

February 26

Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. *Philippians 4:4*

WE cannot have too many rejoicing Christians, nor can they rejoice too much, if they rejoice *in the Lord*. This rejoicing is

2HG633 "Who has not noticed the exultant songs of the prophets and the apostles—that notwithstanding their trials, their difficulties, their persecutions for righteousness' sake, they were joyful in the house of their pilgrimage: and a note of triumph may be found in all of their messages to the Church."

R3305 "'Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand: be not worried about anything; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and minds [thoughts] in Christ Jesus."

What a wonderful exhortation this is!... Through manifold trials, discouragements, weaknesses, etc., there may be moments of dejection and sorrow; but these are only like the sun-showers of the summer-time. To the true followers of the Lord, instructed through his Word, the light of the Lord's kindness shines through all earth-born clouds and troubles, to bring him joy and peace and blessing."

NS224 "Many never get rid of the spirit of heaviness because they fail to put on the garment of praise -- they fail to be sufficiently thankful, sufficiently appreciative of the good things received of the Lord."

Q613 "The old creature is counted dead, both by God and by ourselves; but although *reckoned* dead, it is *actually* alive. Therefore it is the New Creature's business to keep the old nature on the altar, upon which the great High Priest has put it. In other words, the New Creature must keep the old nature dead, hold it in subjection..."

We recall with comfort and encouragement the case of St. Paul and Silas in prison at Philippi. While their flesh was lacerated with the whipping they had received, yet they rejoiced in spirit and were able to sing praises to God. (Acts 16:26.) Thus should it be with us as New Creatures. While the flesh suffers, the spirit should rejoice always, as saith the Word of God. (Philippians 4:4.) We rejoice because God's favor and blessing are with us as New Creatures.

We should endeavor to forget earthly things. To enable us to do this, we should not dwell too much upon them; for it is only the flesh that suffers, and the Apostle intimates that it must suffer until it dies. Therefore do not make too much of the sufferings of the flesh. Do not talk too much about your painful experiences and about the things of the present. "Forget the things that are behind." Think mostly about the blessings of the Heavenly Father and of the glorious hope which is held out for us in the future; and let the old nature with all its interests, die daily."

NS223 "A GARLAND FOR ASHES" "A

not necessarily boisterous, nor of necessity the reverse. It implies serenity, happiness, peace, pleasure of soul, however, and does not mean that noisy demonstration is essential, as some seem mistakenly to think....The only ones who can rejoice *alway* are those who are living very near to the Lord, and

garland, a wreath, symbolically pictures hope and joy, as ashes symbolically picture the reverse...

Earthly hopes indeed we had, earthly ambitions, earthly desires, earthly prospects, but as time passed on we found that these withered, failed, turned to ashes. We said to our souls, "Here is not rest." Every fresh earthly hope seemed to last but a time and was gone, leaving in our hearts an aching void; but now, as the poet has expressed it, those who find the Lord find rest and peace and a hope that maketh not ashamed, so they can sing, "Jesus has satisfied, Jesus is mine." In their acceptance of Jesus with their whole hearts they obtain a satisfying portion, they lose old fears as well as old ambitions; they find new hopes, new joys, represented symbolically as a "garland." (R.V.) Not one joy, but many joys... Even death itself loses its sting when they realize to certainty that Christ has bought every prisoner in the tomb..."

R4592 "THE EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE"

In our Memorial service let not our hearts merely meditate upon the sufferings of Jesus, nor merely upon the sufferings of the members of his Body as they walk in *his footsteps to sacrificial death*. On the contrary, let us receive a proper exhilaration of spirit from our participation in this cup. We read that Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and the Apostle urges all these who are drinking of the cup, saying, "Rejoice in the Lord; and again I say, Rejoice!" The Christian's life is not a sad or morose one, but a most joyful one. He can even be joyful in tribulation, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." Knowing also that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—beyond the veil. (Rom. 5:3,4; 2 Cor. 4:17.) We thus partake in the cup of *suffering and joy* which is an earnest of our inheritance, which we will receive at the Second Coming of our Lord and our gathering together with him—as his members and his Bride class. This rejoicing in spirit is necessary to our courage and zeal in the service of the Lord. Note the operation of it in St. Paul, who, with Silas, could sing praises to God in the prison with his feet in the stocks and his back lacerated. And so it should be with all Christ's true followers in the narrow way. With the wound of every thorn, with the pain of every sharp arrow of bitter words with which we are assaulted for Christ's sake, we may have joy unspeakable.

