

July 31

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire. 1 Corinthians 3:13

THE apostle speaks of this time of fiery trial, and, likening the faith and works

1Co 3:11-15 KJV "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12) Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; (13) Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. (14) If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. (15) If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

SM289 "Mark how our Lord declared that the trial of our time would be so critical, so crucial, that it would deceive if it were possible the "Very Elect." (Matt. 24:24.) But this will not be possible, for the Lord has promised them the assistance needful, and they will be in that attitude of heart and mind to seek assistance and use it...

"THE DAY SHALL DECLARE IT"

...No other period in the world's history has ever been so notable in so many ways. Referring to this time, and to the testings of faith that will come upon the Lord's people here, the Apostle says, "Let every man take heed how he build [faith]; for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." ...Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall declare it: because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."—1Co. 3:10-15.

How could a plainer statement of this be made? The fire referred to, of course, is symbolical, as are the wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, precious stones. As wood, hay, stubble can be destroyed by literal fire, so selfish doctrines, errors and all improper faith will be destroyed in this time which the Apostle designates. "The Day shall declare it," or demonstrate the faith that will stand and the faith that will be consumed. The Apostle proceeds, "If any man's work shall abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss." Alas, how many are finding their faith burned out! How few are having the great reward of finding that they have a faith that will stand all the tests of this day!"

R428 "YOUR BUILDING"

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ." "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1Co. 3:9,11,10-15)

The individual Christian faith is a building, and as such must have both founda-

tion and superstructure. Every principle of truth or error adopted becomes a part of our faith-building. A building made of wood, and thatched with straw, may look well and for a time protect, but it will not endure like a better and more costly structure. So a faith building, constructed of men's traditions, may for a time look passably well, be less costly and more quickly finished than one built of the precious truths patiently quarried from God's Word. The former is easily swept away with the storm of infidelity which does not even shake the latter. The one will stand the test of fire and protect its owner, the other will but feed the flame and endanger the owner.

The building of our faith God leaves largely with us. He furnishes a mine of truth, places the tools within our reach, and urges us to build well of enduring materials, adding faith to faith, virtue to virtue, knowledge to knowledge. Thus he would have us grow in grace and knowledge and love, following examples of building which he has furnished...

Those who build on the rock with the gold, silver, and precious stones of God's revelation by reason of this good and proper faith-building, are enabled to overcome the world and carry out their consecration acceptably to God through Jesus Christ. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your *faith*." These overcomers who now "follow the Lamb" shall in due time be everlastingly united to Him whom "God hath appointed heir of all things."

...Those who build with wood, hay, and stubble of human traditions, we understand to be those who *do not overcome* the world, but who are ensnared and bound by the spirit of the world and hindered from carrying out their consecration. Having only the traditions of men, they lack protection against error, and the strength necessary to overcome the world which is obtainable only from *the truth*. All, then, should recognize the value of truth in enabling us to carry out our consecration vows of death to the world and its ambitions.

If all Christians valued truth properly all would buy it and never sell it, though it cost *time*, *inconvenience* and *self-denial* to get it, and *reputation* and *sacrifice* to hold it.

The class who, though consecrated, are building a flimsy faith of man's wisdom, we understand to be the "*great company*" (Rev. 19:6; 7:9-17) who will come to spiritual conditions, but through great tribulation brought on them by their erroneous faith, all of which dross of error must be consumed. Thus they will be saved by that fire or purification. This is the class which follows the Bride company (Psa. 45:14,15) ... These shall "*serve* God in His temple" and be "*before* the throne." ... Therefore let all who seek the prize of our high calling take heed how (with what material) they build their faith even though on the sure foundation."

ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION WITH SIMILAR LESSON

Eph 6:13 KJV "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able

member that such loyal characters grow not suddenly, in a few hours or days -- mushroom like,--but are progressive developments, fine-grained and strong like the olive tree. Z.'99-171 R2496:5

to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

R36 "The apostle foresaw this time and warns us of "the evil day," (Eph. 6:11-12.) "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the *wiles* of the devil." for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, &c." "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in *that evil day*." It is a day more for defence than aggressive warfare—*withstanding*.

