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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rains from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end." (Deut. 11:11-12 NIV).

Has the journey of the last year been through the wilderness or in the dark valleys? Have we experienced some really hard trials or stumbled amid temptations? We have left that behind. Sin confessed is cast into the ocean depths. Each experience has brought us new lessons. Perhaps some have brought tears but maybe some have brought laughter. We go forward into the New Year with the good land lying before us. Each experience is part of our life with the Lord. Each experience is part of our education for our Heavenly Home.

He came to my desk with a quivering lip - The lesson was done - "Dear teacher, I want a new leaf," he said "I have spoiled this one." In place of the leaf, so stained and blotted I gave him a new one, all unspotted, And into his sad eyes smiled "Do better now, my child." I went to the throne with a quivering soul The old year was done "Dear Father, hast Thou a new leaf for me? `I have spoiled this one." He took the old leaf, stained and blotted And gave me a new one, all unspotted, And into my sad heart smiled "Do better now, My child." (Poems of Dawn) DN

WORDS OF LIFE

Part 2

By C.T. Ward

Part I of this essay took as its theme "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life " (John 6:63), dwelling first upon the words of Jesus during his earthly ministry, leading to consideration of Jesus as the Living Word, the Alpha, and the Omega, the Savior of the world, at which point this concluding part takes up the thread.

When John in his vision saw the Son of Man in all the risen glory of white raiment, eyes of flame and burnished feet, he saw also the sharp two-edged sword in his mouth. That weapon of authority he recognized as a fitting symbol for the Word of God (Rev. 19:15). He who refused the offices of the literal sword during his arrest is Divinely equipped with the spiritual sword by which to subdue and instruct the nations. It is a sword which lays wide open the corruptions of the heart, strikes at the sinews and muscles of long-established evil practices, searching and probing to the very root and core of all human maladies. He is even now the Great Physician, revealing men to themselves when they look at him and listen to him through the written word, but then his name will be "King of kings and Lord of lords" with power unlimited. His sword will smite and heal, subdue and conquer, cut from man's race the deadly canker of its sins and break down every obstacle that would keep it from truth and life. As the Word in the beginning created, the Word in the end will recreate. What beside this Word and the words He spoke on earth are all the words of man, his everyday words, his written words, his eloquent high-flown words, his oratory, sophistries and bombast which are often so much chaff blown before every wind, so much crackling thorns and snapping twigs and sounding brass?

When God writes, men pause to see what He has written. When God speaks, the earth trembles and men are forced to listen. At Sinai not only Moses and the people trembled at the voice of God issuing his commandments from its smoking summit, the mountains also trembled. "The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness " (Psalm 29). In the picturesque imagery of eastern words the Old Testament writers leave none in doubt of the powerful effects of the spoken word of God. The earth obeys his every behest, trembles at the presence of her Maker and a "Thus saith the Lord" is an end of all argument. The engraven commandments may be mocked, ignored or intensely disliked but they are still there; they will always be there, the safe conduct for human society, written on rock by the finger of God.

When Belshazzar at his great banquet drank wine from the golden vessels looted from the House of God, he saw the fingers of a man's hand writing on the wall, and the sight caused his royal knees to knock together with terror. He knew before the interpretation of the words that the Owner of the Temple vessels was spelling out his doom. "Weighed in the balances and found wanting," has been the brief and pungent summing up of many a nation, many an institution grown stale and effete and many a life which has not fulfilled its golden promise through moral weaknesses. The words are few but they are enough. They have about them the clean, decisive thrust of the two-edged sword. They cannot be gainsaid. These and many others like them have

so penetrated the minds of men that in any dramatic situation they leap readily to the tongue or the pen. Nathan's words accusing David, "Thou art the man!" were God's words to all who deal crookedly and hope to get away with it, as his words to the slayer of the priests of Baal, "What doest thou here Elijah?" were a rebuke to all who run away from their place, their task and the circumstances which are their own peculiar challenge.

The story of the woman taken in adultery, avoided by some early copyists as too controversial or too pointed for comfort, has all the ring of truth about it. John, with his instruction to write, was not likely to miss the drama of Jesus writing with his finger in the dust, ignoring the sly cunning of the self-righteous men who rushed into the very Temple, dragging into his presence the poor, disheveled victim of unlawful behavior. Looking up from his writing He spoke words as few and pointed as those written for the ruler of the Chaldeans. "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her." Jesus resumed his writing. What he wrote and what he said silenced the accusers. One by one they silently stole away, abashed as must all be who dare to affront the presence of God with their own righteousness. "Thy word is truth", and truth has a sterilizing effect upon the germs of selfishness, the seeds of evil responsible for the fevers, deliriums and illusions by which the world deceives and is deceived.

"Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned " (Matt. 12:36-37). This is a sobering thought, one which might well stem the torrent of words spilled out by every human creature except the dumb. Jesus took those words seriously as indicating the true state of the heart and mind. Frivolous, flippant, unkind, disloyal, unjust, cruel, pernicious, double-sided, malicious, sly, slanderous, crafty, unprofitable, unkind, unthankful, unholy, impure, etc., etc. This long catalogue of injurious words of which the tongue and pen are capable all spring from the poisoned fountain of the mind. How easily these damaging words leap out, fluent and glib, yet how slow, how halting the words of apology, if they come at all; how few the words of affection and praise, so rare their sincerity is often suspected as empty flattery. How damaging the words of violence, slander and lies.

How discouraging is the word of the critic snapping at flaws, how vain the gibberish that poses as knowledge, how tiring the din of a gabbling throng, how inane the gossip, how silly the chatter where more than two or three are met together to discuss the affairs of friends and acquaintances. Around many a conference table there hangs the strange futility of words vainly beating the air, of councilors taking council together to bring everything to nothing. The shouting demagogue, the screaming mob, the frenzied fanatics literally foaming out words which daily beat about the revolving earth like a sandstorm.

If the scientific theory is correct that all sound is trapped somewhere in the airy bag of the earth's atmosphere, someday to be captured and reproduced, then how accurate will be the words of the Lord in the day of judgment and how poetic the justice when all that has been said in secret will be shouted from the house tops (Luke 12:2-3). "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee " (Luke 19:22). Then, if ever, all tongues will be silenced, for all tongues have sinned and fallen short with respect to words. Job, that near perfect man, said "If I justify myself my own words shall condemn me. If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse " (Job. 9:20). At a later date both James and John dwelt on the evil of words from the untamable tongue, of the impossibility of perfection in this respect, regardless of the finest ideals and the best intentions.