JOY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

A further joy may be ours as we gradually comprehend more and more fully the significance of this New Covenant or New Testament blood in which our Lord offers us an opportunity to participate. He imputes his merit and thus enables us to be dead with him. He thus passes the blood of the

who can feel always their oneness with Him, and that His protection and care are over them, and that His promise is sure, that all things shall work together for their highest welfare, as New Creatures. Z.'03-7R3128:2

New Covenant *through us*, his members. But it is offered only to such as pledge themselves to be dead with Christ. Even then it is not given, but merely *imputed* or loaned to us to make good or worthy our offerings when the great High Priest as our Advocate presents them and accepts them in the Father's name and grants us his Spirit of adoption.

These earthly rights which belong to our Lord Jesus alone, which are at his disposal, are to go by the New Covenant to natural Israel. (*Jer. 31:31*.) "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy." (*Rom. 11:31*.) We may therefore rejoice in sympathetic anticipation of the blessings about to come to natural Israel, in which all mankind will have an opportunity of sharing. If their casting away at the beginning of this age was preparatory to our acceptance, how glad we may be that our acceptance will not mean their everlasting loss, but, on the contrary, that they will be profited through the blessing of Spiritual Israel, members of the great High Priest and Mediator and fully "qualified servants of the New Covenant." (2 Cor. 3:6.) Thus to Israel eventually will be given the earthly blessings and promises which God originally set apart for them, and which were typified under the Law Covenant and its typical Mediator Moses, who is like unto or a type of the great Mediator, the Christ of God, of which Jesus is the Head and the overcoming saints, his faithful followers, are accounted members.—*Acts 3:22,23*.

Let us then appreciate this glorious Memorial more and more as the years go by, seeing in it expressed more and more of the "Love Divine all love excelling," whose length and breadth and height and depth surpass all human comprehension."

Q579:2 QUESTION (1913)—2—How does "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (Phil. 4:4) manifest itself? Are we to expect a condition where we will not have times of sadness and sorrow?

ANSWER—When we think of any matters like this, we properly look back to the case of our Lord. We see that during three and a half years of His ministry He did indeed delight to do the Father's will, and yet we find that in the very close of His earthly career He had the dark Gethsemane hour. And if the Master might have such a dark hour of sorrow and uncertainty for a moment until He had some assurance from the Father, so you and I might surely have. Therefore it would not be safe to say our rejoicing in the Lord could be such a rejoicing as would never know a tear, or sigh, or sorrow, or a fear. But we are to rejoice more and more as we experience the evidences that God is for us and all things are working for our good. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." If you have some hour of sorrow come in, and then have the victory over it, rejoice again."

Hymn 193
Heavenly Aspirations

Now let our souls on wings sublime
Rise from the trivial cares of time,
Draw back the parting veil, and see
The glories of eternity.

The joys of time, of little worth,
Should not confine our thoughts to earth;
Why grasp at transitory toys,
So near to heav'n's eternal joys?

Shall aught beguile us on the road,
The narrow way that leads to God?
Or can we love earth's ties so well,
As not to long with God to dwell?

Lord, we would grasp the joys divine,
Find present joy in works of thine,
And press along the narrow way
That leads to realms of endless day.

R3127 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)
"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS"
--PHILIPPIANS 4:1-13--JANUARY 11.--

THE EPISTLE to the Philippians is one of the most loving of all the Church letters written by the Apostle Paul. In our last lesson we considered the story of the founding of that Church and the cost thereof to the faithful Apostle and his companion Silas. The Epistle to the Philippians contains no reproofs, no chidings, such as appear in others of the epistles, but rather it is full of approval, commendation and special love. Apparently, too, this little company of the Lord's people loved the Apostle as fervently as he loved them. His afflictions on their account bound their hearts to him in lasting gratitude. We find that on at least four occasions they helped to sustain the Apostle; once while at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:9), twice while at Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16), and once while he was a prisoner at Rome. On this latter occasion they sent their gifts and expressions of love by a special messenger, Epaphroditus who, arriving at Rome in the malarial season, took dangerously ill--probably with what is termed the Pontine, or Roman fever. It was on the occasion of the recovery of Epaphroditus and his return to Philippi that the Apostle sent back with him this epistle.

