

May 28

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body [so long as we feel entirely contented with present conditions -- ourselves and our surroundings], we are absent from the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:6

IF we were living near to Him, "walk-

(Heb 13:13-14 KJV) "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. {14} For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

(2 Cor 4:16-5:1 KJV) "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. {17} For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; {18} While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. {5:1} For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

R5951 On 2Cor. 4:16-18 "What great Christian courage St. Paul's words and deeds manifest! He that endured so many hardships, a veritable thrashing-machine experience, nevertheless writes: "We faint not: for though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Ah, that was the secret of the matter—the renewing of the inward man, the New Creature!... The inward man had God's assurance that if God were for him the opposition of all others would be as nothing. He had the assurance that God would overrule all of his experiences for his highest welfare...

THE SECRET OF HIS FAITHFULNESS

Many find it easy to make a start in the Christian way when everything is favorable. Some run briskly for a while, and then grow weary in well-doing. But the Apostle seemed never to weary. He was always on the alert, in season and out of season, so far as his own convenience was concerned. He was ready to preach the Gospel anywhere, everywhere, to all who had the hearing ear. The secret of his perseverance is given us in *Verse 18*, in the words: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

What do these words mean? They mean that St. Paul had spiritual eyesight. He indeed saw earthly attractions, but they lost their drawing power upon him because of his spiritual sight—his perception of the things unseen. With the eye of faith he saw the Heavenly Father, the glorified Lord Jesus, the Heavenly hosts, the coming Kingdom of glory, honor and immortality. By faith he saw the great Millennial Kingdom spreading out before him, and heard the Divine invitation to become an heir in that Kingdom, to be joined in heirship with the Master and Redeemer. He had accepted this invitation. He had enlisted under the banner of the Master; and he realized that everything else in the world was of practically no value in comparison with these eternal things which God had promised. His confidence was in the Word of God."

ing with God," we would not feel perfectly satisfied with present attainments, conditions, etc.; but would feel like pilgrims and strangers, seeking a better rest, a better home, "which God hath in reservation for them that love Him." But this, as the apostle explains (verse 7), is true only of those who walk by faith and not by sight. "But we are

R1798 "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of the soul."—Heb. 10:38,39...

Men of the world look at the things that are seen: they judge of their relative values, but only with reference to temporal interests, entirely ignoring their eternal interests and the claims of the Creator upon them. Lacking faith in the divine Word, they lack substantial hope beyond the present; and upon their own judgment of the relative values of earthly prizes and their hopes of winning them, they exercise themselves in their pursuit, leaving the questions of the future and of present responsibility to God practically out of consideration.

But not so is it with the true child of God. He walks by faith and not by sight: he looks not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen (2 Cor. 4:18), ever bearing in mind that the things that are seen are temporal, uncertain and unsatisfactory, while the things that are unseen are eternal, sure to the faithful, and of inestimable value. He is living, not for the present, but for the future—for the things revealed to the eye of faith in the promises of God, all of which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to them that believe. In this life of faith the motives, hopes, aims, ambitions and joys are all of a higher, nobler order than those of the world; but they are such as depend entirely upon faith. If the Christian's faith be overthrown he must of necessity to that extent cease to live the life of faith; that is, he will cease to be actuated by the same motives, etc., which his faith previously inspired. And if, through unfaithfulness, his spiritual vision has become dim, so that he can no longer see or rightly estimate the value of spiritual things, the world, the flesh and the devil are still busy presenting allurements and deceptions to lead him farther and farther away from God, in whose favor alone is life...

To gain the victory we must not only put on the armor of God, but we must be heroes in the strife, and wage an *aggressive* warfare upon the lusts of the eye and flesh and pride of life and all the foes of righteousness and purity. *Love*—love for the Lord, for the truth and for righteousness—must inspire us, or we shall never be victors."

