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THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S GREATEST NEED

By the late Dr. T. I. Stockley
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THE late Dr. A. J. Gordon of Boston, Massachusetts, once wrote, "I know of nothing more nearly resembling Pentecost than the scenes which followed the preaching of David Brainerd at Crossweeksing, N.J. Even Brainerd himself looked on with astonishment and awe at the power of the gospel on the hearts of these savages." Now, we presume, that what we long for above all else today is to see the same gospel working similar wonders in the hearts of men and women around us. What, then, was the key to the great work which Brainerd witnessed? How is it to be explained? Brainerd himself shall give us a suggestion in his dying counsel to his brother. Said he, "Strive to obtain much of the grace of God's Spirit in the heart; for when ministers feel the special gracious influences of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, it wonderfully assists them to come at the consciences of men and, as it were, to *handle* them; whereas without these influences, whatever reason or oratory we may employ, we do but make use of stumps instead of hands". And if we want to see how it was that Brainerd received these "special influences", how it was that he could grasp the hearts of those stolid Indians, not with the "stumps" of reason and logic, but with the invisible and irresistible fingers of the Holy Spirit, then take another look at that man of God. See him in his secret place, praying whole days and nights with such intensity that even when the nights were very cold his garments would be wet with the sweat of his agonizing cries.

The worker's greatest need to-day is the same almighty presence and power of the Holy Spirit. And we should know and feel that need. Many Christians have *some* feeling of their need of the power of the Holy Spirit. They feel that they ought to confess Christ in the home, the workshop, and the office, but their lips refuse to utter the message of their heart. They feel that they ought to do something to advance the work of God, but they feel too helpless to touch it. Yes, and worse than all, they are

constantly being overcome by besetting sins which carry them whither they would not.

We cannot but feel our deep need of power if *we think of the nature of the work* which is to be done. We are not sent forth by our great Master merely to reform the manners of men, nor to bring about better social conditions, nor to instruct the intellect, nor to teach morals, nor to expound politics. All these are important in their place, and most of them are included in the *results* of our work. But our task is vastly harder than all these: it goes down to the root of things. Our work has to do with the regeneration, the conversion, the sanctification of men. It is a task profoundly spiritual; it touches the secret springs of men's thoughts, and emotions, and motives. It goes to the very root of man's being, there to cleanse him from sin, and to implant within him the very life of Christ. "The standard under which we fight is a more sacred sign than that of Caesar, the territory that we invade is more difficult of conquest than any which kept the conquerors of the world at bay. We see rising before us the lofty fortresses of hostile error and sin; they must be reduced or razed. Every fortress to which the enemy of Light and Love can retreat must be scaled and destroyed, and every thought of the human soul which is hostile to the authority of Divine truth and holiness incarnate in Jesus Christ must be led away as a prisoner of war into the camp of Christ." Who is sufficient for these things? We may just as well talk to men about engineering, or electricity, and expect them to be born again thereby, as to talk to them of Christ and His gospel unless we are clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit. If we only realize in a very small degree the nature and magnitude of our work, we must feel how utterly incapable we are for such a gigantic task.

Our great need of the Holy Spirit's power will also be felt *when we come into contact with men*—when we see their spiritual dullness, their indifference, their deadness,

their real dislike for the things of God, — when we stand face to face with devil-tormented people, and see how utterly incapable we are to cast the demon out. How helpless we are in the presence of sin, and ignorance, and prejudice, and hatred of God! How can we speak to dead souls without the presence of Him Who says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life"? What can we do to work the greatest of miracles, the miracle of a transfigured life?

Again, our need will be felt when we think a little further of *what this service means*. It requires for *motive* nothing less than the glory of God in the salvation of men, and that motive to be constantly present in our work. It requires that we put our best into every word we speak for Christ, and into every atom of work entrusted to our hands. It requires that, like Richard Baxter, we always labour to speak things *necessary*, and not to waste the Lord's time, and our energy and opportunity on things which do not touch the conscience, and heart, and will, and life of men. It requires that we explore the mighty continent of Truth, laid open to us in the Word of God; and that we return on every occasion to the people from freshly-discovered lands, from new visions of the glory of Christ, new victories over self and sin, from fresh tears and blood shed in the agony of prayer, and therefore with ever new intensity, of conviction, emotion, and life. It requires that we endeavour to know something of the needs of men — their sorrows and their sins, their pleasures and their difficulties, their heart questions, their falls and their sighs: the burdens of the men of business, the cares and tears of mothers in their homes, the doubts and atheisms of youth, the aching heart of some, and the giddy, empty lives of others. It requires that the priceless loan of time be always and only used for high and holy purposes.

Once more: our deep need of the Holy Spirit's wondrous power will be felt *when we see the lofty privileges and almost boundless possibilities which await us* both in character and in service. It is possible to live a life of constant triumph; possible to cast every care daily on the Lord and to be kept in perfect peace; possible to see the will of God in everything and to find that will to be "no longer a sigh but a song"; possible to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and evil-speaking daily; possible to become strong at our weakest point; possible "daily to enjoy the blessedness of belonging never more to ourselves but only to Him, our Lord"; possible to be always on the alert to catch the least whisper of His Voice; possible each day to find out what good works have been prepared by Him for us in which to walk; possible to abide in our Lord continually; possible to go through the hunger and temptation of the lonely wilderness and to come out victorious.

And in the special work of "doing good", we may have a strong, independent insight in the holy Word of God. We may have the tongue of fire with which to speak the living Word. We may have a heart of burning love for sinful, suffering men. We may have "the face of an angel" as we visit the homes of the sorrowing and the sick. We may have the boldness of Peter and John, the self-sacrifice of Paul, and the realized Presence of our Lord. We may be charged with the Holy Spirit's power so that there shall go forth from us a virtue that shall make the commonest words powerful and healing, like the hem of the garment of our Lord. We may have the joy of being used of God for the quickening of the dead, for

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bringing home the wanderers, for lifting up the fallen, for saving lost but priceless souls, and thus awakening in the world above new songs of heavenly joy.

If the need of the Holy Spirit is so vast, and if His presence means so much, let us then open every part of our nature to Him, and this sacred power will soon pour through every chink and aperture, and we shall be filled with God, and so "be strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man," and ever "meet for the Master's use".

PATIENCE IN SMALL EFFORTS

A poor woman had a supply of coal laid at her door by a charitable neighbor. A very little girl came out with a small fire shovel, and began to take up a shovelful at a time and carry it in. I said to the child, "Do you expect to get all that coal in with that little shovel?" She was confused at my question, but her answer was striking, "Yes, sir, if I work long enough." Humble worker, make up for your want of ability by abundant continuance in well-doing, and your life work will not be trivial. Patience in small efforts will effect more than the occasional use of great talents.—SPURGEON

A CORRECTION

All unsigned articles that appear in the pages of THE GOSPEL WITNESS are from the pen of the editor of this paper. One exception was "Baptism and Circumcision" which appeared on page 13 of last week's issue. That article was an excerpt from a sermon by the prince of preachers, C. H. Spurgeon.

EFFECTIVE WARFARE

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.—II Cor.10:4.

ONE of the cleverest and most effective devices of Satan is to persuade the believer that the Christian life is one of absolute pacificism. The deceiver of souls very plausibly suggests that, since the new-found Lord is truly the Prince of Peace, the disciple should not only be meek and lowly but should also be quiet when his faith is attacked and his Lord is maligned. Consequently there has arisen a generation of evangelicals who pride themselves upon their ability to coexist and even to co-operate with falsehood.

Let us turn to the Word of God that we may discover what is written therein. All other arguments must vacate the field in the face of the settled verdict of Holy Writ. We absolutely refuse to listen to any other pleas or to engage in any discussion as to what other men's experience has proved. Experience is no reliable guide if it is not based solidly upon the great principles of the Word of God.

This verse in Paul's letter to the Corinthians strikes us as one that portrays the Christian life under a striking figure. Let us then examine the words.

I.

Paul here emphatically declares by divine inspiration that the Christian is engaged in a warfare — "the weapons of our warfare." "Oh, Paul," says some timid soul, "surely you cannot mean that! Why Mr. So and So says that the Christian should not ever be belligerent and I do respect his opinion so much."

This is not one isolated instance in which Paul thus describes the Christian life as a warfare. In Ephesians he urges the believer to "put on the whole armour of God"; in II Timothy 2:3, 4, he says—"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." In his first letter to Timothy he urges the young pastor to "fight the good fight of faith" (I Timothy 6:12).

How can the Christian life be described as a warfare? Against whom do we fight? First of all the Christian is called to fight against sin within. The great enemies which we are called to conquer are not those apart from ourselves. The sin that so quickly conquers us is an enemy to be subdued. Each believer feels very keenly his own inadequacy before God and is caused to mourn at the ease with which old sins overwhelm him. Though saved he is yet found to declare with Isaiah—"Woe is me!" and with Paul, "O wretched man that I am!"

Our greatest battlefield will not be one that is renowned before the world nor will our greatest foes be illustrious. The battlefield will be our own soul and the foes will be our familiar sins. This is surely a warfare that has no glamour about it yet it is very needful.