There were times when even the poet king of Israel was dumb with silence, not because he, a master of words, experienced a shortage but because he realized the futility of even fine words in the presence of God who reads the heart. God does not need man's words but man needs the words of God because they are spirit and life. The words of God are much more than guidance. They are energizing words which put new life into those whose hearts and ears are attuned to the ring of truth. If the earth is ever to become a perfect home for a perfect society according to the promise of God and the inspired visions of the poets and prophets, it must first become a silent earth. "The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him". (Hab. 2:20). The words are both a rebuke and a command. A silent earth means a cessation of uproar, of war and commotion, of vociferation, of tumult and the strife of tongues. When events have finally destroyed a misplaced trust in machines, money and men, a chastened race will be put in a mood to listen in a new atmosphere of quiet.

It is in periods of silent meditation that the voice of God is heard, that men come to their senses and learn what they have to do. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind" (Isa. 65:17.) These are God's words, words of assurance and hope, words of life. Man's endeavors, at peace and quality fail for obvious reasons, the spiritual and social elements dissolve in the fiery heat of troubled times, but "the word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Pet. 1:25). "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away " (Matt. 24:3-5).

A new earth, a new social climate of love and goodwill in which all the natural virtues of courage, truth, kindness and justice will prevail, will require new words. "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve with one consent " (Zeph. 3:9). In the final vision of the new civilization which is poetically known as Paradise Restored, John heard a mighty thunder of praise bursting from the hearts of eager, thankful multitudes. This new and glorious sound he recognized as a great paean of triumph, a hymn of rejoicing. Hymns have been a choice medium of praise for Christian people since the angels sang their sublime chorus at Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace". Poets have conjured their finest sentiments to fit that vision, to extend that praise to every corner of the earth, so that somewhere, every hour, a more worthy set of words might be heard ascending to the ear of the high and holy One sitting upon the rainbow-circled throne.

Vulgar, coarse, inferior and common words have been somewhat offset by uncommon words, by beautiful words of prayer and praise. Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words, beautiful words, Wonderful words of life.

Above the torrent of profanity and worldly words the sweet chorus of praise and the solemn words of prayer rise unceasingly, an offering and an incense to heavenly places. "A word fitly spoken, how good it is, like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11).

The spoken word is powerful, swaying multitudes, changing lives by its spell-binding tongue. Unless the words are recorded much of their power is lost, their eloquence blown like the spray from the surface of the sea. When God would have his words impressed into the minds and lives of men He either wrote with his own finger or commanded his servants to write. "It is written" is the sharp reminder to those who would plead ignorance or loss of memory. The man with the writer's ink-horn in his belt was the man who went about making notes for future reference, setting down what he saw and heard. The immortal, essence of words is the truth they contain.

"They are spirit and they are life." They are eventually to be written into the very fabric of man's nature. "I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts " (Jer. 31:33). This will be the greatest feat of writing ever achieved, the finest words put to the best use. No longer will men need to consult books, with their mixed ideas and varied advice, their complicated rules and complex explanations. The written instructions for the new man will not be something he can lose or misunderstand. They will be so plain, so much a part of him self that even a simpleton could not go wrong.

Imagination alone can visualize what sort of words will issue from the regenerated hearts and minds of these new days. The arts of the past will fade into insignificance before those which the inspired talents of the men and women of the future will give to a golden age of peace and life. These things shall be; a loftier race Than e'er the earth hath known shall rise With flame of freedom in their souls And light of knowledge in their eyes. New arts shall bloom of finer mould And lovelier music thrill the skies.

The harmony of the times will require new and finer words. Whatever their form they will be beautiful words to gladden the heart, to ennoble the mind, to carry the spirit of man into hitherto unexplored realms of thought and happiness. Coming from him whose words were always gracious, who spoke as no one else had ever spoken, they must be and will be words of peace, spirit and life.

UNIVERSAL LAW IN NATURE

"Everything that occurs in Nature is the result of some law instituted to bring it to pass. No phenomena are in opposition to the laws of Nature, nor are the laws of Nature ever set aside in order to bring about conditions or circumstances that would be more conducive to men's welfare, than the operation of the original laws themselves. Even "miracles" are, no doubt, in strict conformity with the primitive and immutable scheme of Divine government, which has maintained the universe in its integrity and sublime order ever since the time of that sweet aurora when the "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy "; we call them "supernatural," simply because they are effected, not by suspending the laws, but by exhibiting the unaccustomed powers of Nature. For there is a spiritual law within, and thus above, every natural law, which, being necessarily in perfect harmony with it may dignify and expand its operation, but can never contradict it. If we feel disposed to regard miracles as works requiring the suspension of the laws of Nature, it is again simply because we do not understand - and in this, our present life, probably cannot so understand - the immensity and fullness of the laws of Nature, nor see how occurrences, apparently quite at variance one with another, may yet be in harmony and be quite compatible when viewed by the light of some grand and omnipotent principle which originates and includes both. L. H. Grindon c. 1890

DANIEL IN BABYLON,

13. The Den of Lions

By A. O. Hudson, The story of a great man's faith

It was during the seven months' short reign of Darius the Mede that Daniel's enemies made one more - unavailing- attempt to get rid of him. The stalwart old man had survived many such plots in the course of his long life; perhaps by now he was getting used to them. At any rate there is no indication that his faith wavered in the slightest. As an example of the strength of character a firm faith in God can develop in a man's life the story of Daniel stands supreme. Never did he concede one jot or tittle to the forces of the enemy; at no time were his principles compromised. Fearless before kings, humble before God, his life reveals that combination of iron strength and dependent pliancy which made him so useful an instrument in the hand of God. We can look for no better instance among the records of faithful men upon which to model our own Christian lives. Some there were, following Jesus for a time, who turned back and "walked no more with him." The same sad sequel writes "finis " across the pages of many believers' lives when the discouragement's of the way, the opposition of God's enemies, the attractions of other things, prove too strong for the faith and hope which alone will enable any disciple to "endure to the end." Like Israel of old, who "could not enter in because of unbelief," so do many Christians falter and fall in the wilderness instead of marching onward to enter the Promised Land. The example of Daniel's life shows what inflexible devotion to the things of God and unshakable faith in his power and providence can do to a man who builds those things into his life's experience.