Paul describes the whole armor; have you taken it? Are you wearing it now? Unless you have it on you are not prepared for the "evil day" into which we are now entering. Some have one part of this armor and some another. Few have it all. There are few who can not add to their defensive preparation. Some Christians have caught the end of the girdle of truth, wrapped it about them and started with the sword (the word) to attack the powers of darkness. These are they, who have only the intellectual, and not the experimental, knowledge of the word of truth. Stop, brother, put on the *whole armor*. You will need the *helmet* of salvation (the acceptance of Christ's atoning work), the *breast plate* of righteousness, (experimental religion), and a *shield* of faith and trust, else you may be pierced by many an arrow. And do not neglect to have "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"—meekness, gentleness, patience, long suffering, love, lest you soon become weary in the rugged way...

Yes, friends, we need the whole armor if we would stand. If you have it complete — *head and heart* religion—then you will be of those described as being "able to quench all the fiery darts, arrows of the wicked."

R2312 "Let us...not make either the mistake of attempting to fight without the armor, nor the equally serious mistake of putting on the armor and neglecting to fight."

R5745 "We realize that we are now living in this very evil day to which he referred in his letter to the Ephesians; that it has already come, and that only those who have put on the whole armor of God will be properly equipped to withstand the assaults of the enemy..."

Alas, how few seem to realize the importance of this armor which God has commended! Their difficulty is the result of their not recognizing the time in which they are now living, of their not being sufficiently awake, of not being zealous to search the Scriptures, and to arm themselves therewith for the battle of the Great Day of God Almighty.

But with all the preparation the earnest Christian may make, he should see to it that there is a direct and continual communication between his heart and his Lord. In the Bible God has given us His Message, His promises, His instruction, in advance. Elsewhere St. Paul has declared that this Word

"is sufficient, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." We appreciate this assurance and also realize our own unworthiness, our littleness and our imperfections. But despite all these our Lord has assured us that we may approach with courage the Throne of Heavenly Grace and there obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need—and forgiveness of sins...

We have need of every provision that He has made for us. It is our daily transgressions that require daily forgiveness. Any one, therefore, who would be a good soldier of the Lord Jesus must keep in close touch with Headquarters. This he is privileged to do by coming daily to the Throne of Grace...

Each of God's children before approaching the Throne of Grace should seek to know what things are approved of the Lord and what things are disapproved. It should be the one ambition of the child of God to know the Father's will and to guide his affairs accordingly. But taking it for granted that our hearts are fully submissive to the Lord's will, the Apostle is here describing the Christian soldier who has put

on the whole armor of God, or who is putting it on, and who is seeking to come up to the highest standard. He will need, with all his armor, to cultivate and to use the privilege of prayer.—Ephesians 6:18."

R388 "The enemy endeavors to lull some to sleep with ease, comfort, and prosperity, in the matters of this life; how he perplexes and overcharges others in this world's busy cares; and how he seeks to draw others from the truth by error...

To stand--to maintain our standing -- to keep on the armor of God--we need to have much and close communion with God, not only in the way of talking to him (prayer), but also and *especially* by listening to what he says to us (through his Word)."

[Songs in the Night - June 10]

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. John 7:17

WE BELIEVE that without a love for truth none will be favored with the light of "present truth." More than this, we hold that if sincere love for truth--honesty of thought and deed--be yielded, sacrificed to pride,

R2494 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

IN THE FIERY FURNACE

--JULY 16.--DAN. 3:14-28.--

"Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us."

PROBABLY twenty years elapsed after Daniel and his companions reached Babylon in captivity before the scenes of this lesson were enacted. Meantime Daniel had been raised to a very high position in the empire, as king's counsellor, while his three companions had been made magistrates in the provinces of Babylon. We know that their prosperity did not tend to make them careless of their duties and responsibilities toward God, for otherwise they would not have been able to stand the severe test recounted in this lesson, and which proved a great blessing to them because of their fidelity to the Lord.

