

February 9

Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. Psalm 116:7

THE Christian's *habit of thought* has much indeed to do with his spiritual progress or retrogression, as it is also an index of his spiritual state; and good habits of

"Sow a thought and you reap an act;
Sow an act and you reap a habit;
Sow a habit and you reap a character;
Sow a character and you reap a destiny."

R5785 Titled "MEDITATIONS IN THE NIGHT" *"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips, when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches."--Psalm 63:5,6.*

BY THE expression as to satisfying his soul with marrow and fatness, the Prophet David evidently referred to the abundance of God's favor and blessing which had come to him. He had a large portion, a fat portion, and appreciated God's goodness, God's favor toward him, taking him as a shepherd boy from among the flocks, and privileging him to engage in His service and finally bringing him to the throne as the king of Israel. For all this he was very grateful to the Lord. He appreciated all of God's blessings. It was appropriate that his mouth should give praise, that he should be joyful,

thought need to be carefully cultivated. By "habit of thought" we mean that normal condition to which the mind habitually returns in the moments of mental leisure. While engaged in the active duties of life we must of necessity bend our mental energies to the work in hand, for if we do anything merely mechanically and without

that he should speak of the Lord's loving-kindness. So we find in the Psalms of David many beautiful expressions in which he gives great praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty. He speaks also of God's majesty, of His wondrous power and might, and refers to the heavens as His handiwork...

In ancient times the people were more dependent upon the moon and stars for light at night, not having as we have today full provision for illumination by means of refined oil, gas, electricity, etc... They were dependent for artificial light upon olive oil, and that was not very plentiful. As a consequence, the people went to bed early. So King David was thinking upon the Almighty as he lay upon his bed, meditating upon God-- he was not thinking foolish thoughts, not planning foolish doings. When we think of this, we are not surprised that his mind was full of beautiful thoughts.

NOBLEST SUBJECT FOR MEDITATION...

We should be continually remembering the Lord in all of our moments of rest,

R1884 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."--Phil. 3:14.

THESE were the words of one of the most earnest and faithful runners for the prize of the high calling of the Gospel Church. The speaker was a man of faith, a man of understanding, a man of fixed and unwavering purpose and of dauntless courage--a wise man in the Scriptural sense, though a fool in the world's estimation. His course, as well as those of the other eleven apostles, we are assured was a successful one; for the Revelator in describing the heavenly Jerusalem says, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (Rev. 21:14.) And at the end of his course, the Apostle, in the full assurance of faith, left us this triumphant testimony: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." And then, ever mindful of the other members of the body still in the race, he added, "And not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing."-- 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

In reviewing the course of the successful runners of the past, there is much of encouragement and helpfulness to all those who are still endeavoring to make their calling and election sure; for even the Apostle Paul, strong and daring as he was, reminds us that he was a man of like passions with ourselves; that while still in the strife of the Christian warfare he counted not that he had already attained the mark for the prize, nor that he was already perfect. He tells us that he realized, as we all do, a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and that he found it necessary to exert his will continually to keep the body under.--Acts 14:15; Phil. 3:12; Rom. 7:23; 1 Cor. 9:27.

If Paul and all the other apostles and beloved saints of the early church were men of like passions with ourselves, and similarly compassed with infirmities and adverse influences, besetments and allurements; and if they too were frequently assailed with temptations and trials which summoned all their fortitude to enable them to overcome, then, in their overcoming, we have the assurance that we also may overcome through the grace promised to us, as well as to them, if, like them, we avail ourselves of it.

So assured was the Apostle of his own continuous faithfulness, and of that of the other apostles, and of his co-laborers, that he could say to the church, "You have us for examples."--Phil. 3:17; 2 Thes. 3:7-9; 1 Cor. 4:9.

