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Editorial

Fellowship in Difficult Times

“But this know, that in the last days difficult times shall be there;” (2Ti 3:1, JND Translation)

Christians living in Western lands have been largely spared the open, violent persecution that some of our beloved brethren living in other countries daily experience. While we ought to thank God for these mercies and earnestly pray for our brethren, let’s remember that more difficult days are yet ahead for this poor world. Should our Lord leave His beloved assembly here a bit longer, these privileged lands will increasingly feel the effects of Godlessness that is rushing *in like a flood*.

One’s boyhood was spent during the 1950’s in a small, quiet mid-central American town. During the nine years we lived there, I cannot remember one violent crime occurring. People, including children, freely walked about the streets in those quiet days and nights without fear. Most everyone knew everyone else, and there was at least some outward reverence of God, respect for the Bible, and a clear public disapproval of immoral life-styles. The closing of almost all merchants’ stores on the Lord’s Day also gave evidence of some public respect of God.

The past 40 years however, have witnessed rapid deterioration in the social fabric of so called Christian lands. Behavior which would have been rejected in earlier generations as corrupt and unacceptable, is now considered perfectly normal and legitimate life styles. Truly we do live in “difficult days”—times

which God's Word tells us will yet become darker for "*evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.*" (2Tim. 3:1)

Viewing this sad ruin should cause us to realize afresh the vital necessity of walking in daily communion with our God. It is only as abiding in communion with the Lord that *peace* of heart and *understanding of the times* will be found.

Comfort in the heat of the day

The life of Abraham is a bright example of living by faith in trying times. Though his pilgrimage was not free of conflict and trial, he who is called the "friend of God" (Jam. 2:23), walked to His glory, wonderfully sustained and blessed. It need be no different for believers today. Our blessed God is the same, His love unfailing, and His promise to never leave or forsake His redeemed unchanged.

In Gen. 18:1 we find dear Abraham in the wilderness occupying the proper position of a pilgrim—seated in his tent door. It was during the *heat of the day*, the time when pressures and trials are most severe, that we read "*the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre.*"

Fellowship with God—sweet and rich

It is encouraging to see that Mamre (fatness) where Abraham's tent was spread, was in Hebron (communion—Gen 13:18). The path of faith appears to unbelief as a dry and barren wilderness (even as the world ought to appear to faith), but how rich and sweet is that place of fellowship which each

may enjoy with his God!

Thus it is that at this most trying time—*the beat of the day*—Abraham lifts up his eyes from that wilderness scene to see the Lord *standing by him*. Faith immediately discerns the Divine Visitor, and Abraham desires that He might accept the hospitality of his home, finding His rest *under the tree*.

Calvary is the foundation of all communion with our God. He has found eternal rest and satisfaction in the work of His beloved Son on the cross, and thus there is now ground upon which we may have fellowship *with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. (1 Joh 1:3)

Fellowship enjoyed—faith tested

What joy Abraham had in serving the Lord—not only in *servng*, but *standing by Him under the tree*. *This* delightful fellowship enabled Abraham to walk the path of faith when great difficulties and testings confronted him. Let us consider three specific instances of *difficulties* that Abraham faced *after* he had enjoyed communion with the Lord. In each case his faith, supported by that sweet fellowship, rises above the trial and difficulty.

Looking beyond difficulty

“And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.” (Gen. 19:27, 28)

It must have been a sorrow to Abraham's heart to see that which he had interceded with the Lord about previously, come under such solemn judgement. Had his prayers failed? Oh no! The sense of fellowship with God that he had enjoyed kept him from being discouraged in this *difficult day*. And the Lord did answer his intercessory prayer in a wonderful way. In the very next verse we read "*And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow...*".

The sin of those cities was so abominable that God must destroy them. Yet mindful of Abraham's prayer, He spared Lot from the awful judgement. What a comforting thought this is to those who cry to God in prayer in dark days of trial and testing. Is it not often so that *we know not what we should pray for as we ought*: and yet we have the sweet assurance that *thei Spirit itself maketh intercession for us*. Fellowship with Himself gives wonderful assurance that He hears and answers according to Divine love and wisdom, and always far above all that *we could ask or think*.

