a misplaced faith. It is a right faith shown by our willingness to conform our will to God's will. This involves zeal and vigilance, that we are doing all that we can do daily to serve the Father and his dear Son. It is the Father's desire that we may obtain the prize of salvation, "not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:9) It is made possible through Jesus, our Savior, and because of God's mercy. Our salvation is of grace; and it required a ransom price, which then provided salvation from death to life—salvation from sin to righteousness. His mercy makes possible a transformation from human nature to the Divine nature, if we are faithful unto death. The

Apostle Paul refers to it as, “so great salvation.” (Heb. 2:3) God’s part also makes it possible to forgive our past sins, cleanse us from our past condemnation, and cover our unintentional blemishes. He also encourages us to do the best that we can each day through all of the blessings that he so richly provides for us.

TAUGHT OF GOD

God has placed us in the school of Christ, until we come, “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:13) We are told, “All thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.” (Isa. 54:13) The spiritual sons of God, “shall be all taught of God.” (John 6:45) So all that desire shall be ‘taught of God’—the source of all true knowledge. The message of God received by faith is accepted to be the Truth, and leads to understanding. He will further lead us to place our full confidence in his Word. We read further, “The LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge.” (Prov. 2:6) John continues, “Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” (John 6:45) This is the object of seeking God’s Word of Truth. So, our Father enters us in the school of Christ. Our Lord Jesus is the great Teacher of men by the appointment of the Heavenly Father, the great Master Teacher above all.

OUR PART

An important aspect of being in this school of Christ, is that we do not learn all lessons at once, but gradually—“precept upon precept; line upon line; . . . here a little, and there a little.” (Isa. 28:10)

We look at these as being the gems of Truth from Genesis to Revelation. The hope of the faithful ones is that they may obtain the great salvation to “glory, and honour and immortality” (Rom. 2:7), which God hath promised to the more than overcomers. Justification through faith secures a legal standing before God, and requires the giving of our all, that we be careful, watchful, and prayerful, bringing our will into perfect submission to God. After our consecration is accepted, we are justified, and we know that this can only happen once. “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:13) We must do our part by being meek, teachable, and submissive to God’s leadings. We show our submission to him when we pray as our Lord Jesus taught us, “Thy will be done.” (Luke 11:2) Paul expressed this same outlook for the Lord’s providence in all of the affairs of life, realizing that nothing happens by chance to those who are in a covenant relationship with God, as members of the body of Christ. (Acts 21:14) The footstep followers of the Lord are to pray in this manner with determination, and with the submissive attitude of full obedience to the Father.

GOD’S WILL

What is God’s will for us? (See Mark 3:35) It is to provide to his consecrated people the opportunity, and the ability to know of his wonderful plans and purposes, revealed to them by the Holy Spirit of understanding. “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good

work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” (Heb. 13:20,21) Our Heavenly Father shows us that his will, and all of his works, are wholly on the side of purity, on the side of goodness, justice, and truth—everything contrary to sin. It is then displayed in his providential care over all of our interests for our highest welfare. It can be shown in the words, “It is your Father’s good pleasure [good will] to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32) His will involves having his children conform to his will, and daily do all that they can to serve him. If we desire to serve the Lord our God, we will wait on him with patience. “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” (II Thess. 3:5) Remember the scripture, “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Matt. 10:30) Even your smallest interest is not overlooked.

GIFTS FROM THE FATHER

God gives us gifts, and they come down to us, as it says, from the “Father of lights.” (James 1:17) We are assured that these are dispensed according to his will. (Eccles. 2:26) In actuality, all of our blessings are God’s gifts. We have “peace” (Ps. 29:11), “strength and power” (Ps. 68:35), “a new spirit” (Ezek. 11:19), “rest” (Matt. 11:28), “grace” (Ps. 84:11), “wisdom” (Prov. 2:6), and “glory” (Ps. 84:11). “They that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.”—Ps. 34:10

