

July 30

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines. Canticles 2:15

MANY deal slackly with themselves in respect to little violations of their consecration vow, saying,-- "What's the use of such carefulness and so different a life from that of the world in general?" Ah! there is great

R2093 *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me..."*

The promise of the divine favor and blessing is not to the forgetful, listless hearers who fail to apply their hearts unto instruction, but to the attentive hearers and faithful doers of the Word.--James 1:25...

There must be a daily laying up of its treasures of wisdom and counsel in the heart, and the working out of its principles in the life."

R3914 "There might be a firmness, a positiveness of the will as respects the great fact of consecration, yet a slackness as respects the little details of everyday life. Our suggestion is that this fixity of purpose should be extended to all of life's matters--that the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts, and so far as possible every act of life might speak forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Whoever takes this position is setting, fixing, establishing his affections, his mind, his heart on things above, and loosening them as respects things of earth...Such will grow the more rapidly, the more thriftily. On the contrary those who, even with fixity of will, rule their mortal bodies slackly, too leniently, are in danger of failing."

R5886 "THE LITTLE FOXES" *"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes."--Canticles 2:15*

IN THE above text the word "take" is used in the sense of *catch*--help us to catch the foxes, especially the *little foxes*. The fox is known as a very cunning, but docile little animal, not capable of ferocity and viciousness, but nevertheless the cause of much harm. Its very appearance of harmlessness makes it the more dangerous...

If we apply the term to sins, we find that there are little sins which are really more dangerous than grosser sins, because we are less likely to be on our guard against these than against the greater sins. Every one would be instinctively on guard against lions, bears, serpents, etc.; but little foxes are so attractive-looking and seem so artless in disposition that unless one has had bitter experience with them he would have little or no fear. But these little animals are much given to scratching and generally destroying everything with which they come in contact.

GUARD CAREFULLY THE "TENDER GRAPES"

In this illustration of the wise man the grape-vine is spoken of, as though these foxes have a special predilection for grapes--the grapes representing the fruits of the Holy Spirit. As these little foxes delight to tear the vine with their sharp claws and to gnaw the roots with their teeth, so small sins tear the branches and gnaw at the roots of the spiritual vine, thus endangering its very life. They destroy or devour the precious grapes, which are very tender. Grapes during the formative period and while very

use in it, for victories in little things prepare for greater things and make them possible: and on the contrary, surrender to the will of the flesh in the little things means sure defeat in the warfare as a whole.

We who have become "New Creatures," reckonedly, in Christ, know that we are to be tested (if our testings have not

small are exceedingly tender and the stems very brittle and easily snapped off the vine and destroyed. So the Spirit's fruitage in the hearts and lives of immature Christians may be easily ruined, either by their own lack of care and watchfulness or by the example of the brethren. How careful should those be who have been longer in the Heavenly way to guard their words and conduct in the presence of the younger, less mature ones, the lambs of the flock! Unloving criticism of the brethren before beginners, or others, may do untold harm and is a manifestation of a lack of love and Christian maturity...

Let us, dear brethren, strive to be more and more watchful to catch these "little foxes." Let us each, individually, watch and pray that we do not by thought or word or act of ours hinder or lessen our own fruit-bearing or that of another.

It is difficult for us to realize how potent is our influence for either good or evil in matters which, unless carefully scrutinized, seem trifling. Ah, these little foxes! Careless words, spoken with scarcely a thought or in a moment of impatience, little grumblings, a sarcastic word or laugh or look or shrug--oh, how these things count in our daily lives either for or against our own spiritual development, and often the development of others!"

Lu 16:10 KJV "...He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

SM349 "AN APPALLING LACK IN EVERYDAY LIFE...*Awake to a proper appreciation of justice...*The principle of justice enters into every transaction, even the most trivial. It applies not only to our dealings with the world at large, but with every member of our own family...

God did not say that we were to observe the Golden Rule whenever others observed it toward us, and to ignore it whenever others failed to observe it toward us. On the contrary, we are to practise it on every occasion, regardless of what others do. Then we shall know that all things shall work together for good toward us, because we shall be in line with God... The very least that we must do is to give justice to one another; and to do so will mean a great blessing to our own characters...

