

March 23

Ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became the companions of them that were so used. Hebrews 10:32,33

THE strongest of the brethren need the help, the encouragement, the assistance of

others. The Lord has so arranged it that we may not feel ourselves entirely self-sufficient, and that even our proper leaning upon the Lord shall seem to require also the cooperation, encouragement, sympathy and love of the fellow-laborers in the vineyard. Who that has borne any measure of the labor and heat of the day in the gospel ser-

vice cannot sympathize with this thought? Here, then, is a way in which many of the Lord's dear people, who have not themselves the largest amount of talent or opportunity for service, may be co-laborers and assistants in the Gospel work. Z.'03-40R3144:1

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CAST NOT AWAY YOUR CONFIDENCE

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence,

which hath great recompense of reward; for ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

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 who draw back unto destruction,

but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."--Heb. 10:32-39.

WITH very many of God's people, as well as with the world's people, the ideal Christian life is one of constant peace and tranquility. They have never learned that "the peace of God which passeth all [worldly] understanding," promised to the Christian, is to rule in and keep his *heart* (Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15), and does not apply to his outward life. They forget, or perhaps never learned, that our Master's words were, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," but in me ye shall have peace (in your hearts). "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?" "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, [in this present evil world or dispensation], shall suffer persecution." It is of a wicked class, and of the saints, that the Prophet declared, "They are not in trouble as other men."--John 16:33; 15:18; Matt. 10:25; 2 Tim. 3:12; Psa. 73:5.

Only to those who have some knowledge of God's great plan is this, his dealing with his people, understandable and readable. The world marvels that those whom God receives into his family, as sons by redemption and adoption, should be required or even permitted to suffer afflictions. But to the well-instructed saint the Apostle says, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that shall try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." And this one may now clearly discern the object and utility of present trials, afflictions and persecutions. He sees that these are in fullest accord with his high calling, his heavenly calling,--to be an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ our Lord, "if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."--Rom. 8:17.

But why should a share in the coming glory be made dependent and contingent upon present sufferings? We answer, for two reasons.

(1) Because severe trials and testings of our love for God and his truth, and of our faith in him and his promises, are only a wise provision on God's part, in view of the very high honor and responsibility of the great office to which he has called us. If it was proper that our Lord and Redeemer should be tested in all points as to faith and obedience prior to his exaltation to the excellent glory and power of his divine, immortal nature, much more so it is fitting that we, who were once aliens and strangers, far from God, and children of wrath even as others, should be thoroughly tested; not tested as to the perfection of our earthen vessels, for God and we well know that in our fallen flesh dwelleth no perfection, but tested as to our new minds, our *consecrated wills*, whether or not these are *fully* consecrated to the Lord, firmly established in the love of truth, purity and righteousness in general. And also to see whether we would *compromise* any of the principles of righteousness for worldly favor, selfish ambition, or for any of "the pleasures of sin for a season." Those who *love* righteousness and *hate* iniquity, who develop *positive characters*, these are the "overcomers" who shall, as members of Christ, inherit all things. The undecided, the luke-warm--neither cold nor hot--are far from having the spirit of the Kingdom class, and will surely be rejected--"spewed out."--Rev. 3:16.

(2) A share in the coming glory is dependent upon present sufferings, for the reason that the coming glories are to be bestowed only upon those who have the spirit of Christ, the spirit (disposition) of holiness. And whoever has received this holy spirit or disposition and been transformed by the renewing of his mind or will, so that no

longer *selfishness* but *love* shall rule over his thoughts and words and deeds, that person, if in the world at all, could not avoid present suffering. His love for God, his zeal for God's service and people, his faith in God's Word and his uncompromising attitude respecting everything relating to these would be so greatly in contrast with the prevalent spirit of doubt, selfishness and compromise that he would be thought peculiar, called an extremist and fanatic, if not a hypocrite. Evil surmisings, out of hearts not fully consecrated, will attribute every good deed to some selfish or evil motive, and therefore, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my [Christ's] name's sake;" for "the world knoweth [understandeth] us not, because it knew him not." (Luke 21:17; 1 John 3:1.) The reason for all this is evident: it is because "the god of this world hath blinded the eyes" of the vast majority of men; because the faithful, who appreciate the truth, who have new hearts (wills) and the right spirit on these subjects, are but a "little flock."

