

Brief Notes of a Lecture.

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The Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son – Matthew 22:1-14.

This is one of the most impressive of Christ's parables. Behold a royal marriage feast provided, and gracious invitations given, but, alas! the invitations rejected, the grace and kindness undervalued and despised. Still more, as the close of the parable shows, even some of those who are taken from "the highways," and profess to sit as sincere guests, are found unfit and unworthy, and cast into "the outer darkness." What a solemn, searching warning is here! I shall now proceed, as the Lord may help, to observe the details of the parable.

I. – The marriage supper.

1. Who made the supper? The King – God, the Father. Whose marriage is it? The marriage of His Son, Jesus Christ. Who is the bride? The Church. Is Christ the only Husband of the Church? Yes. Do some people say that pastors of congregations are married to the Church, or to the particular congregations over which they are ordained? Yes. Are they correct in saying that? No. I shall give the following reasons:

(1) In Scripture there is none spoken of as the husband of the Church but Christ. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom" (John 3:29); "Thy Maker is thy husband" (Isaiah 54:5).

(2) It would be unlawful for a wife to have more than one husband.

(3) Pastors are at the same time members of the Church, which is the bride of Christ, and it would be absurd to say that the wife was her own husband, or a joint-husband with Christ.

(4) If pastors were married to the Church, then she would have as many husbands as there are pastors. Are some good people in the habit of saying that when a minister is ordained over a congregation he is married to the Church or to that particular congregation? What is the reason of this? That saying was handed down from Popery, which usurps the prerogative of Christ in relation to His Church; and these good people, although they believe that Christ is the only Husband of the Church, speak of it as a matter of habit, without inquiring whether it is scriptural or not. It is not scriptural; it is not true. May it not, however, be a fact that some pastors claim to be married to what is called a church? Yes; but such pastors are not Christ's pastors, and their so-called church is not His Church. For Christ will not allow any man to usurp His own place as the Husband of His Church, and His Church is taught to keep her own place in relation to Christ as her Husband, and made faithful so as not to accept of any other husband than Him. Christ has been pleased to accept of her as His only bride, and she has been made willing – very willing – to accept of Him as her only husband. Let her keep the marriage covenant faithfully in heart, speech, and behaviour. Christ will keep His own part of it.

2. What is the supper? The Gospel provision. Why is it called a supper?

(1) Because of the richness of the provision. It is the richest provision that was ever made for men or angels. In the East it is said that supper was the best meal of the day. So is the Gospel provision.

(2) Because, as supper is the last meal of the day, the New Testament dispensation is the last that will be given. These are the last days in which God speaks to us, and He speaks to us now through His Son.

II. – The invitation. – Who sends the invitation? God, the King. Who are sent by Him to invite? His servants. Who are these?

(1) John the Baptist;

(2) Christ, the Bridegroom;

(3) the Apostles; and

(4) Gospel ministers to the end of time. Did these servants go on their errand? Yes, they all obeyed the command of the King.

Who were invited?

(1) The Jews;

(2) the Gentiles.

Was this the first time the Jews were invited to the marriage supper? No, for it is said that the servants were sent “to call them that were *bidden*.” They were bidden before by the prophets, and now are bidden once more, but it will be the last time. When sinners who have been often called are again called to come to Christ, may it not be the last call? It may, and it is so with some. What was the result of the invitation? The Jews refused to comply with the invitation sent to them by the first messengers. “And they would not come” (verse 3). Other servants were sent to them with the same message, urging upon them to come, and adding that “all things are now ready” (verse 4). But they made light of it, and went their ways – one to his farm, another to his merchandise (verse 5). Others, who were persecutors, entreated the servants spitefully and slew them. The former were more civil; they did not say any bad word to the servants. Perhaps they spoke well of the marriage which was to be celebrated, but they were too busy with their lawful callings to leave them at present for going to a marriage – even a royal marriage. The latter were determined enemies of the King and His Son, and so they slew them. Who were the servants that were slain by these ruffians? John the Baptist was beheaded, Christ was crucified, some of the Apostles were put to death in other ways, and many of Christ’s ministers since were put to death in a most barbarous manner. People would not deal in this cruel way with servants sent forth by an earthly king to invite them to the marriage of his son. They would consider it a great honour to be invited. But when the Lord of hosts sends His servants – His own Beloved among them – to invite sinners to come to the Saviour, this is the treatment they often meet with at the hands of some whom they invite!

How did the King take this insult to His gracious invitation, and cruel treatment of His servants? “He was wroth” (verse 7). How did He manifest His righteous displeasure at them? “He sent forth his armies, and destroyed these murderers and burned their city” (verse 7). Who were the armies employed to execute this judgment upon them? The Romans. Did the Romans know that they were actuated by God to do this work? No; they had no thoughts of it. They had their own selfish ends in view, but God accomplished His purpose through them towards His enemies. What does the King call those that slew His servants? “*Murderers*.” Are those who persecute and slay God’s servants and people murderers? Yes, the worst kind of murderers. What will God do with such men? He will destroy them. According to law the murderer must be hanged. May not these murderers flee to some hiding-place and thus escape the punishment they deserve? No; for God will find them out and bring them to trial. There can be no possible escape. When shall they be so dealt with?

(1) Sometimes in this world, as in the case of the Jews whom God destroyed by the Romans, and burnt their city;

(2) at death, when their souls shall be cast into hell; and

(3) at the day of judgment, when their bodies, re-united to their souls, shall be punished in the place of everlasting torment. The day of judgment will be a day of awful revelations. All secret sins, which lay hid from the eye of other men, shall be disclosed and made bare before the eyes of all men and angels, and those who committed them shall be

dealt with according to their desert, if they die unpardoned. All murderers – and those, especially, who murdered God’s people – shall be punished according to the aggravation of their sins. Many a neck shall, so to speak, be stretched on that day of final reckoning; many a body shall swing before the gaze of an innumerable assemblage of spectators.

Were there any guests found for the wedding? Yes. Where were they found? “In the highways.” Who are meant by those in the highways? The Gentiles. When the Jews refused, the King sent His servants to invite the Gentiles. “Go ye,” he said, “into the highways, and bid them to the marriage.” Before the invitation came to the Gentiles, did they expect to be honoured with a call to the royal marriage? No. How did they treat the invitation? Not like the Jews; they readily complied with it. They came in great multitudes, “and the wedding was furnished with guests.” Nothing will gather so many people as the Gospel.

Were all who came good people? No; they were a mixed company – some were good, others bad. Does this mean that some are good by nature and others bad that are invited to come to Christ? No, for all are bad by nature – “there is no difference” – and they are, as such, invited to the Saviour, that they may be made good. What, then, is meant? That of the many who are gathered into the visible Church, and make a profession of religion, many shall be found to be hypocrites when God shall bring them to judgment.

When they were all gathered who came in to see them? The King. Did He notice that there were some among them who were hypocrites? Yes. By what mark were they distinguished from the rest? By their garment. Is it the outward garment of the body that is meant? No. What, then? The garment of the soul. What is that garment we require that we may be approved of God? The righteousness of Christ. Yes, that is the garment that can make us acceptable to Him. Is there any other garment needed in order to be prepared for heaven? Yes; the garment of holiness (Psalm 45:13). The one is to be had by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness; the other by the sanctifying work of the Spirit in us. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

Was there only one of the guests without the wedding garment? Yes. Why, then, is only one mentioned? As a specimen of many others who were in a similar condition. Why was that man without the necessary apparel while others had it? He thought his own was good enough, and therefore he did not apply for a better. He was honest in his dealings with his fellow-creatures, was outwardly decent, and was a regular attendant at church, and he imagined that that was sufficient. How did the King deal with this man? He spoke to him. What did He say to him? He called him “friend.” Why did He call him “friend”? Not because he was really so, but because he pretended or feigned to be a friend – just as Christ called Judas by that name. What did He say to him after this? “How camest thou in hither?” Why did He ask him “How,” and not “Why”? To remind him that it was not by the door – the only lawful way of entrance – he came in. Who is the door? Christ. He says, “I am the door.” As the poor sinner did not come in by that door, no wonder although he was without the wedding garment. Had the man anything to say in his own defence? No; he had no plea at the bar of God. His mouth was shut. Could he not have pled that he was earnest in religion, and acted according to the light he had? No, for if he could, he would have done it. Could he not have pled that he was not elected, and that if he had been he would have the necessary preparation, like others? No, for if he could, he would have done it. Could he not have pled that he could not convert himself, that this was God’s work, and therefore cast the blame upon God? No, for if he could, he would have done it. Could he not have pled that if he got one more chance he would make sure of being prepared? No, for if he could, he would have done it in so critical a position. His mouth was shut; he had nothing to plead at God’s bar in his own defence.

Do sinners under the Gospel bring forward the excuses I have mentioned, and many others, when they are pressed to come to Christ? Yes. Will they be able to adduce these

when God shall bring them to account? No; their mouth shall be shut, as that man's mouth was. Do many blame God, their fellow-creatures, and Satan now for their not being in Christ – for their not being converted to God? Yes. What shall become of all these excuses – for they are only excuses – when they shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? They shall all vanish away like smoke. Their mouth shall be closed, as the mouth of that man was. Probably that man had many excuses to plead in his own defence till the King came in and brought him to trial, but then his mouth was closed. O my soul, take warning; O fellow-sinner, take warning! Cast away all your vain excuses; come to Christ now. This may be the last call to you. Fall down on your knees; cry for mercy; for God still waits to be gracious. Christ says, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”

Did the King take further proceedings against this man? Yes. He gave orders about him. To whom did He give these orders? To His servants. What were the servants ordered to do with him?

(1) To bind him hand and foot – “Bind him hand and foot.” Why were his hands to be bound? It is by their hands men work, and God says, “I know thy works.” But there is nothing laid to his charge but that he wanted the wedding garment. But all he did, however good as to the matter of it, was sinful, because it was not done from the right principle and from the right motive. It did not spring from the principle of grace in his soul, and it was not done from the motive of glorifying God; and therefore his hands must be bound. At death the hands of sinners shall be bound so that they cannot do the evil works which they did in their lifetime. Why were his feet to be bound? It is by their feet men walk, and this man walked in his own self-righteous way and despised the righteousness of Christ; and therefore his feet must be bound. Sinners who walk in their own evil ways and trample upon God's commandments shall have their feet bound at death, so that they will be no longer able to walk in the ways in which they had formerly walked. They cannot trample upon God's holy law any more in the world. Is there anything more to be understood by his being bound hand and foot? Yes; for when a man is so bound he is unable to do anything for himself; he is powerless. Will that be the case of sinners at death? Yes; they shall be quite powerless to help themselves. Besides, when a man is bound hand and foot he is absolutely in the power of him that bound him. He can deal with him as he pleases. And in like manner, sinners at death are absolutely in the power of God. Many say now, “Our mouth is our own, our hands and feet are our own, and we may do with them as we please. We may speak what we like; we may do what we think ourselves, and not what God commands us to do and we can walk out on the Sabbath, seeking our own pleasure, although God says, ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.’” But when their mouth is shut and their hands and feet are bound they cannot act in that way. O Sabbath-breaker, take warning! You got many warnings already, but if you turn your feet now – even now – from profaning the Lord's day, it may not be too late. “Turn at my reproof,” God says. “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?”

(2) They were commanded to take him away. The King said, “Take him away.” Hitherto he was in the company of God's people, but now he must part company with them for ever. Is it thus how it shall be at death with those who are not true professors of religion? Yes. They are now in the company of the Lord's people; they are with them in the same church, under the same Gospel ministry, sitting with them at the Lord's table, and thus making the same public profession of being the disciples of Christ. But as they want the wedding garment they shall be taken away from the good company in which they had so long been, and with whom they had no sympathy or real likeness. “The ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous” (Psalm 1:5). O, the solemn parting – never, never to meet again! O, seek not only to be in the company of the Lord's people, seek to be of the blessed number, or you shall be taken away from their company at death, as that man was by the order of the King.