Unless we are just in our very hearts, unless we appreciate this principle of justice and rejoice to practise it, we shall not be fit for the Kingdom...

Whoever is not disposed to justice to such an extent as to be willing to suffer loss rather than do an injustice will not have a share in the Kingdom...

Let us remember that if we are true, loyal children of God, all our blemishes are covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness; and if we are doing with our might what our hands find to do in this great matter of justice, dealing with all, along the lines of the Golden Rule, we are showing the Father that we appreciate this principle as the foundation of His Government."

already commenced), and should realize that only as we practice self-denials in the little things of life, and mortify (deaden) the natural cravings of our flesh in respect to food, clothing, conduct, etc., will we become strong spiritually and be able to "overcome." Z. 99-172 R2496:6

R5750 "According to the Scriptures it is sinful for the Lord's people to injure one another in word, act or thought. But many do not realize this high standard, even after they have come into the family of God. They may not learn until months, or even years afterward, the full measure of the Divine Law respecting every affair in life."

R4514 "We should not only square our every act and word with strictest justice, but beyond this we should scrutinize our every *thought* and "bring every thought into subjection to the will of God"... Whoever does not love righteousness; yea, whoever does not hate inequity, is surely in danger."

R672 "THOUGHTS BY ALEX. D. M'RAE

Thoughts are a powerful factor, either for good or evil, in our influence upon our fellow beings. Figuratively, we should do our thinking as much as possible in the sunshine. Thoughts which are not regarded as wicked or filthy may yet have a most pernicious effect. Discontented thoughts may make as much misery for him who harbors them, and for his neighbors, as thoughts which are viciously impure... Content on the other hand, sweetens and brightens all within its reach. The cheerful look, the happy, winning smile, the loving word and the kindly deed may all be traced to contented thoughts... Happiness and contentment and glory redound, through our thanksgivings to the Giver of all good...

We can keep our minds pure and free by constantly putting pure, clean food for reflection into them. As a sack filled with wheat has little room for chaff or other refuse, so the mind that is stored with good things cannot harbor evil thoughts.

Therefore, "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Lu 16:10-12 KJV "...He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. (11) If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? (12) And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

R5436 "Unfaithfulness in the present time respecting things of trifling value in comparison would mean unfaithfulness in the future great things. Whoever therefore selfishly appropriates to himself the things of which he is steward will not be trusted with the future great things; and whoever is sacrificing will thus demonstrate his faithfulness, his loyalty to God, and to such the greater things will be entrusted. Would God entrust the riches of the future life and glory and honor to any who now prove themselves unfaithful, selfish, covetous, using present blessings merely for self-gratification? Surely not!"

R5740 *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." Luke 16:10...*

Our Lord gives us to understand that present opportunities are to be prized as opportunities for indicating what is our real attitude of heart...

Even in the smallest affairs of life we are to look for the Lord's will. The right attitude for us to maintain is this: I serve the Lord Christ; and whether it is a great work or a small one does not matter. "Therefore whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31.) The humblest kind of service is acceptable to the Lord if prompted by love.... As we thus work for the Lord and strive to please Him, and cultivate the spirit of thankfulness for service in the little things, we shall be proving our worthiness for the great things. Our desire to render faithful service to the Lord will manifest itself in economy in the home and in consideration for others around us...

In respect to spiritual matters the principle is the same. Little rifts in the lute spoil the music. God is seeking a very special class for the Kingdom. He desires those who will be absolutely loyal to Him, loyal

to His Word, faithful not only in some great thing, but also in the smallest affairs of life--faithful in thought, word and deed... He is watching us closely, but with a kindly eye. He wishes us to succeed. He gives us the necessary instruction and guidance. When we practise carefulness in little things, we are thereby developing our characters along right lines. If we fail to do this, we shall never become fit to be entrusted with important matters. Let us each make this a personal question: What kind of character am I developing as the days go by?

