

**\*February 16**

*Through honor and dishonor, through evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; ...giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed. 2Corinthians 6:8,3*

WHILE in the discharge of duty to the best of our ability and when apparently we have the Lord's blessing and favor upon us

**“GIVING NO OFFENCE IN ANYTHING, THAT THE MINISTRY BE NOT BLAMED”**

(2 Cor 6:3)

R859 “Paul gives a vivid picture of the true Christian life which we cannot ponder too carefully:—“Giving no offence in anything [against the principles of truth and righteousness] that the ministry be not blamed. But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonment, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left; by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing...2 Cor. 6:3-10”

**LARGER CONTEXT**

(2Cor 6:1-4 quotes Isa 49:8 and interprets it as referring to the Church)

(Isa 49:8 KJV) “Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;”

(2 Cor 6:1-4 KJV) “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (2) (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) (3) Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: (4) But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses”

R4542 “GIVE THEE FOR A COVENANT.... “I will preserve thee and give thee for a *Covenant* unto the people, to establish the earth,” etc. Notice the fact that the people and their earthly inheritance are here differentiated from the great Mediator of the Covenant, through whom the people are to be blessed...

Note St. Paul's application of our text to the Church. He quotes the passage as applicable to the Body of Christ... “now is the accepted time [when we, like our Lord, may sacrifice earthly rights and restitution privileges and thereby attain the spiritual blessing of our 'high calling of God in Christ Jesus']; behold, now is the day of salvation”—the great salvation to the Divine nature.—2 Cor. 6:1, 2.

Reading again the prophecy from which this quotation is made—our text—we perceive that there is no room to question that the entire Christ Head and Body was

and our affairs in a most marked degree, suddenly trouble may arise, adversity come, the powers of darkness seem to triumph, and for a moment we may be apparently culprits in the judgment of our fellowmen, and apparently forsaken by divine providence. Such experiences, doubtless, are needful to us; for though we may sing:--

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given as a Covenant for the people, the world, to institute general times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.--Acts 3:19-21.

We see, in this connection, also the appropriateness of our Lord's speaking of his "Cup" of suffering and death which he invited his faithful to share with him as being not only his own blood shed for us, but also "the blood of the New Covenant shed for many," in which we are privileged to *participate*. Those who see and who appreciate the privilege rejoice to be accounted worthy to have *fellowship* or participation with Christ in his sufferings and sacrifices, that they may have share with him also in his glories and work. The blood of the New Covenant signifies the "better sacrifices" by which God has been pleased to arrange to bring the whole world anew into Covenant relations with himself.”

R858 "BEHOLD, NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME; BEHOLD, NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION." 2 Cor. 6:2. Isa. 49:8...

The class addressed is plainly seen from Isaiah's prophecy, to be consecrated believers of the Gospel Age—the Christ head and body...

It is the anointed, the Christ, head and body, selected and developed during the Gospel Age, which is to accomplish the great work here pointed out—the work of the resurrection, or restitution, in the next age, saying to the prisoners in death, "Go forth," and to those in the darkness or shadow of death, "Show yourselves." "Now," the Gospel Age now closing, has been the acceptable time for justified believers to offer themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God; because this age was specially set apart by God for the calling and development of this class of *sacrificers* whose sacrifices are *now acceptable*.”

**THIS GREAT TRUTH PREVIOUSLY KNOWN, UNCOVERED AGAIN IN 1881**

R3825 In HARVEST GATHERINGS AND SIFTINGS after telling us how the tabernacle came to be understood just in time to counter a no ransom theory that was stumbling the brethren, Br Russell continues: “Here, too, I first saw that “the *acceptable day of the Lord*” signifies this Gospel age—the time during which he will *accept the sacrifice* of any who come unto God through Christ, the great Sin-Offering: that when this acceptable day ends, the reward of joint-heirship and change to the divine nature ends; and that when this great day of sacrifice, the Gospel age (the real day of Atonement), has closed, when all the members of the body of Christ have participated with him in the sacrifice of their rights as justified men, and been glorified, then the blessing will begin to come to the world—the Millennial blessings purchased for men by their Redeemer, according to the grace of God.”