(3) They were ordered to cast him into outer darkness. Why is that place called “outer darkness”? Because there is not the least ray of light in it. Are not sinners in a state of nature in darkness? Yes, and on that account they are called “darkness” itself. “Ye who were once *darkness* are now made light in the Lord.” But although sinners are in that darkness in this world, yet it is not “outer darkness,” because the light of the Gospel has shined upon this sinful world. That light shines about them, though the darkness comprehends it not. There is hope for sinners as long as they are within the call of the Gospel. This is a great privilege. But those who go to the other world refusing the Saviour are cast into “outer darkness,” where the light of the Gospel never shines. There is nothing there but utter and everlasting despair, and therefore it is called “outer darkness.” The darkness in which sinners are now in Gospel lands is but *inner darkness*.” That is an “outer darkness” – there is no darker darkness beyond it. It is the “blackness of darkness.” O, fellow-sinner, flee from the works of darkness; flee to Christ, the “Light of the world,” “the Sun of righteousness.” Seek to be made light in the Lord. It may not yet be too late. The Gospel call is to you as long as you are within the bounds of time. If you die refusing the Saviour, there is nothing else awaiting you in eternity but to be cast into “outer darkness”!

Why are those in that place said to be *weeping*? Because of their great suffering and misery. They rejoiced on earth while they ought to have been weeping and bemoaning themselves, like Ephraim when he repented; but now they weep bitterly, and for ever. God’s people wept in the world, and the world – the wicked – rejoiced. But now the tables are turned. God’s people rejoice in heaven, and never weep again; the wicked weep in hell, and never rejoice any more. They endure the greatest conceivable sufferings, and are in the depth of the greatest misery, and therefore they are said to *weep*.

Why are they said to gnash their teeth? (1) Because of their great suffering, as when people are in extreme pain they gnash their teeth. (2) It is a manifestation of their heart’s enmity against God. Like a furious dog that is chained, when he cannot get at you to tear your flesh, he gnashes his teeth at you. The wicked in this world hate God, and they show their hatred in disobedience, transgression of His law, and in neglecting the great salvation and rejecting Christ. And as they are, in eternity, bound hand and foot, they manifest their enmity to God by gnashing their teeth at Him. But by so doing they only increase their own misery.

O, sinner, seek that your heart’s enmity against God may be slain by the death of Christ, and that the love of God may be shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost, so that you may be enabled to say, “I love the Lord”; or that enmity shall be a scourge, tormenting you for ever in the “outer darkness.” “He that sinneth against me,” Christ says, “wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:36). But so long as you are in the land of the living you are invited to Christ. “All things are ready; come unto the marriage.” This may be the last call to you.

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A Sermon.

By the REV. THOMAS MANTON, D.D., Puritan Divine.

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“Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” – Hebrews 12:1.

In the former chapter you have a spiritual chronicle or a catalogue of the Lord’s worthies, and all the eminent effects of their faith; and now the Apostle comes to make use of this history that he had produced through so many successions of ages of all the holy men of God that excelled in faith. “Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” etc.

The text is wholly hortatory. In it observe:

(1) The premises or principle the Apostle worketh upon. “Seeing we are compassed about,” etc.

(2) The practical inferences which are deduced from thence, and they are two.

[1] One concerning the private part of our duty. “Let us lay aside every weight,” etc. There is something external and without – like to clog us in our way to heaven – “every weight”; and something within that will hinder and trouble us within: therefore he saith, “And the sin which doth so easily beset us.”

[2] Here is the positive part. “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” There’s motion, “run”; the manner, “with patience”; the stage or way, “the race that is set before us.”

My purpose is to give you some brief thoughts upon this useful and practical inference of the Apostle, from the histories of the faithful, before recorded. Therefore I will sum up the whole text in this point.

Doctrine. – The people of God, that have such a multitude of examples of holy men and women set before them, should prepare themselves to run the spiritual race with more patience and cheerfulness.

There are two things in this doctrine – the encouragement and the duty. I shall open both with respect to the circumstances of the text.

First, the encouragement: a multitude of examples, or, as in the text, “Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.” Mark, here are witnesses – a great cloud of witnesses – and these compassing us round about.

(1) Here are witnesses. By that term we are to understand those worthy saints mentioned and reckoned up in the former chapter: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc. All the saints of God that have had experience of the goodness of His providence to them and the fulfilling of His promises, they are all called witnesses. Why? Because they depose a testimony for God, and to speak to future generations to be constant, as they were, that they might receive the like reward. This witness was partly in their faith and partly in the fruit of their faith.

1. They witnessed by their faith. “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33). A man that hath soundly digested the promises, that expresses his faith by cheerfulness and patience under all difficulties, troubles, delays, and those sundry trials that he meets with, gives it under hand and seal – proclaims it to the world – that he hath to do with the true God. And

2. They witnessed in the fruits of their faith, as they give us an instance of God’s fidelity towards them that faithfully adhere to and firmly believe in His promises; so it is said, “Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise” (Hebrews 6:12). Let faith but set patience a work – do but hold out a little while with God – and you may learn by the example of all those holy men, we shall inherit the promises; they shall be made good to a tittle, and not one thing fail of all that the Lord hath spoken. As these holy men were exercised and tossed to and fro, but it succeeded well with

them at the last. O then, let us hearken to the deposition of these worthy witnesses that are recorded in the Scripture, and with such an invincible resolution as theirs was, let us hold on our course towards true happiness. If we do not, they that are now propounded as witnesses to us will, at the day of judgment, be produced as witnesses against us. And, pray, also let us remember that we are to continue and keep afoot that testimony to succeeding generations. For not only the prophets and the holy men of God were God's witnesses, but all God's people also are His witnesses (Isaiah 43:10); by their faith, patience, diligence, constancy, and cheerfulness under afflictions, they are to give it under hand and seal to the world that God is a true and faithful God. But now, if we either, by our sinful walking or by our drooping discouragements, discredit Christ and His profession, then we are witnesses against Him; we deny that religion which we would seem to profess and cry up. "They profess they know God, but in works they deny him" (Titus 1:16), and the more dangerous, because deeds are more deliberate than words, and so a greater evidence of what we think in our hearts. If we, by drooping discouragements and sinful walking, discredit religion, we deny it, and do in effect put the lie upon Christ. Therefore let us remember they were witnesses, and so must we.

(2) By a figurative speech they are called a cloud – having "a cloud of witnesses." Why so? I might trouble you with many conceits interpreters have had of this word "cloud." Say some, because of the raisedness of their spirits, because clouds fly aloft; clouds, for the fruitfulness of their doctrine, as clouds send down fruitful showers upon the earth; and clouds, because they cool and cover us from the heat. So some would gloss for our comfort. Others, with more judgment, say a cloud, with allusion to the pillar of cloud which conducted the Israelites to Canaan. Yet neither doth this come up fully to the scope of the Apostle, for the Apostle speaks not of a cloud that goes before us, but of a cloud that compasses us round about, and therefore a cloud. The reason why it is called so is the number and multitude of those witnesses; as a cloud is made up of a multitude of vapours gathered together and condensed into one body. And so the expression is often used; "Thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land," etc. (Ezekiel 38:9), noting the increase of the people when God would restore them, the multitude of converts. And so in profane authors, Livy hath such an expression; an army of men is called a cloud. But this is enough to show the intent of this expression; that there are a multitude – a very great number. Though the godly, comparatively and with respect to the wicked, are a few, yet considered in themselves they are a great number; for if the martyrs, and those glorious instances of heroic faith, and that under the Old Testament, when God's interest was more confined to one people – if there were such a Church then of so great a number, what will the whole Church of the Old and New Testaments be when we shall meet together in heaven? We are often discouraged with the paucity of professors, and are apt to think ourselves to be left alone (1 Kings 19:10). But let us remember there is a "cloud of witnesses." We are not solitary now, and certainly we shall not want company when we come to heaven. "To the innumerable company of," etc.

Again, it meets with an ordinary and strong temptation which Satan suggests to the hearts of the godly – that they are singular and matchless in their afflictions; that none of the people of God have ever undergone such difficulties as they are exposed unto. And this makes them question their Father's affections, and put themselves out of the number of His children. Yes, but all these things are accomplished in the saints of God before you. Here is a cloud of witnesses that have been exercised and tried to purpose (1 Peter 5:9). They are troubled with a busy devil, a naughty world, a corrupt heart. All have had their trial from God's correcting hand. "The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren, that are in the world." So that we have many fellows. Our lot is no harder than the saints of God that have gone before us, for there is a "cloud of witnesses."

(3) Observe the Apostle calls it a cloud that compasses us round about. That is, we have instances for every trial, temptation, and duty that we are put upon. Here we have examples of those that have fulfilled the commands of Christ on this side with an undaunted courage, and the examples of those that have borne the cross of Christ with an invincible patience. Here we have examples of those that have conquered right-hand temptations – that have despised the delights of the world; and there are those that have conquered left-hand temptations – that have not been broken and affrighted with the terrors of the world. All the saints of God have trodden that way – the same paths wherein we are to walk after them. We cannot look this way or that way but we have instances of faith, confidence in God, and patience. “We are compassed about,” etc. In short, here lies the encouragement that Christians should propound to themselves.

1. That there are examples. Christians of latter times have more to answer for their infidelity than those of former ages. They that first believed the promises believed without such a “cloud of witnesses” or multitude of examples. Many have gone before us that have broken the ice, and that found good success from their own experience. They have commended God to us as a true and faithful God; and will not you go on? When Jonathan and his armour bearer climbed up the rocks of the Philistines, then the people were encouraged to go up after. So here are some that have gone before you, and it hath succeeded well with them.

2. These examples are many. Not one or two that might be supposed to be singularly afflicted and to have eminent prerogatives above the rest of their brethren, but many in every age – a whole cloud of them.

3. There are examples of many rare and excellent men – the best that ever lived under heaven. “Take, my brethren, the prophets for an example,” etc. (James 5: 10).

4. They are propounded to us not for their words only and for their profession, but for their deeds, for their bitter sufferings; and they abundantly manifest to us that there is nothing impossible in our duty, or anything so difficult but may be overcome through Christ’s strength enabling us. They all had the same nature we have; they were of the like passion with us; flesh and blood as we are; of the same relations and concerns. And then, on the other side, we have the same cause with them, the same recompense of reward to encourage us, the same God and Saviour to recompense us. He suffered for us as well as for them. Therefore we should follow in their steps and hold fast our confidence to the end, for they have showed us that poverty, reproaches, death itself, and all those things that would look harsh and with a ghastly aspect upon the eyes of the world, are no such evils but that a believer may rejoice in them and triumph over them. I say they have showed that the blandishments of the world have not such a charm but they may be renounced without any loss of considerable joy and contentment, and that the duties of Christianity are not so hard but that a little waiting upon God will bring in grace enough to perform them. Therefore saith the Apostle, “Seeing we have a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside,” etc. And so I come to the encouragement – to the

Second thing, and that is the duty here pressed. Here is (1) the privative, (2) the positive part of our duty. Here is mortification and vivification. Mortification: “Let us lay aside,” etc. Vivification: “Let us run with patience,” etc. In both the branches he alludes to terms proper to races. In a race you know men strip themselves of their clothes and whatever is burdensome and heavy, that they may be the more light of foot. And so the Apostle bids us “lay aside every weight.” And they do withal diet themselves, that they might have no clog from within. “Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things” (1 Corinthians 9:25), that is, they took care that they did not clog and indispose themselves for the race they were to run. But they, verily, run only for a corruptible crown; we for a crown that is incorruptible and glorious. So according to this double practice of racers, we are to

cast aside every weight from without, etc. So here's a double object: laying aside every weight, and sin. There's *onus externum* – the weight without that presses us down and hinders our speed; and then there's *impedimentum internum* – there's sin – that which weakens within. By reason of the former we make little speed; by reason of the latter we are often interrupted. And therefore we must do as they, that they might be swift and expedite – “lay aside every weight” and be more “temperate in all things.” Herein a runner in a race differs from a traveller. A traveller strengthens himself for his journey as well as he can – his clothes on, and sometimes carries a great burden with him; but a runner of a race makes himself as light as he can. But to come more particularly to the words.

