



TOWARD THE MARK

***“I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE
OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.”***

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

***A MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS
OF ALL AGES***

**January 2021
Vol. 20 No. 1**

January 2021

Dear Reader,

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” Luke 21:28

A new year has arrived! And like the year before it, this new 365 days has come with much anticipation. It is fitting at such a time that we should look backward, onward, and upward. Concerning the past, we can say, “Surely goodness and mercy hath followed us all the days.” Notwithstanding failure and feebleness, God has been the strength and portion of His people, and they remember with thankful hearts “all the way” the Lord their God hath led them (Deut.8:2). To the glory of His grace, they confess – “There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken: all came to pass” (Josh.21:45). Regarding the future, the people of God need have no distrust or fear. What their God has been, He will be: “Thou are the same, and Thy years shall not fail” (Heb.1:12), is the sure word upon which they may calmly rely, fearing no evil.

Many people begin January 1 with goals, hopes, dreams, and perhaps even a plan of action for all that they would like to accomplish. The possibilities for a New Year’s list of resolutions are endless. Some of the most common include exercise routines, healthier eating, progress at work, and quality time spent with family. Life goals and resolutions can be a great way to begin a year. But please make sure that the Lord Jesus is the center of it all.

For Christians, the start of a new year arrives with reminders afresh of the sure promises that God has made to His people throughout the Bible. For Christians—those who have repented of their sin and received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior—a New Year is a chance for renewed commitments to seek after the Lord.

Indeed 2020 was a not what we thought it might be, many experienced a lot of disappointment, anxiety, and fear. But I hope that we have heard the voice of the Lord very clearly whispering in our ears through His Word, **“Fear Not”!** May we continue to hear His voice every day in this coming New Year saying, **“Fear not I am your God!”**

Let us cultivate the good habits that will build us up on our most holy faith, seeking to have every day in our life be filled with devotion to Him. Let us spend time every day alone with Him reading His Word, praying, and seeking His guidance in every aspect of our life. The Scriptures are foundational truths that Christians believe. They are beacons of hope, not only for a new year but also for an eternal future **with the Lord Jesus in the Father’s house**, so until He brings us there let us have a closer walk with Him.

Dear Friends.

It is hard to believe this is the 20th year for Toward the Mark!!

The Lord is faithful!!

I am thankful to the Lord for His faithfulness and goodness toward us in the past years. I am grateful to those faithful saints who have quietly been a source of help and encouragement to me in producing Toward the Mark. For those who translate many of the articles to other languages and publishing on brethren magazines and web sites. The Lord is their rewarder. Also, I would like to thank all of you dear readers for your overwhelming response to the magazine. It is our prayer that the Lord will use Toward the Mark to help you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him.

Please keep praying for the Lord's blessing on Toward the Mark.

Yours in our soon-coming Lord,

Emil S. Nashed

Please send your questions and comments to:

Toward The Mark

c/o Wayne Christian Assembly

60 Smith Lane

Wayne, NJ 07470-5354

Attention: Emil S. Nashed

www.towardthemark.org

TOWARD THE MARK

Contents

Therefore, I have Hope	1
The Women in Matthew's Genealogy	5
Partial Obedience	12
Christ Presence with those who love Him	14
Low at Thy Feet	20

If you would like to join the mailing list to receive the electronic version of Toward the Mark, simply visit www.towardthemark.org or send an e-mail to toward.the.mark@gmail.com to be added. If you would like copies of older issues, please mention it in your e-mail.

Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or the J.N. Darby translation.

MILK

"The truth shall make you free"

HOPE FOR THE NEW YEAR *THEREFORE, I HAVE HOPE!*

"This I recall to my mind; therefore, have I hope"
(Lamentations 3:21).

There was some great cause for this hope that seems suddenly to have illuminated the soul of the weeping prophet; his **THEREFORE** proves this.