“I would rather walk in the dark with God, Than go alone in the light,”

yet this might be but an empty boast unless we were put through the trying experiences which would develop such faith, such trust, as would hold to the Lord's hand, and trust divine providence in the darkest hour. Z.'01-314 R2886:3 [\*Feb 16 Br. Russell's Birthday R5997-2 Cor 6:8,3 certainly applies]

R5928 July 1916 "Gather My saints [holy ones] together unto Me [saith the Lord]; those that have made a Covenant with Me by sacrifice." (Psalm 50:5) This special class of saints, or holy ones, who make the Covenant of Sacrifice have as their Head the Lord Jesus Himself. When this company shall have completed their Covenant by Sacrifice, this present Age will end.”

(Rom 11:25-27 KJV) “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (26) And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: (27) For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

R4681 “The New Covenant put into operation as soon as the Royal Priesthood shall have completed the appointed work of sacrifice.—Romans 11:27-30”

**“BY EVIL REPORT AND BY GOOD... AS DECEIVERS AND YET TRUE”**

(2 Cor 6:8)

R3895-3897 “OUR Lord's words, "The darkness hateth the light," were verified not only in his own case but also amongst those who have been his footstep followers throughout this Gospel age...

**JESUS BEFORE PILATE...**

The multitude standing outside the gates shouted the accusations riotously, incited so to do by their religious teachers. Jesus made no reply, so that even Pilate marveled at his quietness, self-possession, non-resistance and lack of vindictiveness and refusal to defend himself, even though he was manifestly a person quite able to plead his own cause. Pilate even asked him if he were not aware of the fact that he had power either to set him at liberty or to inflict the punishment desired by the people. Our Lord's answer was serene, that Pilate could have no power at all except as it was permitted him by the heavenly Father. Ah, this was the secret of our Lord's composure! He had given his life, his all; he had surrendered to the Father his every interest; he had confidence in the Father's love and wisdom, and was willing, therefore, to drink of the cup which the Father had poured, rejoicing to do the will of him that sent him and to finish that work. So with the Lord's followers throughout this age—in proportion as they, like him, have been enabled to realize the fulness of their consecration and at heart have been filled with his spirit and loving submission to the Father's will—in that same proportion they have been able to be calm under most severe and trying ordeals, so that the world even has marveled at their composure and self-control, the peace of God passing all understanding ruling in their hearts...

**“AS DECEIVERS AND YET TRUE”**

These words of the Apostle merely confirm

the thought emphasized by the Master himself, that all true followers of Jesus will have more or less of his experiences. He was the true one--the Truth, as well as the Way and the Life--and yet he was crucified as a deceiver, he was misunderstood by the sin-blinded world, yea, by the most enlightened people of that time. The disciple is not to expect to be above his Lord, but rather to expect to glory in the privilege of being his companion. Let us learn, therefore, to rejoice even in the midst of misrepresentation, falsification, buffetings, scourgings, legal and illegal, farcical--let us count it all joy to be permitted thus to have companionship with our beloved Savior; let us learn the lesson of patient endurance in well doing, that in due time, not having fainted, we may reap the glorious reward of joint-heirship with him in his Kingdom."

R2615 "The terms or conditions upon which the heavenly life is to be attained are the sacrifice of the earthly life and its interests..."

"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "Reckon ye yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." Self-denial, then, means to ignore self-will, self-gratification: and this includes all the earthly ambitions and desires, the sinful, and no less those that are laudable and proper. We pledge ourselves at the very beginning that we are not following our own inclinations and our own wills, but are to be wholly subject to the will of our Head, the Lord Jesus, if we may be in turn counted in as members in particular of his body, the elect Church..."

Could we see all that is implied from the very beginning of the race we would be disheartened no doubt, but as we grow in grace, and become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, we grow also in knowledge and in love toward the Lord and toward all who are in fellowship with him, and thus it becomes daily easier for us, as we sing,

(3) "...the pathway smooths

Since first we learned to love it."