(Col 3:1-3 KJV) "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. {2} Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. {3} For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

R5905 "TRAINING OUR AFFECTIONS HEAVENWARD "Set your affection on things Above, not on things on the earth."—Colossians 3:2.

confident [full of faith toward God, we rejoice to walk by faith], and are well pleased rather to be from home [homeless, pilgrims and strangers on the earth], and to be at home with the Lord" in the spirit of our fellowship. Z.'97-305R2231:4

IN THE natural make-up of humanity there is a certain tendency which we all recognize as a sort of mental sacrilege, although we are unable to philosophize upon it or to explain it. So surely as we are men and women we have certain impulses of affection, certain powers that go out toward other creatures, other things; and it is very important that we see where they are tending; otherwise they will lead to idolatry. Just as the little tendrils of a vine will take hold of whatever is within reach, so our affections go out to various earthly objects; and they need to be pruned and trained, just as a vine needs to be. When you desire to have your vine grow a certain way, you turn it in the proper direction, tie it if need be, and see that its tendrils take hold of the proper supports.

VARIOUS WORLDLY OBJECTS OF AFFECTION

Thus it is with each of us. These affections are proper, they are good; but they need guiding, training. If we did not have these affections, we could not love God. We must have them in order to a proper balance of character. Without them we could not hold together. The need for their proper guidance is manifest when we see some lady setting her affections on a little dog, giving it much time, care, choice food, etc. Some of the wealthy set their affections on poodle dogs, bull dogs, bird dogs or Angora cats. Some make pets of Canary birds, rabbits, white mice, etc. They spend upon those pets much valuable time, thought and care that might be much better spent in other ways—often treating them as if they were children, and lavishing as much affection upon them as if they were human. Some do the same with flowers.

Although we believe in having a very kindly feeling toward dumb animals, and although we greatly admire flowers, yet we hold that as the Lord's people we should not treat any of these as if they were human beings, nor set our affections upon them to our injury and the neglect of much more important things. There are plenty of children to care for; and we should not put flowers, dogs and toys in place of them. Although it is very proper for us to think how good is our Heavenly Father to give us all these things for pleasure, yet we should be on guard that we do not set our affections upon them and give them too large a place in our hearts. Where people do this, something valuable has been lost in their lives. If they are grown people, perhaps it would have been better if they had had children, rather than to set their love upon dogs and cats, and to waste precious time upon them...

Many who spend little or no time upon pets, set their affections and thoughts upon a home. It is a great pleasure to them to be able to say, "I have a good home of my own." This longing for home is a natural craving of our beings. Phrenologists call this natural trait, inhabitiveness—love of habita-

tion. But we are not to permit our affections to center even here. As children of God we should have far higher aspirations than the world has.

Many set their hearts upon having a large bank account. We have known people whose minds are so unbalanced that they would do almost anything to secure a good bank account. And when this is gained, they still are not satisfied. They continue to grasp after more, often resorting to very questionable or very dishonest methods to gain their ends. Such people are mentally and morally deranged. But we are to remember that the human family in their fallen condition are all more or less deranged. Only a thorough and radical course of treatment can remove the difficulty. The Lord alone can cure the malady that affects the entire human race.

LEGITIMATE AFFECTIONS LIABLE TO PERVERSION

There are still higher affections than those we have named which are also dangerous unless properly trained and guided. These are the affections of man for woman, woman for man, man for man, woman for woman, etc. All this is proper, of course, but we are to avoid inordinate affections, and are to have only that which is ordinary-- that is, reasonable, proper. We are to beware of going to extremes. In His Word God has given us the proper outlines of conduct for His children; and we can know these only when we study His directions. Otherwise we are sure to take a wrong course. "Set not your affection on things on the earth."

It is God's arrangement that even husbands and wives should not set their affections too much upon each other. Thus the Apostle Paul enjoins, "The time is short; it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none." (1 Corinthians 7:29.) The intimation seems to be that we should not reckon our earthly relationships as being the highest and best of all things. It is a great thing to have each other's support in the trials and difficulties of life. We are not wishing to say anything to weaken this blessed bond. But it should be held in accordance with knowledge of and in harmony with God's Word. It should not be permitted to be in any wise a hindrance to our running the Heavenly race successfully. It should not become an earth-born cloud to veil from us the Father's face and approval.