And these conditions will not be changed until the testing of the "little flock" is finished. God will permit evil to be in the ascendancy until that testing, sifting, refining and polishing of the Bride of Christ is fully accomplished. Then Satan shall be bound for a thousand years, and not be permitted to further blind and deceive the nations during that Millennial age of blessing; but, on the contrary, the little flock of overcomers, with Christ, their Lord and Head, will bless all the families of the earth with a full knowledge of the truth.

Therefore, dear brethren and sisters, let us give heed to the Apostle's words, and not cast away our confidence. Confidence in God, and in the outworking of his great plan, and confidence in all who trust in the precious blood and are bringing forth the fruits of the spirit in their daily lives--meekness, patience, brotherly-kindness, love.

The Apostle here clearly shows that there are two ways of enduring the afflictions of Christ: (1) to be made a gazingstock both by afflictions and reproaches, and (2) by avowing our sympathy for the reproached ones and thus sharing their reproaches and afflictions. For if one member suffer, *all the members* of the body of Christ suffer with it.

"Call to remembrance the former days," and note that your afflictions and trials came principally after you had been illuminated with the light of the knowledge of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord; and that they have increased as the light of present truth has increased with you. It is not difficult to discern the reason for this. The great Adversary is not interested in disturbing those who are "asleep in Zion;" but he is ever on the alert to mislead and entangle those that are awake. And the more active we become in the service of the Lord and the truth, and consequently the more actively opposed to Satan and error, the more he will fight against us. And the more faithfully and vigorously we fight the good fight of faith, as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we will have of the Master's approval now, and the greater will be our reward in the Kingdom.

No doubt there are many and more severe trials just before us. From God's standpoint, having been blest with great light, we should be able to endure greater trials and afflictions. From Satan's standpoint, we, as a Gideon's band, armed with the truth, are more injurious to his cause than all others combined. The only wonder to us is that he has not assailed us still more fiercely in the past. Perhaps he

was hindered; perhaps he will be granted yet more liberty to buffet us, as the night draws on. Such is our expectation, based upon the direct statements and the types of Scripture.

But such reflections should bring us no sadness, no fear; for he that is on our part is more than all that be against us. (1 John 4:4; Rom. 8:31.) The Lord of hosts is with us. His promises, as well as his providences, are walls of salvation and protection on every hand. What shall separate us from the love of God in Christ? Shall tribulation? No! it shall but cause us to draw closer to him; and under his

protecting care we shall rest. His grace is sufficient for us. His strength is made manifest in our weakness. When we feel weak in ourselves, then we are strong in him. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

"Watchman, what of the night?"

"The morning cometh, and a night also."

See *Poems and Hymns of Dawn*, pages 62 and 286.

SB176 "NEED OF GREAT CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S WORD" *"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."*—Heb 10:35...

St. Paul is criticizing some who had for quite a time been Christians and who had been granted large opportunities for growth in grace and knowledge. He says to these, "For the time ye ought to be teachers, but ye need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the doctrine of Christ." They had lost the first principles. They had gotten entangled with vain philosophies, and their spirituality was at a low ebb. Conditions are very similar today. After eighteen centuries of Divine instruction, and with the wonderful Bibles now at our command and with helps for Bible study, what manner of Christians ought we to be—in faith, in love, in obedience, in courage!—Heb 5:12-14; 6:1-3.

A MOST SOLEMN THOUGHT

St. Paul points out the necessity for the Lord's people to assemble themselves together for fellowship and for the study of His Word and to provoke one another to love and good works. The necessity for this, he suggests... He says, "For if we sin after that we have received a knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins...."—Heb 10:25-27.