As a result, by and by the trials which came at first seem to be as nothing, but other trials come instead, as we discern more distinctly, more clearly, the good, the acceptable, the perfect will of God. Thus our trial condition progresses, and what is required of us is that step by step we shall be faithful to what we see to be the Lord's will, and shall seek to the best of our ability to submit ourselves thereto. This is self-denial,--forsaking all else to be Jesus' disciples.

Cross-bearing is closely related to self-denial, and yet a distinction between them may be noted. Self-denial relates more particularly to passive obedience and endurance for the Lord's sake; cross-bearing relates more particularly to activities in the Lord's service, which we find to be contrary to our natural inclinations... Our self-denials may be victories gained in our own hearts, of which others may know nothing, and of which they should know nothing, if we desire to have the fulness of the Lord's blessing, for we are to make sure that we do not deny ourselves to be seen of men, but merely for the Lord's approval. Our cross-bearings, however, may be seen, to some extent at least, by those who are in close

contact with us, and especially by those who are walking in the same "narrow way."

And how appropriate it is that all cross-bearers should recognize each other, and be able to sympathize with one another, and give an encouraging word, a sympathizing look or a helping hand, as opportunity may offer. As for others, we cannot expect sympathy from them, for from their standpoint we are counted fools (Acts 26:24; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14; 3:18), unwise, following an unwise course, bringing our difficulties upon ourselves, because we insist on following an ideal Pattern, the pattern of our dear Redeemer, instead of following the pattern of churchianity and the world. Such, of course, have only sneers for the faithful, and often no doubt think of them as they speak of them, as being hypocrites. This indeed is a part of the cross-bearing...

Look, for instance, at our Lord Jesus, and the cross which he bore--not the literal cross of wood which he bore to Calvary, amid shame and jeers, but the cross-bearing which he practiced continually throughout the three and a half years of his ministry from the time of his consecration at Jordan. Note how faithfulness to the truth, in testifying respecting his mission, the Kingdom that he was establishing, and the terms and conditions of membership in it, being misunderstood by the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, led to opposition continually, so that they not only maligned his name, but in their hatred sought his life and finally obtained it. Note that these were not worldly people, as that word is generally understood, but members of the leading denominations of his day: and that the so-called holiness people of that day were his most bitter assailants. He could indeed have fallen into line with the Pharisees or with the Sadducees, and have been considered "respectable," and have had a large following, but fidelity to the truth would not permit him to do this, but forced him to take a stand independent of all sects and parties, and this brought against him the wrath of all of them, and was his continual and daily cross-bearing, that had to be borne, if he would "overcome" and be granted association with the Father in the Kingdom...

Such dishonor, such evil reports, are amongst the things which our Lord specifically declared would be a part of our cross-bearing when he said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad (in all such cross-bearings), for great is your reward in heaven."

R859 "Our consecration is to *active service* for the Master, and a patient uncomplaining endurance of whatever it may cost in the way of sacrifice. Faithfulness to our covenant will not shrink from any service because of the cost, and he that endureth unto the end shall receive the crown of life. Let us mark well the example and counsel of Jesus and the Apostles, that we may gain courage and strength by the way..."

How perfectly this marks out the course of the truly consecrated. It is not a life of easy lethargy; it is not a course that secures the approval and friendship of the worldly minded; it is not a course which secures present temporal advantage; nor is it a course agreeable to the flesh; yet in it, the "new creature" rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and in every condition

gives thanks for the privilege of fellowship in the sacrifices and self-denials with Christ Jesus our Lord and Redeemer...

Your sacrifice should be on the altar and the fire of zeal under it consuming your time, talents, reputation and all in the heavenly service. Let it be burning briskly, that the odor of sweet incense may ascend to God, that you may be fully accepted in the Beloved in this *acceptable time*, and be made partaker of the glory to follow--now at hand."

### "YET ALWAYS REJOICING"

(2 Cor 6:10)

R4592 "Rejoicing in spirit is necessary to our courage and zeal in the service of the Lord. Note the operation of it in St. Paul, who, with Silas, could sing praises to God in the prison with his feet in the stocks and his back lacerated. And so it should be with all Christ's true followers in the narrow way. With the wound of every thorn, with the pain of every sharp arrow of bitter words with which we are assaulted for Christ's sake, we may have joy unspeakable."