But the Christian who makes a mistake, and who sees his mistake and makes what amends are possible, will find his experience beneficial to him -- perhaps throughout the remainder of his life. Through the castigation which he imposes upon himself he will learn greater carefulness. Care and watchfulness are necessary, and we should see to it that they extend to every affair of life--to the use of our time, our talents, our money, etc. Whatever we have of these is from the Lord and belongs to Him. We should therefore carefully con-

sider what we shall do with these opportunities and be very conscientious in the use of them--how much we shall use for ourselves and how we shall use the remainder. Our course in these matters will show to the Lord whether or not we are fitted for a place in glory.

Our use or abuse of all the talents, great or small, entrusted to us by the Master will demonstrate how careful we are to note His will and to do that will in respect to this feature of our stewardship... It is the manner in which we use the things of this life that manifests our loyalty to the Lord and that demonstrates how we would use the Divine power during the thousand years of Messiah's Kingdom, for the blessing of all the families of the earth...

In view of this future inheritance of the saints in light, is it any wonder that our Lord wishes us to have kind, just, generous hearts? Our opportunity of being in the Little Flock will depend largely upon our appreciation of our opportunities for serving the Lord in the little things of the present life."

R2494 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

IN THE FIERY FURNACE

--JULY 16.--DAN. 3:14-28.--

"Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us."

PROBABLY twenty years elapsed after Daniel and his companions reached Babylon in captivity before the scenes of this lesson were enacted. Meantime Daniel had been raised to a very high position in the empire, as king's counsellor, while his three companions had been made magistrates in the provinces of Babylon. We know that their prosperity did not tend to make them careless of their duties and responsibilities toward God, for otherwise they would not have been able to stand the severe test recounted in this lesson, and which proved a great blessing to them because of their fidelity to the Lord.

King Nebuchadnezzar just before this had won some great victories over surrounding nations--Egypt, Syria, etc.--as he had previously done with Judah, and as the Lord had predicted in the dream which Daniel had interpreted for the King, which showed the Babylonian Empire as the golden head of earthly dominion. His great success no doubt had tended to feelings of pride and a desire for display. Yet these were probably not the only motives which led to the program of the great festival in honor of his victories, and the erection of the great image which all were commanded to worship. Nebuchadnezzar's thought evidently was to unify his empire, and as a step in this direction he desired to unify the religious views and worship of the various peoples under his sway. In this his example was frequently followed subsequently, for all rulers have seemed to grasp the thought that man's mental organization is such that obedience can be best and most lastingly secured through the acquiescence of the religious organs of his mind. In other words, since man is a religious animal, no government of him can be secure and permanent which does not have, directly or indirectly, the support of his veneration. Hence it was that Nebuchadnezzar and others endeavored to associate the Creator and the king together in men's minds, that venerating the One they should respect and serve the other as his representative.

It was no doubt with a view to thus unifying the religious sentiments of his empire that this great feast was arranged, of which the very center of attraction was the great image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. This image, with its pedestal, was ninety feet high and nine feet wide. It was of gold, probably either made hollow or on a base of clay cement. It was located in the Plain of Dura, about the center of the walled enclosure twenty-four miles square, known as the city of Babylon. As it is a level country, and as the structures were comparatively low, the image could probably be seen from every part of the great city.

The appointed time for the festival having come, leading representatives, judges, treasurers, governors, sheriffs, etc., from all the divisions of the empire, clad in the gorgeous garments of the East, were present. A great band had been prepared, composed of all the musical instruments popular at that period, and the command of the king had gone forth that when the musicians should play upon their

instruments all the vast concourse of people, representatives of his whole empire, facing the image which he had set up, should fall down and worship it, and thus indicate their loyalty, not only to King Nebuchadnezzar, but also to his gods who had given him the wonderful victories which they were celebrating.

As magistrates of the empire, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were necessarily in the great throng, tho it is quite probable that they, representing different departments, may have been at a distance from each other, each surrounded by his secretaries, assistants, servants, etc. Undoubtedly the object of the festival was clearly discerned by these intelligent men, and the question arose before their minds respecting their duty to God and the conflict of this with the probable requirements of the king. It was a crucial test for them, for they knew that the king's powers were autocratic, and that to cross his will meant death in some form. Nevertheless, they decided that they must be true to God, whatever the cost. It might be that their refusal to prostrate themselves before the image would pass entirely unnoticed by others, or it might be that, even if noticed, the incident might never reach the ears of the king, but such circumstances could make no change in the matter of their duty; whatever others might do, they must not bow the knee to any but the true God. Daniel is omitted from mention here, possibly because, occupying a different position as one of the king's personal staff and household, his conduct would not come so directly in contrast with the general conduct.