Nothing of this was in the minds of those presidents and princes who at this time were conspiring against Daniel. Unscrupulous men of the world, determined to dispose once and for all of the man who by his rectitude and uprightness was a constant threat to their nefarious ways, they hatched a plot which seemed certain of success. No ordinary methods would do; this was a man incorruptible, proof against either threats or bribes, influenced neither by fear nor greed. None of the ordinary methods of achieving their object would serve. They could not accuse him of disloyalty to the king or State, for he was manifestly the soul of integrity. They could not insinuate that he was guilty of personal enrichment from the public purse, or of taking bribes to pervert the course of justice; his private life was open for all to see. They could not impugn or malign his character, for all men knew him to be blameless and irreproachable. And in desperation at last these men said "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5). They could only hope to bring about the downfall of Daniel by making his loyalty to God a crime in itself.

So the plot was hatched. It was a simple enough scheme once the bare idea had crossed someone's mind. From its very nature it could not fail to work. Daniel's very firmness of character would be the sure guarantee of his undoing. As the details were unfolded and discussed there would be many nodding heads and covert smiles. The Jew was as good as dead already. Probably the principal contestants for Daniel's soon- to-be vacant office began to eye one another speculatively and under the cover of a spurious heartiness in discussion, began to take each others' measure for the further scramble for power which would follow immediately Daniel had

been disposed of.

Agreement reached, the band of rogues sought audience with the king, and outlined their proposal. Briefly put, it provided that for a period of thirty days supplicatory prayer should be offered to no god or man save the king. The brief account in the sixth chapter of Daniel gives no supporting reasons for this apparently pointless piece of authoritarianism, no argument to justify what must have appeared to be a particularly foolish and vapid decree. Nevertheless the litigants may well have made out a case for their request, and that without revealing the true purpose behind the scheme. The Babylonians were worshippers of many gods, spirits and demons, but the Persians were monotheists, worshippers of one god, Ahura-Mazda, the god of light. The argument may well have been that this thirty days' decree would have the effect of suspending temporarily the native people's customary worship and introducing them to the idea of monotheistic worship, the worship of one god. But since the god of the Persians was not well known in Babylon, why not let him be worshipped in the person of the king as his representative? Thus the vanity of Darius would be flattered and his ear lent more willingly to the proposal. The Roman emperors had Divine honors paid to them while yet living and the early Christians suffered for refusing to give homage to them as gods, here at a much earlier date it seems that the same situation was to face the saintly Daniel.

The manner in which the conspirators put the decree before the king and practically demanded his signature seems as though he was brow-beaten into signing. It might well have been that, faced with a united front of all his principal men except Daniel, he yielded against his own better judgment. It might not have occurred to him that Daniel would object to the decree; after all, Daniel himself was a monotheist, worshipping one God, and might reasonably be expected to support the general idea. Darius probably saw little difference between the one god of the Persians and the one God of Daniel, and perhaps reasoned that at any rate Daniel could not seriously object. At any rate he signed.

Of course Daniel behaved in the manner expected by the plotters. The habit of over sixty years was not going to be abrogated on account of the king's decree. Three times a day, from his earliest youth in Babylon, he had prayed with his face towards Jerusalem, no wall or door intervening, giving open testimony to his faith that one day the House of God would be re-established in that present desolate city. He must have done that when a lad in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, in full view of his pagan companions. At first they would have mocked and derided him, later they perhaps came to respect him. There may have been an occasion when an imperious summons to the presence of his royal master came to him when thus engaged, as happened once to a British Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, in the days of Queen Victoria. He would most surely have behaved as Mr. Gladstone did on that occasion, continuing with his prayers unhurriedly, and if then faced with an angry demand for an explanation, as was the case with that Christian statesman, returned the same answer: "I was engaged in audience with the King of kings." Daniel's enemies probably knew his history and judged rightly his behavior. Assembling at the appropriate time, as expected, they found Daniel with his windows wide open, praying to his God, in flat defiance of the royal decree.

With what glee and triumph must the plotters have hastened to the royal palace and sought audience with King Darius. They were careful, however, to get the king irrevocably committed and to that end they first had him confirm his earlier concurrence. "Hast thou not signed a decree ...?" and so on. True enough, agreed the unsuspecting king; a decree which, once signed, cannot

be revoked. That was the law of the Medes and Persians and the king confirmed his upholding of the law. Then the mask was thrown off. "That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree which thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day" (vs. 13).

Too late, the king perceived the trap into which he had fallen. Verse 14 says that he was "displeased with himself " He must have realized that the one man he could really trust was now, by his own stupid action, condemned to death. He might also have reflected that he himself, deprived of Daniel's loyalty and integrity, would be more at the mercy of these scheming conspirators than ever before. So he "labored until the going down of the sun to deliver him. "

The presidents and princes were ready for this. They knew it would come. Before long they were back again, reminding the king of his obligations under the State Constitution. The king realized that there was no way out; the sentence would have to be executed. It must have been with a heavy heart that he gave the necessary orders, and the Palace guards went off to arrest the nation's Chief Minister and bring him to the place of execution.

Verse 16 is a little puzzling. It reads as though Darius assured Daniel that his God, whom he served continually, would certainly deliver him. Whether this was an expression of faith or merely a soothing last assurance to a man he regarded as good as dead, is not clear; when he came to the den next morning he was not half so sure about it. But it was now too late for further talk. The entire company came to the den, usually a large round pit in which the animals could roam freely but from which they could not escape, approached by means of a steeply sloping tunnel from the surface. The unresisting victim was pushed down the tunnel and slid helplessly to the floor of the pit where the lions awaited him. The iron grille at the entrance to the tunnel was shut and locked and sealed with the king's seal and those of the conspirators so that there need be no suspicion next morning that any attempt to deliver the condemned man had been made. There would, of course, be guards posted at the gate, just in case any of Daniel's own friends should attempt a rescue during the night. These precautions taken, the party dispersed; the king, to a miserable evening and a sleepless couch, the others, to a sound night's sleep in the satisfaction of a job well done.

