

June 11

*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. Phil. 3:13*

IF any man consider that he has attained a satisfactory spiritual state, from that moment he may date the beginning of his spiritual decline. No present attainments can

R4909 "BE NOT WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS!"... The less blemished often feel a self-complacency and satisfaction which hinders them from coming to God as repentant sinners and from realizing that they can be justified only through the imputed merit of Christ. But those who come to Christ and *hear* Him, soon learn how imperfect are their depraved conceptions, and they seek and obtain *His mind*, that it may be theirs thenceforth, as *instead of their own judgments*. "We have the mind of Christ," says the Apostle. It is our "new mind"; we are "transformed by the renewing of our minds," so as to be able to "prove [know] what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God."--Rom. 12:2."

R2283 "The spirit of the world in general is that of self-sufficiency and independence; following their own wisdom and lacking the instruction and wisdom from above..."

#### BEWARE OF BLINDING INFLUENCES

R3842 "Alas, that so many of those who have some knowledge of God and of his plan of salvation are hindered from laying hold in a proper manner by a lack of humility and readiness to see their own faults, confess them and to accept divine mercy and grace."

R3842 "Pride signifies self-satisfaction, and the corresponding ignoring of the all-sufficiency of our glorious Head, who said to us, "Without me ye can do nothing."--John 15:5."

R5186 "Instead of self-confidence, wisdom dictates a distrustfulness of self, remembering its weaknesses and imperfections, and correspondingly the greater reverence for God and reliance upon Him, which more than anything else will strengthen us and enable us to depart from the evil of our fallen estate."

#### R525 "OUR GOSPEL HID TO SOME

*"Therefore having this ministry, even as we received mercy we faint not; but have repudiated the secret things of shame; not walking in craftiness, nor falsifying the Word of God; but by the exhibition of THE TRUTH approving ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

*But if, indeed, our Glad Tidings be veiled, they have been veiled to those who are perishing ..."* (2 Cor. 4:1-4). The above rendering in the Diaglott brings to the surface of this passage a beauty and meaning...

Let the dear saints who by the truth have been translated out of darkness into this glorious light wherein we stand and rejoice, give special heed to another blinding influence. We have known some who had clean escaped from all those snares and blindings, and who had seen much of the glory of the glad tidings, who were still pursued by the adversary, and again brought into bondage and darkness, being led into

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

spiritual pride and ambition; and such the adversary harnesses into the service and blinds to the truth, by engaging them in manufacturing and spreading fancied *new light* which has foundation and support neither in hoary tradition nor in Scripture, and whose only passport is that it is *new*."

R5967 "The Editor and all of the Pilgrims and the Elder Brethren in the Church have in St. Paul a noble example of faithfulness and loyalty. He did not preach himself; he did not preach enticing words of men's wisdom and science, falsely so called. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 1 Timothy 6:20.) Giving himself up to the Lord's service, and seeking not his own glory, but to do the Lord's will, the Apostle became more and more an able and qualified minister, or servant, of the Lord. The Lord used him more and more in the presentation of the glorious Message of God's Love, as revealed in the great Divine Plan of the Ages.

St. Paul's faithfulness is manifest to us in the words, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before [in the promises of God's Word], I press toward the mark for the Prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13,14). That was the secret of the Apostle's power."

R4360 "The proper influence which we should seek to leave in every heart; not astonishment at our ability or oratory or other powers, but astonishment at the teaching of the Lord's Word. Indeed, there is no doubt that this is the secret of the progress of the Harvest message today. People are astonished at the *doctrine*. Our Pilgrim speakers are not beyond the average. Many would say, perhaps, not up to the average of denominational ministers, but they have *the* teaching. They have the Divine Plan of the Ages-- and this it is which impresses and astonishes those who hear."

R526 "Some others are blinded by prosperity: Satan throws them handfulls of gold, and their eyes become so fastened on it, that soon the *glories* of the glad tidings begin to fade from view, and they, too, are in outer darkness. Others are blinded by the *cares* of this life. They are made to appear necessities, so that all the energies of life may be absorbed in the things which perish; and that the heavenly things, being neglected, may fade from view. Let us beware of every blinding influence and keep the *one* thing constantly before us, saying as did Paul: "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14)."

