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Editorial

Working mothers or mothers working?

I heard them long before I saw them. Walking on the tree lined bike path near our home, the quiet serenity of the late morning spring day was abruptly interrupted by a child's loud wails. Between those wails, cries for "mommy" could be heard, along with the muffled response of an adult's voice. I rounded a bend in the path and they came into view—3 adults evenly spaced at the front, middle and the end of a line of 15 or more pre-school children.

These little children (none looked older than four or five)—"residents" of one of several "day care" facilities in our town—were on a walk with the adults who were hired to care for them. Except for talking among some of the children, there was little conversation—the adults speaking only when it seemed necessary to give orders to the children.

One little child at the very end of the line—evidently the source of the loud wailing—was the picture of abject misery. He kept trying to pull away from the adult holding his hand. Both appeared equally unhappy with each other.

Walking by the first worker I smiled and said "hello"—receiving in return an unsmiling, silent nod. The second worker—also silent—did manage a faint smile. The last, still busily occupied with the unhappy little boy did not even look up.

This experience suggested to me some stark realities connected with the issue of *working*

mothers—those who are engaged in full-time employment that takes them outside the home, away from their family. Though there are many other considerations, let us ponder three of these *realities*.

Constant access

The *first* reality is that a child desperately needs daily, constant contact with its mother's nurturing love and care.

A *working mother* is often unavailable to her children. She can't provide nurturing and love when her child may need it most. Five days a week, eight or more hours each day, the children I met on the trail were denied vital access to their mothers.

A *mother working* within the sphere of home and family, is always accessible to her children. The Divine pattern is found in Hebrews 4:16. We enjoy constant, unchanging access into the presence of our God. Why should Christian parents be satisfied with a lower standard for their children?

“ . . . Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.” (Ex. 2:9)

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children” (1Th. 2:7)

Day care workers can't be substitute moms

The *second* reality is that an adult whose chief concern is earning a living working as a “day care” provider for others' children, is a poor *alternative* for a *nursing mother*. No matter how diligently they may carry out their duties or how much they may

love children, none but a mother can be a mother.

"...a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Prov. 29:15)

"I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful... a mother in Israel" (2 Sam. 20:19)

A "P.S." for mothering isn't possible

The *third* reality is that a mother has but *few years* to mother (the same may be said for a father) her children. All too quickly children are grown, leave home, and with them forever goes the priceless privilege and opportunity of *mothering*.

"I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house ..." (1Tim. 5:14).

"The wisdom of women buildeth their house..." (Prov. 14:1, JND trans.).

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed;..." (Prov. 31:28).

Communism and consumerism

Forty years ago, when I was a teenager, the "cold war" between democracy and communism was at its height. I remember hearing warnings that communism was making a deadset to destroy the traditional *home* and *family* values of Western cultures.

Free-world societies were quick to criticize a political system in which the *state* removed children from their parents and their homes and placed them in government run nurseries and day care centers. The evident objects of these actions were twofold: (1) *indoctrination* and, (2) enabling *both* father and mother to become *full-time laborers* in the work-

place! The sad result was that the communist state became a *surrogate parent*.

Lenin (one of the originators of communism) was reported to have said: “Give me your child for its first 5 years and then you can have it back—I’ll have made it a communist for life.” If an atheist politician understood the value of the early years of a child’s life, how is it that so many *working mothers* don’t?

Now—when communism is no longer a threat—we wonder, “*Who or what* is it in our world today, that denies children (such as were on the bike trail) the daily nurturing, loving care of their mothers?

The answer, to our sorrow and shame, is that the god of *consumerism* has captured the heart of man. Satan has used that idol to successfully accomplish what *communism* failed to do—the separation of mothers from their infants and little children.

Rather than sacrificing children through the philosophy of *the stoicks* (Acts 17:18) as seen in communist ideology, we now see them, through the philosophy of *the epicureans* (overindulgence), being sacrificed to the golden idol of consumerism.

Molech and materialism

In Jeremiah 32:35 we read that the beloved people of God had become so involved with the Satanic idols of the Gentiles, that “*they built the high places of Baal. . . to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech. . .*”.