A contemporary writer, referring to the practical manifestation of love by the Philippian brethren makes the following comment: "The people of Malta were the only others recorded who expressed their love in this way to Paul. The Ephesians wept over him, but there is nothing said of their expressing their feelings by aiding him. Perhaps they did." Evidently the Apostle needed some such manifestation of affection and appreciation of his efforts on their behalf, for his own encouragement. It must have been hard, indeed, for him to love the Church at Corinth as he did--laying down his life on its behalf, as well as on behalf of the other Churches--while realizing keenly, as his epistles distinctly intimate, that he was but lightly esteemed in return.--1 Cor. 4:7-9; 2 Cor. 10:10.

In view of this close and dear relationship between the Apostle and the Church at Philippi, as between an under shepherd, or pastor and the flock, how full of meaning the *first verse* of our lesson! "My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and my crown, --so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." These words from the pen of a conscientious and sincere man, such as the Apostle was, are fragrant with the very essence of Christian love and fellowship. How much they must have been appreciated, and how much they must have been deserved!

But if there was nothing in the condition of the Philippians to reprove, they, nevertheless, needed the exhortation to stand fast. They had already, by the Lord's favor, reached a considerable attainment in the graces of the spirit--they must needs be tested, however, to prove them, to try them; and for this ordeal, which every individual, as well as every congregation of the Lord's people must expect, the Apostle wished to prepare them--to urge that they do not retreat from the advanced steps of love and obedience already taken --that they continue firm, not, however, trusting to their own strength, but, as he expresses it, that they should "stand fast in the Lord," trusting in his power, in his grace, sufficient for every time of need.

Several of the sisters of this congregation appear to have been prominent helpers in the work, not only when the Apostle was with them, but subsequently. Two of these are mentioned by name (v. 2), and the exhortation that they be of the same mind in the Lord implies that in some respects at least these two were at variance. It is well that we note the Apostle's language to them very carefully, for

there is wisdom in it. He does not exhort them to be of one mind in everything; quite possibly realizing that because of very different temperaments and dispositions, habits of life, etc., this might be impossible; but he does urge them to be of the same mind *in the Lord*--to preserve a unity of heart and head in all things relating to the Lord and his cause.

It will be of advantage to all of the Lord's people to pursue in such matters the course which the Apostle here advocates--not to attempt to "harmonize all earthly things" under present conditions;--to be content that each should have differences of opinion on various other subjects, and to insist only on oneness, fellowship, union, harmony in the Lord, in the truth, in the spirit of love, and toward all the members of the household of faith. Insistence on more than this--endeavoring to bring all to one view on social, financial and other questions--endeavoring to bring all to one view respecting dress and food, etc., has caused grievous strivings and estrangements between members of the household of faith; and all such endeavors should be recognized as contrary to the Lord's instruction through the Apostle--contrary to the "spirit of a sound mind"--contrary to the wisdom that cometh from above,--which entertains and exhorts for unity only *in the Lord* and along the line of questions positively settled by the Lord in the Scriptures--which generously leaves with each full liberty to act and to judge on all questions not positively settled by the Scriptures. We urge that all of the Lord's dear flock copy the wisdom of the Apostle in this matter, and heed his injunction, given to these two sisters, to let nothing come between them in the Lord.

In the *third verse* of our lesson "Yokefellow" apparently should be written with a capital, as the proper name of a brother in the Philippian Church--not only a Yokefellow in name, but as here declared, "a true Yokefellow," and, as we might expect, therefore, one who would be ready to cooperate with and to assist others. In the Apostle's judgment, some others were burdened, needing assistance. He specifies Clement and the two sisters already referred to, whose differences were burdening them. That the differences had not yet extended so as to injure them spiritually, the Apostle firmly believed, and hence he declares that he still recognizes them as fellow-laborers, still recognizes that their names are in the Book of Life. On this account they should seek harmony in the Lord, and Brother Yokefellow should fulfil toward them the true meaning of his name, by helping them over their difficulties; helping them to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace in the Lord.