It is the word that is specially used to introduce the conclusion as a result of something that has been previously stated, **"Therefore" looks in two directions and is a splendid word with which to begin a New Year. It looks backward to the preceding sufficient cause, and forward to the infallible consequence. The consequence in Jeremiah's case was HOPE. "Therefore," says he, "I have hope," That is an inspiring thing to have; without it, life would be impossible; with it the heart is made strong to meet any trial, if, of course, the hope is not a false one.**

But what was the cause that brought the prophet to this blessed conclusion? A strange one indeed. Hear him! He is in the midst of a great lament; with such gave expressions of sorrow. In this center section of it he tells in harrowing detail the story of his woe. An irresistible power had driven him into a tangled gloom, and his every effort to find a path to light and freedom only involved him in a deeper darkness and a denser thicket. He had struggled and strained for a way of escape, but it was in vain. "I cannot get out," he cried. His shouts for help brought him no helper, for he says, "I cry and shout, but He shutteth out my prayer." One answer only seemed to come to his agony, and that was the derisive laughter of his foes. Truly he was a man who

had seen affliction and had drunk from the cup of wormwood and gall.

It would appear as though he had once lived in peace, and prospered, but that was long ago, or the magnitude of his calamities made it appear long ago, for now his soul was far removed from peace and he forgot prosperity, and utterly crushed and broken, he cries, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." Could mortal man be so beset and buffeted and yet live? If his strength and hope had perished from the Lord, what had he more? Surely that was his last despairing gasp in the sea of despair in which he struggled swallowed him up! Yet that was not the end of the story, though it was indeed the prophet's extremity.

He can do no more, and his cries and struggles cease, and with a heart humbled within him, he dwells upon his experience, remembering his affliction and misery, the wormwood and the gall — as a man might remember, sitting before the dying embers in his fireplace with back bent and head bowed in hands and misery in his heart, while the winter storm moans and beats about his dwelling. A stricken man was this prophet, and a stricken man is a disillusioned man, disappointed man and a disappointed man is more likely to reason rightly than one who lives in dreams. **As he remembered and reasoned, he arrived at his conclusion and got the solution of the great problem; then he lifted his long-bowed head and cried, "Therefore I have hope."** Strange yet triumphant conclusion to be wrung from such unpromising premises!

A great logician was this weeping prophet.

But how could this be? And from whence came his hope? Let nature teach us. How deeply into the soil the ploughman thrusts his share, leaving in his wake a gaping furrow! To what purpose is this determined labor? Ah, a great purpose! He is preparing the ground for a miracle. The seed-basket shall follow the ploughshare and into the furrowed soil shall golden grain be cast. Then shall come the reapers, when rain and sun and summer months have done their work, and sheaves shall he

gather home in the joy of harvest time. But the field would yield no harvest were it not first cut and seamed and ploughed. Because the ploughshare does its work in the soil there is hope. IF the ploughshare of adversity or sorrow left deep furrows in your soul, **"therefore have hope."** The good seed of the Word can take no root in a heart that has not been prepared for it. Therefore, the ploughing was needed, and the gaping wounds, and though the process is not joyous but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.

But to return to our prophet, for we must not miss the great message that he has for us at the opening of this New Year. He remembered the wormwood and the gall, but another cup had been put to his lips that, in his misery, he had almost forgotten — a cup of mercies. "It is of the Lord's mercies," he says, "that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." "Therefore, we have hope." What was it that sustained our souls in the past when they were all but overwhelmed? The Lord's mercies! Therefore, we have hope. When other helpers failed and comforts fled, what was it that failed not? His compassions. For "His compassions are new every morning and great is His faithfulness." Aye, the sorrows did not come alone, the mercies followed hard upon their heels. Therefore, we have hope!

And suppose there were neither mercies nor compassions, What then? Then, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore, will I hope in Him." It is good to hear the song that hope sings break in upon the prophet's dirge, and to learn that the Lord was greater than his greatest sorrow, and it carries us into the New Testament, where hope not only sings her song, but sings it with a great confidence. "And not only so," says the Apostle, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience, and experience, hope; and hope makes not ashamed because the love of God is shed

abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given to us" (Rom. 5:3-5).

This is a word that will bear considering. Never did a trial visit any heart but it brought an experience with it, and everything depends upon whether that experience be the bitterness and resentment of an unsubdued will; or the indifference of a proud and unbroken heart; or of the sustaining mercies and compassion of the Lord. One of these three it must be, and if the last, which is always the experience of the humbled and contrite spirit, then way is made for hope to enter, not as a visitor only, but to abide as a most blessed companion.

And a wonderful teacher is this hope as she sings. She shows us that the present affliction is light, and the coming glories are exceeding and eternal in their weight, and that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed.

