

August 21

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Matthew 6:33

THE Lord's people of spiritual Israel will do well to bear this thought continually in mind--that spiritual interests are to be given the preference always; that temporal affairs are to be managed and controlled

SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Mat 6:33 KJV "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

R2765 "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "No man can serve two masters." As a rule we find that people are either cold or hot in spiritual things; either it is the Kingdom of heaven first and far above all other considerations, demanding and receiving the very best we have of time, energy and influence; or else the Kingdom of heaven is neglected and forgotten, and time and influence are spent in money-getting or other selfish and earthly occupations of mind and body.

The lesson of this to every one of the Lord's consecrated people is plain: we are to "seek first [chiefly] the Kingdom of God." It is to be our chief concern and to receive from us all the time, attention, thought, energy, influence and means we have--the things *needful* for the present life being understood to be excepted; and our love and zeal will be manifested by the proportion of these even, which we are willing to sacrifice in the interest of heavenly things."

R5048 "Let us show our faith, not merely by professions, but in every act and word. Let us seek the Kingdom as the pre-eminent matter of our lives, in comparison with which all other things are inferior, and, as St. Paul declared, "not worthy to be compared." If seeking the Kingdom seems to hinder some of our earthly prospects, so much the better. The Master said it must cost us our *all*. Our earthly considerations we have left in His hands. Let Him apportion our earthly blessings according to His wisdom of what will be most helpful to us in making our "calling and election sure" to a place in the Kingdom."

SM370 "The whole world is seeking for earthly good things, but the Lord's disciples are to take a different course. Having the invitation to joint-heirship in the Kingdom of God before their minds as the grandest possibility imaginable, they are to so esteem it that all other interests and ambitions are to sink into insignificance in their estimation and to be comparatively neglected. Our Lord's advice is, therefore, "Seek ye first [primarily--as of the first or primary importance] the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [food, raiment, etc.] shall be added unto you."

Be it noted that the Lord does not say that His followers shall have as much of these temporary good things as others have; but elsewhere He declares, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of."

R2479 "We are to remember continually that joint-heirship with the Lord in that spiritual condition and in his heavenly power and Kingdom are the hopes set before the Church of this age, and we are to "seek those things"

from the standpoint of the everlasting welfare; -- from the standpoint of spiritual growth and development and prosperity;--from the standpoint of the best interests and influences upon their children. They should not only hesitate to follow any suggestion that would take themselves and their families into unfavorable, godless surroundings,

--"seek chiefly the Kingdom of God" -- *seek* to make our calling and election sure to participation with our Lord in the Kingdom honors and glories to which he already has attained as a reward for his faithful sacrifice... Matt. 6:33; Rom. 2:7; 2 Pet. 1:10.

The Apostle wishes us to understand how we are to "seek" those things. We are not merely to seek them in prayer, altho prayer is an excellent aid in the seeking. We are to seek them by setting our affections on those things, and by lifting our affections from earthly things.

Comparatively few realize to what extent we have the forming of our own characters--to what extent our minds, our affections, are gardens, in which we may plant either the thorns and thistles of sin, or plant the merely moral and practical qualities corresponding to the useful vegetables, or plant those seeds which will produce the fragrant and beautiful flowers which more particularly would represent the heavenly and spiritual graces. That which a man soweth he shall also reap in kind, whether he sow to the flesh or to the spirit. Whoever, therefore, seeks for the heavenly things, joint-heirship in the Kingdom etc., must plant or set out in his mind, in his affections, those qualities and graces which the Lord marks out as essential to the development of characters such as will be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."--Col. 1:12...

Consider what a blessed privilege has been granted us, not only of being transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we might come more and more to know and to strive for the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, but in addition to all this God has set before us the grandest reward imaginable for the doing of that which is merely our duty and reasonable service--the doing of that which would bring us the largest measure of joy and peace, aside from a future reward.--2 Pet. 1:3,4.