King Nebuchadnezzar just before this had won some great victories over surrounding nations--Egypt, Syria, etc.--as he had previously done with Judah, and as the Lord had predicted in the dream which Daniel had interpreted for the King, which showed the Babylonian Empire as the golden head of earthly dominion. His great success no doubt had tended to feelings of pride and a desire for display. Yet these were probably not the only motives which led to the program of the great festival in honor of his victories, and the erection of the great image which all were commanded to worship. Nebuchadnezzar's thought evidently was to unify his empire, and as a step in this direction he desired to unify the religious views and worship of the various peoples under his sway. In this his example was frequently followed subsequently, for all rulers have seemed to grasp the thought that man's mental organization is such that obedience can be best and most lastingly secured through the acquiescence of the religious organs of his mind. In other words, since man is a religious animal, no government of him can be secure and permanent which does not have, directly or indirectly, the support of his veneration. Hence it was that Nebuchadnezzar and others endeavored to associate the Creator and the king together in men's minds, that venerating the One they should respect and serve the other as his representative.

It was no doubt with a view to thus unifying the religious sentiments of his empire that this great feast was arranged, of which the very center of attraction was the great image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. This image, with its pedestal, was ninety feet high and nine feet wide. It was of gold, probably either made hollow or on a base of clay cement. It was located in the Plain of Dura, about the center of the walled enclosure twenty-four miles square, known as the city of Babylon. As it is a level country, and as the structures were comparatively low, the image could probably be seen from every part of the great city.

The appointed time for the festival having come, leading representatives, judges, treasurers, governors, sheriffs, etc., from all the divisions of the empire, clad in the gorgeous garments of the East, were present. A great band had been prepared, composed of all the musical instruments popular at that period, and the command of the

ambition, vainglory, or any other thing, the result will be the loss of present truth. Let us ever keep in memory our Lord's message through the apostle, that now in the end of this age he will send strong delusion, that all may believe a lie who have pleasure in untruth--who received not the truth in the love of it. Let us guard our consciences, realizing that their perversion would surely work our injury, our alienation from the Lord, and our rejection from his service now and hereafter. Z'06-277 R3847:5(Hymn 49)

R1799 "To gain the victory we must not only put on the armor of God, but we must be heroes in the strife, and wage an *aggressive* warfare upon the lusts of the eye and flesh and pride of life and all the foes of righteousness and purity. *Love*--love for the Lord, for the truth and for righteousness--must inspire us, or we shall never be victors...

In such faithful obedience to the truth, and earnest endeavor to conform to its principles, the way and the truth grow more and more precious, and our willing feet with joy are led in the paths of righteousness and peace--into life everlasting."

king had gone forth that when the musicians should play upon their instruments all the vast concourse of people, representatives of his whole empire, facing the image which he had set up, should fall down and worship it, and thus indicate their loyalty, not only to King Nebuchadnezzar, but also to his gods who had given him the wonderful victories which they were celebrating.

As magistrates of the empire, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were necessarily in the great throng, tho it is quite probable that they, representing different departments, may have been at a distance from each other, each surrounded by his secretaries, assistants, servants, etc. Undoubtedly the object of the festival was clearly discerned by these intelligent men, and the question arose before their minds respecting their duty to God and the conflict of this with the probable requirements of the king. It was a crucial test for them, for they knew that the king's powers were autocratic, and that to cross his will meant death in some form. Nevertheless, they decided that they must be true to God, whatever the cost. It might be that their refusal to prostrate themselves before the image would pass entirely unnoticed by others, or it might be that, even if noticed, the incident might never reach the ears of the king, but such circumstances could make no change in the matter of their duty; whatever others might do, they must not bow the knee to any but the true God. Daniel is omitted from mention here, possibly because, occupying a different position as one of the king's personal staff and household, his conduct would not come so directly in contrast with the general conduct.