(1) “Lay aside every weight.” By weight is meant those things that burden the soul and make our heavenly progress more tedious and cumbersome. And by weight is meant, I think, the delights and cares of the world, the multitude of secular business. All our earthly contentments and affairs, so far as they are a burden to us, hinder us in our way to heaven; these must all be put off. Saith Christ, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life,” etc. (Luke 21:3,4). The heart that is depressed cannot be so free for God and the offices of our heavenly calling, when we give way to surfeiting, drunkenness, and cares of this world.

1. The heart may be overcharged with the delights of the world. Surfeiting and drunkenness must not be taken in the gross notion. You must not think of spewing, reeling, vomiting, as if to avoid these were a full compliance with Christ's direction. The heart may be overcharged when the stomach is not. There is a dry drunkenness and a more refined surfeiting, and that is when the heart grows heavy, unfit for prayer, and relishes not the things of the Spirit. When the delights of the flesh clog the wheel, abate that vigour and cheerfulness that we should show forth in the worship of God and holy actions – when the delights of the flesh withdraw us from that watchfulness and diligence that is necessary in taking care for our souls – then the heart is overcharged. Voluptuous living is a great sin. It chokes the seed of piety so soon as planted in the heart, so that they can bring nothing to perfection. It brings a brawn and a deadness upon the conscience and affections. There is nothing that hardens the heart so much as the softness of carnal pleasure. “Sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude 19). Sensuality quenches our natural bravery and briskness of spirit that becomes a man; much more doth it hinder the sublime operations of the Spirit of God. Well then, remember, Christians, you are not only travellers by the way but runners in a race. If we were to speak to you only under the notion of travellers in a way, this were enough to wean you from the delights of the flesh. “As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). The more you indulge these fleshly lusts, the more you hearten and strengthen the great enemy of your souls, and starve the better part. But you are runners in a race. By this metaphor the duty is more bound upon you. Much more should you beat down the body and keep it in subjection. The Apostle hath a notable word: “I keep under my body, and bring it in subjection” etc. (1 Corinthians 9:27). I beat down my body. You must either keep under pleasures, or pleasures will keep you under. For a man is soon brought under the power, dominion, and tyranny of evil customs and some brutish pleasure by indulging the lusts of the flesh (1 Corinthians 6:12). Be but a little addicted to any one thing, and you are brought under the power of it. The flesh waxes wanton and imperious, and a slavery grows upon you by degrees. The more you indulge carnal affections, the more they increase upon you; and therefore you must hold the reins hard – exercise a powerful restraint. Solomon in his penitentials gives an account of his own folly, and how fearfully he was corrupted this way. “Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy,” etc. (Ecclesiastes 2:20). This was that which brought him to such a lawless excess, and at length to fall off from God. When we give nature the full swing, and use pleasure with too free a license, the heart is insensibly

corrupted, and the necessities of life are turned into diseases, and all that you do is but in compliance with your lusts. Your eating and drinking is but a meat-offering and drink-offering to lusts and carnal appetites. I remember Solomon saith, “He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at length” (Proverbs 29:21); that is, allow a servant too much liberty and he will no more know his condition, but grow contemptuous, bold, and troublesome. So it is here. We are all the worse for license. Natural desires – unless they feel fetters and prudent restraints – grow unruly and excessive. And therefore it is good to abate the liberty of the flesh, that the body may be a servant and not a master. When you deny yourselves in nothing, but satisfy every vain appetite, a custom grows upon the soul, and intemperance proves a trade and a habitual distemper, so that you cannot when you would – upon prudent and pious respects – refrain and command your desires. And therefore ’tis good sometimes to thwart and vex the flesh; as David poured out the water of Bethlehem that he longed for (2 Samuel 23:17). Not to deny ourselves in what we affect and covet, lust grows into a wanton, bold and imperious, and so prescribes upon us, and we are brought under the power of these things.

2. The business and cares of this world. For these immoderately followed, and not in obedience to God, are a sore burden, and make the soul heavy, and allows no time and strength for God and His service and those happy opportunities of private communion with Him. When we are encumbered with much service we neglect that “one thing necessary” (Luke 10:42). And therefore Christians must take heed that the lean kine do not devour the fat; that Sarah be not thrown out of doors instead of Hagar; that religion be not thrust to the walls, which should be our prime and chief business, while every business hath its time and course. The Scriptures, knowing the proneness of our hearts to temporal things, deals with us as we do with a crooked stick – we bend it so much the other way. And therefore sometimes they forbid necessary labour. “Labour not for the meat which perisheth,” etc. (John 6:28); the meaning is, not chiefly. But it bends the stick another way: “Set not your affections on the things of the earth.” A man must have some kind of affection to his work here below, but we had need to be bent the other way. We may gather this from this precept: ’tis better to encroach upon the world than the world should encroach upon godliness. In short, things are a burthen and clog to us according as our delight and scope is. If the pomp and increase of the world be our end and scope, then religion will be looked upon as a burden. That will be a weight, and all the duties of godliness as a melancholy interruption; as this, “When will the Sabbath be over?” (Amos 2:8). The exercise of godliness will be a troublesome thing, and we shall go about the work of religion as if we went about it not. But, on the other side, if heaven and heavenly things be our scope, then the world is a burthen, and then we shall use it in the way – but not abusing – as taking up our rest here (1 Corinthians 7:31,32). Man hath a body and soul, and he doth provide for both, but for one in subordination. The soul is the chief, and therefore we must not so look after the interests and concernments of the bodily life as to forget the interests of the soul or to neglect them. Many will not so grossly idolise present things as to renounce things to come. Aye, but they so often follow the things of the world that they neglect their eternal concernments. The happiness of a people lies in communion with God, and therefore that must be looked after. We must take heed that the cares of the world have not such a hand and power over us as either to divert us from or unfit us for these higher and nobler pursuits – the enjoyments of God in Christ. This is the first thing the Apostle speaks to these spiritual racers: to “lay aside every weight,” that is, the delights of the flesh and the cares of the world.

(2) The next thing to be laid aside is sin, which doth so easily beset us. As we must guard against things without, so we must mortify our corrupt inclinations within; or else it will soon make us weary of our heavenly race or faint in it. Sin, you know, is twofold – original and actual. Actual sin is not meant primarily, for that is not *peccatum agens*, the sin

that easily besets us; but *peccatum transiens*, the sin that passes from us. And original sin is that which is emphatically called “sin” (Romans 7:8). Now this original corruption may be considered as merely native, or as acquired and improved into evil customs and habits; for according to men’s tempers and constitutions – as they are severally disposed – so by the corruption of nature they are inclined to one sin more than another. As the channel is cut, so corrupt nature finds a vent and issue. In every man there is some predominant sin, and in every regenerate person some relics of that sin, from whence is the greatest danger of his soul. Thus David speaks of his iniquity (Psalm 18:23). Well, then, this is that “sin that doth so easily beset us” – original sin, improved into some tyranny or evil custom, which doth increase and prevail upon us more and more. Now this is said – “easily beset us” – for three reasons. Partly because it hath a great power and restraint over us, and implies the whole man – the members of the body, the faculties of the soul. So great an interest hath it acquired in our affections that it doth “easily beset us”; it hath great power and command over us. Partly because it sticks so close that we cannot by our own strength lay it aside. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” (Jeremiah 13:23). A man can as soon change his skin as lay aside his customs, that are so deeply engraven as the blackness of an Ethiopian or the spots of the leopard. And partly because it mingles itself with all our motions and actions (Romans 7:21, etc.) It easily besets us. ’Tis present with us; it impels us, and solicits us, and draws us to sin further and further, and doth make us negligent in what is God’s. We cannot do or speak anything but it will infest us in all our duties of piety, charity, justice. On every side it is interposing, vexing, thwarting the motions of the Spirit; and so abates our strength, vigour, and agility, and retards our course towards heaven and glory. Therefore, lay aside, as every weight, so every sin, etc.

Question. – Now, what is it to lay aside, or how can we lay aside, since sin sticks so close to us and is engraven in our natures?

Answer. – Certainly something may be done by us, for this is everywhere pressed as our duty. “Put off the old man” (Ephesians 4:22; 1 Peter 2:11). We may put it off more and more, though we cannot lay it aside. Then we are said to “lay aside the sin that so easily besets us” when we prevent and break the dominion of it, that it shall not reign over us. “Let not sin reign,” etc. (Romans 6:12). Though it dwells in us, lives in us, and works in us, yet it should not overcome us and bring us into bondage, and so it will not be imputed to our condemnation. And at length, when the soul shall be separated from the body, we shall be wholly free from it.

Question. – Aye, but what must we do that we may repress it – the question returns – that we may break the dominion of it?

Answer. – I answer, this is the work of the Spirit of God. But we must know the Spirit of God doth work the work of mortification two ways – by regeneration and after regeneration. By regeneration and so He doth immediately, without any co-operation of ours, mortify the deeds of sin – gives sin its death wound. That which is left is as a thing mortified; ’tis broken. The Scripture often speaks of this first work of regeneration (Romans 6:6; Colossians 2:11).

(1) When we are planted into Christ then we put off the body of sin; and though it doth not presently die, yet ’tis weakened that it cannot reign, though it be not destroyed.

(2) After regeneration the Spirit doth more and more destroy sin, the relics of sin, this crucified body of sin, till it dieth wholly away. This He doth in us, but not without us. “Through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body” (Romans 8:13). Not the Spirit without us, nor we without the Spirit, but ye through the Spirit. What is then required of us?

1. Seriously purpose not to sin, and promise to God to yield Him unfeigned obedience. Especially should we make this promise in the use of those solemn rites by which

the Covenant between God and us is confirmed. Take up a solemn purpose not to grieve the Spirit nor to break His law. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments" (Psalm 119:106). This purpose of heart is the root of all good actions; therefore in the confidence of God's help, in the sense of thy own weakness (Psalm 119:32), we cannot lay wagers upon our own strength. Yet 'tis our duty to engage our hearts to God. To sin against the light of our own conscience, and illumination of the Spirit, and the chastening and instruction of our own reins, that aggravates our sin; but to sin against and besides our fixed purpose of not sinning, that lightens sin; for then 'tis a sin of weakness and infirmity, not of wilfulness and malice. And then we can say, as Paul, when the heart is fixedly bent towards God, "The evil which I would not, that do I" (Romans 7:19). Two ways may we be said to sin against purpose – either when we are overborne besides our purpose, or our purpose still remains to please God. As when the water breaks over the bank – the bank remaining – in such a case the fault is not in the bank, but in the violence of the flood. Or, second, when we break off our purpose or consent to do evil; as when we cut through the bank, the water may easily make through. There's a great deal of difference between sin dwelling in us and sin entertained by us; between sin remaining and sin reserved. When you have a firm purpose against all sin, there is sin remaining, but 'tis not reserved, 'tis not kept and allowed.

2. Watch over thyself with a holy suspicion, because thou hast sin within thee that doth easily beset thee. Therefore "consider thy ways" (Psalm 119:59); "guard thy senses" (Job 31:1); but above all, "keep thy heart" (Proverbs 4:23). Conscience must stand as porter at the door, and examine what comes in and what goes out. Watch over the stratagems of Satan and seducing motions of thy own heart.

3. Resist and oppose strongly against the first risings of the flesh, and the tickling and pleasing motions of sin that doth easily beset us, when it doth entice us away from God, or do anything that is unseemly and contrary unto the duties of our heavenly calling. Oh, remember we are not debtors to the flesh (Romans 8:20). Thou art tied to the Lord by all obligations and indulgence. Therefore break the force of sin by a serious resistance; check it; and let thy soul rise up in indignation against it. My business is not to please the flesh but to please the Lord.

4. Bewail thy involuntary lapses and falls with penitential tears, as "Peter went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:57). Godly sorrow is of great use for laying aside of sin, as salt potions kill worms. When children are troubled with worms we give them salt potions. So these bitter penitential tears are the means God hath appointed to mortify sin; that's the reason the Apostle saith, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7:10). 'Tis not only a part of repentance, but worketh preserving durable resolutions – a walking closely with God. 'Tis a means God hath blessed to this end and purpose.

