

December 18

The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Heb. 13:6

TO have the proper course in life, to be able to meet the trials and difficulties of life as they come to us, and to meet them in the

BOLD, WISE, HARMLESS, MEEK

(Prov 28:1 KJV) "The righteous are bold as a lion."

(Mat 10:16 KJV) "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

(Psa 25:9 KJV) "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way."

THE LORD IS OUR HELPER

(Heb 13:5-6 KJV) "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (6) So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

R2353 "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The whole world has wondered at the intelligent courage of the humble ones of the Lord's people. The secret of their courage and of their strength is in their confidence that the Lord is their helper, that he, with wisdom and love which are infinite, is both able and willing to make all things work together for their good."

R2353 "The best illustrations of this true faith, this *continuous confidence in God*, is found, as we should expect, in our dear Redeemer's experiences..."

This is forcibly illustrated in his answer to Pilate; when the latter said to him, "Knowest thou not that I have power either to deliver thee or to put thee to death?" Jesus answered, "Thou couldst have no power, except it were given thee of my Father." Again he said, with respect to the cup of suffering and ignominy, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Indeed, it was sufficient for him in any and every matter to realize that the Father was controlling; this thought gave him courage to do, to suffer and to bear.

And similar confidence in divine Providence is necessary to all who would come off conquerors through him who loved us and died for us. If we can feel sure that we have fully surrendered ourselves to God according to his call, we may also feel sure that all things are working for our *good*: we may realize in every emergency of life that the Father has prepared the cup, and will sustain and bless us while we drink it: our Lord Jesus, the Father's representative, oversees our trials and ignominy and suffering; he permits the cup to be prepared for us by blinded servants of Satan. This knowledge should not only enable us to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods (anything that we deemed precious, trade, influence, good name, etc.), but should enable us also to entreat with kindness and gentleness, and with a spirit of forgiveness those who prepare and administer the cup of our sufferings..."

R3136 "The Lord's exhortation is that we seek to render good in return for the evil we receive, and includes our language as well as our conduct... It includes also our very

proper spirit which the Lord directs--in the spirit of rejoicing in tribulation, and counting such experiences all joy,--it is necessary that all fear of man, which brings a snare, shall be removed. And it is our Lord's direction that we shall fear Jehovah, and not fear

thoughts, for we are not even to render anger for anger, malice for malice, envy for envy. Two evils can never make a good--two wrongs will never make a right. Our sympathy for our blinded enemies is to cultivate our patience and forbearance toward them in thought, word and deed...

The worldly spirit does not approve this part of the Apostle's counsel, but urges, rather, that we should treat others as they treat us--that we should "give as good as we get,"--meaning that we should give as bad as we get. By way of saying as good a word as they can in their own favor along these lines they sometimes accuse the Lord's followers of cowardice. Courage is one of the noble qualities of humanity, and it is quite a trial to some to be considered timid or lacking in courage; and to such this enjoined restraint of word and act is a particular trial. It is not true, however, that the Lord's counsel tends to effeminacy or lack of courage. This matter is well stated in the language of another, as follows:--

"One feature which stands out clear in the society founded by Christ and his apostles is the extraordinary heroism which was shown in the face of death and tortures, not only by men, but by feeble women and tender children. It amazed the heathen magistrates who were striving after *fortitude* by the aid of philosophy. It amazed the wild savages, who mistook gentleness for cowardice, when they found it was harder to terrify the missionary who came with the Gospel than the invader who came in battle array. Quiet endurance may be *more heroic* than violent resistance, and the Christian law of bearing personal insults and injuries meekly tends to the development of the highest courage and truest manliness. There is nothing more courageous, more heroic, in all history than living up to this precept."

