

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 96

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Reader Friends, Greetings in the name of Jesus.

We thank those who have corresponded or telephoned during the past month, these messages are much appreciated.

I was able to visit our Sister May Lockett on October 23rd but sorry to say she is still very poorly but she sends her love to the brethren and sisters, we pray for her and all who suffer at this time, we also have news that our Bro. David Phillips has removed to an Elderly Persons Home near to where his daughter lives, we hope he will be happy there.

We see in the various trouble spots around the world evidence of the coming "time of trouble such as never was" prophesied by our Lord so many years ago and in particular the worsening situation in the Persian Gulf which threatens to involve other nations besides Iraq and Iran and now the financial world crisis.

The future seems bleak to those who have no hope and knowledge of God's plan of Salvation, but we are assured that the dark night of tribulation will herald a glorious dawn even the advent of the Kingdom of God on earth for which we daily pray.

In this issue we have a further instalment of "From Eden To Gethsemane", also a reply to a booklet issued by Logos Publications entitled "Christ's death and your Salvation" by our brother Phil Parry and an exhortation by our Bro. Leo Dreifuss called "Ye were strangers" and a selected piece entitled "Patient Waiting".

We pray for the welfare of you all and send sincere Love in the Master's Service.

Harvey and Evelyn Linggood.

continued from October.

From Eden To Gethsemane.

Though tried in all points like as we are, we are struck with wonder and admiration that, by obedience to His Father's will, He defies every allurements, which would, if yielded to, have ended in transgression and death. He utterly suppressed the will of the flesh in obedience to the will of Him who sent Him. The only heir, therefore, of all things is Jesus. This-right comes of His being God's Son, a claim denied of the highest angel. While therefore, we behold Him "serving", we must not forget that He is "Lord of all". Make this One "the possession of sin", and you present a future of blackness, darkness, oblivion; but when by the word of truth we accept Him as "The seed of God", then at once is disclosed to us the root of the Tree of Life. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". Make these the words of. One "as much under the curse as His brethren", and you outrage the Royalty of the Heavens. Truly the life is in the blood; and as truly did God give that life upon the altar to make an atonement for our souls; and as truly did Jesus pour out that soul unto death (Isaiah liii.), a ransom (anti) in place of many (Matthew xx. 28). Has not God "Formally declared" why He made His (Jesus') soul an offering for sin? Shall we analyse John iii. 16? God So loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son. Why? What is His adverbial of reason? "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life". Will the Editor then, point out any other way by which any human soul can be saved? O for The Nazarene Fellowship where alone all of us can be satiated in the embrace of Him whose Banner over us is love. In chapter v. the Editor resumes his refutation of a theory as repulsive to us as it is to him. No argument could therefore betray more lamentable confusion. Instead of refuting a theory which represents God as demanding a debt from man, and another paying man's debt to God, by which man could claim release from God, let the Editor attempt the refutation of our actual faith, instead of this gross inversion of the Divine order. Our conviction is that it is the gracious God who condescends to pay the Bankrupt Sinner's account: that the life blood of His Own Son is the ransom claimed by the Government of Sin for the release of Adam and his family; that an individual recognition of this fact by the symbol of Christ's death, is an indispensable preliminary to our acceptance with God.

Those who spurn this, remain under the Dominion of sin. We are therefore, forced to reject the theory which involves Jesus under the Curse and "Sin's possession", as this would reduce God's scheme of redemption to a fraudulent transaction by swindling the redemption of man by delivering up to sin one who, the Editor dogmatically declares was always Sin's possession. We know the secret of his denial of substitution, and rejection of redemption by a price.

The Editor next puts forth the death of believers as the strongest refutation of Substitution. He says: "If Christ died in our stead, then we ought to be exempt". We refute that proposition by inverting it. If Jesus did not die in the stead of Adam and the prospective human race, not one human soul ought to have lived. Do believers still die the death unto sin? This is the dying echo of the delusion of twenty years ago, viz; "That the believer still dies under Adamic condemnation". The believer died the death unto sin in symbol when baptised into the Sacrificial death of Christ (Romans vi. 4). There is therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ (Rom. viii. 1). God is not the God of the dead. They are not dead, but asleep in Christ. The Editor's argument here is based on the assumption that if Adam had proved faithful, God was under an obligation, there and then, to glorify Adam. We challenge him to prove from Scripture that Adam, even though obedient, would not have slept. We ask the Editor therefore, to distinguish between Natural death and the Death unto Sin.

