

August 22

Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? Luke 2:49

SHOULD we not all have the Master's Spirit, expressed by His words?...The Lord's

true saints have no business of their *own*, for they gave their all to the Lord at consecration. Their business they manage as trustees for the Lord--not to be turned over at their death, in prosperous condition, to their chil-

dren or their friends, possibly to their injury. It is to be used by the trustee as wisely as he knows how before death; for then his trusteeship ends, and he must render his account. *Z.'03-53 R3148:5*

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THE BOY JESUS

--JAN. 12.-- Luke 2:40-52.--

Golden Text--"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."--Luke 2:52.

THIS brief narrative gives us a single glimpse at the youth of our Lord; but it reveals all that is important for us to know concerning him before he arrived at maturity. It shows us the wonderful prodigy of wisdom and grace, so developed at twelve years of age as to be able to cope with the reasoning powers and the learning of men far advanced in years, in so much that he astonished them with his understanding and answers.

We observe also that his superior ability did not puff him up nor cause him to forget the respect and deference due to the advanced years and position of the Doctors and teachers. He was meek and lowly of heart, both as a boy and as a man. He was anxious also to learn of them from the law and the prophets. He did not miraculously know all that was in them; but he "*grew in wisdom.*" He acquired knowledge, but with that ease, rapidity and retentiveness with which only a perfect mind can grasp and hold it.

His tarrying in the temple to receive the instructions of his Father's Word evidently was not in wilful disregard for his parents; but rather, was an evidence of his zeal to do his Father's will, which motive, in his childish simplicity, he seemed to think his mother and Joseph would fully realize and approve. This is apparent from his

question,--"Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be in the courts of my Father?" No, they did not know. They could not understand the wonderful child. Bearing in mind subsequent expressions of more mature years which showed that his memory extended back to his previous existence with the Father before the world was, we have no reason to doubt that at the age of twelve his memory was active, and that he then knew what in after years he affirmed, saying,--"Before Abraham was, I am." "What and if ye shall see me ascend up where I was before?" "Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," etc.--John 8:58; 6:62; 17:5.

But his mother and Joseph understood him not. How could they? Mary silently pondered these things in her heart; but how could she understand this mystery of God? Jesus, seeing that he was not understood and remembering his duty of submission to parents, was subject to their wishes, and returned with them to Nazareth. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." In the retirement of his early life of preparation for his public ministry and great sacrifice, his virtues commanded the admiration of all who knew him. Praise God for this testimony of the human perfection of his dear Son!

R5854 "HOW WE OUTWORK OUR GREAT SALVATION

"Beloved, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."--Philippians 2:12,13.

IN THIS chapter from which our text is taken, the Apostle Paul pays a beautiful tribute to the Church at Philippi. He refers in tender and loving terms to their obedience always to his instruction and counsel, not only when he was present with them, but likewise in his absence. He urges them to continued faithfulness and earnestness in this good way. He desires that they make still further progress in the Master's likeness, working out in themselves through humility and obedience the character-development necessary, with fear and trembling, doing their own part in the attainment of the salvation to which they had been called in Christ.

This exhortation of St. Paul is designed likewise for the sanctified in Christ Jesus of today. He reminds us, as he did the Philippian Church, that we are to *work out* our salvation. Elsewhere the Scriptures inform us that our salvation is by grace--that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by *His mercy* He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5.) These Scriptures are not contradictory. Our salvation is "not of ourselves, lest any man should boast." The Father has appointed the Lord Jesus to be our Savior; and it is through Him that our salvation is to be accomplished.

We cannot work out our own justification; but being justified by the blood of Christ and being called with the Heavenly Calling, we can do our share in this great work of our own preparation for our future station and glory. We do this by giving heed to the instructions of our Lord, by following

the example which He has set us. We can never attain perfection in the flesh; but from the beginning our heart, our intention, must be wholly loyal, and day by day this heart intention must become more and more crystallized, fixed, in the way of righteousness. We must continue the work of bringing our body into subjection, and enlisting in the service of the Lord...