5. Recover from thy falls; renew thy combat. As Israel, when they were overcome in battle, would try it again and again (Judges 20:28). Take heed of ceasing for the present; for though thy enemy seems to prevail – though the flesh seems to prevail against the spirit in the battle – yet thou shalt have the best of it in the war. By the power of grace thou shalt have the victory.

Thus I have gone over the privative part of our duty: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us." I should have come to the positive: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." There is the duty – "Let us run the race that is set before us"; and there is the manner of the duty – "Let us run with patience." I should have shown you that a Christian's life is like a race from earth to heaven, in a way of holiness and exercise of grace. This race continues as long as we continue in the world – from our nativity to our death. After death the strife is ended.

Now, in this race we must run, and “so run that we may obtain the crown” (1 Corinthians 9:24). Running is a motion, and a speedy motion. There is no lying, sitting, or standing, but still there must be running. We must make a further progress in the way to heaven, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Philippians 3:13).

The runner was not to inquire how much of the way already was past, but to strain himself to overcome what was yet before. And so should we consider what sins are yet to be mortified, what duties yet untouched – almost untouched, what hard conflicts are yet to be undergone, and still to hold on our way without winning aside or halting because of difficulties, discouragements, stumbling-blocks. And there are fellows and co-partners with us, that run this race, with whom we may strive, in a holy emulation, who should go forward – who should be most forward in the course of pleasing God. O Christians, there are many contentions amongst us, but when shall we have this holy contention (Hebrews 10:24)?

In a race there is the *Agonetheta*, the judge of the sports. So here God observes all. No matter what the standers-by say, the Judge of the sports must decide who must have the crown (1 Corinthians 14:3,4). And then at the end of the race there is the crown. “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” (2 Timothy 4:7,8). In a race there are spectators. So there are here God, angels, and men. “We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men” (1 Corinthians 4:9).

Thus for the similitude of our race in our way to heaven. Now, wherein it differs.

This is a race not undertaken out of wantonness, but out of necessity. God hath called us to this course, and if we run not in this race we are undone for ever. And in other races but one had the crown; here all are crowned (2 Timothy 4:8), though they be not so eminent as the Apostle; here all are crowned that run in the manner God hath required. “Henceforth there is laid up 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 them that love his appearing.”

For the manner – with patience: “Let us run with patience.” Patience is necessary –

(1) Partly because of the length of the race and the distance between us and the promised reward. Our race cannot be ended but after some degrees of time. Long waiting is troublesome to the flesh, and therefore we have need of patience.

(2) Because we meet with many impediments, troubles, and temptations by the way; there are spiritual adversaries with whom we must fight. For we go on; we not only run, but fight. Therefore “run with patience.”

(3) Because the spectators will be ready to discourage us. We are set forth not only as a spectacle to God and angels, but to the world, and they will be ready to deride, scorn, and oppose us for our zeal to God and our forwardness in the ways of God, and to discourage us by bitter mockings, etc. Therefore “let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

[June & July 1912]

A Sermon.

By the REV. D. MACFARLANE, Dingwall.

“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God” – Joel 2:12-14.

We are not told in this book when Joel began to prophesy, or how long he was employed in that work. But we may infer from the nature of the message he was divinely commissioned to deliver that it was – like our own day – a time of great declension in the Church and in the nation. The first part of his prophesy contains awful denunciations of impending judgments on the people for their sins. Of these judgments the prophet was commanded to give due warning to the people, and to call them to repentance. He was to blow the trumpet in Sion and to sound an alarm in God’s holy mountain. It is the duty of ministers to give warning to their people when God threatens to pour out his judgments upon them for their sins. Our text is a call to repentance. In endeavouring to speak from the words of the text, as the Lord may enable me, I shall direct your attention to four things:

- I. – The reason for the call;
- II. – The call itself;
- III. – The encouragement to obey the call; and

IV. – The door of hope that is here set before us.

I. – The reason for the call. – The Lord was threatening to come forth with an army to punish the people for their sins. His army was composed of two kinds of soldiers:

- (1) insects to destroy the fruits of the earth;
- (2) wicked men to oppress and kill the people.

In these two ways the Lord had often punished the people of Israel and Judah for their sins – especially the sin of idolatry, to which they were prone, and into which they had so frequently fallen. Famine and sword were scourges He often used to speak to them when they refused to hearken to His word through His prophets.

The people to whom the message in our text was originally addressed have been removed to the world of eternity long ago, and it speaks to us now; and we are commanded to blow the trumpet of warning in Sion, and to sound an alarm in the holy mount, as sure as Joel was commanded to do so in his own day. Does the Lord threaten to punish us as a Church and as a nation? Yes, and for the same reason for which He threatened to punish the people of Israel – for our forsaking of Him, the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. We have committed these two great evils. We, as a Church and as a nation, are guilty in the sight of God, and are deserving the righteous judgment of the Most High. Notwithstanding that, some leaders in the Church, who are under the influence of spiritual blindness, say that religion was never purer and never more prosperous than it is at the present time. It can be proved that religion, as taught in the most of churches, was never more corrupt and of less influence for good on the lives of men since the Reformation than it is at the present day. The same may be said of our nation. “From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness.” In their legislation our rulers have no regard for the Word of God, and the people as a rule follow their evil example. Therefore we cannot, without repentance, expect to escape the judgment which the Lord threatens to pour upon us as a Church and nation.

What are the instruments that are likely to be used by the Lord to punish us for our iniquities? When He punished the people of Israel He employed, as the rod of His anger, outside enemies – the Babylonians and others. He may take the same way to punish our nation. There are great preparations being made for a European war, and Britain is looked at with an envious eye by the other Powers. But although our nation should not be attacked by outside enemies, there are many enemies within our borders who are plotting for our destruction. Among these are those who call themselves Socialists. There are forty-two of these Members of Parliament, and they have agents in the Army, Navy, Schools, Churches, etc., who are doing their utmost to win to their side from these different sources recruits to strengthen them to overthrow our monarchy when the fit opportunity comes. That this is their intention may be proved by their own public utterances. J. Keir Hardie, M.P., is reported to have said “There are differences of opinion about the wisdom or unwisdom of having a King. I have no doubt whatever in my mind on the subject. I regard the existence of a King as a proof of lunacy among the people. A sane people would insist on ruling themselves; but for the moment we have a King. Those who assume the people of this country are intensely loyal are making a profound mistake.” – (*Daily Express*, 25th July, 1910.) This is treason! In the Socialist organ of the Socialist Labour Party, April, 1908, the following statement to the same effect is found “There is no reason why a Socialist Labour Party man should take an oath of loyalty to King Edward the Seventh and heirs for ever, and swear to uphold the constitution we are out to destroy.” That extreme Socialism is bound up with the grossest infidelity may be seen in the following statement that appeared in the *Clarion*, 23rd September, 1904: – “I deny the existence of a Heavenly Father. I deny the efficacy of prayer. I deny the Providence of God. I deny the truth of the Old Testament and

the New Testament. I deny the truth of the Gospels. I do not believe that any miracle was ever performed. I do not believe that Christ was divine. I do not believe that Christ died for man; I do not believe that He ever rose from the dead; I am strongly inclined to believe that he never existed at all.” – (R. Blatchford.)

It is a bad sign of the system of Socialism when it is opposed to religion in any form. But while it seeks to rob man of his religion, it aims also at depriving him of his worldly substance, which he acquired in an honest way by his industry. Socialism holds that no man should be richer than his fellow. God did not find fault with Job for being richer than his neighbours. But Satan came forward as a Socialist leader, and stirred up the Sabians to rob the man of God of his wealth. This is what Socialism seeks to do. In prosecuting their work of spoliation, Socialists say that they must begin with the middle class. E. Belford Bax, in an essay on Socialism, says, “The small middle class in its various sections is the great obstacle which will have to be suppressed before we can see even the inauguration of a consciously Socialist policy. It must be destroyed or materially crippled as a class before real progress can be made.” If men of this class in Scotland, and in the Highlands of Scotland, who support Socialists by their vote, understood that they were helping to deprive themselves of their worldly goods, they would not act so foolishly against their own interest. When the Socialists succeed in crippling or destroying the middle class, they shall proceed to attack the richer class, of whom some are millionaires, and reduce them to the level of the poor or labouring class. The only rich class shall be the Socialists themselves! The Socialists profess to work for the benefit of the labouring class, but they only make a tool of these in order to accomplish their own selfish ends. They know that without the aid of the labouring class they cannot accomplish their own revolutionary plot. The labouring class would be content with their lot if their leaders would not interfere with them. Their leaders keep up the agitation, not to benefit the labouring class, but to cause a general revolution in the country. This is evident from the fact that no sooner one strike is settled than another begins. Indeed, the Socialists do not conceal their intention. They say, “We are accused of preaching discontent and stirring up actual conflict. We do preach discontent, and we mean to preach discontent, and we mean, if we can, to stir up actual conflict.” – (H. M. Hyndman.)

To accomplish their evil design they are prepared to use force and violence should milder means fail. H. Quelch is reported to have said in October, 1893, “We are prepared to use any means, any weapon, from the ballot box to the bomb; from organised voting to organised revolt; from Parliamentary contests to political assassination – which opportunity offers, and which will help on the end we have in view. Let this be understood, we have absolutely no scruples as to the means to be employed.”

Now, this deplorable state of matters in our once Christian land is a plain indication that we as a Church and as a nation have fallen from the high position to which God had raised us by means of the Gospel, and that He is now threatening to punish us for our apostacy. Surely this is a reason why we should humble ourselves in the dust before the Most High, and seek grace to return to Him with repentance, confession of sin, and earnest prayer, in response to His gracious call addressed to us in our text.

II. – The call to repentance. – On this head we shall notice: –

1. The *persons* exhorted to engage in this necessary duty. We learn from the context that all persons in the Church and in the nation – from the new-born child to the oldest man and woman – were called to repent. The divine command was: “Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests – the ministers of the Lord – weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over

them: Wherefore should they say, among the people, Where is their God?" The duty of repentance was enjoined on all the people without exception. National sin deserves national judgment, and calls for national repentance. It is to be observed that those in authority in Church and State were to take the lead in this work, as probably they were ringleaders in the apostasy. The *Elders* and the *Priests* – the ministers of the Lord – are mentioned in particular. It is well known by readers of the Old Testament that almost every declension in the Church began with the teachers of the people, and that when an ungodly king ruled, the nation relapsed to idolatry. This is the cause of the deplorable declension in the Church and the State in our own day. It cannot be denied that the present ministers in the Church are responsible for much of the idolatry and infidelity that are rampant among the rising generation; and the rulers of our nation – from the king downward – have been, and are still, co-operating with the backsliding Church in leading the people to idolatry. The Popish altar gifted by the King to Crathie Parish Church is one instance of this. Therefore, as these have taken the lead in causing the people to forsake the Lord, His Word and worship, they ought to be the first to obey the call to repentance. If they were to do so, their good example would be followed by the people. But whether they do so or not, it is our duty to declare to them what the Lord commands them to do in order to avert the threatened calamity.

2. The *manner* in which the duty is to be performed. The first thing is to turn unto the Lord: "Turn ye even to me." This implies that those addressed had forsaken the Lord. He had chosen them from among all other nations in the world, brought them nigh to Himself, delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt, led them through the wilderness into the good land that flowed with milk and honey, set up His tabernacle among them; and they entered into a solemn covenant with Him, and promised that they would continue in His covenant and never forsake Him. But they broke the covenant; forsook the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and began to worship idols – gods that could not save them or do them any good. Their sin was great – greater than that of the heathen – and yet He calls them to turn unto Him, and promises to receive them into His favour, notwithstanding the aggravation of their sin. Oh, how good God is! But did they return to Him and accept of His gracious offer? No; for we see that they were soon after reaping the fruit of their sin and folly in captivity, where they had been left till they were brought to repentance.