Then let us not forget that the believer has foes without. Those who are the enemies of the gospel of Jesus Christ must be refuted in the name of the Lord. At this point some timid soul recoils and mutters something about an "unlovely spirit". It may be true that the Christian may assume an uncharitable attitude and may be exceptionally bitter but the failure of individuals does

not release any other believer from the responsibility to wage a good fight for Jesus Christ.

Just recently we received a letter at THE GOSPEL WITNESS office. In it the correspondent declared that he was cancelling his subscription to our paper. His reason was as follows: Dr. Nels-Ferre who has denied nearly every cardinal doctrine of the faith, was slated to speak in Calgary, Alberta. The Editor of THE GOSPEL WITNESS learned of this and inserted an ad on the church page of a Calgary daily paper. In the ad we sought to inform people of the teaching of Dr. Ferre and urged all to write for copies of THE GOSPEL WITNESS which contained quotations from Dr. Ferre's books. This correspondent had learned of our action and was infuriated at our lack of charity! We noticed that the whole letter was one tirade against us because we had sought to honour the Saviour's name but there was not one word of criticism for this theological professor who declared that Jesus Christ could have been the son of a German soldier!

There are too many "bleacher" Christians who are content to sit idly by and criticize those who do make poor efforts to uphold the Saviour's name. The enemy may trample the gospel under foot but they maintain a stolid silence. Shame! Shame! We are engaged in a warfare that knows no respite until our death or until He comes.

Finally all believers are engaged in a warfare for souls. Men are taken alive by Satan (II Tim. 2:26) and we are called to wage a good warfare in order that they might be released. This is the real business of Christians and New Testament churches. There is no warfare in all the world that has such eternal consequences as this warfare for souls.

II.

How shall we wage this fight? Will any weapons suffice? The Word plainly declares that all weapons are not legitimate — "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." We need not forge our own arms. How prone are we to venture against the enemy with our wooden swords and tin helmets. The armoury of heaven, however, is at hand and is filled with tested weapons.

Before we discuss the specific weapons that are provided, we should note a guiding principle. These weapons will not be carnal; they will be spiritual. In short, any weapon that is manifestly carnal is not of God for spiritual battle is fought with spiritual weapons.

It would be a simple matter for us to dismiss this thought by referring to some obvious carnal weapons such as those commonly employed by Rome — political influence and the splendour of the church. Or we might refer to the carnal attempts of modernists. But we are persuaded that this text intimates that Christians might be guilty of using carnal weapons and so need to be warned of their danger.

Some of modern evangelism is carnal to the core. Performing horses, influential politicians and dignified bishops have all been imported to be displayed on the platform at evangelistic meetings. Sob stories and cheap tricks have been employed by some who otherwise preached the gospel. All could be bundled into one big package and labelled "CARNAL".

Our weapons are not carnal says the text but they are spiritual. With what other type of weapons could one conceivably wage spiritual warfare? First among the weapons of our warfare that we would mention is the Word of God. There is no substitute for this tried and trusted sword. Let no one be so presumptuous as to enter the lists against sin with any inventions of his own. The Word of God has the promise of God that it shall not return unto Him void.

Then the Holy Spirit is the One who will bless the weapon and make it effectual. His power is indispensable. No amount of high pressure publicity or no number of catchy tunes can ever replace His work. If He does not manifest Himself in revealing Jesus Christ, then our warfare is in vain.

Another sure spiritual weapon is the New Testament church. No conglomeration of modernists and evangelicals can ever replace this instrument. The local body composed of the redeemed is an awful instrument in the hand of our God.

Then another spiritual weapon is that of prayer. Here is the one that will cause seemingly invincible foes to fall before the faithful servant of the Lord. Paul appropriately lists prayer as the final weapon in the armoury of Ephesians six.

III.

The spiritual weapons are effective. Some will acquiesce to all that we have said but in practice they act as though spiritual weapons had to be supplemented by carnal devices. Their actions would indicate that they held the letter of the Word and are hearers but are not doers of the Word. Why is this the case? "Oh," replies someone, "we follow such and such a (carnal) practice because it brings results. That is what counts." The inference is that the use of spiritual weapons will not bring results!

This is not so! The Lord declares that spiritual weapons are *mighty!* Results will follow if they are employed in the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence this text condemns two extremes — those who employ carnal weapons and those lazy Christians who idly say that they are content with no results *if the Lord so wills* (a pious addition to excuse sin.) God says—"My weapons are mighty!"

How this cheers the Christian in his labour for Jesus Christ. Ours is a winning cause and before us are victories of which we never dreamed. Let us go to the divine armoury and take up the prescribed weapons and wage a good warfare for Jesus Christ.

A PATIENT GOD

Our God is a God of patience — patience long continued but not everlasting. Swift fly the wings of mercy, slow goes the hand of justice; like the shadow on the sun-dial, ever moving, yet creeping slowly on, with a motion all but imperceptible. Still let sinners stand in awe. The hand of justice has not stopped, although imperceptibly, it steadily advances, by and by having reached the tenth, eleventh, twelfth hour, the bell strikes. Then, unless you soon flee to Christ, the blow which was so slow to fall shall descend on the head of impenitence with accumulated force. Let it never be forgotten, that although God's patience is lasting, it is not everlasting.

—GUTHRIE

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"From the Snare of the Fowler"

A Sermon by Dr. T. T. Shields

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, September 13, 1936

(Stenographically Reported)

"Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."—Psalm 91:3.

Prayer Before the Sermon

How shall we come, O Lord our God, where Thou art, before Whose presence even the angels veil their faces. There is but one way by which we may come. We have no wings, but we have Jesus. We bow beneath the overshadowing wings of the Mercy Seat, where the blood is sprinkled, and there we plead Thy promises, that Thou wilt be with us.

We desire, O Lord, to feel Thy presence with us. We desire Thee for ourselves. Without Thee we can do nothing. And as we come this morning, we beseech Thee to lay Thy hand upon us. Make us to know that this is a Bethel, that God is in this place.

Accept, we pray Thee, the worship of our hearts, for we acknowledge Thee to be our God. Give, we pray Thee, to any who have no consciousness of God, who have not come seeking Thy face and favour this morning, a sense of their need of Thee.

So bring us all, we pray Thee, into an attitude of supplication. Look upon every one of us in our need, and of Thy fulness of grace in Christ Jesus wilt Thou supply us. Help us that we may know that Thou art here to guide Thy people, that we may put our hands into Thine; that we may go forward into the week before us with all its burdens and temptations, its difficulties, its foes, in the confidence that Thou wilt not leave us, nor forsake us.

It may be, there are some here this morning contemplating some great crisis in life. Be with us at the parting of the ways, at the cross roads, in the place of darkness, and of gloom, when the fog is thick and we cannot see into the distance. Help us to know that Thou art with us, and then we shall be assured that we are safe.

Speak to us out of Thy Word this morning. Send a message to the boys and girls, the young men and young women. Bring us all to the Saviour's feet.

Look, we pray Thee, upon the world about us, this world of trouble and of conflict, of great darkness. We pray that Thy hand may be upon all the affairs of men, that Thy will may be done even in the nations whose rulers do not fear Thee.

Graciously remember some who are sick this morning. We thank Thee that

The healing of Thy seamless robe,
Is by our beds of pain.

We pray that those who suffer may be made sensible of Thy presence this morning.

And now as we come to Thy Holy Word, we pray that the Spirit may direct us in the truths of God; and that this service may minister grace to saint and sinner alike, and bring glory to Thy great name, for we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE ninety-first Psalm is one to which I suppose we all have frequently turned for comfort, because it is a Psalm that is crowded with exceeding great and precious promises. One of the promises of this Psalm was quoted to our Lord by the devil himself, the great fowler, who tried to entrap our Substitute and Representative, Who is our Lord and Saviour too. But by implication the Psalm is full of warnings, as it is full of comfort, and this clause: "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence", has

warning implications in it. It tells us there is a fowler, and that he uses a snare. But there is Someone Who can be depended upon to deliver us from the snare of the fowler.

I.

Let me warn you — I had almost said particularly the boys and girls; but we all need the warning that THERE IS A FOWLER WHO SEEKS TO ENTRAP US AND TAKE US FOR HIS PREY. There is an alien power in the world. There is an enemy seeking whom he may devour, trying to catch the souls of men. A fowler is a bird catcher, one who sets traps, who sets snares that he may catch the unwary. And so there is one who seeks to catch every one of us. Let us not forget that the Bible doctrine of the existence of the devil, a malignant power, seeking our destruction, is literally true.

I know there are many clever people who tell us there is no devil. Well, if there is not, I would like to know who is here in the world to-day, someone who ought to be called a devil anyhow, everywhere. And we have reason to be afraid of him, all of us. He is more deadly than any flame. His snare, his activities, are linked in this verse with "the noisome pestilence". More to be dreaded than scarlet fever, or typhoid, or tuberculosis, or any other thing that may afflict the bodies of men. There is a real devil, seeking whom he may devour.