R2109 "Stephen was courageous. Notwithstanding the fact of his arrest, and that he was on trial, and that if found guilty the punishment would be death by stoning, according to the law, Stephen was not daunted. Instead of a look of fear and servility, or of anger, malice, hatred and defiance, the record is that they beheld his face "as it had been the face of an angel;"--a face beaming with love, kindness, interest in their welfare, desire to do them good, of purity and holiness of motive, combined with humble confidence in God and fearlessness of men. We believe that to a greater or less extent this is the case with all who receive the holy spirit, in proportion as they progress in the knowledge, faith, love, zeal and character of Christ their Lord. This change does not come instantaneously; it comes gradually. The spirit of the world places the marks of selfishness and hardness upon the countenances of all the slaves of sin, in proportion as they are faithful thereto. But when the spirit of the truth is received and these become freed from the slavery to sin and become the servants of righteousness, the result is a proportionate displacement of the marks of slavery upon the countenance and an illumination instead, which more and more approaches the angelic... This illumination will be found most

our mortal fellows. The righteous are bold as a lion, as well as gentle as a dove, and meek as a lamb. This peculiar combination should be found in every Christian, and we doubt if it will be found elsewhere. Z. '02-45 R2953:1

remarkable and conspicuous when such saints are actively engaged in telling the good tidings, and particularly when opposing the error."

REJOICING IN TRIBULATION

R5779 "TORTURES OF TODAY MORE REFINED... The Apostle James says, the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, and it sets on fire the course of nature. (James 3:6.) And so in our day the tongue and the pen are often used as weapons of evil.

We have all noticed, perhaps, how willing the world is to *speak* evil and to *believe* evil--how willing to say that which they do not know. This is all because they are obsessed, besieged by the Adversary. But we are living in a more civilized day than were our brethren of the past. We think the individual who does these wicked things today--who slanders and vilifies God's people--is under some malevolent influence. And then the temptation comes to us to speak evil of them in return--to do all the harm we can against them. If we find this disposition to speak evil arising within us, we are to resist it, to allow the fire of this time to burn up these elements of our old nature. And the fire will have this purifying effect upon us, if we receive it aright, making us meet for the Heavenly Kingdom.

SECONDARY SOURCE OF TRIAL

Not only from the Adversary do these trials come, but they come from the weaknesses and the imperfections of others. And perhaps those that come from the brethren are the most difficult to bear. We know that "the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not." But when it comes to those who have made a profession of loyalty to God, and who have named the name of Christ... those who are Bible Students--if in any of these we find the persecuting spirit, we are more discouraged and less likely to have the proper sympathy for them.

We are to remember, however, that nothing can happen to us unless the Father permits it. If we did not get the trials from Methodists or Presbyterians or Bible Students, we would get them from somewhere else, in order to burn up our dross and strengthen the elements of our character which need development. We are to take all of these things patiently, knowing that they are working out for us a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We are to look away from these things and to recognize the grand purpose of God. We are to reflect that this is the way in which God is chiseling us and polishing us to make us ready for the grand Temple of Glory. And when we think of this, we can look with fortitude and patience on these fiery trials, recognizing that we shall get a blessing out of them.

Thus we learn as people of God to *glory*. We may glory in all the things which He has done *for* us and *in* us. The things that naturally would be least likely to be gloried in are tribulations, persecutions. But we may glory also in these. We may rejoice in them--not that we enjoy the tribulations, the persecutions, but we realize that these are working for us characters pleasing to God...

BLESSING RESULTING FROM PERSECUTION

Shall we say that we will not be reconciled to any certain experience? No; we have committed all to the Lord, and it is for us to bow in full submission, knowing by faith and from the assurance of God's Word that all things are working together for good to us...

"Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." This does not mean that we get all of our patience first, then all of our experience, and then all of our hope; but that they are all developing together. We have a good courage and are desirous of pleasing the Lord; we are not ashamed to be His children. And the reason why we are not ashamed is that with this hope, we have the realization of God's love; and we are able to say, "If I had *tribulation*, I now have more *hope* and more *patience*. I am getting the results in these tribulations, in the fruits of the Spirit." Whoever escapes experiences that would develop the fruits of the Holy Spirit will never gain a place in the Kingdom...

We have need of preparation for our future work. This can be gained only by those experiences which will touch us with a feeling of the infirmities and difficulties and trials of the groaning creation to whom we shall be ministers and representatives when we reach the Throne."

R5295 "The Father will not withhold anything necessary for the proper development of His children. He also promises that we shall not be tempted above that we are *able* to endure, lest some injury come to us. Thus we see that He is supplying all our needs, enabling us to lay down our earthly lives... If God permits us to have experiences of trial from the Adversary and our fellowmen, He does so to the intent that these may work out good to us."