“It is God,” as our text from Philippians 2:13 begins, “which worketh in you,” who has permitted all things—sickness, pain, sorrow, trouble, and also joy and gladness. Love shall, by Divine wisdom and

power, overrule all things for good. It points us to a scripture that has been referred to as a formula for daily living, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28) This is an affirmation of God’s love for us, and an affirmation that he will make everything work out for our spiritual growth and development as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. The Father wants to give you good things—“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Ps. 23:1) Almighty God, the Chief Shepherd, grants to his Son, our Lord Jesus, the great privilege of being the loving shepherd of the flock, and the sheep are fed by the Messiah in the strength of the Father. (Mic. 5:4) Continuing in Psalm 23, verses 2,3, his sheep are permitted “to lie down in green pastures,” to rest the rest of faith, and to be spiritually fed and refreshed. “He restoreth my soul,” justifies us to life, because we trust in his name and in his merit. He gives us all the needed instruction, grace, comfort, discipline, training and care necessary to receive the highest spiritual and everlasting blessings. “As for God, his way is perfect.”—Ps. 18:30

PRECIOUS PROMISES

A wonderful key point to our salvation and hope is shown in the words, “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32) This is also shown to us by means of the precious promises found in his Word. These promises should be a source of strength and encouragement to the Lord’s people. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) The Apostle Paul reminds us, “If ye continue in the faith

grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, . . . To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:23,27) Further, you are privileged to understand this ‘mystery’ of God. It is knowing his Truth which shall make you free from the law of sin and death, and the hand of your adversary, Satan. James urges us, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”—James 4:7,8

It was the Father’s will, and an evidence of his power, that made possible these oath-bound promises. They were assured through the Lord’s sacrificial death as a sin offering, when he “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:6) The same power that brought our Lord from the dead is able to perfect us, by the laying down of our lives and thus sharing in his death. “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. 4:8

Our Father is so loving that he even shows us how to accomplish that which we have to do. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” (Dan. 12:3) The ‘little flock,’ the wise virgins, are those who thoroughly believe the testimony of God, and yield themselves directly to it. They shall be as the “stars of the heaven”—heavenly rulers—Christ and his bride. (Gen. 22:17) We read further, “If any man’s

work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward” (I Cor. 3:14); and, in verses 11 and 12, we are told to build upon the foundation “which is Jesus Christ, . . . gold, silver, precious stones.” This refers to Divine Truth, the blueprint of which is provided by the Master Builder in his Holy Word.

It is God who planned the whole matter, and has been working in us. We did not begin the work, our Father did. We read, “It is the same God which worketh all in all.” (I Cor. 12:6) By his grace and mercy, and through his Word, our Father grants to us salvation, and the opportunity to know and to do his will. It is shown to us by the Holy Spirit of understanding, which helps us “to be conformed to the image of his Son.”—Rom. 8: 29

It is the new mind, the new will that is in the school of Christ, that is to be brought into full accord with the Divine will. In purity of heart, purity of intention, and sincerity, we desire to be copies of the dear Son who, as we are told in Colossians 1:15, “is the image of the invisible God.” The Lord Jesus is working with his footstep followers to help them. (Mark 16:20) This assurance is given to us in Philipians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Here we have a means to “draw near [to the Father] with a true heart in full assurance of faith,” having our hearts “sprinkled” and our bodies “washed” clean. (Heb. 10:22) This assurance made it possible for his Son to reconcile all things by the blood of the cross, and made it possible for his followers to present their bodies “holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.” (Col. 1:22) Again we have this assurance

in chapter 2, verse 2, that their “hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,” the only begotten Son of God.

This reveals a most important aspect of what God has done for us. John 3:17 reads, “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” It points us to a key to God’s part in all of this—his love. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” (John 3:16) This was the highest form of love—*agape* love—charity, and benevolence. It is the essence of perfect love, of which our Father is the Author. We should also realize that the Father showed his grace by the giving of his Son. Salvation from sin and death was made possible through the wonderful redemption of our Lord Jesus—by his shed blood given willingly on the cross.

THE TRUTH THAT SANCTIFIES

Jude 1 begins with the words, “To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” Verse 2 continues, “Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.” God loved us first, when we were without strength, when there was ‘no arm to save.’ From these words we see that he has a special love for the church, for those who have consecrated themselves fully to him, during this present Gospel Age. (I John 4:19) He set our feet upon the solid rock, and “that Rock was Christ.” (I Cor. 10:4) The Lord passed this love and devotion of his Father first to the apostles, next to his disciples, and to those who would take up their

cross to follow him. We read, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (I John 4:10) Through his obedience, it makes it possible for us to believe on him and be faithful unto death. (Rev. 2:10) He shows us that godlikeness is ‘love-likeness.’ We should see from our theme text, as we have explored this scripture from Philippians, that we have a part in this work, and God has a part.