There is a natural attraction to earthly things for all mankind: even tho the earthly things, during the reign of evil, be blemished and in many respects distasteful to those who have learned to love righteousness and hate iniquity, there is nevertheless still a strong attraction to the marred and blemished earthly things. Like weeds, earthly affections and desires spring spontaneously from seeds which come we know not whither. The Christian, therefore, who would keep his heart in the love of God must not only keep planting out or setting his affections on heavenly things, but he must keep rooting out the weeds of earthly desire and attraction."

Col 3:1-3 KJV "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

1 Pet 2:9 Wilson Diaglott "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a purpose..."

but they should determine that not under any consideration would they follow such a suggestion;--that on the contrary the Lord's people should be their people, even though this meant less of the comforts and luxuries of this present life. Z. '02-350 R3110:6

R5057 "The Apostle Peter says that the Church is a people for a purpose; that is, God has a special object or purpose in selecting the Church. They are to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light," "that men may see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven."--1 Pet. 2:9; Matt. 5:16...

The Church is called out to be a privileged people and to become joint-heirs with her Lord in His Kingdom... Those who faithfully follow the Lamb through good report and evil report, who take up their cross and follow Jesus, will be accounted worthy to be His associates in the Kingdom... The Savior's mission will be to bless mankind as the "Sun of Righteousness," with "healing" in His beams; and the Church is to have a share with Him in the blessing of the world... This was God's Plan and purpose from *before the foundation of the world*. This is the Gospel, or good tidings, first declared to Abraham: "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."--Gen. 12:3, etc.

Eph 2:4-10 KJV "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); (6) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (7) That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus... (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

SEEK "HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS"

Mat 6:33 KJV "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness..."

SM371 "It is not enough that the Lord's Elect shall seek the Kingdom. They might seek it in a measure of selfishness, because of its honor and glory. Hence, the Lord makes another stipulation: That we shall not only seek the Kingdom, but seek its righteousness--the righteousness which the Kingdom will bring, the righteousness which God will approve. Ah, this is a searching proposition! All who will be counted worthy a place in the Kingdom must come up to the standard of perfect love toward God and toward men. This is the Divine standard, and nothing short of it will be acceptable. It means that this class will be in harmony with their God, right, just, loving, peaceable wherever found; and that they will be out of harmony with all injustice and unrighteousness wherever found--in themselves and in others.

Since we were all born in sin, since we were all tainted with selfishness, even though in differing degrees, it follows that we must all fight a good warfare against this [SM372] element of our human natures--that as New Creatures we shall not be in sympathy with any of the fallen proclivities and tendencies

in ourselves and in others. It is a work of days, months and years to find out and root these selfish propensities, these Amalekites, which have entrenched themselves in our fallen flesh, and to bring in instead of them the loving, generous impulses and endeavors of the spirit of love, which seeks to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the Household of Faith. This is learning to speak evil of no man, to have no sympathy with slander, backbiting and evil surmisings, but, on the contrary, to rejoice in the Truth and in "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."—Phil. 4:8.

The law of absolute justice, righteousness, the Law of Love, which will be introduced world-wide during the Millennium, must already, even now, have our sympathy and support. In the present time, when so much may be gained by a little deflection from the proper standards of purity or truth or honesty, when so many are in favor of graft if it works favorably to themselves, and so unfavorable to graft if it works against their interests—in these times the heirs of the Kingdom are to be governed strictly by the laws of the Kingdom. They are to seek after and to appropriate to themselves the principles of righteousness which they perceive will be the laws of the Kingdom for the whole world by and by.

It will be much easier for the world to conform to the laws of righteousness by and by, when every transgression will receive prompt rebuke or punishment, and when every good word or deed will receive a prompt reward. But it is comparatively difficult now for this Kingdom class to think and to act along opposite lines from those which prevail to a large degree amongst their friends and neighbors. This sympathy for righteousness, truth and [SM373] purity must be sought even as the Kingdom is sought; and those consecrated believers who find the one find the other. Much of the Christian's time, therefore, must be devoted to self-examination and self-instruction in righteousness, as well as building one another up in the most holy faith, the Divine Word being the censor.