Noble examples they were--of faithfulness, of zeal, of patience,

concentrating thought upon it we cannot do it well; yet even here Christian principle, well established in the character, will unconsciously guide. But when the strain of labor and care are lifted for a time, the established habit of thought, like the needle to the pole, should quickly return to its rest in God. Z.'95-250R1885:5

whether upon a bed, or wherever it may be. We should cultivate the habit of meditating upon Him. We think very few people meditate upon the Lord; and it is to their disadvantage that they do not.

The great and holy Laws of God find expression in Him. We should think of God as the personification of all that is just, loving, kind, wise, in character and principle. This should stimulate us to be like Him. The more we appreciate a noble character the more we desire to emulate it. The more we see of God's mighty works in nature and His mercies toward us, in that same proportion our hearts and lips will praise Him. If there is a prophetic thought connected with this passage, it is that all through the Dark Ages, all through the night time of this Age, God's faithful people have been praising Him... We should meditate more and more upon His Holy will and ways, and strive to conform ourselves thereto. Thus shall we become more and more like unto our Father in Heaven."

of endurance, and of true Christian fortitude and heroism. While many of those in more obscure positions in the church were doubtless as faithful in their spheres, the Apostle Paul, as a leader and pioneer of the faith among the Gentiles, comes very prominently to view. At the very beginning of his Christian course, the Lord said, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9:16.) Paul was not long in proving the truth of this prediction; but, instead of allowing the prospect of continual tribulation to depress him, he only rejoiced in the privilege thus afforded of testifying his love to the Lord. "And now," he says, "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."--Acts 20:22-24.

Hear the Apostle's testimony of his own experience-- "In labors abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"--2 Cor. 11:23-33.

Through all these tribulations the Apostle pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling. The mark to be attained was holiness--that holiness which brings *every thought* into captivity to the will of God, the mind of Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5.) That was the grand ideal which Paul steadily pursued; and surely in his life he gave evidence of constant growth in grace. Under tests of great and ever-increasing severity his character developed into most graceful and beautiful proportions. The same is also manifest in the characters of the other apostles and saints, though their record has not come down to us as complete as that of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

But it is specially important that we should observe *how* our beloved Brother Paul was enabled to run so steadily in a race so diffi-

cult. How was he able to steer so clear of the temptations and besetments to which he, as a man of like passions with us, was necessarily subject? His answer is--"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark," etc.

Here are four considerations which we do well to ponder most carefully:--

First. The Apostle made a humble, sober estimate of his spiritual standing and strength. He did not feel puffed up at being a chosen vessel of the Lord to bear his name before the Gentiles. He did not consider himself *the Great Apostle*, nor vaunt himself in any way. And so far was he from boasting of his spiritual attainments, that he humbly reminded the church of the possibility of himself being a castaway, even after he had preached to others, unless he continued to stand fast in his integrity and to grow in grace. (1 Cor. 9:27.) And while he held up before them Christ as the power of God and the wisdom of God, and the model for their imitation, he humbly declared that he, with them, was striving to follow the pattern, Christ, while trusting alone in the merit of his sacrifice to make up his own shortcomings. Thus he was relieved of that greatest hindrance to spiritual development--self-satisfaction; for ⁽¹⁾if any man considers that he has attained a satisfactory spiritual state, from that very moment he may date the beginning of his spiritual decline. No present attainments can be satisfactory to a sincere follower of Christ who studiously endeavors to copy the perfect pattern. It is only when we turn our eyes away from Christ that self-complacency can be exercised; for, in full view of the pattern, our shortcomings are ever manifest. And if in pride of heart we do lose sight of them ourselves, they only become the more manifest to others. Only in the realization of a continual growth into the likeness of Christ should the Christian find satisfaction. Like the Apostle, let him consider, not that he has already attained, neither that he is already perfect, but that he is still in the race and making progress towards the goal. And no doubt it was the considering of himself as not having attained perfection, and as still subject to frailty, that led the Apostle to seek the Lord's grace, that kept him always in a humble attitude of mind and that gave him compassion for the weaknesses and failings of others. It is those who become high-minded and self-sufficient that strain to pull out the mote from their brother's eye and forget the beam in their own.