Are we, as a nation, of whom better things might be expected, better than they? We are not. We are as guilty in the sight of God as they were. When our forefathers were "sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death," the Lord caused a great light to arise unto them. He sent to them the glorious Gospel, which they left as the best legacy to their posterity. It was the Gospel that made our nation great, powerful, and prosperous. It exalted us far above the other nations of the world in respect of religion, civilization, and true virtue. But what are we now? We have, like Israel, forsaken the Lord; we are fallen from the high position to which the Lord had raised us. We have turned away from the living and true God to worship idols. Yea, many in our nation have sunk into deeper degradation than the heathen, inasmuch as they deny the existence of God – a state in which no heathen people have ever been found in any part of the world. They are worshippers of some god or gods, and they acknowledge one Supreme Spirit, though, without the Word of the Gospel, they do not know who that glorious Being is. To deny the existence of God is the lowest state of degradation to which man, possessed of a moral nature, can come. Into this state many in our much privileged nation have fallen. But in our text we hear the voice of the Lord crying unto them, "Turn ye even to me." Oh, that they would obey the gracious call!

(1) It must be a *heartly* turning. There may be a turning to the Lord by profession without a change of heart. But where there is a sincere turning it has its spring in the heart. The backsliding began in the heart, the turning to the Lord begins there too. So it was in the case of the prodigal. The resolution to return to his father was formed in his mind or heart

before he took the first step homeward, "I will arise," etc. The whole heart must be in this work: "Turn ye even to me with all your heart." The Lord seeks the whole heart – "Son, give me thine heart." A heart divided between the Lord and the world, between Christ and Belial, will not be accepted. The people of Israel were charged with turning feignedly to the Lord. They flattered Him with their lips while their heart was not right with Him. Before there can be a true turning to the Lord a "new heart" is given – a new creation is made by the Holy Spirit by means of the Word of Scripture. This is the Lord's work, but it is the sinner so changed that turns to the Lord. It will then be a hearty turning, a turning with all the heart without any reserve.

(2) With *fasting*. The ministers of the Church were commanded to sanctify a *fast*, that is, to set apart a day or more, and gather the people, young and old, rich and poor, and of all ranks, to humble themselves before the Lord, to confess their sins, and to pray for mercy and pardon. This is the kind of fasting that is acceptable to God. In this exercise they were to deny themselves to some extent of food and drink, lawful on other occasions. A time of *fasting* is not a time of *feasting*. We have several instances in Scripture of literal fasting when the Lord threatened to pour out His wrath on the people for their sins. When He threatened to destroy the people of Nineveh they believed His word through His prophet, humbled themselves, fasted, and turned from their evil ways, and the Lord owned their exercise, and spared them because of their repentance. Although outward obedience to God's command by unconverted men, or even converted men, does not merit eternal life, yet it prevents temporal judgments, from which otherwise there would be no escape. When King Ahab, though a wicked man, humbled himself, the Lord took notice of it, and delayed to cut him off for his idolatry. If the people of our nation rendered even outward obedience to His command, which is within their power to do as reasonable creatures, the judgment which is ready to fall upon us would be averted.

(3) "With weeping and with mourning" – weeping more for our sins than for the many miseries to which sin made us liable. The cause of misery – even eternal punishment – is a greater evil than its effects. Sin is an unrighteous thing. The punishment of sin is just. If you do not weep more for your sins than for your miseries, your weeping is not that of God's people. Many weep for their miseries who never wept for their sins. In true repentance there is *mourning* as well as weeping. There is some difference between weeping and mourning, as they are spoken of here as distinct, though connected. The difference is this: mourning is more lasting than weeping. The Lord's people are not always shedding tears, but they are mourning all their days in the wilderness. Even their rejoicing is mixed or accompanied with mourning so long as they are in this world. They are characterised by Christ as "they that mourn" – (Matthew 5:4). Those who never weep for their sins now shall be weeping for ever in eternity.

(4) With rending of heart: "Rend your heart and not your garments." In Old Testament times rending their garments was practised by penitents as a visible sign of inward grief for their sins against God. But this was so easy a thing to do that others might do it without any true sense of sin or any real grief of heart for it. Therefore they were commanded to rend their heart and not their garments. When God turns sinners to Himself, He rends their heart by conviction of sin, and they themselves begin to rend their heart too. And when He stops to rend their heart by pardoning their sins and speaking peace to them through the blood of Christ, they shall not stop that work. They shall continue it during their course in the world till death. Then they shall not rend their heart any more for ever. The broken heart is then completely healed. But those who do not rend their heart in time shall be rending it throughout eternity; their worm shall not die, and the fire that torments them shall never be quenched. Oh, careless sinner, begin to rend your heart now!

(5) With turning unto the Lord: “And turn unto the Lord your God.” The call to repentance begins with this exhortation and closes with it. The people were so far gone astray, and so tied to their idols, that they needed “precept upon precept” to bring them back to the living and true God. Although they would perform all the other duties enjoined on them, unless they turned to the Lord, all would be in vain. The threatened judgment would fall upon them, and they would perish in their sins. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Repentance is a continual exercise of the believer in turning from sin to God, till he is made perfect in holiness at death. Then it ceases for ever; there is no repentance after death.

III. – The encouragement to obey the call. – There is nothing in those called that can be the least ground of encouragement to obey the call. On the contrary, everything in them, and done by them in departing from the Lord is enough to keep them for ever away from Him, if they are dealt with according to their ill desert. But there is every encouragement in Him that calls them. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.”

(1) Are they so impressed with the heinousness of their sins, as against light and privileges, that they are now afraid that they put themselves beyond the possibility of forgiveness? To meet their desperate case, the prophet tells them that the Lord against whom they had so grievously sinned, is *gracious*. He is gracious in His nature, and is naturally disposed to deal graciously with offenders, who come to Him repenting, confessing their sins, and praying for pardon and acceptance. They cannot plead merit or worthiness. But grace in God does not look for merit in the guilty sinner. It flows out freely to the guilty, through and on the ground of the merit of Jesus Christ, and on that ground alone. This was the ground of forgiveness under the Old Testament, and it is the ground under the New. Not only forgiveness, but the whole of salvation from beginning to end is by the grace of God. “By grace are ye saved” (Ephesians 2:8).

(2) “He is merciful.” Are they miserable; as all men are by nature? The prophet brings the remedy before them. The Lord is merciful, yea, He is rich in mercy, so that they cannot have sunk into such a state of misery but God’s mercy can deliver them, and raise them up out of the fearful pit, and out of the miry clay, and set their feet on the firm rock – Christ. Yea, He can change their mournful complaint of misery into the joyful song of praise!

(3) “He is slow to anger.” They cannot say that He was too hasty to mark iniquity against them, and visit them with tokens of His wrath. No, He bore long with them in their sinful course; and even now, after all their provocations, He is ready to turn away His anger from them, if they only turn to Him. What more could they reasonably expect?

(4) “He is of great kindness.” If they turn to Him even now, He will meet them with open arms, and treat them with the greatest kindness, as if they had never offended Him. Their sins and iniquities He will remember no more. O, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

(5) “He repenteth of the evil.” That is, He will change His manner of dealing with them. He will not change His mind – as the word *repentance* means. He is of one mind. But He changes His way of dealing with those who return to Him at His reproof. He will not execute His threatenings against them. His threatenings were conditional on their obedience or disobedience to His call to repentance, just as His threatening to destroy Nineveh was. This leaves the responsibility at the door of those to whom the divine message comes. They are thus left without any excuse. Every barrier is removed out of the way on the part of the

Lord. If they perish, they must blame themselves, and justify the Lord in punishing them in time and in eternity.

IV. – The door of hope that is here set before them: “Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God.” Here is a door of hope. It may look small; yet it is an open door, however small. The prophet cannot meantime open a wider door for them. He did not yet know whether the Lord would return and leave a blessing behind Him or not. That depended on their turning unto Him. “Turn ye unto me and I will turn unto you,” is the divine order in this matter. If they returned unto the Lord there is no doubt but He would return unto them, for He has given His word for it. And if He returned unto them He would leave a blessing behind Him – a temporal and spiritual blessing. On account of their sins they were, it would seem, deprived already of the fruit of the earth by the insects mentioned in the first chapter and fourth verse, to such an extent that they had not wherewith to offer a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord. Just as in our own day the Churches that forsook the Lord confess that they are not able to provide the people with Gospel ordinances for want of money. The meat offering and drink offering are withheld in judgment for their apostacy. The only cure for this deficiency is to return unto the Lord; then He would be as good as His word. He would supply them with sufficient funds to carry on His work in their several spheres of labour, as He has wonderfully done and is still doing to those who, in the midst of the general declension, “kept the faith,” and are determined, through grace, to keep it to the end and to hand it down pure and entire to coming generations, as the faithful Reformers left it to us. If they returned unto the Lord He would give them greater, richer, and more lasting blessings than these. He would pour out His Spirit upon them and make them partakers of Christ and of the benefits of His redemption – even eternal life!

The call to repentance contained in our text may be the last call to us as a Church and as a nation till the threatened judgment is poured out; and nothing can prevent the catastrophe but a sincere turning from our evil ways unto the Lord in the manner described by Himself, which we have endeavoured to point out. In connection with repentance let there be earnest prayer and intercession by His own people, and let His public messengers take the lead in this necessary work, according to His own command: “Let the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?”

[September 1912]

A Sermon.

By the REV. DUNCAN MACKENZIE, Gairloch, Ross-shire,
Moderator of Synod.

Preached at Opening of Synod in Inverness Church on 2nd July, 1912.
[The discourse is expanded more fully than when delivered.]

“Fight the good fight of faith.” – 1 Timothy 6:12.

Paul was desirous of having faithful soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ on the field of battle – men of valour, full of the Holy Spirit. As time went on this desire grew more intense in the bosom of Paul. Every battle won required fresh soldiers to minister to and provide for and protect the conquered; and the greater and more numerous the victories, the more the demands made upon Paul and his fellow-soldiers. Paul now saw that he must soon quit the field of battle, and he was all the more desirous of seeing warriors in great numbers engaged on the Lord’s side ere he himself laid down his armour. In Timothy he had a tried and trusted soldier, and to him he gave his last commands. Timothy was his own son in the faith, and where any intricate and delicate work had to be done, requiring wisdom and prudence, Paul delegated that work to Timothy. Paul was a rare soldier, a mighty man of valour, an experienced soldier. He had gone over many a battlefield and had gained many remarkable victories, and right nobly did he in every battle honour his Commander. He was thus one qualified to give advice. When he looked forward to the hour when he must needs lay down his life for the testimony of his Commander, he specially selected Timothy as one fitted to carry on the fight, and addressed him in these words: “Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called.”

When the veterans of Christ’s army are removed from the scene of battle to their eternal rest of bliss above, and thick clouds are gathering, betokening coming storms, faithful and strong men are urgently required in the field. One of the many favours the Lord bestows upon a nation is that He raises up men equipped to occupy, with honour, the highest positions of

trust in the land. It is a sign of God's displeasure when the land lacks such men. The prestige of the British army was at stake at the beginning of the South African War. Battle after battle was lost, with enormous loss of life and weapons of war, and little gained. The officers, as far as I have seen from reports, did not publicly acknowledge before the army, Jehovah as the Supreme Ruler and Disposer of all events. "Good luck" and "bad luck" were the gods acknowledged by them. Matters were brought to a standstill. The nation for a time stood in the balance. But the ruling power at home, in its dilemma, cast its eye upon Earl Roberts, then Lord Roberts – a tested and trusted officer, who had to his account a very brilliant series of victories gained in Afghanistan – to take the chief command in South Africa. When this experienced and popular officer took command in South Africa he addressed the army, and there publicly acknowledged the Divine Being. We know how matters ended. "Good luck" and "bad luck" – the gods of men's own perturbed imagination – do not deliver armies. There is but one God only – the living and the true God. No one but the God of the armies of Israel, lovingly and loyally adored and honoured, bestows a lasting boon and blessing alike upon armies and nations.

