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Editorial

Faith, Blessing and Suffering

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2Ti 3:12)

The Word of God is filled with exceedingly precious assurances for believers. We have *eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* and His *divine power* has given us *all things* concerning *life and godliness*. We have *exceeding great and precious promises*. He desires us to have a *richly furnished* (JND trans.) *entrance . . . into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. And while in this world, He will *never leave . . . nor forsake* us. His final recorded promise in Rev. 22:20 is *surely I come quickly*. May we respond in ardent desire, *“Amen, even so come Lord Jesus”!*

However, while assured of such an abundance of Divine blessings, saints are also assured of trials and conflict in the of faith. So the beloved apostle writes in 2 Tim. 3:12, so the blessed Saviour assures His own in John 16:33.

Even as the *prophets* of old (Jas. 5:1), Paul was an example of suffering for Christ—suffering which only our Lord Himself (1 Pet. 2:21) fully experienced. Thus, even in heavy affliction, Divine love —*shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost* (Rom. 5:5)—is to unceasingly flow forth, *bearing, enduring, and never failing* (1 Cor. 13:7,8).

In 2 Tim 3:11 it is Paul writes that he *endured persecutions* and afflictions *at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra*. This account, recorded in Acts 13:14–14:25

provides wonderful encouragement and instruction for times when we suffer persecution for the Lord.

When Paul and his company had come to Pisidian Antioch, all seemed well, for the Jews told him, “...*if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on*” (Acts 13:15). However, after the Gentiles gladly received the gospel, the Jews stirred “*up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and they are expelled out of their coasts*” (Acts 13:50).

The world made it plain that Paul and his companions were not *socially* or *politically acceptable*. Such persecution is still felt in “Christian lands”. Those who seek to live *Godly* soon feel the loathing and censure—a very real and painful kind of persecution—of *respectable society*.

After their rejection at Antioch, Paul’s company visit Iconium. Violence against them increases, as the *unbelieving Jews* stir up the Gentiles against them. *Religious prejudice* generates terrible persecution, both in Christian or heathen lands.

Fleeing next to Lystra, the gospel is confirmed by God through the healing of the crippled man (Acts 14:8-10). The apostles, now made the objects of *idolatrous worship*, find a different, but still very real form of persecution.

At times, believers are offered similar adulation and respect because of what Christianity provides the world in material blessing. Sadly, we often find this deceitful *flattery* more comfortable than *persecution*. Yet, as with Paul in Lystra, whenever faithfulness to Christ spurns such accolades, a far

more violent persecution is sure to result.

It was so with the Lord Jesus in Luke 4:16-29. He speaks, and all in the synagog wonder at *the gracious words* that come from His lips. Yet, a short time later, those same people angrily *thrust out* the Lord, intending in their hatred, to cast Him over the *brow of the hill*. “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*” (Jn. 15:18)

Will Paul, having been so ruthlessly treated at Lystra—*left for dead*—call for righteous vengeance on his evil persecutors? Ah no! So far from such a thought, he is animated by the spirit of our blessed Saviour, Who in the midst of unfathomable suffering uttered Divine words of love and forgiveness — “*Father forgive them for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34).

Energized by this Divine love and guided by the Spirit, Paul *goes back* to the scene of his persecutions. There the grace of God shines yet brighter, for he *begins* the return journey at the place of his most violent treatment! “*And... they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch*” (Acts 14:21).

Thus were the new believers in those three cities given an unforgettable lesson through Paul’s example—that “*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*”

What comfort (and guidance, too), to see that we are to *expect* persecution; by faith are given courage to *face* persecution; and have Divine love to *overcome* persecution. Let us walk in faithfulness to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

Ed.

Grace

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3)

“For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace” (Heb.13:9)

I should like to see in saints a larger sense of the *grace of God* in having taken them up; so that they should be more bowed down in the thought of it. It is one thing to be crippled in the sense of what poor creatures we are, and quite another thing to be bowed down in the thought of that grace which *met us where we were*, and *put us where we are*. We were dead in trespasses and sins, when He picked us up and gave us life and fellowship with the body of Christ: and I should like to see that thought bowing down the heart of each saint.