Have we grasped the import of the thought? It signifies that those of us who have accepted the Divine terms and entered the family of God will have no future opportunity in another life. We must either make our "calling and election sure" under the terms of the call, as accepted, or be rejected as unworthy of life everlasting...

NEVERTHELESS BE NOT DISCOURAGED

These things were written, not only for the Hebrew Christians of St. Paul's day, but designed by the Holy Spirit for all the Household of Faith. We should not rock ourselves to sleep, nor give to each other opiates. While the *world* is not yet on trial for eternal life, the *Church* is now being tested—for life or death eternal. The thought should sober us. As the Apostle suggests, "Be diligent, be sober," be faithful, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

But St. Paul or, rather, the Holy Spirit through him, took cognizance of the fact that the Lord's people are in a world that is "no friend to grace to help them on to God." The Apostle recognized that we might become discouraged with our own faults and weaknesses. Hence, after earnestly exhorting to faithfulness and energy, and after pointing out the dangers of slothfulness and of being over-charged with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches and thus losing the spirit of Christ, he turns from this threatening attitude and uses encouraging words.

He says, "Call to mind the former days in which, following your illumination of the Holy Spirit, you endured a great fight of

afflictions." St. Paul's intimation is that at that time, while suffering persecutions, the brethren were really in a better, more alive, spiritual condition than later. The prosperity, privileges, freedom from persecution enjoyed, had made them slothful and less courageous. He would have them and us call to mind the victories won in the past, that we might have courage for the present and the future. How gracious, how helpful, are all the provisions of our God for those who now hear His call and seek to walk in Jesus' steps! To these He guarantees that every experience of life which His providence shall permit shall work for good, for blessing, for valuable experience and education along lines of righteousness and character development.

TWO CLASSES OF THE FAITHFUL

In time of war not all can go forth as soldiers. Some unfit for such service may perform a useful part at home supporting, encouraging, sending supplies to those at the front, etc. And so it is in the army of the Lord; Jesus is the Captain of all those who voluntarily enlist as soldiers of the Cross to battle against sin, especially in themselves—fighting a "good fight of faith" and overcoming the spirit of the world, which surges all about them, threatening to overwhelm them as New Creatures in Christ.—2Co 5:17.

St. Paul intimates a strong persecution, openly manifested by the worldly-spirited, Satan-deceived people of God. He says, "Ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods."—Heb 10:32-34.

St. Paul and others prominent amongst the Lord's followers naturally would receive the brunt of Satan's attacks. It is presumed that the Epistle of which our text is a part was written while St. Paul was a prisoner at Rome. Fellow Jews, so far from being sympathetic for a countryman, reproached him as a traitor, unorthodox, seeking to tear down the work of God and to ignore the Divine promises belonging to Israel and their sacred traditions. By the Romans, too, he was regarded with suspicion, as one giving allegiance to another King, Jesus, and not therefore disposed to use his Roman citizenship especially for the pride and glory of the Empire. St. Paul declares that thus himself and those who espouse the cause of the Lord are despised and rejected by all. He says that we are counted as the filth and offscouring of the earth—that which nobody cares for or values, but which all would like to get rid of; for the darkness always hates the light and seeks to quench it and reigns completely only when all lights are extinguished. Christians, far and near, either by expressing sympathy for the Apostle or fellowshiping with him, or by defending

him from the unjust and malicious slanders circulated against him, thereby exposed themselves to similar reproaches and their disesteem, opposition from their neighbors, etc.

History tells us of various terrible persecutions of the Christians by the Roman Emperors...

"GREAT RECOMPENSE OF REWARD"

Poor human nature finds it difficult to stand alone with God and with the few who are on his side—the side of righteousness and truth. When, additionally, there comes persecution it tries their hearts, proves their loyalty. This is exactly what the Lord designs. He is now seeking a special class of overcomers to be joint-heirs with His Son on the spirit plane as the Bride of Messiah. Through these He designs shortly to grant to Israel and, through Israel, to all mankind glorious blessings of instruction and restitution. To be qualified to thus serve in the instruction and uplifting of humanity it is necessary that these called ones should be of strong character—copies of their Master, in the spirit of their minds. To these he says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His Throne."—Re 3:21; Rom. 8:16,17.