We begin the year with hope; the sorrows and the joys of the past — and the sorrows more than the joys — fill us with hope, and our hope makes not ashamed; it will not disappoint us, for it is based upon what God is — God whose matchless love we know, whose immutable word we trust, and whose Son we wait for — this is our blessed hope.

J T Mawson

MEAT

"Sanctify them by the truth"

THE WOMEN IN MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY!

It is of considerable interest to observe that there are the names of five women in the genealogical record of Matthew, and although no historical events are mentioned in connection with a number of the men whose names are there, the Spirit of God has been pleased to give us something of the history of each of these women.

Tamar

The first of these women is Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah who, it would seem, was a daughter of the Canaanites, like her mother-in-law. Abraham had been most careful regarding the choice of a wife for Isaac, she was not to be a daughter of the Canaanites; but Isaac had evidently not interfered with Esau's choice when he took as wives daughters of the Hittites, though they were a grief of mind to him. Jacob was charged by Isaac not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan, but Jacob does not appear to have been concerned when Judah was united to the Canaanites by Shuah, or when he took Tamar to be the wife of his eldest son, Er. There is much instruction for Christians in all this: how very careful we should be as to our associations, both for ourselves and for our children. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 is a Scripture on which we should ponder in relation to this important subject.

Tamar's husband "was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him." His brother, Onan, also invoked the Lord's displeasure, in his dealings with Tamar, and he too was slain. Tamar had the natural desire for children and was evidently content to wait till Judah's third son was old enough to be her

husband, which seemed to show that she valued her place in the family of Jacob.

But the action of Tamar in waylaying Judah was not one that sprang from faith in God, even if she valued a place in the family where there was the knowledge of the true God.

Humanly speaking, the act of Tamar was more righteous than that of Judah as he confessed; but they were alike morally, partners in a grievous sin. Conduct such as this might suit the families of the Canaanites, but it was abhorrent to the holiness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It might be difficult for us to rightly assess the true worth of Tamar. Her desire for children was a right one, and we can admire her valuation of a place in the family where God's Name was known, and the righteous and trusting qualities is expressed in her patient waiting in widowhood; but her actions to achieve her ends cannot be condoned, both because of the lack of confidence in God and for the unnatural character of the sin.

Her deceit manifested the natural scheming that is only too common among those who have been brought into a place of divine privilege; it savored of the guile that marked Laban, and that came out in Rebekah and Jacob when they deceived Isaac. How apt we are naturally to seek to obtain divine blessing in our own way.

In spite of her birth, her deceit, and her grave sin, Tamar received a place in the most honored genealogical line in human history. It may be that beneath all the activities of the flesh there was a genuine faith in the God of Jacob, and a real, divinely implanted desire to be associated with those who knew the God of Abraham and of Isaac. Whether this was so or not, we do know that in the sovereignty of His grace God marked out Tamar, in spite of all that she was and did, to have her name associated with so many honored names in Scripture, and with the most honored, the Name of Jesus, the blessed Son of God. Divine grace and mercy can rise above all that we are naturally, and all that we have done, to give us part with Christ before the

Father's face even now, and to share Christ's place in the coming day of glory, and in the Father's house for evermore.

Rahab

God has not only given the history of Rahab in the Book of Joshua, but the commentary of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 11, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace." What would be accounted an act of treason by men is viewed in its true light, by the Searcher of hearts, as an act of faith. Rahab believed that the living God was with the armies of Israel, and that Israel were His people, and she risked her life that she might be saved when the vengeance of God overtook the guilty nations of Canaan.

What a change it meant for Rahab! She left behind in the judged and ruined city of Jericho a life of sin to have part with the people of God, and to be chosen of God, not only to live in the royal tribe, but to be in the royal line, the grandmother of Boaz, who was to be the great-grandfather of King David. No provision was made in the law of Moses for bringing a Canaanite, under any circumstances, into the congregation of the Lord; they were to be utterly destroyed (Deut. 20:16-17); but God's sovereign mercy prevailed in Rahab's case to bring her into a place of blessing beyond any-thing she ever could have conceived.

And does not Rahab's case indicate what God has done for us? In Ephesians 2 we are called to remember "that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh ... without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Such was our state and portion before God's sovereign mercy reached us; "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ ... For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (verses 11-18).