All such are really taught of God. They learn to consider honesty not merely in respect to dollars and cents, but also in regard to words and actions. Yea, more, they learn to observe honesty in their thoughts—to be honest with the Lord, honest with the brethren, honest with themselves. As these lessons are learned, appropriated, the pupils in the School of Christ are being made meet for an inheritance in the Kingdom.

THE LESSON OF SELF-DENIAL

One great difficulty among these "heirs of salvation," "heirs of the Kingdom," "heirs of glory," lies in our inability to rightly appreciate the importance of the little things in life and the little things in our own minds. Many who would have the courage to go to the stake in defense of some principle of righteousness and truth find it very difficult to "examine themselves," and, as the Apostle suggests, to bring eventually even the very thoughts of their minds into subjection to the will of God as expressed in Christ. But our Lord's word is, "He that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is greater." Hence we should have in mind that the Lord will instruct us along the lines of little things; and in our endeavors in

all the trifling affairs of life we should cultivate and exercise the spirit of Christ, the spirit of meekness, gentleness, patience, long suffering, brotherly-kindness, love, that these things being in us, and abounding, an entrance shall be administered to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

An important feature of the teaching of the School of Christ is the necessity for self-denial....All who will be counted worthy to be kings and priests to God in that Heavenly Kingdom must demonstrate now to Divine satisfaction their willingness to sacrifice their own personal interests and rights in favor of the Kingdom and the Father's will and the blessing of those whom the Father designs shall be blessed by the Kingdom. Whoever, therefore, refuses to take up his cross of self-denial and to deny himself cannot long be one of the Lord's disciples. He will fall out by the way, for ultimately only those will constitute members of the Kingdom class who shall count it all joy to gain that Kingdom and the Divine favor and the great privilege of being associated with Jesus in the great work of blessing the world at any cost, at any self-denial. Let us, dear brethren, emulate more and more this spirit of our Redeemer, who made Himself of no reputation that He might work the works of God, who sent Him. Thus we also shall be counted worthy of a share with Him in the Kingdom and its glorious opportunities."

R1820 "THE HEAVENLY TREASURE

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is there will your heart be also."—Matt. 6:19-21.

A TREASURE is something in which we take special pleasure and delight. It is in our thoughts and plans and hopes, an inspiration in our lives, and an incentive to energy, perseverance and endurance for the hope which it enkindles. There are few people in the world who have no treasures; yet they are generally such as yield but little satisfaction, being earthly and therefore perishable. Some find their treasures in wealth, fame, social distinction, houses and lands, friends, home, family, etc., and in these they center their hopes. But all of these are subject to change and decay, and may, if the heart be centered in them, at any moment desolate the life, plunging the heart at once into an abyss of sorrow which can only be measured by the former high tide of its joy when life was young and hope new, before the shadows of disappointment crossed the way.

The wealth, laboriously gathered and husbanded with much care, may vanish in an hour; the fame, so dearly won, may change to censure at the caprice of fickle public sentiment; the social distinction, which once bade you to the uppermost seat, may by and by relegate you to the lowest seat, as one despised and forsaken; houses and lands may disappear under the sheriff's hammer; friends long trusted may suddenly turn the cold shoulder and prove untrue or even treacherous; the home you love must soon or later break up; the family will be scattered, or death will invade it, or even the love that glowed on the home-altar may flicker and become uncertain or extinct. So the high hopes of early life, centered in the earthly

treasures, may in a few short years turn to ashes. How many have found it so! the moth of wear and the rust of time corrupt the fair earthly blessings; and thieves break through and steal the treasures of our possessions and our hearts, and desolation and gloom are the painful results. But it is not so with those whose treasure is laid up in heaven...

The chiefest of all treasures there is the personal friendship and love of Christ, "the fairest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely." If we have gained this treasure we have gained one that never changes, one whose love never grows cold and from which nothing can separate us... Neither can... "principalities and powers" of darkness that are arrayed against us to separate the betrothed virgin of Christ from her beloved Bridegroom; nor any of the "things present or to come;" "neither height" of temporary exaltation, nor "depth" of trouble and sorrow, "nor any other creature [thing]" in heaven or earth, separate from his special love the Lord's elect, who have found in him their chief treasure.—Cant. 5:10,16.