Secondly, ⁽²⁾we observe the Apostle's singleness of purpose -- "This *one thing* I do." He did not try to do several things: if he had, he would surely have failed. He devoted his life to the one purpose to which he was called, and to that end dropped every other aim in life. He did it, too, in view of the fact that all through the present life his chosen course would bring certain loss, privation, toil, care, persecution and continual reproach. In this singleness of purpose he was relieved of many temptations to turn aside to enjoy some of the good things of this present life, or to pursue some of its illusive bubbles.

Thirdly, we observe that he determined to forget the things behind. Had he allowed his mind to return again and again to con over the treasures of the past which he had given up; to reconsider how great the sacrifice which he had made in thus devoting himself to the cause of the despised and crucified One, he might have been tempted first to despondency, and later to return and seek to recover the things behind. On the other hand, he might have carried before him the picture of his persecutions of the Christians and his consenting to their martyrdom, wondering whether the Lord had forgiven him, and continually condemning himself for his blindness, thus forfeiting his peace of mind and interfering with his usefulness. But, having accepted forgiveness in Christ, he put that away also, though he frequently referred to the matter with contrition, and the thought seemed to influence his whole life so that he labored the more diligently to testify to his appreciation of the grace bestowed, and to be long-suffering with others as God had been with him. (1 Cor. 15:9,10; Phil. 3:6; Eph. 3:8; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:12-16.) Wise indeed was he to forget the things behind!

Fourthly, he reached forward to the things that were before,-- his faith took hold of the promises of God with such tenacity that to him they were living realities, inspiring zeal and faithfulness. Upon the heavenly themes he allowed his mind to dwell, as he also advised others, saying, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,

whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phil. 4:8.) This is the way he reached forward to the things before; and thus also we must gather our inspiration to holiness and our courage to endurance and preserving faithfulness, even unto death. ⁽³⁾The Christian's *habit of thought* has much indeed to do with his spiritual progress or retrogression, as it is also an index of his spiritual state, and good habits of thought need to be very carefully cultivated.

By "habit of thought" we mean that normal condition to which the mind habitually returns in the moments of mental leisure. While engaged in the active duties of life we must of necessity bend our mental energies to the work in hand, for if we do any thing merely mechanically and without concentrating thought upon it, we cannot do it well; yet, even here, Christian principle, well established in the character, will unconsciously guide. But when the strain of labor and care are lifted for a time, the established habit of thought, like the needle to the pole, should quickly return to its rest in God. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." (Psa. 116:7.) Let not the mind thus temporarily released grovel and revel in earthly things, but let it return to its rest and refreshment in the contemplation of "whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report" --upon that beauty of holiness which is the mark or goal or end of our high calling, the attainment of which will be rewarded with the "prize"--glory, honor and immortality. As the poet has beautifully expressed it,--

⁽⁴⁾Now let our thoughts on wings sublime
Rise from the trivial cares of time,
Draw back the parting veil, and see
The glories of eternity."

Let thoughts of God and Christ and the worthy saints of the past and present, of the heavenly inheritance, of the blessedness of our future work in cooperation with Christ, of the magnitude and benevolence of the divine plan, and of the glory and blessedness of our gathering together unto Christ when our work of the present life is finished, fill our minds and inspire our hearts. And to these contemplations let us also receive the additional comfort and blessedness of personal communion and fellowship with God through prayer and the study of the Word and the assembling of ourselves together for worship and praise.

Fifthly, we note the Apostle's energetic zeal, which not only reached forward in contemplation of and desire for the beauty of holiness and the heavenly glory, but also earnestly pressed toward the mark for the prize. It is not enough that we consider and desire these things, we must also run for them, strive to attain them, and study and endeavor by the grace of God to so run as to obtain. In this connection we see a fresh beauty in the Apostle's admonition in another place--"*strive* [i.e., endeavor, labor] to enter into *rest*." The harder we work to accomplish the Lord's will in ourselves and that part of his work committed to us, the greater is our peace and true rest. Let all the faithful take courage, and also take instruction from the example and teaching of the faithful Apostle to us Gentiles, who himself ran so successfully to the end of his course; for the same grace is promised also unto us.