Next morning "the king arose very early" much earlier apparently, than the men whose scheming had created this situation. The account says that he "went in haste to the den of lions. " He must at least have had some glimmer of hope that Daniel's God had been able to deliver him, or he would not have made such an early morning expedition. His faith was only very rudimentary, however; we are told that he "cried with a lamentable voice, O Daniel....is thy God.....able to deliver thee? " He was by no means over sanguine, but he evidently thought that there was at least a chance.

Calm and unruffled came the familiar voice from the depths below. "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me. . . . "

Our God does not treat all his saints in the same fashion. Plenty of Christians were thrown to the lions in the days of pagan Rome, but God did not intervene to save them. He did intervene to save Daniel. That deliverance was for a definite purpose in the Divine Plan. Daniel yet had more work to do. The death of those many Christians in the Roman arena was for a definite purpose also, for "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church " Whether in life or in death, we are

the Lord's, and He will dispose of our earthly lives in the way that is good in his sight, and in the interests of his fulfilling purpose for all mankind. Only when we are all united together in the "General Assembly of the Church of the Firstborn" beyond the Vail, will we fully understand just how our apparently dissimilar experiences and varied fortunes in this life have been wrought together by our all-wise Father to effect the great end He has in view.

As far as Darius was concerned, Daniel's reassuring words brought about a swift revulsion of feeling. "Then was the king exceeding glad." Not only was he glad for Daniel's sake, but also for his own. Here was a golden opportunity to rid himself of the men whom he now realized to be a menace to his own security. Probably some of them at least were Persians, and more disposed to favor Cyrus than Darius. This was the psychological moment, while the wonder of the miracle was fresh upon the minds of the king's soldiers and servants. The king was not slow to take advantage of the chance. In the first place Daniel could legitimately be freed, since the decree merely stipulated that he should be cast into the den of lions without defining the consequences. The plotters had hardly thought that necessary. The law had been fulfilled and now Daniel could be released. The king saw to it that he was so freed without further delay. The same guards who cast him in now had the somewhat more ticklish task of getting him out. They doubtless hoped as they did so that the restored Chief Minister would not hold their action of the previous night against them when he resumed his administrative duties. With the same thought in mind they were probably only too pleased to show diligence in executing the king's next order, to the effect that they should arrest the men who were responsible for the plot against Daniel and cast them without further ado to the lions from which Daniel had so recently escaped. The summary nature of this arbitrary command would support the idea that the men concerned were taken from their beds before they had the time to realize what had happened, were hurried to the pit and without further ceremony flung in. Their unhappy wives and families were treated in similar fashion - a piece of Oriental barbarity which was quite the usual thing in those days, the idea being to ensure that no descendant of the criminal should live or be born to perpetuate his name. This ferocious act is quite in keeping with what might be expected of Darius; his father Astyages was one of the most inhuman monsters of antiquity.

The story ends with another decree, this time without any prompting. Darius sent a command to all parts of the empire requiring that worship and reverence be paid to the God of Daniel. It need not be thought that this implied the conversion of Darius or the establishment of Judaism as the State religion. It need only mean that Darius was sufficiently impressed by the manifest power of the God of Daniel that he gave the seal of his royal approval upon the worship of that God, wheresoever and by whomsoever performed. It might well be that this incident provided the starting point for that tolerance with which the Medo-Persian rulers regarded the Jewish religion, leading only a year after this happening to the decree of Cyrus permitting the Jews to return and build their Temple, and later on for the favor they enjoyed, in the days Nehemiah, when the city of Jerusalem itself was rebuilt. To Christians it is just one of the many examples in history where God shows us all his power to deliver, when deliverance is in accord with his will and his Plan. This story shows us that God can deliver; whether in any given case, or in our own case, He will deliver, rests again upon the needs of his Plan and his designs for us personally. Those of us whose lives are given over completely to serve him and be used by him would not have it otherwise; for He knoweth best. (To be continued)

DESPISE NOT THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

By M. Warren

There are musical notes too high for the human ear to hear. There are places too remote for the human eye to see and concepts too majestic for the human mind to grasp. Our senses are strictly limited. The figures quoted by astronomers have little meaning for the man in the street. The sheer immensity of the universe confounds those who try to comprehend it. At the other end of the scale man fails to understand the minuteness of God's creation. An atom! Yes even less than an atom is the basic unit of our world. On television, aided by the use of modern microscopes and cameras are revealed millions of tiny plants and creatures, beautifully made, all different, fantastically adapted to their environment, each one created by and known of God. As the Psalmist viewing the skies without the use of a telescope, exclaimed in awe, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained", he was constrained to add "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:3-4). Meditating on all the marvels of creation, how can man fail to be "lost in wonder, love, and praise"?

But the Psalmist goes on to reveal that God is mindful of man, and the wonder of it is that generally speaking it is not the greatest and wisest of men who most evoke his interest, but rather, as Paul says, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27). As God uses something smaller than the atom to work his will, nothing else is too small for his purpose.

"A small round thing. " It lay on the ground like a hoar frost. So small, so insignificant that its very name means "What is it?" and yet it provided food for all the Children of Israel throughout their forty years' wandering and was a wonderful picture of the Heavenly Manna which sustains the Christian in his pilgrimage through this world.

There were five pebbles in a brook, small and round; a boy, younger than his brothers, and a boy's sling, yet these were all used to defeat the giant enemy of Israel when the king in his armor and all his army were powerless to do so.

There was a little maid in Syria, taken captive from Israel. She had two fine characteristics, faith in the prophet of the Lord and love for her earthly master, although she was a slave. So God used her, little as she was. Her master was cured of his leprosy and acknowledged the God of Israel.

Gideon had an army to fight the Midianites but the army was too great for the Lord's use. God told Gideon so, adding, "lest Israel say `Mine own hand hath saved me'"(Jud. 7:2.). So the numbers were reduced from a somewhat mixed company of 32,000 to 300 who were devoted to the cause, and the Lord delivered Israel from the Midianites. This lesson seems to be one which Israel has yet to learn in our day. Not until she is prepared to give God the glory will her final deliverance come. The principle on which the Lord always works is "Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit".

God says of Bethlehem, "Thou, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that shall be Ruler in Israel, whose goings

forth have been from of old, from everlasting". (Micah 5:2). What an honor for that little town! Jerusalem might have been chosen - perhaps it might have seemed to us more appropriate - but Jerusalem is remembered as the city where our Lord was crucified. Perhaps the people of Bethlehem had a more humble spirit than those of Jerusalem over whom Jesus wept with the words "How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.!" (Matt. 23:37).