Ruth

The story of Ruth the Moabitess is well known, the Holy Spirit recording the charming account of how she came to be identified with God's people Israel. Herself a widow, she chose to be the companion of a broken-hearted, dispirited, lonely widowed-mother, whose sons had died, to share her sorrows and her hardships, and to sweeten the bitter cup of "Marah" by sustaining her with what she gleaned in the harvest fields.

Her noble choice is found in the exquisite words, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." She chose a path contrary to nature; one that could only have been taken by the drawing power of God. Her sister-in-law, Orpah, took the natural way, returning to her people and her gods, and we hear of her no more. Ruth, with single-eyed devotion and affection turns to the land of Israel, and to the God of Israel, and her actions are indelibly written in moral and royal glory on the pages of divine inspiration.

Having cast in her lot with Naomi, Ruth was content to leave herself in her hands, first requesting to be allowed to glean in the corn fields, then obeying her mother-in-law in all that she asked her to do. Her happening to light in the fields of Boaz was no doubt directed, though she knew it not, by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings she had come to trust. Little did Ruth realize what blessings were involved in the words of Boaz, when he said to her, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel." There was no evidence at that time of the blessings that were so soon to be hers in relation to Boaz, or in the distant prospect of her relationship with Jehovah Messiah, Himself.

A Moabite, saith the law of Moses, "shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall

they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever" (Deut. 23:3); yet Ruth chose to be identified with Israel and was accepted by Jehovah. Truly, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

Ruth had a very different character naturally from Rahab, for, said Boaz to Ruth, "All the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." But it needed the same sovereign grace to bring into the families of Israel, and into the royal line, the dissolute Canaanite, and the virtuous Moabite. Neither had a claim naturally to divine blessing; both were excluded by the law. It was divine grace that blessed them, and faith that enabled them to seek to be associated with God's people. With them, we have proved that God "is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us ... For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Like Ruth, we have the present blessings of grace, and in the ages to come "the exceeding riches of His grace."

Bathsheba

What happened to Bathsheba's children reminds us of the Scripture, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22). The child that was born of David's sin was smitten by the Lord, and he died; but her second child, Solomon, was chosen of God to succeed David as King of Israel. When this child was born, "he called his name Solomon, and the Lord loved him; and he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah (Beloved of Jehovah), because of the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:24-25). It was Jehovah's love for Solomon, sovereign love, that put him on the throne.

According to the law, as the wife of a Hittite, Bathsheba would have no place in the congregation of the Lord; and we might have thought that her guilty relationship with David would have forever excluded her from the privileges conferred by a holy God. She is not presented to us with the faith of a Rahab, or

with the beautiful traits of a Ruth; but as one that in spite of the dishonor that stained her name, was taken up by God in the sovereignty of His grace to bring forth a child to sit upon David's throne, herself through sovereign grace a progenitor of Israel's Messiah.

We might have thought that some other wife of David should have provided the heir to the throne, one without a blemish on her character; but we are taught here, as in many another portion of God's word, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9).

God often chooses the most unlikely to carry out His will. Who would have thought that God would have chosen unlearned fishermen to be the companions of His Son on earth, and to sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel? Who would have thought that God would choose a railing, dying thief, to confess the worth and Name of the Lord while He was on the cross, and to speak of His coming kingdom? Who would have thought that God would call the man at whose feet the clothes of the murderers of Stephen were laid to carry what Stephen had seen, "the glory of God and Jesus," in testimony to the Gentiles, and to lay down his life in fidelity to the One he formerly persecuted? And who would have thought that God, in His sovereignty, would have chosen such worthless creatures as you and me to live for Christ in this world, and to share His glory in the coming day, and His place of joy and affection in the Father's House for all eternity?

Mary

Although Mary, the mother of Jesus, had none of the natural disqualifications of the other women in Matthew's genealogy, the sovereignty of God's grace was manifest in choosing her as it had been in bringing the others into the royal line. She was not a Canaanite, like Tamar and Rahab, nor a Moabitess, like

Ruth, nor had she been united to a Hittite, like Bathsheba: she was of the royal house of David in a descent that the Spirit of God has traced in Luke's Gospel, and she was espoused to one who could show his title to David's throne.

