

June 13

*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with
Thy likeness. Psalm 17:15*

"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 co-operation with Christ,
of the magnitude and benevolence of the
divine plan, and of the glory and blessed-
ness of our gathering together unto Christ
when our work of the present life is fin-
ished, fill our minds and inspire our hearts.

And to these contemplations let us also
receive the additional comfort and blessed-
ness of personal communion and fellowship
with God through prayer and study of the
Word and the assembling of ourselves to-
gether for worship and praise. Z. 95-251
R1885:6

[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.

R1914 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

THE ONE THING DESIRABLE

*"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?...One thing have I
desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple."--Psa. 27:1,4.*

THE inspired Psalmist in loftiest strains of devotion and fervor
puts into the hearts and minds of God's consecrated people senti-
ments of faith and trust and love and adoration to God, who is wor-
thy of all praise. While many of these sentiments were based upon
his own checkered experience, they were uttered under divine inspi-
ration for the instruction and edification specially of the true spiritu-
al Israel of God.

Thus the Lord himself would indicate to us the sentiments of
fervent devotion to him that should fill our hearts; and in this view
of the matter we see how closely he would draw us to himself in
love and faith and childlike confidence. While reason and common
sense have their rightful place and are indispensable to a religious
life, the soul that never mounts upon the wings of holy and fervent
emotion, that is never stirred to its depths by a sense of the divine
goodness and beneficence, has never yet experienced the blessed-
ness of the relation of sonship. A true son of a beloved and approv-
ing father naturally experiences the fervor of tender emotion. Espe-
cially is this so of a true son of God who recognizes in his heavenly
Father the perfection of every grace, the crowning glory of all excel-
lence, and who lives in close communion and fellowship with him
and has the constant witness in himself of his love and approval.

Ah, those were no empty words of our blessed Lord Jesus when
he said,--"The Father himself loveth you." "If a man love me, he will
keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come
unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 16:27; 14:23.) It is
under such conditions that all those holy emotions of love, tender-
ness, faith, gratitude and praise fill to the brim our cup of joy; and
with holy ecstasy we sing, "My cup runneth over. Surely goodness
and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in
the house of the Lord forever."

How full of the melody of fervent emotion, of grateful praise,
and of loving confidence are the inspired psalms! They bid our
hearts rejoice and our tongues be glad, and they show us how, by
meditating on his word and obeying his precepts, to "Rejoice in the
Lord always, and in everything give thanks."

It was in view of the Lord's providences and of his many deliv-
erances from the power of his enemies, and of the uniform kindness
and mercy of God as he meditated upon them, that David exclaimed,
"The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The
Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?" This
consolation, variously expressed throughout the Scriptures, comes
with all its blessed potency in our times of greatest need: the more
desperate and determined the foes we encounter and the more fierce
the conflict with the powers of darkness, the more glorious is the
deliverance and the clearer are the manifestations of divine grace.
And, as a consequence, faith takes deeper root, and, with renewed
confidence and assurance, lays hold upon all the precious promises
of God; and love and gratitude well up from hearts refreshed with an
increased sense of the divine favor and blessing.

So it was with David; and so it is with God's *faithful* people
who lead a life of prayer and faith and close fellowship with God.
Such fellowship with God in adversity and in prosperity naturally
tends more and more to center the heart's affections and desires in
God, until the one thing supremely desired and sought after is that
expressed by the Psalmist--to continually dwell in the house of the
Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

To dwell continually in the house of the Lord signifies to be
continually counted worthy and to be recognized of God as a mem-
ber of his Church, "whose house are we if we hold fast the confi-
dence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. 3:6.)
These, who hold fast their faith, and by faith overcome the allure-
ments and temptations of the world, dying daily unto its spirit, hopes
and ambitions, and living more and more unto God--these shall in-
deed dwell in the house of the Lord, in his holy, spiritual temple, his
Church, forever. Now they dwell in the holy place of consecration
and adoption; and the Lord says, "I will not blot out his name out of
the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and
before his angels;" and by and by he will present them to himself "a
glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and
worthy, as kings and priests unto God, to pass beyond the veil into
the Most Holy--into the glorious spiritual condition and into the
immediate presence of God.

"To behold the beauty of the Lord" is to behold the beauty of
holiness, to have this image of his glory ever before the mind's eye
as our inspiration, our light, our guide, our pattern and our chief joy.
Here indeed is the Christian's secret of a happy life--happy in the
midst of whatever may come to him of affliction or pain or loss or
perplexity or whatever experiences come through the checkered
scenes of this present life. To behold the beauty of the Lord really is
only possible to those who dwell in his house; for only to such does
he reveal himself "the fairest among ten thousand and the one alto-
gether lovely." Such only know how to appreciate the beauty of his
holiness; such only can delight themselves in the Lord and in the
continual meditation of his law, and in conforming their lives to it.

"To inquire in his temple" signifies that those who are truly of
the Lord's house are inquirers, students of his holy law and testimo-
ny, and that their delight is in so doing. The language of their hearts
is, "Oh, how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." "I have
meat to eat that ye [who are of the world] know not of;" for "It is my
delight to do thy will, O God."