There is no room for any of us today to become apostles, for there were only twelve of them, and never will there be more. (Rev. 21:14.) There may not be opportunities for all of us to do great things in the Lord's service in this harvest time, either; but there are opportunities for every one of us to be true yokefellows--to assist the dear brethren and sisters with their burdens;--not merely financial burdens, or burdens of illness, but sometimes to assist them over difficulties and burdens of the kind suggested in this lesson--burdens of different temperaments and dispositions. Let us each and all seek to be true yokefellows to the various members of the body of Christ. We may be sure that the Lord will highly esteem such service, and that thus we will be growing in that grace which he so highly commended when he said, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."

Laying down certain general principles for godly living, healthful for New Creatures, the Apostle exhorts, --"Rejoice in the Lord

always, and again I say, rejoice." This, the Golden Text of the lesson, represents the very essence of Christian living. Under present conditions it is not supposable that outward circumstances will always be favorable to rejoicing, from the natural standpoint. He, therefore, who would rejoice always in the Lord must have faith in the Lord,--trust, hope, love. Without these he could not so appropriate to himself the gracious promises of the Word as to be able to rejoice in tribulation and suffering and under trials and difficulties, and when falsely accused and misrepresented, and when slandered and evilly entreated for the truth's sake. ⁽¹⁾The only ones who can rejoice *always* are those who are living very near to the Lord, and who can feel always their oneness with him, and that his protection and care are over them, and that his promise is sure, that all things shall work together for their highest welfare, as New Creatures.

Others may rejoice today and be cast down tomorrow; only the faithful in Christ Jesus are privileged to rejoice always. The thought of the Lord's favors, past, present and to come, makes all the trials and difficulties of such to appear very light afflictions, as but for a moment, not worthy to be compared with the glory, honor and immortality promised, and the blessed privileges of divine service, both here and hereafter. The Apostle emphasizes the matter by saying, "Again I say, Rejoice." ⁽²⁾We cannot have too many rejoicing Christians, nor can they rejoice too much, if they rejoice *in the Lord*. This rejoicing is not necessarily boisterous, nor of necessity the reverse. It implies serenity, happiness, peace, pleasure of soul, however, and does not mean that noisy demonstration is essential, as some seem mistakenly to think.

The Apostle further exhorts that the faithful let their moderation, their forbearance, be manifested, not only toward the brethren, but toward all with whom they have to do. ⁽³⁾The Greek word here rendered "moderation" seems to carry with it the thought of *reasonableness*, and of not exacting our rights too rigorously. Mercy and leniency are certainly qualities required of all who would be members of the body of the Anointed. Faithfulness in the performance, as far as possible, of all that justice would require of us, and mercifulness in respect to all our requirements of justice from others should be our rule: so shall we be the children of our Father which is in heaven, for he is kind and merciful to the unthankful.

"The Lord is at hand!" The thought seems to be that we who are the Lord's are not living for the present time. We are expecting great changes to be ushered in when our King shall take to himself his great power and begin his reign. We are not to be struggling for the last inch or the last penny, nor for the extreme of our own rights; but, rather, to be so full of rejoicing in the good things coming, and already ours by faith, that it will make us generous as respects the things of this present time in our dealings with the brethren and with others. We are not expecting justice from the Lord, for nothing that we have or done or could do would *justly* call for such exceeding great and precious things as he has promised us. And as we are expecting grace or bounty in so large measure we can well afford to be generous and liberal in our sentiments toward others--especially toward the household of faith, because they are our brethren and fellow-representatives of the Lord himself, from whom our bounty is to come; and toward the world without, because they have not the future prospects which we possess, and hence set their hearts upon the things of this present time; and we can well afford to accord them their full share of these or more, since we are so rich through our heavenly Father and our heavenly Bridegroom.