World Bordering

I believe there are many Christians whose intelligence does not enable them to realize that they are in the position of Eph. 2:5, 6—*quickened and raised up together with Christ*. When the Israelites were brought through the Red Sea there would have been no difficulty in finding borderers, trying to blend the two things, Egypt and Canaan, together. If you do not believe that God sees you dead, buried, and risen *in Christ*, it is no wonder if you are a *borderer*. But if, by His grace, you see your standing there before God as identified with the death and resurrection of Christ, I defy you to be a borderer!

G.V.Wigram

Thoughts on the Judgment Seat of Christ

A Meditation on David's Mighty Men

In this last of the series on David's mighty men, we will consider the long list of names that follows the description of the first two trios, those who occupied the place of special prominence. From II Sam. 23:24 to the end of the chapter, we have a large number of names, many of whom we know nothing about. But while we are not told the particulars of their service to David, they were well known to him, and he includes their names here. This too is in keeping with the judgment seat of Christ, where no doubt many names will become prominent who were comparatively little known down here. Many having served in obscurity here, will there enjoy the fullness of "*Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly*" (Matthew 6:18).

Asahel—Energy and Devotedness

Let us consider Asahel, the brother of Joab first. We remember that he was killed at a comparatively young age, before David became king over all Israel. When a fight broke out between the followers of David and those who under Abner continued to support Saul's son Ishbosheth, Abner and his men were defeated.

Asahel made a point of pursuing Abner, no doubt thinking if Abner were dead, the rest would quickly make peace and follow David. But Abner was the more experienced soldier and after remonstrating twice with Asahel, was obliged to kill him.

There are at least two lessons to be learned here. First of all, we see in Asahel the energy and speed of youth. (Scripture tells us he was “as light of foot as a wild roe” 2 Sam. 2:18) But sometimes this energy is not directed in the right way. God cannot bless such zeal, although it is well intentioned. So too, we may die in battle if we go forth in our own strength and without God’s mind.

On the other hand, we find that David includes Asahel in his list of mighty men. Though he died as a relatively young man, David never forgot his zeal and his devotedness. David valued the motive even if the act itself was not done with God’s mind. So we sometimes seek to act for the Lord with an energy and zeal that has much of the flesh in it. God is faithful and may not allow us to get the victory under such circumstances. However, the One who knows the heart can and will reward a right motive, and in that day when God will “*make manifest the counsels of the hearts. . . then shall every man have praise of God*” (1 Cor. 4:5).

Eliam—Faithfulness in the Face of Failure

Another name that is in this list is that of Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite. We will find that this man was the father of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite with whom David committed adultery. We know too that Eliam’s father Ahithophel defected to Absalom when he rebelled against David, and when Ahithophel’s counsel was not followed, he committed suicide. We can only imagine the thoughts and feelings that must have

rent Eliam's heart over all this—how he must have felt to see his beautiful daughter's marriage destroyed and her husband killed. No doubt he was one of the few who knew the details of the case. Yet how encouraging to see that Eliam did not waver in his loyalty to David, continuing to serve him faithfully. He is rewarded by a place in David's list of mighty men.

This also has a solemn lesson for us. The Lord may allow wrong to be done to us or to our loved ones—serious wrong that cannot be passed over. At such times we are tested most severely as to whether we will honour the Lord, or whether we will succumb to the pain and sorrow of it all and do that which ultimately dishonours the Lord. On the human level we can understand how Ahithophel might have been influenced to follow Absalom, perhaps thinking that by his despicable conduct David had forfeited the crown. But the One who could say, "*To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence*" (Deut. 32:35) would take care of the matter. Meanwhile David was the rightful king and was to be owned as such. So today we are to honour God in all our ways, not allowing even the deepest pain to distract us from following the Lord with a full heart. We may rest assured that such faithfulness will have its reward in that day!

Haharai—Humble Service

Another name that comes before us is that of Naharai the Beerothite, armourbearer to Joab. Here we find a man who perhaps all his life was given a

relatively simple job to do, although involving a great deal of trust and also potential danger. Combined with this he was compelled to serve Joab, a man who was himself not a man of faith. But evidently Naharai did his job well, and is rewarded for it.