This is further shown in the words, “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you.” (Lev. 20:7,8) If we make a full consecration, God will set us apart and will accept us. He gives to us the indication of this acceptance in the begetting of his Holy Spirit. He gives to us a new mind, a new disposition, and a new heart. Paul speaks of it when he says, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification”—your full setting apart. (I Thess. 4:3) Recall the words from chapter 5, verse 23, “The very God of peace sanctify you.” This scripture points to the entire process of a transformation of character and preparation for the called ones to be faithful. It then progresses throughout the Christian course until the character is fully developed. This character must be maintained until the end of the way, when this life of trials and experiences has ended. The Father helps us to develop a new mind, and a new will, which will lead to becoming “a new creature” in Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 5:17) If we follow this course, God will sanctify us. This condition of complete sanctification is the Divine ideal, and God will complete it in you if you follow the directions prescribed. We

know also that sanctification is of God, by Jesus. “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”—John 17:17

THE WORK OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

We read, “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” (Rom. 8:3) This reveals to us that the Heavenly Father gave permission for his only begotten Son to be born in the likeness of Adam, and fulfill God’s law. (Phil. 2:7,8) He was a perfect man in whom was no sin (Heb. 7: 26), “that the righteousness [the full, whole, complete meaning] of the law [of God’s demands] might be fulfilled.” (Rom. 8:4) This is expressed by what is referred to as the Golden Rule, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” (Matt. 7:12) This is an outworking of the Spirit, and is stressed in the new commandment that our Lord gave to us, in the words “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . And . . . love thy neighbour as thyself.”—Matt. 22:37,39; John 13:34

Jesus’ life set the seal or mark of approval, and righteousness to the Law. The Law that we are referring to is deemed “spiritual” in Romans 7:14, for it came from the Spirit Being of the highest order—God himself. It represents the mind or judgment of the Creator by his perfect wisdom, mercy, justice, love, and power. “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” (Isa. 32:17) Also, in Isaiah 61:10, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath

covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”

The anointed body of Christ rejoices even in the present life, for he covers their many unwilling imperfections by Christ’s righteousness, even our justification. Look at the words of praise, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places [the heavenlies] in Christ.” (Eph. 1:3) These are special blessings, heavenly privileges given only to the foot-step followers of the Lord. “Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Cor. 1:8) “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 1:6) The Father will watch over you until you receive the ‘crown of life’—having gone on to glory, honor, and immortality. “Great is your reward in heaven.”—Matt. 5:12

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

So let us keep in mind what we must do to be faithful in working out our own salvation. Especially remember that God’s part in our theme text is made possible because he is a faithful Father. As the Author of the Plan of the Ages, he is able to accomplish all through his wonderful attributes. This is especially evidenced to us by his love. Looking back to John 3:16, “Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” He provides salvation from sin, from death, from human imperfection to human perfection, and full restitution and life through his Son’s shed blood. The Father’s

desire is that the willing and obedient of mankind will be able to live on a restored, perfect earth forever, where nothing shall cause them any harm.

The Father grants a special salvation to the church—life on the highest plane, which is inherent life, eternal life, everlasting life. By his grace he “called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) He called out a people for his name, “Ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD.” (Isa. 61:6) Those whom he calls, he places in the school of Christ (through the Holy Spirit), that we “May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; . . . that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”—Eph. 3:18,19

He teaches us through our Advocate and great Teacher, Christ Jesus. He gives us all of the necessary experiences in the way of trials, joys and sorrows—the shaping and polishing work of character development. He also provides a covering under the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Giving his children every opportunity to make their calling and election sure, he provides them with help in time of need; for he will finish that work which he started in us, because he promised to do so. We know that at the completion of that work there awaits a crown of life, which he gives to the more than overcomers, the “called, and chosen, and faithful.” (Rev. 17:14) “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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.” (I John 3:2) The faithful ones can then truly say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”—Ps. 23:6 ■

Called, Elected and Assured

“Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”
—*Hebrews 12:3*

IN HEBREWS, CHAPTER 12, the Apostle Paul assures the consecrated that their experiences would be of sufficient length and difficulty that their resolve and commitment will be thoroughly tried. He likens those experiences, and that test, to a race. It is a race that will be won not by the swift, but by those who patiently endure. “Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience 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.” (vss. 1,2) Paul forewarns his brethren that circumstances might arise that would cause some to succumb to weariness, and question their ability to continue their run “for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—I Cor. 9:24; Phil.3:14