This one desire is the sum and substance of the Christian's am-
bition as more and more he becomes dead to the world and alive
toward God. Let us more and more seek after it and conform to it;
for in so doing Christian courage, boldness, fortitude and zeal will
be greatly multiplied. These all are not only born of faith, but they
increase and grow strong by a living faith developed and strength-
ened by the lessons of experience.

Courage, born of faith and strengthened by endurance, cries

with humble boldness in the midst of the deepest darkness of the most perplexing difficulties, and in the midst of the wildest storms and most threatening dangers, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

The Apostle Paul surely caught this blessed inspiration when he said, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say rejoice....Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Mark how all through the Word of God we are taught, not only to be sober, vigilant, diligent, thoughtful, prayerful, and always abounding in the work of the Lord through whatsoever it may bring of toil or care or reproach or persecution, but in the midst of any or all of these experiences we are taught to be happy and to be filled with the inspiration of a holy joy. And not only are we counselled to be joy-

ous, but the manner of life which naturally produces this joy is pointed out to us. When we come into the Lord's family we enter a new and holy atmosphere which those only can realize and appreciate who have the one desire above referred to paramount to every other, viz.,--to be counted worthy to abide continually in the house of the Lord.

"Do not count, when day is o'er, daily loss from life's rich store;

But the gains, however small, count them daily one and all:

Every sweet and gracious word, every pleasant truth you've heard;

Every tender glance and tone, every kindly deed you've known:

Let all evil things go by; still with brave endeavor,
try simple joys to multiply.

Thus you'll learn, how large a sum will
with faithful reckoning come."

I SHALL BE SATISFIED, WHEN I AWAKE, WITH THY LIKENESS

R4966 "We have heard of the Sunday School teacher who told her class about heaven, about its pianos, harps, organs, horses and carriages, fruits and flowers, etc. We see that she was merely thinking of the blessings God has provided for the faithful and obedient of the world--"in due time." She had no conception of the "heaven of heavens" promised to the faithful followers of Jesus in the "narrow way." The Great Teacher explains that it is impossible to describe heaven with its beauties and charms. He said to Nicodemus, "If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"--John 3:12.

In line with this, the Bible makes no attempt to describe heaven itself, nor its inhabitants. We are merely told that "God is a Spirit," "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see"--personally. (John 4:24; I Tim. 6:16.) Men must discern God in His works--the noblest of which is the perfect man--made in His moral likeness, on the earthly plane, "a little lower than the angels" on the spirit plane. The most that His Word declares of our heavenly inheritance is that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." --I Cor. 2:9.

But while refusing to inform us of the heavenly condition, God gives us a soul-satisfying portion. Through the Apostle He declares (I John 3:2), "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He [the glorified Jesus] shall appear [at His second advent, in power and great glory] we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Others, not thus changed from human to spirit nature by the First Resurrection power, will not "see Him as He is," but only as He shall be revealed in His providences and judgments, which every eye shall recognize.

How satisfactory! Beyond all that we could have asked or thought! "Like Him!"--what more could we ask? "Like Him" whom God hath highly exalted "Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named!" (Eph. 1:21.) We stand amazed at such grace! Moreover, we can realize that He who called us to become "partakers of the divine nature" and joint-heirs with the Redeemer in His Mediatorial Kingdom has provided for our every comfort and joy in that heavenly state, the details of which we may not now grasp. Prophetically of these it is written, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness."--Psa. 17:15."

R4132 "COME UNTO ME AND DRINK"

...Before anyone can come to the Lord he must thirst, he must have an appreciation of that which the Lord has to give--the water, the refreshment, of eternal life. This means that he must learn that he is a sinner, and under sentence of death, and that there is no hope for a future life except through Christ. The coming to the Lord is the approach of faith. Our thirst is our desire. We drink, or appropriate to ourselves the divine message. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth" (John 17:17)--and water is the symbol of truth. The promise of a blessing to those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" is in full accordance with this. And the promise is, "They shall be filled." This, too, is in harmony with our Lord's statement in our lesson, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."--v. 14.

In the present time our thirst is in one sense of the word insatiable--we are never satisfied--in the sense that the Lord's blessings are so great and so good that we can never in the present day and in present conditions have enough of them. We shall be satisfied thoroughly when we awake in his likeness (Psa. 17:15) --when the "change" of the First Resurrection shall have completed our transformation as New Creatures into our Lord's likeness--"from glory to glory." (2 Cor. 3:18.) Nevertheless, there is a measure of satisfaction to our drinking, even in the present time--just as with a thirsty one at a fountain, he drinks with relish, with appreciation, with satisfaction, only to take more and more. So with those who are the Lord's. He pours into their cup blessings rich and satisfying, and fills the cup repeatedly, even while they are in their present tabernacle. Let us appreciate more and more the Truth, the water of life, and let us see to it that we get it pure from the fountain, and that we recognize no other fountain than the Lord Jesus, however much we may appreciate the channels through which the supply may have come to us."