Moreover, there were the attractive moral features of Mary. Her ready acceptance of the angelic message evinces her quiet and simple confidence in Jehovah and in His word, and her meek and gentle spirit pours out its praise in the delightful words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior."

While rejoicing in her blessing, saying, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed"; there is no attempt to magnify herself; all her praise is to God who had so "highly favored" her, the God who acts in sovereign mercy towards the poor in filling "the hungry with good things," and sending the rich empty away. He is a God who helps His servant Israel, "in remembrance of His mercy."

The counsels of eternity, and many Old Testament Scriptures were to be fulfilled in Mary's child; and God, in sovereign goodness had chosen a vessel, and a suited vessel, for the conception of "the holy thing." Even the time of Messiah's coming into the world had been accurately foretold in Daniel's prophecy, and Isaiah had written, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His Name Immanuel."

When Leah had borne her fourth son, "she said, Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah," which means "Praise." And how much more suitable were the praises that hailed the coming and birth of Mary's child! Praises from Mary, praises from Elizabeth, praises from Zacharias, praises from the heavenly host, praises from the aged Simeon and from Anna, and the adoration of the Magi that God had brought from afar. Very soon there shall be a universe of bliss, filled with the praises of God and the Lamb, and all resulting from the coming into the world of Mary's child, the blessed Son of God. While awaiting our part in the praises of that happy day, for us the

eternal day, it is our privilege, as knowing the sovereign grace of God that has blessed us in association with Christ to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually," and, in the assembly, to join in the praises that the Son leads to the Father.

W. Reid

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. What is the first color mentioned in the Bible?
2. Who asked the Lord Jesus to show the disciples the Father?
3. How many fruits does the tree of life produce every month?

EXERCISE

"Exercise thyself unto piety"

PARTIAL OBEDIENCE

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

So often we hear people say: "I have done my best. God can surely accept that. None of us is perfect." This seems quite reasonable to men as a whole, but we know that Adam and Eve transgressed the only commandment that God had given to them, and death entered into the world.

Centuries later the children of Israel, in their desire to be "like all the nations" (although this was contrary to God's intentions, since He had chosen them to be a peculiar people for Himself), came to Samuel with the request for a king, who would fight their battles and judge their cause. In spite of Samuel's warnings, they persisted in their demand: "Nay; but we will have a king over us" (1 Samuel 8:19).

We know how the newly appointed king appealed to the people. He was tall and handsome, and even modest and self-effacing at first, but he had to be put to the test. Samuel came to the king and reminded him that it was a divine commission that had put him on the throne. Now he has another message direct from the Lord Himself. God remembered how the Amalekites had laid wait for the children of Israel on their way from Egypt. Now this guilty nation had to be punished. Samuel's message was clear:

"Hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD."

Nothing was left to Saul's imagination. Amalek had to be exterminated, and nothing was to be left over to remind the nations round about that Amalek had existed. Not only the men of war, but the whole nation, and even their flocks and herds, were to be destroyed.

Saul went out, and smote the Amalekites, after first warning the Kenites to separate themselves from the doomed nation, since they, at least, had taken pity on the children of Israel when they were attacked by Amalek. Nevertheless, Saul was only partially obedient. He spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and encouraged his followers to preserve the best of the sheep and oxen that they found there. We read that "everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed," but the best of the sheep and oxen they would not destroy. No wonder God said to Samuel: "It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following Me, and hath not performed My commandments."

Saul was not the only one to be "partially obedient," though really there is no such thing. To be partially obedient is to be disobedient. How often we may think that we are being obedient to the Word of God, when we have only carried out a portion of the clear commandment of God. Other portions of Scripture remind us that "God hath spoken;" "He left not Himself without witness." More specifically we read that He commands all men to repent. To the believer the commandment is given to "love one another," "give none offence," 'seek those things which are above." In each of Paul's epistles, after the doctrinal outline, we have practical directions about putting the doctrine into operation, with such warnings as "lie not one to another," "fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." So often we may dismiss a commandment that comes too close to us by saying: "That is only Paul speaking," forgetting that Paul himself writes: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Saul seems to have no idea that he had failed in his task. When he returned to Samuel, he said: "I have performed the commandment of the Lord." He expected Samuel to congratulate him on his obedience, but Samuel said to him: "What meaneth

then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

Saul is ready with his answer: "The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Samuel's response is often quoted: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). He went on to point out that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness ("self-will," J.N.D.) is as iniquity and idolatry. For this reason, Saul was no longer regarded as the true king of Israel. God had a man in view, David, who would rule over God's people in the fear of the Lord.