There is one other thought suggested by the above words of the Apostle which we would do well to consider, and that is, that as his faithful and successful course was a worthy and safe example to the Church, so likewise should each disciple of Christ in turn consider that his example will have its influence upon others. ⁽⁵⁾Every Christian should strive to be a pattern worthy of imitation--a pattern of earnest, faithful endeavor to copy Christ in his daily life, and of active zeal in his service. Patterns of perfection, of the ultimate moral glory and beauty of holiness, we cannot expect to be in the present life. Such a pattern we have only in Christ our Lord. In no such sense did Paul ever say, Follow me, or Follow us; but he did say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." --1 Cor. 11:1.

The Apostle was a grand example of earnest endeavor to attain perfection, but not of the ultimate perfection which was in Christ only; and it is his zeal and intense earnestness in striving to copy ⁽⁶⁾Christ and to accomplish his will that we should imitate. Let us mark all such worthy examples while we also "press toward the mark [of character] for [the attainment of] the prize of our high calling."

⁽³⁾ Feb. 9 Manna, Psa. 116:7

⁽⁴⁾ Jun. 13 Manna, Psa. 17:15, Hymn 193

⁽⁵⁾ Feb. 10 Manna, 1Tim. 4:12

⁽⁶⁾ Hymn 256

⁽¹⁾ June 11 Manna, Phil. 3:13

⁽²⁾ Jun. 12 Manna, Phil. 3:13

R5518 "As the Psalmist says of the godly man, "His delight is in the Law of the Lord; and in His Law doth he meditate day and night." And of himself he declares, "Mine eyes prevent [anticipate] the night watches, that I may meditate in Thy Word," Law, precepts -- the spirit, the purpose of that Law, not merely the outward form. So should we meditate upon the spirit of the Law of God. The sentiment of our heart should be the desire to get the Divine Mind as nearly as possible on every subject. All who are eager to be in harmony with God and to attain His character-likeness will think upon things that are good, pure, holy.--Psalm 1:2; 119:148; Philippians 4:8."

(Phil 4:8 NASV-1995) "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."

TRUE

R2891 "This is the first question to be asked respecting any matter: Is it true or is it false?"

HONORABLE

R2891 "The true but dishonorable or unworthy things presenting themselves for our consideration at the bar of our minds are perhaps oftenest in connection -- with others -- the weaknesses, the errors, the follies, or what not of our neighbors, of our friends. The entertaining of these thoughts, the pondering of them, will be unfavorable to us, and the sooner we discern the matter and dismiss them the better, the happier, the more noble will be our own hearts."

JUST

R4827 "We could allow our minds to dwell much on the injustices practiced about us and elsewhere; on how much injustice is done in Africa against those who could rule themselves better; on how much injustice is done in business, etc."

R2891 "Our minds are to be occupied in thinking about righteousness or just things, principles, etc.; we are not to be continually meditating upon grievances and injustices, either real or imagined. We are to remember, on the contrary, that we are living in the period which the Scriptures denominate "the present evil world," and that it could not be this if Justice prevailed generally. We are to remember that hereunto we were called, -- even to endure injustice, for righteousness' sake;--to do good, to lay down our lives in the service of the Lord and his Word, and yet to be evil-spoken of and to be misunderstood and to have all manner of evil said against us falsely for Christ's sake... We are to take it as it comes, as a matter of course, not grieving over nor specially thinking about the trials, the injustices, etc."

R4827 "The Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." This is not the rule of *love*, but of *justice*... We are not to allow our minds to run along lines that would be unjust. 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, so far as reason will permit, from the standpoint of mercy, pity, forgiveness, helpfulness..."