The late J.J. Andrews was far in advance of the Editor on this score. In his pamphlet, "The Blood of the Covenant" p. 51 he asks: "Is their death necessary?" and he answers: "No; otherwise the last generation of those under the Law of the Spirit of life could not escape the grave. If as taught by the Apostasy, the place of reward had always been ready... the faithful would never enter the grave, and the unfaithful would not die until condemned by the Judge. But inasmuch as the place of reward is not fully prepared... and as the faithful are all to be glorified together... they simply fall asleep in Christ" (I Cor. xv. 18). See also his remarks on Enoch, p. 10. We are not therefore contending that Jesus died to

prevent His people from falling asleep, but that He died “The death unto Sin” to exempt us, that we might live the existence of the human race to-day is the evidence. So Paul judged that, “If One died for all, then all died, that those who live might not live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again”.

But the Editor failing to discriminate between the accursed death unto sin and the Natural death of believers, think natural death should open our eyes to the fact that when we read “For us”, it does not mean “instead of us”, as also implying, “That Jesus would not otherwise have died through the operation of His own mortality”. We have already proved that both Jesus and Paul declare that the life of Jesus was a ransom in place of ours (Matt. xx. 28; I Tim. ii. 6). Not to prevent our falling asleep, but our perishing. But what authority has the Editor for the assumption “That Jesus would otherwise have died through the operation of His own mortality”?

Scripture clearly confounds this idea; not that He possessed either a different kind of flesh or life, as grossly imputed, but that the purpose of God, in Him was mature. Except for the redemption of man, there was no cause that He should die. It was not possible that His Holy One should see corruption (Psalm xvi. 10). He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. His just reward therefore was: “Length of days, that for evermore He should live”. “The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified” (John xii. 24). “But except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone”. Those who involve Jesus under the curse are forced to ignore these Gracious Words. Then we are told that a soldier dying “for” his country, does not die instead of it. This is an anti-climax the most inglorious to which we have yet seen the Sacrifice of Christ reduced. Does a soldier purposely die for his country? Or does his death benefit his country one iota? What a simile!

Let us compare notes. Was not Jesus sent of God purposely to die for man? (Acts ii. 25, iii. 18, iv. 28). On the assumption, therefore that Jesus had not died, what about His country? Shall we trample in the dust the Spirit’s reply? - “Ye know nothing at all nor deem it expedient that one man should die for the people”. Why? “That the whole nation perish not” (John xi. 50). But the Editor says: “Substitution is clearly forbidden by the specific teaching of the Apostles”. We are eager to see that “Specific teaching”. Where is it? The Editor says: “Peter, who tells us that Christ suffered for us, making clear that in doing so He left us an example that we should follow in His steps”. If this were “The avenue of his own deliverance” (which the editor must first prove), then we grant that Substitution falls to the ground; but one little question will clear matters. Are the unredeemed permitted to follow in His steps? Now you see the confusion. Redemption is therefore imperative before we can take the first step. Shall we therefore ignore this prerequisite counsel of God by skipping redemption, and rushing into the Holy of Holies without even wiping our boots. At this point, even Mr. Grant leaves the Editor far behind. He says: “Every follower of Christ has his part to do; but he must first be put into a right relation before God”. Let us, therefore, prosecute the Divine philosophy of this redemption, this “Right Relation”. Let us see whether God has not bought us to Himself on His own Divine principle of Substitution? What does this very Peter declare?

To be continued...

Christ’s Death And Your Salvation

A reply to the Christadelphian booklet by LOGOS Publications.

Editor: H.P.Mansfield.

This subject is purported to be based on Bible Truth and said by the Editor to be -

“An absorbing and all important theme and that a correct understanding of the Atonement is vital to Salvation. Further information upon any aspect of this subject will be willingly supplied on application to the Editorial address above”.

I very much doubt that any knowledgeable student of the Bible would want any further information from such a source after reading such blasphemous and irresponsible statements regarding the sacrifice of Jesus. What is stated page 65 in regard to most people - "They do not have a concrete understanding of the Atonement, nor a true appreciation of salvation and are therefore indifferent to both", - is also true of Christadelphians by their own policies of indifference and prejudice in refusing freedom of thought and discussion on the Basis of Holy Scripture only, not only among themselves but refusal to print in their magazine the points of view of others who claim to understand the Atonement more correctly than themselves.