Overcoming failure

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba." (Gen. 21:14)

What a *difficult day* this was when Abraham had

to send his son Ishmael, and Hagar, away! That *father's heart* —earlier beseeching the Lord, “*O that Ishmael might live before thee!*” (Gen 17:18)—must have grieved at what his failure had wrought. Dear Abraham, who had provided a meal acceptable to the Lord, found that he did not have resources to provide what would sustain Ishmael and Hagar in the barren wilderness. But sustained by communion with the Lord, he does not hesitate to rise *early in the morning* and obey the Lord's command.

Before long Abraham's supply of bread and water gave out, then Hagar's faith and strength gave out, leaving poor Ishmael abandoned to die. But the *example of faith* that Abraham had given Ishmael did not give out.

The Divine word of comfort came to Hagar!—“fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the *lad* where he is.” (Gen 21:17) Ishmael, when alone and all seemed hopeless, did as he had seen his dear father do—he exercised faith and prayed to the Lord who delivered him. (Gen. 21:19, 20)

Giving up all to God

“*And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.*” (Gen 22:3)

The most difficult trial in the path of faith now faces the man of faith as he walked in communion with God. Every hope and promise that Jehovah had

made to Abraham centered in his beloved Isaac. But now, all those promises of future blessing and glory must be laid on the altar, wholly given up to God. Does Abraham—who enjoyed such sweet Divine fellowship—hesitate or falter at the moment of this supreme test? The words *Abraham rose up early in the morning* give eloquent answer. Even the most severe test a father's heart could experience, was not able to turn aside from obedience one who enjoyed the peace of communion with God.

Abraham's faith shown brightly when he uttered these words to the young men, as he and Isaac were about to go to the mountain: "*Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*" (Ge 22:5)

May our God grant that each would earnestly seek to be found walking in communion with Himself. Until that blessed moment when *the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout*, let us walk as pilgrims and strangers, our dwelling a *tent*, its place the *wilderness*, separated from spiritual and moral corruption. When this is so, we too can *lift up our eyes* to behold the Divine guest who always stands by His loved own. *Ed.*

As Christians we are continually confronted with choices. Will we accept the puny, flimsy and uncertain authority of man—or the solid, certain and clear Word of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Gems for the Path of Faith

Meditations of a father

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”
(Gal 2:20)

To experience our new life in Christ will not be pleasant for the flesh—in fact it can be excruciating. Still it is the way to experience the reality and blessedness of that life. *Not I, but Christ* is a tremendous motto for every situation of life. He is our life (Col.3), and so this is just giving room for that life to be experienced in a world that had no room for Him. *“The faith of the Son of God”* simply means the faith whose object is the Son of God. How wonderful to forget self and get that blessed Man before our souls in all His perfection and glory—to say, because it is the truth, “this is my life.”

“What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.” “In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.” (Psa 56:3, 4)

There is a *first class* and a *second class* train to heaven. In the first verse (second class), fear is there first and then trust in the Lord. We must confess that this is often our experience. In the second case (first class) God is put first and there is no room for fear. How important to daily set the Lord always before us in a real and living way—leaving not much room for the fear.

“Looking upon Jesus as He walked”

Did you ever consider the occasions on which the Lord is seen at different tables? We see Him at the Pharisee's, at Levi's, at Zaccheus's, with the two disciples going to Emmaus, and at the table at Bethany—occupying each table in a differently.

With the two Pharisees (Luke 7 & 14) He goes to be a *teacher—rebuker*. He does so because that was the character in which He was invited to them.

Then we see him at the house of Levi who had been called and had left all and followed Him. So full with the mind of the One he had invited was Levi that he puts publicans and sinners at the table with Him! The Lord sits there, not as a *teacher* but as a *Saviour*. He says to those who complain, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Next we see Zaccheus who had been moved by a desire to see Him. He calls him by name and went into his house as One *desired*. Jesus says to him as it were, “You have looked for a passing sight at Me, and I will abide all day with you.”