The manna lay on the ground. David was content to mind the sheep. The little slave girl had faith in God. Gideon gave up his army without question to put his trust in the power of God. Bethlehem must have recognized its humble position.

Does not the manna remind one of the five loaves and two small fishes? Only a boy's lunch, but the lunch of a boy who was willing to give it to Jesus for his use, and the multitude was fed. This was a wonderful demonstration of the power of God, of the compassion of Jesus and of the bread which represented his body which He would give for the life of the world. Such a little in the hand of the Lord can mean so much.

Unlike the little slave of Naaman, the slave Onesimus, who is the subject of Paul's letter to Philemon, ran away from his master. But he knew where to run. Obviously, even at that stage, "a lover of good men", he went to the apostle Paul. He was only a slave and even good slaves in those days were of less account than the animals. Onesimus apparently was an unprofitable slave. But evidently God was "mindful" of him and it is wonderful to know from the letter to the Colossians that Paul can later say "Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you" (Col. 4:9).

Jesus had much to say about the little ones in the Kingdom. Such are in God's sight greater than the prophets. His warnings are grave against causing them to stumble in the way.

So it is evident that the things and the people regarded by men as of little account are precious to God and can be used by him to his glory.

But there are warnings too about some small things, the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vine". Are these the so-called "small" sins, the slips, which with a greater devotion to the Lord could be avoided? Are they the careless thoughts and words and deeds which do not bring honor to God? Are they the little ways in which we neglect the needs of others, or perhaps the small anxieties which show our lack of trust?

James reminds us of one little fox which causes a great deal of trouble. He says "The tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth" (James 3:5-6).

But, praise God, that same member can be used as a real evidence of consecration to the Lord, as the word of love, of encouragement, of humble witness to the Lord's faithfulness is expressed. It is through the power of the tongue that the Gospel is preached and every Christian can play a small part in this. The tongue is in use when "confession is made unto salvation" and by this same little member the people of God can "offer the sacrifice of praise, giving thanks to his name".

Paul points out how all the members of the human body can be yielded to God as instruments of

righteousness.

So it is with the spiritual reality of which the human body is but a picture. Every member of the "Church which is his Body" not only may but must play a significant role if the Body is to be healthy and growing. The way Paul expresses it is, "The whole Body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love " (Eph. 4:16).

One may consider that one has no talent at all and therefore no part to play. In our Lord's parable all had at least one talent and the owner of the one was severely reprimanded for not making good use of it in the master's service. When it is remembered, too, that the Christian's service does not relate only to his relationship with his brethren but to every aspect of daily life, a little thought on this might reveal many hidden talents which could be cheerfully devoted to the praise of God. As the hymn says: "The daily round, the common task Will furnish all we need to ask Room to deny ourselves, a road To bring us daily nearer God " The called ones are still members of the Body even when not actually in contact with the other members and in each one a character is being formed which will affect the whole. So the small, the least member, like the little slave girl, may glorify God. How true are the poet's words "On the strength of one link in the cable, dependeth the might of the chain". God's values are so different from those of men.

How important is such a small thing as a moment! Every decision ever taken is arrived at in a moment. It is true that one may ponder an idea for days or weeks or years, but a single moment only is needed for the final decision, sometimes irrevocable. The first decision to yield to Satan was the work of a moment. Abraham, called of God, immediately went forth in obedience. Daniel determined once for all to serve the God of Israel. In one moment Pilate gave up Jesus to crucifixion. In one moment each of the apostles decided to dedicate his all to God. For each Christian, though the work of preparation and the actual working out of his consecration may span many years, there is surely one moment when a definite decision is made for the Lord. One moment only is necessary for a resolution which can have results reaching to eternity.

An atom, a pebble, a young boy, a little girl, a boy's lunch, a runaway slave, a part of the body as small as the tongue, one talent, a moment of time, the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. How insignificant in the eyes of men, how important in the eyes of God!

"Who hath despised the day of small things? says the Lord by the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 4:10). The foundations of the Temple being laid after the captivity seemed to give no promise of the great and glorious building to come, but if the building is the Lord's the grand result is never in doubt.

So, to those who in the eyes of the world and perhaps in their own opinion are small and unimportant, but who nevertheless are willing to commit their way to the Lord, came the words of Jesus, "Fear not, little flock it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom".

Strong Delusion (1 Thess. 2:11)

The words about a "strong delusion," or "working of error" are an example of what is taught as clearly in the New Testament as in the Old - that judicial hardening follows willful blindness and persistent sin. God will never send any delusion upon those who have not first deluded themselves. Thus Pharaoh hardened his own heart before it was ever said that the Lord hardened

his heart. God has so ordered things that sin brings its own judgment in this way, and the Hebrew writers were so greatly impressed with the basic fact of the sovereignty of God that they expressed themselves in the most direct language about it. The conviction that all things were under the divine ordering and control saved them from a pagan dualism such as would regard evil as existing under separate authority, beyond Divine control. In this conviction, they represent everything as directly within the sphere of Divine action - not that God is the author of evil or desires evil for anyone, but that human action out of harmony with the Divine ordering inevitably brings its own judgment; and it is a real judgment of God, because God has so ordered things as to involve this inevitable consequence.

For our consolation, it appears to be indicated that delusions of this kind cannot affect believers (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22). But persistent rejection on the part of those who will not welcome "the love of the truth (2 Thess. 2:10) results in the terrible `working of error" that leads them to "believe the lie" (v.11); the Greek involves just that arresting contrast, more emphatically than appears in our versions - "the lie" as the opposite of "the truth"; not merely "a lie", but "the lie", as thus opposed. May we not link this thought with our Lord's own declaration, "I am ... the Truth," and say that He has his antagonist "the Lie"? ("Life of Faith")

Divine Guidance

A very great mistake which some have made, in view of conflicting ideas as to what is truth, has been to discard every human instrumentality and expect God's guidance through the Bible alone. Such forget that God gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry" for the edifying of the Body of Christ; that we are exhorted to build one another up in the holy faith and to esteem the servants of God for their work's sake. Ever since the Church has had an existence, God has raised up from its midst, as special servants of the body, some who have special teaching ability. Blessed is that servant who at the Master's appearing is found giving the meat in due season to the household of faith (Matt. 24. 46), and no less blessed are they of the faithful household, who, like the "noble Bereans" of old, search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so - who prove all things, as the apostle exhorts, and hold fast that which is good. (selected)

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 7. St. Paul: Conclusion

By F A. Shuttleworth

One portrait remains in the gallery of faith, worthy of our attention before we quietly close the door and pass out into the mad whirl of the last years of the twentieth century. It is that of the man who opened up the West to Christianity, with whose words we began our viewing of so many great ancestors. (Eph. 2:19).