R4558 "Jesus would have his disciples understand that righteousness and Truth are scarce commodities at the present time... They must so love Truth, righteousness, as to hunger and thirst for it... Nevertheless, because their longings infinite for righteousness are circumscribed by imperfections of the flesh in the present time, they will not attain full satisfaction until they shall experience their resurrection "change." "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (I Cor. 13:10.) "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."--Psa. 17:15."

E250 "In those who receive the holy Spirit of love this natural love should become intensified, broadened, deepened, and should more and more lose its selfish characteristics, and become a generous love, a self-sacrificing love, based not upon selfishness, but upon principles of righteousness, truth, goodness, and the possession in general of the Spirit, disposition of God. And this Spirit of love should continue, increasing and abounding more and more, until that which is perfect is come and that which is in part will be done away. I Cor. 13:10"

A227 "The "dead in Christ shall rise first." Then we, who are alive and remain, shall be changed in a moment--made perfect spiritual beings with bodies like unto Christ's glorious body (for "this mortal must put on immortality"). Then, that which is perfect having come, that which is in part (the begotten condition with the various hindrances of the flesh to which we are now subject) shall be done away."

R1387 "As the figure of head and body represented the care of the Lord in and over the Church during his actual absence in "a far country," the figure of the *betrothed* or espoused virgin, longing for the coming of the Bridegroom and the consummation of her hopes and his promises, represents the *actual* state of the case far better. Like Rebecca we were already virgins, pure ones, whose sins had been pardoned (by the grace of God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ), and therefore of the household of faith, before we were called of the Spirit to go to him to become his Bride and joint-heir. Like her we each (and all of the faithful little flock from the first) have been *betrothed* to our Lord and are following on to know the Lord and to see him as he is and to share his glory--under the lead of the Spirit. Already we have exceeding great and precious promises, gifts and graces of the spirit, but we are not satisfied: we prize them and treasure them, but we think of them only as foretastes of the greater blessings to come when we shall enter fully into the joys of our Lord. We shall be satisfied only when we shall *see him* as he is --when we shall awake in his likeness.--I John 3:2; Psa. 17:15.

All along the journey, like Rebecca, the Church has been on the look-out for him whom, not having seen, she loved, and in whom, though she saw him not, yet she rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory at the thought of the coming union. (1Pet. 1:8.) And now, oh, blessed vision! our eyes of faith, like Rebecca's, are keen and we see one in the field (the world) ap-

proaching us. Like Rebecca, we ask our guide (the Spirit of truth) who it is -- half surmising from the first that it is our Beloved, as we see his stately steppings among the nations and note the promised signs of his *presence*. The Spirit of the Lord through his Word is even now assuring us that what we see is "the sign [or manifestation] of the Son of Man," and that the hour of our rapture is near at hand. Soon we shall pass beyond the veil of death and be with him (See Gen. 24:64,65)"

SM739-740 "NEARING THE DESIRED HAVEN OF REST *"So He bringeth them unto their desired haven."*—Ps 107:30.

Our context seems to describe the Church of Christ and her billowy journey from Pentecost down to the time when the last member of the Church, which is the Body of Christ, shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye and when all together united with Him He shall present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. (Jude 24.) That certainly is the desired haven of all those who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit, who have been taught of God and who have learned something at least respecting the things that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath in reservation for them that love Him—1Co 2:9.

It is of that desired haven that the

Prophet speaks representing Christ and the Church, saying, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness." (Ps 17:15.) O dearly beloved, we may be content whatever lot we see, since we realize that we are under the guidance and leading of our Lord and since we know that all things are working together for good to them that love Him, to the called ones according to His purpose! We may be content in the midst of all the sufferings and trials and difficulties of life, but we are not satisfied. We are content because our Lord assures us that present lessons, experiences and disciplines are necessary for our fitting and preparing for the Heavenly Kingdom and for the future glory. But we shall be satisfied only when we get those eternal verities of which now we have only the promise, or hope. But what a hope is ours; what a glorious hope! No wonder the Apostle referred to it as that "blessed hope" and connected it with the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ at His Second Advent.—Tit. 2:13.

More and more, as we study our Father's Word and come to understand the deep things of the Divine Plan, do we find this hope to be a blessed one, the one our dear Redeemer had in mind when He said, "If I go away I will come again and receive you unto Myself." (Joh 14:3.)

The Apostle again refers to this "blessed hope" of ours, saying that it is to

our souls an anchorage, sure and steadfast, entered within the veil, because we believe in Jesus. Faith is the cable by which that glorious promise or hope that the Lord has given us holds us fast and secure, not moved amidst the storms and trials of life. I remind you that this hope, as the Apostle explains, was originally set forth in God's promise to Abraham—the promise which He not only repeated but made oath to—the only promise made with an oath, secured and held fast by the most solemn declaration imaginable, the word and oath of Jehovah God."

(Gal 3:27, 29 KJV) "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ... {29} And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

(Heb 10:19-23 KJV) "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, {20} By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; {21} And having an high priest over the house of God; {22} Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. {23} Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"

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,

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⁾ Jun. 11 Manna, Phil. 3:13

⁽²⁾ Jun. 12 Manna, Phil. 3:13