By natural tendency we would all be inclined to go wrong; therefore we need to give careful heed to the admonition to set our affection on things Above. Let each of us look around carefully and sweep before our own doors. We are not here simply to have a good time. We are here for the purpose of learning certain principles, certain lessons that the Lord would have us learn, so that we may more than ever shape our lives in harmony therewith, that we may be able to see all the things of life from God's

viewpoint. God's Word does not go into every detail of life; but it lays down important principles that touch our lives at every point; and it is for us to learn more and more how to apply these principles, to see what we need to restrain, what we need to cultivate, etc. The Lord wishes us to be intelligent children.

"GOD FIRST"

Those who come into harmony with the mind of the Lord have that wisdom from Above, which is first pure, then peaceable, easy of entreatment, full of mercy and good fruits. (James 3:17.) Each of us should scrutinize the affairs of his own life and observe whether to any extent he is *setting* his affections upon earthly objects or things, even upon things which are in themselves right and proper. One cannot love his wife too much, unless he permits her to come into the Lord's place in his heart. If he should love her so much that he would please her rather than the Lord, then he is doing wrong. God must be first. Everything must be subordinate. Everything should be brought into line with this: GOD FIRST-- His will, His Plan, His ways.

As husbands and wives, kindred and friends, there is a certain degree of love that is in full harmony with the Heavenly love, the Father's will; and there are other affections or degrees of affection that are not in accordance therewith. Beware of these latter. Every one is imperfect, and each has tendencies whereby he might be led astray. Our great Adversary goeth about seeking whom he may devour. If he could, he would be glad to devour us. The better Christian one is, the better the Adversary would like to get hold of him.

To be a child of God does not mean that we shall be free from all earth-born tendencies. The Apostle points out that there is a continual fight of the New Creature against the old. (Galatians 5:17.) The Heavenly impulses, tendencies and aspirations need to be fought for; they must be carefully and continually cultivated. Not only must our affections be torn from their earthly props, to which they naturally cling, but they must be trained Heavenward, and be held there by the cords of love and devotion to God. Do not let them gravitate again earthward. There are many things on this earth that are attractive, that are beautiful; but we need not set our hearts upon them. We may see them and admire them; but we must go right along the narrow way. Our hearts are only just so large; and if we fill them with flowers or pets or earthly ambitions or affections, how can there be room for the infinitely more important and beautiful things?

FRUITS, NOT CHIPS, SHOULD FILL OUR MENTAL BASKETS

We all remember the familiar story of the boy who was very fond of reading nov-

els, and whose father wished to impress a valuable lesson upon his mind. One day he said to his son, "John, empty that basket of apples in the corner; then go and fill the basket with chips." The boy did so, and brought in the basket filled with chips. "Now," said the father, "put all the apples also into the basket." The surprised boy said, "Father, I cannot put the apples in while the chips are there." "No," said the father, and your mind is just like that basket. It can hold only so much; and if you fill it with chips, there will be no room for other and better things."

This was a wise father; he gave his son a good suggestion. You and I, as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, should fill our minds with the glorious Heavenly things-- the Heavenly hopes, the Heavenly ambitions, the Heavenly affections. All these earthly things are but as chips in comparison. The mind and the heart filled with chips cannot contain the fruits of the Spirit. If we fill our baskets with the Heavenly loves and joys, the spiritual treasures, we shall have that which is transcendently above any earthly love and joy.

Beware of earthly, spurious love; for it will be a hindrance to the Heavenly love. The two should not be confused and mixed. The unselfish natural love, which is an element of perfect human nature, will not, if kept in subservience to the Heavenly, interfere with our spiritual interests. The one does not infract or destroy the other. There should be a natural love for husband, wife, children, parents, and the Lord would have this continue; but He would have it in full subjection to the Heavenly things. Here, also, God should be first.