I shall speak of this subject under these divisions: –

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| I. The Commander; | VI. The commissariat; |
| II. The soldiers; | VII. The Physician; |
| III. The enemy; | VIII. The last enemy; |
| IV. The fight; | IX. The reward; |
| V. The armour; | X. Conclusion. |

I. – *The Commander.* – The Lord Jesus Christ is the Commander of this army. No one but He Himself could undertake the command. No other was qualified for it. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Prince of Peace. As Mediator He is exalted at the right hand of God on high, a Prince and a Saviour. He is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Captain of the Lord's hosts. The government is upon His shoulders; and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice. Ere the Lord Jesus Christ could become Commander He had to take a journey no other one could take. God foreknew and foresaw from all eternity that the man whom He would in time create would rebel against Him, and bring himself and all his posterity to ruin. In eternity God the Father covenanted with God the Son anent a people from Adam's race, to redeem them from their lost and ruined state. The journey then that Jesus Christ took was from the eternal throne to the manger in Bethlehem's stable, from the manger to the accursed tree, from the accursed tree to the grave, from the grave to His little flock, and from His little flock to the eternal throne. In order, then, to be a Leader and Commander He had to take bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, to give satisfaction to heaven for the dishonour heaped by the creature upon the Creator by defying His authority and transgressing His holy and just and good law. He had thus to reckon with the Judge of eternity for rebels. As the substitute for guilty sinners He appeared before God, and the sword of the eternal throne not only smote Him heavily, but awoke against Him. Yet it was soon seen that the sword gave its last stroke, for in the smitten One it got complete and eternal satisfaction, which it never got before. Here then was given perfect satisfaction for all the rebels whom the Saviour undertook to subdue and enlist in His army. Divine justice, dishonoured and outraged, was fully vindicated by Christ, and the law set at nought was not only obeyed in every detail, but magnified and made honourable. In this satisfaction there is glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill toward men. By His life of loving obedience unto death Christ Jesus opened up a way, consistent with all the divine perfections of Godhead, of deliverance from sin and guilt, and a way by which everlasting salvation is

secured for all the heirs of eternal promise. Behold, then, the Commander of the army! God the Father says: "I have given him to be a leader and commander to the people"; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am, well pleased; hear ye him." Behold this great wonder – the God-man, Emmanuel, incarnate God, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person, very God of very God, yet man – true man – in two distinct natures and one Person for ever! "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). When He became man He did not cease to be God. He is the Eternal, the I AM, the Christ of God; Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God. He is Jehovah Jesus. He died, the just in room of the unjust, that He might bring us to God. "For it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10). "In the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared: though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:7-9).

The Commander is none other than the Creator of heaven and earth, the upholder of all things by the word of His power. He is, from everlasting to everlasting, God. He has had no predecessor in charge of His army, and shall have no successor. He reigns from generation to generation. He is the Supreme King, before whose tribunal all kings and queens, and emperors and empresses, and all rulers and their subjects, must appear to give an account of their stewardship. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad. His word shall never fail.

"His word at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure."

He is a kingly and princely Commander. Satan hates Christ, and at one time marshalled all his hosts against Him. Christ contended with him, and so completely vanquished him that he shall never regain that which he has lost. Of this victory of Christ there shall be an eternal remembrance. Christ then, having spoilt principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, is now enlisting soldiers for His army.

II. – *The soldiers.* – Ere Timothy enlisted he cheerfully and heartily put his soul's amen to all the terms laid down by the Commander. No one is admitted otherwise. All who enlist otherwise are only traitors, thieves, and robbers. All the soldiers in Christ's army are conquered soldiers – conquered by Jesus Christ himself. When, with all the speed of time, they were marching to everlasting perdition, His gentle but powerful voice caused them to make a right-about-turn. They saw they were not only self-destroyed, but destroyers, rebels, and conspirators against the Heavens and against the laws of Heaven upon earth. They were caught red-handed in crime. The law arrested them; they could not extricate themselves. They were now convinced that they were born criminals, conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, and realized they were enemies in heart to God by wicked works. The law thundered forth its curses against them, and insulted justice threatened the execution of the sentence of death passed upon them. They now saw they were soldiers in Satan's army – Satan's willing dupes, captivated by him; fighting against the Most High, to whom alone they were indebted for not being long ago in the place of eternal woe. They then besought the Almighty for forgiveness and deliverance, but, when Jesus was revealed to them, they died to all that they had done, or could do, to save themselves. They took the penalty of the law as their portion, and the Lord Jesus Christ then manifested Himself to them in such a way as to win them over

completely to Himself. They became His: they gave themselves willingly to Him, “Thy people shall be very willing in the day of Thy power.” The fact that they were very active soldiers in Satan’s army, wearing his uniform, that they could not free themselves from Satan, or strip themselves of his uniform, or release themselves from his army, or remove the enmity of their hearts against God, overwhelmed them. The discovery that they were all their life-time offering to the Most High the filthy rags of their own righteousness, while simultaneously refusing the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness, offered to them by God, appalled them. They saw this to be the climax of audacity and insult; and it was a marvel to them that God had at all spared them in life; but God, who is rich in mercy, made Christ Jesus the Lord over to them as their righteousness, and they were led to know Him as the end of the law for their righteousness. Were it not for this they were convinced in the depths of their souls that they would have been long ere then consigned to eternal woe, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

“I love the Lord, because my voice
And prayers he did hear.
I, while I live, will call on him,
Who bow’d to me his ear.
Of death the cords and sorrows did
About me compass round
The pains of hell took hold on me,
I grief and trouble found.
Upon the name of God the Lord
Then did I call, and say,
Deliver thou my soul, O Lord,
I do thee humbly pray.
God merciful and righteous is,
Yea, gracious is our Lord.
God saves the meek: I was brought low,
He did me help afford.”

None but those conquered by grace are soldiers of Jesus Christ. The soldiers know their Commander, and confide in Him. Here is what a young soldier once said:

- (1) “Three Persons in the Godhead: God the Father made and preserved me;
- (2) God the Son came into the world and died for sinners;
- (3) God the Holy Ghost came into my heart, and made me love God and hate sin.”

Now, all the soldiers are sin-haters, and lovers of holiness. “The Lord knoweth them that are His, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

It is essential that the soldier be mighty in the word of the Lord. If he is to be saved from worry and annoyance he must know the plan of the enemy, and be able to distinguish between friend and foe. This knowledge is highly beneficial, while ignorance of it leads to bitter disappointment. David had a sad experience in the case of Ahithophel. We all need the spirit of wisdom, of knowledge, of love, and of sound mind. An unfortunate encounter is reported to have occurred in the South African War. The British were ordered to take possession of an hill supposed to have been occupied by Boers, but, when the heights were gained, it was found they had been attacking friendly Basutos instead of Boers. This occasioned much grief to both parties, especially to the British.

III. – *The enemy.* – 1. *Inward foes.*

(1) *The flesh.* The enemies are powerful, they are legion. The conquered by grace are called upon to conquer themselves, for they are now conscious of enemies within. The flesh, with all that it embraces, must be crucified. "Crucify the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but, if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof." "As strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul." Believers are commanded to hate the garment spotted by the flesh; and to keep the garment of their profession unspotted. Paul, who delighted in the law of God after the inward man, saw another law in his members warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death in his members. The conflict was so tenacious and so protracted that the apostle exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he was not long in receiving an answer from the Lord, for, in almost the same breath, he said, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." Paul was given a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, but a promise was given to him that by the grace and strength of God he would overcome this messenger; yea, he rejoiced in the glorious fact that the conflict would end on the side of Divine grace and strength. "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "The carnal mind is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God nor can it be." It is lawlessness run riot. But the Commander subdues it, and gives grace to the humble soldier to keep it in subjection. "To be carnally minded is death." "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Carnality, in the visible Church of God, is a source of division: but the new creature in Christ has a spiritual mind. To be spiritually minded is life and peace:" and the duty of Christ's soldiers is to study the things that make for peace – peace founded upon eternal righteousness: peace obtained and maintained in following the Lord fully. The new creature in Christ delights in the law of the Lord, and meditates thereon day and night. The true soldier of Jesus has a pure mind, and should exercise it in that which tends to keep it from the impurity of the old nature: "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." The soldier is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ dwells in him. The old nature being in the regenerate soldier he is in danger of being taken aside by it, and should therefore watch against the encroachments of the flesh. "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." "Fight the good fight of faith."

(2) *Self.* – Self is the fly in the ointment. It seeks a place in man's bosom. It is a very intrusive enemy. Christ, and not self, must be extolled if we are to be prosperous and successful and faithful soldiers of Jesus. Self makes a great noise, but it is not the stir nor the life proceeding from a meek and quiet and humble soldier. A youthful soldier was once heard praying, "Take myself out of my heart." Christ enthroned in the heart, and revered there, will keep self in subjection. The proud Pharisee made a great blustering prayer: he was so much intoxicated with his great conception of himself, and with "the exuberance of his own verbosity," that he looked, with the utmost contempt, upon any one coming to God beseeching mercy.

(3) *Unbelief.* – This is a cruel enemy; an enemy that usurps the place that belongs to God and His truth. A soldier of Jesus is in danger of listening to the voice of unbelief and pitting it against the truth. Unbelief is the crowning evil, for it rejects the Christ of God. The prayer of every soldier of Jesus should be: "Lord, increase my faith. Enable me to fight against unbelief in its various forms."

(4) *Sin.* – Sin in all circumstances, at all times, and in all places, must be crucified if we are to enjoy the favour of the Captain of our salvation. "If I regard sin in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Crucifixion is a slow death; and the crucifying of sin in one's members is a slow process – a lingering death. Sin asserts itself again and again. There is no

way of keeping it under, and of being kept from yielding to it, but by following strictly in the spirit of love and new obedience, all the injunctions of our beloved Commander.

“By what means shall a young man learn
His way to purify,
If he, according to Thy word,
Thereto attentive be?”

Here is an illustration fitted to comfort struggling believers, faint yet pursuing. Sin in the redeemed soul is compared to an evil company in the soul popping up their heads now and again, enticing the soul to embrace them. If the soul embraces them the soul is guilty, but, if it resists all these enticements, then it is no sin to the soul. Yielding to temptation is sin, but resisting sin is noble work – the work of Christ’s soldiers: “Fight the good fight of faith.”

(5) *The Old Heart*. – This heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” That evil heart, the fountain of corruption, and the filthy streams therefrom, were revealed to the soul by the Holy Spirit through the truth, and not by Satan. All this was in the soul formerly, but the soul was dead, and the dead spiritual are blind to their own real character as depicted in the truth by the Holy Spirit. The soul lived formerly in carnal security, but when the Spirit of God opened the blind eyes matters became entirely different. From the day of his enlistment the soldier is engaged in deadly conflict with these mighty forces of evil in which he was formerly sleeping the sleep of death. Now with him it is often war to the knife.

The Commander has given to every soldier a new heart, a right spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, an heart to know Jehovah Himself. “And I will give them an heart to know me that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God for they shall return unto me with their whole heart” (Jeremiah 24:7). Those who have this heart are characterised by the Commander as “the pure in heart,” and a promise is given that they shall see God. It is an heart upon which the law of the Commander is written. Christ’s soldiers are His living epistles; and are enjoined to keep their heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

(6) *Pride*. – This is an ugly sin, and yet even a soldier of Jesus is in danger of its finding a place within him. Pride and self-confidence are twin brothers. Pride, does not spring from grace, but from one’s corrupt and rebellious nature. It is so much of the spirit of Satan revealed in the creature. There may be in one pride of grace, pride of one’s own gifts, pride of one’s own success; but in whatsoever form it manifests itself it is dishonouring to God, and it is injurious to one’s best interests. It takes one to very slippery ground, and leads one far from the paths of peace and righteousness. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” In view of all this we need to petition the Commander: – “Search me, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me: and lead me in the way everlasting.”