THE MARVELOUS GRACE OF GOD!

This is a wonderful work, a marvelous transformation! Selected from a race of bondslaves of sin, beings of a fleshly nature, depraved, death-stricken, sin-cursed, we are lifted out of the miry clay; we are washed, cleansed, from our pollution, our soiled rags of unrighteousness, and a new nature has been begun in us. Then our earthward tendencies are gradually bent Heavenward. We are transformed day by day, rising *up*, UP, until, our resurrection completed, the work of transformation fully accomplished, we are exalted to heights unimaginable--passing the nature and rank of angels, of cherubim, of seraphim, and every name that is named, and seated upon Messiah's Throne, beside the Infinite Son of God, partakers of His glorious nature--the nature of Jehovah Himself--the Divine nature!

Can mortal man conceive so marvelous a glory? The very thought of such a Calling should cause us to bow our hearts in the dust before our God, realizing our great unworthiness of such stupendous grace--of bliss so transcendent! What can we render unto the Lord that can fittingly demonstrate our gratitude, our thankfulness, for so unspeakable a favor? Surely, the most faithful service we can give is but a very feeble return to Him who has so loved us, so blessed us, so honored us!

We are joint-heirs with the Lord of Glory to this wonderful inheritance, if only we are faithful unto death and keep our

garments white. To us "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." As old creatures we had no standing with God; we were feeding on the beggarly elements of the world. We were dead in trespasses and in sins. It is only as New Creatures that we have any standing, that we can please God, that we can work for Him. It is this New Creature that the Apostle is addressing in our text.

OUR GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

As we have made a consecration of ourselves to God, our sins are all under the blood, and the new life has begun in us. We are under a solemn contract to see that the work of transformation steadily progresses. When the Father accepted our offering and our vows to Him, and granted us His Holy Spirit, He did not give us the full consummation of our hopes, but merely an "earnest of our inheritance." Our agreement was to be dead to the world, dead to earthly things, and alive toward God. It is therefore for each of us to demonstrate in our words, in our actions, in our thoughts, that everything in this contract is bona fide on our part--that we *meant* every word of it. When we become children of God, our one ambition should be to prove our loyalty to God, our loyalty to our Covenant of Sacrifice. Was it not so with our Lord Jesus?

Our Lord came into the world to be our Redeemer. But He was not the Redeemer when He was born, nor when He was thirty years of age, until He made His consecration. He was called the Savior from His birth, only in a prospective sense. He became our Redeemer in the real, the official, sense when He was baptized of John in Jordan, and the Holy Spirit came upon Him in begetting power. Then it remained for Him during the three and a half years of His active service to work out that consecration. Every act of life during that crucial period

was the fulfilling of His Covenant of Sacrifice. He had covenanted to sacrifice His human nature with all its conditions and possibilities, in order that He might carry out the Father's purpose. For this cause He came into the world, and He faithfully fulfilled His Covenant. His glorious reward was the Divine nature and the authority to execute all the Father's great Program.

OUR COVENANT IDENTICAL WITH CHRIST'S

And so it is to be with us, His followers. We come in under the same arrangement, our weaknesses and imperfections being covered by our Redeemer's robe of righteousness, which constitutes our "wedding garment." Thus we stand before the Father complete in the Beloved. And His Word to us is, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9.) All the children of God who are true to their covenant are working out their salvation from day to day. It is a work of sacrifice, a daily work of crucifixion of the flesh. From the beginning of our consecrated life we are reckoned as being fully "crucified with Christ"; but the actual crucifixion is a slow, painful, lingering process, and ends only with the completion of our sacrifice in death.

"Gather my saints together unto Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice," is the command of Jehovah. (Psalm 50:5.) To what extent are we performing this work of sacrifice in ourselves? And to what extent are we seeking to assist in the work of gathering the saints of God unto Him? Are we faithful to the extent of our ability and opportunity? Are we sure that we are careful to *note* the opportunities, great or small, that are within our reach? If we do not see our opportunities, the Lord will use another to do the work that might have been ours; and we shall lose the blessing and the reward of the service that we might have rendered. How careful, then, we should be!