Nor will any other creature in heaven or in earth receive from him those marks of special favor which are, and ever will be, the chief joy of his beloved bride. Though "the whole family of God in heaven and in earth" will be blessed through him, his wife co-operating with him in the work, she alone will be *his companion, his confidant, his treasure*. This close relationship of the Church to Christ was set forth in the Lord's words to his typical people (Deut. 14:2), which the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. 2:9) shows belonged, not to them, but to their antitypes, the elect Church. To them he said, "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." And the Apostle, after showing that the typical people of God stumbled and proved themselves unworthy of such special favor, applies the promise to the Gospel Church, saying, "But ye are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not the people, but are now the people of God.—1 Pet. 2:9.

And to us God has made exceeding great and precious promises—promises, not only of redemption and deliverance from sin and death, and recognition as sons and heirs of God through Christ to the inheritance of eternal life, but more: he has called us by his grace to be the bride of his only Son and heir—the "heir of all things;" to be his intimate and eternal companion in all things; to be "joint-heirs" with him of all his possessions, so that "all things are ours" also, "if we are Christ's;" to be "partakers," too, of the "divine nature" and glory and kingdom; even to sit with him in his throne, and with him to constitute a "royal priesthood" in whom all the world shall be blessed.

Hear the invitation (Psa. 45:10,11), "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house [the world and its ambitions, hopes and aims]; so shall the King [Jehovah's Anointed] greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

...No sooner is the gracious invitation thus accepted than the pleasure of the Lord is expressed to the prospective bride. Hear—Ye "shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." "Thine eyes shall see the King in

his beauty." "I will give thee to eat of the hidden manna" [John 4:32], and will give thee a white stone [a precious token of love], and in the stone a new name written [the name of the Bridegroom, henceforth to be ours—Acts 15:14], which no man knoweth [1Cor. 2:14] saving he that receiveth it." "Lo, I am with you alway [in thought and loving oversight and care], even unto the end of the age." "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is expedient *for you* that [personally] I go away to him that sent me: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that *where I am, there ye may be also*... He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him: we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—Mal. 3:17; Isa. 33:17; Rev. 2:17; Matt. 28:20; John 16:7, 5; 14:2, 3, 15-18, 21-23...

Precious words! con them over again and again, beloved of the Lord, that all their sweetness may permeate your souls and reinforce your waning powers with new vigor, courage and zeal to press along the narrow way until your eyes shall "see the King in his beauty."

Other treasures which we may lay up in heaven are those marks of just approval and distinction among all the good and holy which must result from zeal and faithfulness to the Lord and patient endurance of tribulation in his service in the present life. While an exceeding and eternal weight of glory is to be the inheritance of all of the elect body of Christ who are now laying up treasure in heaven, the Apostle Paul clearly intimates

that that treasure may be augmented by special zeal and faithfulness under the peculiar trials of the present time. (2 Cor. 4:17,18.) Treasures also of mind and character we shall find laid up in heaven; for nothing that is good and true, and worthy of preservation, shall be lost to those who have committed their investments to the Lord's keeping. These are incorruptible treasures which neither the lapse of time nor the exigencies of circumstance will be permitted to wrest from us. The treasures in heaven will also include all those true and noble friendships founded in righteousness and truth here on earth, whether they be on the natural or the spiritual plane. For instance, one on the spiritual plane of being will not be disposed to forget or to ignore the loving loyalty of a former earthly friendship which often ministered a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul in time of need. Surely some special marks of favor from the highly exalted ones will manifest the appreciation of the old-time friendships (Matt. 10:41,42; Heb. 6:10), and the reciprocation of such grateful loving hearts will be a part of the treasure long laid up in heaven, then to be realized. Nor will the special friendships of those on the spiritual plane, begun and cherished here and now, lose any of their value and sweetness when mortality is swallowed up of life...

With what joy shall the faithful begin to realize them when first they hear the Master's welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord."

...Who indeed can estimate the value of the

heavenly treasures? Their value is past our present powers of reckoning; yet, with an approximate appreciation of them, let us keep our eye upon them and diligently lay up in heaven many of them, assured that there moth and rust can not corrupt, nor thieves break through nor steal...

