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Editorial

Which Master?

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matt. 6:24)

He was a man who tried to serve *two masters*. One he served—Ahab—is described as doing *more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him*. (1 Ki. 16:33) Yet it is also said of Obadiah that he *feared the Lord greatly*. What a strange combination!

Regarding Ahab, Obadiah worked for an idolatrous, apostate master as *steward* (1 Ki. 18:3, JND) of his house. In that sad character of service, he bore primary responsibility for insuring the *health* and *prosperity* of the most wicked, Godless king who ever reigned over the 10 tribes of Israel!

At the same time he also served Jehovah—the One whom his master Ahab had disobeyed and dishonored—hiding from Jezebel, his murderous wife, 100 prophets of the Lord. How very sad, and how very difficult this path of duplicity was, seeking to acceptably serve two masters!

Service for God in dark times

Obadiah’s service was rendered in part, during a terrible famine—a significant though not surprising fact. When a man turns his back in rebellion from God—especially after having received the blessing of Divine light— a great *spiritual famine* is sure to

result. And it is sure to have an adverse effects on the spiritual welfare of others also.

Ahab, no doubt keenly feeling the famine, yet refusing to acknowledge God's hand in this severe trial, sends Obadiah to find food. Not in order to preserve the lives of men, but rather to save the lives of animals! Ahab thought more of his horses (power) and mules (wealth) than of God's beloved people over whom he ruled. He desired *grass* so that some of the *beasts* might be *saved alive*.

It is good for those who walk in the path of faith, to realize that this world has no interest in the believer's welfare. It is engaged in a continual, frantic search to find *food* which can provide the power, strength and riches needed to maintain itself in its rebellion and alienation from God.

Hindered service

It was no mean service for Obadiah to hide the prophets of Jehovah, by fifties in a cave. In doing so he placed himself in a position of extreme danger with Ahab. Further, he no doubt had to personally bear the expense of the *bread and water* they ate. But, we may say, in spite of these good things, his was still a *hampered* service for Jehovah—severely restricted by *the fear of man*, his other master.

When the Lord Jesus Christ walked on this earth—Perfect Man and Perfect Servant—His ministry was never thus hindered. He never acted out of the *fear of man*, but from perfect submission to the only One He served, His Father and God. Nor was His *Father's business* which He *must be about*, ever

constrained by or compromised with the world.

Thus when the His disciples thought He should send away the weary, hungry multitude, our blessed Lord Jesus seats them by *fifties*—not in a *cave* but on the soft *grass*. And those He ministers to, number far more than 100 *prophets*. 5,000 men, besides *women and children* were fed to their full satisfaction, that wonderful day. Surely this Divine Steward *doeth all things well*.

Service with a bad conscience

Obadiah was quite aware that his service to Ahab was not pleasing to Jehovah. We are told in v. 7 that when Elijah met him *in the way* (Ahab's way), he knew him, and *fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?* Poor Obadiah! He *knows* Elijah when he meets him—why then the question? It was the response of a troubled conscience for a *double minded man is unstable in all his ways*. (Jas. 1:8) Obadiah could not say what the beloved Apostle Paul (who only served one Master) said; “herein do I exercise myself, to have always a *conscience void of offence* toward God, and toward men.” (Acts 24:16)

May we ever seek to be a little more like our precious Saviour who, as perfect Man, alone could say, “*I do always those things that please Him*.” (Jn. 8:29)

Service without fellowship and with fear

Obadiah carried on his service, apparently without Ahab's fellowship and certainly with no sense of his approval—something which the Lord delights to give to those who serve Him with a

perfect heart. (1 Chron. 28:9)

When he and Ahab went to search for food, they did not walk together in fellowship for we read that “Obadiah went another way *by himself*.” (v 6) Even the discouraged Cleophas and his companion were able to *commune* and *reason together*. (Luke 24:14, 15) Obadiah’s duplicity provides a stark answer to the prophet’s question, *can two walk together except they be agreed.* (Amos 3:3)

More than this, not only was Obadiah denied the sense of Ahab’s approval and fellowship, but he found the king had *no compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.* (Heb. 5:2). Evidently Ahab’s cruel response to a failure in his servants was to kill the guilty! (v 9)