Again we find a real lesson for our souls in this. We will not be rewarded necessarily for doing great things, but rather for using the particular talent that the Lord has given, doing what He wills. In Matt. 25 the man who was given two talents got the same reward as the one given five talents, for each used what he was given for the Master. May we be content to do that which may seem menial, for God rewards according to faithfulness and not gift.

Uriah—Faithful unto Death

The last name in the list is that of Uriah the Hittite. We know how David first of all committed adultery with his wife, then used his authority as a king to have him set in the battle where he would be killed. We know too his remarkable devotedness to David while all this was going on, refusing the comforts of home while others were in conflict. We feel sad at the end of such a faithful man. Yet surely this has been in principle the lot of more than one devoted Christian down through the ages.

How many have been betrayed by those from whom they had a right to expect protection and support. How often selfish motives have allowed even dear Christians to take part in such treachery!

Does our blessed Master know and understand this? Indeed he does, for he was betrayed by one

who had been intimately connected with him during the whole of His earthly ministry, then forsaken by all His disciples, and eventually denied by one of them with oaths and curses. He may allow us to feel in some measure the same rejection, while reserving a reward for faithfulness under such extreme testing. May we count it a privilege to follow in His steps!

Joab—Fleshly Ambition

In closing we mention one name that occurs three times in the chapter, yet is not one of the mighty men, and is mentioned only because of his connection with others. Joab's name is most prominent in David's history, and no doubt he performed mighty acts as well as supervising the winning of many victories.

But he was not a man of faith, and is typical of man in the flesh. He had a great deal of ambition, no doubt a measure of ability, and also a fair degree of common sense. He could even discern at times a wrong spirit in David, but he responded using intrigue and human wisdom rather than moral power. It is sad to see such a man, so prominent in David's various wars, yet not included in David's list of mighty men.

At the end of his life David had to tell Solomon not to allow his hoar head to go down to the grave in peace, for Joab had killed two men better than himself, and shed the blood of war in peace. It seems clear from the history that both of these needless killings were motivated largely by a fear that some-

how his position as captain of the host might be threatened.

May this also be a voice to us, for ambition and a fleshly desire to have the first place may in fact place us in the public eye down here, and for a time we may seem to have triumphed. However, God who knows the heart will reward according to His estimate, and He cannot reward that which has been done for self. No, all such things constitute wood, hay, and stubble, and will have to be burned up in that day (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Let us not be envious of the present glory others may seem to be get. Rather let us quietly follow the Lord, for His approval in that day will make up for it all.

We trust the Lord will bless this meditation to our souls, that we live our lives down here in view of that day, rather than for man's day! *W.J. Prost*

“Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favourable no more?” (Psa. 77:7)

The Christian does not go back to former mercies (as the Jew rightly would) because he always stands in present favour, even if Satan have got hold of his mind for a time. He returns into the sunshine of it, when the cloud that arose out of his own heart is passed. The Jews had early sovereign blessings, and are right to remember them when they have been cast off, though it be not for ever. The Christian is *never cast off*. Hence he has not to remember but enters again into the enjoyment of divine favour which *has never ceased*. *J.N. Darby*

Christian Love

“A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (Jn. 13:34).

What a lofty standard to follow—to love one another *as* Christ has loved us. How did He love? He loved in spite of all our weakness, failures, and sins. His love rose above every barrier, proving itself superior to every hinderance. *Many waters could not quench* His love—not even the dark waters of death, for He loved us and gave Himself for us.

Such love is to be our model. We are to love one another *as* Christ loved us. It is the outflow of the Divine nature in the believer. It may express itself in various ways—at times, rebuking, reproofing, or even smiting. Our Lord had occasionally to do so in reference to those whom, notwithstanding, He loved with an everlasting, unchangeable love.

True love is not *blind*, for it occupies itself with my faults in order to deliver me. *“Love suffereth long, and is kind . . . love never faileth”* (1 Cor. 13:4-8). *“little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth”* (1 Jn. 3:18).