R610 "JOY UNSPEAKABLE." "A good story is told of a little blind child who once had a surgical operation performed that resulted in restoring her to sight... The little patient...had never seen... The eyes were bandaged for awhile, until the wounded parts should be somewhat healed. At length the hour arrived when the bandage... was to be removed... This child...cried out with delight, "O, mother, why did you not tell me it was so beautiful?" The mother, bursting into tears, replied: "I tried to tell you, my dear, but the words wouldn't make you understand." Precisely; and so, withal, is it with the Christian when he attempts to tell what is the joy unspeakable and full of glory, the peace of God that passeth understanding, the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and what is the excellency of the knowledge of that Christ for whom he would, if necessary, joyfully suffer the loss of all things.--*Sel.*"

R5803 "The saints have indeed in every sorrow and grief a blessed consolation of which the world is wholly in ignorance. None but the true child of God can know it. What is this consolation? Oh, you who have never enlisted under the banner of the Cross, who have never put yourselves wholly into the hands of the Lord to be molded and fashioned into His glorious likeness, who have never made an earnest effort to stem the tide of the tendencies of your own fallen nature, who have never contended earnestly for Truth and righteousness in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, what can you know of the sweets of this Divine consolation? It is the precious balm of Gilead for wounded spirits on the battlefield of life, it is the stimulating, refreshing draught for fainting souls, hard pressed by the relentless foe. It is the soothing caress of a loving hand upon the fevered brow of the noble contender for Truth and godliness. It is the gentle whisper of hope and love and courage when heart and flesh are almost failing. This is Divine consolation, the only consolation that has in it any virtue of healing or refreshment. It is reserved alone for those noble souls who are faithfully bearing the burden and heat of the day in the service of the King of kings; while those who listlessly drift with the current of the world and

(3) Hymn 179

the downward tendencies of the carnal nature can never have an intimation of its sweetness.

How loving and tender is our God, and how wise and strong! His promises have never failed those who have put their trust in Him. We may feel that our efforts to be good and to do good are very unproductive, that the opposition from without and within is very strong. But it is when we are weak, when we realize our own helplessness and incompetency, that we may be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. It is then that we may realize that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. The fact that we are weak and lame does not separate us from the love and power of our God, while we are striving to do His will; for "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." Then let us more and more lay hold of this strength of the Lord, that we may courageously pursue our course in the narrow way of difficulty and trial. Precious indeed to the saint of God is the ministry of pain and sorrow!...

"Faith can firmly trust Him,  
Come what may."

#### PRECIOUSNESS OF INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

It is when continued trust in the Lord and His many responsive providences in our lives have ripened into precious personal acquaintance and intimacy that we learn to delight in Him. Yes, it is when heart answers to heart, when pleading prayer brings recognized answers of peace, when the Divine love and care have been clearly seen in the guidance of our way, that we can recognize the abiding presence with us of the Father and the Son. Then, however dark may be our way, however severe may be the storm that rages about us, the thought of Divine protection is ever with us, so that as the children of the Lord we are never in

despair; though cast down, we are not destroyed; though persecuted, we are never forsaken. We know our Father's hand is ever at the helm, that His love and care are sure and unfailing.

Those who have come into real heart sympathy with God have learned to see Him as the Fountain of all goodness and Truth and blessing. To them He is the One altogether lovely. His Law is their delight. His friendship and love are their very life. When the heart has become thus centered in God, it is the most natural impulse to commit its way unto Him. These can truly sing with the poet: [Hymn 110]

"So on I go, not knowing,  
I would not if I might;  
I'd rather walk in the dark with God  
Than go alone in the light;  
I'd rather walk by faith with Him  
Than go alone by sight."

Surely these have the desires of their heart, and no good thing shall be withheld from them. Their fervent prayers avail much, and in the Lord's good time their righteousness, however much it may now be misunderstood, misrepresented and evil-spoken of, shall be brought forth as the light--clear, cloudless and widely manifest; and their judgment, the justice and righteousness of their course and of their hearts, shall be brought forth as the noonday. Even while we remain here as aliens and foreigners in the enemy's land, we shall be fed, nourished, temporally and spiritually, and shall rejoice and be glad in the "house of our pilgrimage"..."