But the loving Master we are privileged to serve is ever ready to forgive confessed sins and failure. (1 Jn. 1:9) And He does so every day, on the Divine principle of *seventy times seven.* (Matt. 18:22)

“It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” (Lam. 3:22, 23)

Service without confidence

Finally, in Obadiah’s vain effort to faithfully serve *two masters*, he judges the One (Jehovah) according to the cruelty of the other (Ahab). All he can assume in his sad state, is that if he is obedient to Elijah, the Lord will trick him. His piteous plea to Elijah—*“the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he*

cannot find thee, he shall slay me." (v 12)— reminds us of the unbelief of Joseph's brethren (Gen. 50:17). But it ought to humble and remind us even more of our own treacherous natural hearts, so willing to mistrust and deny the only One Who has ever and always only done us good.

Hear how beautifully and confidently that perfect Man trusts God in His path of service. "*even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.*" (Luke 10:21) "*Not my will, but thine be done.*" (Luke 22:42)

Let us also hear the words of the Apostle Paul while following the example of his faith and confidence in the Lord, in whatever little service we are allowed to do for our precious Saviour.

"...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (1 Tim. 1:12)

May we learn from the record of Obadiah's failure, and seek grace to *serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:*" (Heb. 12:28). *Ed.*

It is said that a blind man answered thus when asked why he always carried a lantern at night. "Being unable to see, the light is not to preserve my feet as I walk, but to keep others from stumbling over me." May the Lord keep us walking *as children of Light*. Only then will our feet be kept from stumbling and we shall have no occasion of stumbling others.

Spiritual Gems for the Path of Faith

How to Know the Will of the Father

If a child habitually neglected its father, and did not take the trouble of seeking to know his mind and will, it is easy to see that when a difficulty presented itself, the child would not be readily able to understand what would please its father.

If instead of the case I have supposed of a child, if it were a question of a wife towards her husband, it is probable that, if she had the feelings and mind of a wife, she would not hesitate a moment as to knowing what would be agreeable to her husband. And she would know this without his having expressed a positive will about the matter.

Believers would like a convenient and comfortable means of knowing God's will—as one might get a receipt for anything. But there exists no means of determining His will without reference to the state of our own soul.

Sometimes we are of too much importance in our own eyes, and thus we deceive ourselves in supposing some will of God in such and such a case. At other times, we seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances in which His only will is that we should not be found in those circumstances!

Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall not be at a loss to know His will. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." And thus it is certain that, if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. Now you will say, "That is poor consolation." I answer that it is rich consolation for those whose sole desire is to have the eye single

and to walk with God. “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

You cannot exempt yourself from the moral law of Christianity. “*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing by the knowledge of God.*” (Col. 1:9)

The mutual connection of these things is of immense importance for the soul. The Lord must be known intimately if one would walk in a way worthy of Him; and it is thus that we grow in the knowledge of God’s will. “*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.*” (Phi. 1:9, 10)

Finally, it is written that the spiritual man “*judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*” (1 Cor. 2:15). It is the will of God, and a precious will, that we should be able to discern His will *only according to our own spiritual state*. In general, when we think that we are judging circumstances, it is God who is judging us—who is judging our state. Our business is to keep close to Him. God would not be good to us, if He permitted us to discover His will without that.

excerpt adapted, J. N. D

Ed. Note: The complete unabridged text is available in print form. We heartily recommend it!

“Looking upon Jesus as He walked”

At the close of Luke 9 one comes to the Lord Jesus saying, “I will follow Thee.” And He says, “Do not you see how the villagers have treated Me? If you will follow Me, you must take part with One who has not where to lay His head.”

Another comes, “Suffer me first to go and bury my father.” With a wonderful sense of the dignity of His ministry the Lord says as it were, “One fellow creature may do the office of the dying to the dying, but go you and do the office of a living Saviour in the world.”

The Lord carried with Him the sense of His ministerial glory. Paul had it in the vessel going to Rome, and before Agrippa. There he was, a prisoner in chains and degradation, and he stands and says, “I would you were like me.”