That this unspeakably horrible sacrifice of young children to the Ammonite fire-god took place among God’s chosen people, is unthinkable, except we find

it recorded in the Bible for our learning and warning.

We recoil from such cruel indifference which could throw helpless little ones into Molech's sacrificial fires. Yet today we see the same indifference for the children who are *morally* offered to the *god of consumerism*. The wailing little boy on the bike trail indicates that children today feel some of the same terror that those innocents must have felt when they were hurled into those awful fires.

Oh! dear parents—and we especially address our comments to the beloved mothers who are to *guide the house*—do not allow your hearts to become hardened by the covetousness and lusts of this *present evil world!* (Gal. 1:4) Far better to sacrifice your ability to purchase more “stuff”, then to sacrifice your precious lambs by following the godless philosophy of self-seeking, materialism.

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matt. 18:6)

“. . . making a difference. . .” (Jude 22)

Other realities, however, ought to be considered in order to give balance to the foregoing comments, for we are to have “*an understanding of the times.*” (1 Chron. 12:32) and the *times* we live in present many complicated family situations. A man-made *set of rules* for guidance will ever be found wanting.

Consider for example, the astronomical rise of *single parent* families in so-called Christian lands. Because he or she must earn a living, a single

Christian parent may be unable to spend all the time they would desire, with their children. How comforting to realize that our Father, who knows perfectly each situation, “*giveth more grace*” (Jas. 4:6). A parent found in such *abnormal* circumstances can still walk to His glory, expecting the Lord’s blessing.

God also promises the needed *wisdom* for every occasion of life, and gives it without rebuke. (Jas. 1:5) Let us walk in close fellowship with Him who is perfect in love, tenderness, and compassion.

There are no doubt, many other family situations—illness, unexpected debt, rapidly changing demands in the job market, schooling or retraining needs, etc.—that directly bear on children and “day care” issues. But in all these things, the One who declares the *end from the beginning* (Isa. 46:10) is ever our wonderful, never failing resource.

“*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?*” (Jer 32:27)

A mother’s work. . .difficult and demanding

A Godly mother who remains at home, raising her children for the Lord’s glory, will have accomplished a work of far greater difficulty, needing far greater ability and skill, than any other profession. Though *mothering* is without equal in its complexity, challenges, and demands, a God fearing mother, acting in faith and obedience, will find the needed supply of grace and wisdom to do it well.

“*. . .they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*” (S. of S. 1:6)

Ed.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is a great fact, one which we must apply to ourselves. In the book of Acts it is dealt with as a fact—a fact from which none can escape its application. Though it have its twofold force and meaning, men are to know how it addresses itself to each, and none can elude it.

Resurrection is thus set before us, even as, at creation, the sun was set in the heavens and all the creation of God had to do with it. Who could pluck the sun out of the heavens?

The glory seated itself in the cloud, and Israel *must* know it there, and have to do with it there. (Exo. 13:21, 22) It may conduct them cheerfully, or rebuke and judge them. But there it is in their company, in their midst, and the camp in its different conditions must have to do with it.

Consider too the *budding rod*. (Num. 17:8) It is brought out from the sanctuary to the camp, and the camp must accept its presence. It is there, a fact none can deny. But whether they will use that fact obediently and taste the fruit of the service of God's anointed One, or rebel to their own destruction is another thing. The budding rod speaks both of judgement and mercy.

So too Christ in the world that Satan had usurped through subtlety, was also a fact. None could deny or rid themselves of its force. Satan shall know it, and men shall be blessed by it, or find in it their guilt and judgement enhanced. The Kingdom of God had

come—they must accept that as fact.

Just in this manner is the present great fact of the resurrection. Jesus is risen and exalted—He is ascended and glorified. Men might as well try to pluck the sun from the heavens as to try to escape the application of this fact to his condition—whether that be repentance or unbelief.