"PAY THAT WHICH THOU HAST VOWED"

But this is not a matter in which we are to judge one another. It is not for me to say to you that you are not sufficiently earnest in your sacrificing. Neither can you properly say to me that I am not faithfully fulfilling my sacrifice. To his own Master each one stands or falls...

The Lord alone is to decide whether or not we are each living up to the terms of our covenant. He expects faithfulness in each one who has taken His Covenant upon him. It were far better that we never covenant to sacrifice our earthly life and its interests than that we take this vow upon us and then fail to pay that which we have vowed. (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6.) This is a most solemn matter, and the Lord will certainly require of us the fulfilment of our vows. If death is not voluntary, He will destroy our flesh. If

we resist this, it will mean the hopeless death of our being.

OUR FAITHFUL, UNCHANGABLE GOD

"It is God who worketh in you," declares the Apostle Paul. We did not begin this work ourselves. It would never have occurred to us, uninvited, to endeavor to obtain a share in the glory, honor and immortality of the Lord Jesus. It would have been the height of presumption for us so to do without an express invitation. It is God who planned the whole matter. He has been working in us by His promises, by His providences in our daily experiences, and by all the instructions, warnings and counsels of His Word, and we rejoice in this. There is no changeableness with God; and when once He made this proposition, He meant it to the full. It would never mean anything else. He never makes an arrangement which He would wish to abrogate or amend.

We are assured by the Apostle Paul that "He who has begun the good work in us will complete it, unto the Day of Jesus Christ." The only condition is *our own* faithfulness. *God* will never fail. "We are His workmanship." He is really doing the work. We are submitting ourselves that God may work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. He is the great Master Workman. Thus the work of grace goes on in our hearts and lives, making us ready for the exalted position to which we are called. And it is only if we are negligent of these great privileges granted to us that God will take them from us and give them to others.

Those who are constructing a fine building need special power to accomplish the work--to hoist the great steel frames, the blocks of stone, the brick, etc. Now God purposes to furnish the power by which we may accomplish the work on our character-building, this wonderful structure we are setting up. But the Lord will not accomplish this great work in us unless we diligently cooperate with Him. He gave us the calling, the inspiration, and furnishes all the necessary assistance day by day; so we are to persevere in the building of this character which is essential and which He purposes shall be in all those whom He will make joint-heirs with His Son.

"DO ALL THINGS WITHOUT MURMURINGS"

In following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus, we are not to *murmur* by the way, finding fault with its difficulties and its narrowness; nor are we to dispute how or where we are to be led, nor to seek to have any other way than that which Divine providence marks out for us, realizing and trusting that the Lord knows exactly what experiences are necessary to our development in the character-likeness of Christ. We should realize also that if obedience were possible while our mouths are full of complaints and dissatisfaction with the Lord and with our lot, which He has permitted, it would indi-

The Little Flock fit their life into the Truth.
The Great Company fit the Truth into their life.

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NOTHING TOO GOOD FOR GOD'S SERVICE

"If there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame or blind, or have any ill-blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God." --Deut. 15:21.--

SUCH an injunction to the house of servants under Moses is, perhaps, more necessary to the house of sons under Christ (Heb.

3:5,6), than many are apt to suppose. Inborn selfishness generally suggests that it would be a pity to sacrifice the best things, which

cate that we are out of sympathy with the spirit of His arrangement.

Such an obedience, if it were possible--and it is not -- would not meet the Divine approval nor gain us the prize...

HOW WE ARE TO FEAR AND TREMBLE...