What consciousness of secret dignity in the midst of public degradation! “Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God”. Go and do the Saviour’s business, the business of life, not of death, in a sin-stricken world.

Then in Luke 10 we are introduced to the commission of the seventy. They were to say “The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you”. And they were to heal the sick. What a terrible verdict against this world, that God has to publish His kingdom in it! “Shake off the dust of your feet”. An insulting kind of thing to do. Ah! but the seriousness of the message required this.

Let them learn, if they receive it not, in the most

awful terms you can convey, how they have jeopardized themselves.

The disciples return (10:17) and tell Him that the devils are subject to them. He immediately takes them into the book of Revelation, where not only is there power to cast out devils from this body and that, but He penetrates to where, in the majesty of His authority, Satan shall be cast down.

Have you been accustomed to think of Satan as being in heaven? We find him there in Job, in Kings, here, and in Ephesians; and in the Revelation we see him *cast down* from heaven.

Now which is dearer to your heart at this moment, your relationships or your circumstances? The Lord puts these balances into the hands of the disciples—"You may have power on earth, but it ought not to be so dear to you as your family place in heaven."

Did it open Adam's mouth when he was made lord of all around him? *No!* It was not opened by a sense of property or power; it was opened when he got relationship—when he got Eve. *Property* ought to be nothing when compared with *affection*.

So the Lord says to the seventy, "Rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." See how the Lord falls into the current of their joy for a moment. Then the Lord looks up to heaven and rejoices *there*. (v. 21)

I do not know that the Lord was ever happier than here, save—yes, let us tell it for our comfort—save when a poor, believing heart gave Him meat to eat that the others knew not of. (Jn. 4).

The Lord here *gave* Himself to the disciples. They returned with joy, and He entered into their joy, and swelled it out.

excerpts adapted, Notes on Luke, J. G. Bellet

Thoughts for our time

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:” (Eph. 2:8)

God's grace is *unmerited* favor, thus it gives us much. However, it will never give us any cause to boast. If grace made us better in ourselves, it would work itself out of a job; we would merit something. God would have us know that *“By His grace we are what we are”* (1Cor.15:10), and would have us *“strong in His grace”* (2Tim.2:1), so that we don't lose the sense of unmerited favor and think that our blessings are merited. (Gal.5:4) *B. Warr*

Trials and Temptations

“And he shall sit [as] a refiner and purifier of silver” (Mal. 3:3).

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1Pet. 1:7).

God puts His children to the test, but never tempts them to do evil. (Jas. 1:13)

God has a positive purpose in trials. (Jas. 1: 3, 4)

God has an answer for trials. (Jas. 1: 5)
God reveals worthwhile values and worthless values, through trials. (Jas. 1:9 -11)
God rewards those who endure trials. (James 1:12)
Satan tempts for evil purposes that we might sin and fall, but God proves His children for benevolent and ends that we might stand. Heb. 12: 1 0)
If there is a secret spirit of rebellion against the trials that are sent for our good, they may become temptations to our harm. (Jas. 1: 13,14)
God is the Giver, not primarily of trials, but of blessings. (Jas. 1:16,17)
God's purpose in trials is that the Lord Jesus Christ would have the praise, honour and glory at His appearing. (I Pet. 1: 7) *Adapted, N. Berry*

Christ takes the heart out of the region of darkness, and into the region of light—not to *get light upon* the word, for the word *is* light. When I have got Christ, I find Him on every page.

A man may reason with and puzzle his neighbor, but if I am walking in God's light, he will never puzzle me out of that. I do not need light in order to see the sun for the sun *is* light, and if I have eyes, I shall see the light.

“...*thou ... hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*” This is what he approves of—all our service and labor having reference to Christ.
Adapted, A Voice to the Faithful

The Writings of C.H. Mackintosh

“C.H.M.”, as he has been popularly known for over a century, was and is a well-known Christian writer of the past century. Born in Ireland, in 1820, he was converted to Christ at the age of 18. About this time, he got particular help from a statement in J.N. Darby’s “Operations of the Spirit”: “It is Christ’s work for us, not His work in us, that gives us peace.” That C.H.M. enjoyed this truth throughout his life is apparent in many of his writings.