Saul, as we read, was ready to confess his sin, and asked to be pardoned, but we read that he "feared the people, and obeyed their voice," thus pleading "extenuating circumstances," as we should call it now, and so he pleaded with Samuel to go with him as if nothing had happened. It is to be feared that Saul was but a "profane person," as was Esau, who sought forgiveness without true repentance.

To go back in history, we are reminded of Aaron and Moses, of whom we read in Numbers 20, when they were almost within sight of the promised land. At the beginning of the wilderness journey, while Moses was in the mountain receiving details of the tabernacle and the worship of God, Aaron, like Saul, listened to the people, and fashioned a golden calf, and encouraged the children of Israel to worship the idol. Moses later tells us how "the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron" (Deuteronomy 9:20), and Aaron's sin was forgiven. When, however, Moses took his rod, and smote the rock at Kadesh, Aaron did not restrain his brother, and so participated in his disobedience. For this reason, Aaron and Moses were not allowed to enter the promised land. We understand that the rock was a type of Christ, who would be

smitten once for all. Moses had smitten the rock at the beginning of the wilderness journey. At Kadesh he was told to speak to the rock, but he was disobedient. We should think that the idolatry of Aaron was much more sinful than the hasty action of his brother, but again we are reminded that "self-will" is as the sin of idolatry, since we are pleasing ourselves rather than God.

We have been reminded of Samuel's words to Saul: "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou" (1 Samuel 15:28), but we must not think that David was always obedient to his God. We know how grievously he sinned in breaking the tenth and sixth commandments. We know that Nathan, the prophet, was sent to him with the parable of the poor man and his ewe lamb. When David rose up in wrath at the injustice of the rich man and said to Nathan: "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die," he heard the solemn words: "Thou art the man." There is no doubt that David was truly repentant, and God forgave his grievous sin, but the history of his reign from that time reveals that this one sin had undermined his influence for good and given the enemy an occasion to triumph. In the summing up of David's life in 1 Kings 15 we read: "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord and turned not aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (verse 5). What a sad epitaph! It reminds us of the words of the apostle to the Galatians: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 5:7). May it not be with us that our testimony should be spoilt for the sake of being only "partially obedient"! **We have proved that the Lord is gracious, but we must not presume on His grace. We know that there was only One who "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." Nevertheless, we are called to follow Him, and we are reminded in the Scriptures that we have been called to obedience. May it then be true of us, as was said of Joshua and Caleb, that we wholly follow the Lord.**

REST

"Shall I not seek rest for thee that it may be well with thee?"

CHRIST'S PRESENCE WITH THOSE WHO LOVE HIM

When the Lord Jesus passed through this world as Man for the accomplishment of the will of God, His Father was ever the object before Him, and He constantly counted on His support, even as He said in spirit in Psalm 16, "I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (ver. 8). How comforting and sustaining for the Lord to have ever the sense of the Father's nearness in His path of obedience and submission to His will. It was the knowledge of the Father's presence with Him that sustained Him as He contemplated that even His disciples would forsake Him, even as He said, "Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me (John 16:32).

"I will manifest myself to him."

This is a precious promise from the Lord to His own: even if isolated, or left alone, they can have the comfort and joy of His own company. Those who delight in the will of the Lord, and in simple obedience seek to do it, will have the sense of His presence with them, even as we read, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

Earlier, the Lord had promised His presence to His own collectively, saying, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18); now the promise is to the individual saint. So often down the centuries, as in these last days, devoted saints of God have been isolated and left alone because of their fidelity to Christ; if deserted by others, or unable to meet with

the faithful, they can still have the companionship of Christ. What they lose of Christ's company in the midst of His own because of faithfulness to Him, or because of circumstances ordered by Him, can be compensated by the sense of the manifestation of Himself as promised.