He is called here a "fowler". It suggests that it requires a little skill on his part to catch his prey. It suggests that we need not become the prey of the fowler. The human soul is thus really likened to a wild bird, given the liberty of the forests, freedom to soar away into the face of the sun, but who is in danger of being entrapped. Let us not be pessimistic and assume that it is absolutely necessary that we should all go to the devil. That is not true. He seeks whom he may devour. He is a fowler who has to be very careful how he sets his nets, his traps. It is not necessary that boys and girls should run in the way of evil. There is a way out.

I saw three children running along the street yesterday when I was walking. There was an older sister, a very motherly person of about six or seven, and two younger children, a little girl and a little boy. The boy was the youngest of the three. The older sister, with a fine sense of responsibility, was holding both of the others by the hand, walking in the middle. The little fellow, who was on her right, just pulled himself away, and walked off, right ahead. She reproved him; she said "You are a bad boy." The little fellow stood up and said, "I am not a bad boy." But when he held out his hand to her she said: "Now you are a good boy", and she held him firmly, and walked on.

Oh, we need someone to hold us by the hand. We are all bad boys and bad girls too, if we let go that hand, and try to go by ourselves, and we are liable to get into great trouble. There is a fowler abroad seeking to ensnare our souls. Perhaps there is someone who says, "He is not going to catch me." But don't you see that this fowler is a very skilful person. He has had a lot of experience, and he has got a great many proud birds in his time. He knows how to catch them.

Oh, some of us can see. We are not ignorant of his devices. He is very dangerous. Even an archangel was afraid of him. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." His traps are very astutely baited. His nets are very cleverly disguised. Do not say that you are in no danger. This skilful fowler is proud. He does not try to catch all people in precisely the same way. The fowler studies the habits of his intended prey. If you want to catch birds you must know how to catch them; know what they like. And this fowler knows how to catch boys and girls, and men and women. Oh, not the stupid people, but the wise people, too! He has caught kings and their counsellors, prophets and sages, — all sorts of people have been enmeshed in his net. This is a pretty unsafe world to live in. Children cannot safely play on the streets as they used to. The chariots are rushing back and forth like lightning, and it is scarcely safe to step from the sidewalk. It is only a parable, however, of the perils of life in general. Beware of the fowler, for he is out about his business every day.

I could talk about him for a long time, but I just remind you of him, and tell you that this fowler uses a snare. He has a way of catching every sort of bird; and you are a bird. I do not mean in the colloquial sense, but he is always on the watch for your soul. Sometimes he uses a net.

I do not see it in this country, but I remember when I was a boy I have seen the fowler going out to his work on a Sunday morning when I would be going to church.

II.

Now the wise man said: "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." Sometimes the fowler sets the nets over night, when the bird cannot see him. The birds that see him spread his nets, are seldom caught in them. They are on their guard. And yet have not we seen this fowler set his net in the sight of some birds, and catch them? Right on that corner there is one net. Right across on the other corner there is another net. Within two blocks of this church there are eleven of the devil's nets. The most infamous ruler this province ever had, the present Premier, is responsible for that. I do not think the devil ever had a more subtle and effective agent than Ontario's Premier. Living here in the midst of this population where there are thousands and thousands of boys and girls, young men and women, I hate these devil's traps, hate them as I hate the devil himself, because they belong to him. The amazing thing is that he puts out his sign, actually advertises what it is, and the net is spread in the sight of the bird, and the bird gets caught.

Be on your guard. He has different kinds of bait for different kinds of birds. He catches people by appetite sometimes, by drinking and eating. Be careful of your appetites. The fowler knows how to use them for the soul's destruction.

I have seen the fowler carrying gilded cages, and in the

cages "call birds". The hunter who goes shooting uses decoys. Sometimes they call them "stool pigeons", imitation pigeons. They are set to attract other birds. I have seen them spread their nets, and then put just outside of the sweep of the net a gilded cage for a bird, with rich plumage that has learned to love its captivity, singing its song in its gilded prison, calling other birds, and as the other birds come the fowler who is in hiding just pulls his cords, and the nets drop over the birds.

Be on the lookout against the fowler's "call birds". Do you know what they are? Other boys and girls. Be careful of your company. I saw a very young boy the other day walking down the street with a cigarette in his mouth. That little bit of paper he thought made him a man! He saw no harm in it! We used to conduct a clinic on Parliament Street, and we had bad boys come to us by the score, by the hundred, indeed, practically ruined, just physical wrecks, all of a tremble, brought by their mothers: "Can you do anything to cure this boy of his cigarette habit" — stunted and dwarfed, and all but ruined before he had attained his manhood. How did it happen? Oh, he saw some other boy doing it, and he thought it was smart, and so he followed his example. And the girls are just as bad. They have different kinds of "call birds". Be on the lookout. Sometimes the fowler puts something on the branch of a very attractive tree. They call it bird lime, and the bird thinks that is a nice place to perch and sing. And so it flies up into the tree and lights on the branch. Then by and by after a while it spreads its wings, but it cannot move; it is caught, caught by the feet. I have known people to be ensnared by their feet. Anything wrong with dancing? Well, it depends on where your brains are. It is a silly thing, a dangerous thing. But not a few people have been ensnared in just that way. Caught by their feet.

I could go on forever, telling you of the snares of the devil. There they are, the fowler and his snare. What a blessing it is written: "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler". Sometimes a bird gets caught in such a way that it cannot deliver itself. It must have help from outside. And that is true of all of us. We cannot disentangle ourselves. We cannot free ourselves from the devil's trap. We have been caught, and we need somebody to deliver us out of the snare of the fowler, just to open the trap and set us free.

Oh, how many people are "habit bound"! I knew a woman who used to come to this church, and she seemed to be a very fine woman, lived a respectable sober life. But about once in six months she got caught by the fowler, and became drunk. She came into my vestry one day. (She always called me "Pastor"). She said: "Pastor, there is nothing I hate like the thing that enslaves me. I say to myself, 'I will never touch it again', but just as soon as I get a whiff of alcohol, all resistance melts in me, and I am perfectly helpless." Oh, there are tens of thousands of boys and girls, and young men and women, who, before the next election comes in this province, will have been caught in the Hepburn snare; and unless God helps them, ruined for time and for eternity! Sometimes I wish I had a million tons of dynamite to blow the whole thing out of existence, and the cursed government that is responsible for it. Give Mr. Hepburn my compliments, and tell him I said that.

People are ensnared until by and by they cannot extricate themselves; they are bound, helpless — apart from divine grace.

III.

But the Lord can deliver us all from the snares of the fowler, no matter what the snare is. He is equal to every emergency, and to every temptation. Boys and girls, we in this place love you all. Oh, I was happy to receive a little note this morning: "The youngest prospect officer of the School, who is just three and a half years old, prospected two playmates yesterday, called for them this morning, and brought them to Bible School." He is beginning early, is he not? Is little Paul Coghill here this morning? Yes; there he is. Now you go and find two more next week, Paul.

"He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."

I am always limited Sunday morning. But you remember that great text in the one hundred and twenty-fourth Psalm where the Psalmist cast down into the depths, complains of the waves and of the billows going over him, and he said: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us." But before he gets through the Psalm he says: "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are escaped."

The Lord came and broke the snare of the fowler, and set the bird free, and it flew away into God's hands. What a blessing it is when people are made free! I see a lot of people who have no freedom at all. I have seen some preachers who just shuffled along, and they cannot do anything without asking somebody else. No liberty at all! But it is a great thing to have the shackles broken. Somebody quoted in prayer meeting last night: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

I have told you this story before, but I shall relate it again in case some of you have not heard it. A western cowboy coming in from the plains and walking down the street of a considerable town, saw a little crowd about a window, and stopped to look. He was a tall man, and he looked over the shoulders of those in front of him. There in the window he saw an eagle with a chain on its leg, fastened to a staple secured there in the window. It was motionless. It had its head down, moping, no interest in anything in the world. The cowboy went in and said to the storekeeper: "How much do you want for that eagle?" He said: "What do you want to give for it?" The cowboy said: "I have not much money", and he turned out his pockets. "Will you take what I have?" "I guess so," replied the storekeeper. So he paid his money, and broke the chain and took the eagle outside. People wondered what he was going to do with it. You can't make a pet of an eagle as you could of a canary. He went out and looked about till he found a large signpost. He climbed the fence, and put the eagle on the top of the signpost, then got down. The eagle sat there, still motionless. The cowboy took off his hat, and waved it. The eagle lifted its head. Just then the sun came out, and as he caught sight of the sun he lifted his head a little higher, flapped his great wings, and soared away. The cowboy, hat in hand, watched him as he went off toward the sun. People cheered him, then they said: "What did you do that for?" "Oh," he said, "I don't know whether or not it was the same eagle, but if not, I have seen one like him out there soaring over the mountains, and when I saw that glorious creature chained, I just could not stand it. I had to set him free."

That is how the Lord Jesus did. He bought us, and having bought us, He sets us free, and our soul is escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

May the Lord make us all flying Christians!

Let us pray:

Thou great Deliverer, we pray thee to come to us this morning, and set us all free, for Thy name's sake, Amen.