He became a schoolmaster and pursued that vocation until, at the age of 33, he began to devote his life to preaching and writing. For 21 years, he edited the periodical “*Things New and Old*” and many of his articles first appeared there.

He is best known, however, for his “*Notes on the Pentatuch*”—a commentary on the five books of Moses which began to appear in serial form in his magazine and continued to appear during the following 40 years. This has more recently been published in one volume titled “*Genesis to Deuteronomy*”. These “Notes” are more devotional commentary than exposition (not being verse-by-verse). Their emphasis on basic truth, practical application, and the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ and His work have endeared them to many. The writer of these lines witnesses to the particular and lasting blessing he received from reading C.H.M.’s notes on Genesis and Exodus in his youth.

These writings should be read prayerfully and patiently. C.H.M. tended to ramble—but not idly. Have patience, stay with him, and you will be amply

rewarded. His writings are full of choice morsels—rich nuggets of truth. Although he was apparently happily married, little is known of his wife or family. However, his writings on the character and conduct of the family have been especially appreciated. After a life of active and fruitful service, C.H.M. departed to be with Christ in 1896—leaving a rich heritage for the benefit and blessing of many to this day.

C.H.M. authored many other works—some book length, some shorter. Many of these were collected and published in another 6 volume set titled “*Miscellaneous Writings*”. Found here are many very helpful articles on basic Bible doctrines, the Christian life, the authority of Scripture, lessons from the lives of Old Testament saints, Church doctrine and practice, and his widely circulated and much blessed “*Paper’s on the Lord’s Coming*”. In more recent years, the 6 volumes were combined into one larger volume called “*The Mackintosh Treasury*”. The value of these writings can hardly be overstated, and they are warmly recommended.

In the years since C.H.M.’s periodical “*Things New and Old*”, succeeding generations have discovered the value of C.H.M.’s other articles which appeared there, and these briefer articles have been collected and released in several additional volumes.

One of these, “*Answers to Correspondants*”, is comprised of selected questions from the readers of his magazine and his answers which he shared with his readers for their edification. This little volume is very well suited to young people since it answers simply and briefly the types of questions young

believers often ask.

“*Short Papers*” is a volume of short to very short articles which appeared in “*Things New and Old*”. These cover a wide variety of subjects and are very practical, instructive, and easy to read. If you want something challenging and useful to read five minutes at a time, try reading this volume.

Excerpted, J. Kaiser

God the Son

As *Man* He could be hungry, thirsty and weary, that He might be a sympathetic High Priest.

As *God* He could still the winds and the waves, raise the dead, open the disciples understanding. He could and did communicate power. He knew the thoughts of those about Him and He could and did foretell the manner of His death. He is the *Eternal I Am*. (Jn. 8:58).

To deny the full Godhead glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is to turn one’s back on the *only* Saviour. Those who do so will die in their sins. (1 Jn. 8:24). The Scripture says, “*None . . . can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him.*” (Psa. 49:7) The Lord Jesus was perfect God *and* perfect Man as He walked here on earth. It is His Person (God the Son) that gives value to the work of atonement He accomplished when lifted up on the cross. (Jn. 3:14) Thus we see that in order to have the knowledge of salvation as in Jn. 3:16, one must believe in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. (see Jn. 3:36) *H. E. Hayhoe*

Meditations of a father

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” (Gen. 17:1).

Notice the order. He does not say “be perfect” first, but rather “I am the ALMIGHTY GOD.” We can almost hear people say, “come on now, you’re asking for the impossible.” But when you get the thing in perspective—that is, it is the Almighty God who is speaking—what seems so impossible for us is not impossible any longer. But it is possible only as we have our sights set on Him. It is what Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Don’t get accustomed to saying, “I can’t” when it is something that you know the Lord asks us to do. Just look to Him in all your insufficiency and find just how sufficient He is.

“Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.” (Jn. 2:5)

This was the instruction from the mother of Jesus to the servants at the wedding feast. How often we want to understand something before we do it. But here it was simple obedience that was important. We may want to stop and question ourselves whether we understand what He says properly, but once it is clear, there is only one path for faith—pure simple obedience, leaving the results with Him. They might have thought it quite futile to fill those containers with that much water when what they

needed was wine. But they not only did it, they also drew from the stone pots and took to the governor of the feast. The result was better than anybody could have imagined. “. . . *but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*” (Jn. 2:10) *B. Thonney*

Thoughts on music and dancing

“...*and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.*” (Luke 15:25)

When someone draws *nigh* a believer's home, he should *bear* it filled with *music* and *dancing*. The music would speak of those precious teachings of our Lord Jesus. He said in Luke 7 referring to His ministry, “we have piped unto you”. What a wonderful *music* that was!

But in the father's home in Luke 15 we also have *dancing*—the proper response and effect in those who hear the *music*. In Luke 7 they heard the Lord as He *pip*ed to them—but they had *not danced*.

What makes a happy Christian home is that there is more than good teaching (music), there is also a *good response* (dancing). Oh! may we, especially we who are fathers, ever be found not simply being *many teachers*, but ourselves *doers of the Word*. Surely this will bring joy to our homes.

“*And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that bath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.*” (Ezk. 33:32)

H. Short

Practical thoughts on Eternal Life

It is not persecution that the people of God find now, but a slippery day. A day in which it is difficult to keep the feet. The hot blast of persecution is not so dangerous as the clear frost which, after a shower of rain, makes the ground slippery as glass. And that is the character of the day in which we live. Little snares of Satan are on every side, the feet slip and slide, and you get discouraged. But Why?

God says, "Is not Eternal Life yours? Have I not Myself pledged that it is? If you fail, Christ will not fail. If you slip, get up again and go on. You have Eternal Life in Him."

Is it possible that your heart is discouraged and drooping when Christ in Heaven is yours? Or is it that you are going through the stormy sea and cannot steer, that you are drooping? Take hold of that precious promise (the promise of Eternal Life—Jn. 10:28, 1 Jn. 2:25) and never let it go.

And when others are discouraged saying, "We cannot go on, we see no way whatever to turn." you bring them that word and see the effect.

The Eternal Life pledged to me in the Son. That is what I have got and that Eternal Life entirely changes death and the grave for the believer. I have a life which is altogether new, a life born of incorruptible seed, which nothing has power to corrupt. It is not only like pure water, gushing out of a rock, but water of such purity and brightness, that you can

neither color or corrupt it.

But let us ask ourselves, “Has this Eternal Life been marking the life we are leading?” Today, for instance, have we been passing *with it* through every duty? A saint has no business to do anything unless he can recognize Christ in it. If today you have been living a life in the flesh, indulging its lusts, wishing for this thing and that, you have not been walking as one who possesses the Eternal Life.

You may be called to pass through a stronger trial of principle than any you have yet had. Suppose you were in prison, with none to love you, to comfort you, left there all alone. But if it be so, there is the Eternal Life.

I have to walk on earth as one who possesses it, and if so, have I to care what my circumstances may be? Sorrow, and nothing but sorrow, there may be for a time—but if I have the Eternal Life, I am soon to be up and above it all. *G. V. Wigram*

Note to our readers

Concerning the article entitled “Thoughts on Grace and Mercy” included in the May 2000 issue. On Page 132 a sentence in the last paragraph may be easier understood if it is read this way: “Mercy is great in the greatness of our need; grace is great in the greatness of the Giver. Grace magnifies Him, while mercy delivers us from our *peril*.”

Ed.

“The Jews which believed not... set all the city on an uproar... when the ... word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came ... and stirred up the people.” (Acts 17:5, 13)

Knowledge of old revelation gives no security for receiving the truth God is sending or using most at any given time. If there be pride in what is already possessed, it will act powerfully in rejecting what is meant of God to test the heart; especially if grace is opening the door of faith to those who had no religious standing. The gospel is of all things most repulsive to the ancient people of God, who madly refused the mercy which waited on them first of all, before it was preached to the Gentiles.