Finally, the hour of trial came, when the great king of Babylon was recognized not only as civil but also as religious ruler, and the image which he had set up was worshiped by the various representatives of his empire--except Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Their neglect to bow was quickly brought to the attention of the king, for no doubt these, like all good men, had their enemies: some enemies through jealousy and rivalry for the king's favor; other enemies because, perhaps, they had been interrupted or hindered in dishonest practices and contracts with the government. The matter seems to have astounded the king, and hence his inquiry, Is it true, can it be true? Surely, no sane men would be so foolhardy as to oppose my decree, and that in my very presence, and upon such a feteday as this? Not waiting an answer as respects matters of the past, the king voluntarily proposed for them a fresh test of loyalty and submission, nothing doubting but what, now that the matter had come to his attention, they would be moved by fear, not only in respect to their degradation from office, but by the danger of death in the fiery furnace, to render prompt obedience.

Perhaps the king's mind shot a glance backward fifteen years, to the time when the God of the Hebrews, through Daniel, had told and interpreted his dream, a matter which none of the other gods of his wise men could do; and as tho he had this in mind, and wishing to impress the matter upon these three Hebrews who had dared to

challenge his power, he made the boast, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" In his arrogance of mind and under the flush of his mighty victories over the greatest nations and mightiest kings, Nebuchadnezzar felt prepared to have a contest even with the unseen and to him unknown invisible powers. He would not be backed down in his own capital city; he would demonstrate his power to inflict a penalty, regardless of what any of the gods might do in retaliation. He would show that he, at all events, had the power in the present time, and in this respect at least was more powerful than any of the gods of whom he had knowledge.

The answer of the three Hebrews was a wise one; seeing from the king's mood that the discussion of the subject would be useless, they did not attempt to retaliate by threatening him with divine vengeance; neither did they attempt to convert the king to Judaism, knowing well that the provisions of the Jewish covenant were not for Gentiles. They simply responded that they were not anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity to argue the matter with the king. They assured him of their full confidence that their God was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace, and out of the hand or power of even the greatest king of the earth; but they answered, "While our God is thus all-powerful we are not by any means certain that he will deliver us; nevertheless, 'O king, be it known unto thee that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'"

Angered that his great festal day should be thus marred by even the slightest opposition to his will, the king did not wait to give another opportunity wherein the Hebrews might relent. He saw that it was useless, that they were men of character and determination, and he resolved that he would make an example of them before all the people. The form of his visage or his countenance changed toward these men; whereas once he had admired them, as amongst his ablest counsellors and magistrates, and an honor to his empire, now he hated them, as opponents whose course, if not interrupted, might introduce disorder into his empire, and lead to more or less sedition, if copied by others. In his rage he commanded that the furnace be heated seven times, or to its utmost capacity. The furnace, already heated for the occasion, may have been the one used in melting the gold for the image, and must have been of immense size.

Probably as a mark of his great authority, and to show that even the very greatest of his subjects were subordinate to his supreme authority, the king commanded that these three recalcitrant officials be cast into the fiery furnace by prominent officers of his army --no doubt to teach a lesson respecting the power of the army, and the willingness of its chief representatives to serve the king, as against everybody else.

The Hebrews, bound in their official garb, were evidently cast into the furnace from the top, because it is stated that they fell down bound, while the heat was so intense that it even killed those who cast them into the furnace, possibly by the inhalation of the flames, which might kill them instantly.

The king seemed to be having matters his own way, as usual; even the mighty God of the Hebrews had not delivered these men from his power. And yet the king was solicitous and eyed the furnace, and to his surprise beheld those who had been cast into the furnace bound, walking about free in the flames--seemingly uninjured. More than this, he saw a fourth person there, of most remarkable appearance, which caused the king to think and speak of him as one of the gods. No wonder he was astonished; he was evidently contending with a God of whose powers he had been ignorant.