R1840 "*Delight* thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." This delight in the Lord is a still more advanced step in the Christian life. It is a blessed thing to learn to trust in the Lord; but it is when continued trust and responsive

providences have ripened into personal acquaintance and fellowship with God that we learn to delight in him. Yes, it is when heart answers to heart, when pleading prayer brings recognized answers of peace, when the divine care and love are specially seen in the guidance of our way: in a word, when we come to feel that the Father and the Son have so clearly manifested themselves to us that we can recognize their abiding presence with us. Ah! then it is that we begin to delight ourselves in the Lord. Then, however dark may be the way, or however heavy may be the storm that rages about us, the balm of divine consolation is always there, so that the child of God, though often troubled on every side, is not distressed; though perplexed, he is never in despair; though cast down, he is never destroyed; and though persecuted, he is never forsaken.

To delight thus in the Lord is to have the affections centered in him; it is to have the heart in such sympathy with righteousness and truth as to see in God the fountain of all goodness and truth, the one altogether lovely. The Psalmist expresses such an attitude of heart when, personifying our Lord Jesus, he said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." And again, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day." And again, when he says, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is....Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee....My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me."--Psa. 63`."

#### R2885 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0) IN THE SCHOOL OF ADVERSITY

--GEN. 39:20-40:15.--OCT. 13.--

"For God was with Joseph, and showed him mercy."

AS THE FAVORED child of his beloved wife, Rachel, Joseph was no doubt esteemed by his father as the special inheritor of the Abrahamic promises. He remembered his own experiences, and how the divine favor had come to him, making him an heir of that promise; and doubtless he had, to a greater or less extent, communicated these hopes and promises to all of his sons, and especially to Joseph, his favored one. Joseph's dreams, which so angered his brethren, must have appealed to him and to his father as rather an intimation on God's part of his pre-eminence. It must therefore have caused great disappointment and chagrin to Joseph, first to find himself in the pit, and his strong cryings and tears unheard both by his brethren and the Lord. It must have been a source of bitter disappointment and chagrin when he found himself sold to the Ishmaelites, to be a slave. But however disappointing these circumstances we can see that they were profitable experiences, tending to develop in him a proper character, if rightly accepted--to develop patience, obedience, trust.

There are good lessons in Joseph's experiences for all who are hoping to be heirs of the spiritual features of this same Abrahamic covenant--joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord. (Gal. 3:29.) The promise is sure, and the privilege of inheriting is ours; but in order that we may be prepared for that service and its responsibilities it is needful that we should learn lessons of humility, patience, faith, endurance. Our Lord, the head of this "Seed of Abraham," endured such contradiction of sinners, and trials and testings, and learned obedience to the Father's will even unto death--although he was perfect, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Much more does it seem necessary that we who are called to be "members of his body" should pass through severe testings and trials, to be fitted and prepared for the glory that shall follow.

Arrived in Egypt, the Lord's blessing was upon Joseph in a re-

markable manner, in that he was sold as a slave to a wealthy master. We have little insight into Joseph's previous history, but apparently he was a remarkable boy when he entered Potiphar's house at seventeen years of age. His manliness and sedateness and faithfulness to duty and quick intelligence were a good inheritance from his father, who had earnestly desired his birth--which was, indeed, in answer to prayer. He evidently inherited considerable of his father's faith, benevolence and executive ability, and as a result rose rapidly in Potiphar's house to a position of great responsibility, to have charge over all his master's affairs. We cannot doubt that the boy's mind frequently reverted to his father and brethren, and his dreams, and to the Abrahamic covenant. Unquestionably he believed in those promises, and doubtless often wondered how they would be fulfilled--what would be the leadings of divine providence in his affairs. His faith in God, his trust in the promises, served to separate him from the evil influences connected with that sudden transfer of his life from the pasture fields of Canaan to the busy scenes and luxuries and pleasures and sins of one of the greatest cities in the world at that time, a capital of the most renowned nation in that day.