Then we come to the disciples journeying to Emmaus. Here we get two—I will not call them backsliders—who had got under the power of unbelief. “O fools, and slow of heart,” He calls them. But He does not leave them till He leaves them with kindled hearts. “Abide with us” AKJKI is the expression of a kindled heart.

Last we see Him at Bethany, not here as a teacher or a Saviour, but as a *familiar friend*, one who adopts completely the sweet and gracious truth of

the Christian home. Yet He would have left the family scene as He found it, if Martha had not stepped out of her place. She might have been a housekeeper still, but the moment she leaves her place and becomes a teacher, He will rebuke her.

We return to the Pharisees' house (Luke 7:36). Here we find the most complete expression in the gospels of a consciously accepted sinner. She came, knowing that her sins were forgiven, and bringing everything she had with her—her heart, her person, and her wealth. This is a beautiful witness of what we would be if the sense of salvation were simple with us.

The Lord entered into Simon's reasonings, but they were lost on the woman. One loves the soul that is resting peacefully in the conclusion, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." If the reasonings of a doubtful mind are lost on you, happy are you! So happily have thousands reached this blessed conclusion, that they cannot understand the reasonings of others. She is occupied with her joy.

adpated, Notes on the Gospel of Luke, J. G. Bellet

Man's calendar has only a few days in a year marked as *holidays*. But *every day* of the Christian's calendar is marked by the hand of God as a day of rejoicing.

The patience of God in judgement is one of the most marvelous of his ways. Let us be imitators of Him in this. *Spiritual Gems for the Path of Faith*

Spirit, Soul, and Body

“I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess 5:23)

Man is a tripartite being (three parts), spirit, soul and body. This is revealed to us in God’s Word, the Bible. When God created animals, birds, fishes and creeping things, He said, on the fifth day of creation, “Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.” (Gen 1:20) Then on the sixth day, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind.” (Gen 1:24)

When it came to the creation of man we read in Gen 1:26, “Let us make man in Our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing.” We then read in Gen 2:7, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

We can say then that all the lower creation have a body and a life given of God, but with mankind there was special act of God when He breathed into man’s nostrils the breath (or “spirit”) of life, placing him in a relationship with his Creator, (“for we are His offspring.” Acts 17:25), and giving a command from Him as to man’s position and responsibility. This is

what distinguishes mankind from the lower creation. In a word, we may say, the lower creation has a body and a life given of God, but mankind has spirit, soul and body. The *spirit* is the intelligent God-conscious part of his being, the *soul* is the seat of his appetites and desires, and the *body* is physical. Mankind is placed in headship over the creation, and is responsible to his Creator. An animal is guided by God-given instincts, while man was to be guided by instructions from his Creator. This is why we speak of man as a tripartite being, and responsible to his Creator as such.

When an animal, bird, fish, or insect dies, that is the end of its existence. It is not responsible to God for its conduct, it dies and that is the end. But the Bible makes it very clear that man must answer to God. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom 14:12) Death is not the end for man or woman. They must meet God as living souls, either as their Saviour or as their Judge. If one has received Christ as Saviour, he or she is forgiven and justified before God through the finished work of Christ on the cross. If not, it is a solemn thing to die in one's sins and meet God as a Judge. Every human being has a soul that will live on forever, either in eternal joy or in eternal punishment, as we read in Matt 25:46, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

If the one who reads these lines is a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, then you have the privilege of living to please Him, your Saviour and Lord. The Bible says "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought

with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Cor 6:20)

The apostle’s prayer, as quoted at the beginning of this paper, was his desire for those who were children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and he desired that every part of their being, spirit, soul, and body, would be devoted to the Lord, and that they would live to please Him.