BE YE TRANSFORMED

One of the vital purposes of the race run by the chosen is to bring them to a gradual realization of their personal weaknesses. The purpose is not to humiliate, but to develop within them a more perfect attitude of submission to God's will and transforming power. To enter the race, one must present his body to God thereby surrendering ownership—disowning its appetites and preferences. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) To finish the race, one must be transformed. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (vs. 2) Only if those chosen for the race submit utterly, as clay submits to the strong hands of the potter, can the necessary process of transformation be accomplished in them.—Rom. 9:21

The discovery of one's frailties can be unsettling. Confronted by failings they expected to have long ago overcome, the brethren who have run the longest are often the most vulnerable to doubt. Pondering their frailties for long years, they may question their ability to continue the race. Some say, I expected to feel stronger by now, but I feel weak, perhaps even weaker than when I began. It is here that Satan can enter in and cause confidence to slip. Those chosen to run this race feel strong when they begin. However, as they run, they may stumble. As they stumble, they become increasingly aware of their inadequacies. That awareness, as essential as it is, can cause great consternation for those in the race, all of whom

long to serve God perfectly. It is vital that the chosen understand their faults, and are neither a surprise nor a disappointment to their Heavenly Father. He knew precisely how weak they were before he called and elected them to run the race.

PAUL'S STRUGGLE

It was by God's strength that those called and elected began the race, and it is certain that it will be by his strength alone that they will finish it. Paul struggled with the same issue of personal weakness. "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. 7:19-25) Unremitting warfare rages between the intent of the Spirit-begotten mind and the deeds of the corrupted flesh. The battleground is within the elect.

Though frustrated with the weakness of his flesh, the apostle does not indicate that he fears it would inhibit the making of his calling and election sure. To the contrary, he assured Timothy that he had made his calling and election sure. "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) It is clear Paul understood that the making of his calling and election sure did not require his victory over the besetments of the flesh before he finished his course. Making one’s calling and election sure is not determined by personal weaknesses. The chosen overcome during the course of their race. Imperfections will afflict the chosen to the end of their course.

RUN WITH PATIENCE

In Hebrews, chapter 12, the apostle earnestly encourages his brethren to patiently endure to the end the various circumstances of the race. He cites the many examples of faithful endeavor in the Old Testament, as well as the ultimate example of patient endurance, Christ Jesus. He encourages the consecrated to resist the temptation to believe the race is only for others who are more qualified, or for those who are less weighted down with sin. He graciously reminds his brethren that he, too, is running the race, and that he is as easily beset with sin as they. The apostle tells the called and chosen that, though the Lord who made it possible for them to enter the race was perfect, he will bring all whom he has chosen to the finish of it if they but continue to believe he has the ability and will to do so, regardless of their personal imperfections. Paul exhorts the consecrated to keep their eye on the prize, not their weaknesses. He reminds them that God is a rewarder of “them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.”—Rom. 2:7

EQUALLY QUALIFIED

The prize for finishing the race is so grand that the truly humble often find it difficult to imagine attaining it, feeling others are more qualified than they to run. The Lord, knowing the wiles of Satan, reminds the chosen they are all equally qualified to run the race. “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” (John 5:24, *New International Version*) Satan knows that if he can cause the called and chosen to doubt they are equally qualified to run, it is but a small step for some to believe they were never qualified to run at all. The Lord emphasizes that all who enter the race have equally laid hold upon eternal life and have thereby equally escaped all prior condemnation.

The called and chosen begin their race convinced of the declarations in Romans, chapters 5 and 8, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (chap. 5:1) “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (chap. 8:1,2) Paul reminds his brethren that Israel’s inability to meet the perfect standard of the Mosaic Law left it condemned for its imperfect deeds. That perfect standard proved that Israel served the law of sin and death. The same chapter then emphasizes that those in Christ Jesus walk after the Spirit, and are free of all such obligations; all perfect standards having been met on their behalf by Christ. The chosen, therefore, prove they serve

‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ referred to by Paul in Romans, chapter 8, by continuing, under all conditions, to believe that in Christ Jesus they are free of the law of sin and death.