Thus in Acts, Peter opens that ministry taking the resurrection of the Lord as his text. (Acts 2:22-36) He exhibits that great fact in its judicial and in its saving power. Peter's fullest interpretation of it is found in the house of Cornelius, when he preaches that Jesus is set of God both for judgement and for salvation. (Acts 10:42, 43)

Paul does the same as Peter, in his ministry, interpreting the resurrection to both heart and conscience. At Antioch he preaches the forgiveness of sins upon it. But he solemnly warns that being careless or indifferent to it, will surely bring judgment. (Acts 13:16-41)

To man *as man*, the resurrection speaks of *judgement*. It witnesses a solemn collision between God and man, and God is on the side of *man's Victim*. God has glorified the One whom man denied and crucified. God is stronger than man, and man must be overthrown in such conflict, judgment falling on him that is opposed to God.

To the broken, confessing sinner, resurrection speaks of *salvation*. It witnesses God's satisfaction in that *atonement for sin which Jesus offered*. If God is satisfied, who can condemn? God witnesses the efficacy of the death of Christ for all who believe—

who shall lay anything to the charge of such?

Thus we see the resurrection speaking both of judgment and mercy—as man either looks at the cross of Christ with believing hearts, or despises and slights it. Thus it speaks to us whether we will *bear* or *forbear*. To enjoy it as the salvation of God, we must personally, and livingly by faith, be brought into connection with it. But if it be slighted all our days, at the end it will *bring itself into connection with us*, whether we will or not.

If we do not now by faith use a risen Jesus, and get the virtue that is in Him, He will visit us by and by, and that, too, with the judgement that will then be in him. No depreciation will then avail—now, seeking will avail.

In the book of Acts we learn that God has taken out of man's hand the very weapon of his fullest enmity against Himself, and used it for man's eternal blessing! If man despises such goodness, he must answer to God for having taken that weapon into his hand. Solemn thought!

The sword that man was using in hostility to God, God has turned as into a plough-share, whereby to get for man the Bread of everlasting life. Joseph of old was sold by his brethren—but Joseph sold became an instrument and channel of life to them who had sold him. Their very wickedness was turned of God to their blessing.

J. G. Bellet

Meditations of a father

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”. (Eph. 1:7).

Redemption is buying back with the purpose of setting free. According to this Scripture, we (believers) have it. As a result of that redemption that we have, we also have forgiveness of sins. Then in Romans 3:24 it tells us that another result contingent on that redemption is that we are justified. Just think of it—the price paid to buy us back to God is so complete that not only are all our sins forgiven, but we are looked by God Himself as righteous.

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” (Matt. 11:25,26).

It was the time of the Lord's rejection by His people Israel. What, naturally speaking, would have been so hard, the Lord looks up in perfect confidence and accepts from the hand of His Father and even thanks Him. What seemed to make no sense to the wise and prudent (those who leaned on their own understanding), was revealed to babes (those who trusted in the Lord with all their hearts and accepted in the simplicity of faith what their Father had order for their own good). Then the Lord Jesus

speaks of His yoke and the rest that comes from taking it. A yoke is often used for work, but there is rest in work when we are yoked with the Lord Jesus.

“Jesus . . . groaned in the Spirit, and was troubled.” (Jn. 11:33)

“Jesus Wept.” (Jn. 11:35)

The Lord Jesus knew that He would raise Lazarus from the dead. Why then the groaning and weeping? It is because He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. What troubles us and makes us weep, even now as our great High Priest He feels and accordingly intercedes for us. No trial that is out of reach for Him.

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. . . I will maintain mine own ways before Him.” (Job 13:15)

Job thought that he trusted God completely, but the fact that he maintained his own ways showed He really didn't trust as He should. When at the end, he was brought to see God and His greatness, Job bowed in humbleness with no more self defense. Then God turned the captivity of Job. We often convince ourselves we trust God when really it is a only self-confidence none but God sees. In faithfulness and perfect wisdom God allows us to be painfully broken until we, ceasing to struggle, turn from ourselves. It is then we can appreciate in greater fullness all that He is for us.

R. Thonney

Success

In meditating on the subject of “success,” I carefully looked up that word and found it to be a very rare word in the Bible. I haven’t been able to find it but in the one passage read in Joshua. (Jos. 1:8). I suppose it is a word used often in the vocabulary of the present day. There never was a day when that line of things was more pressed upon young people. In order that their lives might be lived in a way to contribute to their own encouragement and the good of society, they must make what the world terms a “success.”