I would like to say a little about the order given here, “spirit, soul, and body” and that all our decisions in life should be made in that order. Too often, even as believers, we put our *bodies* first, and go places and use our bodies as we wish, without considering whether our decision is pleasing to the Lord. Would it not be better, and pleasing to the lord, to as first, *Is this the Lord’s will that i make this plan to do this or that?* It is putting our *spirit* first, when we intelligently seek the Lord’s mind in accordance with His Word, saying as Paul did when he was saved, “What shall I do , Lord?” (Acts 22:10)

Next comes the *soul*, the appetites and desires. Having prayed and sought the Lord’s will for our path, our *souls* are thankful, peaceful and happy in choosing what is pleasing to Him. “Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk: for I lift up my soul unto Thee.” (Psa 143:8)

Then comes the *body*. When we have sought the Lord’s mind and will in light of His Word (a *reasonable* or intelligent service, Rom 12:1) and our *souls* are wiling and happy in the path of obedience, pleasing the Lord, we present our *bodies* a living sacrifice to do His will.

This was the prayer of the apostle in 1 Thess 5:23 for the Thessalonian believers, and though we are living over 1900 years later, it should be the desire of every believer, even today, in all our decisions in life. In choosing our friends, the kind of employment we take up for our livelihood, the company of Christians with whom we gather in Christian fellowship, the life partner we choose as wife or husband, indeed in everything in life, may we say, first of all, is this *the Lord's will* for me and in accordance with His Word (the spirit)? I will enjoy that because it is pleasing to Him (the soul) and that is the path my body takes because I want to glorify Him in my body. (1 Cor 6:20) "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. (Prov 3:6)

In closing I would like to quote again the verse with which we began, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Thess 5:23)

*Do Thou the very God of peace,
Us wholly sanctify,
And grant us such a rich increase
Of power from on high,
That spirit, soul, and body may,
Preserved free from stain,
Be blameless until that great day;
Lord Jesus Christ, Amen*

G. H. Hayhoe

Occupation with Christ in glory conforms to
Christ in humiliation. *W. Potter*

Serving the Lord, ministering to the saints

We find in 1 Cor. 16 four channels, so to speak, of ministry. *First*, the apostle, sent direct from the Lord and by the Holy Ghost. *Secondly*, persons associated with the apostle in his work, and acting at his desire, and (in the case of Timothy) one pointed out by prophecy. *Thirdly*, and entirely independent laborer, partly instructed by others (see Acts 17:26), but acting where he saw fit, according to the Lord and to the gift he had received. *Fourthly*, one who gives himself to the service of the saints, as well as others who helped the apostle and labored. Paul exhorts the faithful to submit themselves to such, and to all those who helped in the work and labored.

He would also have them acknowledge those who refreshed his heart by their service of devotedness. Thus we find the simple and important principle according to which all the best affections of the heart are developed, namely, the acknowledgment of every one according to the manifestation of grace and of the power of the Holy Ghost in him.

The Christian submits to those who addict themselves to the service of the saints; he acknowledges those who manifest grace in a special way. They are not persons officially nominated and consecrated who are spoken of here. It is the conscience and the spiritual affection of Christians which acknowledges them according to their work—a principle valid at all times, which does not permit this respect to be demanded, but which requires it to be paid.

JND from synopsis on 1 Cor. 16

Contrasts found in Revelation 19

- v 1 The Lord Jesus is given praise, honor and glory; but He agonized in the garden and bore the curse on the tree. (Luke 22:44: Galatians 3:13)
- vv 6 Our Lord is worshipped; but when here in the world He was mocked. (Mt 27:39-44).
- vv 7-9 He, the Lamb, has eternal companionship—His beloved bride; yet He bore the cross alone, forsaken of God. (Mt 27:46)
- v 11 He rides a white horse victoriously. He rode lowly into Jerusalem on a donkey, Mt 21:1-5.
- v 12 The Lord Who is *Faithful and True* wears many crowns (diadems). In this world He was give a crown of thorns. (Mt 27:29)
- v 13 His vesture is dipped in the blood of His enemies; but on the cross He shed His own blood *for* His enemies. (John 19:34)
- v 15 He rules the nations with a rod of iron; yet He was smitten with a rod upon the cheek. (Micah 5:1; Mt 27:30)
- v 16 His glorious title is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” On the cross Pilate wrote His title, “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” (John 19:19)
- v 19 He judges the Roman armies. Roman soldiers had crucified Him. (Mk 15:15)
- v 20 Two *wicked* men are cast alive into the lake of fire. Two *righteous* men, Enoch and Elijah, are taken alive into heaven. (Gen 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11)
- v 21 The Lord’s enemies are slain by His Word. But when on the cross He said, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”. (Luke 23:34)

T. Roach

Question: “Is it appropriate to continue asking things of the Lord such as increase of faith, or conversion of relatives, etc.—or when these requests have once been made, leave them in His hands?”