Nebuchadnezzar showed himself to be a man of broad mind--in his acceptance to the Babylonian college of the brightest youths out of all the peoples taken captive; in his readiness to acknowledge the God of Daniel, when he had received the evidences of his power; so now, realizing that he had made a great mistake in attempting the destruction of three of his most eminent magistrates, and that he was thus defying the great God, Nebuchadnezzar was prompt to make acknowledgement, and approached the furnace, calling out, "Ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come hither." In the presence of the king's courtiers they came forth, and all beheld them that the fire had done them no injury, not even having singed their clothes or their hair. This was indeed a stupendous miracle, and doubtless was valuable in its influence, not only upon the Gentiles, but also upon the Hebrews residing throughout Babylon, who would thus hear of the power of Jehovah in delivering those faithful to him. Whether this had a bearing on the subject or not, we know well that, while idolatry had been one of the chief sins of the Israelites before this captivity, there was comparatively little of idolatry in its crude forms in that nation afterward.

Nebuchadnezzar's acknowledgement of the God of the Hebrews, who sent his messenger and delivered his servants that trust-

ed in him, is very simple and very beautiful. He rejoiced in the noble character of these men, and at once made a decree "that every people, nation and language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be a dung-hill; because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort." And furthermore, he promoted these faithful men to still higher positions, for they had still more of his confidence respecting their integrity. Men who would thus hazard their lives for conscience' sake could be trusted in the most important positions.

It is not necessary that we determine this incident to have been a type and look for correspondencies to its every feature. Without so determining, the Lord's people may readily find in it many valuable lessons and suggestions. Not all of God's people are in such prominent positions as were these Hebrews; and not many have testings of exactly the same kind as were theirs, with a literal fiery furnace before their eyes. Nevertheless, there are trials before the Lord's people to-day that are fully as severe. Who will not agree that questions respecting a public acknowledgement of an idol and thus a public disavowal of the true God would be a point more quickly and more easily decided by nearly everyone than some of the subtle temptations of our day? For instance, various idols are set up all over Christendom, each of which, it is claimed, represents the true God, and each of which demands worship in honor and substance.

Babylon the literal was in ruins long before the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos was shown in prophetic vision the mystic or symbolic Babylon "which reigneth over the kings of the earth" to-day. The provinces of Babylon to-day are the various civilized nations --really "kingdoms of this world;" but deluded into calling themselves and thinking themselves kingdoms of Christ--"Christendom." And parallels to the king and the image are also presented in Revelation--they are religious systems symbolically described as "the beast and his image."--Rev. 13:15-18.

Without at present examining the symbols in detail we note the fact that worship of this symbolic beast and his image are to be the great test or trial upon professing Christians in every province of symbolic Babylon in the end of this age; indeed, the testing is even now in progress. And we have the same inspired record as authority for the statement that only those who refuse to render worship to those powerfully influential religious systems (symbolized by "the beast and his image) will be counted by the Lord as "overcomers" and be made his joint-heirs as members of his elect Church. --See Rev. 20:4.

As already pointed out, the "beast" represents not Roman Catholics (the people) but the Roman Catholic *system*, as an institution; and the image represents not Protestants (the people) but the consolidation of Protestant *systems*, as an institution. We have pointed out* that the first step in the formation of this symbolic image of Papacy was taken in A.D. 1846 in the organization of the Evangelical Alliance, and that the second step must come shortly in an active *living* cooperation of Protestants as one system; and that this infusion of *life* will result from the Episcopal Church or Church of England joining or affiliating with other Protestants under some general arrangement similar to the Evangelical Alliance.

While the severest testings will follow the giving of life to the consolidated image, in the near future, the testing has already commenced with many, for "Churchianity" is more and more demanding reverence and support, and those who absolutely refuse to worship its images are already exposed to fiery trials;-- social ostracism and financial boycotts. Prominent amongst these is the Roman Catholic idol; that church sets itself as the representative of God, and demands worship, obedience and contribution to its funds. It is one of the most popular as well as one of the most arbitrary of idols. The Greek Catholic Church is another idol; the Anglican is another; and the Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc., etc., all similarly demand worship, obedience and revenue. They have "pooled their issues," to a certain extent, so as not to war upon each other's devotees, but they unite in warfare *against all who do not bow the knee to some such idol* (who reverence and worship *only* the Almighty God, and recognize his only begotten Son as the *only* Head and Lord of the true Church, whose names are *only* written in heaven--not on earthly rolls of membership.) --See Heb. 12:23.