We can readily see how some of the more prominent followers of the Lord who suffered martyrdom because of their loyalty to the principles of righteousness and to the name of Jesus would be accounted overcomers and members of the Kingdom class. But sometimes it is difficult for us to discern clearly how the less prominent, less persecuted ones stand with God. St. Paul's argument proves that they stand *well*—that God counts them in as martyrs, as faithful unto death, if they have the martyr spirit, if they are loyal, courageous for the Truth, even though they never seal their testimony at the stake, even though they never are counted worthy of open or public opposition or persecution. Here is an encouragement for all; and this is exactly what St. Paul would stimulate us to in the words of our text.

WE MUST LET THE LIGHT SHINE

He says, "Cast not away, therefore, your outspokenness, which hath great recompense of reward." The Lord has not promised a great reward to us for merely believing, merely trusting, and in a cowardly manner keeping our light hidden, lest its exposure should bring us persecution or reproach. He seeketh not such. They will not be counted worthy of a place in the Kingdom which is to bless the world.

St. Paul elsewhere declares, "If we deny Him, He will also deny us" (2Ti 2:12). If we have accepted the Lord as our Counsellor, Guide, Captain, Teacher, Exemplar, Bridegroom, He expects of us courage to confess Him as such and on all suitable and proper occasions to "let our light so shine before men that they may see our good

works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven." (Mt 5:16.) Our good works are to so accord with the Master's teachings that, however we may be represented by others, all who know us intimately will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. They should also see that our courage, our boldness, our outspokenness, is not a desire to preach ourselves, not vainglory in ourselves, but

that, on the contrary, we preach Christ and the glorious Message of His Word, which always has brought opposition and persecution from the Adversary and from all who are under his blinding influence.—1Co 1:23.

Every faithful follower of Jesus must be a confessor—must show his colors. We do not mean by this that he must be belligerent and fight a carnal warfare, either with

swords or spears or hands or tongue. On the contrary, like his Master, he must ever be alert to do good. His orders from the Captain are, "Speak evil of no man." What he must speak forth and show forth by his life is the doctrine of Christ—the Truth, the Light, in contrast with the prevailing Error and Darkness.... "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant."—Ps 25:14.

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PAUL AT CORINTH

--ACTS 18:1-11--FEBRUARY 8.--

"Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ."--1 Cor. 3:11.

ATHENS did not prove to be a very successful field for the Apostle Paul's labors. He quickly perceived that, although its citizens were chiefly engaged in hearing new things and in philosophizing on every subject, including religion, nevertheless, the tendency of science and philosophy, falsely so-called, so occupied their attention and so satisfied their minds that they were not as ready for the truth as some others less highly educated and less philosophical. The Apostle's experience in this respect coincides with that of all who, in sincerity, preach the gospel of Christ stripped of all human invention and philosophy. His experience illustrates his declaration that God does not choose many great or wise or learned, according to the course or standard of this world, but chiefly the poor of this world, socially, philosophically and financially, to be heirs of the Kingdom; because this class is more inclined to receive the faith and to become rich therein.