The attitude of Nicodemus stated on page 66 - "Secret visits for fear of the religious leaders" - has been forced on the Editor's members because the B.A.S.F. fails to explain the 'Atonement' or to unify in a satisfactory way. The indiscriminate use of the scriptures on the part of Christadelphians and especially the Editor of this booklet, has not improved matters. You disprove of the use of 'substitution' for the death of Christ in relation to Adam's sin but you are not afraid to use the word unlawfully and indiscriminately when describing 'Sin' as 'human nature' and vice-versa. This whole book is based on these unscriptural theories and failure to consider the context when reading. You fail to observe that Law was operative upon a man already created corruptible as all other animal creation, and therefore subject to its physical duration if left without any divine modification, your belief therefore in Natural death as the penalty is unfounded; "Thou shall surely die", being (inflicted) on account of sin. To those 'in Christ' who have died unto sin (Bondmaster) symbolically into his death, (Adam's due penalty), natural death is but a mere sleep until their resurrection or 'standing-again' in life incorruptible, purchased for them before their decease.

This lesson is taught in the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness that all who were about to "surely die" by their sin, might in faith look unto it and be saved from inflicted death; natural death being their experience later despite their faith. Jesus likened Himself to this lifting up, for an exhibition of faith in the power of His Atoning blood to save from the death that came by Adam's Sin and hanging as a deferred sentence over all, but not as guilt until enlightened to it.

By the grace of God the serpent was lifted up and so was Christ irrespective of whether people would look unto the Atoning power in faith, - "in due time Christ died for the ungodly" - "he tasted death for every man", what death did He taste? It was inflicted - the death for Sin which Adam incurred - not natural death as generally believed, otherwise Jesus should have died naturally, being without sin. In the typical sacrifices under the Law, God would not accept that which died of itself - shedding of blood was required - "and I have given you the blood wherein is the life, upon the altar to make an Atonement for your souls". Thus the Atoning blood of Jesus was the Ransom Price God offered for our Redemption - the equivalent of the life Adam forfeited to sin by disobedience, and this was foreshadowed from Eden to the Cross of Calvary ending in Christ the antitype. In Baptism our dying with Christ is not symbolic of Natural death - but inflicted death by blood shedding. The natural death theory must accept that the penalty was in operation before Adam sinned - this would be an injustice in Adam's case and ours, and would violate the words of the Apostle that "God is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus". It is on this false premise of natural death being the penalty for sin that the Christadelphian view of the "Atonement" becomes a meaningless jumble of phrases and contradictions exhibiting the Son of God in an alienated position from his birth and needing to be ransomed from the bondage of sin which they describe as "human nature". Thus God is reputed to have offered as a ransom price a body of "Sinful flesh" which in the correct understanding of the Greek "Sin's Flesh" (or owner ship) already belonged to "sin". It is evident from the reading of this booklet that the author cannot discriminate between the legal terms and the physical terms employed in the scriptures much less the Federal Principle employed by Paul in Romans chapter 5. It is also grossly untrue to state that in Scripture, both the serpent and brass, are used as symbols of sinful-flesh, because the phrase "Sinful-flesh" was not used by Paul, he used the correct Greek rendering of the possessive case "Sin's Flesh" which would make sense and a clearer understanding of Romans ch. 8 v. 3, otherwise the word "Likeness" need not have been used but Paul found its use indispensable realising that Adam sold himself and his posterity into "Sin's Bondage" or "Constitution" so that they became flesh belonging to "Sin" or "Sin's Flesh". The author and readers of this booklet should realise that "Sinful" does not qualify the physical flesh but the character. Jesus was