Hitherto the Gentile nations had been considered outsiders, the unclean and the unchosen who might now and again pick up a few crumbs from the rich man's table. Now all that is changed. The four dimensional love of God is revealed to every nation, kindred and tongue. Those who were once far off, strangers and foreigners, are invited to become "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God". The man chosen to carry this invitation was the man Saul of Tarsus, to be known to the Christian world as Paul the Apostle.

As a man of outstanding qualities, of fine intelligence, of superb courage, of unwavering faith and loyalty, he claims kinship with all who went before him. As the bond-slave of Christ he carried on the great tradition of the past, widening the bounds of faith, deepening the depths of love, elevating the spiritual life of man, overthrowing the beggarly gods of this world, and dying, bequeathed to every generation of truth seekers a vision of the whole race of man eventually united in peace under the righteous reign of that One whom God has appointed, Jesus Christ, before whom every knee shall yet bend in glad obedience.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith " (2 Tim. 4:7). These are the last words of a great man, a much hated, a much criticized man. He had spent the greater part of his life preaching an unpopular gospel which was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. The rewards of his office had been partial blindness, shipwrecks, stonings, beatings and imprisonment. At the end of his day, conscious that his work was finished, he had little outward evidence of success. A few books and an old cloak were all his possessions. An old man, he sits a prisoner in Nero's dungeon, awaiting execution. His friends are few, his enemies many. Of all his peril's that of false brethren must have been the hardest to endure. The churches he had founded fell victims to the fear and harshness of persecution, or to the false doctrines of heady high-minded men who got inside the little groups to control them for their own ends. Like his Lord before him, he left the treasure of his teaching in the hands of a faithful few. Looking back over the years he saw himself as a runner who had held aloft the torch of truth under all conditions and over all obstacles, until the time had come to hand it over to a younger man whose fresh energies would preach the word to the same mixed multitudes, with the same mixed results.

There are no complaints about the hardness of the way, the fickleness of human nature, or the ways of his Divine Master. He has learned contentment under all conditions, to give thanks on dark days as well as fair. He has kept the steadfast, unwavering faith through all his checkered road, and now at the last it shines the brightest. Confidence for himself, confidence for all faith-keeping hearts of the victor's crown is his last declaration to those who will continue the fight

and run the race. For fading laurels and earthly trophies men have endured much; for a crown, an inheritance that cannot be lost or withered, the Apostle to the Gentiles had endured all the loss, the sorrow and the afflictions of the way in which his faith had led him, counting it but a light thing compared with the eternal glory of an unending life in the company of Christ and the saintly members of his House.

Against all that would have destroyed him or undermined his faith in Christ, in the resurrection of the dead, in the future of his people and in the love of God, he had fought a good fight. In spite of all the distractions, the persuasions of city life and social position, he had held firmly on his course, the bondsman of Christ, instant in season and out of season, preaching this gospel to all classes of men. Through honor and dishonor, through evil report and good report, he had pressed forward towards his goal, holding aloft, for all to see, the pure name of the knowledge of God and of his Christ.

Now the long race was over, the work was finished, the coveted prize of life, the priceless privilege of knowing Jesus face to face, was at hand. The last words of advice had been written to Timothy, words to infuse courage and patience into a young man's heart, when an old man was no longer there to speak the words of wisdom, or set the undaunted example.

"I am now ready to be offered. " In his lifetime he had often faced death and been delivered, preserved to continue the work for which he had been chosen'. Now the work was finished. He has come to terms with life, with God and man, with the last enemy. Neither preaching nor deeds nor suffering will plead for him at the last hour. Only faith and the scars of faith are his passport to eternity. His epitaph is as bright as his crown is glorious; the testimony and reward of all the people of God. "Firm as his throne his promise stands and he can well secure, What I've committed to his hands till the decisive hour."

It is a far cry now from the days of Christ and the selected band of apostles, further still to the prophets of Israel and to Moses when the faith of earlier men was expressed and compressed into rules of conduct which would keep human life in a sound state. Although centuries have rolled over generations of people, expanding the nations and shrinking the globe they inhabit, the inflexible law is still the standard for those people. It has needed no alteration nor will it ever be lowered to suit man's fancy. When man himself lowers or ignores that standard he does so at his peril. The results are lamentable.

A thoughtful poet once wrote "The mills of God grind slowly". How slowly, history relates in the nineteen centuries which have rolled away since the stone was rolled from the tomb in a rich man's garden and the disciples of Jesus went joyfully forth on their appointed mission to preach the gospel to all nations, to give hope to a dying race of the resurrection of the dead. In their enthusiasm they probably expected an immediate realization of all the blessings which the life and death of Jesus could release to mankind. He had said he would come again and they looked for his coming with the earnest longing of lovers for the beloved. Like their predecessors they died in faith, not having seen that for which they looked. One generation succeeded another, repeating all the old mistakes, blundering on through bigotry, schism, cruelty, intolerance, ignorance and formality, until students of this long history or religion may well wonder what have been its benefits'. The mind shudders at the awful crimes committed in its name. Considering all the hopes and promises of long ago, even the best informed in hard-pressed moments must ask the eternal question, "Why?" In this scientific, space, jet-propelled age, it is

not the bells of heaven but the music of hell which beats about the ears of earth's seething millions, in constant violence, in bomb-blast, gun-fire, roaring roads, screaming skies, industrial clangor and the threatening voices of unrest and discontent. As the specters of world famine, world domination, world bankruptcies and world destruction stretch out grisly hands across the moral chaos whose mounting problems have no solution, the voice of the cynic may be heard in the land, "What price religion now and where are all the promises, since all things continue as they were, only worse, for the other side is winning?".