SETTING AFFECTIONS ABOVE A GRADUAL WORK

In our text the Apostle is addressing Christians, the class who are day by day training their affections Heavenward. This matter of *setting* the affections on Heavenly things, however, is something that must be repeated, persevered in; for the affections are inclined to slip off. We have nothing but our old brains with which to do our thinking, and these brains have tendencies toward the flesh. Therefore the necessity arises for a repeated and continual setting of the affections on the things Above, until they become securely fastened there, fixed, established. Heaven is to be our eternal Home, not the earth, not the fleshly condition. All the precious promises center Above. Christ our beloved King is there. We are being prepared to enter soon into Heaven itself, the condition beyond the veil. The glories of the Holiest of all are now ours by faith; and they will soon be ours in reality if we hold fast and continue faithful to our covenant with God."

R2230 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2008)

SONGS IN THE HOUSE OF OUR PILGRIMAGE

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."--Psa. 119:54.

GOD'S PEOPLE during the Jewish dispensation as well as during the Gospel dispensation are spoken of as "pilgrims and strangers" in the "present evil world." They are such, because they have heard of "a better country," whose ruler is God, and whose law is love--"the perfect law of liberty." To such pilgrims the strife for wealth and vain glory, the pride, haughtiness and tinsel that everywhere prevail now, are distasteful; while the battle for wealth or

position, especially when it leads to unrighteousness, oppression, slander, envy, strife and every evil work, is repulsive. Having obtained a glimpse of the perfection of divine character with its absoluteness of justice and love, it has become their ideal; and they have heard "the voice of him that speaketh from heaven," instructing them that sin and evil shall not always prevail, but that the God of heaven by and by shall set up his Kingdom which will renovate and

bless the world of mankind, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Since they have heard this, and the more they learn to appreciate it, the more, necessarily, they are out of harmony with the contrary conditions of the present time. Hence it is that they feel themselves, and are portrayed in the Scriptures as being, pilgrims and strangers who seek the fairer clime of the coming age.

It was in this view of matters that the Apostle declared that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were "pilgrims and strangers on the earth," who sought a better country, a home under more righteous conditions. They sojourned in the very land promised to them, but it was not their "home;" because it was still in the hands and under the government of those who were aliens and strangers from God. They waited for the fulfillment of God's promise to give them that country under his divine blessing and laws, when it would become to them a heavenly country, a country under heavenly direction and blessing. They were obliged to wait for two reasons: first, as a test and development of their own faith and trust in the Great Promiser; and secondly, because "the wickedness of the Amorites was not yet come to the full."--Gen. 15:16.

Commenting on this, the Apostle declares that if they had been mindful, *i.e.*, wishful, to have returned to Charran, their own country prior to the promise of Canaan, they might have returned to it,--when they found the land of promise still occupied by other peoples, and that God was *not yet ready to fulfil* to them his promises. (Heb. 11:15.) But they preferred to hold on to God's promises, and chose accordingly, for the time, to be pilgrims and strangers in the land of promise. Stephen in his discourse (Acts 7:2,5) points out this pilgrimage and sojourn, as strangers, of Abraham and his seed--waiting for possession of the promised land. Stephen says, "God gave him none inheritance in it: no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he *would give it to him* for a possession, and to his seed after him."

We are to understand, accordingly, that the heavenly country for which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the faithful of the fleshly house of Israel waited as "pilgrims and strangers" is after all to be earthly, in the sense of being *on the earth*; but it will be heavenly in the sense that its government, regulations, laws, etc., will be heavenly laws, etc., and not "earthly, sensual, devilish." Consequently, when the Apostle says that they "looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" and that God "hath prepared for them a city," we must understand this promise, so far as they are concerned, to be in harmony with the other promises made to fleshly Israel.