neither “Sin’s Flesh” nor sinful in character. He was God’s Son, God’s Possession, though in the Likeness of the flesh of Adam he belonged to God so that it can be honestly said, unlike the person who quotes on the cover John 3:16, “God so loved the world that He gave etc.” How could God give what according to Christadelphians was sold to Sin and needed Redemption? It would be wise here to quote Dr. Thomas’s explanation of Redemption seeing that the author has a divine viewpoint from the very pioneer of his sect, “Redemption is release for a ransom, all who become God’s servants are released from a former Lord by purchase, the purchaser is God and the Ransom Paid is the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot and blemish.” Some have asked “to whom was the ransom paid? The answer is simple enough, ‘It was paid to the Bondmaster personified as ‘Sin’ whom all except Christ had been sold under, or as Paul rendered it in his unconverted state, ‘I am carnal, sold under Sin’”. We learn then from Paul and Dr. Thomas that Redemption means Ransom or Purchase from slavery - not as stated, a change of nature from so-called ‘Sinful Flesh’ which is a myth of the Apostasy. It is untrue to say as on page 69 “All mankind, without exception, are under sentence of death because of inherited mortality. Through weakness of the flesh, all sin, and the sentence is justified”. Paul does not say or teach this in Romans 5. This is another example of wresting scripture out of context and charging God as unjust. Nowhere in scripture can it be proved that natural mortality is the sentence for sin, or that the sentence is justified through weakness of the flesh. The sentence ‘Surely Die’ for Adam’s Sin was through weakness of character not flesh, and the same is applicable to us. Our flesh is no different from Adam’s at creation though the author states that Adam by some miraculous power changed his and that of his posterity to a lower grade whereby abstract disobedience under law became a physical element in the flesh which prevented mankind from being obedient, thus demanding that God introduce a puppet on a string in the person of His Son to do what man could not do, then suffer a just penalty for having human nature, as a condition of obedience - or in the words of the B.A.S.F. “By dying abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him.” How can the suffering of a penalty due, abrogate the law which enforces it? This is the absurd nonsense Christadelphians have inherited from 1873 and until they accept the fact that human nature is not sin, but capable of sin even as it is of obedience, they will go on peddling the sinful-flesh delusion of the Apostate Church of Rome. It is the author of this booklet who believes in a Christ of different nature from other men as shown and stated on page 69, but his explanation of what Jesus did and his references to flesh are completely contradictory of scripture. H. P. Mansfield is well known for his wresting of scripture and blasphemous implications under the guise of sincerity. “The doctrine of the Atonement reveals God as just and merciful” page 71. Certainly. But the Christadelphian doctrine of the Atonement makes God a monster of injustice.

At the top of page 71, the question “Was God just in so punishing Adam that the effect of the punishment rested upon his posterity? Certainly - but God also is shown to be just in that He made provision for Adam’s posterity to escape from it”, (i.e.; Natural death). This again is a wresting of the scriptures out of context. Adam did not escape from natural death neither do his posterity apart from Enoch (as far as we know of his case) and those who died under Moses for their personal sins, others by accident or Martyrdom.

Death is death in whatever form it takes and there is no escape from experience. I refer to physical death of course. But from Legal Death as a deferred sentence hanging over mankind (Romans ch. 5 and ch. 8 verses 2 and 3 there is escape from its reality (the Second Death) by symbolic death of Baptism into that of Christ. If as H.P.Mansfield says, “God realises that flesh is weak and prone to sin, and that unless one is Divinely strengthened, he must inevitably succumb to it”, what is the significance of the Virgin Birth in producing Jesus, could not any Jew have been strengthened in the way he says we can? What about Nathaniel for example? “Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile”. How does Mansfield make scriptural sense when he explains 2 Cor. 5:21. “God made Jesus to be sin for us (at birth)”, when in fact he has already stated that it was Adam who did this through some miraculous change of nature to “sinful flesh” transmitted to his posterity? To the sensible and logical Bible Student free of the Apostate Thomas and Roberts indoctrination, this would correctly read, “God hath made him to be a sin-offering for us at 33½ years of age, even him who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”.

On page 75 where this is quoted, there is a mixing and confusing of the Federal principal employed by Paul in Rom. 5; and this has become the stumbling block of disunity in the Christadelphian

community, and as long as the indoctrination of their literature continues unchallenged the blind will continue to lead the blind and consequently both will fall into the ditch.

If you believe that it was just and right for Jesus to die for himself and his own Redemption, then he could not be a 'Sacrifice' for your Salvation. Do you think for one moment that in renouncing the name Christadelphian you are renouncing Fellowship with God and His Son.

The precepts of men have caused it to lose its meaning.

P. Parry of The Nazarene Fellowship

Ye Were Strangers.