PURE

R2891 "Whoever maintains purity of thought will have comparatively little effort in maintaining purity of word and of action. Whether the impurity come from one direction or another--from the world or the flesh or the devil--its attack must first of all be upon the mind; and if repelled there the victory is won: if not repelled we cannot know what the consequences would be, as the Apostle James declares: "Lust [selfish desire of any kind], when it has conceived [in the mind] bringeth forth sin [develops sinful words or deeds], and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."--Jas. 1:15."

R4828 "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 shall desire to drop it from memory."

LOVELY

R4827 "We can scarcely overestimate the power of the mind over the body. If we take pleasure in the cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit, they will prove a rich blessing to ourselves and to others."

R4828 "We are to recognize true loveliness and to esteem it. 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 and another of the followers of Jesus who walk closely in his footsteps."

VIRTUE

R4828 "If there is anything that has any value, any merit, that has anything worthy of praise, we should recognize it. We should note in those about us, and particularly in the Church, the elements of character which are worthy of praise. We should not underestimate gentleness, faithfulness, patience. We should take note of constancy, of energy, of devotion to duty. We should not think of the trifling failures of others or of even their greater failures. If we continue to fill our minds with unhappy thoughts, we shall do injury to ourselves. As we continue to recognize the commendable things in our own lives and in the lives of those about us, we shall become the more God-like.

Things of any virtue, or value, things in any degree praiseworthy--the noble words, or noble deeds, or noble sentiments of anyone--we may safely meditate upon and, as a consequence, find ourselves growing toward those ideals upon which our minds, our new natures, thus feed.

Thus shall we become more and more transformed by the renewing of our minds, and approach nearer and nearer to the glorious likeness of our 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."

R4409 "It is necessary that we do more than know about the Scriptures and have an appreciation of their teachings. We must get their Truths into our hearts. There are cer-

tain points which underlie the Divine Law and all of its regulations bearing upon us, and these points cannot be comprehended at once. Day by day as we persevere in the study of the Truth, as we meditate upon God's Law by day and by night, we come to clearer views of these great principles of Truth-- Justice, Love and Wisdom--which underlie all of the Divine Government. In proportion as we attain this attitude of heart and mind we know the Lord not only in the sense of appreciating his glorious character, but in the sense that we are enabled to put those points into operation in our daily lives--in our deeds, our words, our thoughts. Whoever does not attain to this heart appreciation of the Divine arrangements will be sure to sin against the Lord, to keep his Covenant of consecration imperfectly and those who so do will fail to gain the highest prize, if, indeed, they be accounted worthy of eternal life upon any plane of being.

Let us then not only search the Scriptures daily and obtain intellectual appreciation of the Divine character, but let us meditate upon these eternal verities in our hearts. Let us familiarize ourselves with these points of Divine Government. Let us come more and more into sympathy with them--come into fullest harmony with our Creator and his requirements!"

R1390 "GOD'S WORKS AND WORD LESSON III., APRIL 17, 'PSALM 19:1-14'. Golden Text -- "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."--Verse 7."

It is good to meditate upon, to ponder, the Word of the Lord; for only in so doing can we receive the nourishment it is designed to give. A hasty reading of the Scriptures and a quick return of the mind to other thoughts and pursuits makes a spiritual dyspeptic, incapable of assimilating the spirit of the truth and lacking the strength and power of mature and developed Christian character. The Psalmist beautifully represents the proper attitude of all those who truly love the Lord, and who therefore delight in his Word and plan: "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night;" "I will meditate of all thy work, and talk of thy doings;" "I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word;" "Thy testimonies are my delight and my counselors;" "I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands;" "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day; ...therefore I hate every false way... Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever;" "My meditation of them shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." -- Psa. 1:2; 77:12; 119:15, 16, 24; 143:5; 119:97, 104, 111; 104:34.