"Let us touch lightly the things of this earth, Esteeming them only of trifling worth," and let our treasures be laid up in heaven and our hearts dwell there.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE HEAVENLY TREASURES UPON THE PRESENT LIFE

In this view of the heavenly treasures we can see what a marked influence such a hope and ambition must have on the present life. (1) It helps us to realize that the Lord, whose present and final commendation we so earnestly desire, is taking special notice of even the most trivial affairs of our daily life and of our conduct with reference to them, as well as when we pass through the great billows of temptation and trial that seem disposed at times to overwhelm us. (2) It helps us to realize that the future approval of even our present enemies is a treasure worth the seeking. By and by the present opponent may be converted from the error of his way, and when he shall look back and call to mind the patient endurance, faithfulness and uniform kindness of the man formerly despised, hated, reviled and persecuted, the persecuting spirit may turn to mourning and repentance, and the former hatred, to love and admiration."

R3110 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

"THY PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE"

--RUTH 1:16-22—DECEMBER 7—

"Be kindly affectioned one toward another."—Rom. 12:10.

WHILE THE BOOK OF RUTH is not prophetic, but merely historical, it is valuable to us in various ways. (1) It furnishes an important link in the chronological chain leading down to King David and, hence, a part of the chronological line leading down to the Man Christ Jesus. (2) It gives a glimpse of the habits and customs of the Israelites in general as an agricultural people. In this respect it is in marked contrast with the Books of Judges, Kings and Chronicles, which dealt more particularly with the rulers, generals and wars. (3) The story of Ruth points a very beautiful lesson of fidelity, sympathy and love amongst the people at that time, and inculcates a similar lesson of kindness of disposition amongst the spiritual Israelites, guaranteeing them, along this line, blessings both for the present and for the future.

Somewhere about Gideon's time, when scarcity amounting almost to famine prevailed in Palestine, as a judgment of the Lord upon his people for some measure of coldness or unfaithfulness to him and to their covenant, Naomi's husband determined to emigrate with his family to the other side of the Dead Sea—to the land of Moab. The Moabites were the descendants of Lot, but, nevertheless, the Lord marked out to his people Israel that the—were not to be considered the children of Abraham—that they were not fellow-heirs of the promises made to Abraham, and, therefore, they were not subjects of special dealings, disciplines, providences, etc., as were the Israelites. Naomi and her two sons went with her husband apparently without regret, to the land of Moab, hoping thereby to better the prospects of the family. It was a mistake, however, as she afterwards realized, to attempt to regulate their own affairs when they were specially under the Lord's protection and guidance.

As Israelites they should have esteemed the divine promises so highly that they would not have left the land of promise and the people of promise to commingle with those who were strangers to those promises and more or less idolaters. To be on the Lord's side amongst the Lord's people should have been esteemed far more important than earthly prospects. Naomi, however, is not to blame in connection with this matter; the responsibility rested with her husband, and it is evident that her heart was never fully in sympathy with the move, because about ten years subsequently, when her

husband and two sons died, she promptly determined on a return to the Lord's people and to the land which he had given them.

Human nature is much the same everywhere and always. How many there are to-day who mistakenly seek to map out their plans for the present life in disregard of their highest interests, in disregard of the Lord's promises and the relationship which they have entered into by covenant with him! How many there are who forget that the Lord's arrangement with all of his covenant people is that he will supervise their affairs and cause all things to work together for good to them! Instead of making temporal interests the chief concern, Naomi's husband should have been making the religious interests of himself and family his chief concern, so that if he had been living in Moab under greater prosperity, he should rather have been willing to go into the land of promise amongst the Lord's people, though such a course would seem to mean a blighting of some of his earthly interests.