After the Lord rose from the dead, He thrice manifested Himself to His disciples collectively (John 21:14); but before doing so He manifested Himself to Mary Magdalene. When promising to manifest Himself to the individual, the Lord plainly stated that it would be to the individual that loved Him: how blessedly this was fulfilled in the manifestation of Himself to Mary. It was love to Jesus that took her to the tomb; her words to Him, while thinking Him to be the gardener, disclosed that it was Himself that absorbed her heart and mind. As she wept, she said, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him"; and again, "If thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." How deep was her affection for Christ! It was indeed her love for Him that gave her this precious manifestation of Himself.

Special seasons of trial will prove our affection for Christ and will manifest our obedience to what He has asked us to do. These testings will bring the special sense of His presence, even as the more constant walk in obedience to Christ's commandments will bring the more constant sense of His presence with us.

To Mary, the Lord's manifestation of Himself was a special one, even as was that to the disciple whom Jesus loved who, at Patmos was a prisoner for "The word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." To John, that peculiar manifestation brought rich unfolding of the truth, not only for himself, but also for the whole church of God.

It was a special manifestation of the Lord to him of which Paul speaks in Acts 22:17-21; in which he was warned of the Lord that the Jews would not receive his testimony. Later, when Paul

returned to Jerusalem, and proved the truth of the Lord's warning, "The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11).

From these and other Scriptures we learn that in manifesting Himself to His own, the Lord not only brings comfort and cheer, but makes known His mind for us in relation to the details of our path, warning and instructing, so that we might not be turned aside from the path of obedience. What joys too are to be found in such manifestations of Himself! Joy in communion regarding Himself and His interests, which sustains for whatever trials we may be called upon to face.

"The Lord is near."

Having learned for himself the reality of Christ's presence in His life of service, the apostle Paul was able to encourage the saints at Philippi with the exhortation, "Let your gentleness be known of all men. The Lord is near" (Phil. 4:5). The Christian has not been called of God to assert himself before men, either in endeavoring to put this world right, or to claim rights for himself in a world where his Master is rejected. We are to be like Christ; manifesting His gentleness, meekness and lowliness; for He has given us an example that we should follow in His steps. Walking in Christ's steps, we need not to trouble about the opposition of men, for "The Lord is near." He will sustain us with His heavenly grace and give the sense of His own nearness.

Right to the end of his course the apostle proved the reality of Christ's presence with him. His fidelity to Christ, and devotion to His interests, had caused "All they which are in Asia" to turn away from him; and concerning his appearance before Nero he wrote to Timothy, "At my first answer no man stood with me"; but he could add, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me" (2 Tim. 1:15; 2 Tim. 4:16-17). How near the Lord was to His

faithful servant; standing just beside him when he felt the need most.

"Lo, I am with you alway."

These words, spoken to His disciples by Jesus shortly before His ascension to heaven, have been of the greatest comfort to His servants since that time. Who but the Son of God could have spoken such words? The promise of His presence with His servants has been realized as the source of their strength at all times. What deeds have been wrought in the conflicts of the Gospel because of the assurance that Christ was with His, servants!

The same faith that laid hold of Christ's presence in the midst of two or three gathered to His name, and that has apprehended His presence in times of isolation and loneliness, has known His presence in times of service and conflict for His testimony. Faith apprehends Christ's presence, but it is consciously enjoyed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we have seen, the lonely prisoner of Patmos was sustained in the sense that Christ was with him; as was also the great apostle to the Gentiles in his conflict for the Gospel. Simon Peter had once walked on the water when conscious of the presence of the Lord; and because of the Lord's presence with him in his testimony, he could stand and preach before the multitudes of Israel, and witness with boldness to Jesus before the rulers and elders of Israel. Israel's rulers "Took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus"; but did not know the further secret of the boldness of the disciples was that Jesus was with them.

Apostolic days have gone, but the Lord still grant His presence to His servants, for His words were, "Lo, I am with you alway, unto the end of the age." The promise remains for us today, and it remains for the faithful servants of the Lord who will be raised up after the church has gone to heaven. When the church is raptured home to heaven, the Gospel of the kingdom will go

forth by chosen servants of the Lord, and He will be with them, to sustain them in their trials, and to provide for them in their needs (Matt. 25:44-45).

ANSWERS TO SCRIPTURE SEARCH!