That the Apostle did not mean to be understood that the Lord's second advent might be expected momentarily, nor before his death, is evident; for elsewhere in his epistles he clearly sets forth his expectation to die, and to wait for the reward, the crown of righteousness laid up for him; elsewhere also he clearly intimates that the day of the Lord could not come until after the great falling away mentioned in the prophecies, and the manifestation of the Man of Sin, etc. (2 Tim. 3:7,8; 2 Thess. 2:2-10.) Evidently, therefore, his only thought in this exhortation, "The Lord is at hand," was, as already suggested--that we are living in the close of the reign of evil, that the dawning of the day of the Lord is not far distant, and that to the eye of faith it is so near that its influence should affect even the smallest affairs of the present life.

"Be careful for nothing" is the next exhortation; but since our English word *careful* has lost its original meaning, there is danger of error here. The word originally had the thought of being full of care-

-anxiety, trouble. The Apostle's words correspond exactly to our Lord's injunction, "Take no thought," and signify, Be not anxious, burdened, full of care. It is proper that the Lord's people should be careful, in the meaning of the word careful as used today. We should not be careless, indifferent, loose in our conduct or words, but be circumspect.

Anxiety and burdens are unavoidable to those who are depending on themselves, their own wisdom, their own strength, their own skill; but the members of the body of Christ, accepted in the Beloved, adopted into the divine family, sons of God, are assured over and over again in the Word that if they abide faithful all things shall work together for their highest welfare. Why should they be burdened? Why should they feel anxious? He who guards their interests slumbers not. When Christians find themselves anxious, fearful, burdened, the evidence is that they are lacking in faith, and the probability is that they have either never grown to the point of having the proper faith in the Lord, or that they have allowed "earth-born clouds" and cares of this life to come between them and the Lord, so that they no longer have confidence that they are abiding in his love and in his care. All in such condition should go at once to the throne of heavenly grace, and to the divine promises, and obtaining mercy at the former, and feeding upon the latter, they should grow strong in the Lord and in confidence in him, and their corroding cares will give place to faith, confidence, peace of heart, whatever the outward conditions.

Such is the counsel of the Apostle--that instead of continuing in the anxious condition, we should lay all of our affairs before the Lord, supplicating his promised providential care, acknowledging our own lack of wisdom;--and gladly accepting his wisdom and the provisions of his love, we should make every request in a spirit of thanksgiving. This spirit of thanksgiving implies a recognition that the circumstances and conditions in which *we are*, have been super-vised of the Lord, and that we are appreciative of his care and trust it for the future. Thanksgiving for what we have, and a full appreciation of the Lord's leadings hitherto and now, will preclude any anxiety for the future; for the thankful heart will conclude that he who favored us and redeemed us while we were yet sinners will much more favor and do for us now that we are his through the adoption that is in Christ Jesus.

⁽⁴⁾The question may arise, Why will not God give us the things which he sees us to need without our making petition to him and claiming his promises? Undoubtedly because we need previously to come into the proper attitude of heart to receive his favors and to be advantaged by them. Even as it is, we may be sure that we do not sufficiently appreciate the divine care bestowed upon us hitherto and now. Even in the attitude of prayer and thanksgiving we probably do not discern one-half of our causes for gratitude, as we shall see them by and by, when we shall know even as we are known. It is the same with natural hunger. Unless we were so constituted that the gnawings of hunger would show us our need of food we would probably appreciate it less, even if we ate as much and with the same regularity.

If we have the foregoing described spirit of rejoicing and trust in the Lord, and make all of our requests, so far as we are able to discern, in harmony with his promise, and *accept with gratitude and thanksgiving, whatever his providence may send us*, then the Apostle assures us, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." The thought here is distinct. It is not our own peace that is referred to. ⁽⁵⁾We may by nature be more or less indisposed to peace, restless, dissatisfied, discontented, fearful, foreboding or quarrelsome; but, following the course outlined above, we learn to trust God in all of our affairs, and it is the peace of God--the peace which comes to us from a realization of God's power and goodness and willingness to hold us by his right hand as his children--that comes in, to keep us from worry, from anxiety, etc. The thought is that this peace stands guard continually, as a sentinel, to challenge every hostile or worrying thought or fear. It keeps the Christian's mind, so that he at heart has peace with the Lord, fellowship, communion;--and it guards his mind also, his reasoning faculties, instructing him and assuring him respecting the divine power and wisdom and love. But it does not assure him of anything respecting his own perfection or worthiness of acceptance before God. This proper peace merely assures us of our standing in divine favor through *Christ Jesus*,--his worthiness, his sacrifice, his aid.