So it is with every life; there is need of an ideal, of a hope, of a good ambition, to act as a ballast and to keep the life steady in the midst of the divers winds and currents of the present evil world. The boy or the girl who has had a proper training by godly parents, especially in respect to the hopes set before us in the gospel, has much advantage every way over youthful companions who have no specific object and motive in life, who lack the ballast of the divine promises, and are driven hither and thither by the changing winds of time, generally into folly and often into sin, in search of satisfaction, which all crave. Christian parents who have been derelict of duty toward their children cannot too quickly correct the fault and help them to settle their minds upon the only things that can bring them

true peace and joy and satisfaction, and balance, in the storms of life.

But if Joseph thought he had learned all the necessary lessons of experience, and that his course henceforth would be one of prosperity, he was mistaken. Divine providence had marked out for him a higher station than that of chief overseer of the household affairs and business of General Potiphar; and if his station was to be a higher one, likewise also he must receive further lessons in a still severer school, in order to be prepared for the still greater exaltation in due time. Suddenly, while evidently enjoying his master's confidence and his mistress' favor, calamity came upon him, and that through no fault of his own, but really because of his faithfulness to his master. He was falsely accused by Potiphar's spiteful wife. He was cast into prison; and this expression, "prison," meant and still means something entirely different in Egypt and all eastern countries from what it means in Europe and America. There prisons were dark, loathsome, terrible places; and prisoners were frequently horribly mistreated, bound in iron fetters, etc. That this was Joseph's treatment, at first, seems evident from a reference to the matter in Psalm 105:18: "Whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron." This must have been a severe trial to Joseph, a doubly bitter experience by reason of the hopes he had been entertaining respecting divine favor and future exaltation.

And so it is with the spiritual heirs of the Abrahamic promises: sometimes, <sup>(1)</sup>while in the discharge of duty to the best of our ability, and when apparently we have the Lord's blessing and favor upon us and our affairs in a most marked degree, suddenly trouble may arise, adversity come, the powers of darkness seem to triumph, and for the moment we may be apparently culprits in the judgment of our fellow-men, and apparently forsaken by divine providence. The only consolation in such conditions is that we have suffered wrongfully--"as deceivers, yet true." Such experiences, doubtless, are needful to us; for though we may sing:--

"I would rather walk in the dark with God,  
Than go alone in the light,"

yet this might be but an empty boast unless we were put through the trying experiences which would develop such faith, such a trust, as would hold to the Lord's hand, and trust divine providence in the darkest hour. We are to learn to walk by faith, and not by sight, to trust our Lord where we cannot trace him.

Joseph's faith evidently stood the test, and his nobility of character shone out even under those adverse conditions; and this became a sign to the master of the prison that the Lord was with Joseph, that he was a peculiarly exemplary and wise young man-- now twenty-seven years old. The warden of the prison was anxious to have such a faithful servant to assist him in his work. Indeed, there is always room in this world for efficient men and women, and the most efficient are those in whom is the spirit of the Lord, and who have "the wisdom which cometh from above--first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." (James 3:17.) The prison keeper doubtless was actuated by selfish motives to favor Joseph and put him in charge of the prisoners. But no matter for this; it was the operation of divine providence, nevertheless, and not merely Joseph's abilities that secured for him the position. However, we are to note that those whom God specially favors, and specially uses, must have character. A rough diamond may not look better than an ordinary pebble, but it has something of firmness and purity about it that ordinary pebbles do not have, that justifies the cutting and polishing and ultimate mounting as a gem. So we are to remember that while all our blessings are of the Lord and through Christ, nevertheless we have something to do in the matter of "making our calling and election sure"; we must have the love, the devotion, the zeal for God and for righteousness; and not only must we have this character, but we must have the submission which will enable us to accept and profit by the various trials of faith and patience which divine providence sees proper to permit us to experience for the trimming and polishing of the jewel.