#### R5080 "THE MARK OF CRYSTALLIZATION OF CHARACTER

*"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reach-*

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. Z. 95-250R1885:3

*ing forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."--Phil. 3:13,14.*

IN THE EPISTLE to the Philippians, St. Paul expresses his full appreciation of his opportunity to gain a prize, something worthy of laying hold upon, of grasping fully, of getting possession of. What was that for which the great Apostle was striving and which he had not yet attained? He spoke of this thing as a *prize*, which he was pressing along to win.

We may view "the mark for the prize of the high calling" from two standpoints, both of which are correct. From one standpoint, this mark is that of *heart-likeness* to God's dear Son, of perfection of intention, of love for righteousness, for God, for the brethren of Christ, and for the world, even our enemies. This degree of character-development should be attained as early as possible in our Christian experience, and should be such that, were we to die at any time after its attainment, God would count us worthy of a share in the First Resurrection.

From the other standpoint, this "mark for the prize of the high calling" is that of crystallization of character in the likeness of our Lord. After having attained a heart-likeness to Christ, we must *hold it fast*, and see that in all the testings which the Lord permits to come upon us, we are counted by Him as overcomers, not in our own strength, but in that of our Redeemer. This mark of *crystallized* character is not attained so early in our Christian experience as is the mark of character-development. But by fighting the good fight until the end of our course, we *crystallize* our characters in love for the principles of righteousness, for God, for the brethren and even for our enemies. If thus faithful, we shall win the prize of glory, honor and immortality."

R835 "That Paul understood that obedience or unfaithfulness to the present opportunities, was to prove whether he was worthy or unworthy to be a member of the already elect, or predetermined spiritual class--the "body of Christ," is clearly evident from his many statements to this effect. For instance he says: "I keep my body under and bring it into subjection [I do not allow my human appetites, or ambitions, or hopes, to govern my course, but I permit the new mind, begotten of God's promises, to rule], lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, [of the great prize for which we run and sacrifice], I myself should be a castaway+ [rejected as unworthy a place in that choice company which God has predetermined shall be composed of "overcomers"] 1 Cor. 9:27. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended [or *grasped* the prize to which God called me, and for which I, with you, am running]; but ...I press along the line towards the mark for the prize of the high calling." --(Phil. 3:11-15.) And in the preceding verses he tells us in what way he was running or pressing along the line to

win this great prize which God has already predetermined to give to the class whom he would select for it. He tells us that he was casting away former hopes, and ambitions, and honors, as though they were worthless and vile, and spending every effort to win a place in the body of Christ, and to secure a share in the *chief* resurrection [to spiritual being]...

The apostle knew also that from the moment of consecration he was *reckoned* a member of that chosen "body" or "bride" of Christ, and that his name was "written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23); and though he had full assurance of faith each moment, because of full knowledge that he was daily a living sacrifice, yet he also knew that for him to turn back, or even to "look back," (or desire to recover that which he had sacrificed), would prove him unworthy of the kingdom position. He well knew that he who wrote his name in heaven when he consecrated and started to run, could blot it out; and that the condition upon which it would not be blotted out was, *faithfulness to the end of the race*. (Rev. 3:5.) And not until his faithful course was closing with martyrdom did he write, "I have fought a good fight; I have *finished* my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up [reserved securely] for me, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."-- 2 Tim. 4:7,8...

Yet, while remembering that God has made the deciding of the matter, whether or not we shall be members of the elect company to which he called us, to depend upon our faithfulness to the end--"unto death"--we should ever bear in mind, as Paul did, that the prize is not offered to us because of our worthiness of it, but of God's grace or favor. And that our running is acceptable only because of God's "*mercy*" in imputing to us the merits of Christ, our Redeemer, as the covering of our inherited weaknesses and imperfections.--Rom. 9:16"

#### R5080 "THE MARK OF CRYSTALLIZATION OF CHARACTER ..."

The Apostle was a noble example of one who had reached the mark. So far as we know, he was ready to die at any time; hence it was not this mark of character-development to which he had not attained. He had not yet attained to the *prize itself*...