Finally, the hour of trial came, when the great king of Babylon was recognized not only as civil but also as religious ruler, and the image which he had set up was worshiped by the various representatives of his empire--except Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Their neglect to bow was quickly brought to the attention of the king, for no doubt these, like all good men, had their enemies: some enemies through jealousy and rivalry for the king's favor; other enemies because, perhaps, they had been interrupted or hindered in dishonest practices and contracts with the government. The matter seems to have astounded the king, and hence his inquiry, Is it true, can it be true? Surely, no sane men would be so foolhardy as to oppose my decree, and that in my very presence, and upon such a feteday as this? Not waiting an answer as respects matters of the past, the king voluntarily proposed for them a fresh test of loyalty and submission, nothing doubting but what, now that the matter had come to his attention, they would be moved by fear, not only in respect to their degradation from office, but by the danger of death in the fiery furnace, to render prompt obedience.

Perhaps the king's mind shot a glance backward fifteen years, to the time when the God of the Hebrews, through Daniel, had told and interpreted his dream, a matter which none of the other gods of

his wise men could do; and as tho he had this in mind, and wishing to impress the matter upon these three Hebrews who had dared to challenge his power, he made the boast, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" In his arrogance of mind and under the flush of his mighty victories over the greatest nations and mightiest kings, Nebuchadnezzar felt prepared to have a contest even with the unseen and to him unknown invisible powers. He would not be backed down in his own capital city; he would demonstrate his power to inflict a penalty, regardless of what any of the gods might do in retaliation. He would show that he, at all events, had the power in the present time, and in this respect at least was more powerful than any of the gods of whom he had knowledge.

The answer of the three Hebrews was a wise one; seeing from the king's mood that the discussion of the subject would be useless, they did not attempt to retaliate by threatening him with divine vengeance; neither did they attempt to convert the king to Judaism, knowing well that the provisions of the Jewish covenant were not for Gentiles. They simply responded that they were not anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity to argue the matter with the king. They assured him of their full confidence that their God was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace, and out of the hand or power of even the greatest king of the earth; but they answered, "While our God is thus all-powerful we are not by any means certain that he will deliver us; nevertheless, 'O king, be it known unto thee that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'"

Angered that his great festal day should be thus marred by even the slightest opposition to his will, the king did not wait to give another opportunity wherein the Hebrews might relent. He saw that it was useless, that they were men of character and determination, and he resolved that he would make an example of them before all the people. The form of his visage or his countenance changed toward these men; whereas once he had admired them, as amongst his ablest counselors and magistrates, and an honor to his empire, now he hated them, as opponents whose course, if not interrupted, might introduce disorder into his empire, and lead to more or less sedition, if copied by others. In his rage he commanded that the furnace be heated seven times, or to its utmost capacity. The furnace, already heated for the occasion, may have been the one used in melting the gold for the image, and must have been of immense size.

Probably as a mark of his great authority, and to show that even the very greatest of his subjects were subordinate to his supreme authority, the king commanded that these three recalcitrant officials be cast into the fiery furnace by prominent officers of his army --no doubt to teach a lesson respecting the power of the army, and the willingness of its chief representatives to serve the king, as against everybody else.

The Hebrews, bound in their official garb, were evidently cast into the furnace from the top, because it is stated that they fell down bound, while the heat was so intense that it even killed those who cast them into the furnace, possibly by the inhalation of the flames, which might kill them instantly.

The king seemed to be having matters his own way, as usual; even the mighty God of the Hebrews had not delivered these men from his power. And yet the king was solicitous and eyed the furnace, and to his surprise beheld those who had been cast into the furnace bound, walking about free in the flames--seemingly uninjured. More than this, he saw a fourth person there, of most remarkable appearance, which caused the king to think and speak of him as one of the gods. No wonder he was astonished; he was evidently contending with a God of whose powers he had been ignorant.