⁽¹⁾ ½ Feb. 26 Manna

⁽²⁾ ½ Feb. 26 Manna, Phil. 4:4

⁽³⁾ Feb 27 Manna, Phil 4:5

⁽⁴⁾ Feb. 28 Manna, Phil. 4:6

⁽⁵⁾ Mar. 1 Manna, Phil. 4:7

Now we come to the Apostle's grand summing up of the way in which the Christian is to set his affections --fix them, fasten them, hold them upon profitable things; that he may grow in grace as well as in knowledge and love of God. The Apostle points out that the will having been consecrated to the Lord, faith having been exercised in rejoicing and thanksgiving in all of the Lord's providences, the peace of trust having come in, the further steps in the development of character will be through *guarding our thoughts*: and this means also the guarding of our words and acts, because it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, and that the whole course of life is directed. What, then, should be the trend of the Christian's thoughts after he has reached the grand development already outlined by the Apostle? It should be toward things that are true, having no sympathy with anything that is false or even exaggerated. ^[6]Whoever sympathizes with falsehood or exaggeration is more or less defiling himself. Whoever cleanses his thoughts, and avoids exaggeration, etc., is in that degree purifying his mind and his entire character, and coming the more into touch and sympathy with the Lord himself, who is "the Truth."

Nor is it sufficient that we are sure of the truth of matters. We are to test them further, and discern to what extent they are honorable, noble; for although the Lord has accepted us, ignoble and imperfect, and has covered the ignoble features of our characters, and proposes to cover them to the end with his own merit, nevertheless, we cannot be in sympathy with the ignoble features of our fallen condition, but on the contrary must desire true nobility, and the highest standards of honor in our hearts, in our thoughts, in all of our dealings with our God and with our fellows. The test of honor is therefore to be applied after the test of the truth. The thing might be true, but Is it honorable to think about it or tell about it? is another question.

^[7]Another test we are to apply is, Are the things just? We are not to allow our minds to run along lines that would be unjust, and we are to learn to apply this test of justice to every thought and word and act of ours, while learning at the same time to view the conduct of others from a different standpoint;--so far as reason will permit, from the standpoint of mercy, forbearance, pity, helpfulness. But we cannot be too careful how we criticize every thought we entertain, every plan we mature, that the lines of justice shall in no sense of the word be infringed by us with our hearts' approval.

Purity is another quality to be esteemed by us. We are to love and cultivate that which is pure to such an extent that that which is impure will become painful to us, distressing, and we will desire to drop it from memory, and this will only be accomplished by continually thinking upon those things that are pure, and avoiding the giving of thought to the things that are impure. We are to recognize true loveliness, and to esteem it. From our standpoint the impure, the unjust, the untrue, the dishonorable things, cannot appear lovely, desirable, worthy of emulation. When we would think on the purest of things we must of necessity lift our mental vision to as high a point as possible, and, as nearly as we may be able, discern the loveliness of the perfect character of our God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and proportionately the loveliness manifested in one or another of the followers of Jesus, who walk closely in his footsteps. The mind that frequently calls up the lovely perfections of the Lord and the truth, and is well filled by these, is guarded greatly against intrusions of unlovely and unholy things, contrary to the spirit of the Lord. The Apostle concludes the list, by referring to all things of good repute: ^[8]things of any virtue or value, things in any degree praiseworthy--the noble words or noble deeds or noble sentiments of anybody, we may safely meditate upon, and as a consequence find ourselves growing toward these ideals upon which our minds, our new natures, thus feed. We will become more and more transformed by the renewing of our minds, and approach nearer and nearer to the glorious likeness of our Lord and Master, being changed from glory to glory, inch by inch, step by step, little by little, during the present life; and our thoughts being in this attitude and our union with the Lord maintained, we shall have part in the First Resurrection, which will perfect us forever in the Lord's image and likeness.