However, if we are to be guided by worldly standards and ideals, we will live a different life from that mapped out for young Christians in the Bible.

When one is referred to in the world, one of the questions generally asked is as to his standing or accomplishments. And one of the requisites to a satisfactory answer is to be able to say “He has made quite a success.”

A man who can write his name at the bottom of a check and perhaps that check tells its story in six or seven figures—that one is, in the eyes of the world, a success. Then here is another who has not accumulated so much in material wealth, but is a great political leader. The world pays tribute to him too. They, and many more like them are *successful*.

However, when we consider success using the Word of God as the measuring stick, how different everything appears. This Divine standard never fails to tell the truth, and it is the only standard by which you and I can judge these matters.

If you use a faulty standard, your conclusions will be faulty? Recently I wanted a new pipe for my furnace. I took a measurement of the old pipe and it came out exactly at 10". I ordered the pipe but when it came it didn't fit. I thought the clerk had made a mistake. I was positive my measurement was right. Then I checked the yardstick I used to take the measurement and found that it had one inch cut off! I used the wrong standard and thus, my conclusions were wrong, though I was absolutely sure I was right. So it is in measuring what is called *worldly* success. What is the standard you are using to measure such success?

In Matthew's gospel where the Lord gives the talents to His servants, He gives to every man according to his several ability. He didn't give the same to each man. When He came to reckon, He reckoned with them on that ground, too. So He is going to reckon with you on that ground.

You are a steward of what God has endowed you. Will you use all this splendid equipment to advance yourself—pushing on, getting to the front, to the top? What about this, "*It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*"? (1 Cor. 4:2). How will it be in that day when you give account to the Lord Jesus—when the question is asked how you have used your talents?

One came to the Lord and told Him he had kept what was committed to him laid up in a napkin. He was rebuked. God has given you these to use for Him, and in that day will require it of you again.

excerpt adapted from an address, C. H. Brown

“They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Mk. 2:17)

I recently asked a co-worker about his “standard” response to the common greeting “How’re you doing?” As I would pass him in the halls and ask him this question, he always responded “Better.” That made me wonder if something had been wrong with him.

So I asked him about it. His answer was exercising to me. He said that he answers, “Better” to the generic “how are you” question, because it has the same effect on most other people that it had on me. Hearing that he is *better*, they stop and ask him what *was wrong*. Their question allows him to tell them that he *was* on his way to a lost eternity in hell, but now he’s saved by faith in Christ, and on his way to heaven!

The next time someone asks “How’re you doing,” let’s remember our blessed Lord Jesus, the Great Physician, and how it is that He has made us *better*.

T. Bookman

Recently, I was reading the words of the Lord Jesus in John 10. “*No man takes my life from me, I lay it down of myself that I might take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father*”. Death had no claims on the Son of God who had life in Himself. (Jn. 5:26)

Yet our blessed Lord surely felt the awful agony of crucifixion. Psalm 22 clearly foretells that. Both Jew and Gentile stand guilty before God, of the

murder of Emanuel. But *He lay down His life* of His own choice. At the end of those three awful hours of suffering from the hand of thrice holy God, the work of redemption was fully accomplished. God was fully propitiated concerning the whole question of sin.

When the Savior cried “It is finished”, scripture records that it was a *loud* cry. With the words “*Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit*”, He bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Death had no claims on Him. He had never sinned (He *could* never sin), and thus He was not subject to death. Yet for our sakes He willingly *tasted death* for every man.

We read that “*without shedding of blood is no remission*” of sins. (Heb. 9:22). He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. His precious blood having been thus shed, proved that His life was poured out.

The Lord’s sufferings at the hand of man showed His patient love and man’s wretchedness. But those sufferings could never put away our sins—they only condemned man the more. It was only when the Lord Jesus was *made sin*, during the last three hours on the cross, that the atonement was wrought. Then He was forsaken of God, when it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, when He was wounded for *our* transgressions, bruised for *our* iniquities. (Isa. 53).