**When Jesus was crucified Pilate put this inscription on his cross: -
"Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews"**

How was it that Pilate, not a Jew, knew this? Well in a sense he learned it the hard way. He first wondered why a man accused of a serious crime replied absolutely nothing to his accuser. And when he said to Jesus "knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee" back came the answer thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above". Furthermore he learned from the chief priests and officers of his claim to be the Son of God. This together with a dream by his wife really put fear into Pilate. But that was not all. There was the pressure from the chief priest who said "if thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend". This really put Pilate, into a quandary. There is more to it than meets the eye. For Pilate held appointments as governor before he was put in charge of Judea. For some reason or another he had incurred the displeasure of his boss in Rome, and he knew that if he blundered over this business, it might cost him his job, or even his life in those days. Pilate knew in his limited way that Jesus was the Son of God. In a limited way he very likely had some belief in God. So what was he to do? Perhaps the situation Pilate found himself in was vaguely similar to that of Rahab when she hid Joshua's messengers. Rahab knew that God would give the land of Canaan to the Israelites. She had some amount of faith. But when it came to the point when they were looking for the spies she panicked and told a lie. It must be remembered of course that at that time Rahab was not subject to the law of Moses - that came later - she had some knowledge of God, partly instilled by fear, but her faith was not sufficient when it came to the crunch, to trust that God with His infinite power is able to deliver his faithful servants instantaneously.

Pilate knew that Jesus was the Son of God, but his faith was not sufficient to put his trust in Him, so at the decisive moment being afraid of the wrath of his Roman boss he gave way and crucified him. And what about our faith? Is ours sufficient to trust in God to the end? Now what I want to impress on you is here we have two strangers, Rahab and Pilate, acknowledging the power of God, though in a limited way. The word of God has many examples of strangers believing and acknowledging God. There is the case of the Syrian leper who came to the prophet Elisha. There was the Samaritan leper having been healed, the only one out of ten who returned to thank the Lord for his having been healed. Or the Sidonian widow who lodged Elijah during the famine under king Ahab.

With all these examples, and many more it behoves us not to look down on strangers. We live among them, we trade with them, we make use of their professional services in all trades. The saying that "no man is an island" is very true for us as well as anybody else. And are not many of us blessed with really good neighbours who though not of our faith are always ready to help and put some of us to shame. It reminds me of the parable of the good Samaritan. And are we always ready to help them? Moses told the children of Israel many times "for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt", something they were never to forget. No room for high mindedness. Unfortunately the children of Israel in their later prosperity did forget. To this day, I am sorry to have to say that of my own kinsmen in the flesh, when there is anything they don't like about somebody not a Jew, they disdain him. There is a Hebrew word

“Goy” meaning “Gentile”, “Heathen”, etc. They say in a belittling way “Oh, he is a Goy”, meaning “take no notice”, if it was one of us, such and such would not have happened.

But the admonition “Ye were strangers” has an important application for us. We too, (Eph. ii. 12) were once “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world”. There is truly no place for boasting or high mindedness. Come to think of it, for most of us it was through a near miracle that our call to the truth came. Perhaps a chance remark that made us think. Or we learned it from our parents, or some literature that fell into our hands.

Let us be very careful not to be contemptuous towards people not of the faith. There are some people among them doing good and putting us to shame. Rather let us count our blessings in that we have learned the truth, and endeavour to help our friends to find it when an opportunity arises. Remember, we were strangers, we were of them “of the world”, let us never forget that. We have of course also good reason to rejoice.

Rejoice in the privilege of being born in these last days of this age and understanding the signs of the times. Rejoice in the hope of the resurrection and being in the first resurrection if we hold fast and are found worthy.

It is a matter of finding the right balance between counting our blessings on the one hand, but acknowledging on the other hand, that it is not on account of our merit that the calling out has come to us. We, like anybody else, were born bondservants to “Master Sin”, unable to redeem ourselves. That quite apart from our own sins. Come to think of it. God’s mercy to us is vast. Not only did God design the scheme by which Christ paid the penalty and so brought us back, but all our past sins are forgiven by the one act in baptism. Let us close with another two verses from Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians chapter ii verses 8 and 9 “ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast”.

In conclusion let me say: Rejoice in our blessings by all means. Yes. But high-mindedness to people not blessed with the knowledge of the truth, decidedly No.