Leaving Athens, the Apostle journeyed about forty miles to Corinth, a prominent city of Greece, though very different from Athens. It was a commercial city, noted for its manufactures, architecture, paintings, Corinthian brass, or bronze, etc. It was much less moral than Athens, much less refined, much less given to the study of religious themes, but, nevertheless, a better field for the gospel. Where religious forms and ceremonies become popular they are apt to have correspondingly the less weight and force. Where sin, immorality and irreligion are popular, those minds which have a religious trend are apt to be freer, more open for the truth, because unsatisfied by formalism, and because they more keenly recognize righteousness by its sharp contrast with the sin abounding. Similarly today, the truth is likely to receive a cooler reception amongst those whose religious sensibilities are to some extent satisfied by forms and ceremonies: truth usually makes better progress today in places where to some extent irreligion seems to have the upper hand (as in Corinth), and where, therefore, virtue is at a higher premium. The heart most ready for the truth is the one which is not satiated and stupefied with religious formalism; but which realizes to some extent the exceeding sinfulness of sin and longs for the righteousness which is of God. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is induced by such conditions. Like the Apostle, we are to discern the most fruitful fields, and spend our energies upon them, leaving the other fields for a more convenient season, whether it shall come during the present age or during the Millennium. The Apostle apparently stayed but a few days at Athens, but abode a year and a half at Corinth -- the irreligious city, where he found many honest-hearted people, to whom the Lord directed the gospel through him.

The Emperor Claudius Caesar was reigning at this time, and the historian says that he "drove the Jews from Rome, because they were incessantly raising tumults at the instigation of a certain Chrestus." This was about the year A.D. 52, about twenty years after Pentecost, and it is surmised by some that the historian wrote Chrestus instead of Christus, a less common name, and that his reference was to dissensions among the Jews respecting the principles of Christianity, which by this time had doubtless reached Rome. That Christianity was already established in Rome before Paul's going there seems to be implied by his expression, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome also." (Rom. 1:8-15.) The supposition is that Aquila, a Jew, with his wife, Priscilla, a Gentile, who were amongst those driven from Rome, had received the message of the gospel, and that the Apostle going to Corinth found Aquila readily by reason of their being of the same craft or trade -- tent-makers.

It was customary at that time that the sons of all the upper class of people should learn a trade, however well educated otherwise. St. Paul's trade as a tent-maker stood him now in good place, enabling him to provide for his necessities, while preaching the gospel of

Christ. From his own explanation of the matter we learn that even after a considerable number of believers had been gathered at Corinth as a Church, the Apostle maintained himself by his trade -- not because it would have been a sin for him to have received money and support from the believers there, but because he hoped that the gospel would commend itself more to many if its chief expounder were seen to be laboring not for the meat that perisheth, nor for wealth, but preaching the gospel without charge -- laying down his life for the brethren. There is a lesson in this for all of the Lord's people who have talent as ministers of the Word. Our object, like that of the Apostle, should be seen to be that "we seek not *yours*, but *you*." -- 2 Cor. 12:14.

The Apostle evidently lost no time in showing his colors -- engaging with as much wisdom as possible in the preaching of the gospel to the Jews and Jewish proselytes from amongst the Greeks in their synagogue. He was not in this an intruder, for such was the custom of the synagogue; -- that any person of ability had the privilege of giving an exposition of the teachings of the Law and the Prophets. The Apostle was a man of some ability, and apparently in every city he at first was welcomed; the subsequent hatred of himself and his theme being the logical result of the wrong condition of heart on the part of those who heard -- their unwillingness to receive the truth in the love of it -- their preference for the traditions of the elders, with their more or less error, rejecting the light of the truth as it came to them. We find similar conditions today in Christendom, and are following the Scriptural precedent when we approach as closely as we can to the synagogues of our time, and as nearly as possible do as the Apostle did, -- reasoning with and persuading the attendants at divine worship. Under the usages of our time it would be improper for us now to attempt such a discussion or reasoning inside church buildings. The nearest approach we have is through the printed page, on the pavement, near the churches, -- but far enough away to avoid reasonable prejudice and opposition. Let it be noticed also that the proper method of presenting the truth today, as in the Apostle's time, is not by haranguing, but by reasonable presentation -- appealing to the testimony of the Word of God in a logical and a reasonable manner. Let us rejoice that we find ourselves in such good accord with apostolic methods, and resolve that we will refrain from any other methods, however popular they may be with those who follow not with us.