The "city" referred to is not a literal city, but the symbolical one mentioned in Rev. 21:2,9-27. In symbol a city signifies a government, and this city which comes down from God out of heaven symbolizes the Kingdom of God, his rule or government, which will be established in all the earth. This "city" or government will consist of The Christ--the "Bridegroom" and "the bride the Lamb's wife." "Then shall the righteous shine forth"--the city will have the glory of God. When this Kingdom is established, the nations shall walk in the light of it.--Rev. 21:24.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the faithful pilgrims and strangers prior to the atonement, while they will not be members of the bride company nor of the new Jerusalem, the Kingdom, will nevertheless be very closely identified with it in the work of blessing the world of mankind in general. And hence it is that they are represented as waiting for this "city," this government which God will establish in the world; preferring to have their inheritance at that time, and under the blessing and bright illumination of that heavenly city or government, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. It is in harmony with this thought that we are taught to pray, "Thy Kingdom [the Heavenly Jerusalem, the city which hath for foundations the twelve Apostles--Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone] come! Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." This city will shine and bless the world until all the *willing* shall be helped and reconciled to God. Its reign will be for a thousand years, after which a new dispensation will open, under new conditions, in which mankind (perfected) will be granted the privilege of ruling themselves in harmony with the divine law.

In a certain sense then we might designate the present era, "the present evil world," to be the general house of our pilgrimage for all

who love and long for righteousness; and the better condition of the future, the "new heavens and the new earth" promised as the heavenly home or condition which will be found abundantly satisfactory to all who shall attain thereto.

"OUR EARTHLY HOUSE" AND "OUR HOUSE FROM HEAVEN"

Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 5:1-10) writing concerning this pilgrimage and addressing specially the consecrated Church of the Gospel age, uses language which, while not out of harmony with what we have just seen, foregoing, may be nevertheless properly understood to refer to the present mortal bodies of the saints, as their houses of pilgrimage-- their temporary houses, while on the way to their permanent homes, the spiritual bodies which God hath promised to them that love him, and which the same apostle described to the same readers in a previous epistle.--1 Cor. 15:38,42-45.

Moreover, since we well know that very much in the Psalms was written prophetically, respecting the Christ, head and body, the overcoming Church of the Gospel age, we may well infer that the language of our text had special reference to these pilgrims of the Gospel age. The Apostle says, "We know that if our earthly house of this temporary dwelling place were dissolved, we have a permanent structure of God, a house not made with hands [not produced by human powers] everlasting in the heavens." Since the renewed earth, altho it will be a permanent house for the world of mankind, will not be "in the heavens;" and since the Church when granted their new spiritual bodies in the resurrection will be thereafter everlastingly in the higher or heavenly condition, it seems but proper to construe the Apostle's language as relating to the earthly bodies and the heavenly bodies of the Church. And such an application seems to fit his discourse throughout thoroughly. It is true that in this present body or temporary house of pilgrimage we groan--oppressed not only by the evil influence of the world and the devil on every hand but also and especially by the weaknesses of our own flesh. For when we would do good, evil is present with us, so that the good which we would do we are often hindered from doing, while the evil which we do not approve often obtrudes itself on us and requires to be continually resisted and overcome. As the Apostle elsewhere declares, we "which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the deliverance of our body,"-- the Church, into the glorious likeness of our Lord.

But our groaning is not with a desire to be unclothed; we do not wish to be without a body, for that at very best all down through the Gospel age would mean to be "asleep in Jesus," waiting for the resurrection morning that then we might be "clothed upon with our house from heaven," our new, perfect and permanent body, our "home." What we prefer is not to have the little spark of present life extinguished, but to have it swallowed up, absorbed into the perfect conditions of the perfect life to which we are begotten, with its perfect body.

"Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the spirit." This perfect condition which we are to obtain in the resurrection will be the grand consummation of our salvation which God has promised; and the new mind, the new will begotten by the Word of truth, is reckoned as the beginning of that new creature, which will be perfected in the divine nature when the first resurrection shall have completed it. The holy spirit granted us in the present time is a hand payment so to speak, an "earnest" or assurance of the grand and gracious results for which we are hoping and striving, groaning and praying.

"Therefore we are always confident knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body [so long as we feel entirely contented with present conditions--ourselves and our surroundings], we are absent from the Lord." ^[1] If we were living near to him, "walking with God, we would not feel perfectly satisfied with present attainments, conditions, etc.; but would feel like pilgrims and strangers, seeking a better rest, a better home, "which God hath in reservation for them that love him." But this, as the Apostle explains, is true only of those who walk by faith and not by sight.