Here, as well as in the lesson under consideration, the two great books of nature and of revelation are pointed out as special themes for the meditation of those who love the Lord and who desire to know more of him.

Verses 1-6 refer to the silent yet eloquent testimony of nature to the power and skill and wisdom and goodness and glory of its divine Author. Its testimony may be read by the thoughtful of every land and of every language, by day and by night, in all the earth. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." Job, considering the testimony of

nature to the glory of God, says, "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength...which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number." (Job 9:4,9,10'.) And the Lord, desiring to reassure Job of his superior power and grace, inquires of him, "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth the constellations of the Zodiac, each in its season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? or dost thou appoint its rule on earth?"--Job 38:31-33'.

Thus, by their numberless multitude, their orderly grouping in various constellations, their continual yet never conflicting movements, their perfect harmony, their magnitude and their mutual benign influence, do the shining hosts of heaven declare the glory of God, by day and by night. He who meditates upon these things will scarcely be "the fool" who saith "in his heart, There is no God;" for all nature testifies to the Creator's glory and power.

'Verses 7-11' refer us to the yet superior glory of God's special written revelation of himself, given through his inspired human agents, the prophets and the apostles. This testimony not only declares the existence and power and wisdom of God, with a silent intimation of his goodness and grace, but with overwhelming force it bears to the thoughtful mind the convincing testimony of all his glorious attributes and of all his love and grace toward us in Christ.

Hear the Psalmist: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Other influences may lead to temporary and partial changes of course and action, but nothing else equals God's revealed Truth in producing a change--change of being, character, soul. It is because other converting agencies and powers are so often used (instead of this one which God has provided) that there are so many merely glossed-over, nominal Christians, as compared with the few whose entire beings are turned and fully consecrated to the Lord. People may be converted from savagery to civilization by a general knowledge; or from intemperance to sobriety by a study of the advantages of the latter over the former; or from dishonesty to honesty by learning that "Honesty is the best policy." But none of these are soul conversions. Only God's truth can produce soul conversion, as also our Lord indicates in his prayer, "Sanctify them through thy truth-- thy word is truth."

"The testimony of the Lord is sure [not doubtful, but clear and positive], making wise [not the heady and wilful who have plans and theories of their own and who do not submit themselves to the will and plan of God, but] the simple" [the single hearted who have no will or plan of their own which they wish the Lord to adopt, but who seek the Lord's will only].

"The statutes [*piqqudim* -- appointments: the appointed plans] of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." Yes, indeed, God's glorious, appointed plan of the ages rejoices the hearts of all who have come to a knowledge of it.

"The commandments [*mitzvah* -- precepts or teachings] of the Lord are clear, enlightening the eyes" [showing us the unmistakable course and end of righteousness and of unrighteousness].

"The fear [*yirah*--reverence] of the Lord is clean [a pure and lofty sentiment based upon love and gratitude, and not upon a servile recognition of tyranny and power], enduring forever."

"The judgments [*mishpat*--ordinances or decrees] of the Lord are true; they are altogether righteous. More are to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold: and they are sweeter than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb." Once, following the leadings of mistaken teachers, and catechisms, we thought of God's "Eternal Decrees" only with horror, supposing that they provided for the salvation of but a mere handful of our race and for the everlasting misery of the masses. But what a change since the eyes of our understandings are opened. God's *decrees* are sweet to our taste, we appreciate them greatly, we see that he has decreed a Great Savior and a great salvation, open to every creature's acceptance; and that he has provided that all shall be brought to a clear knowledge of the truth, that they may have the fullest opportunity for everlasting life upon the only condition God can make--righteousness.

"Moreover, by them [by the judgments or decrees of the Lord as to the course of righteousness and unrighteousness and their rewards and penalties] is thy servant [the thoughtful servant, who meditates on these things] warned; and in keeping them [in remembering and harmonizing with them] there is great reward."