{1}The Lord's people of Spiritual Israel will do well to bear this thought continually in mind—that spiritual interests are to be given the preference always; that temporal affairs are to be managed and controlled from the standpoint of the everlasting welfare;--from the standpoint of spiritual growth and development and prosperity;--from the standpoint of the best interests and influences upon their children. They should not only hesitate to follow any suggestion that would take themselves and their families into unfavorable, godless surroundings, but they should determine that not under any consideration would they follow such a suggestion;--that on the contrary the Lord's people should be their people, even though this meant less of the comforts and luxuries of this present life: it would surely mean greater spiritual blessings and favors for the present time, and persevering would mean the gaining of the glorious reward which our Lord has promised to the faithful who love him more than they love houses and lands and kindred, etc.

Evidently Naomi's life and example and her faithfulness to the Lord had made an impression amongst those with whom she was specially in contact,--her two daughters-in-law, both of whom re-

{1} Aug. 21 Manna Matt. 6:33

solved to go back with her to the land of Canaan. On the journey, however, she reflected that these two young women would be sacrificing much—leaving kindred, homes, acquaintances, customs, and good prospects to go with her to a land where they would be considered foreigners and probably be discriminated against. She, therefore, urged them to return to their own people, to the religious worship, etc., to which they had been accustomed. She feared that their resolution to accompany her would result in disappointment later on. Her disinterested course in this matter reminds us very much of our Lord's words to some who proposed to become his disciples. He advised them first of all to sit down and count the cost; this he did, not because he wished to stumble or to turn back any who had inclinations to follow in his footsteps, but because it is best on general principles that people should not undertake that in which their hearts are not fully and deeply interested; because, otherwise, they are sure to make a failure. They who sit down and count the cost and then rejoicingly follow in the Lord's footsteps of suffering and trial, glad to be accounted worthy to suffer for his name's sake, and to walk in his footsteps, --they alone are the kind who will gain the prize. Those who would follow without th' spirit of sacrifice would be sure to miss the prize, and all the sacrificing they might do would be burdensome and measurably disappointing.

Naomi's argument appealed to one of her daughters-in-law, who did return to her Moabitish home, concluding that after all it would be too much of a sacrifice for her to part with her kindred, etc. Ruth, on the contrary, had come to love her mother-in-law so deeply and to respect her religion so thoroughly that although it cost a tear to part with home and kindred and to contemplate the trials of poverty in a foreign land, she, nevertheless, fully resolved that such a home amongst those who revered the true God and were heirs of his promises was more to be esteemed than anything she was leaving. Her impassioned words to her mother-in-law are noted throughout the world as being amongst the most beautiful expressions of sympathy, kindness and devotion. Some one has arranged them in poetic form, thus:--

"Entreat me not to leave thee,
And to return from following after thee;
For whither thou goest, I will go;
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge;
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God, my God;
Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried.
The Lord do so to me, and more also,
If aught but death part thee and me."—*Vs. 16, 17.*

A good and faithful, God-fearing, God-serving, God-honoring mother-in-law, Naomi surely was, to have so deeply interested Ruth in herself and in her God and in his promises to her people. There is a lesson here, not only for mothers-in-law, but for all of the Lord's people. Not all are able to preach and to teach the Word of God publicly or privately, but all can teach through their daily lives and glorify their Father in heaven in their bodies and spirits which are his, by living a godly life, by telling in the simplest manner of the hopes and promises which control their own hearts and inspire their own courage and devotion. The Apostle Paul had in mind this same thought of the general influence of life and character when he said, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ." Our Lord had the same thought in mind when he declared, "Ye are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." That Naomi had told her daughters-in-law respecting her God and his promises to his people is evident; but to have told them of this and not to have acted and spoken and lived in accord with this faith and hope, would have been contradictory and, undoubtedly, never would have influenced Ruth to forsake her own people and her father's house, and to cast in her lot with her mother-in-law and the Israelites.

Arrived at her home city, Bethlehem, Naomi, who had been well known ten years before, and whose friends probably never expected to see her again, was greeted by her name; but she replied, Call me no longer Naomi (which signifies lovable, pleasant), but call me rather Marah (which signifies bitter). She explained to them that the Lord's providences in respect to her affairs had been severe afflictions;--the Lord had testified against her course--had not prospered herself and family in the course they had taken. No doubt later on she came to see that the Lord's afflictions upon her had really been for her good, bringing her back to the land of promise and to fellowship with her people, so that her last days were probably the best of her life.