How long the Apostle continued in this way is not distinctly declared, but in his first letter to that church, written some time after, he remarks, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling; and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit, and with power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The word "weakness" in this text may be properly understood to imply that the Apostle was physically weak, possibly for a time ailing to such an extent as to be unable to work at his trade, because, referring again to the matter (2 Cor. 11:9) he intimates that for a time he was in want. This noble soldier of the cross was evidently permitted of the Lord to have a little season of measurable discouragement, when the sunshine of divine favor was to some extent beclouded by temporal difficulties: probably his physical weakness to some extent produced melancholy -- "trembling with fear." He had no thought of abandoning the warfare in which he had enlisted himself even unto death, but apparently his recent experiences at Thessalonica, at Berea and at Athens, were causing him to wonder whether or not he was too aggressive in the presentation of the gospel -- whether or not he was inclined needlessly to bring upon himself persecution, and was thus perhaps interfering with the Lord's work, rather than helping it forward, as he desired. Now he was, for the time, at least, disposed to be extremely careful how he

presented the message, -- how that, as our Golden Text expresses it, there is no salvation, no harmony with God, no eternal life by the law, nor by any other means than through the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was about this time that the Lord comforted and encouraged the Apostle by the arrival of Silas and Timothy, whom he had left in Berea. They brought with them not only the comfort and encouragement of a good report of the work behind them, the fruitage of his labors, but additionally brought presents from the brethren, which supplied his necessities, and caused his heart to rejoice because of the evidence of their brotherly love, and that the gospel had reached their hearts and even down into their pocket-books. The presence of these two fellow-helpers, in whom he had so much confidence, was a refreshment of spirit to the Apostle. Their coming not only brought physical strength, but an energy of spirit -- an increased earnestness and force to his preaching: he no longer felt so timid, trembling, fearful. This is still true amongst the Lord's people -- ⁽¹⁾the strongest of the brethren need the help, the encouragement, the assistance of others. The Lord has so arranged it that we may not feel ourselves entirely self-sufficient, and that even our proper leaning upon the Lord shall seem to require also the co-operation, encouragement, sympathy and love of the fellow-laborers in the vineyard.

Who that has borne any measure of labor and heat of the day in the gospel service cannot sympathize with this thought? Here, then, is a way in which many of the Lord's dear people who have not themselves the largest amount of talent or opportunity for service may be co-laborers and assistants in the gospel work. The Apostle mentions these helpers in the same breath with the more able servants of the truth, saying, "Ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became the companions of them that were so used." -- Heb. 10:32,33.

Encouraged, revived in spirit, the Apostle was bolder now to tell the Jews and Greek proselytes plainly that there is no salvation except through Christ. The effect of this plain declaration was that he was no longer made welcome in the synagogue, and the opposition becoming violent, he shook his raiment, as an indication that he had nothing further to present, and would discontinue the discussion, declaring that their responsibility rested with themselves; that he had done all in his power to preach the good tidings to them first, as was proper; but that now henceforth, according to the scriptural declaration, the message should be proclaimed outside the synagogue, to any who had ears to hear it and hearts to receive it. The new meeting was started close to the synagogue, to the intent that the message he had already delivered might be impressed more and more upon those who had heard it -- that they should not forget his declaration that the promise made to the fathers was in process of fulfilment in Christ, and those who accept him.

One of the chief men of the synagogue, and various of the people at Corinth were favorably impressed by the gospel message, and the Church of Corinth thus took its start in the house of Justus. The believers testified their acceptance by baptism -- the true baptism of consecration, we may be sure, first, but also the outward symbolic water baptism, which would be a testimony to others and which is referred to in this lesson.

The Apostle, still meditating the propriety of greater moderation in preaching Jesus and the resurrection, was by this time, perhaps, feeling fearful of further difficulties with the Jews, and the trouble they could stir up with the authorities. Doubtless he had in mind previous experiences, and was debating mentally whether or not he should leave before the persecution set in, -- whether or not it was the Lord's will that he should be so courageous in the presentations of the truth as to awaken further hostilities against himself and all the brethren. The Lord came to the assistance of his faithful servant, and instructed him in a dream that he should neither leave nor hold his peace -- that there were many people there of right condition of heart to receive the truth.