Nebuchadnezzar showed himself to be a man of broad mind--in his acceptance to the Babylonian college of the brightest youths out of all the peoples taken captive; in his readiness to acknowledge the God of Daniel, when he had received the evidences of his power; so now, realizing that he had made a great mistake in attempting the destruction of three of his most eminent magistrates, and that he was thus defying the great God, Nebuchadnezzar was prompt to make acknowledgement, and approached the furnace, calling out, "Ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come hither." In the presence of the king's courtiers they came forth, and all beheld them that the fire had done them no injury, not even having singed their clothes or their hair. This was indeed a stupendous miracle, and doubtless was valuable in its influence, not only upon the Gentiles, but also upon the Hebrews residing throughout Babylon, who would thus hear of the power of Jehovah in delivering those faithful to him. Whether this had a bearing on the subject or not, we know well that, while idolatry had been one of the chief sins of the Israelites before this captivity, there was comparatively little of idolatry in its crude forms in that nation afterward.

Nebuchadnezzar's acknowledgement of the God of the Hebrews, who sent his messenger and delivered his servants that trusted in him, is very simple and very beautiful. He rejoiced in the noble character of these men, and at once made a decree "that every people, nation and language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be a dung-hill; because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort." And furthermore, he promoted these faithful men to still higher positions, for they had still more of his confidence respecting their integrity. Men who would thus hazard their lives for conscience' sake could be trusted in the most important positions.

It is not necessary that we determine this incident to have been a type and look for correspondencies to its every feature. Without so determining, the Lord's people may readily find in it many valuable lessons and suggestions. Not all of God's people are in such prominent positions as were these Hebrews; and not many have testings of exactly the same kind as were theirs, with a literal fiery furnace before their eyes. Nevertheless, there are trials before the Lord's people to-day that are fully as severe. Who will not agree that questions respecting a public acknowledgement of an idol and thus a public disavowal of the true God would be a point more quickly and more easily decided by nearly everyone than some of the subtle temptations of our day? For instance, various idols are set up all over Christendom, each of which, it is claimed, represents the true God, and each of which demands worship in honor and substance.

Babylon the literal was in ruins long before the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos was shown in prophetic vision the mystic or symbolic Babylon "which reigneth over the kings of the earth" to-day. The provinces of Babylon to-day are the various civilized nations --really "kingdoms of this world;" but deluded into calling themselves and thinking themselves kingdoms of Christ--"Christendom." And parallels to the king and the image are also presented in Revelation--they are religious systems symbolically described as "the beast and his image."--Rev. 13:15-18.

Without at present examining the symbols in detail we note the fact that worship of this symbolic beast and his image are to be the great test or trial upon professing Christians in every province of symbolic Babylon in the end of this age: indeed, the testing is even now in progress. And we have the same inspired record as authority for the statement that only those who refuse to render worship to those powerfully influential religious systems (symbolized by "the beast and his image) will be counted by the Lord as "overcomers" and be made his joint-heirs as members of his elect Church. --See Rev. 20:4.

As already pointed out, the "beast" represents not Roman Catholics (the people) but the Roman Catholic *system*, as an institution: and the image represents not Protestants (the people) but the consolidation of Protestant *systems*, as an institution. We have pointed out* that the first step in the formation of this symbolic image of Papacy was taken in A.D. 1846 in the organization of the Evangelical Alliance, and that the second step must come shortly in an active *living* cooperation of Protestants as one system; and that this infusion of *life* will result from the Episcopal Church or Church of England joining or affiliating with other Protestants under some general arrangement similar to the Evangelical Alliance.

While the severest testings will follow the giving of life to the consolidated image, in the near future, the testing has already commenced with many, for "Churchianity" is more and more demanding reverence and support, and those who absolutely refuse to worship its images are already exposed to fiery trials;-- social ostracism and financial boycotts. Prominent amongst these is the Roman Catholic idol; that church sets itself as the representative of God, and demands worship, obedience and contribution to its funds. It is one of the most popular as well as one of the most arbitrary of idols. The Greek Catholic Church is another idol: the Anglican is another; and the Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc., etc., all similarly demand worship, obedience and revenue. They have "pooled their issues," to a certain extent, so as not to war upon each other's devotees, but they unite in warfare *against all who do not bow the knee to some such idol* (who reverence and worship *only* the Almighty God, and recognize his only begotten Son as the *only* Head and Lord of the true Church, whose names are *only* written in heaven--not on earthly rolls of membership.) --See Heb. 12:23.