The Editor's Corner

October 15—A Red Letter Day

On October 15 the first book in the Dr. T. T. Shields' Memorial Library will be ready for distribution. The name of this volume will be *The Doctrines of Grace*. All the books of the set will be bound in a uniform binding—a rich maroon cloth cover with gold printing. Dr. Shields' picture will appear in the front of this first volume. We anticipate a great demand for this first book and would suggest that GOSPEL WITNESS readers place their orders early with the understanding that the book will not be ready until October 15. *The Doctrines of Grace* would make an ideal Christmas present for some Christian friend.

The Editor in Indiana

From September 4 - September 7 the Editor of THE GOSPEL WITNESS will be attending the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Baptist Bible Fellowship to be held in Twin City Baptist Temple, Mishawaka, Indiana (Pastor — Dr. Victor E. Sears). We will be happy to meet any of our readers who live in that area and would suggest that they attend these great meetings of this Bible Baptist group.

Servants of Apostasy

Copies of Dr. Carl McIntire's latest book are still available. Simply write to THE GOSPEL WITNESS office and your copy will be promptly sent. This large book of valuable information sells for only \$4.00 (cloth cover) and \$3.00 (paper cover). It is a handbook of ecumenical information and is an indispensable book for those who would know more of the nature and aims of the World Council of Churches.

School Days! School Days!

Yes, the children, make their way to school next week — whether reluctantly or joyfully, depending upon the individual. On September 19 school days will again be in order for the students of Toronto Baptist Seminary. We do know that the older students will joyfully make their way back to Canada's School of the Prophets. We trust too that many new students will be among those who enter the halls of the Seminary. Any who feel called to the service of the Lord would do well to write for this year's prospectus. Simply write The Registrar, Toronto Baptist Seminary, 337 Jarvis Street, Toronto 2.

A Devotional Study in Revelation

by Dr. R. D. Barry

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ANTICIPATIONS CONCERNING THE END OF THE EARTHLY HISTORY

Revelation 6:9-7:17

IT HAS been our purpose to show that the seven seals symbolize the repercussions brought about by the elevation of the Son of God to His Father's throne. According to our interpretation, the first four seals disclose to us, under the figures of the four fiery horses and their riders, the main moral forces at work in the conflict provoked by the warning message of the Gospel.

The opening of the next two seals gives us a glimpse of the far-reaching effects of the enthronement of Jesus Christ, by describing the ultimate fate of God's adversaries and the everlasting bliss of His redeemed. The opening of the seventh seal will then depict at length the events which, from the origin of the conflict to its consummation, must result from the continuous action of the forces personified in the four riders.

By giving in the fifth and sixth seals an anticipated description of the epilogue of all earthly history — which will be depicted in more detail in the vision of the seventh seal — this divine provision answers a very natural concern on the part of the reader of Revelation.

Since the brief summary given in the fifth and sixth seals of the final fate of mankind deals with that which is temporary, the vision touches only upon generalities. That preliminary survey leaves therefore to the concluding revelations of the book to bring, in their logical place, ultimate and final information concerning the end of all things.

The destiny of the redeemed is to John and his believing readers of essential import. Their end will therefore be the object of a more detailed description than that of the lost. The latter are depicted as belonging to one category, with terror as their common bond. But the happy condition of the redeemed is the object of a three-fold description: We have: (1) The dead in Christ waiting for the resurrection. (2) The Misery of the Un-saved. (3) The believers in the midst of their earthly conflict. (4) Those who have definitely entered the celestial land.

I. THE REDEEMED RESTING IN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION (6:9-11)

"And his name that sat on the pale horse was Death, and Hell followed with him." The vision of the fourth seal seemed to have reached a climax in the description of evil. Will the last three seals, whose opening had been earlier predicted by John, carry the description

farther still? Yes, if we remember that the first four seals depict the forces at work in the world rather than their action in the conflict itself. But before the visions concerning that conflict are unveiled before us, the divine Revealer anticipates the instinctive questions of the apostle concerning the destiny of the saints.

First of all, a comforting vision is given regarding those who have died in the faith, as the fifth seal is opened. Whatever their works and their ends may have been, their condition is one of security and happy waiting. However, it pleases God to mention only the case of the martyrs, as a suggestive type of the privileges which those dying in the Lord must expect on the other side of the veil.

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held." More exactly we should read: "the physical lives", which is tantamount to saying "the blood" instead of "the souls". Likewise, instead of "under the altar", a better rendering would be: "at the foot of the altar". So that the vision would be that of martyrs whose blood spreads around the altar. As they died in the communion of their Saviour's death, the seer must associate here both the vision of the Lamb of God — whose sacrifice justifies the presence of the altar — and that of the bleeding witnesses.

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" That question, so natural to the heart of John and of those who, like him, still "dwell on the earth" is anticipated by the Lord before the apostle, stirred by the sublime visions, dares ask him: He causes the martyrs to ask it to Himself, the martyrs whose blood, like Abel's, legitimately "crieth" unto Him. The words that follow as well as the very character of the martyrs, prove that the vengeance they demand implies no cruel feeling and that such retribution could only be an act of justice aiming at preventing other bloody persecutions.

"And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Their human vision being limited, John's contemporaries could hardly imagine that the divine triumph could be yet delayed for some millenaries. But the destruction through exclusively moral and spiritual means of so ancient and so tremendous a work as that of the Enemy required a slow and progressive strategy. Other victims were to fall in that conflict; but, in His loving-

kindness, the Lord holy and true had from all time determined their number, which could never be augmented by a single unit.

For the comfort of the waiting martyrs, as much as for our own, provision is here made for three things:

(1) They receive "every one of them" a token of their redemption — the gift of white robes. After their earthly trials, God thereby declares them justified and regards their condition as one of absolute innocence.

2. They are told to "rest" — the natural disposition of those who, having for their faith serenely gone through the most heroic tribulations, await with the same quiet confidence their introduction into the final state of the blessed.

3. They should yet rest "for a little season": thus is fixed the limit of their expectation. They already share in some privileges of the divine nature. Their anguish of old is no more, when one day was as a thousand years: it is now the heavenly serenity when a thousand years are as one day.

What a comfort for the apostle John to imagine, in the eager question of the martyrs, the voice of Peter, whose cruel end had been predicted in his presence; the voice of his brethren from among the twelve, probably all put to death for their faith; the voice of Stephen, the first martyr; the voice of Paul the apostle; the never-to-be-forgotten voice of Antipas, the unknown but faithful witness of Pergamos; the familiar voices of so many others. . . . Among this holy company, his stirred heart perhaps catches a glimpse of his first master John the Baptist, and of all the guests of the sacred Westminster Abbey of Hebrews eleven. What bright light is thrown on John's vision by the conclusion of that chapter, where the heroes of the Old Covenant are mentioned in despatches for an eternity of glory: "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

For the temporary privileges of the martyrs are also bestowed upon all the dead waiting for the resurrection, upon all those who, like the heroes of the faith, are already "with Christ, which is far better". For they also, according to the biblical figure, have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

II. THE MISERABLE STATE OF THE REBELS WAITING FOR THE JUDGMENT

(6:12-17)

The question asked by those waiting for the resurrection has now been solved by a right priority; a long persecution has then been predicted. Now, as the sixth seal is opened, the "how long" of the martyrs will be answered.

As the language of the book we are studying is highly figurative, the commotions described in verses 13 and 14 of chapter 6 are only symbols, whereas verses 15 to 17 give the explanation to these symbols. Accordingly, the shaken earth represents a great upheaval in human society; the sun growing black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon becoming as blood, are the symbols of the annihilation of the great orderly powers and of the rise of anarchy; the fall of the stars emphasizes that the general upheaval even affects the lesser powers; the picture of the heavens "rolled together as a scroll" seems to imply a complete sweeping away of the stability and order characteristic of the universe; the removing out of their

place of every mountain and island pictures the overthrow of the great nations and of the lesser communities.

The natural reaction of those thus deprived of their rights is expressed by their horrified cry: "Mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" There can be no doubt that we have here a symbolical description of the last days, a description logically prepared in the apostle's mind by the visions of the first five seals. For not only are the great fallen, but "every bondman and every freeman" share in the miserable fate of the wicked shepherds they had chosen for themselves.

Let us here stress how God's supreme act of justice should be dreaded, since a mere look from the One that sitteth on the throne, and the wrath of the Lamb, suffice to strike every man with terror.

III. THE SECURITY OF THE REDEEMED IN THE MIDST OF THEIR EARTHLY CONFLICT

(7:1-8)

"Who shall be able to stand?" To that despairing inquiry, the sixth seal will again answer by a two-fold revelation.

In the midst of the great calamities described in the preceding verses, the protection of the redeemed is fully guaranteed. They will be secure from the punitive act which, under the figure of the four winds and through the action of the four angels, must "hurt the earth, the sea and the trees", that is, according to the scriptural symbolism, the organized communities, the unruly nations, and the human powers.

Just as the number of the martyrs must be brought to completion, the punishment of the rebels must be retarded until the protective seal is placed upon the foreheads of the servants of God. That important revelation is proclaimed "with a loud voice" by an angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. As it is the case in other parts of the book of Revelation, could we not witness here an intervention of the Son Himself or of the Holy Spirit, or of both of these divine persons acting jointly?