Brother G.L. Dreifuss.

OMNIPRESENCE

Lord of all being, throned afar,
Thy glory flames from sun and star;
Center and soul of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near!

Sun of our life, Thy quickening ray
Sheds on our path the glow of day;
Star of our hope. Thy softened light
Cheers the long watches of the night.

Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch Thy mercy’s sign;
All, save the clouds of sin, are Thine !

Lord of all life, below, above,
Whose light is truth, whose warmth is love,
Before Thy ever-blazing throne
We ask no lustre of our own.

Grant us Thy Truth to make us free,
And kindling hearts that burn for Thee,
Till all Thy living altars claim
One holy light, one heavenly flame.

Patient Waiting.

II Thess. iii. 5.

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

We are apt to find waiting easy when things go well with us, but more difficult in time of stress and uncertainty, when like Job, we look to the right and cannot see Him, and to the left and He is not there. (Job xxiii. 9). Stricken by a loathsome disease, treated like a leper by friends and family, he clung firmly to his faith in a just God, and believed that after death he would come forth bodily from the grave.

We have many examples in scripture of those who patiently waited. One of the earliest was Noah. He was warned by God to build an ark for the saving of his household. He did so, and when the flood came God shut them in. The flood lasted 150 days until the mountains were covered and all flesh had perished. When the days were over Noah opened the window at the top of the ark and sent out a raven; then a dove, who, at the third sending, brought back a leaf showing that the waters were abating.

By this time Noah and his family must have been longing to leave their restricted quarters and to walk on the earth again, but Noah waited patiently for a word of instruction from God. If he had not done so, and had stepped out on his own, he might have sunk into the unhardened clay and topsoil, but he patiently waited until God unlocked the door, and all was well.

We have also the example of Jacob, who, in spite of all his afflictions, never for a moment lost faith in the goodness and mercy of God. In his latter days the loss of his favourite son was a bitter blow to him and he sorrowed for about fourteen years thinking his son was dead. But Joseph, also a great example of patient endurance, was very much alive, and now a ruler of the people who had bought him as a slave. No wonder Jacob was stunned by this news and could not at first believe it. How marvellous is the God of Israel who can in an instant turn our despairing sorrow into such joy! Blessed indeed are all they that wait for Him.

In the book of Esther we have another record of patient waiting under severe trial. Not a record of Esther alone, but of all her kindred, who at that time were held captive in Babylon. Her relation and guardian Mordecai, a most upright and God fearing man had incurred the hatred of the King's favourite (Haman), who by trickery had induced the King to sign a decree ordering the death of all Jews in the provinces of Babylon. For one year Esther, Mordecai and the rest of the Jews had this terrible threat hanging over them, with it seemed, no possible hope of deliverance - for the King was powerless against it and the decree was irrevocable.

As the time passed and the day of destruction drew nearer the strain must have been very great. The situation certainly seemed hopeless. But there was one thing that we should never forget, and that is that nothing is too hard for God. Jesus said that if we have but a grain of faith our mountains of trouble will be removed, and so it happened with the Jews in ancient Babylon. The very day on which they were to be slaughtered was turned for them into a day of feasting and gladness, and for their enemies into a day of destruction.

Jonah also, that strange mixture of faith, charity, and tearfulness, was caught up in some alarming situations. He spent three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish saved by a miracle from the stormy seas. He prayed for help: “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came in unto Thee”. (Jonah ii. 7 and 9). Those three days must have been fraught with anxiety: there was no escape humanly speaking, from such a prison (Jesus likens it to his three days and three nights in the prison house of death) but Jonah waited patiently for God to release him, and this came about quite naturally - for, after God commanded it the great fish vomited Jonah up. “The Lord is good to those who wait for Him to the soul that seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord”. Lam. iii. 25.

The records of Ezra and Nehemiah contain an account of the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem - a task which was achieved under the most difficult of circumstances. Given permission from Cyrus the

Medo-Persian king, who in turn received the orders from God Himself, these two men set out on a long and hazardous journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, but on arrival they found that trouble and evil awaited them.