Not only were Joseph's experiences as a slave and as a prisoner calculated to give him a sympathy for those in adversity, but additionally he was learning lessons of experience and wisdom, educational in their character, which would prepare him in time to stand before King Pharaoh and to be made his Prime Minister. Some of these experiences he gained in the prison, as related in this lesson. The prisoners at that time were not all culprits, but sometimes the subjects of the king's displeasure. Two such persons high in Pharaoh's household (the "butler" or cup-bearer to the king, being one of the highest officers in honor and trust, and the baker, the manager of the king's culinary department, and general steward of the house-

hold) were cast into the same prison with Joseph because of having in some manner offended the king; and as Joseph had by this time chief charge of the prisoners he must have come frequently and into intimate contact with these men, so well versed in the affairs of the kingdom. And under the circumstances they would undoubtedly be communicative to Joseph, as we may be sure he was receptive to all the information obtainable. They must have thought him a very different sort of prisoner from others of that time when he even noticed so small a matter as sadness upon their faces, and enquired considerably respecting the same. So all of the spiritual heirs of the Abrahamic promise, while passing through the trials and difficulties needful to their preparation and polishing for the future glory, must learn to be *compassionate*. "Blessed are the merciful; they shall obtain mercy." Their own experiences help to mollify their hearts, and make them tender-hearted toward all who are in trouble. All of the Lord's people should be peculiar in these respects--"full of mercy and good fruits."

Joseph's expression of sympathy soon brought from the prisoners an explanation of their sadness-- they had each dreamed on the previous night, and each was troubled, thinking that his dream foreboded evil. Joseph was blessed by the Lord with some intuitive understanding of dreams, and promptly gave their interpretation--one of the officers would in a short time be released, while the other would be executed; and having sympathized with the one who would suffer, and having congratulated the one who would be released, Joseph made request of the latter that in his coming days of prosperity he would remember him and his kindness, and if possible secure his release through the king's mercy.

Joseph's two dreams, and now these two dreams of the butler and baker, and two subsequent dreams by Pharaoh, all give evidence of having been in some manner divinely inspired, and intended to exercise certain influences and to bring about certain results. In our accepting these for all that they were, we are not to be understood as endorsing the thought that every dream is of the Lord, or is to have a special prophetic or providential fulfilment. Quite to the contrary, we believe that the majority of dreams are mental fictions, the result frequently of disordered stomachs and of the brain being partly asleep and partly awake, producing often unreasonable and absurd images, without special meaning except as warnings for better care in respect to our eating. We may even go further than this, and say that we feel sure that there is still a third kind of dreams,--dreams of a still different origin--neither inspired by the Lord nor by indigestion, but by evil spirits, for the purpose of misleading the dreamer. To make sure that our dreams are not the inspiration of evil we must make sure that we are not the children of the Evil One, but that having renounced sin and fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the Gospel, we have, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, obtained adoption into the family of God, and thus obtained relationship to him and protection from the power of the Evil One, and his delusions as respects our affairs; and come under the gracious promise that "all things shall work together for good" to us because we love God and have been called according to his purpose. In the dreams mentioned in this connection we are to notice that those of the butler and baker and Pharaoh were not the dreams of God's people, but nevertheless were evidently inspired of him, and that the purposes of these dreams were not specially in the interest of the dreamers, but largely in the interest of Joseph.

As respects the Lord's people of to-day, there is much less necessity for dreams than in olden times. We have the Word of God--God's testimony bearing upon every subject needful to us. This message is so complete that the Apostle could say that by it the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work. (2 Tim. 3:16,17.) This should not hinder us from recognizing a dream as from the Lord, provided it would stand the tests of the written Word--provided the dream was not in any sense in conflict with God's revelation in the Scriptures. If the dream be in conflict with the Scriptures we are to reject the dream. If we find it in harmony with the Scriptures we are to accept it because of that harmony, and merely allow it to draw our attention more particularly to the Scriptures with which it accords. But whether by dreams or walking by faith entirely, and not by sight or dreams in any particular, the true child of God, the heir of the spiritual promises to Abraham, is to look for, to expect, to find, to realize, more fully even than our Golden Text says of Joseph, that "the Lord was with him, and showed him mercy." If the Lord be with us and show mercy toward us, no matter how he may do this, we are to take his favor with grateful hearts, and to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, and who eventually will bring us out of the prison-house of death into the glories of the everlasting Kingdom, to joint-heirship with his Son.

<sup>(1)</sup> Feb. 16 Manna, 2 Cor 6:8,3