Answer: God exercises our hearts and our faith in delaying at times, answers to our prayers. The earnestness of our prayer will be according to our [felt need], and the consciousness that He alone can give the answer. Our hearts are kept in exercise and dependence, waiting on Him, and faith is kept alive.

Prayer is a *mighty engine*, a fitting expression of the new-born soul’s dependence on God and contrasted with the [flesh] which would ever be independent of Him. [Continuing in prayer] shows that we are not indifferent to the result, when the heart can, in earnest entreaty, wait upon God.

In the midst of our cares and conflicts we have to “Be careful for nothing,” but to “let our requests be made known to God.” He who has no cares—God—keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. But we also are to “continue in prayer,” “watch in the same” and that “with thanksgiving” for His ear is ever an opened ear.

One of the exhortations in Rom. 12:12 is “continuing instant in prayer” which might be rendered “pursuing” or “persevering in prayer”.

There are times when there is consciousness that we can but cry to God until the heart is at rest concerning the petition. He will not give it until His own time, and meanwhile the soul is kept exercised.

excerpt adapted from F. G. Patterson

The God of Peace

Take your heart full of cares, and get into the presence of the God of peace in heaven. What will be the effect? Will those cares remain in you there? What are they? Only *outside things* connected with self. Can you find one sorrow of one individual believer from Abel downwards, of which you could say that sorrow was not in connection with the God of peace? Not that He is the sender of sorrow, but the God of peace, sitting in heaven and causing everything to work together for good to us, taking flesh into the account, sweeping the very ground of the heart, taking strength from the strong, causing pulsation to cease. Is anything terrifying when we get into His presence? No! all is peace in the presence of the God who counts the hairs of our head.

“In everything give thanks”. Is there a lust or a single thing in me that I would try to hide from God? No: I would like His knife to cut, to root up every evil, so that I may bear more fruit.

How apt we are to limit thanksgiving to things that we can understand to be good. But we have to give thanks for *all* things. If we are within the veil and living there, we shall know what it is to give thanks for all that is most contrary to what we should naturally choose. Are there any who have one thing they cannot give thanks for? Whatever that particular thing may be, they have not go into the light of God’s presence. If they had, they would know what cause they had to thank God for that very thing, as for all else.

G. V. Wigram

Feed the Flock

“When I’m Happy”

Little Suzy had known more adversity in her six short years than most people face during a lifetime. Partially paralyzed by a stroke, she had recently lost both her parents, and now she faced an MRI to determine if she had a brain tumor. The day of the test, after carefully instructing her to lay very still, the technician placed the uncomplaining little girl into the MRI machine. But as images were being taken of her head, the radiologist heard a muffled voice and noticed that Suzy’s mouth was moving.

Gently reminding her that she must lay still, the test was restarted, only to be stopped when once again there was the faint sound of her voice with that same slight movement. Becoming a bit impatient, a technologist slid her out of the machine and sternly said, “Suzy, you were talking again, and that causes blurry pictures.”

The little girl gave her a crooked smile and said “I wasn’t talking, I was singing. You said no talking.”

After a moment’s surprised silence another nurse asked Suzy, “What were you singing?”

The whispered reply came back, “Jesus Loves Me. I always sing ‘Jesus Loves Me’ when I’m happy.”

This touching, humbling story reminds us of how easily believers can get caught up in a spirit of complaining and grumbling. Such a spirit is not of God, for His beloved children are to “be ye thankful” (Col 3:15), to “rejoice evermore” (1 Thess. 5:16), to “comfort” others who are “in any trouble” (2 Cor

1:4), have full joy (1 Joh. 1:4), and are even to “take joyfully the spoiling of your goods” (Heb. 10:34).