There are two kinds of spurious love—*sectarian* and *clique*. There is a great danger in loving a person merely because they hold the same opinions as we (*sectarian*) or because their habits and tastes are agreeable to us (*clique*). It is not Christian love to love our own opinions, or our own image. True Christian love is to love the *image of Christ* wherever we may see it.

excerpted, Things New & Old, C. H. Mackintosh

Children of Light and Children of Night

“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” (1 Thess. 5:5, 6)

The growing preoccupation with occult (supernatural) themes is a world wide epidemic. Music, books, movies, games, etc.—all are being saturated with its wickedness. And because of the opportunity to gain immense wealth through occult means (see Acts 19:19), man spreads it the more rapidly.

This scourge is but one further preparation for the coming great apostasy when man will give up even the profession of Christianity and embrace Satanic delusion. *“And then shall that Wicked be revealed. . . even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. . .”* (see also Rev. 12:9, 12).

The foundation for this final deception is currently being laid in unprecedented ways in the minds of the young. It is effectively disseminated through recreation as well as schools. Libraries and literature classes are used to communicate occult themes to children who are easy targets of this evil when it is presented as *excitement* and *fun*. Even parents are lulled into accepting Satanic subject matter if it is hidden in *educational* content.

Though the presence of the Spirit of God on earth inhibits such evil (see 2 Thess. 2:7), as the day grows morally darker the conflict intensifies. The world is little aware how much of its well being and

order is due to the presence of the Spirit of God and the assembly still being here. A brother once said that when the Holy Spirit leaves the earth, God will lift the lid and let the stench of what is in the human heart fully come out.

Seeing the world hastening on towards its end, may we be found walking *circumspectly, not as fools* as this dreadful time draws near (Eph. 5:15).

“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober; and watch unto prayer.” (1 Pet. 4:7)

A Further Loving Warning to Parents

A beloved brother recently shared some of the preceding thoughts, which are timely in view of a series of childrens' fiction that has lately become favorite reading in many lands. These wildly popular stories, written by a young divorced British mother (who says she *believes in God*), presents the make believe adventures of an orphan named *Harry Potter*. Four of the planned seven stories are now available in the series. Specifically targeted are 9 to 12 year old children, though all ages read them.

The craftiness of this fiction is unparalleled. It is clearly Satanic in nature, though many supposed *experts* praise the *Harry Potter* series. Those—especially Christians—who express concern are quickly labeled inflexible dogmatists or religious zealots. *“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light”* (2 Cor. 11:14).

The following warning is presented with the prayerful desire that dear Christian families may preserved from such awful influences of Satan.

Who and What is “Harry Potter”?

The stories concern an orphan boy who is a witch. Born to parents who also were witches, each story describes a battle between good witches (such as Harry’s parents) and evil ones like the witch who killed them. Harry miraculously survives the attack which has orphaned him. Bearing a *mark in his forehead* (Rev. 14:9) of the assault, he begins to attend an invisible (to mere humans) school for witches. His teachers are an assorted group of wizards, witches and other occult figures. All manner of magic and witchcraft form his *normal* life.

Yet the most blasphemous subtlety of this story is its portrayal of the battle between *good* witches and *evil* witches. Thus Satan teaches children that what God calls *abomination* (Deut. 18:10-12), is in reality, still to be considered *good*!

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness...!” (Isa. 5:20)

Judging with Righteous Judgement

Writing to the believers at Corinth, the beloved apostle through Divine inspiration tells them that he speaks *“as to wise men”*. They are responsible to *“judge ye what I say”* (1Co 10:15). Thus, rather than reviewing the *Harry Potter* stories, let us hear from the following excerpts, thoughts of those who are best acquainted with this work. Then let us hear the Divine Word of God so that each may judge these things using *true* and *righteous judgement*.

The Author Speaks

First the author, J. K. Rowling, states, “Harry’s status as an orphan gives him a *freedom* other children can only dream about. Being removed from the expectations of parents is alluring. The orphan . . . is *freed* from the *obligation* to satisfy parents.”

But Scripture says, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother;*” (Eph. 6:1, 2). And, “*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*” (Joh 8:36).

She also says that as Harry grows older in future episodes, “the books are going to get darker”! Thus, once the imaginations and hearts of young children have been captured by this wicked series, the author evidently intends to make the stories more corrupt, violent, immoral and demonic!

But Scripture says “*whatsoever things are true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report; . . . think on these things*” (Php 4:8), and believers are to “*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*” (Eph 5:1).