Failure, disappointment, uncertainty, perplexity and materialism have led in these latter days to a serious decline in the faith. Many prime beliefs for which our forefathers suffered have been abandoned, jettisoned in the interests of science, fallen before the pens and tongues of the higher critics, who, in the name of culture, have reasoned away the word of God. Evolution became the gospel of the industrial revolution and in the end Mammon has taken all but not quite. At the end of the long oppressive, bloodstained centuries, as all the way through them, there are the few, the comparative handful who yet understand the faith once delivered to the saints, who have remained loyal to its highest principles and true to the great vision of the Kingdom of God on earth as the sure and only solution of the many evils which bedevil man's world and destroy his life and peace.

Faith and hope are twin sisters, two of the three graces which form the backbone of all true religion. Without faith it is impossible to accept God or try to please him; without hope it is impossible to visualize a nobler future for mankind. Without vision people perish. The target, the aim, the life of the future is the star of hope which draws life's pilgrims onwards, which buoys them up above the waves of adversity.

To hope for a whole lifetime, to die without the fulfillment of hope, must be the acid test of faith, the demonstration to God and man that it is the genuine quality. The early heroes of faith who walked with God were all men of hope and vision, looking forward with confidence to a time when all wrong things would be righted under the just government of God. They received certain great and precious promises of world wide blessing, of a Kingdom of God on earth which would bring joy to all its peoples, yet one by one this great household of faith, too numerous to recount, died without having seen this new government in action. Abraham was the prince of the faith who had personally received the promise, bound by the oath of God, yet his biographers state that he died without receiving one foot of the land promised to him, or seeing any of the world-wide blessings, which had been to him an incentive, the splendid vision of the future. "He looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God " This faith and hope and vision shared by thousands since the world began has not in their lifetime become a reality. Skeptics have jeered and critics have found fault with the faith, but the faith lives on. These men and women of God have been strangers and pilgrims in the earth, out of tune with its varied aspirations and activities, strongly convinced that it is not God's world, not his kingdom of heavenly peace, of just judgment, of abounding life and light and vitality, but a crooked and perverse system of things which must some day be removed to make way for a finer, more beneficent rule which will never pass away. So they died in faith, having believed in and accepted the promises. They saw the vision afar off, hoped for it, died undaunted while the vision tarried, knowing that God cannot and will not break his word. The living God, the God of all the faithful, is the God of the living. For his family of faith, honored and loved, he has prepared a city, a kingdom, a new day, a new life which will abundantly justify all the faith and

hope that has been placed in it. Its reality will outshine the vision which has delighted the eyes and thoughts of those who have believed and kept the faith.

Death does not have the last word. The faith of saints will taste the victory of God over this last great enemy of man. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? ". These immortal words are faith's reply to all defeat, to all doubt, to all stony indifference. The promises of God concern all that concerns man. They remain unmoved by the turmoil of the centuries, by the theories and agitation of men. The brevity of life, the destruction of death, cannot annul the eternal Word. Every detail will be fulfilled at the appointed time. In the book of remembrance the names of the faithful glow before God. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels". Those who were given the title deeds of the land, the keys of the kingdom, and the promises of everlasting life and dominion, will be there to receive them.

So to those still fighting the good fight of faith in these last days of an old world, which has been allowed to run its full course that evil may plant an imperishable lesson in the heart of man, and the wisdom of God be justified, there comes a clarion call from that great Cloud of Witnesses whose illustrious portraits have looked down upon these latest members of the house of God , - "Be strong and of a good courage, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee". "Hear you not the voices ringing down the ages, Echoing still the message, though their task be done: Voices, born of heroes, monarchs, poets, sages, Yearning still to share the wisdom they have won? " The thronging, deafening, clamorous world with its vain delusions, its mockeries, its glamorous attractions, must beat and call in vain against that faith in the justice and love of God and to those who stand by its insistent Word to bless man's race, to restore a pillaged and polluted earth and fill it with the glory of God.

A place in the house of God with such knowledge and conviction is not only the greatest possible honor and privilege; it is Divine armor-plating and heavenly peace of mind. For this great inheritance we owe an inestimable debt to all who have lived before us who have fought the good fight and kept the faith. Let us, like them, walk worthily before God, holding fast the same faith, that we may in God's good time gain the crown of life. The End

"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." (Rev. 14:4)

Christianity is not acting according to the letter of certain rules and regulations. It is following a living Christ; walking as He walked; doing as He did; imitating his example in all things. This is Christian movement - Christian action. It is keeping the eye fixed upon Jesus, and having the features, traits, and lineaments of his character imprinted on our new nature, and reproduced in our life and ways.

EVENTIDE

"So he bringeth them into their desired haven"

By T.Holmes

How dispiritingly few were the interludes of satisfaction and delight during the Saviour's last year on earth! He was increasingly becoming a "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief". A deepening consciousness that the "end" for which He had come to earth was already looming darkly ahead drove him repeatedly to mountain-top or solitude for prayer. >From the time of his transfiguration this consciousness of approaching death prompted him to make reference to the "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem". The outward circumstances of life changed greatly. The period of successful work in Galilee had drawn to its end, mainly because of his refusal to be made a bread-and-fish-providing king. Jerusalem had not, from the start, opened hand or heart to him, deeming him of too lowly birth, and of too inadequate education to satisfy her needs. But Galilee had drunk deeply of blessing from his hands. And now even Galilee had "hid as it were its face from him", no longer finding beauty in him that it should desire his company Despised and rejected of men, knowing that the door in Galilee was closed, the Man of Sorrows set his face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem, knowing that she who slew the prophets would have no compunction about slaying him. A state of internal strain had gripped him, mind and body alike, revealing itself in those tense words of censure upon Capernaum and the cities by the sea. It also shows itself in the exacting terms put upon discipleship - such terms as "let him take up his cross", - "can ye drink of the Cup that I shall drink".

Arriving in Jerusalem, the web of malice and intrigue began to weave its strands about his Person. First the cold and calculating Pharisees came, asking by what authority He drove the money-changers from his Father's House. Then the Scribes and Chief Priests sought to enmesh him in their tribute-money trap; after them the unbelieving Sadducees, hoping to succeed where others failed, propounded a petty quibble - each and all a token of the icy atmosphere into which He had thrust himself. Everything denoted that the end was drawing near - the snarling pack of hungry wolves were closing in upon their prey! He, the worthy Lamb of God, had presented himself at Jerusalem as a sheep for the impending slaughter!