All who refuse to worship before any of these images are threatened with a fiery furnace of persecution, and the threat is generally carried out as thoroughly as circumstances will permit. In the "dark ages," when Papacy had a monopoly of the "church" business, it meant torture and the stake, as well as social ostracism. To-day,

* MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. III., p. 119.

under a higher enlightenment, and especially because of competition for worshippers, matters are not carried to the same extreme, thank God! Yet in many instances there are evidences that the same spirit prevails, merely restrained by changed circumstances and lack of power. Still, as many are witnesses, there are methods of torture which serve to intimidate many who would scorn to bow the knee to a literal visible idol. Thousands to-day are worshipping at the various shrines of Christendom who in their hearts long to be free from the sectarian bondage of fear--who fain would serve the Lord God only, had they the courage. And there are some the world over who, with a courage not less than that of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, declare publicly that the Lord God alone shall have the worship and the service which they can render. None, perhaps, know better than the writer the various fiery experiences to which these faithful few are exposed--boycotted socially, boycotted in business, slandered in every conceivable manner, and often by those of whom they had least expected it, who, according to the Lord's declaration, say "*all manner of evil against them falsely.*" --Matt. 5:11,12.

But with these, as with the three Hebrews of our lesson, the chief trial is in connection with their faith; after they have taken a firm stand for the Lord and his truth they may indeed be bound and have their liberties of speech and of effort restrained, and they may indeed be cast into the fiery furnace, but nothing more than these things can be done to them. As soon as they have demonstrated their fidelity to God to this extent, their trials and troubles are turned into blessings and joys. As the form of the Son of God was seen with the Hebrews in the fiery furnace, so unseen, the Lord is present with those who trust him and who, because of faithfulness to him and to his Word, come into tribulation. How beautifully this is expressed in the familiar hymn,

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."

And sometimes even the worldly can realize that the Lord's people in the furnace of affliction are receiving a blessing, and sometimes thus our Heavenly Father's name is glorified in the world, as in Nebuchadnezzar's experience. Sometimes the Lord's people who are bound, restrained of liberty to proclaim the truth, find, as did those Hebrews, that the fire burns the cords and sets them free, and really gives them larger opportunities to testify to the glory of our God than they could have had by any other course.

⁽¹⁾The Lord's providences vary, and it is not for his people to decide when shall come remarkable deliverances, and when they shall apparently be left entirely to the will of their enemies without any manifestation of divine favor on their behalf. Note, for instance, the fact that, while the Lord interposed to deliver these three Hebrews from the fiery furnace, he did not interpose to prevent the beheading of John the Baptist, altho of the latter it is specifically declared, "There hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist." We remember that, while Peter was delivered from prison by the angel of the Lord, James was not delivered, but was beheaded. We remember also that Paul's life was miraculously preserved on several occasions, and that the Apostle John, according to tradition, was once cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, but escaped uninjured, while on other occasions dire disaster came upon the Lord's faithful ones, and that quickly, as in the case of Stephen, who was stoned.

It is not, therefore, for us to predetermine what shall be the divine providence in respect to ourselves; we are to note the point of right and duty and to follow it regardless of consequences, trusting implicitly in the Lord. This lesson is most beautifully set forth in the language of the three Hebrews, who declared to King Nebuchadnezzar that their God was entirely capable of delivering them from his power, but that, whether he chose to do so or not, they would not violate their conscience. It is just such characters that the Lord is seeking for, and it is in order to their development and testing that multiform evil is now permitted to have sway.

While such testings have been in progress to a considerable extent throughout this entire Gospel age, the Scriptures clearly indicate to us that in some special sense all of the Lord's people will be tested in the "harvest" or closing time of this age. Our Lord speaks of it, likening our Christian faith to a house, and represents the trials in the end of this age as a great storm which will beat upon every house, with the result that all that are founded upon the rock will stand, and all founded upon the sand will collapse. The Apostle Peter speaks of this trial-time, saying, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which shall try you, as tho some strange thing

happened unto you." (1 Pet. 4:12.) We are to expect a testing in the end of this age, just as there was a testing of the Jewish nominal church in the end of its age. As in that testing there was a thorough, complete separating of the "wheat" from the "chaff," so here the separating will be complete between the "wheat" and the "tares," as our Lord declares. (Matt. 13:24-30.) Throughout the age the "wheat" and the "tares," by divine arrangement, have been permitted to grow side by side; but in the "harvest" the separation must occur, that the "wheat" may be "gathered," received to the Kingdom.