As for finding acceptable children’s reading materials, we have a wonderful principle found in Isa. 7:15. “*Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*”

The World Speaks

The world is vigorous in its defense. One critic says: “These books teach kids that reading can be fun. The Harry Potter books are often the *first* that a child reads just for *fun*, opening up children’s eyes to the further possibilities of *recreational reading*.”

They can *change* a child's attitude about reading while improving reading skills.”

What awful reasoning! Encouraging children to fill their tender minds with witchcraft in order to *become better readers!* The Apostle Paul makes short work of this wicked logic—asking believers if the *damnation* of those who *falsely* accuse Christians of saying “*Let us do evil, that good may come?*” is not indeed just (Rom. 3:8).

One critic asserts that Harry has “basic human values—many of them are Christian!” What?! A witch with Christian values! What blasphemy! Let us hear the Word of God. “. . . *what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*” (2 Cor. 6:14).

Others say that “Harry's moral superiority carries the day, *not divine grace!*” These books also “teach children that there is a *different degree* of *truth* in fairy tales and in the historical facts of Christian salvation.” A *different degree* of truth?! What dishonor to the *Person and work* of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me!*” (Jn. 14:6)!

The Bible says: “*Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*” (Heb 10:29)

Satanic Religion Speaks

Those actively involved in Satan worship and

witchcraft are also happy with these books. A practicing witch commented, "If somebody wants to write about us as being *fun, interesting, magical people*, we don't mind that at all!" Another said, "[The *Harry Potter* series] portrays witches in a *positive* way. For once witches are the *heroes*, not the villains".

But the Bible says: "*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections. . . Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*" (Rom. 1:26, 32).

Professing Christianity Speaks

Most solemn of all is that many well known leaders in Christendom (such as Charles Colson) have actively supported this satanic series. One such Christian leader, writing in a popular religious publication states: "I don't think it's a strong enough case to say a book should be pulled [from school shelves] because it has witches and wizards and violence in it".

But the Bible says, "*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*" (1Co 15:33). Let us ever *believe God*, and *obey Him rather than men*.

Another Christian writer made this shocking statement: "Author J.K. Rowling has created a world with real good and evil, and Harry is definitely on the side of light fighting the dark powers". The Bible says, "*what concord hath Christ with Belial?*" (2Co 6:15)

Yet another Christian writer comments: "[The *Harry Potter*] series is a *Book of Virtues* with examples of compassion, loyalty, courage, friendship, and even self-sacrifice."

To such horrible thinking, our blessed Lord Jesus says: *“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch”* (Matt. 15:14).

A Young Believer Speaks

Let us now hear the words of a dear nine year old boy—a believer in the Lord Jesus. Jean-Paul is enrolled in a private, Christian school in Baton Rouge, La. During reading time, students in his class are given the *Harry Potter* books to read! Jean-Paul’s folks have stoutly resisted this activity, requesting that their son be allowed to go to the school library instead.

When asked why he doesn’t read the series, Jean-Paul simply says, *“In the Bible it says not to do witchcraft”*. *“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou established praise”* (Psa. 8:2).

The Spirit of Antichrist

In closing let us once more hear God’s Word. *“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists”* (1 Jn. 2:18). *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God”* (1 Jn. 4:1).

Oh dear reader! Consider well these things. *Harry Potter*, the fictional boy-witch, has two natures molded into one being. Though a witch with magical powers, he also possesses *human feelings and emotions*. When not at the witchcraft school, he lives with normal humans. Yet, he is able to see and move in a world invisible to mere mortals—a world

of spirits. And he is portrayed as always on the side of good, always gaining victory over evil.

Do we not see the most horrible subtlety and blasphemy of all, in this?! The hero of this wicked fantasy has *many of the attributes of an antichrist*—in spirit *Harry Potter* is very subtly presented to the young as a *substitute* for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even worse, the antichrist spirit in *Harry Potter* is directed at little children! It seeks to draw them away from the One who said *suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not*. These stories do much to prepare the hearts and minds of little ones to accept the spirit of antichrist. May God deeply stir us up to practically *be... separate and touch not the unclean thing* (2 Cor. 6:17).

Let us cast "*down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God... bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (2Co 10:5).