PETER’S PERFECT STANDARD

Peter presents a perfect standard which he says, if heeded, will allow the called and chosen to remain unswayed by the corruption of the world that surrounds them. “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [love].” (II Pet. 1:5-7) The apostle emphasizes his point in verse 10, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” (vs. 10) *Strong’s Bible Concordance* defines the word ‘fall’ (#4417) as ‘fail of salvation, offend, stumble.’

The apostle does not say if one does ‘these things’ one will make his calling and election sure. He says if one does these things one will never stumble. One will be immune to the allure of the world and the personal lapses and failures that impede the making of one’s calling and election sure.

The Apostle James says, “We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.” (James 3:2, *NIV*) By this we know that all the called and chosen, including the apostle, stumble. The conclusion is that none in Christ do sufficiently these things that Peter enumerated. All the chosen remain affected by their worldly surround-

ings. None are immune to the personal infirmities that impede the making of one's calling and election sure. The called and chosen all stumble.

EMPHATIC ASSURANCE

If they cannot hope for victory over the personal besetments of the flesh that so plagued even the Apostle Paul, and they cannot attain those things of Peter's perfect standard, which eluded even the Apostle James, how can the chosen gain the certainty that Paul had that they will not 'fail of salvation' due to weaknesses, lapses, stumbling? How are those who stumble to make their calling and election sure?

The Apostle John answers, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (I John 3:14) It would require no effort on the part of the chosen to love their brethren, if their brethren were perfect as the Lord is perfect. The unequivocal assurance of John is that, no matter how weak the runners feel, no matter how few of these things of Peter's perfect standard they are able to do, no matter how unqualified they feel, if they have not lost their love for their imperfect brethren, they are not lost. The testimony of Paul, Peter, and James, assure the called and chosen that their personal weaknesses and insufficiencies will not disqualify them from the race for the prize of the High Calling. The Apostle John assures us that a lack of love for one's brethren will. The love the called and chosen have for their brethren in the race is to be the ultimate indicator of their spiritual health, regardless of personal frailties and inadequacies.

THE ONE COMMAND

The Lord defines the specific kind of love of which John speaks. He does so in a direct command to those in the race. It is his only command. “As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, . . . My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” (John 15:9,10,12, *NIV*) The Lord issued this as a command because it is something that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the runners can do. The chosen ones can love their brethren as the Lord has loved them. The Lord loved his brethren with a love that is only generated by the Holy Spirit. Likewise, each of those chosen are to love each other with that same product of the Holy Spirit which is far superior to anything the world defines as love. When those who run and stumble demonstrate their capacity to bestow this specific kind of love upon their brethren who have personal limitations, they are not condemned for their own. Implied in the Lord’s command is that a lack of that particular kind of love indicates a lack of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle John is explicit in explaining how it is that the chosen can run the race for the prize of the High Calling, and not be disqualified by their limitations. “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ the Righteous One.” (I John 2:1, *NIV*) The word ‘sin’ in these verses translates as ‘stumble.’ This, in conjunction with our Lord’s command in John, chapter 15, emphasizes that the very one who has chosen those for the race will defend them

before Divine justice no matter how weak they are, as long as they continue to love one another as he loves them. Only if they neglect to love all others who have been chosen, can the chosen separate themselves from the love of God, and from him who speaks to God in their defense.

Even the weakest, with the fewest abilities, are capable of loving those whom God loves. By this means, both the strong and the weak, the runners just beginning and those finishing their course, can make their calling and election sure.

SHARING IN CHRIST

The chosen started their course with great confidence in their Father and his provision for their life in Christ Jesus. Their test is whether they will finish the course with it. “We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.” (Heb. 3:14, *NIV*) From this, it is clear that one must have an abiding confidence that one’s insufficiencies will not debar him from his life in Christ Jesus. In addition, one must, by the power of the Holy Spirit, love all others who have this same confidence. Those runners can make their calling and election sure, not by their perfect deeds, but by not fainting in their renewed minds, certain to the end they have been called and elected even as they realize how imperfect their deeds actually are. Let us then give all diligence to heed the apostle’s admonition, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.”—Heb. 10:35 ■

Praise the LORD!