We are “redeemed with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18), loved individually and eternally by the Son of God (Gal. 2:20), have been given “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Pet. 1:4), and have been blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Surely an unhappy, complaining spirit does not befit those so richly blessed. May each one seek grace to be able to say with the beloved Apostle Paul “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” (Phil. 4:11) *Ed.*

Answers to March 2000 Bible Challenger

Merry	I Kings 4:20
Ashes	2 Peter 2:6
None effect	Mark 7:13
Yourselves	Eph 5:19
Balances	Amos 8:5
Ordinances	Eph 2:15
Our prayers	1 Thess. 1:2
Knowledge	2 Chronicles 30:22
Supplication	Daniel 6:11

“And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making **MANY BOOKS** there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. (Isa. 59:8)

R. Erisman

Practical Reflections

Acts 5:15—33

v 15, 16 *“Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.”*

A shadow is cast by something which exists in the light. The more believers walk in the *light* of the glory of God revealed in the *face of Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. 4:6), the more blessing will result to the spiritually needy with whom they may come in contact.

v 17, 18 *“Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.”*

What is darker than a faithless, Godless religion! Through the apostles' preaching in the Name of Jesus, everyone in need had been healed in Jerusalem. This was the city where blessing was to flow out to the whole world, had the Jews received their Messiah. But the impotent, unbelieving leaders—guilty of His death—angrily try to stop the blessing.

v 19, 20 *“But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”*

It was *night* morally in the hearts of the leaders nation of Israel. They would lock away in prison the truth, even as they had delivered to death the One Who is truth. But it is at the morally darkest times, when it seems most impossible to testify of the Lord Jesus, that His power brings liberty and freedom to preach the life giving message.

V 21 *“And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.”*

The Lord Jesus gives liberty, religion imprisons. How far from Jehovah had the leaders of the nation gone! Those who were responsible to be in the temple, leading the people in worshipping God, were instead gathered together seeking to stop the outflow of Divine truth.

v 21-24 *“But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.”*

We read that *where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty* (2 Cor. 3:17). The Jews' prison and guards were no more able to contain the apostles who were guided by the Spirit of God, then the grave was able to hold the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. *If the Son*

therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed is a precious truth. The enemy goes to great lengths to stifle the gospel, but those who are led by the Spirit of God, are free and at liberty to proclaim the wonderful news of salvation to the lost.

v 25 *“Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.”*

The Apostle Paul suffered “trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.” (2 Tim. 2:9) What a comfort to know that the Word of God can never be bound, in spite of our failures or the darkness of the day in which we live.

v 26 *“Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.”*

These wicked rulers no doubt *wished* to harm the apostles. But they could not for “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” (Prov 16:7) It is wonderful if our ways *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*, even as our words speak of the *Prince of peace*.

v 27, 28 *“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”*

The gospel message is filled with good news and joy. Yet if faithfully proclaimed it first effects the conscience bringing a sense of guilt and responsibil-

ity before a Holy God. This, the religious leaders could not stand. So blinded and hardened were they, that the very oath they bound themselves with (*His blood be on us and on our children* Matt. 27:25), they now desperately try to refuse to accept.

v 29 “*Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*”

This simple, eloquent answer could only have come through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Do mere men, haters of the blessed Name of Jesus, seek to silence those who speak well of Him? What is that to the believer? In relation to the *powers that be*, Christians *ought to obey*. When those powers *ordained* of God go beyond their God given authority, Christians *ought to obey God*.

v 30 “*The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.*”

The very God these religious leaders boasted in and the One whom the patriarchs trusted in, had raised from among the dead the blessed Jesus whom they would deny. Their fathers had *trusted* in God, yet they who were descendents of the patriarchs were guilt of *slaying* His Son, their Messiah.

The faith of family members is precious—a priceless heritage—but it does not in itself benefit unless personal faith in each member is in exercise. It is eternally fatal to rest in family religious position.

v 31 “*Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*”

They had condemned Jesus to death, had spit in

His blessed face, cast Him out—*mocked and rejected* Him. But God *exalted* Him. Rather than execute the judgement their wicked acts deserved, God (the God of their fathers) was offering through that despised one, *repentance* and *forgiveness*.