The act of sealing is everywhere linked in Scripture to a taking possession by the sealer, and to a promise of security made to the person thus sealed. The seal placed on the foreheads of the servants of God corresponds to the seal of the Holy Spirit of promise "which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. 1:13-14).

That proclamation of the constant union of the glorified Christ with all those who represent Him on earth had to be found here. For during the opening of the preceding seals, no allusion had been made to the privileged position of the redeemed still in the midst of the greatest perils. No allusion either to their safe-keeping on the day of judgment, when the four winds symbolizing the storm will rage.

The number of these privileged ones is figurative. Twelve deacons multiplied by one thousand indicates at once perfect completeness and precise limitation. Proof is here given that the choice of the elect is perfect — neither too wide nor too reduced.

After carefully examining all the other hypothesis we have come to the conclusion that the dividing up of the

144,000 is also figurative and indicates both the unity and the diversity of the true "Israel of God". (Gal. 6:16). "There is neither Jew nor Greek: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus . . . Christ is all, and in all." (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). "Ye, Gentiles, were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh, by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition . . . For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father". (Eph. 2:12-18). "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly." (Rom. 2:28-29). Indeed every born-again Jew will share in the privileges of the 144,000: but so will it be with all uncircumcised believers. That interpretation of the prophecy of Rev. 7:1-8 seems most logical to us, and in no wise clashes with apparent difficulties, such as, the particular order in which the tribes are mentioned, the absence of the tribe of Dan, the fact that ten of the twelve tribes have never reappeared in separate bodies since the Babylonian exile some twenty-five centuries ago.

IV. THE FINAL BEATITUDE OF THE REDEEMED (7:9-17)

The third scene revealed by the opening of the sixth seal leads us to the end of the Christian dispensation, as it is summarized in the first six seals. This third scene finds its parallel in the more detailed description of the heavenly vision which ends the book, and which will throw an explanatory light on our commentary of the present revelation:

The placing of the protective seal reminds us of the safe-keeping of Israel on the first Passover, as the blood was applied on the lintels. In the same way, the heavenly beatitude of the elect brings back to our memories the rejoicings of an everlasting Feast of the Tabernacles.

This vision puts before our eyes the innumerable company of the redeemed brought to completion. Whereas that company had been orally introduced in the preceding scene ("I heard," v. 4), it is now graphically described ("I beheld," v. 9). We thus come back to the glorious setting and the sublime songs of praise which attended the enthronement of Jesus Christ (Ch. 5). For here, the things of heaven attain at the very first to such a perfection that the scenes presented to us cannot but unfold themselves before our eyes under the same perfect aspects.

For the second time, John is addressed by one of the elders who represent the redeemed. In the enthronement scene the elder had reminded the seer of the origin of the elevation of the Lamb: "Behold, he hath prevailed . . ." In the present vision, an elder — is it the same? — calls John's attention to the origin of the privileges of the redeemed: "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The apostle shows a wise humility as he provokes the above answer from a more authoritative source: "Thou knowest, sir."

But the answer is twofold, as the question was: "What are these? . . . Whence came they?" — "They came out . . . and they have washed . . ." At the same time a contrast is made between the joyful serenity of the redeemed and their former condition: "They came (rather: they are coming) out of great tribulation" We are unable to see here — as advocated by a modern system of

interpretation, which has been repeatedly and decisively refuted — a particular company of "tribulation saints" which would appear after the rapture of the Church during a period of unprecedented physical and mental agony, reserved to those who did not participate in the rapture. Here, the most simple interpretation, and the only one to be in full harmony with Holy Scripture and with the evangelical majority of all centuries, seems to be the right one: the great tribulation, from which those arrayed in white garments come, would be the spiritual conflict which, during the whole course of history, has been the lot of Jesus' disciples, a conflict symbolized by the four horses and their riders. No man escapes it: neither the past or future martyrs; nor any of the redeemed. But the divine seal, *not the rapture*, although it has its place, will be, in all of the Christian economy, the sole and perfect safeguard of the faithful witnesses: "I pray *not* that thou shouldest take them out of the world, *but* that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." As the elder gives John a detailed answer, the description he makes of the unique bliss of those clad in white is so similar to that of the crowning visions of Revelation that the identification of the company of chapter seven with the multitude of the redeemed of chapters 21 and 22 is amply confirmed.

As we close, let us emphasize the contrast between the first and the last contact of John with the elders. "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon . . .": there is the consequence of sin. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes": there is the effect of grace.

In their turn, the people of God bear the same testimony, and every assembly of believers must bring this message to every heart honestly opened to truth.

THE TEACHING OF THE LEAVES

O impatient ones! Did the leaves say nothing to you as they murmured, when you came hither to-day? They were not created this spring, but months ago; and the summer just begun will fashion others for another year. At the bottom of every leaf stem is a cradle, and in it is an infant germ; and the winds will rock it, and the birds will sing to it all summer long, and next season it will unfold. So God is working for you, and carrying forward to the perfect development all the processes of your lives.

—BEECHER

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CHURCH UNION "MANIA" SUFFERS SETBACK

For twelve years discussions have been carried on between the United Church of Canada, and the Church of England in Canada. The purpose of these exchanges was to effect organic union between the two largest Protestant denominations in the Dominion. Now the press reports that the discussions have broken down. Archbishop Barfoot, the Anglican Primate of all Canada, is quoted as saying that the efforts have now "reached a point of ineffectiveness". He further declares that "some fresh approach is indicated".

These union discussions have been watched with interest by many, for if these two large bodies should unite, there is a real possibility that the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Baptist Federation might be enticed into the imposing Protestant front. The failure of the talks, however, will make it imperative that some entirely new approach be conceived.

The Union Ideal

At first thought this idea of church union might appeal to Christians, for it sounds so plausible to suggest that there should be "one church". The modern idea of this "one church" is not the scriptural one. In discussions of our day, the great consideration is not "what saith the Word of God?" Rather, the discussions inevitably unite around such questions as "tradition", "the consensus of opinion" and other equally minor considerations.

The church that will emerge from the usual modern forums will be a strange spectacle to behold. Its doctrinal statement will be composed of the lowest common denominator of the partners in the union; its government will be a hopeless mixture of episcopacy and the hybrid found in the United Church. We do wonder what place will be given to the "high churchman" or perhaps the United churchman will consent to be called "father", and will run around in long black gowns to hear confession.

The Attitude of the "Laity"

When Archbishop Barfoot released his statement, the press contacted some United Church men to hear their comments. The *Toronto Telegram* quoted Dr. R. McCleary of Woodgreen United Church—"while there may be a quiescence among the clergy of both churches, the movement among the laity is gathering momentum. Men around luncheon and service clubs will not be impeded on their march for a united return to a spiritual premise. Laymen everywhere are becoming more conscious of a necessity of a spiritual awareness in a day of material prosperity."

We dislike intensely the terms "laity" and "clergy" for they have a certain Romish air about them. Dr. McCleary maintains that whatever may be the attitude of the "clergy", the "laity" (the man in the pew or who should be there) is determined to press forward in this union crusade. We had never thought of the service club as being a suitable theological forum, but apparently this is the "church council" of our day. On second thought, there is probably as much spiritual discussion there as there is in the average theological gathering of the day.

The Union Trend

There is a definite trend toward union in many spheres. Just recently we learned of the proposed merger of the

two largest labour unions of Canada and the United States. Then we hear of other great industrial mergers. "Bigness" is the cry, and there is a disparagement of any dissent. Unfortunately, centralization and bureaucracy are popular in politics and religion. The average church member takes up the cry and so a union movement is proposed.

We are inclined to believe that Dr. McCleary is right in suggesting that "laymen" are eager for union. Unfortunately this trend toward unions is not conclusive in judging the rightness or wrongness of the movement. We are prepared for criticism when we say that the average church goer is totally ignorant of spiritual things, and hence is no fit juror in this matter.

On the other hand we see no reason why this union should not come about for nearly all the major Protestant bodies of Canada are one in spiritual decay and spiritual poverty. The issues would be much clearer if they would unite in one body — which will undoubtedly come to pass in the not too far distant future.

What of the Believer?

The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ rejoices in a unity between those of the precious faith. He refuses to have part with any church or union movement that does not rest squarely upon the Word of God. He despises modern "church politics" and is more concerned that God's work be done in God's way.

SUNDAY IN JARVIS STREET

Sunday was a great day in the house of the Lord. Dr. Slade who has recently returned from Europe preached at both services. In the morning his subject was "The Care of Souls". In the evening he spoke on "The New Birth". During the day two came forward for baptism and two young men professed faith in Jesus Christ. The believers are looking forward to great things and long for a true revival.

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THE HAPPY BEGGAR

By C. H. Spurgeon

"But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me."—Psalm 40:17.