Thus the Book of Nature and the Book of Revelation, when rightly read, harmoniously declare the glory of God; and blessed is the man whose character is ennobled and purified and blessed by constant meditation on these glorious themes. How it refreshes and strengthens every noble and generous aspiration, checks every tendency to evil and sin, purifies the heart, kindles hope, awakens zeal and starts and keeps us in the heavenly race with its glorious end in view. The great Emperor of this wonderful universe upon which we daily and nightly cast our wondering gaze has called even us to be the bride of and joint-heir with his only begotten Son, the heir of all things; and in these glorious revelations of himself is supplied the inspiration and instruction necessary to enable us to run with patience the race set before us, if we make them the centre of our meditations.

'Verse 12'--"Who [in his own strength or by his own wisdom and foresight] can guard against errors?" Not one; for as the Apostle Paul tells us, we have our treasure, the new nature, in earthen vessels. Not only are we weak, mentally, morally and physically, but in addition we have a wily foe: we wrestle not merely with flesh and blood, but also against principalities and unseen spiritual powers, strongly entrenched in places of power and influence. (Eph. 6:12'.) Who, indeed, is strong enough in himself to guard against errors of doctrine and practice strongly entrenched in a misguided and depraved public opinion, fortified by the tendencies of his own impaired conditions of mind and heart and skilfully glossed over by the great deceiver who, with untiring effort, seeks to accomplish our deception and overthrow? Who, indeed, is sufficient for these things? The inquiry of the Psalmist implies the answer --Not one. In our own strength we cannot presume to stand, and therefore how appropriate the prayer:--

'Verses 12-13'. "From secret faults do thou cleanse me. Also from presumptuous sins do thou restrain thy servant; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

Sins of presumption are such as result from undue *self*-confidence, ambition or pride. Many are guilty of them without seemingly being aware of the fact: They *presume* in prayer to direct the Lord how they want to have numbers join some sect, whose existence God never authorized; or they say how many they want to have converted at a certain meeting; or they instruct him how the Foreign Missions should be blessed and what results they shall expect.

Others presume to decide what God intends to do aside from what his Word authorizes, and will perhaps pass lightly over such a doctrine as that of the Second Death if it stands in the way of a favorite theory which they have prepared for the Lord to follow. This is presumptuous sin.

Others, on the other hand, tell that God will everlastingly preserve the wicked in torture, and thus they are in error from attempting to be wise above what is written. Is not this a presumptuous sin?

Such presumptuous sins bring natural *consequences*: the presumptuous lose *respect* for that which they can do without, or can twist and turn to their own convenience. As respect for the exactness of the Bible is lost the presumption naturally increases and finds more pronounced expression in their self-assurance. Some, indeed, go so far as to interpret the language of Scripture the opposite of the way in which it reads, to favor the ideas of the presumer...

Ah! yes, beloved, this sin of presumption is one into which many who have been enlightened by a knowledge of the plan of God are inclined to fall...

Presumptuous sins pervert the judgment, make void the Scriptures and lead to "the great transgression" of "counting the blood of the covenant wherewith we were sanctified a common thing." (Heb. 10:29.) In view of such temptations and tendencies, let the consecrated ever bear in mind that their only safety is in meekness and humility, clinging close to the word of the Lord; and in meditating on its precepts and pondering over all their solemn and momentous import.--"Then shall" they "be upright, and they shall be innocent from the great transgression." And let the constant prayer of all such be--

'Verse 14'. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."

R5909 "The object of this trial and sifting evidently is to select all whose heart desires are unselfish, who are fully and unreservedly consecrated to the Lord; who are so desirous of having the Lord's will done, and whose confidence in His wisdom, His way and His Word is so great, that they refuse to be led away from the Lord's Word, either by the sophistries of others or by plans and ideas of their own. These in this sifting time will be strengthened and will increase their joy in the Lord and their knowledge of His plans, even while their faith is being tested by the falling into error of thousands on every hand.--Psalm 91:7."