How many (how few!) can say what the Apostle says in vs. 9? "The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do!" This should be the standard of every Christian, because they each and all are representatives of the Lord, am-

bassadors for him; hence, so far as in them lieth, their conduct and words should be such as would be living epistles, read by the brethren and by the world to profit. No wonder the Apostle adds that, doing thus, "the God of peace shall be with you." So surely as he was with the Apostle he will be with all others similarly walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

"I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length ye have *revived* your thought for me." These words seem to imply that their thoughtfulness for the Apostle, and earnestness to improve opportunities to serve him, had to some extent relaxed for a time and been revived. Then, as though fearful that his words might be understood as a reproof, he adds, "Ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity." How careful was this man of God not unnecessarily to wound the feelings of the brethren, and how careful we all should likewise be to let the love of God extend, not only to the degree of giving us liberal sentiments toward the brethren, but also to the extent of influencing our tongues and pens not to wound unnecessarily even the least of them.

The Apostle hastens to point out that he is not complaining of *want*. He had learned to put into practice himself the lesson which he was just communicating to them, regarding rejoicing in the Lord,--to cast aside anxious thought and to approach the Lord in prayer and supplication in thanksgiving, and he possessed the resultant peace. In this condition of heart, however many may have been his necessities, he was not in *want*, for he was *satisfied* that the Father would provide the things which he really needed--and more he did not *want*; for, as he explains, he had learned the lesson, "In whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." We are not to be contented after the manner of the tramp or the indolent and shiftless, who would prefer to "live by faith," at the expense of others who "labor, working with their hands." We are not to be content to allow the opportunities and talents and privileges which the Lord has given us to lie idly by, unused; but while using these talents and opportunities to the very best of our ability and intelligence, and while seeking in prayer and supplication, rejoicing and thanksgiving, to use them all as would please the Lord, we should be *content with the result of such efforts*.

We should conclude that our heavenly Father who feeds the sparrows and who clothes the fields with verdure is quite able to supply our needs in the manner and to the degree that would be for our highest welfare; and so, after having done our part to the best of our ability, we are to be *thoroughly contented* with the results --even if the results should be the barest necessities of life. But we are not to be contented with the barest necessities unless these are the best results obtainable from a reasonable and judicious use of opportunities and talents which the Lord has given us, consistent with our consecration to his service. "Be content with such things as ye have" does not ignore our talents and opportunities, for these are part of the things which we *have*,--the things which, as stewards, we are bound to use to the best of our judgments.

Surely the Lord was fitting the Apostle for a grand place in the heavenly Kingdom, when he gave him such a variety of experiences as are detailed in the *12th verse*. Surely, as the Lord was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that he might be a faithful High-Priest for the Millennial Kingdom (as well as to us now), so the Apostle, by his experiences, evidently was being fitted and prepared for a very honorable and prominent place in the Royal Priesthood of the same Kingdom. And so with us: ^[9]if we find our experiences in life very checkered we may conclude that the Lord sees that we need both the heights and depths of prosperity and adversity to properly instruct us and qualify us for the position he designs for us in the future. Let us, then, as the Apostle did, *learn how* to abound, not allowing the abundance of earthly good things to swerve us from our consecration vows; and *learn also how* to be in want (need) and yet not to *want* anything beyond what the Lord's wisdom and providence sees best to give,--to be content.

The secret of the Apostle's success is stated in the last verse of the lesson. It was his close relationship to the Lord, his intimate union with him, his reliance upon him: he was abiding as a branch in the Vine, and was strengthened by the same spirit, and thus was enabled to do all these things and to pass through all these experiences with gratitude, with thankfulness, with rejoicing. Let us all thus learn to "Rejoice in the Lord *always*."

[6] Mar. 2 Manna, Phil. 4:8

[7] Mar. 3, Phil. 4:8

[8] Mar. 5, Phil. 4:8

[9] Mar. 6 Manna, Phil 4:11-12