When we read this Scripture, we are not to think that we should tremble with fear before our God; but we believe the Apostle's thought to be that in this great work that we have undertaken--of walking in the footsteps of Jesus that we may attain the prize of our High Calling--*so much* depends upon our faithfulness, our diligence. We have not undertaken a light thing. It is a very heavy responsibility. Our eternal interests are in the balance--the issue of life or death. Those who win the prize will be heirs of God to the highest honors and glories which have ever been offered--to a glory and honor beyond human power to imagine! We believe that no such offer will ever again be made.

The Son of God holds the position next to Jehovah, and can never have but one Bride. Surely, then, there is need that we work out our salvation with fear and trembling--with great carefulness, with great earnestness, in respect to everything in connection with it! We should be keenly appreciative of the fact that it is the most wonderful thing in all the Universe of God! We believe that if we do not make our calling and election sure and win in this fight within a very brief time now, the opportunity will be gone forever. No amount of wailing and gnashing of teeth will then avail. When the door is shut, it will never open again. Like Esau, those who fail will find "no place for repentance," though they seek it "carefully with tears." The glorious birthright will have slipped from their grasp forever.

But, beloved fellow-laborers, who are earnestly striving day by day to "so run as to obtain," "we are persuaded better things of you, though we thus speak." But it is well that we have our "pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance," that we may keep our eyes upon the Heavenly City and the prize set before us. The wearisome march will, we believe, soon be ended. At most it is only a *little while*. And so, with steadfast hearts, let us run with patience and perseverance to the end of our course.

"Joyful through hope,
thy motto still must be--
The Dawn is here!

What glories does that
Dawn unfold to thee!
Be of good cheer!

Gird up thy loins;
bind sandals on thy feet!
The way was dark and long;
the end is sweet."

could be used to advantage in so many other ways. And it is because this is generally done unconsciously that we now discuss this subject, with a view of helping the true-hearted out of the difficulty. Truly our hearts are exceedingly deceitful and require constant watching as respects their real motives, which they sometimes hide even from the loyal-hearted sons of God.

How often we have seen Christian parents, lovers of the Lord and his cause, who at times would bemoan their own inability to be actively engaged in the Lord's service, and who loved and admired the sacrifices of brethren and sisters in the colporteur service, who, to their injury, held back their own sons and daughters. Their reasoning seems to be that the work of the evangelist, as a colporteur, is good enough for those who have no education, or for such as are untalented; but they would have their children aim *higher* in life;--they would accept the Lord's bounty and expend it upon their children to give them an education, and then point them to medicine or law or literature or school-teaching as honorable and remunerative fields for their talents and education.

What a great mistake! what a sad mistake! How ashamed they will feel, if they ever get into the Kingdom, when looking back they will see how lightly they esteemed the wonderful privilege of being co-workers with God in this present time! How vastly different will be their views then, respecting the *importance* of medicine and law and schools and literature and marriage! How ashamed they will be that they ever thought that the lean and the lame and the ill-favored were good enough to sacrifice to the Lord! --that none should think of colporturing but those who had no capacity for "worldly prosperity!"

On the contrary the consecrated parent should consecrate to the Lord not only his firstborn, but all of his children; and from infancy should be instilling into their minds and hearts that the proper course for all of God's people is to devote themselves in largest possible measure to the divine service. They should be taught to regard all of life's affairs with a view to rendering their all to his service in any possible capacity; and to pray that the Lord would accept and use their time, talent, influence--all--in his service, the most honorable service imaginable, and ultimately to be the most highly rewarded. The Apostle's teaching respecting marriage (1 Cor. 7:27-40) should be brought to their attention with the thought of the Apostle that it is not a condemnation of marriage in others, but one of the incidental sacrifices of those anxious to be most fully used in the Lord's service.

Not only so, but the Christian parent who discerns present truth should encourage his child not to strive for the higher education, but to be content with a common school education; because (1) to qualify himself for a profession would be to put before himself a temptation in that direction which would last through life; (2) because the higher education of the present day in all colleges is so impregnated with the Evolution theory and Higher Criticism that the strong probability is that, like others, he would fall into skepticism, which will kill his devotion to the Lord, and he could only be induced to serve the Lord, even outwardly, by an honorable position and a good salary --if, indeed, it left him anything but morality as a substitute for religion!