R2109 "It is still necessary to suffer with Christ, if we would be glorified with him and share his coming Kingdom. But the persecutions of to-day are more refined than in any

previous period. The faithful to-day are not stoned with literal stones or shot with literal arrows or literally beheaded, but it is still true that the wicked shoot out arrows at the righteous, "even *bitter words*," and many because of faithfulness are reproved and slandered and cut off from fellowship -- beheaded for the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. 20:4.) Let all such emulate Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Let their testimonies be given with radiant faces like his."

1Pe 4:11-14 KJV "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (12) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: (13) But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (14) If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

R2258 "Some will continue to walk with the Lord; some will not be driven from him by any of the arts and wiles of the evil one. They are such as are at heart fully the Lord's..."

R1914 "*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?... One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.*"--Psa. 27:1,4...

It was in view of the Lord's providences and of his many deliverances from the power of his enemies, and of the uniform kindness and mercy of God as he meditated upon them, that David exclaimed, "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom

R5539 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

THE CHRISTIAN'S TOWER OF STRENGTH

"The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." -- Hebrews 13:6

THE Christian's position in the world is a peculiar one. None others can afford to be so courageous and independent as he. Yet the true child of God is not self-sufficient nor independent of any outside help. He is exhorted in the Word of the Lord to be not boastful, but humble-minded, realizing his powerlessness of himself and his need of God. Indeed, unless he is humble-minded he cannot be pleasing to the Lord. But at the same time he is to be full of courage and confidence. No power in the Universe is able to cope with our God; and He has declared that He is the Support and Shield of His children. He is the Strong Tower of those who put their trust in Him.

If we abide in Christ and His Word abides in us, He will be our Deliverer in six troubles, and in the seventh He will not forsake us--because we have been called of God, because we have responded to that call, because we are seeking to glorify Him in our bodies. Hence we need not fear what any man can do unto us. The Apostle Paul, who exhorts us to courage and confident trust in God, was a noble example of courageous faith. He tells us why we have such abundant reason for assurance of faith and absence of fear of man. He says, "Let your conversation [conduct, manner of life] be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

TRUE FAITH NOT PRESUMPTION

We should not say, The Lord is my Helper, and therefore He will not suffer my house to burn, nor burglars to break in and steal my belongings. I will not lock my doors at night; for the Lord is watching over me and mine. This would not be the spirit of a sound

mind. It would not be true faith, but presumption. We should take all reasonable precautions to prevent losses of such kinds. The Lord expects us to do all in our power for our own protection, and not expect Him to work unnecessary miracles to protect us from our own carelessness and inefficiency. Under such circumstances He might allow us to become involved in difficulty and loss, and thus to learn a needed lesson. We are stewards of whatever the Lord has entrusted to us, and He expects us to exercise care in regard to whatever is properly under our care but belonging to Him. We should have buckets and water at hand so as to be ready in case of fire. We should have proper fastenings upon our doors and our windows. When our own duty is done, we are to leave ourselves fully in the Lord's hands, knowing that all will be well with us.

shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?"... The more desperate and determined the foes we encounter and the more fierce the conflict with the powers of darkness, the more glorious is the deliverance and the clearer are the manifestations of divine grace. And, as a consequence, faith takes deeper root, and, with renewed confidence and assurance, lays hold upon all the precious promises of God; and love and gratitude well up from hearts refreshed with an increased sense of the divine favor and blessing.

So it was with David; and so it is with God's *faithful* people who lead a life of prayer and faith and close fellowship with God. Such fellowship with God in adversity and in prosperity naturally tends more and more to center the heart's affections and desires in God...

"To behold the beauty of the Lord" is to behold the beauty of holiness, to have this image of his glory ever before the mind's eye as our inspiration, our light, our guide, our pattern and our chief joy. Here indeed is the Christian's secret of a happy life--happy in the midst of whatever may come to him of affliction or pain or loss or perplexity or whatever experiences come through the checkered scenes of this present life...

The language of their hearts is, "Oh, how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." "I have meat to eat that ye [who are of the world] know not of;" for "It is my delight to do thy will, O God..."