All who refuse to worship before any of these images are threatened with a fiery furnace of persecution, and the threat is generally carried out as thoroughly as circumstances will permit. In the "dark ages," when Papacy had a monopoly of the "church" business, it meant torture and the stake, as well as social ostracism. To-day,

* MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. III., p. 119.

under a higher enlightenment, and especially because of competition for worshipers, matters are not carried to the same extreme, thank God! Yet in many instances there are evidences that the same spirit prevails, merely restrained by changed circumstances and lack of power. Still, as many are witnesses, there are methods of torture which serve to intimidate many who would scorn to bow the knee to a literal visible idol. Thousands to-day are worshipping at the various shrines of Christendom who in their hearts long to be free from the sectarian bondage of fear--who fain would serve the Lord God only, had they the courage. And there are some the world over who, with a courage not less than that of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, declare publicly that the Lord God alone shall have the worship and the service which they can render. None, perhaps, know better than the writer the various fiery experiences to which these faithful few are exposed--boycotted socially, boycotted in business, slandered in every conceivable manner, and often by those of whom they had least expected it, who, according to the Lord's declaration, say "*all manner of evil against them falsely.*" --Matt. 5:11,12.

But with these, as with the three Hebrews of our lesson, the chief trial is in connection with their faith; after they have taken a firm stand for the Lord and his truth they may indeed be bound and have their liberties of speech and of effort restrained, and they may indeed be cast into the fiery furnace, but nothing more than these things can be done to them. As soon as they have demonstrated their fidelity to God to this extent, their trials and troubles are turned into blessings and joys. As the form of the Son of God was seen with the Hebrews in the fiery furnace, so unseen, the Lord is present with those who trust him and who, because of faithfulness to him and to his Word, come into tribulation. How beautifully this is expressed in the familiar hymn,

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."

And sometimes even the worldly can realize that the Lord's people in the furnace of affliction are receiving a blessing, and sometimes thus our Heavenly Father's name is glorified in the world, as in Nebuchadnezzar's experience. Sometimes the Lord's people who are bound, restrained of liberty to proclaim the truth, find, as did those Hebrews, that the fire burns the cords and sets them free, and really gives them larger opportunities to testify to the glory of our God than they could have had by any other course.

⁽¹⁾The Lord's providences vary, and it is not for his people to decide when shall come remarkable deliverances, and when they shall apparently be left entirely to the will of their enemies without any manifestation of divine favor on their behalf. Note, for instance, the fact that, while the Lord interposed to deliver these three Hebrews from the fiery furnace, he did not interpose to prevent the beheading of John the Baptist, altho of the latter it is specifically declared, "There hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist." We remember that, while Peter was delivered from prison by the angel of the Lord, James was not delivered, but was beheaded. We remember also that Paul's life was miraculously preserved on several occasions, and that the Apostle John, according to tradition, was once cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, but escaped uninjured, while on other occasions dire disaster came upon the Lord's faithful ones, and that quickly, as in the case of Stephen, who was stoned.

It is not, therefore, for us to predetermine what shall be the divine providence in respect to ourselves; we are to note the point of right and duty and to follow it regardless of consequences, trusting implicitly in the Lord. This lesson is most beautifully set forth in the language of the three Hebrews, who declared to King Nebuchadnezzar that their God was entirely capable of delivering them from his power, but that, whether he chose to do so or not, they would not violate their conscience. It is just such characters that the Lord is seeking for, and it is in order to their development and testing that multifarious evil is now permitted to have sway.