A good illustration of the process of character-development and crystallization is afforded by the work of a potter. First, he must select the right kind of clay, for some clays would produce very coarse ware, others would crack or warp in the drying, and still others would not stand the intense heat. Having selected the proper clay the potter subjects it to very many processes of grinding, mixing and wetting until it comes from the mill a soft, plastic mass of the consistency of tough dough, ready for the potter's use. Then comes the moulding into the article desired. The dish is formed, or shaped, with care and dried. Next it is placed in the kiln and fired with an intense heat for two or three days and nights. Then it requires a long time to cool before it can be removed from the kiln. But even then it is only a porous, leaky vessel, altogether unfit for use until it has been dipped into a liquid glaze, or slip, which it readily absorbs.

Again it is subjected to the heat of the

glaze kiln, which not only melts the glaze, but converts it into a perfectly transparent glaze all over the surface, making the article beautifully smooth and comely. But if the vessel is of very choice porcelain, to be made still more attractive to the eye by decorations, the ornamentation and gilding must be done at this stage, and the vessel must again be placed in the kiln for a third firing. Some vessels which have stood all the other tests, fail at this point and are cast into the waste heap. But if the vessel passes successfully the last test, it is ready for the service for which it was designed...

#### CONDITIONS REQUIRED IN THE RACE

What then is God seeking? To what has He called us? The Apostle Peter says that God has "called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:3.) Certain conditions God requires of those who will run in the race. He requires that none be proud, but that they possess humility. And He will have no one in the Kingdom of His Elect who is weak, vacillating, so far as his *mind* is concerned. He may not have a strong *intellect*; but he must manifest to God that he has a strong *will* and *firm determination*, and that he has cut off everything in life in order to win the prize. He must also demonstrate his *loyalty* to God. He must not merely seek glory, but he must recognize and appreciate his responsibilities to God.

*Loyalty* is one of the great tests of character-- loyalty to *God*, to His *Word*, loyalty to *principle*. Whatever follows, the Christian must be submissive to God, trustful and faithful. To such alone could we expect God to give the great blessings promised to overcomers. Hence we see that the Apostle was quite right in giving up *all* that he might serve God, that he might please the Father, and thus attain to this glorious reward of joint-heirship with His Son.

#### "EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVETH"

Not necessarily all who *make a consecration*, but all whose consecration God *accepts*, all whom He begets of His Holy Spirit to become New Creatures, will have the opportunity of reaching this mark of *crystallization* of character before they die. These will have full testing-- "Every son whom *He receiveth*." (Heb. 12:6.) This promise guarantees that they shall have trials and difficulties to develop them in the proper character-likeness of our Lord; and that none of their experiences will be cut short of this attainment. God will see to it that they have the full opportunity to develop character-likeness to Christ. Those who turn to sin wilfully, deliberately, will fall into the Second Death. Others may fall from the priestly class into the Great Company. But even these must have sufficient time to manifest their loyalty to God...

#### THE GREAT TEST IS TO REMAIN AT THE MARK

The possession of perfection necessarily means that one is at the mark, as in the case of Adam. The test is, not whether one can *reach* the mark, but whether one will *remain at* the mark--"having done all, to *stand*." (Eph. 6:13.) When we reach the mark of character which God approves in every sense of the word, let us *continue there*. When our Lord came into the world He was perfect, loyal, at the mark--God's standard, perfection. Whether or not He

would be moved away from the mark by the contradiction of sinners against Himself, was to be proved. But none of these tests led Him to abandon His determination to continue at the mark. So it should be with us--to the best of our ability...

#### WE MUST "LOVE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATE INIQUITY"

In the formation of character, we see that the lessons which we learn in the School of Christ are very helpful to us. Originally, man was made in the image of God. Yet in us the image is blurred, indistinct. Those who learn the lessons now and appreciate them to the full will be given no further trial. Those who have not had a sufficiency of opportunity will have a full trial in the Age to come. Under the discipline, the chastenings and the rewards of that time, they will learn how much better is righteousness than sin, Truth than error. They will develop in the character-likeness of God, which Adam lost, and will see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. They will learn both to *will* and to *do* righteousness. All who fail to learn this lesson will be judged unworthy of eternal life.

We see that the angels willed of themselves whether they would be obedient, or be disobedient and enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. All the holy angels, who are now in favor with God, are such as have had their testing and have come off victors. Their example will prove more and more a lesson to us as we come to understand it. As a result of this knowledge, we see in God the noblest sentiment that could actuate our Creator and Father in dealing with His creatures; and we are glad that we have chosen to do His will concerning us.