Courage, born of faith and strengthened by endurance, cries with humble boldness in the midst of the deepest darkness of the most perplexing difficulties, and in the midst of the wildest storms and most threatening dangers, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Gen 18:14 KJV "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" Psa 121:2 KJV "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

If the Lord permits seeming calamity to come, we may rest assured that it will work out our good, if we are properly exercised by the experience. After having done our part, we should trust all consequences to Him, not doubting that He will care for us in His own best way. The Lord will give us whatever help along temporal lines He sees is for the highest interests of the New Creature, if we do not remove ourselves from His keeping and seek to manage our own interests. Even in the event of such a mistake, if we come to see where we have been wilful and have leaned to our own understanding and renew full allegiance to the Lord, the difficulties in which we have become involved may prove to be a real blessing in opening our eyes to our wrong course, in showing us our own insufficiency to guide ourselves, and in bringing us wholly back to God.

"THAT WICKED ONE TOUCHETH HIM NOT"
Our highest interests, our real interests, are matters of our Fa-

ther's constant care. If we keep very near to the Lord, we are protected from the power of the fallen angels, who would, if permitted, bring about our ensnarement and overthrow. They cannot really harm us if we are watching and keeping our garments white. Only a lack of faithfulness would subject us to their power to any extent so far as our New Creature interests are concerned. They can neither harm our bodies in any way nor cause any violence to us, unless the Lord permits it for our highest good--perhaps for our deliverance and exaltation, as in the case of our Master.

Let us, then, keep ourselves, that "that Wicked One touch us not." We are subject to various attacks by the deluded servants of the powers of darkness. There may be attacks upon our good name, our reputation, our bodies, or what not, with more or less legality. We are to a considerable extent subject to man, through "the powers that be." Yet our bitterest enemies are powerless to touch us, unless permitted by the Lord. And we cannot be touched by the great Adversary, if we remain true to our Covenant--true to the Vows we have taken to the Lord. The Adversary can never touch our real selves as New Creatures save by our own unfaithfulness.

WE WILL WORSHIP OUR GOD ALONE

It may be the will of God to permit us to suffer, just as He permitted John the Baptist to be imprisoned and finally beheaded, just as He permitted Jesus to be arrested and crucified, and He has permitted many of His saints in the past to be maltreated or killed. But we need not fear what men may do unto us, knowing that our God, whose we are and whom we serve, will be with us constantly, and will cause all things to work out His own glorious purposes *for us and in us*.

We would, of course, be glad to please men, if this were possible. But wherever it is a question of pleasing *God* or pleasing *man*, we will say, as did the three young Hebrews to the king of Babylon: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us....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." We will not do anything contrary to the Divine will, to the command of Jehovah. We will worship our God alone!

When the Jewish Council (Acts 4:13-20) commanded the Apostles Peter and John to speak no more in the name of Jesus, their reply was: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." When Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, said to our Lord on the night of His arrest and trial, "Knowest Thou that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?" Jesus answered: "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above." So it is with all the footstep followers of the Master. God's grace will be sufficient. Man is powerless to harm a hair of our heads, unless it is permitted of our Father in Heaven for His glory and our own highest welfare.

COURAGE BORN OF FAITH

The world has often wondered at the calmness of the Lord's humble little ones under circumstances which would cause the stoutest heart to quail. But to follow the course in life which will glorify our God and magnify His grace, to be able to meet wisely and courageously the trials and difficulties as they come to us as Christians, representatives of the King of Heaven, and to meet them in the spirit of rejoicing, counting our tribulations all joy, it is necessary that our hearts be in attune with the Lord, that we have no will but His, and that the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, shall be overcome. We cannot accomplish this in our own strength, but in the strength of God alone. We are instructed to fear Jehovah, and not to fear a weak mortal. The righteous are as bold as a lion, as gentle as a dove, as meek as a lamb. This peculiar combination of boldness, gentleness and meekness should characterize every Christian.