THERE is no crime, and there is no credit in being poor. Everything depends upon the occasion of the poverty. Some men are poor, and are greatly to be pitied, for their poverty has come upon them without any fault of their own; God has been pleased to lay this burden upon them, and therefore they may expect to experience divine help, and ought to be tenderly considered by their brethren in Christ. Occasionally poverty has been the result of integrity or religion, and here the poor man is to be admired and honoured. At the same time, it will be observed by all who watch with an impartial eye, that very much of the poverty about us is the direct result of idleness, intemperance, improvidence, and sin. There would probably not be one-tenth of the poverty there now is upon the face of the earth if the drinking shops were less frequented, if debauchery were less common, if idleness were banished, and extravagance abandoned. Lovers of pleasure (alas! that such a word should be so degraded) are great impoverishers of themselves. It is clear that there is not, of necessity, either vice or virtue in being poor, and a man's poverty cannot be judged of by itself, but its causes and circumstances must be taken into consideration.

The poverty, however, to which the text relates is a poverty which I desire to cultivate in my own heart, and it is one upon which our divine Lord has pronounced a blessing. When he sat down upon the mountain and poured forth his famous series of beatitudes, he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The poor in pocket may be blessed, or may not be blessed, as the case may be; but the poor in spirit are always blessed, and we have Christ's authority for so saying. Theirs is a poverty which is better than wealth; in fact, it is a poverty which indicates the possession of the truest of all riches.

It was mainly in this sense that David said, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me;" certainly in any other sense there are vast multitudes who are "poor and needy", but who neither think upon God nor rejoice that God thinks upon them. Those who are *spiritually* "poor and needy", the sacred beggars at mercy's gate, the elect mendicants of heaven, these are the people who may say, with humble confidence, "Yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

Two things are noteworthy in the text. First, *here is a frank acknowledgment*, "I am poor and needy"; but secondly, *here is a comfortable confidence*, "Yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

I. First, here is a FRANK ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

Some men do not object to confess that they are poor in worldly goods. In fact, they are rather fond of pleading poverty when there is a collection coming, or a subscription list in dangerous proximity. Men have even gloried in history in the name of "the Beggars"; and "silver and gold have I none," has been exalted into a boast. But, *spiritually*, it is little less than a miracle to bring men to feel, and then to confess their poverty, for naked, and

poor, and miserable as we are by nature, we are all-apt enough to say, "I am rich and increased in goods." We cannot dig, and to beg we are ashamed. If we did not inherit a penny of virtue from father Adam, we certainly inherited plenty of pride. Poor and proud we all are. We will not, if we can help it, take our seat in the lowest room, though that is our proper place. Grace alone can bring us to see ourselves in the glass of truth. To have nothing is natural to us, but to confess that we have nothing is more than we will come to until the Holy Spirit has wrought self-abasement in us. The emptiers must come up upon us, for though naturally as empty as Hagar's bottle, yet we boast ourselves to be as full as a fountain. The Spirit of God must take from us our goddy Babylonish garment, or we shall never consent to be dressed in the fair white linen of the righteousness of saints. What Paul flung away as dross and dung, we poor rag-collectors prize and hoard up as long as ever we can. "I am poor and needy," is a confession which only he who is the Truth can teach us to offer. If you are saying it, my brother, you need not be afraid that you are under a desponding delusion. But, true as it is, and plain to every grace-taught child of God, yet only grace will make a man confess the obnoxious fact! It is not in public that we can or should confess our soul-poverty as we do in the chamber when we bow our knee secretly before God, but many of us in secret have been compelled with many tears and sighs, to feel, as well as to say, "I am poor and needy." We have searched through and through, looked from the top to the bottom of our humanity, and we could not find a single piece of good money in the house, so greatly reduced were we. We had not a shekel of merit, nor a penny of hope in ourselves, and we were constrained to fall flat on our face before God and confess our inability to meet his claims, and we found no comfort till by faith we learned to present our Lord Jesus as the Surety for his servants for good. We could not pay even the poorest composition, and therefore cast ourselves upon the forbearance of God.

The psalmist is doubly humble, for first he says *he is poor*, and then adds that *he is needy*, and there is a difference between these two things.

He acknowledges that *he is poor*, and you and I, if taught of God, will say the same. We may well be poor, for *we came of a poor father*. Our father Adam had a great estate enough at first, but he soon lost it. He violated the trust on which he held his property, and he was cast out of the inheritance, and turned adrift into the world to earn his bread as a day labourer by tilling the ground whence he was taken. His eldest son was a vagabond; the firstborn of our race was a convict upon ticket-of-leave. If any suppose that we have inherited some good thing by natural descent, they go very contrary to what David tells us, when he declares, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Our first parents were utter bankrupts. They left us nothing but a heritage of old debts, and a propensity to accumulate yet more personal obligations. Well may we be poor who come into this world "heirs of wrath", with a decayed estate and tainted blood.

Moreover, since the time when we came into the world, we have followed a very miserable trade. I recollect when I was a spinner and weaver of the poorest sort, I dreamed that I should be able by my own spinning to make a garment to cover myself withal. This was the trade of father Adam and mother Eve when they first lost their innocence; they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. It is a very laborious business, and has worn out the lives of many with bitter bondage, but its worst feature is that the Lord has declared concerning all who followed this self-righteous craft, "their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." Even those who have best attired themselves, and have for awhile gloried in their fair apparel have had to feel the truth of the Lord's words by Isaiah, "I will take away the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils, and instead of a girdle there shall be a rent; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth." Vain is it to spend our labour on that which profiteth not, yet to this business are we early put apprentice, and we work at it with mighty pains.

We are miserably poor, for we have become bankrupt even in our wretched trade. Some of us had once a comfortable competence laid by in the bank of Self Righteousness, and we meant to draw it out when we came to die, and thought we should even have a little spending money for our old age out of the interest which was paid us in the coin of self-conceit; but the bank broke long ago, and now we have not so much as a farthing of our own merits left us, no, nor a chance of ever having any; and what is worse, we are deep in debt, and we have nothing to pay. Instead of having anything like a balance on our own account, behold, we are insolvent debtors to the justice of God, without a single farthing of assets, and unless we are freely forgiven we must be cast into prison, and lie there for ever. Job described us well when he said, "for want and famine they are solitary, fleeing into the wilderness, in former time desolate and waste. They have no covering in the cold, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter." See, then, what poverty-stricken creatures we are — of a poor stock, following a starving trade, and made bankrupts even in that.

What is worse still, poor human nature has no power left to retrieve itself. As long as a man has a stout pair of arms he is not without a hope of rising from the dung-hill. We once thought that we were equal anything, but now Paul's description suits us well—"without strength". Our Lord's words, too, are deeply true, "Without me ye can do nothing." Unable so much as to think a good thought, or to lift our hearts heavenward of ourselves — this is poverty indeed! We are wrecked, and the whole vessel has gone to pieces. We have destroyed ourselves. Ah! my fellow man, may God make you feel this! Many know nothing about it, and would be very angry if we were to say that this is their condition; and yet this is the condition of every man born into the world until the Spirit of God brings him into communion with Christ, and endows him with the riches of the covenant of grace. "I am poor," it is my confession: is it yours? Is it a confession extorted from you by a clear perception that it is really so? I will recommend you, if it be so, to take to a trade which is the best trade in the world to live by, not for the body but for the soul, and that is the profession of a beggar, certainly a suitable one for you and me. I took to it long ago, and began to beg for

mercy from God; I have been constrained to continue begging every day of the same kind Benefactor, and I hope to die begging. Many of the saints have grown rich upon this holy mendicancy; they have indeed spoken of being daily loaded with benefits. The noblest of the peers of heaven were here below daily pensioners upon God's love; they were fed, and clothed, and housed by the charity of the Lord, and they delighted to have it so. (How clear is it from all this that none of us can have anything whereof to glory! boasting is excluded, for let the beggar get what he may he is but a beggar still; and the child of God, notwithstanding the bounty of his heavenly Father is still in himself alone a penniless vagrant.

The psalmist also said, "I am needy." There are poor people who are not needy. Diogenes was very poor, but he was not needy; he had made up his mind that he would not need anything, so he lived in a tub; he had but one drinking vessel, and when he saw a boy drinking out of his hand he broke that, for he said he would not possess anything superfluous. He was poor enough, but he was not needy; for when Alexander said, "What can I do for you?" he answered, "Stand out of my sunshine." So it is clear a man may be very poor, and yet he may not be burdened with need; but David was conscious of extreme need, and in this many of us can join him.

Brethren, we confess that we need ten thousand things, in fact, we need *everything*. By nature the sinner needs healing, for he is sick unto death; he needs washing, for he is foul with sin; he needs clothing, for he is naked before God; he needs preserving after he is saved, he needs the bread of heaven, he needs the water out of the rock; he is all needs, and nothing but needs. Not one thing that his soul wants can he of himself supply. He needs to be kept from even the commonest sins. He needs to be instructed what be the first elements of the faith; he needs to be taught to walk in the ways of God's plainest commandments. Our needs are so great that they comprise the whole range of covenant supplies, and all the fulness treasured up in Christ Jesus.

We are needy in every condition. We are soldiers, and we need that grace should find us both shield and sword. We are pilgrims, and we need that love should give us both a staff and a guide. We are sailing over the sea of life, and we need that the wind of the Spirit shall fill our sails, and that Christ shall be our pilot. There is no figure under which the Christian life can be represented in which our need is not a very conspicuous part of the image. In all aspects we are poor and needy.