While such testings have been in progress to a considerable extent throughout this entire Gospel age, the Scriptures clearly indicate to us that in some special sense all of the Lord's people will be tested in the "harvest" or closing time of this age. Our Lord speaks of it, likening our Christian faith to a house, and represents the trials in the end of this age as a great storm which will beat upon every house, with the result that all that are founded upon the rock will stand, and all founded upon the sand will collapse. The Apostle Peter speaks of this trial-time, saying, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which shall try you, as tho some strange thing

happened unto you." (1 Pet. 4:12.) We are to expect a testing in the end of this age, just as there was a testing of the Jewish nominal church in the end of its age. As in that testing there was a thorough, complete separating of the "wheat" from the "chaff," so here the separating will be complete between the "wheat" and the "tares," as our Lord declares. (Matt. 13:24-30.) Throughout the age the "wheat" and the "tares," by divine arrangement, have been permitted to grow side by side; but in the "harvest" the separation must occur, that the "wheat" may be "garnered," received to the Kingdom.

⁽²⁾The Apostle Paul, also, speaks of this time of fiery trial, and, likening the faith and works of a zealous Christian to a house built of gold, silver and precious stones, he declares that the fire of this day, in the end of this age, shall try every man's work of what sort it is, and shall consume all but the genuine faith and character structures. (1 Cor. 3:11-15.) But we are to remember that such loyal characters grow not suddenly, in a few hours or days--mushroom-like,--but are progressive developments, fine-grained and strong like the olive-tree.

Looking back, we cannot doubt that the step of self-denial recorded in our previous lesson,--taken for conscience' sake by the Hebrews,--had much to do with the development in them of the staunch characters illustrated in this lesson. Likewise we who have become "new creatures," reckonedly, in Christ, know that we are to be tested (if our testing has not already commenced), and should realize that only as we practice self-denials in the little things of life, and mortify (deadens) the natural cravings of our flesh in respect to food, clothing, conduct, etc., will we become strong spiritually and be able to "overcome."

⁽³⁾Many deal slackly with themselves in respect to little violations of their consecration vow, saying,-- "What's the use" of such carefulness and so different a life from that of the world in general? Ah! there is great use in it, for victories in little things prepare for greater victories and make them possible; and on the contrary, surrender to the will of the flesh in the little things means sure defeat in the warfare as a whole. Let us remember the maxim laid down by our Great Teacher--that he that is faithful in the things that are least will be faithful also in the things which are great. And this is the operation of a law, whose operations may be discerned in all the affairs of life.

Our Lord expresses the same thought, saying,-- To him that hath (used) shall be given (more), and from him that hath not (used) shall be taken away that which he hath. If we start on a Christian life ever so weak in the flesh and weak in spirit, we will find that faithfulness in the little things will bring increasing strength in the Lord and in the power of his might. But it is in vain that we pray, "Lord, Lord," and hope for great victories and the "crown of rejoicing," if we fail to do our best to conquer in the little affairs of daily life. In other words, our testing is in progress from the moment of our consecration, and the little trials are but preparations for greater ones which, when faithfully attained, we will be able to reckon with the Apostle as light afflictions which are but for a moment, and which are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.--2 Cor. 4:17.

⁽⁴⁾The answer of the Hebrews to Nebuchadnezzar,-- "Our God whom we *serve*," is worthy of note. They not only acknowledged God and worshiped him, but they additionally *serv'd* him, according as they had opportunity. And so it will be found to-day: those who have the necessary strength of character to refuse to worship human institutions and thereby to "suffer the loss of all things," counting them but as loss and dross, that they may win Christ and be found finally complete in him, as members of his glorified body, and joint-heirs in his Kingdom, not only practice self-denials, but gladly serve and confess the Lord in their daily life. Rightly appreciated, a profession of love for the Lord would always be a profession of service to his cause. Whoever is not rendering some service to our King in the present time of multiplied opportunities has at very most the "lukewarm" love that is offensive to the Master.--Rev. 2:4; 3:16.

Let us resolve, dear brethren, as did the three Hebrews of this lesson, that we will worship and serve only the Lord our God--that we will neither worship nor serve sectarianism, in any of its many forms, nor mammon, with its many enticements and rewards, nor fame, nor friends, nor self. God "seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth," is the declaration of our Lord and Head.--John 4:23,24.

⁽²⁾ July 31 Manna, 1Cor. 3:13

⁽³⁾ July 30 Manna, Cant. 2:15

⁽⁴⁾ Aug. 31 Manna, Dan 3:17-18

⁽¹⁾ July 29 Manna, Dan 3:17