R2951 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

DEACON STEPHEN, CHRISTIAN MARTYR

--ACTS 6:7-15--FEB. 23--

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

STEPHEN may be acknowledged the second Christian martyr--surely our Lord Jesus was the first. We must begin with the first verse of our lesson-chapter in order to trace the history of this worthy soldier of the cross. An emergency arose in the Church, calling for a force of seven deacons to look after various temporal matters, and Stephen was one of these seven, all of whom were chosen by the congregation, not by the apostles, as men of honest reputation, wise, and full of the holy spirit. This incident suggests to us the loose character of the organization of the early Church. It had no cast-iron rules and laws, except that the Lord, the Redeemer, was the Head of the Church, and that none could be recognized as members thereto except as they recognized him as their Savior and Lord, and made consecration to him, receiving his spirit, and recognized as of his appointment and of the holy spirit's designation his specially chosen apostles, as the authorized instructors of the Church. Aside from this, the necessities of each case seem to have guided: and yet, we may safely presume that in all the arrangements in the Church, as well as in the teachings of the apostles, the holy spirit directed; --for the benefit also of those believing on the Lord through their word, throughout the entire age.

In a previous lesson we saw that a measure of communism was early established in the Church; but the incidents of this lesson clearly imply that it was only limited, and not a complete division of property. It was evidently the intention of the early Church to provide for the poor of their number who were without means of livelihood. Prominent amongst those provided for, if not the only ones, were widows without income; such at that time must have been comparatively helpless and dependent upon charity, since there were so few opportunities for earning a living, especially amongst women.

We are not to suppose that there was any intentional partiality or neglect of the Grecian more than of the Hebrew women. Apparently it was unintentional, and possibly arose from the fact that the apostles, native-born, appreciated more keenly the needs of the native widows than of the foreign-born. These were all Jewesses, of course, whether born in Palestine or born in Greece. Up to this time the Gospel had not been sent to others,--Gentiles. No doubt there was some reasonable cause for the murmur. In any event the apostles manifested their honesty of purpose in the matter by promptly instituting measures for the correction of the difficulty. There is a lesson in this for all of the Lord's people: if difficulties arise, based upon temporal questions, likely to sprout a "root of bitterness" or to cause a schism in the Church, the proper course would be to throw the responsibility upon the shoulders of the whole congregation--to

ask for the election of some of the number who could give the matter better attention, and see that all were justly dealt with. We are not to forget that in this as in other ways the Lord has clearly indicated that the *Church as a whole* is under his supervision, his care, and that it is therefore proper that the general affairs of the Church be conducted by the *congregation* and not by one man, nor by a clerical class.

No doubt some of those chosen for the serving of tables--the money collection and the food distribution --were representatives of the Grecian brethren who, knowing the peculiarities of the Grecian customs, would be the better able to see to the welfare of the Grecian widows. It is here that we get acquainted with Stephen, as one of the seven chosen deacons. The word "deacon" signifies runner, attendant, servant. The "elders" of the Church were more particularly chosen according to their Christian character and aptness to teach, while the deacons were chosen according to Christian character and aptness in business affairs. In both instances, however, the Christian character, the holiness of spirit and wisdom were primary considerations. So with the Lord's people to-day: those chosen to any part of the service should first of all be recognized as the best and the wisest of the number--the possession of a holy, meek and quiet spirit, of great value, being carefully considered --then natural abilities.

In Stephen's case we see an illustration of the Lord's methods of advancing his people step by step in his service: (1) He was honored with a knowledge of the truth: faithful in his acceptance of it, and zealous toward the Lord, he ere long manifested these qualities; and under the guidance of the holy spirit, was chosen a deacon. (2) Faithfulness in this, serving tables, prepared him for further opportunities, and (3) we find him exercising the gift of healing and performing signs in attestation of his *ministry of the truth*; which implies that he had actually attained to the position of an elder in the Church tho' the apostles residing in Jerusalem, perhaps, made an unnecessary election of elders,--for they were all elders. (I Pet. 5:1.) Stephen was so full of the spirit of the truth and devotion to its service that he had the high honor (4) of being the first one of the brethren to follow the Master's footsteps in a sacrificial death. Here surely was an advancement in service and its honor that may well quicken and energize all of the Lord's people to greater efforts to serve and please the same Master. He who thus accepted the consecrated Stephen, and advanced him step by step in his service, is ready and willing to-day to take and use those who are similarly consecrated, and burning with heavenly zeal. He is willing to make of such burning and shining lights in the Church, if they in turn are willing to

suffer with him, that they may also be glorified together in due time.-- Rom. 8:17.