It is an encouragement to us to note this, another evidence that the Lord himself has supervision of his own work, and guides those

who are truly his servants, -- who seek not their own will nor their own honor, but to glorify him in their bodies and spirits which are his. The necessity for such admonishing by dreams is less today than in the Apostle's day, because the Word of the Lord is now complete, and in the hands of his people in convenient form, that they can, through the experience and instruction of the apostles, know what to expect and how to do; -- whereas the Apostle was treading a new path and needed to be guided therein. We of today may know assuredly that it is the Lord's will that we should exercise wisdom in the presentation of his Word, and that grace should be poured upon our lips, that they may minister blessing to the hearers; but that we shall not hold our peace nor flee to another city until persecution has come to such a pitch as to almost necessitate removal.

We should not dare to say that the Lord might not use a dream today to instruct and guide his people, as he did the Apostle, but we do say that there is less necessity for such special direction, since the general directions of his Word are now explicit and amplified. We do suggest, however, that as the Apostle says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits," so we may well say to ourselves, Believe not every dream, but test the dream -- whether it be of God or not. A dream must never lead us in opposition to the written Word of God, but if it can be understood in harmony with the Word and its reasonable interpretation, we should rejoice in it and be thereby encouraged to follow the *Word*. If the dream agree not with this Word it is because there is no light in it. (Isa. 8:20.) We are confident that many dreams are not of God, the majority probably being of indigestion, and some quite probably of the evil one. Hence, we have the more need of care that we follow not a dream, because it is a dream, but at very most permit it to direct us to the plain instruction of the Lord's Word.

The Lord's promise that no man should set on the Apostle to hurt was fulfilled; for, although a disturbance was created and he was taken before the magistracy, no violence was done him, and the case was dismissed by the Roman governor. As with the Apostle, so with us; in the Lord's wisdom varying experiences may be to our advantage. Sometimes it may be advantageous to us and the cause that we should seem to be defeated and forced to flight. We may rely, however, that the Lord understands the situation fully, and will not permit his work to be disconcerted and interrupted to its real disadvantage. ⁽²⁾Long ago some one said, "I am immortal until my work is finished;" and we may rely upon it that this is practically true of all engaged in the Lord's service -- that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." He will use and protect and guide them in their affairs, in ways that will be to his pleasured, and eventually to their highest welfare, -- to the intent that all of his good purposes shall be accomplished.

⁽³⁾Why, then, should we fear what man may do unto us, or be distressed in regard to the Lord's work, as though Satan or any other evil power could prevail against it? Nevertheless, it is for us to show our devotion, not only by our zeal, but also by our prudence. While God knows what will prosper, he declares of us, "Thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that" -- ⁽⁴⁾therefore, we are to proceed in the Lord's work as though the entire responsibility rested upon us, but in our hearts are to recognize that the entire weight and responsibility rests with the Lord.

Our Golden Text gives us the central theme of the Apostle's preaching on every occasion. It would be a poor text for Higher Critics, for Evolutionists, for Theosophists, for Christian Scientists, and for most other of the new gospels so numerous in our day. Let us hold fast to the same message which the Apostle preached, which recognizes no other foundation than Christ, and no other Church and no other salvation than that built upon that foundation. Other structures, built upon other foundations, are anti-Christian, however smooth their philosophy, however arrayed in a garment of light to deceive, if possible, the very elect.

⁽²⁾ 1/3 Mar. 24 Manna

⁽³⁾ 1/3 Mar. 24 Manna, Heb. 13:5

⁽⁴⁾ 1/3 Mar. 24 Manna

⁽¹⁾ Mar. 23 Manna, Heb. 10:32-33

Be patient and submissive; each disaster
Will bring thee nearer to thy loving Lord.
These trials make thee like thy blessed Master,
Who knows them all, and will His grace afford.

Be patient and submissive; strength is given
For every step along the weary way.
And for it all thou'lt render praise to Heaven,
When dreary night gives place to perfect day.