We get a wonderful example of this in the flood. Both the windows of heaven and the fountains of the great deep were *broken up*. (Gen. 7:11). They both beat upon the ark, yet those inside felt not a drop. “*For me Lord Jesus, Thou hast died, And I have died with Thee Thou art risen, my bands are*

all untied, And now Thou livest in me. The Father's face of radiant grace, Shines now in light on me."

Adapted, Keith Gorgas

"Praying always ... with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Galatians 6:18) "We ought not to care merely for the Christians that we know. Surely we ought to love them; but our hearts ought always, in private and in public, to take in the whole Church of God. We are never right if we do not. There is sectarian leaven in our hearts if we do not go out toward all that are of God."

Lessons on the books of Chronicles, W. Kelly

[The Lord] has been so good to those gathered to His precious Name in giving such a precious deposit of truth. His Word to us is to *bold fast* till He comes. We pray especially for the dear young people that they may lay hold of the truth—or rather—that *it may lay hold of them*, so that we with them may *walk* in it. (3 Jn. 4). *from a personal letter*

The story is told of a boy whose father had given him a quantity of boxes to carry out of their house. As he walked across the yard, arms loaded, a neighbor called, "You're carrying too many."

The boy replied, "It's okay, my dad knows how many I can carry." *selected*

When *brethren* came out, what were they?
Nothing. What was their feeling? They took up the interest of the Church of God, desiring to see all who loved God manifested in it. A large measure of blessing followed; numbers joined. Then came trouble and trial within, and that plentifully occupied their hearts, and practically became their circle, consequently not the Church of the Living God.

We ought to be humbled—ah! humbled in the dust, if you please, *but not discouraged*. A truly humbled man is not discouraged; the discouraged man is not a humble man, for he has trusted, as man, to something beside God; true nothingness cannot.

People say, we have been too narrow, we must mix up a little. No, never—I cannot go back. *If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor*. I have nothing to go back from.

The one desire of my heart is the beauty and the blessing of the Church—the bride of Christ. *That will make me earnestly love all saints, for they are of it*. I desire its [the church] entire separation to Christ to whom she belongs—espoused as a chaste virgin, my feet in the narrow way—my heart as large as Christ's.

J. N. Darby

For those that know Him as Saviour

“And those three hours of darkness, those three hours of total eclipse between God and the One on the cross, rolled on, and then at the ninth hour, three o'clock in the afternoon, comes that great, that

terrible cry from Him. “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” Ah, He forsook Jesus that He might never forsake you and me. There was darkness for Him that there might be only light for us. He bore the judgement that we might go free. (Heb. 13:5)
For those who know Him not

We go to the cross, and see Jesus forsaken and in darkness, but the darkness is only from the sixth hour to the ninth; it passes away from Him. But oh! unsaved, lost soul, there will be no ninth hour for you; no passing away of the darkness for you, it will be forever.” (Matt. 8:12) *W.T.P. Wolston*

Do you want comfort? Nothing gives it so much as the thought of His coming. “*Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*” (1 Thess. 4:18). There may be sorrow in the night, but joy enough — *fulness of joy*—in that morning (Psa. 30:5) when we shall see Him as He is. Fulness of joy in being *like Him* and *with Him* for evermore.

When all the world seems to smile upon you, it is easy to think that there is little need to talk of such a thing as separation from the love of Christ. But if persecution were to break forth and come upon you, and you were led forth to the stake and fire, you would feel that the love of Christ is a *very precious*

Saints forget often that Christ is a great deal more watchful than they are. he said to Peter before he failed, “*I have prayed for thee*”. As soon as the heart

of a believer recognizes sin, it ought to recognize Christ praying for him. This blessed Lord is not only the *restorer* of our souls, but the One who continually renews the *flow* of affection between the Father and the wandering child.

The Father has *all* delight in Christ as the perfect expression of His love. What a God we have! Not contented to be Himself light and love, He has presented light and love and glory to us in His Son.