THE INSPIRED WRITER says, "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, . . . the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Heb. 13:15) And how appropriate is such a course! The rendering of praise indicates appreciation, gratitude, and thankfulness. In order to render praise, however, one must have a knowledge of God's favors and blessings. The knowledge attained, devotion should follow, with praise and thanksgiving. It is well, therefore, that we count our blessings daily. Those who so do will find themselves the richer. They may have no more blessings than before, but they will the more appreciate them and be disposed to offer praise, worship, and thanksgiving.

The Bible assures us that many of God's favors are common to all the human family, and not especially limited to those who have become his children through a complete consecration of themselves to him. Thus Jesus declared, the Father "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."—Matt. 5:45

All should render some acknowledgement for the blessings that are common to all; but there is a difference between giving thanks to God and offering

prayer—petition. The LORD grants the privilege of prayer only to those who have come into his family as children—through Christ. The Christian has special grounds for thanksgiving and praise to God; and his causes for praise multiply as the days go by, while he abides in the LORD.

The Scriptures indicate that the heavenly hosts give praise to God, recognizing his goodness toward them and toward us. The poet well says that “all who see and share his love” should have the desire to render unto him praise and thanksgiving. An unthankful heart cannot enjoy in full measure the LORD’s blessings.

Our praise to the LORD depends very largely upon our development in Christian faith and knowledge. We see God’s provision in Christ for the sins of the whole world. We see his mighty power displayed in the course of events and, as our eyes of understanding open more widely, we perceive his providence and his interest even in the smallest affairs of our lives as Christians. The Master’s words figuratively imply this, saying, “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.”—Matt. 10:30

Not merely when singing with our voices are we praising the LORD! The Scriptures tell us to sing and make melody to him in our hearts. (Eph. 5:19) This singing in the heart—this praising the LORD from the depths of our soul—is an experience that comes only to the fully consecrated and considerably developed children of God. Our whole life should be a song of praise to the LORD, and will be, if we are walking faithfully in the narrow way. ■

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

TRUTH IN THESE LAST DAYS

Dear Sirs: I write in appreciation of the contents of *The Dawn* monthly booklet, and to express my personal enjoyment of the scholarship and translation of both Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

Congratulations also on the “Sleeping Giant” article [March 2006]. How up-to-date you are on Napoleon’s words regarding China.

Please accept my good wishes. I’m retired six years and your periodical reminds me of the continual unfolding of God’s Truth in these last days. Yours faithfully—ENGLAND

TOUCHED BY BROTHER RUSSELL’S TEACHINGS

Dear Dawn Bible: I have left Jehovah’s Witnesses again, this time formally and properly because of the gulf I have seen in

not only some of the teachings, but also behavior and organization involved.

My wife and I have been Witnesses for 2 years (studying for 2-3 years), and we have been searching for a long time for Truth.

I have always been very impressed and touched at the heart by Brother Russell’s teachings from the Bible. How things went wrong after he died! Until recently, I thought Charles was the founder of Jehovah’s Witnesses; but after some research, I have found major differences (lovely ones) in his teachings and that there was a terrible wrongdoing after his death in regard to the Society.

Of course, due to their shunning rule they no longer talk to me and I cannot talk to them. We have lost our entire community, but it is worth it to seek and worship

Christ as he desires.

Due to all this, I was wondering what groups there are in the UK and how we may get involved. Thank you for your website. Christian love—ENGLAND

GOD'S TRUTH REFRESHING

Dawn Bible: How refreshing to hear God's Truth from his Word. My grandmother was a Dawn Bible student back in the 1940s. I am now in my 74th year of life—better late than never. God bless—NC

TAUGHT AS CHILDREN

Dawn Bible: I wanted to send you an e-mail to let you know that I am very happy that I have found the Dawn Publications online. I am a 57-year-old woman. My grandfather, who passed away when I was a baby, read your materials; and when my mother asked him about how to teach her children the Bible, he said

that he found the Dawn publications to be very helpful. My mother subscribed to them all her adult life, and taught me and my five sisters from your books. The one I remember as our bedtime storybook was *God's Promises Come True*. My Mom passed away in November of 2002, and my father passed away last year in February 2005. When we cleaned up my father's estate, my oldest sister asked if she could have some of *The Dawn* magazines that were my Mom's. I will let her know that you are online, too!

Now, I want to pass this faith on to others. I am going to begin reading your materials regularly, and hope my husband will too, and maybe God can use us to influence the next generation to read the Bible and to understand God's plan for all mankind.