On the contrary, every man and woman favored by the Lord with some knowledge of present truth should at once appreciate the true situation;--that the most talented and best educated have nothing worthy a place on the Lord's altar,--nothing worthy of acceptance in the Lord's service; and, forthwith, each should proceed to devote to it, daily and hourly, the *best* that he has and the *most* that he can, as

being the greatest privilege that could ever be offered to angels or men--to be collaborators with God. Some, thus rightly appreciating the matter, are glad to leave medicine and business and schools to engage in the much grander and more important service of the gospel, as colporteur-evangelists;--to carry the printed message, of glad tidings of great joy, to all who have hearing ears. They rightly feel that they have not too much education or talent for so honorable a service as ambassadors for the King of Kings, but that if they had more and yet more, it would be to the interest of the work.

Would you have a young man or a young woman dash all the prospects and ambitions of the present life, and enter the colporteur work,--simply because they have accepted present truth and because you urge them to this service? No, indeed; we hope that none so minded will enter the work. The Lord seeketh not such for his service and representatives, and, hence, we do not seek them in his name. He seeks such as "count it all joy" to serve him and his at any sacrifice. Those entering the work against their will would, undoubtedly, do poor work and soon fall away from the truth.

But would you recommend a man of means,--a business man, for instance,--to dispose of his own business and go about colporturing? living on the interest of his money, or, perhaps, on the principal? Why not? ⁽¹⁾Should we not all have the Master's spirit, expressed by his words: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The Lord's true saints have no business of their *own*, for they gave their all to the Lord at consecration. Their business they manage as trustees for the Lord--not to be turned over at their death, in prosperous condition, to their children or their friends, possibly to their injury. It is to be used by the trustee as wisely as he knows how before death; for then his trusteeship ends, and he must render his account. (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-26.) If he can provide for the comfortable necessities of the present life for those dependent upon him, why should he do more for them, or for any cause longer delay to "show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light"-- in the best manner open to him? Alas, how few of those who recognize their trusteeship are faithful to it and will be able to render their report with joy, and to hear the Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Before "the harvest is past and the summer is ended," let us get awake, dear brothers and sisters, to our privileges and opportunities and use them thankfully. But let us not be misunderstood as commending anything impracticable. Only exceptional ones can do more than provide for their own personal comforts --even at the very liberal terms granted to colporteurs; and "he that provideth not for his own household is worse than an unbeliever" is the Apostle's argument. Those hampered by family encumbrances must show their love and devotion by some other form of sacrifice.

Let us give a concluding word to some of the humble and small-talented ones who have engaged in this service. They may, perhaps, be inclined to feel that they are of the *blemished* class of ill-favored ones represented in our text as unacceptable. But not so, dear brethren: the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord cleanseth us from all sin--covers all our natural blemishes and makes us worthy and acceptable in the Beloved. A cipher alone has no value, but it is a power indeed, when it follows 1; and so it is with us when we follow Christ--his merit gives us association and cooperation with him; gives us weight and influence and power for God and his cause. "Ye are complete in Him;" "accepted in the Beloved."

⁽¹⁾ Aug. 22 Manna, Luke 2:49

R5228 "CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIND OF CHRIST

The mind of Christ is the will to do the Father's will. Our Lord, when a child, said on one occasion to His mother, "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49.) We recognize that we have a Heavenly Father, whose service is the highest possible service. Those who are His must have this spirit. The work of the New Creature

must be the Heavenly work, otherwise he will have no proof that he has passed from the condemnation upon the human race and become a New Creature.

If we have the spirit of loyalty to God, to the Truth and to the brethren, we have the mind, the disposition of Christ. We also have indeed the weaknesses of the flesh, but it is our privilege to fight against these and to become more and more transformed in the spirit of our minds, to have our minds

more centered in the Truth and in the service of the brethren.