"But we are confident [full of faith toward God, we rejoice to walk by faith], and are well pleased rather to be from home [homeless, pilgrims and strangers on the earth] and to be at home with the Lord" in the spirit of our fellowship.

For this cause we are striving, that whether it be by and by when we reach our home, or whether it be in the present time when we are actually away from home, pilgrims and strangers, we strive that we may be acceptable with the Lord; that we may have his favor

* The words "of them that are saved" in this text are not found in the older MSS. Very evidently they are an interpolation; because after the nations are saved, brought into harmony with God, they will no longer be "nations" (Gentiles, heathen), but parts of the one holy nation, the Kingdom of God.

[1] May 28 Manna, 2Cor 5:6

and blessing and realize his fellowship and presence and know that we shall ultimately be accepted by him. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to the things he hath done whether it be good or bad." All through this pilgrimage we are standing at the bar of our Lord's judgment: he is testing us, proving us, to see whether or not we love him and the things which make for righteousness and peace; and if so, how much we are willing to sacrifice for righteousness' sake. He marks the degree of our love by the measure of our self-denials and self-sacrifices for his sake, the truth's sake.

But to thus speak of our bodies as houses can be true only of the "saints," the "new creatures" in Christ. Others of mankind have not duality of nature, and could not properly apply to themselves such expressions as that of Romans 8:10,11, "If Christ be in you the *body* is [reckoned] *dead* because of sin; but the spirit alive because of [the imputed] righteousness" of Christ. The new nature of the saints, begotten by the word of truth, is really only the new *will*, which however is thenceforth addressed as the real person, and it alone is recognized of God who knows us not after the flesh but after the spirit of our new minds-- Christ-minds. Notice also Romans 6:3,4. These "new creatures" have an old man or outward man that is perishing, and a new man, inward man, or hidden man of the heart who is being renewed day by day.-- 2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 3:9,10; Eph. 4:23,24; 1 Pet. 3:4.

It is written, he "giveth songs in the night," and "He hath put a new song into my mouth." It causes us no surprise to know that the saints will "be joyful in glory" and sing aloud with the high praises of God in their mouths, when it shall be given to them to execute the judgments written (Psa. 149:4-9); but it may strike some as peculiar that the present conditions of God's people, the condition of imperfection and physical frailty, in which we groan and are burdened, should be a condition in which *songs* and thanksgiving and joy should prevail with us. Nevertheless, this is the divine will, as it is the divine statement, respecting all who are truly overcomers: they are all to be joyful in the house of their pilgrimage. Respecting this joy our Lord declares "Your joy no man taketh from you." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."--John 14:27; 16:22.

So then, while there is a measure of groaning because of some burdens on the part of those who have attained to the new life, there are also blessed joys which the world cannot give, neither take away: and these are the source and cause of the unceasing joy and "songs in the night," before the glorious dawn of the new Millennial day: these songs are inspired by the joys granted us in the house of our pilgrimage--while we are actually absent from our "home."

What are our joys which no man taketh from us? and which persecution and affliction and trouble can only deepen and widen and make more sweet? What joy is this? This joy is a foretaste of the blessings to come, an earnest of our inheritance. It is inspired by confidence in him on whom we have believed: confidence that he is both able and willing to perfect the work which he has begun and which we desire shall be perfected in his own best way: confidence that so long as we are firmly holding to his gracious promises with the arms of our faith, he will not permit us to be separated from him. Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ? Shall tribulation and persecution? Our confidence is that "no one is able to pluck us out of the Father's hand," and that "the Father himself loveth" us, and will not turn us away so long as we desire to abide obediently in his love. Yea, we are confident that all things are working together for good to those who love God; confident that he who is for us is more powerful than all who can be against us. Such confidence is sure to bring joy beyond the world's comprehension, and a peace of God that passeth all understanding, which keeps the heart.

And such joy, produced by the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ received into an honest heart, naturally and properly awakens the "songs in the house of our pilgrimage."