"*It is high time to awake out of sleep for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed!*" (Rom. 13:11). *Ed.*

Note: Should any desire, a list of sources which have been quoted in this article is available.

Having cast out and crucified the *Son of God*, the world would have Him forever stay at the right hand of God (Mk. 16:19). But there is a limit to His sitting there. He's coming back as the *Son of Man*, and this the world fears. It will be an awful day for this world when the *Son of Man* is revealed. *W. Potter*

Feed the Flock

Good News

The story is told of a successful, wealthy, and kindhearted professional athlete who entered a major tournament, won first place, and was consequently awarded a large cash prize. A few days later, when the awards ceremony was over, the athlete left the banquet room—grand prize check in hand and walked to his car in the parking lot. On his way, a young woman approached him. Congratulating him on his victory, she broke down into tears, telling him about her baby who was critically ill, near death. She spoke of the medical treatment the little one needed, and her grief at watching her baby die because she couldn't afford the necessary care.

After listening to her, the athlete, touched by her account, took out a pen and, endorsing his winning check, handed it to the woman saying, “get your baby the medical care it needs.”

The next day he was having lunch in a restaurant when one of the tournament officials stopped at his table. Describing the young woman, he asked, “Is it true that you were talking to her in the parking lot yesterday?”

The athlete nodded and recounted the woman's story and what he had done for her.

“Well,” said the official shaking his head sadly, “I've got bad news for you. That woman's a con-artist. She has no sick, dying baby, she has no medical needs—in fact, she has no children at all! She's come around here before, and others have been taken in

by her phony story too. I'm sorry to have to tell you that she fleeced you out of a lot of money"

The athlete frowned and stared at the floor. Then, looking back at the official, he said slowly, "You mean there really isn't any sick baby who's dying?"

"That's right," said the official.

The athlete paused, then continued with a big smile, "That's the best news I've heard all week!"

Believers are not to be "overcome of evil," but are to "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). We are passing through a hostile wilderness where there is much to discourage and turn aside, much that would cause our love to *wax cold*. But we are to consider our perfect pattern—the Lord Jesus Christ Who, "*endured such contradiction of sinners against himself*". Thus we will be kept from becoming spiritually "*wearied and faint*" (Heb. 12:3).

And though Christians are to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Mk. 10:16), let us never allow the shallowness and callousness of this Christ rejecting world to dictate the outflow of love which ought to characterize us. "*See that none render evil for evil unto any. . . ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men*" (1 Thess. 5:15).

Ed.

Too often we sigh and look *within*. Jesus sighed and looked *without*. We sigh and look *down*. Jesus sighed and looked *up*. We sigh and look to *earth*. Jesus sighed and looked to *heaven*. We sigh and look to *man*. Jesus sighed and looked to *God*.

Spiritual Gems for the Path of Faith

Practical Reflections

Acts 8:20–35

v 20 *“But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.”*

And so it shall be with all, who in blind arrogance, think they can purchase that which God offers freely. *“yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price”* (Isa. 55:1). *“And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”* (Rev. 22:17).

v 21 *“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”*

Man’s outward religious appearance, diligent efforts at good works, reasonings and philosophies of his mind—none are of value to God. Man looks *on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart* (1 Sam. 16:7). Let us ever remember that *“He knoweth the secrets of the heart”* (Psa. 44:21).

v 22, 23 *“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”*

The wickedness hidden *inside* (“gall”) and visible *outside* (“bond”) Simon, had completely bound him. Yet God, in infinite, loving grace held open a place of refuge—but it must be entered through the door of *repentance*. How vitally, eternally important is true repentance before God!

v 24 *“Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.”*

Poor, blinded Simon! There was only one safe path open to him. He must bow before God as the publican in a prior day, saying, “*God be merciful to me a sinner*” (Luke 18:13). Sadly, like King Saul (see 1 Sam. 15:15–30), there was evidently had no *personal* reality. He desires Peter to pray for him—to make things right with God for him. Fatal error! “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. 2:5).

v 25 “*And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.*”

How beautiful to see the grace of God at work. It took a *great persecution* to scatter the gospel from Jerusalem to Samaria, by disciples fleeing Jewish religious hatred. Now as some disciples *return* to Jerusalem, they too, preach the gospel. The persecution resulting from Stephen’s martyrdom is still used of God to bring blessing!

v 26 “*And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*”

While many preached the gospel, as they *fled* from Jerusalem, Philip does not seem to have done so. He is referred to as *the evangelist* in Acts 21:8. He is evidently exercising his evangelical gift when he goes (not “flees”) to Samaria to preach the gospel. After his work there is accomplished, the Lord (not “persecution”) sends him to another location.