⁽²⁾The Apostle Paul, also, speaks of this time of fiery trial, and, likening the faith and works of a zealous Christian to a house built of gold, silver and precious stones, he declares that the fire of this day, in the end of this age, shall try every man's work of what sort it is, and shall consume all but the genuine faith and character structures. (1 Cor. 3:11-15.) But we are to remember that such loyal characters grow not suddenly, in a few hours or days--mushroom-like,--but are progressive developments, fine-grained and strong like the olive-tree.

Looking back, we cannot doubt that the step of self-denial recorded in our previous lesson,--taken for conscience' sake by the Hebrews,--had much to do with the development in them of the staunch characters illustrated in this lesson. Likewise we who have become "new creatures," reckonedly, in Christ, know that we are to be tested (if our testing has not already commenced), and should realize that only as we practice self-denials in the little things of life, and mortify (deadend) the natural cravings of our flesh in respect to food, clothing, conduct, etc., will we become strong spiritually and be able to "overcome."

⁽³⁾Many deal slackly with themselves in respect to little violations of their consecration vow, saying,-- "What's the use" of such carefulness and so different a life from that of the world in general? Ah! there is great use in it, for victories in little things prepare for greater victories and make them possible; and on the contrary, surrender to the will of the flesh in the little things means sure defeat in the warfare as a whole. Let us remember the maxim laid down by our Great Teacher--that he that is faithful in the things that are least will be faithful also in the things which are great. And this is the operation of a law, whose operations may be discerned in all the affairs of life.

Our Lord expresses the same thought, saying,-- To him that hath (used) shall be given (more), and from him that hath not (used) shall be taken away that which he hath. If we start on a Christian life ever so weak in the flesh and weak in spirit, we will find that faithfulness in the little things will bring increasing strength in the Lord and in the power of his might. But it is in vain that we pray, "Lord, Lord," and hope for great victories and the "crown of rejoicing," if we fail to do our best to conquer in the little affairs of daily life. In other words, our testing is in progress from the moment of our consecration, and the little trials are but preparations for greater ones which, when faithfully attained, we will be able to reckon with the Apostle as light afflictions which are but for a moment, and which are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.--2 Cor. 4:17.

⁽⁴⁾The answer of the Hebrews to Nebuchadnezzar,-- "Our God whom we *serve*," is worthy of note. They not only acknowledged God and worshiped him, but they additionally *served* him, according as they had opportunity. And so it will be found to-day: those who have the necessary strength of character to refuse to worship human institutions and thereby to "suffer the loss of all things," counting them but as loss and dross, that they may win Christ and be found finally complete in him, as members of his glorified body, and joint-heirs in his Kingdom, not only practice self-denials, but gladly serve and confess the Lord in their daily life. Rightly appreciated, a profession of love for the Lord would always be a profession of service to his cause. Whoever is not rendering some service to our King in the present time of multiplied opportunities has at very most the "lukewarm" love that is offensive to the Master.--Rev. 2:4; 3:16.

Let us resolve, dear brethren, as did the three Hebrews of this lesson, that we will worship and serve only the Lord our God--that we will neither worship nor serve sectarianism, in any of its many forms, nor mammon, with its many enticements and rewards, nor fame, nor friends, nor self. God "seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth," is the declaration of our Lord and Head.--John 4:23,24.

⁽²⁾ Jul. 31 Manna, 1Cor. 3:13

⁽³⁾ Jul. 30 Manna, Cant. 2:15 (See also R5886)

⁽⁴⁾ Aug. 31 Manna, Dan 3:17-18

⁽¹⁾ Jul. 29 Manna, Dan 3:17