excerpts from An Exposition of Acts, W. Kelly

Answers to July 2000 Bible Challenger

F ain	Rom. 15:13
A rm yourselves likewise	Matt. 21:22
I reat calm	1 Jn. 5:1
T n the temple	Isa. 28:16
H ight and day	Acts 16:34
L avest me no kiss	Acts 24:14
E avest me no kiss	Dan. 6:23
S avest me no kiss	Jon. 3:5
S avest me no kiss	Jn. 20:8

“Then said he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not **FAITHLESS**, but believing.” (Jn. 20:27)

Feed the Flock

A Foe and a Friend

“Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8) “The Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:56)

Grrr ... woof! His summer afternoon visit to the mailbox was suddenly, unpleasantly interrupted by an unfriendly warning from the pit bull who lived across the road. The mailbox was on the dog’s side of the road. As he went to get the mail, it came towards him—steady, sure, without hesitation.

Quickly retrieving the mail, the boy thought, “perhaps I can run back to my house.” But the distance was too far, and the dog would certainly catch him before reaching the safety of its front door.

What could he do? He considered kicking the dog, until he remembered its owner’s warning—never kick that dog. The last man that had kicked it had to be rescued from its jaws by his owner.

Thinking that a loud noise might scare the pit bull, the boy yelled at the top of his voice. But the dog’s response was Grrr ...woof! And he kept coming—never hesitating or changing his gait.

What next? There was no large stick, no large rocks—only the small “pea gravel” used to surface the road. He threw a handful as hard as he could. Grrr...woof! The pebbles bounced off the dog without effect. The boy looked at the envelopes he held, but they certainly offered no protection.

Realizing he had run out of resources to protect

himself, he could only continue helplessly backing away from the dog who was steadily drawing closer.

Suddenly, he heard another “Grr ... woof” from behind him! And this bark was much louder and far more ferocious—one which obviously came from a very large dog that was approaching at a full run.

But now the boy was no longer scared for he knew well the sound of that bark—it belonged to his own very large dog, Captain. The pit bull took one look at the onrushing Captain, stopped immediately, turned and ran back into his own yard. Once the boy was safely home, Captain received a hearty display of his owner’s thanks for his rescue from the pit bull.

Believers have an enemy far more dangerous than the pit bull. The devil is seeking to destroy each one of us. Too often we seek to withstand this implacable foe in our own strength and wisdom. Such foolish attempts are less able to protect from Satan, than the boy’s attempts to protect himself against the dog. It is good to learn that it is the Lord’s strength is *made perfect in weakness*. (2 Cor. 12:9) He will never fail!

“... *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*” (1Jn. 4:4)

“... *that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*” (Heb. 2:14)

“... *for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*” (Heb. 13:5, 6)

adapted, B. Short

Practical Reflections

Acts 7:20–33

v 20 “*In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:*”

Moses was the deliverer God would use to bring His beloved people out of Egypt's slavery. How *fair* (*lovely* —JND trans.) he was to God. Amram and Jocabed's faith shown brightly. Seeing Moses as God saw him, they diligently and lovingly *nourished* him for those three critically important months.

Christian parents have very little time with their precious lambs before the world begins to exert its influence—attempting to claim them for its own selfish, Godless purposes. May each Christian family see to it that their home is a place of *nourishment* for their beloved children.

v 21 “*And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.*”

In his father's house, Moses was *nourished* for God's glory and the blessing of His people. In the palace of Pharaoh's daughter, he was *nourished* according to her desires, and for the good of Egypt. For which world are we seeking to nourish our children and our younger brethren?

v 22 “*And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.*”

Moses had two natural abilities most valued by the world—eloquence and courage. To this, Egypt

taught him its special wisdom—a wisdom so advanced that it engineered and constructed the great pyramids. Moses had gained every quality necessary to become a “productive member of society”. One possessing such abilities as he, might go far, making a great name for himself in this world.

v 23 *“And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.”*

Here we find the faith of Moses’ parents rewarded. When the time of testing came—*full forty years old*—Moses visits his *brethren*. With all of Egypt’s wisdom and advantages, his heart had been attached to God’s people—his people. Moses desires to leave Egypt’s fair courts, to visit a poor, enslaved people. Surely his parents had proved the truth of Proverb 22:6 —*“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

v 24 *“And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:”*

All too often, we like Moses seek to do a *right thing* in a *wrong way*. Love for his brethren caused Moses to seek to deliver the oppressed from his persecutor. But he had not God’s guidance in the way he sought to *deliver* his brother.