1. Green (Genesis 1:30)
2. Philip (John 14:8)
3. Twelve (Revelation(22:2)

LOW AT THY FEET

Low at Thy feet, Lord Jesus,
This is the place for me;
Here I have learned deep lessons:
Truth that has set me free.

Free from myself, Lord Jesus,
Free from the ways of men;
Chains of thought that have bound me
Never can bind again.

None but Thyself, Lord Jesus,
Conquered this wayward will,
But for Thy love constraining,
I had been wayward still.

Found in J.N. Darby's Bible after his home call to be with the
Lord

ONE QUICK CALL

On February 25, 1955, a young mother in San Francisco made her doctor swear he would keep her secret. He would never reveal her name to anyone who came asking about the child he'd just delivered. But about thirty years later he was dying, and the secret burned in him. He sat down to write a letter. The doctor finished his letter and then died with it still on his desk.

Steve Jobs, billionaire founder of Apple and mastermind behind the iMac, iPod, iPhone, iPad and so much more, was put up for adoption at birth. His adoptive parents, Paul and Clara Jobs, loved and understood him. Steve later said, when referring to their understanding of his gifts and needs, "Both my parents got me."

But when Steve reached his thirties, he had a hunger to know more. Where did he come from? He spent years hunting for answers, but each clue ended in a dead end. Finally, he was given the name of a doctor. But the doctor told him that he knew nothing about Steve's birth or adoption.

Do you know where you came from and where you are headed? Dig deeper than mere genetics. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (Genesis 1:27). God not only has created us, but He wants to enjoy a loving relationship with us. However, our rebellion against Him has ruptured that relationship. Like one of the first people to ever live, Cain, we have decided we don't want to be around God and His authority. "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord" (Genesis 4:16).

Missing Clues

Steve Jobs went home without hope. Weeks later a letter arrived from the executors of the mysterious doctor's estate. The letter, left on the doctor's desk, contained the clues Steve had been searching for. Before long he had discreetly contacted his birth mother and found out about a sister, Mona Simpson, who'd become a successful novelist. But Steve did not like what he heard about his father "John" Jandali. Steve had no desire to meet his birth father.

Mona went to see John Jandali with the express instruction from Steve that she not tell John anything about him. Mona and John sat down for a few hours' chat at the small restaurant he managed. John's a good storyteller and the conversation flowed. He casually mentioned he'd had a baby boy that was put up for adoption before Mona's birth. Mona asked, "What happened to him?" John replied, "We'll never see that baby again. That baby's gone."

But many years later Jandali discovered his link to Steve. In 2006 Mona confirmed the truth to him but told him Steve Jobs had no interest in meeting him. The years slipped quickly away, and Steve refused to connect. John Jandali sent a few unanswered birthday emails but never tried to call his son. As Steve's pancreatic cancer dragged him into the shadow of death, John told reporters, "Now I just live in hope that, before it is too late, he will reach out to me, because even to have just one coffee with him just once would make me a very happy man."

Waiting for the Phone to Ring

John Jandali did very little to restore his relationship with Steve Jobs. But God, who isn't at fault in our ruptured relationship with Him, has done everything He possibly could to reestablish contact with us. "The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14). The Lord Jesus Christ as a baby entered into the world He had created. He grew up. He was hated for His purity and crucified. But when He died, He died to pay the price to remove the sin barrier that blocked our relationship with Him. He says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). If we receive His love and forgiveness, then our relationship to God can be restored. But some people are too proud to admit they need to be forgiven.

John Jandali said, "This might sound strange, though, but I am not prepared, even if either of us was on our deathbed, to pick up the phone to call him. . . . Pride in me does not want him ever to think I am after his fortune." On October 5, 2011, Steve Jobs entered eternity. John Jandali's iPhone — yes, he carried an iPhone — never rang.

Dear friend 2020 was a very rough years, many throughout the world have suffered, physically and psychologically. Many have died without calling on God to save their souls and went to eternity in their sins, without Christ, to pay for the penalty of their sins for all eternity.

You do not know what 2021 will hold for you and you do not know when your life will end.

So please come to the Lord Jesus confess to him that you are a sinner and you do not want to spend eternity in Hell paying for the consequences of your sins. Please repent and ask him for forgiveness, accept him as your personal savior.

Will you call on God? It's essential for you to say something like this: "As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me" (Psalm 55:16).