All believers are to *do the work of an evange-*

list—whether in the daily tasks of life, or resulting from persecution of the enemy. We are to be *instant in season* and *out of season*. Those who have been given the *gift* of an *evangelist* however, have but one guide—the Lord’s voice. Philip’s path shows the Spirit’s leading (rather than guidance by circumstances—see Psa. 32:8, 9) in his travels to Samaria, then to the desert, and finally when taken to Azotus.

v 27, 28 “*And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.*”

How often in our lives, in order to bless us, the Lord must *strip away* all that we rest in—position, ability, wealth, friends. Then, placing us in *desert circumstances* where there is no distraction nor visible means of support, He shows through His Word where the source of true blessing is found.

The eunuch, with the intense longing of an unfulfilled heart, had made a difficult and, no doubt, expensive pilgrimage to the place where he naturally expected to find heart satisfaction. Yet he was returning as empty and unsatisfied as he had come. But in that desert wasteland, he was finally to discover true heart satisfaction.

v 29 “*Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.*”

The Spirit’s *leading* and a willingness to *identify* with those in need, are two essential requirements for evangelizing. “*This man receiveth sinners, and*

eateth with them" (Luke 15:2).

v 30 "*And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?*"

We find here three more essential elements of evangelization—*eagerness* to share, willingness to listen, and ability to *discern* real soul needs.

v 31 "*And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*"

The sixth essential element of evangelization is *humiliation*. Philip took the *low* place until he was invited to *come up* and help the seeking eunuch.

v 32, 33 "*The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.*"

Nothing the eunuch had observed in the proud, unbelieving religious display at Jerusalem corresponded to the Divine prophecy of Isaiah 53.

v 34, 35 "*And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*"

The *seventh* essential element of evangelization is *preaching Jesus*. May God ever fill the hearts, minds and lips of all who evangelize with that precious Name which is *above every Name*.

Ed.

Meditations of a father

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

In Exo. 17, Joshua as captain of Israel’s army was *below* engaging the enemy (Amalek). But victory did not so much depend on Joshua’s astute tactics, as on the hill *above* where a man with his hands held up stood. Growing weary, there were two who helped to hold up his hands.

What a picture! In the battle field of life we may think that our courage and strength has gained the victory. But faith counts on a real living Man, there in God’s presence with His hands uplifted, never growing weary. He will save all the way home. How important to realize that our victory depends wholly on that glorious *Intercessor* at God’s right hand.

B. Thonney

Bible Challenger

The first letter of each of the following responses will form the word which identifies something a great queen wanted to hear from a great man which prompted her to travel a great distance. This journey formed the basis of a coming judgement. The number in brackets indicates the number of words in each answer.

1. The purpose which a queen’s treasurer had journeyed to a foreign land for to do. (1)

2. Something which a king of Judah's mother had made, that resulted in her removal from being queen.

(1)

3. What did the queen of Sheba give to Solomon in greatness of quantity that is described as "there came no more such abundance". (1)

4. How the corrupt religious system of the world, which Scripture likens to a woman, lived her life as she glorified herself, sitting as a queen. (1)

5. The desired quest of a beautiful queen, that became assured when she was permitted to draw near the throne and touch the king's scepter. (2)

6. The beneficiaries mentioned in a request made by a queen who had prepared a banquet to persuade the king to respond favorably. (2) *R. Erisman*

Answers to November 2000 Bible Challenger

| | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Money | 2 Ki. 12:9 |
| Eyes | Ecc. 2:10 |
| All these things | Mat. 19:20 |
| Lion (and a) bear | 1 Sam. 17:34 |
| In my heart | Dan. 7:28 |
| Valiant | 1 Sam. 26:15 |
| Eight years | Acts 9:33 |

"An now, behold, the Lord hath kept **ME ALIVE**, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old." (Jos. 14:10)

R. Erisman