2. *Outward Foes*. –

(1) *Satan*: The arch-enemy; the murderer of souls and bodies; the prince of the power of the air; the prince of this world; the god of this world; the roaring lion; the cunning fox; the father of lies; the instigator of all the crimes in the universe. Satan traffics in the destruction of souls. He does all he can to harass and annoy the soldiers of Jesus Christ. He envies their liberties: he grudges them their joys, especially the joys of victory. He is ever in the alert to entrap them; and he always maintains in the field an army against God and His cause in the world. He savagely attacked Job; but the grace of God is seen in exercise in Job when passing through his great afflictions, bereavements, and hard trials. It ended by Job being delivered by the wisdom and power of the Commander; and Job was more blessed in his latter days than at the beginning. God, as the God of peace, will soon bruise Satan under the feet of His

saints. Satan desires to have the saints to sift them as wheat. He got Peter into his sieve. Peter could not extricate himself, but Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, by reminding him of the warning given to him, and by looking upon him, set him free from his entanglements; and he went out and wept bitterly. Satan was again foiled by the skill of the Commander. “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me” (Micah 7:8). “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth; lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him” (Proverbs 24:17,18). By bitter experience some, at least, of the Lord’s people get to know the wiles of Satan. We are not ignorant of his devices. Experience teaches wise men; and the falls of the soldiers of Jesus are overruled for their good. The restored backslider has his revenge upon Satan. This is one of the blessed effects of godly sorrow. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge” (2 Corinthians 7:10,11). Peter, after his restoration, had his revenge upon Satan. One points out that for the three times he denied his Lord, he was the means, on the day of Pentecost, of taking about 3,000 out of the kingdom of Satan – 1,000 for every time he disowned all knowledge of Jesus. The falls of the soldiers lead them to observe more closely the tactics of Satan. The soldiers are thus more on their guard against the wiles of Satan, and thereby they escape many of Satan’s onslaughts.

Sections of the British army, stationed at certain posts in South Africa, were much harassed by parties of Boers firing from the mountains. At first there was considerable loss of life on the British side, but once they were able to locate the enemy and knew their tactics, they were the more prepared to deal with them and also to escape their bullets. Satan and his hosts are most dangerous when they appear as friends. Satan at times offers his services to nurse Christ’s soldiers, but all he has in view is to stab them to the heart. Satan can approach Christ’s soldiers in the garb of a saint; but in whatsoever form he may appear he is Satan all the time, and there is not a spark of love in him to anything holy or to any warrior of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the South African War the Boers stripped the British dead and the British prisoners of war of their uniform and weapons of war. They donned the British uniform, and companies of them approached the British as comrades, but when they came to close quarters they showed they had nothing in view but murder and slaughter. They rushed upon the British, who were off their guard, and played havoc with them. But these incidents put the British more on the alert, for they got to know more of the wiles and deceit of the enemy they had to encounter. So God’s children resist Satan when he appears in the garb of an angel of light, and they appeal to the Captain of their salvation for deliverance, and they don’t appeal to Him in vain.

(2) *Evil passions.* – “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” It is necessary, if in all things we are to adorn the profession of our Lord and Saviour, to rule our own spirits well, that our whole inner man be brought into loving subjection and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32). “The discretion (or prudence) of a man deferreth his anger.” “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls” (Proverbs 25:28). “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly” (Proverbs 14:29). “He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly” (Proverbs 14:17). A meek and quiet spirit in God’s sight is of great price. The command issued to the army is to lay aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings, and as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:1,2). “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace

unto the hearers. And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:29,32).

The tongue gets a very bad character in God's Word. The sins of tongue indicate that the inner man has got out of control. Hence the greater need of the Lord garrisoning our souls continually. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit" (Proverbs 15:4). A well-known minister of the Gospel said: – "Bad temper is an ugly venomous sin. It is a sin against the central cardinal grace of love. Look at the mischief that is done in a congregation by a hurtful tongue of censoriousness, that embroils a neighbourhood, and poisons the reputation of fellow-members of Christ's flock. Envy is often counted a small sin. So is a pistol ball, but, if lodged in a human brain, it is deadly. Anger, malice, and uncharitableness kill the spirit of devotion." Christ is meek and lowly in heart, and the more Christ-like the soldier is the more will he reflect of Christ, his Divine Commander. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29). When the disciples showed any spirit alien to the Gospel, Christ lovingly reproved them, and enjoined upon them the necessity of always cherishing a spirit becoming their profession of attachment to Him.

(3) *The World*. – The wicked world; the ungodly world; the world that knows not God; men of the world have nothing in common with Christ. The ungodly world hates Christ and His soldiers. The more the soldiers resemble their Commander, the more does the world hate them. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18,19). "The friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, for if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. This world and the fashion of it passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth ever.

The mission of the soldiers of Christ, the ambassadors of Heaven, commissioned by the courts of glory, is to declare the whole counsel of God, to speak the truth in love and faithfulness; to walk in the truth themselves, and thus commend to others, by their walk and conversation, that which they declare by word of mouth. They declare to rebels their ruin by the Fall, and propose to them terms of peace. Their message, and their terms of peace, are from the Commander, and they cannot alter one iota of what He has committed to them. To tamper with the credentials of Heaven is an act of high treason. The terms of peace do not alter with the times. "The law of the Lord is perfect." No other terms will ever be propounded by the Most High than those laid down by Him in His blessed Book. The command is to tell the wicked that it shall be ill with him, and the righteous that it shall be well with him: to declare that there is mercy in God for every prodigal who returns to Him by the Mediator. Nothing stands between lost sinners and Christ but their unbelief. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

(4) *Mockers*. – There are those who make sport of the threatenings of God against sinners. They trifle with the most momentous issues at stake in the world: trifling on the brink of eternal woe with the things that belong to one's eternal well-being. When Lot warned his sons-in-law, they made light of all his warnings. In their eyes he was only befooling them: but, when the storm of fire came, they believed. They believed when it was too late for them to escape. It is sad that in Presbyterian Scotland eternal punishment is treated lightly if not scorned at. "The bands of mockers shall be made strong." Elisha visited Bethel, and little children in large numbers mocked him, and said, "Go up, thou bald head! go up, thou bald head!" Elisha's life and teaching were a witness against the ungodliness of the cities and country districts, and these children wished that Elisha would get out of the way, and follow Elijah to heaven, so that they might go on in their own career of evil, without let or

hindrance. What happened to these young mockers of God's faithful servant? Forty-two of them were slain by two she-bears. These youthful mockers may have been instigated by their ungodly parents to mock this eminent servant of the Lord. Israel and Judah forgot Jehovah: they adopted the idolatry of the heathen around them. The Lord sent His messengers to reprove them and to call them to repentance; but they made light of the warnings given, and of the mercy offered to them. Those who despise God's warnings will, at last, feel the sting of the fiery lash of God's law in their own conscience. "All the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen and polluted the house of the Lord, which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending: because he had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people till there was no remedy" (2 Chronicles 36:14-16). "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Mockers of law and gospel are warned, and, at the peril of their souls, they refuse the warning. "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Proverbs 1:25,26,29,31,33). The blessed Commander Himself was reviled, set at nought in the days of His humiliation. When Emmanuel was thus treated, His faithful servants, who deliver His message in the love of the Spirit, may expect that they shall meet with some who despise them and their message. Transgressors of the Divine law do not often listen, with pleasure, to sound doctrine. The whole counsel of God is repugnant to their unclean nature. Pleasure-going and pleasure-seeking sinners think that some of Christ's messengers are too strict, and they repel their earnestness in warning them to flee from the wrath to come, and to embrace Jesus as the only Saviour for lost undone sinners.

The Truth declares that in the last days scoffers shall come, walking after their own lusts, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:3). Yea, we are told that, the time cometh when the people will not endure sound doctrine, will walk after their own lusts, and shall, after their own lusts, heap up to themselves teachers having itching ears, and that they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables, – see 2 Timothy 4:3,4). What, then, are the soldiers of Jesus to do in these circumstances? Preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine; watch in all things, endure afflictions, and make full proof of their ministry.

These mockers, scorners, scoffers are indebted to the Jehovah whom they insult, and the Gospel which they despise, for being allowed to tread this earth. To Jesus we owe our common mercies – even to the drop of cold water. To Him we owe our civil and religious liberties. Do away with God's Word and you establish anarchy. An English earl once said to a Fijian chief, "It is really a pity you have been so foolish as to listen to these missionaries. No one now-a-days believes in the Bible." The chief's eyes flashed as he said, "Do you see that stone? There we killed our victims. Do you see that oven? There we roasted their bodies for our feasts. If it had not been for the missionaries and the Bible you would have met the same fate."

(4) *Ritualism and Idolatry.* – "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Idolatry is setting up rivals to the Most High. Idolatry brought Israel and Judah very low. It brought upon them famine, pestilence, wars, banishment, and desolation. The nations whose idolatrous practices Israel and Judah adopted became in the end their scourge and ruin. A

warning to Britain and its Protestant churches. Coquet with idolaters and idolatry and you court disaster.

It is very deplorable that the Churches in Britain have departed so much from the teaching of God's Word, which is the teaching of the Reformers – teaching that delivered this land from the awful tyranny of the Papacy. The land seems to be drifting fast into the cruel darkness from which the Word of God delivered us. The Church of England is, to a large extent, turned into a nursery for Rome. There is in England a society called the "English Church Union" – a Romanising Union. It has succeeded well in Romanising the Church of England. This Society has at present 32 bishops of the Church of England and 4,130 clerical members of that Church, all bent on driving Romewards, and of driving the Church of England into the Church of Rome. There is another Ritualistic Society, which exists practically for the same purpose. It is called "The Alcium Club"; and the present Dean of Chester is a member. It advocates (1) The introduction of the Mass in Latin; (2) Burning Incense; (3) Elevation of the Host, and (4) Lights burning in front of the Sacrament. The Society prayed for the Pope as its "Father," and blessed "Pontiff." In the English Church there is auricular confession, candle-burning in daylight, worship of Mary, etc. The Mass is undoubtedly idolatry. Christ's soldiers in this and other lands gave up their lives rather than yield to the imposition of the Mass. It is in the 13th century that the consecrated wafer is said to have been turned into the flesh of Jesus, moist with blood, and to have been adored even by beasts. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to these words, it is because there is no light in them."

The Church of Scotland, sad to say, is, slowly but steadily, following in the wake of the Church of England. Ritualism is in a number of its congregations for many years. The popish altar in Crathie Church, and the popish baptismal font in St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, have received the protecting wing of the General Assembly of 1912. The Assembly, by its majority, has given its benediction to this Romeward movement. It is extremely sad when the language of expediency, instead of "Thus saith the Lord," was heard from so many apologists on the floor of the Assembly in favour of retaining idolatrous articles in the Church that spewed out all such at the Reformation. It was an offence to the same Assembly to say that the Church of Rome is guilty of creature worship. Did the minority in that Church realise the gravity of the situation, and the awful dishonour cast upon the Supreme Being, the sole object of worship, they would not rest until all the popish altars and fonts, and all the paraphernalia of Rome would be cast out, and the pure doctrines of the Word of God alone proclaimed from every pulpit. The state of matters in Presbyterian Scotland causes much grief to every true and faithful soldier of Jesus Christ. What is to be done when the "rowers" in Church and State have led the land into deep waters? To stand up for Christ's prerogative to rule in His own House, and to put forward afresh the claims of the Word of God alone as the final arbiter in every question.

Pastor Chiniquy was a Roman Catholic priest in Canada. He had charge of a large colony. At that period he was brought to a saving knowledge of the Saviour. He at once began to preach Christ as the only Saviour. His labours were signally acknowledged. His large congregation came under the power of the truth; and, as the truth was taking possession of them, image after image, statue after statue, was cast out of the building: not one was left. Chiniquy did not ask them to remove the images. Of their own accord, as the truth was having effect, they put away all these images. If the Gospel of Jesus Christ were so faithfully and purely and lovingly declared from all our pulpits we might confidently look for similar results. When Rome took steps to depose Chiniquy, and re-assert its own authority in the colony, the language of that vast assembly was, "We want nothing here but the Bible," and the representatives of Rome had to quit the place. May the Most High grant that the day may come upon this nation when its one voice will be, "We shall have nothing here, as our

infallible Guide Book, but the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; and we shall own no master but the Triune Jehovah.”