Attracted by the good rule of Gedaliah, who was left in charge by Cyrus, many Jews returned to the Holy Land from the different countries. Besides this there were a few of the poorer Jews who had remained in the country, not having been taken away captive, and there were also many foreigners who had made the ruins of the Jewish land their homes, these foreigners conspired to hinder the Jews from building it again to its former state. So much so that the builders were forced to build with one hand and hold a weapon in the other. "Nevertheless" says Nehemiah "We made our prayer unto our God and set a watch against them day and night" Jeremiah iv. 9. So the land was cleansed and the Temple built the patient faith of Ezra and Nehemiah justified, a faith which, at the start of their journey had prompted them to declare, "The hand of our God is upon all that seek good".

We are all frail imperfect human creatures. Like very young children we want everything here and now, and the hardest lesson we have to learn is to wait patiently for our good to come. There were many who failed this test in old times, as indeed there are now. The Israelites in the wilderness were fed on 'angel's food' by their Father in Heaven. The Bible calls it the "corn of Heaven" (Psalm 78:24) and we are told it was like fresh oil, a fact which should have reminded them that they had been specially called to be called God's anointed ones, a holy priesthood. It was their sole food for a long time and supplied all their needs, but they grew tired of it and grumbling asked "Can God prepare a table in this wilderness"? They were even prepared to go back to slavery in Egypt to obtain what they regarded as the good things of this life.

Their words remind us of the twenty third Psalm, where David says "Thou hast prepared a table before me in the presence of mine enemies", also we are reminded of Jesus whose "meat it was to do the will of God". He only is the true Bread of Life, the table our God has prepared for us in the wilderness of this world. This is speaking spiritually, of course. The Israelites in the wilderness were, on the other hand thinking of the temporal side of it when they murmured and complained. Taking our eyes off eternal things and putting them on to carnal, temporal things, often has this effect. Even Moses, that great leader, who had intervened so often between his people and the Lord and saved their lives, and with long patience had brought them in sight of the promised land - even he lost his patience on one occasion.

The people were suffering from thirst, which must have been a terrible torture in a parched desert under the hot sun, but instead of falling on their knees and seeking help from God they upbraided Moses and Aaron, saying, "Why have ye brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here"? Moses and Aaron sought the counsel of the Lord, and Moses was told to speak to a certain rock and that it would give forth water. One impatience leads to another, and impatience it seems led to disobedience, for Moses in his anger and exasperation with the people instead struck the rock.

He spoke to it certainly, but not in the words God had given him. According to the Psalmist "He spoke inadvisedly with his lips", and because of this neither he nor Aaron were allowed to enter the promised land. We should glean the lesson here, I think, that God expects us to be patient not only with Him, but also with one another.

Let us now take a look at Isaac's and Rebecca's household. The parents were divided over their two sons, the mother favouring Jacob and the father Esau. The birthright had been settled by God before the children were born, "The elder shall serve the younger". But Rebecca, who appears to have been a strong minded woman, wanting to make sure that Jacob was given the birthright, instead of waiting for God's promise to be fulfilled tricked Isaac into doing what he was bound to do in any case. Her action resulted in Jacob leaving his home for fear of his brother, with no chance of returning for many years. We hear nothing more of Rebecca after this. In all probability she never saw her son again. Both sons came to bury Isaac (Gen. xxxv. 29) but no mention is made of Rebecca.

Jesus in his parable of the prodigal son (Luke xv. 12), pictures for us the greatest example of patient love, the love of God our Father towards His wayward children. In this illustration, the son leaves home,

taking a premature share of his inheritance, and squanders it for his own pleasure. We can imagine how the father waited and waited for news of him which never came. With all his money gone, and reduced to eating swine's food, the son's thoughts turned to home again where there was plenty of food. So he returned and one would think a very cold welcome was all he deserved. But his father, always on the watch, seeing him afar, ran to him, fell on his neck and kissed him, "for", he said " my son was dead and is alive again, was lost, and is found "

Jesus in His parable of the sower, likens the seed which fell on good ground to those who heard His word and brought forth fruit with patience.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh". Jas. v. 7,8.

Selected,

WORK LOYALLY.

Just where you stand in the conflict, there is your place!
Just where you think you are useless, hide not your face'.
God placed you there for a purpose, whate'er it be;
Think, He has chosen you for a purpose, work loyally.
Gird on your armour; be faithful at toil or rest,
Whiche'er it be, never doubting God's way is best.
Out in the night or in the day, stand firm and true;
This is the work which your Master gives you to do.