Stephen's faith and power and opportunities for service came to him along the same lines as faith and power have come to the Lord's people since--whole-hearted devotion to the Lord, to his people and to his truth. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Had Stephen been selfseeking and ambitious for honor of men or of the brethren we may be sure we would have heard little of him, unless, like Ananias, his approbateness had resulted in his being made an example of evil-doing. This is a danger which besets every brother chosen by the church to any service. Hence the apostle's caution "Be not many of you teachers brethren." Hence the necessity that the Church choose for its servants only those of humble mind; and the need of care amongst these servants that they fall not into the snare of the Adversary, and after having preached to others, themselves become castaways.-- Jas. 3:1; I Tim. 3:6,7; I Cor. 9:27.

Stephen in preaching got into a debate with some of his day, and was more than a match for them. As we read, "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." We are not to suppose that Stephen was the greatest of all orators, nor even that he had no peers amongst those with whom he disputed. In this case the adage was well applied, "Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just." It was because Stephen had the truth, the right side of the controversy, and because God was with him, that he was more than a match for any of his adversaries.

The same God is still with his people; and the Lord's Word, therefore, is still worthy of all acceptance, --"I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries shall be able to gainsay or resist." (Luke 21:15.) Do we not see this same principle illustrated to-day, when humble ones amongst the Lord's people are more than a match for all their adversaries? The truth being powerful, prevails, though it is not always acknowledged to prevail, even as it was not acknowledged by Stephen's enemies.

We are not advocating public debating of the truth. We believe that debates, as a rule, accomplish little good; because the opponents of the truth are apt to conduct their arguments unfairly, deceptively--apt to strive for victory, rather than to strive for the truth. However, there are cases to-day, like this case of Stephen's, in which the opponents of the truth are the aggressors; and in such cases those who have the truth are not to be ashamed of it, nor fearful, but to trust in the promise of the Lord for words and wisdom for the occasion. We are not given a report of the discussion, but from what we know of Stephen's character, so well illustrated in the discourse subsequently delivered, we cannot escape the conviction that he spoke to his opponents in a kind, generous, reasonable manner-- that he neither ranted nor stormed nor endeavored to throw a dust of false arguments. He had the truth, which is sharper than a two-edged sword, and we may be sure that he spoke the truth "in love," according to the apostolic command.--Eph. 4:15.

Stephen's disputants were evidently of the Grecian Jews, and Stephen himself was also probably of this class. Possibly Saul of Tarsus, afterwards the Apostle Paul, was amongst those who disputed with him, as he himself tells us that he was a sort of ringleader amongst those who killed him. (Acts 22:20.) We cannot help wondering to what extent young Saul, the lawyer, instructed by Gamaliel, and an adept in logic, may have taken some lessons and caught some ideas from Stephen's reasoning--not enough, however, to make transformation of his career.

It was Stephen's turn to be called before the Sanhedrin, that he might give the leaders of his people a gospel sermon, the basis of which was Jesus and the resurrection. His opponents, who could not down him in argument, were determined to destroy him; and, like other zealots, deluded by superstition, they were nevertheless influenced by their higher principles to desire to accomplish his destruction *legally*--that is to say, with a form of law. Alas, how many people now, as well as then, of comparatively noble mind, succeed in "deceiving their own selves" into thinking that a wrong becomes a virtue, becomes right, if to any extent they can wrap it in the folds of the law! The Lord's people need to have the *spirit* of the law, the *spirit* of justice, the *spirit* of righteousness: without this even the best balanced minds may be led astray under the pressure of zeal, superstition, or error.