This is the heart of our blessed God—what a striking example of *grace* abounding to the *chief of sinners!* And it is so with every soul who has come to God in true repentance, confessing that complete lack of even *one good thing* found within themselves. Each has come away eternally blessed.

Mephibosheth, who as Saul's grandson had good reason to fear reprisal from David, received instead, kindness for the sake of another, all the possessions of Saul his grandfather, and most wonderful of all, a place at the king's table. This is *abounding grace* such as our blessed God delights to bestow upon unworthy sinners, for the sake of His beloved Son.

v 32 "*And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*"

Believers who bear witness to *Divine truth* in the world have confidence that their testimony is supported by and in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

v 33 "*When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them*".

The truth that Peter preached had *pricked* their hearts and many were saved (Acts 2:37). Now the truth *cuts* their heart as will Stephen's message in Acts 7. The result, rather than blessing, is murderous outrage and hatred. Oh! how solemn to continually reject God's Divine truth! *Ed.*

Fragments

When it is said that “Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25), He saw her in the past eternity in all her glory and beauty. [This ought] to encourage us, even in this day of real weakness. It’s something like Paul told Timothy. In the very first chapter of 2 Timothy, He brings in the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. [It is as though] the apostle was saying: “God is going to carry out fully what He purposed in a past eternity; He’s going to carry it all out. Now, Timothy, all I’m telling you to do is to go on in the truth and God is going to take care of things.”

You know [believers] sometimes get so excited and nervous over the conditions of things that we actually forget what we’re here for. We’re here to respond to the Lord’s affections. We’re here to yield some meat for Him, as the woman in the 4th of John— “come see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”. Sometimes we are so busy trying to keep the ship right-side up that we forget that really we’re here to give the Lord some satisfaction out of our hearts.

“And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was [of the age] of twelve years. . . . [he] commanded that something should be given her to eat.” (Mk. 5:41-43)

Jesus commanded that something should be

given her to eat. Now, perhaps[lack of food] was partly the cause of her death—because she hadn't really been given food to eat. Perhaps the Word had been read to her in a mechanical way. But now when the Lord restores her life, He brings in the thought that her life should be sustained with food.

It is lovely, too, that there was food in that house, for the Lord wouldn't have said what He said, if there was no food available. Many times we have an abundance of food in the house, yet perhaps the children are spiritually starving. Could it be that we don't have time to give them this Divine food?

excerpts from ministry

Bible Challenger

The first letters of the following responses form the words that tells what God, who was Maker of all, is presently actively supplying in the night (seasons). The number in brackets [] indicates the number of words in each answer.

1. Where did God put Nehemiah the though of restoring a part of Jerusalem that caused him to arise *in the night*. (1)
2. The stated time of a prophet in seeking the Lord because of his great desire towards him *in the night*. (1)
3. That which accompanies the dissolution of the heavens when the day of the Lord commences with the suddenness of the coming of a thief *in the night*. (2)

4. That which the reins (Inner thoughts and feelings) will do *in the night* seasons when contemplating the counsel of the Lord. (2)

5. Something which appeared to Paul *in the night* when he perceived he had been called to visit Macedonia. (1)

6. The degree of strength which described a fourth beast seen in the night *visions* of a captive prophet. (2)

7. The time period as experienced by earth dwellers, which in God's eyes are but as a watch *in the night*. (2)

8. The reason young children of another era were fainting as a call for lamentation *in the night* was given to save a famous city that lay in ruins (1)

9. What the Lord encouraged Paul to do when he appeared to him *in the night* just before an 18 month teaching campaign. (1)

10. How does God bring to naught the works of men so that they are destroyed *in the night*? (2)

11. What did the Psalmist say he remembered *in the night* as he thought of his faithfulness to the law of the Lord? (1)

12. That which rose up *in the night* as the Egyptians of long ago discovered that there was not one house where death had not visited. (2)

13. What word describes what happens to one walking *in the night* with no light in him. (1)

Answers to these questions will be found, Lord willing, in the next issue of the *Christian Shepherd*.

R. Erisman