We are needy in every exercise. If we are called to preach, we have to cry, "Lord, open thou my lips." If we pray, we are needy at the mercy-seat, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought. If we go out into the world to wrestle with temptation, we need supernatural help, lest we fall before the enemy. If we are alone in meditation, we need the Holy Spirit to quicken our devotion. We are needy in suffering and labouring, in watching and in fighting. Every spiritual engagement does but discover another phase of our need.

And, brethren, we are needy at all times. We never wake up in the morning but we want strength for the day, and we never go to bed at night without needing grace to cover the sins of the past. We are needy at all periods of life: when we begin with Christ in our young days we need to be kept from the follies and passions which are so strong in giddy youth; in middle life our needs are greater still, lest the cares of this world should eat as doth a canker; and in old age we are needy still, and

need persevering grace to bear us onward to the end. So needy are we that even in lying down to die we need our last bed to be made for us by mercy, and our last hour to be cheered by grace. So needy are we that if Jesus had not prepared a mansion for us in eternity we should have no place to dwell in. We are as full of wants as the sea is full of water. We cannot stay at home and say, "I have much goods laid up for many years," for the wolf is at the door, and we must go out a begging again. Our clamorous necessities follow us every moment and dog our heels in every place. We must take the two adjectives and keep them close together in our confession — "I am poor and needy."

II.

The second part of the subject is much more cheering. It is A COMFORTABLE CONFIDENCE—"Yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

A poor man is always pleased to remember that he has a rich relation, especially if that rich relative is very thoughtful towards him, and finds out his distress, and cheerfully and abundantly relieves his wants.

Observe, that the Christian does not find comfort in himself. "I am poor and needy." That is the top and bottom of my case. I have searched myself through and through, and have found in my flesh no good thing. Notwithstanding the grace which the believer possesses, and the hope which he cherishes, he still sees a sentence of death written upon the creature, and he cries, "I am poor and needy." His joy is found in another. He looks away from self, to the consolations which the eternal purpose has prepared for him.

Note well *who it is that gives the comfort*. "The Lord thinketh upon me." By the term "the Lord," we are accustomed to understand the glorious Trinity. "The Lord thinketh upon me," *i. e.*, Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. O beloved believer in Christ, if thou hast rested in Jesus, then the Father thinks upon thee. Thy person was in his thoughts—

"Long ere the sun's effulgent ray,
Primeval shades of darkness drove."

He regarded thee with thoughts of boundless love before he had fashioned the world, or wrapped it up in swaddling bands of ocean and of cloud. Eternal thoughts of love went forth of old towards all the chosen, and these have never changed. Not for a single instant has the Father ever ceased to love his people. As our Lord said, "The Father himself loveth you." Never has he grown cold in his affections towards thee, O poor and needy one. He has seen thee in his Son. He has loved thee in the Beloved. He has seen thee—

"Not as thou stood'st in Adam's fall,
When sin and ruin covered all;
But as thou'lt stand another day,
Brighter than sun's meridian ray."

He saw thee in the glass of his eternal purpose, saw thee as united to his dear Son, and therefore looked upon thee with eyes of complacency. He thought upon thee, and he thinks upon thee still. When the Father thinks of his children, he thinks of thee. When the Great Judge of all thinks of the justified ones, he thinks of thee. O Christian, can you grasp the thought? The Eternal Father thinks of *you!* You are so inconsiderable, that if the mind of God were not infinite it were not possible that he should remember your existence! And yet he *thinks* upon

you! How precious ought his thoughts to be to you! The sum of them is great, let your gratitude for them be great too.

Forget not that the great *Son of God*, to whom you owe your hope, also thinks of you. It was for you that he entered into suretyship engagements or ever the earth was. "It was for you, O heir of heaven, that he took upon himself a mortal body, and was born of the virgin. It was for you that he lived those thirty years of immaculate purity, that he might weave for you a robe of righteousness. For you the bloody sweat in the garden; he thought of you, he prayed for you in Gethsemane. For you were the flagellations in Pilate's hall, and the mockeries before Herod, and the blasphemous accusations at the judgment-seat of Caiaphas. For you the nails, the spear, the vinegar, and the "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*". Jesus thought of you, and died for you with as direct an aim for your salvation as though there had not been another soul to be redeemed by his blood. And now, though he reigns exalted high, and you are "poor and needy"; yet he thinks upon you still. The glory of his present condition does not distract his thoughts from his beloved. He is lovingly thoughtful of you. When he stands up to intercede, your name glitters on his priestly breastplate with the rest of the chosen. He thinks of you when he prepares mansions for those whom his Father has blessed. He looks forward to the time when he shall gather together in one all things in heaven and in earth that are in him, and he counts you among them. Christian, will not this comfort you, that the Son of God is constantly thinking upon you?

We must not forget the love of the *Spirit*, to whom we are so wondrously indebted, he cannot do otherwise than think upon us, for he dwelleth in us, and shall be with us. If he dwells in us he cannot be unmindful of us. It is his office to be the Comforter, to help our infirmities, to make intercession for us according to the will of God. So let us take the three thoughts, and bind them together. "I am poor and needy, but I have a part in the thoughts of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." What fuller cause for comfort could we conceive?

We have answered the question "*who?*" let us now turn to "*what?*" "The Lord *thinketh upon me*." He does not say, "The Lord will uphold me, provide for me, defend me." The declaration that he "*thinketh upon me*" is quite enough. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things," says our Lord, as if it was quite clear that for our heavenly Father to know is to act. We poor short-sighted and short-armed creatures often know the needs of others, and would help if we could; but we are quite unable; it is never so with God, his thoughts always ripen into deeds. Perhaps, O tried believer, you have been thinking a great deal about yourself of late, and about your many trials, so that you lie awake of nights, mourning over your heavy cares. "Alas!" you think, "I have no one to advise me and sympathize with me." Let this text come to you as a whisper, and do you paraphrase in it into a soliloquy, "I am poor and needy, this is true, and I cannot plan a method for supplying my needs, but a mightier mind than mine is cogitating for me; the infinite Jehovah thinketh upon me; he sees my circumstances, he knows the bitterness of my heart, he knows me altogether; and his consideration of me is wise, tender, and gracious. His thoughts are wisdom itself. When *I* think it is a poor, little, weak, empty head that is thinking, but when God thinks, the gigantic

mind which framed the universe, is thinking upon me." Have you attained to the idea of what the thoughts of God must be? That pure Spirit who cannot make mistakes, who is too wise to err, too good to be unkind, thinketh upon us; he does not act without deliberation, does not come to our help in inconsiderate haste, does not do as we do with a poor man when we throw him a penny to be rid of him, but he thoughtfully deals with us: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor," saith the psalmist — those who take up the case of the poor, weigh it, and remember it, are blessed. This is what the Lord does for us: "Yet the Lord thinketh upon me," considers my case, judges when, and how, and after what sort, it will be most fitting to grant me relief. "The Lord thinketh upon me." Beloved, the shadow of this thought seems to me like the wells of Elim, full of refreshment, with the seventy palm trees yielding their ripe fruit. You may sit down here and drink to your full, and then go on your way rejoicing. However poor and needy you may be, the Lord thinketh at the present moment upon you.

We have spoken upon who and what, and now we will answer the enquiry — *How do we know that the Lord thinketh upon us?* "Oh!" say the ungodly, "how do you know?" They are very apt to put posing questions to us. We talk of what we know experimentally, and again they cry, "How do you know?" I will tell you how we know that God thinks upon us. We knew it, first of all, when we had a view of the Redeemer by faith, when we saw the Lord Jesus Christ hanging upon a tree for us, and made a curse for us. We saw that he so exactly suited and fitted our case that we were clear the Lord must have thought and well considered it. If a man were to send you tomorrow a sum of money, exactly the amount you owe, you would be sure that some one had been thinking upon you. And when we see the Saviour, we are compelled to cry out, "O my Lord, thou hast given me the very Saviour I wanted; this is the hope which my despairing soul required, and this the anchorage which my tempest-tossed bark was seeking after." The Lord must have thought upon us; or he would not have provided so suitable a salvation for us.