If there is a decrease of zeal in this direction, then we may know that there is danger of going backward instead of forward. We hear of instances where the Lord's people have lost their first love and have become more or less cold. From our standpoint we may know when any have lost their first love. It is when they have allowed their minds to be led away to earthly things--

- love of family, of home, of worldly possessions, etc., all of which war against the Heavenly things. We should seek our pleasures, not from earthly sources, but from the Heavenly source. Very frequently we find Christians who tell us that they had a blessed experience when first they knew the Lord, but that they do not now feel as near to Him as formerly. If we probe the matter, we nearly always find that they went into business, or married, or did something which has warred against the Holy Spirit. We are not speaking against those things, but "If ye know *these things*, happy are ye if ye do them"--the things that make for our peace."

R4419 "QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT"

The Scriptures represent God as being a light. "God is light." In the Tabernacle he was represented by a brilliant light on the mercy-seat called the Shekinah glory. Our Lord Jesus, filled with the light of the Holy Spirit, was called "the true Light." And it was he that said of his followers, "Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Similarly the Divine power at Pentecost was represented by flames of light, cloven tongues of fire. Similarly the Spirit of the Lord from his Word is in the Scriptures pictured as the blaze of light from a lamp. As we read, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, a lantern to my footsteps." The flame of sacred love, the holy Spirit of the Father and of the Son, was enkindled in our hearts through the Word of grace and the impartation of the holy Spirit. In proportion as we have fed this flame (the Spirit) with the Truth we have become burning and shining lights in the world--the Spirit of the Lord in us.

But how easily such a holy flame may be extinguished -- how quickly too! A sufficient draft of the spirit of the world might extinguish our flame, quench it; or, even to put it under a bushel, we may shut off from ourselves the Divine supply of oil and spiritual oxygen and would soon quench the flame of love--the holy Spirit. We have not mentioned the Adversary; yet he is one of the potent influences to be contended against. He is continually attempting to get us into such a position as would extinguish our light and quench the Spirit. If not in one way, then in another our besetments come from the world, the flesh or the Adversary. Yet the Apostle intimates that we, and we alone, have the determining of the matter,--whether the holy Spirit in us shall be quenched or not. This is the Divine arrangement: We can take ourselves out of the Lord's hands if we choose, but neither saint nor sinner can do this for us. The Adversary himself is powerless to touch one of the Lord's "little ones" so long as he abides in him in faith, in love, in obedience. He himself, therefore, alone has to do with the matter, because God has promised that he will not suffer him to be tempted above that which he is able to endure, but will, with the temptation, provide a way of escape. As the flame of love is to be kept burning in our individual hearts so in the Church it is to be guarded, favored."

R5129 "As there are various ways by which a light may be extinguished, so there are

different means by which this light of the Holy Spirit may be quenched in us. A light will go out if the supply of oil or gas which feeds it be cut off, or if the oxygen of the air be shut off from it, whether because the supply is exhausted or because something is placed over the light to extinguish it. So it is with us. The light of the Spirit may be permitted to die out for want of replenishing, or it may be quenched by contact with some outside force.

In order to have the Holy Spirit in large measure, we must keep near to the Lord; for if we get away from Him, the light will go out. If we neglect the privilege of prayer or of study of the Scriptures or of fellowship with the Lord through failure to think of Him, the illumination of the Spirit will grow dim. On the other hand, it will become brighter in proportion to our realization of our own imperfections and to the degree of our consecration to the Lord. This we manifest by the zeal with which we study His will as expressed in His Word, and with which we practice that will in the affairs of life. These are the means by which we may supply the oil to keep our light burning brightly. But while we are endeavoring to do this, we must see to it that we do not come into contact with anything which will tend to extinguish the flame of sacred love in our hearts.