The doctors of the law and members of the Sanhedrin (Saul of Tarsus is supposed to have been a member) did not wish to be parties directly to the charges, nor to seem to be interested in the destruction of a noble man. They therefore procured others to give testimony that would be of the kind desired--testimony upon which it would be possible for their distorted judgments and consciences to render a death verdict. Strangely enough, the second martyr, like the first, was convicted of blasphemy against God and against the Temple, and without any more foundation for the charges than in the

case of his illustrious Master. Of course the charges were distorted, and yet there was a measure of truth in them. Just how much allowance should be made for those who convicted the Lord and Stephen on such evidence is perhaps difficult for us to judge. Nor is it necessary, because the judgment of such matters is not yet put into our hands. The Lord alone knows to what extent the prejudiced mind was unable to discern the truth, and to what extent the Adversary succeeded in blinding the judgment, so as to make the light appear darkness, the truth appear error.

Doubtless, as Stephen heard the charges against him, and noticed the advancement of the case, he mentally remarked the correspondence between these charges against him and those upon which his Master was convicted. We may be sure that some such thoughts were passing through his mind when his face was so wonderfully lit up with the indwelling joy, that it is recorded that all sitting in the Sanhedrin "looking steadfastly on him saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel." But even an angelic face could not move such hearts, some of the same, doubtless, that had sat in condemnation of the Master himself. Seemingly, Stephen's witness was fruitless, so far as his auditors were concerned; the same might have been said respecting our Master's trial and testimony. And yet, as the latter bore fruit on the day of Pentecost and afterward, so, doubtless, Stephen's testimony bore fruit subsequently. Who can say that that beaming and angelic face was not one of the "pricks" against which Saul of Tarsus had been contending for some time, when the Lord interrupted him enroute to Damascus?

Who can tell that experiences connected with this martyrdom may not have been valuable not only to Saul, but to others? At all events, it was Stephen's duty, as it is our duty, to be faithful under all circumstances, under all conditions, regardless of whether appearances indicate the accomplishment of much, or of little good. We are to remember that the Lord's work is in his own hands, and that our part is to be faithful to him and to the truth, to the extent of our opportunities.

The Editor would like, for himself and for all the Pilgrims, and for all the elders of the Church everywhere, and for all the brethren who speak at all, publicly or privately, in the name of Jesus, that Stephen's beaming face might be impressed upon our memories. If it is, and if every time we stand forth before men publicly or privately, as the representatives of our Lord, we could so realize his blessing and our privilege as his servants, that it would fill our hearts, and beam forth from our faces, in gladness, in thankfulness, for the privilege of serving, then indeed we would have the highest degree of blessing to ourselves, and doubtless also would bring the largest degree of blessing to all those whose hearts would be prepared for the truth, and also for those not yet ready for it, but who are under the Lord's discipline and guidance, in preparation for it, as was Saul of Tarsus.

Our Golden Text is very appropriate in this connection. It is well that the Lord's people, especially when they come into trying positions on account of their fidelity to the truth, should remember these, the Master's words. Men may kill our bodies, or they may speak evil of them, or despitefully use them otherwise; but it is beyond their power to injure us as new creatures, or to ruin our prospects as respects the future life. That life which the Lord has promised to his faithful,--the resurrection life,--is beyond the power of man. It is the eternal, the invaluable life. If we gain it, no matter what the cost may be, as respects the present life, and mortal-body condition, we shall have made a great bargain, we shall have gained a great prize. All who really appreciate it see it to be a "pearl of great price," for which they, like the Master, are willing to lay down all,--to sell all that they have, that they may obtain it.

God is able to kill the soul--able to blot out existence entirely--and he has threatened to do so in all cases of wilful deliberate sin, against full light and knowledge. This is a cause both for comfort and for fear. For comfort, as opposed to the false human teaching that the masses will spend an eternity of woe: for fear, lest after having tasted of divine goodness and learned of God's gracious provisions for such as obey him, any of us should seem to come short and lose our all--life!

^{1}To have the proper course in life, to be able to meet the trials and difficulties of life as they come to us, and to meet them in the proper spirit which the Lord directs--in the spirit of rejoicing in tribulation, and counting such experiences all joy,--it is necessary that all fear of man, which brings a snare, shall be removed. And it is our Lord's direction that we shall fear Jehovah, and not fear our mortal fellows. The righteous are bold as a lion, as well as gentle as a dove, and meek as a lamb. This peculiar combination should be found in every Christian, and we doubt if it will be found elsewhere.

{1} Dec. 18 Manna, Heb. 13:6