Finally it is important that we should keep in mind the fact that since true love on our part will manifest itself in *obedience*, then *disobedience* is an evidence of a *loss of love*, as viewed from the Lord's standpoint, a deflection from loyalty, a failure to endure the tests. We must agree that the Lord's standpoint of judgment is a reasonable one. Should one ask, How would it be if we should disobey through ignorance? The answer is, that the Lord has made provision against our ignorance: first, He has given us the Word of Truth, "that the man of God may be perfect [perfectly informed], thoroughly furnished unto all good works"; and second, He has promised to supply such helps to the spirit of holiness and the understanding of His Word, as will enable us to do what is pleasing in His sight.--2 Tim. 3:17; John 16:13,14.

Love is the crown of all graces, "the fulfilling of the Law." Without a fervent, glowing love, it will be impossible to render obedience or to stand the tests for development and crystallization of character arranged for by Divine Love. Our Lord tells us that He was beloved of the Father; and the Father Himself declared, "This is My beloved Son." We can readily see why our *Lord Jesus* was greatly beloved, for He expressed and fully manifested the Father's love. But it *astounds* us to know that this same love is exercised by the Father toward us! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *sons of God*!" "The Father Himself loveth you!" -- 1 John 3:1; John 16:27.

#### LOVING OBEDIENCE BRINGS JOY AND PEACE

Let us, dearly beloved, be more than

ever careful respecting the Word of the Lord; let us not by negligence give evidence of a decay of love. Our Lord points out that His continuance in the Father's love, as the well-beloved Son, with all which this implies, was because of His *obedience* to the *Father's will*; and that following the same line, He must require that *we* should be obedient to Him if we would *abide* in His love and share His Throne and glory.--John 15:10.

Our Lord's instructions and commandments are not intended to terrify us, nor to deprive us of happiness. On the contrary, "These things have I spoken unto you that *My joy* may be *in you*, and that your joy might be *filled full*." (John 15:11.) Those who give surest evidence of living nearest the Lord well know that obedience to the Lord's words, together with the privilege thus obtained of abiding in Him and His love, is the greatest joy, a joy which wholly outweighs all the trifling pleasures which the world has to offer. It is the joy and peace

which "passeth all understanding," which rules in the heart, and which brings with it the promise, the assurance, "not only of the life which now is, but also of that which is to come."--1 Tim. 4:8."

R5044 "THIS ONE THING I DO"...

This is what the Apostle Paul did. Hear him in his zeal for this *one thing* to which he had devoted his life: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with the excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the mystery of God; for I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. [I *riveted* your attention on this one thing! I kept this one thing continually before you.]... And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power [of the Truth], that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."--1 Cor. 2:1-5.⌘

If all the consecrated were thus busily

engaged in putting on the armor of God, and in proving it by actual use in zealous endeavor to herald the Truth and to help others to stand, there would be no time left for even good temperance reform work, nor for work among the slums of the great cities, nor for the doctrine of healing, nor any such things. We have no consecrated time for these matters, which are only side issues and not harmful in themselves, except as they divert attention and consume time which has been consecrated to another and higher use. All these works will be effectually accomplished in the "Times of Restitution" (Acts 3:19-22), now in the near future. Besides, there are others engaged in these works; we recognize and seek to accomplish the work set before *us* in the Divine Plan.

In all the history of the Church there has never been a time in which the great Adversary has been so active in diverting attention from the Truth by introducing unprofitable and irrelevant questions as at present."

R1884 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2008)

## 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 difficult. 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 <sup>(1)</sup>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*, <sup>(2)</sup>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. <sup>(3)</sup>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,--

<sup>(4)</sup>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. <sup>(5)</sup>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 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."

<sup>(1)</sup> Jun. 11 Manna, Phil. 3:13

<sup>(2)</sup> Jun. 12 Manna, Phil. 3:13

<sup>(3)</sup> Feb. 9 Manna, Psa. 116:7

<sup>(4)</sup> Jun. 13 Manna, Psa. 17:15 -- Hymn 193

<sup>(5)</sup> Feb. 10 Manna, 1Tim 4:12