The world, the flesh and the Devil are all in opposition to the light of the Holy Spirit. To whatever extent they are brought into contact with the light, to that extent they smother it. If the spirit of worldliness come into our hearts, it will extinguish the light of the Holy Spirit. If the spirit of selfishness or of thoughtlessness enter our hearts, it will cause the light to grow dim and finally to die out. Weariness in well-doing will produce the same result. If we indulge in pleasures of the flesh, these will tend to quench the Spirit. *Sinful pleasures* should, of course, be shunned by *everybody*. But there are pleasures which are *not sinful* and which are proper enough for the natural man. Yet to whatever extent the consecrated indulge in these and thus gratify the longings of the *flesh*, proportionately the *new nature* will suffer...

Amongst the various arrangements which God has made for the New Creatures in Christ is the assembling of themselves together in order to *maintain* their light and to *let it shine*. The Apostle Paul exhorts the Church not to forget the assembling together wherever it is possible to do so. (Heb. 10:25.) Where the assembling is *not possible*, the Lord makes up for the lack in some other way; and so we sometimes find a dear brother or sister who has not had the opportunity to meet with others in the Truth, but who seems to be very clear and to have a deep appreciation of the Lord's Plan. Not having the privilege of fellowship with others, such a one has done so much the more reading and studying.

Those who have this opportunity for fellowship and who do not appreciate it, seem to be in a very unsatisfactory condition. In such cases, the oil is not burning brightly, else that one would delight to be with fellow-pilgrims in the same way, marching toward the same goal. We should be as careful of our spiritual condition as of our physical. If we have a bad taste in our mouth and no appetite, we conclude that we

are not well; and if we do not care to go to meetings, we may know that we are not in good spiritual health. When we find that we have not the desire to meet with others of "like precious faith," it is an indication that we should go to the Great Physician, that He may help us...

A flame might be revived, even after having been wholly extinguished. Many of us have seen a candle extinguished, and yet there was a bright, warm core which a quick breath of air might rekindle. So with us. There might be something in our lives to extinguish the flame, but the light would not go entirely out: the breath of the Lord might rekindle it. We have seen people who apparently had been zealous for the Lord, but who seemed to lose their love and zeal: but later it has been rekindled. In other cases, the light has seemed to die out altogether. We should ever be on guard lest we allow anything to dim or to extinguish our love for the Lord, for the Truth or for holiness and Christ-likeness."

R5332 "Peter could never look back without regret to the moment when he denied his Master. If he had been watching and praying for guidance, he would have come off conqueror when Jesus was arraigned before the tribunal..."

Satan was desiring to have him, to sift him out, as it were... St. Peter went out and wept bitterly; and, after he had it out with God in tears and prayers, he started again in the good way. And so *our* entering into temptation may not mean our utter rout. But the more we *resist* temptation, not allowing it to overcome us, the stronger characters we will become...

"Be not like dumb, driven **cattle**;

Be a **hero** in the strife!"

We might be in the Lord's army and yet be *like* driven cattle. But we are to be intelligent...

Let us be watchful, active, alert, and co-labor with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to consider the offer made to us--**the great High calling--the most wonderful thing ever known in all creation!** We shall never have another opportunity of showing God and our Lord Jesus our zeal for righteousness and our earnestness of spirit. The present opportunity is a special one. God has made it possible for all of us, who are in harmony with Him, to grow in grace and in knowledge, and thus to be more intelligent in our service. And we are to pray in harmony with that intelligence.

What may be the character of the temptations which shall come upon us, we may not clearly discern in advance; for if we knew all about them beforehand, they would be but slight temptations and easily overcome. Watch, therefore, and pray always. The only safe way is to be *always prepared*; for our Adversary, the Devil, is seeking whom he may devour. He knows our weak points better even than we do, and is ever ready to take advantage of them. Each of us needs the Spirit of the Lord in his heart, as well as His "grace to help in time of need," if we would be overcomers. Our daily exhortation to self should be,

"My soul, be on thy guard,

Ten thousand foes arise;

The hosts of Sin are pressing hard

To draw thee from the prize."