⁽²⁾"Mid all the tumult and the strife I hear the music ringing,

It finds an echo in my soul, how can I keep from singing."

The word "song" has a wider meaning than simply a musical cadence: it is used in the Scriptures and elsewhere to indicate a joyful message of any kind. For instance, we say, referring to the gospel, the knowledge of the divine plan, "Thou hast put a new song into my mouth, even the loving-kindness of our God." And it is a fact that those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, those who

have received the joy which no man can take from them, those who have tasted of the grace of God in Christ, will not only rejoice and literally sing musical songs with their lips, but they will also rejoice to have their entire lives a song of praise and thanksgiving unto God. The song will bubble over on every proper occasion, wherever hearing ears are found: so fully will the cleansed, justified and consecrated heart appreciate God's goodness and so greatly will it desire to--

⁽³⁾"Tell the whole world these blessed tidings,
And speak of the time of rest that nears."

Wherever Christians find themselves without this joy of the Lord, and where they have no song in the house of their pilgrimage, they have reason to fear that there is something wrong--that the connections between their own hearts and the Lord are not full and complete. If they are unacquainted with this joy and these songs, it is because they have either never fully accepted the Lord as their portion, and consecrated themselves to his service, or else because certain false doctrines have so terrorized their minds and so completely enslaved them to fear that trustful joys are impossible to them. Such should at once take the proper steps either to make their consecration to the Lord *complete*, so that he can put his spirit into them as members of his body, and give them the "seal of adoption," and cause them to know the joys of his salvation; or, if fully consecrated and hindered from joy and songs through false doctrine, they should diligently search the Scriptures and find the Lord's message,-- "Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men."--Isa. 29:13.

IN THE CLOUDY DAY

It is true, nevertheless, that our Christian experience is not always of a kind calculated to produce an exuberance of spirit: it is doubtless to our advantage that sometimes there are dark hours such as our dear Redeemer experienced when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Such experiences no doubt draw us nearer to the fountain of comfort, of joy and peace, and are blessings in disguise, and amongst the "all things" which are working together for our good. But even in the very midst of trials and difficulties, and while cast down so that the songs do not abound, we may nevertheless in all conditions and at all times realize God's love and care and so firmly hold on to the Lord, with the hand of faith, that we would in the darkest moments be able to realize the joy of our Master's sympathy and love and help, and thus have the joy which no disaster of the present time can interrupt.

Despondency and loss of these joys and songs may sometimes result from ill health: in which case, if the illness be the result of selfish gratification, we have room for a lesson and reform; or it may seem to be the result of unselfish fidelity to the service of the truth, along the lines of duty, and if so, as soon as this is recognized, our joys and songs will return. In illustration let us remember Paul and Silas praising God in the prison of Philippi, while their backs were still lacerated and bleeding.

It should be the aim of the Lord's people to cultivate this joy and the conditions favorable to it, daily. The condition of our hearts has much to do with it; for this joy is not wholly dependent upon the heads-- our knowledge of the divine Word and plan. Its possession and increase depends chiefly upon the heart-- the center of our affections. If we set our affections, our hearts, on earthly things and seek for joy through the various gratifications of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, etc., we will thereby quench to some extent the spirit of the new mind, and correspondingly decrease the joys of the new mind. On the contrary, ⁽⁴⁾the more we overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, the more we seek to do the will of our Father who is in heaven, the more we seek for the fellowship and communion of our dear Redeemer, the more we seek to do those things which are pleasing in his sight, so much the more will we have of the joy and peace which no man taketh from us and which trials, difficulties and persecutions can only make the more sweet and precious.

And the more we have of this new mind, and the closer we are in sympathy with the Lord, the more we will desire to sing heartily "The old, old story of Jesus and his love."

"How happy and blessed the hours,
Since Jesus I always can see!

Sweet prospects, sweet birds and sweet flowers
Have all gained new sweetness to me."

⁽³⁾ Hymn 152

⁽⁴⁾ May 29 Manna, Jn 14:27, Jn 16:22