We learn anew that the Lord thinks upon us when we go up to the house of God. I have heard many of you say, "We listen to the preacher, and he seems to know what we have been saying on the road; the Word comes so home to our case that surely God has been hearing our very thoughts and putting into the mind of the preacher a word in season for us." Does not this show how the preacher's Master has been thinking upon you? Then sit down and open the Bible, and you will frequently feel the words to be as much adapted to your case as if the Lord had written them for you alone. If instead of the Bible having been penned many hundreds of years ago, it were actually written piecemeal to suit the circumstances of the Lord's people as they occur, it could not have been written more to the point. Our eyes have filled with tears when we have read such words as these, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel, I will help thee, saith the Lord," "In six troubles I will be with thee, in seven there shall no evil touch thee," "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed," and such like, which we could quote by hundreds. We feel that the Lord must have thought about us, or he would not have sent us such promises. Best of all, when

we sit quietly at the feet of Jesus in the power of the Spirit of God, in solemn silence of the mind, then we know that the Lord thinks upon us, for thoughts come bubbling up one after another, delightful thoughts, such as only the Holy Spirit could inspire. Then the things of Christ are sweetly taken by the Spirit, and laid home to our hearts. We become calm and still, though before we were distracted. A sweet savour fills our heart, like ointment poured forth, it diffuses its fragrance through every secret corner of our spirit. Sometimes our soul has seemed as though it were a peal of bells, and every power and passion has been set a ringing with holy joy because the Lord was there. Our whole nature has been as a harp well-tuned, and the Spirit has laid his fingers among the strings, and filled our entire manhood with music. When we have been the subjects of these marvellous influences and gracious operations, if any one had said to us that the Lord did not think upon us, we should have told them that they lied, even to their face, for the Lord had not only thought of us, but spoken to us, and enabled us by his grace to receive his thoughts, and to speak again to him.

The Lord not think of us! Why, we have proof upon proof. He has very remarkably thought upon us in providence. Should some of us relate the memorable interferences of providence on our behalf they would not be believed; but they are facts for all that. William Huntingdon wrote a book called, "The Bank of Faith," which contains in it a great many very strange things, no doubt, but I believe hundreds and thousands of God's tried people could write "Banks of Faith" too, if it came to that, for God has often appeared for his saints in such a way that if the mercy sent had been stamped with the seal of God, visible to their eyes, they could not have been more sure of its coming from him than they were when they received it. Yea, answered prayers, applied promises, sweet communings, and blessed deliverances in providence, all go to make us feel safe in saying, "yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

At this point we will close our meditation, when we have remarked that those who are not poor and needy, may well envy in their hearts those who are. You who have abounding riches, who feel yourselves to be wealthy in goodness, you who feel as if you could afford to look down upon most people in the world, you who are so respectable, and decorous, so deserving, I beseech you, note well that the text does not say a word about you. You are not poor, and you are not needy, and you do not think upon the Lord, and the Lord does not think upon you. Why should he? "The whole have no need of a physician." Christ did not come to call you. He said he came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Shall I tell you that it is your worst calamity that you have such an elevated idea of your own goodness? Whereas you say, "we see", you are blindest of all; and whereas you boast that you are righteous, there is in that self-righteousness of yours the very worst form of sin, for there is no sin that can be greater than that of setting up your own works in competition with the righteousness of Christ. I bear you witness that you have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for you, being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, go about to establish your own righteousness, and your efforts will end in terrible disappointment. I pray you cast away all reliance upon your own works. Tear up, once for all, all that you have been spinning for these many years. Your tears, your prayers, your church-goings, your chapel-goings, your con-

firmation, your baptism, your sacraments—have done with the whole rotten mass as a ground of confidence. It is all quicksand which will swallow you up if you rest upon it. The only rock upon which you must build, whoever you may be, is the rock of the finished work of Jesus. Come now, and rest upon God's appointed Saviour, the Son of God, even though you may not have felt as you could desire your own poverty and need. If you mourn that you do not mourn as you should, you are one of the poor and needy, and are bidden to turn your eyes to the Lamb of God and live.

I would to God that everyone of us were poor and needy in ourselves and were rich in faith in Christ Jesus! O that we had done both with sin and with self-righteousness, that we had laid both those traitors with their heads on the block for execution! Come, ye penniless sinners, come and receive the bounty of heaven. Come, ye who mourn your want of penitence, come and receive repentance, and every other heavenly gift, from him who is the Sinner's Friend, exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. But you must come empty handed, and sue as the lawyers say, in *forma pauperis*, for in no other form will the Lord give ear to you. "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree; he hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away."

" 'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.

"But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have nought to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all."

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 19 Third Quarter Lesson 11 September 11, 1955

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THE MINISTRY OF LOVE

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 13.

Golden Text: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."—1 Cor. 13:13.

I. Love the Most Excellent Gift: verses 1-7.

We should aim to be worthy of receiving the best gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; Phil. 3:8-14). But, better even than the ambition for high spiritual attainment is the desire to abound in love (Phil. 1:9; 1 Thess. 3:12). Christian love, the work of the Holy Spirit within our hearts, is not a mere sentiment, nor is it just a doctrine (Gal. 5:13, 14, 22). It is rather a Divine gift. God's love to us begets a love in our hearts toward Him and toward others, whether or not they be worthy. It is the very love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and which flows through us to the needy ones around us (Rom. 5:5). The world cannot understand such affection.

In the absence of love, all other gifts lose their value, for it is the one indispensable virtue. It is impossible to prophesy (to foretell or forth-tell the truth) successfully without love (1 Cor. 12:10), for "the Gospel of the broken heart demands the ministry of the bleeding heart" (Acts 20:31; 1 Thess. 2:8, 11; 2 Tim. 4:2). Of what use is the ability to understand that which is hidden from others (1 Cor. 12:8), unless one is willing lovingly to interpret such mysteries (Matt. 15:25; 1 Cor. 1:26-31)? A cold, intellectual grasp of

the truth, when it is not translated into life and humbly imparted to others, will bring no blessing. Faith must be demonstrated by deeds, or it is dead (Matt. 17:20; 1 Cor. 12:9; Jas. 2:17-26). Those who truly believe in Christ will show mercy and compassion, for love is one of the signs of the new birth (1 John 3:14). Formal charity is of no avail, if it be practised simply to exalt self, or to secure a name for being generous, or to gain power over another (John 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 9:6-15). One can make himself out to be a martyr in order to gain popularity, to give others the impression that he is especially holy or devoted. There are those who are proud of their so-called humility (Col. 2:18, 23). Thus, love must be the motive and directing force when we engage in any of these ministries for the Lord.

Since God is love, and since He is the source of love (1 John 4:16), love itself displays the very attributes of God; long-suffering and patience (Exod. 34:6; 2 Cor. 6:4-6; 2 Pet. 3:9), loving-kindness and mercy (Psa. 25:6). The one through whom the love of God flows will not be envious (1 Cor. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:1), discourteous (Eph. 4:31, 32; 1 Pet. 3:8), selfish (Rom. 15:1-3; 1 Cor. 10:24); touchy or unjust. Envy is the fear of another's superiority; it is the desire to reach equality with another by pulling him down. Love is never discourteous, for a kindly consideration for the rights of others will keep one from rude or unseemly conduct. Truly, one cannot possess this excellent grace by natural endowment or by human striving; God alone can bestow it.

Love is not the weak sentiment which the worldling describes when he ignorantly declares his belief that God is too loving to punish sin. Love is strong, manly, courageous and forceful. It will not rejoice in iniquity (Rom. 1:32; 2 Thess. 2:11, 12); it will not compromise the truth, or take sides with those who are in the wrong. We must not justify the wicked, or condemn the just (Prov. 17:15). Love is intolerant of evil and error. On the other hand, love rejoices in the truth, desires to see it prosper, and puts forth every effort to promote righteousness.

The one who truly loves will bear and suffer persecution without retaliation and without complaint (Matt. 5:10-12; John 16:33; 1 Cor. 9:12), even after the example of our Lord. He will not become distrustful in the time of sorrow or affliction, but will trust the Father's heart when he cannot trace the Father's hand (Rom. 8:28; 1 Pet. 5:7). He will continue to hope when all others despair, and he will display brave and enduring courage, for love does not easily give up (Acts 27:25). It is love which gives steadfastness to both faith and hope.

II. Love the Most Enduring Gift: verses 8-13.

Love never fails or falls away from its true purpose (2 Pet. 1:10); it abides firm unto the end. On the other hand, the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge are described as temporary and transitory. The gifts of prophecy and tongues were given in the early Apostolic era for the specific purpose of aiding the growth of the infant church. Later, when the church had become established, these gifts were no longer needed, and they seem to have been withdrawn. The gift of knowledge is also incomplete and partial.

The word "perfect" (verse 10) means "mature" or "full-grown," and the illustration from natural life is most fitting. Certain activities and attitudes which are proper to childhood have no place in the life of the person who is mature. The present is a period of preparation for us. We see things as in a mirror, beholding mere reflections of Divine truth, imperfect and unsatisfactory. We see these things in perplexing forms—in puzzles and enigmas, as it were. There are so many mysteries in life which the human intellect cannot solve (1 Cor. 2:6-14). But when the Lord comes, we shall be like Him, having perfect, direct and full knowledge (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2). The gifts of the Spirit are transitory in nature, but the three virtues—faith, hope and love—will abide. Love is the greatest of these.

Daily Bible Readings

Sept. 5—Love, the Fruit of the Spirit	Gal. 5:19-26
Sept. 6—Love, Fulfilling the Law	Rom. 13:7-10
Sept. 7—Love is of God	1 John 4:7-13
Sept. 8—Love Proves Regeneration	1 John 3:14-24
Sept. 9—Love is Sacrificial	John 15:12-17
Sept. 10—Christ, the Love Gift of the Father ..	1 John 4:14-16
Sept. 11—Christ's Love Passeth Knowledge	Eph. 3:14-21