On one of those closing days, over against the Treasury, Jesus watched the string of well-to-do home and foreign-born visitors place their costly gifts in the great chest, in open view of all who might care to see. Edging her way into that ostentatious file a widow, poorly-clad and meanly-fed, cast in to the spacious coffer her trivial gift - two mites, in value less than one twentieth of the English penny, not even the price of a single sparrow (Matt. 10:29) - but, it was "all her living"! What a grim contrast to behold. One watchful eye observed, - and approved. With a throb of pleasure the near-to-breaking tension was released as the beholder made comparison. More than they all! - two mites more than they all. The austere sternness of the Voice was gone, and for one brief moment in those crucial days pleasure and satisfaction filled his soul. After all, mammon-ridden though the nation might be, there were still those in Israel who would consecrate their all, one little ray of sunshine, cleaving the ever darkening sky; one tiny gush of joy to lighten sorrow's burdening load!

So it is with the humblest brother or sister in the Lord, the least of the thousands in Israel. Not in the eloquence that sways the responsive crowd nor to stir them with ready pen. Not in costly gift of gold nor sparkling gem! Only the two mites, so small in value, so unassuming in appearance, but the watching Eye will see, and assess it at heavenly valuation. The smile of Heaven rests on the little things -the one hair requiring a Father's permit to fall; the one sparrow which the Father deigns to know; the one cup of cold water offered in his Name, and the two mites which constitute one's all!

But what can mites do? Perhaps speak only little word. Only a little word, softly and kindly, Breathed in the ear of the sad and oppressed Oh how it tenderly steals like a melody Over life's billows, and lulls them to rest. Only a little word, softly and kindly Dropped in a heart that is blighted and Oh how its gentle strain tunes every chord again Waking the echoes that sorrow has stilled.

If that one little word be the token of your two mites, then cast it into the treasury of your Lord, and He will accept it as your "all".

DISCIPLESHIP A call to surrender all.

Discipleship! How little has this been in consideration during the great doctrinal disputes which have marred the history of the visible Church! Rather it has been orthodoxy, measured by strictness of adherence to a creed or system of interpretation. But, no matter how correct views might be regarding the teaching of the Bible, simply holding correct views is not being a follower of Jesus, - is not discipleship. The word disciple as used in the New Testament is not an exact synonym for pupil, or student, or scholar. It implies not only an adherence to the teachings of Jesus, but also an attachment to the personal Jesus himself. Being simply students of the Bible in no way implies discipleship; the word carries with it the idea of being disciplined, being trained and developed by instruction and exercise in godliness.

There are many Scriptural illustrations of the relationship existing between Christ and the Church, but this one of discipleship is that by which our lives and conduct are being measured by God, the Father; and, whether we are aware of it or not, by those with whom we come in contact day by day. When Jesus was on earth He could say, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world "; but knowing that He was not to remain here He said to his disciples, "You are the light of the world. . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven " (Matt. 5:14-16; John 9:5). Disciples have no light of themselves; whatever of the light of truth the world may see in them has to be that much of Christ that is reflected.

There is a tendency to put outward activity in place of the inward work of grace, transformation of life and character, sanctification.. In the closing portion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:21-23) Jesus warns against this, saying "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven", for many will come presenting their works, to whom Jesus will say, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity". In astonishment they might ask, Workers of iniquity? what was wrong about preaching in your name? casting out demons? doing wonderful works? They were doing this on their own, having their own program and activities, disregarding the Divine instructions, not being "co-laborers with God". A call to surrender all

In Romans 12:1-2, the Apostle beseeches his readers to present their bodies living sacrifices. He urges them to be transformed, not merely to become informed as to God's will and purposes, not to reform in the sense of becoming moral, but to be transformed by the renewal of their minds in order to demonstrate that God's will is a good will, a perfect will, a most acceptable will. How often the will of God is disassociated from the idea of sacrifice, and sacrifice from the expressed will of God. This is well illustrated in the presumptuous presentation of the burnt offering by King Saul and the prophet Samuel's rebuke "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams " (1. Sam. 15:22).

In the Beatitudes, as arranged in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives a series of qualities that would characterize his followers, and distinguish them. It has been said that the Sermon on the Mount does not fit this world. Jesus never said that it did. It is said by some that these teachings of Jesus are for the Kingdom Age; they are not practical in this Age. But "do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? " (1 Cor. 6:2). The saints could never teach the world the righteous laws of the kingdom if they had never applied these rules to themselves in this life. The teachings of Jesus are for disciples, now; their moral and spiritual excellency is not attractive to fallen human nature.

Consider some of the conditions of discipleship: forbidding even a word of contempt; having no impure desires; loving and praying for those who spitefully use one; rendering good for evil; warning against hypocrisy; warning against being over concerned about daily sustenance; warning against judging, and, at the same time showing the necessity of judging between a true and a false prophet; exhorting to build on a rock. The question arises, "Who is sufficient for these things?". Jesus foresees the difficulty, and prescribes, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you". (Luke 11:9).

Many a professed Christian has taken false comfort in these words, thinking that this is of general application, that here is a blank check which needs only to be filled in and presented for payment. And we, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, are often overtaken in this same fault, as writes James, "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your own lusts " (James 4:3). Self- interest dominates fallen man, and still clings even to disciples.

The first requisite to discipleship is, as expressed by Jesus, to be "poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" - that is, blessed are the self-renounced. And this agrees with the oft reported words of Jesus, "Unless a man deny himself, he cannot be my disciple". Self and self-will must be warred against in order that God's will may have its way. Self-will and God's will cannot peacefully Coexist in the mind of the would-be disciple. Faith is necessary for this, because the natural man can see only the natural; and the naturally unseen must become the most real in order for one to put implicit trust in, and obedience to, the teachings of Jesus, confident that He is what the Scriptures say He is, "the Son of the living God", the exact representation of God to man (Heb. 1:1-3; John 1:1-18; 1 John 1:1-4).

There are three laws which have to do with self. self-preservation; self interest; self-denial. The first of these is good, for "self-preservation is the law of Nature". That is why God has woven the quality of fear in the composition of man's make-up. Fear, of itself, is a good thing; it guards against a discontinuation of existence. This law of self-preservation