So at times it may be with some of the Lord's spiritual Israel-

ites; his chastisements and afflictions and disciplines may seem to indicate his displeasure, but really, from the standpoint of faith and knowledge, they may afterward be seen to have been blessings in disguise. However, much depends upon the way in which the Lord's disciplines are received. Had Naomi suffered herself to become sour and morose and rebellious against the Lord, no blessing would have followed her trying experiences; but the fact that she permitted these to draw her closer to the Lord and to his people formed the channel of her blessings. And this lesson also is easily applied by us all as spiritual Israelites to our experiences.

The remainder of the lesson gives us an insight into the customs of the time, and incidentally shows us how the Lord rewarded the noble character and faith of Ruth. That she did not come to Bethlehem with great expectations and selfish motives is evidenced by the fact that she set out to earn a living for herself and her mother-in-law. She was young and strong, and could, after the manner of the times, go into the harvest fields and glean such stray handfuls of the grain as were missed by the men who did the reaping. This was permitted by the Jewish law; the grain growing in the fence corners might be gathered by any of the poor for their own use. Provisionally Ruth was guided in her humble efforts to make a living, to the field of a man who was a kinsman to Naomi, and to whom she (Ruth) was subsequently married and became one of the mothers in Israel, from whom descended King David and ultimately Mary, the mother of Jesus.

It is well that the Lord's people note even in this little incident something that may be helpful to them. We are to commit our way to the Lord and sincerely and unselfishly determine to follow the path of righteousness; then the Lord shall be our God; then his people shall be our people. Testings will come as to whether or not we are willing to do our duty in respect to the common affairs of life, laboring with our hands, providing things honest in the sight of all men. As we go forward in the line of duty, the Lord guides our steps and overrules in our affairs and brings us blessings, but if we fail to take the proper steps and to do with our might what our hands find to do, we miss the blessings.

The fact that these two women could journey from Moab to Bethlehem by themselves and without molestation, and the fact that Ruth, unknown and unprotected, could safely glean in the fields without interference of any kind, speaks to us strongly of the general law and order prevalent amongst the Israelites--the general recognition of the divine law and the general conformity thereto. We are to remember, too, that at this time the laws were liberally administered, and that, so far as we are made aware, there was neither army or police organization to enforce them. The people were comparatively free and evidently in some respects moral, noble and trustworthy. This is illustrated further in the course of Boaz. How few employers of labor to-day, as they visit their farms, would be in any degree inclined to salute their laborers as Boaz did his; saying, "The Lord be with you!" And how few farm laborers of to-day would respond as did these of Boaz; --"They answered him, The Lord bless thee." Evidently the employers and employees of our day could learn some profitable lessons from the past, notwithstanding the fact that Evolutionists would endeavor to convince us that back in the days of Boaz men must have been much nearer the monkey condition than to-day. The facts are to the contrary.

Furthermore, we notice the generosity of Boaz, that instead of dealing selfishly and miserly in respect to the gleanings of the woman, he gave directions to his servants that they purposely let fall an occasional handful when binding the grain, that Ruth's gleanings might thus be enlarged. Christian employers and employees need not to go back to the Jewish Law and to the customs of the Jews as illustrated by Boaz and his laborers; for we have a still higher law and much advantage every way over them. If their knowledge of the Lord led them to kindly salutations and kindly actions, much more should the Christian's greater knowledge of the divine will and his anointing of the holy spirit enable him to be kind, considerate and affectionate toward others--doing good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith.

Our Golden Text is an exhortation to spiritual Israelites and is in full accord with the sentiments of this lesson as witnessed by the conduct of Naomi and Ruth and Boaz and his laborers. Let us with increasing light and knowledge and privilege make still further progress in all the fruits of the spirit of love.

Finally,--It is unsafe to neglect to have the Lord for our God, and to neglect to make his people our people. Acceptance of the Lord means ultimately a change in all of life's interests and affairs if we would abide in his love and favor. The sacrifice of earthly things may cost us tears and heart-aches at first; but eventually we will be more than compensated--as was Ruth, only in higher, spiritual blessings.