Has the delight and blessedness of fellowship with Him up there, discovered to us the poverty of all down here? Have we—a heavenly people—heavenly stores laid up in Christ? Why put off the joy of heaven for a future day? Why not begin *now* to live in heaven? God calls us to rejoicing and joy in Christ *now*.
G. V. Wigram

Answers to August 2000 Bible Challenger

O ffscouring	1 Cor. 4:13
B enjamin	Gen. 42:36
E njoy	1 Tim. 6:17
D esperately wicked	Jer. 17:9
I ron	Dan. 2:40
E ateth herbs	Rom. 14:2
N ot one thing	Josh. 23:14
T emples made with hands	Acts 17:24

“For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be **OBEDIENT** in all things.” (2 Cor. 2:9)
R. Erisman

Feed the Flock

Good Manners

The tired (and “retired”) ex-grade school teacher moved slowly towards the supermarket checkout counter. Her left leg hurt—a nasty reminder of its arthritic condition. Her whole body ached all over from the exertion of the long shopping trip. So tired was she, that she couldn’t even remember if she had taken all her medications that morning.

Coming from another aisle and heading for the same checkout counter, she saw a young man with four children and a pregnant wife in tow—their shopping cart full of groceries and other items.

The teacher observed the tattoo on his neck, and wondered if he had been to prison. His white T-shirt, shaved hair and baggy pants suggested that he very possibly was a gang member.

She slowed even more, to let the man and his family go ahead of her. “You can go first,” she offered.

But he countered her offer, “No, you go first.”

“No.” She persisted. “Go ahead, you have more people with you.”

“But,” came the reply, “we should *always respect our elders*.” Then with a sweeping motion, he motioned the elderly lady to go ahead of him in line.

A brief and surprised smile flickered across her face as she hobbled in front of him. She certainly had not expected such courtesy. Nodding “thank-you”, the ex-school teacher decided she couldn’t let such a moment pass. Turning back to him she asked “Who taught you your good manners, son?”

The young man, looking intently at the elderly lady, paused for a moment before answering. Then with a wide grin he answered, “Why, you did Mrs. Wallace—when I was in your third grade class!”

We read in Proverbs 22:6, “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*” The Spirit of God, by this precious verse, would surely encourage each parent to continue maintaining watchful care and diligence in the raising of their children.

The stories of Moses, Joseph, Daniel, Timothy and others recorded in the Bible give ample evidence of the blessing connected with the training of children in their earliest years, in that pathway which will lead to rich blessing.

Timothy *from a child*, had been taught—by his grand mother and his mother—*the holy scriptures*. They not only made him *wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*, they gave him the desire to serve the Lord, following the example of his spiritual father, the Apostle Paul. (Tim. 3:15, 1 Cor. 4:17)

Daniel was sorely tried and tested as a young man in Babylon, but he remained faithful, never turning aside from walking in faithfulness to Jehovah—and what blessing his devotion wrought! Daniel’s parents perhaps had little realization of the vital importance, lasting impact, and preserving blessing their training of him would have.

When Daniel *was old* he still walked faithfully in that which he had been taught as a child.

Ed.

Practical Reflections

Acts 7:34-47

v 34 *“I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.”*

Our wonderful God is a *seeing, hearing, and delivering* Saviour God. Though at times while we are passing through adversity, it may seem that He is not taking notice of our trials, still faith trusts Him. Not one thing through which His child passes is unimportant to the Father. And at the perfect time, and in the perfect way, He will come in to deliver.

v 35 *“This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send [to be] a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.”*

The heart of the Israelite slaves was so faithless that they dared to question and reject the very one God raised up to deliver them. This same danger exists today among God’s people. Self will may reject a servant—God’s messenger or deliverer— when sent in a time of individual or collective trial or difficulty.

v 36 *“He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.”*

Their sad unbelief did not turn God from His purpose of blessing. Egypt, the Red Sea and the forty years of wilderness journey proved two things: (1) God purposes of grace were unchanged and (2), the

Israelites hard heart of self will and unbelief was also unchanged. Now, in Stephen's day, the final appeal was being made to this stubborn people—the often unthankful recipients of Divine long-suffering grace and kindness.

v 37, 38 *“This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church (assembly) in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.”*

How solemn! *“This is that Moses”*—a special, chosen vessel of God. He was sent not only to be a *deliverer*; but he had *communed* with God, and he *spoke* the Word of God to them. To *reject* a servant is to reject God and His Word, and to miss the blessing that He would send through that channel.

v 39 *“To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,”*

The sad work of rejection of God's authority over them began *in their hearts*. It was there where they first rejected Moses that they in spirit turned back to the world. How important for believers to guard their heart's affections!