Thanks to God for your work—LP

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.

M. Balko

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13
Milwaukee, WI 19,20

The speakers listed below, in cooperation with the Dawn, are invited by individual classes, or their services have been arranged by their home classes:

G. Balko, Jr.

Milwaukee, WI August 19,20

M. J. Balko

St. Petersburg, FL August 20

D. Blencowe

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13

C. Chandler

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13

B. Clark

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13

P. Cooper

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13

A. Fernets

Milwaukee, WI August 19,20

R. Gorecki

Nowy Sacz, Poland August 6-11
Romania 13-18

S. Jeuck

Louisville, AL August 20

E. Kuenzli

Nowy Sacz, Poland August 6-11

A. Kuly

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13

F. Nemesh

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13

A. Oysttryk

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13

P. Robinson

Mahomet, IL August 13

R. Sconyers

St. Augustine, FL August 6
Milwaukee, WI 19,20

A. Siwak

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13

B. Sweeney

Red Deer, AL, Canada
August 11-13

L. Wesol

Atlanta, GA August 13

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.

Brother Vasile Goje, Romania—May 10. Age, 84

Brother Ed Boroweic, Salem, OR—May 20. Age, 83

Brother Raymond Harris, Glen Ellyn, IL—May 30. Age, 87

Brother Ed Heidelbach, Milwaukee, WI—June 22.

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.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 6-11—Nowy Sacz, Poland. (International Youth Seminar follows in Baia Mare, Romania, August 14-18.) Contact T. Machacek. Phone: (219) 662-8107

ALBERTA, CANADA CONVENTION, August 11,12,13—Stanford Inn, 4707 50th Street, Red Deer, AB, Canada. Phone: (887) 347-5551. Contact A. Baumgarten. Phone: (403) 356-0004

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, August 19,20—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Moore, 2176 South 71st Street, West Allis, WI 53219. Phone: (414) 541-8937

JACKSON LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 2,3—FaHaLo Camp and Conference Center, 3000 Mt. Hope Road, Grass Lake, MI 49240. Contact R. Lumley, 2531 Ashton Road, Jackson, MI 49203. Phone: (517) 782-7252

NEW YORK LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 2,3—Wellesley Inn, Two Bridges Road & Exit 52, Route 80, Fairfield, NJ 07006. Contact D. Szybinski, 250 West 102 Street, 1A, New York, NY 10025. Phone: (212) 998-2095

SEATTLE LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 2,3,4—Seabeck Christian Conference Center, 15395 Seabeck Hwy NW, Seabeck, WA 98380. Phone: (360) 830-5010. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (253) 939-9838

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 8,9,10—Holiday Inn Select, 401 Williams Avenue, AL 35801. Phone: (256) 533-1400. Contact P. Mosley, 1006 Mill Race Circle, Guntersville, AL 35976. Phone: (256) 582-3640

CLAY CITY CONVENTION, September 22,23,24—Canyon Inn, McCormick's Creek State Park, Clay City, IN. Contact Sondra Clark, 7861 Clearwater Parkway, Indianapolis, IN 46240. Phone: (317) 578-2634

LOS ANGELES QUARTERLY CONVENTION, September 24—406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA. Contact R. Bieniak. Phone: (949) 457-0894

NEW ENGLAND CONVENTION, October 13,14,15—**(New Location)** Quality Inn, 51 Hartford Turnpike (Route 83/30), Vernon, CT. Contact A. M. Suraci, 171 Johnson Road, Hamden, CT 06518. Phone: (203) 248-3793

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, October 14,15—Kenowa Hills Middle School, 3950 Hendershot Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI 49544. Contact J. Houlmont. Phone: (231) 972-4259

PITTSBURGH AREA CONVENTION, October 14,15—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton, PA. Contact G. Balko, Jr., 1300 High Street, West Newton, PA 15089. Phone: (724) 872-6418

SAN LUIS OBISPO CONVENTION, October 21,22—Masonic Temple, 859 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo, CA. Contact E. Allard. Phone: (805) 773-2962

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 28,29—Garden Club of Sanford, 200 Fairmont Drive (corner of Hwy. 17-92), Sanford, FL. Contact H. Jeuck, 587 Queens Mirror Circle, Casselberry FL 32707. Phone: (407) 699-8303

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

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

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

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

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

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35