v 25 *“For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.”*

The people of God rejected Moses, when he would have delivered them not understanding the

desire of his heart for their good. The Jewish leaders, rather than believing Stephen's words and finding true deliverance, through hardness of heart, didn't *understand* God's desire to deliver them from a bondage far worse than Israel experienced in Egypt.

v 26 *"And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?"*

Not only did Moses desire to see his brethren delivered from slavery, but he desired their happy oneness. "...*how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Psa. 133:1). The desire for liberty and unity for the people of God ought to animate each servant of Christ.

v 27 *"But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?"*

The guilty seeks to justify himself, even as the guilty leaders of Israel sought to justify their horrible sin against the Lord Jesus, by seeking to silence Stephen. The blinded eyes of the Israelite slave was an apt picture of the blinded eyes of the nation of Israel. Rather than seeing in Moses and in Christ, *deliverers* who would have freed them from bondage, they only see a *ruler* and a *judge*.

v 28 *"Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?"*

A bad conscience and a hardened heart accuses the *blessor* with bringing death rather than deliverance. But it is the *wages of sin* which brings death. And the nation of Israel had sinned in the most

horrible way possible—slaying the Lord of Glory—the Messiah—Who came to deliver His people from their sins. Rather than repenting, the nation, as did the Israelite in Moses day, rejected the only One Who could deliver them from their bondage.

v 29, 30 *“Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.”*

If the blindness of the nation of Israel was so great that it did not allow the Lord to *do many mighty works*—did not allow Him to bring them into blessing at that time—there still would be fruit. For Christ, the perfect antitype of Joseph was that true *“fruitful bough. . . whose branches run over the wall”*. Thus the Gentiles are brought into blessing through His rejection by Israel.

But God was still working with His beloved earthly people, thus the bush was burning but not consumed.

v 31, 32 *“When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.”*

The God of the Patriarchs was sustaining Israel through its trials and suffering in Egypt. The bush which burned but was not consumed, was a picture of the *fiery trials* through which they passed.

Moses showed an appropriate fear of God. When God, in the Person of the Son, walked among His beloved people, the nation collectively showed no such fear of God in their blinded hatred and rejection of the Lord Jesus. Those who looked with the eye of faith saw Who it was that stood in their midst.

v 33 *“Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.”*

Nothing from within himself could ever provide man with the ability to stand in God’s holy presence. If Moses were to stand there and if he were to serve God acceptably, he must learn that his shoes (man’s ability to serve), were of no value—rather they were an offense to the presence of Holy God.

Ed.

Bible Challenger

The first letter of the following responses form the action word as applied “in all things” that would provide proof that the Corinthian saints were indeed embracing the Christian testimony in its entirety. The number in the brackets indicates the number of words in the answer.

1. An uncomplimentary characterization, in the eyes of the world, which was once applied to the endeavors of Christians even as they sought to honor the Lord in all things. (1)
2. One of twelve who was reluctantly given permission to leave home by the father who la-

mented “all these things are against me”. (1)

3. The ultimate purpose to which the living God richly giveth all things to both rich and poor. (1)

4. The degree of incorrigibleness of the vital part of our being which is more that “deceitful above all things”. (2)

5. A mineral to which a Biblical Kingdom was likened because it “subdueth all things”. (1)

6. The dietary custom of someone (who may be weak in faith) which is in marked contrast to those partaking “of all things”. (2)

7. The response contained within the rhetorical statement as to whether the Lord had failed of “all the good things” which were promised when Israel entered their promised land. (3)

8. Specific places that the maker of the world and “all things therein”, refuses as a dwelling place. (4)

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

R. Erisman

Believers may sit week after week under the Word and not bring forth the fruit of peace because the Word is being choked by the cares of this world. Wherever lusts and pleasures rule the heart, conflicts will continue. A dissatisfied heart is neither at peace with God nor with man.

Christianity is not a *spectator sport*. It is personal!
Spiritual Gems for the Path of Faith