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23)

v 40, 41 *“Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is*

become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands"

Though they received the "living oracles" (the Word of God) it *did not profit them*, because it was not *mixed with faith in them that heard it*. (Heb. 4:2). Man is religious by nature, but without faith, human reason and his lusting heart will take him from truth and light and into idolatry and the world.

We rightly recoil at the awfulness of worshipping an animal (the golden calf—Ex. 32:4) in the place of God. But even believers can be caught up in that *spirit* of idolatry—the allowance of an object that replaces the blessed Lord in the affections of the heart. And these idols—wealth, fame, careers, hobbies, etc.—are just as repulsive to God, as the calf that Aaron fashioned from the golden earrings.

v 42, 43 "*Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices [by the space of forty years] in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.*"

What solemn consequences they reaped! Though chosen of God—His *precious, peculiar people*—He allowed them to follow the desires of their heart—desires which resulted in seventy sad years of captivity in Babylon. They lost the enjoyment of that good land, flowing with *milk and honey*, to which Jehovah, in long-suffering grace, had brought them.

What sorrow and loss Christians experience today—those who have been caught up in the idolatry of humanism which encourages self pleasing. Let none be *deceived*. There will be in each life, a time of reaping the fruits of such a course of self will.

v 44 *“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.”*

More solemn yet! During the very time when they were taken up with idolatrous worship, in their midst was the Divine witness of the true God. How dark and horrible the blindness that could not see the glory of Jehovah displayed in the tabernacle.

v 45, 46, 47 *“Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus [Joshua] into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house.”*

Generation after generation in Israel’s history, though often involved with idolatry, experienced the gracious presence of Jehovah. The tabernacle—with them in the wilderness and the promised land—finally gave way to the glorious temple Solomon built in Jerusalem. But the wonder and privilege of having the presence of Jehovah among them only made them more solemnly responsible for their idolatry and dark unbelief.

“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required:” (Luke 12:48) *Ed.*

Bible Challenger

The first letter of the following responses form will form the word which not only identifies something that not only hath appeared, but actually bringeth salvation to all men. The number in brackets indicates the number of words in each answer.

1. An attribute of God that caused a much loved king to become great, spoken at a time he also recalled god's shield of salvation in his life. [1]

2. What are God's purposes in the last time for those who are now kept by His power unto salvation. [4]

3. something no one ever need be, concerning the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation. [1]

4. An earnest exhortation concerning the common salvation that needed to be written. [4]

5. Something commanded to sing unto the Lord, when his salvation is shewn forth from day to day. [1]

6. A classification for believers who have put on the hope of salvation as a helmet. [3]

7. That which a multitude of escapees were commanded to do, so that they might see the salvation of the Lord with formidable barriers before and behind. [5]

8. That which the earth, seemingly a symbol of solidarity, shall be likened, as it grows old and will be contrasted to the Lord's salvation which shall be forever. [1]

9. What is needful for anyone to really know the

author of eternal salvation. [2]

10. The frequency of bestowed benefits from the God of our Salvation. [1]

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

R. Erisman

What a contrast between heaven and earth! See the place the earth has given the Lord Jesus Christ, God's well beloved Son! Measure all in this world by Christ. God's controversy with the world is the *place it gave Christ*.

We *know* that we have part in an ascended Christ. We *know* that He is the One who has put away every spot of sin. We *know* that He is the One who will take us to the Father's house. But are we letting what we *know* be *seen*—as it was in the life of Paul—as we pass through the wilderness.

W. Potter

Be mercilessly honest with yourself, and have everything out with God; none will ever treat you so tenderly as He.

If Christ has not the love of our hearts, He does not want the labor of our hands.

We *earn* a living, we *give* a life.

Spiritual Gems for the Path of Faith