The Church that does not strictly adhere to the command of her Divine Lord is not faithful to Him. The Commander’s order is, “teaching them to observe all things *whatsoever* I have *commanded* you”; whereas the command of the innovators in the visible Church is, “teaching them to observe all things which I have *not forbidden* you.” Those who have thus changed the command of the Commander are guilty of no small crime. The change made in the word of command is responsible for many of the divisions in our Protestant Churches. If the Protestant Churches of the land were faithful to the glorious Head of the Church there would be no popish altars, popish baptismal fonts, images, or creature worship known within the gates of Zion. Unless we repent, a storm is ahead of us. Faithfulness to the Commander is to do what He prescribes to us in His Word. Thy Word is to my feet a lamp and to my path a light.

(5) *Ignorance of God’s Word.* – It is to be feared that God’s Word is not so well known by the young as it should be. Parents should do more than they are doing in teaching their children the Word of God, and the Shorter Catechism; and they should also test the knowledge of their children.

Here is the result of a General Bible Knowledge Examination in the district High School of one of the oldest towns in Otago, New Zealand. The results were given in at the last meeting in Dunedin of the Presbyterian Assembly of New Zealand. Here is what was said: – “I have classified the answers under two headings, ‘Ignorance,’ wrong answer or blank; and ‘Knowledge,’ corrector good answer. Out Of 700 answers 530 showed ignorance, 173 knowledge. Some of the papers would not have got 5 per cent. One boy, in the High School, aged 17, got nothing. Some of the questions were easy. ‘Mention one incident in the life of St. Paul?’ ‘Ignorance’ 41, ‘Knowledge’ 7. That is to say, 31 knew nothing of Paul, 10 confused him with some one else. ‘Who was Joseph’s father?’ 44 did not know, 4 did. 35 knew something about the Ten Commandments, 13 nothing. *Hard Questions.* – Only one child could name the sons of Noah, 47 knew absolutely nothing about them. Two had a hazy idea of Absalom, 46 knew nothing. Only 8 could give the name of an Epistle. I learn from this examination (1) that most of our children know little about the Bible, a few nothing; (2) that more and better teaching is required on Sabbath and week day; (3) that if adults know as little as children much of our preaching is lost, inasmuch as Scripture allusions are not understood.” A local journal makes the following criticism: “It must, therefore, be considered demonstrated by a test as careful as that of a clinical thermometer that, to the extent of five-sevenths, young New Zealand is ignorant of the Word of God. This is sad reading, but the revelation hardly comes as a surprise to those who have noted the growing tendency towards secularism and materialism. It is to be feared that the general tendency in Australia is in the same direction, and any attempt to improve matters, by raising our children from paganism, is thwarted by the *indifference of Protestants*, and the *organised antagonism of Rome.*”

(6) *Rejecters of the Word of the Commander.* – Some who profess to be soldiers of Jesus Christ reject the Pentateuch, others reject a part of it, others reject portions of the books of the prophets and the Psalms, while others reject portions of the New Testament. Thus everyone is judge of what is and what is not the Word of God. One is at liberty to reject or accept as much of it as pleases one. At this rate one exalts oneself above one’s Maker and Creator and above His Word. The Word of God is in subordination to the creature! One criterion given by a learned professor is that if we feel the touch of genius about what we read in Scripture we then know that is the Word of God. Yea, the lives of professing Christians are given, by the same authority, a higher place than the Word of God. But we have not so learned Christ. Those to whom the Word of God came in the power of the Holy Spirit cannot speak against that to which they owe their salvation. Of the Thessalonians Paul writes: “For

our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. And ye became followers of us and of the Lord.” Those who thus receive the Word of God will sound forth its praises as the Thessalonians did, and turn from dumb idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Those brought in guilty before the bar of God and the bar of their own conscience, and who were set free by the Most High on account of Christ and His finished work, cannot say a word against God or His Christ or His Word. It would be most presumptuous to speak or write against the Word of the Eternal. The true soldiers of Jesus are born from above; born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. The language of the redeemed to their Redeemer is, “To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” They are fed at the King’s table; nourished in the word of faith; Christ’s words dwell richly in them; they sit at the feet of free and sovereign grace, listening to the gracious words that proceed out of the mouth of Jesus, realising that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Christ says, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” And to the Father He says, “I have given them the words thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me” (John 17:8). The declaration of Christ’s ambassadors is: “We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (2 Corinthians 13:8). The experience of the saved is on the side of the Truth. It is sweet to their taste – sweeter than honey; more valuable than thousands of silver and of gold; counted more precious than their necessary food. They feed upon the sincere milk of the Word and grow thereby. They buy the truth and sell it not. No one can teach the twice-born to profit but God alone. No one can reveal God but Himself, nor can anyone teach the Word of God but the author of it. God has given His Holy Spirit to teach His children the inspired Word; they all sit at His feet and receive of His words. They receive God’s Word with faith and love, treasure it in their hearts, and practise it in their lives.

By the Word, God kills and makes alive; wounds and heals; casts down and raises up. Freedom comes by knowing the Truth – the Truth in the hands of the Holy Spirit. We are in bondage till we know the Truth. When any one calls in question the reliability of one’s words he is thereby striking at one’s character; and when any one rejects this part and that part of God’s Word he is calling in question the character of God – a very serious crime. Divinity itself seems to be ascribed to the Scriptures: “The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Those who know the Truth of God after this manner cannot doubt it, or speak against it. We can do nothing against the Truth. A well-known clergyman, who had a charge in an English city, once said that Satan has a terrible grudge against the Books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, because out of these Books Christ so severely wounded Satan that, to this day, he has not recovered from these wounds; and that he has, in the visible Church, those who take up his dirty work by calling in question the very books by which he, the arch-enemy, was so sorely wounded.

We read of those who hold the Truth in unrighteousness: of those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient. Their disobedience causes them to stumble, and they reject the Word because it is not palatable to their taste. We also read of those who heard the Word preached, but got no profit therefrom, because it was not mixed with faith in them when they heard it. King Saul rejected God’s Word, and on account of it, God rejected him. A warning to us to deal kindly with our Maker, and His precious Word.

(7) *Infidel Socialism.* – Socialism is a power that is making itself felt in these days, causing much unrest in the land. It has captured our Trade Unions. Here is testimony from headquarters, which is clear evidence of the danger in which the world is from such a well-

organised evil power. James Leatham, an English Socialist, says, "At the present moment I cannot remember a single instance of a person who is at one and the same time a really earnest and intelligent socialist and an orthodox Christian. Those who do not openly attack the Church, and the fabric of Christianity, show but scant respect to either the one or the other in private, and while all of us are thus indifferent to the Church, many of us are frankly hostile to her. Marx, Lassalle, and Engels, among earlier socialists; Morris, Bux, Hyndman, Guesde, and Babel, among present-day socialists, are all, more or less, avowed atheists, and what is true of the more notable men of the party is equally true of the rank and file the world over." Wilhelm Leibnecht says, "It is our duty, as socialists, to root out the faith in God with all our zeal, nor is any one worthy of the name who does not consecrate himself to the spread of atheism." Enrico Ferri declares that, under the influence of "scientific culture," religious convictions will "perish by atrophy." In a letter, in the "Advance," by George D. Herron, he writes "Every appeal to men to become socialists in the name of Christianity will result in the corruption, and betrayal of socialism in the end . . . People cannot separate Christ from Christianity. And Christianity to-day stands for what is lowest and basest in life. The Church of to-day sounds the lowest note in human life. It is the most degraded of all our institutions, and the most brutalising in its effects on the common life. The Church is simply organised Christianity. For socialism to use it, or to make terms with, or let it make approaches to the socialistic movement, is for socialism to take Judas to its bosom. There is not an instance in sixteen centuries in which the Church has not betrayed every movement for human emancipation it has touched . . . Official religion and militarism are the two guardians of capitalism, and the subtle methods of the Church, in destroying the manhood of the soul and keeping it servile, are infinitely more to be dreaded by the socialist movement than the world's standing armies." Karl Marx states, "Religion is a fantastic degradation of human nature." Leibknecht declares, "Socialism must conquer the stupidity of the masses in so far as this stupidity reveals itself in religious forms and dogmas." Babel says, "We wish in politics, republic; in economy, socialism; and in religion, atheism." The following is from the "Sozial Demokrat," the organ of the German socialists: "The Socialistic State will never be realized except by a violent revolution, and it is our duty to spread this conviction through all classes. Christianity is the greatest enemy of socialism. When God is expelled from human brains, what is called the Divine Grace will, at the same time, be banished, and when the heaven above appears nothing more than an immense falsehood, men will seek to create for themselves a heaven below." The "Clarion" is a paper that advocates socialism, and has a large circulation among the labouring classes. The editor, Robert Blatchford, in the issue of 23rd September, 1904, states: "I deny the existence of a Heavenly Father. I deny the efficacy of prayer. I deny the providence of God. I deny the truth of the Old Testament and the New Testament. I deny the truth of the Gospels. I do not believe that any miracle was ever performed. I do not believe Christ was Divine. I do not believe that Christ died for men. I do not believe that He ever rose from the dead. I am strongly inclined to believe that He never existed at all."

Here, then, you have the testimony of socialists themselves, and it reveals the nature of the power that controls labour – a power antagonistic to the Almighty, and to mankind. Banish the Most High from the nation, and you have chaos. A power that denies Jehovah, and treats Him with the utmost contempt, is a power fraught with mischief of a crimson dye. This is the power that seeks to control the nation. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" – a class who have not only lifted up the heel of rebellion against the true Church of God, but against Heaven. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:18,19). "The instruction of fools is folly" (Proverbs 16:22). "The preaching of the cross is

to them that perish foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18). “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:18,22).

The Truth speaks on this wise: The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to “the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 5:7,8). “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned” (Romans 2:14). “We preach Christ crucified: unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23,24). “Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:10,12).

(8) *Mormonism*. – In Great Britain it is well represented. That it is so is an eye-opener to many. It has in Britain 1 apostle, 17 high priests, 67 seventies (propagandists), 236 elders, 856 local missionaries. In 1910 they baptised in Britain 963 women, and induced 555 to emigrate to Utah. W. Jarman, ex-Mormon priest, from Salt Lake City, Utah, says that the “prophet” Brigham Young was a most sensual, wicked man; the apostles an extremely licentious set; the church, and the whole concern, so indecent that it is difficult to describe it; men living with a number of wives; swarms of children in dugouts, and old rickety cabins; the women fighting, and the men cursing and swearing; many living in the most abject poverty and squalid misery. English girls prostitutes on the streets; British women leading a miserable life of sin and shame in the Mormon harems, crying bitterly for deliverance. Hundreds of women die an untimely death, and hundreds more, whose sorrows overwhelm them, commit suicide. The children of the “saints” roam like cattle; unwashed, uneducated, surrounded with vice and immorality, they grow up fearfully corrupt. There are more whisky shops and drunkenness in “Zion” than anywhere else, and there is more bigamy and murder committed in Utah than elsewhere on the face of the earth.

Such, then, is the description in part given by W. Jarman, ex-priest of Utah. If it does not surpass, it equals the character given to Sodom and Gomorrah. Representatives of this unclean body penetrate north of the Grampians, and advocate their tenets with great plausibility. Although this country is warned against this polygamous body, yet British women are led away by fair promises, until at last they find themselves in such unclean entanglements that they are entirely helpless.

According to reports from Montreal, dated 30th June last, 200 Mormon converts are arriving there weekly from Europe. The women and girls, nearly all of whom are British, are brought to Montreal to avoid the American immigration laws, and, while there are a few Mormon colonies in the Western Provinces, the majority of the converts are sent to Utah *via* Winnipeg. All the Montreal Churches are uniting to counteract this evil, and clergymen and church workers meet every immigrant ship. Renewed appeals have been made to the Dominion Government to introduce legislation to prevent the entry of these converts, and efforts are being made to obtain some action by the provincial authorities.

Here, then, is a gigantic evil that demands, in the name of righteousness, extirpation. The nation should make it illegal for any Mormon to domicile in the land. Mormons propagate views completely at variance with the law of God, and with the law of the land. It is very melancholy that many of the young women of the kingdom should be led away to such unclean surroundings. It means ruin for life. The Word of God thunders forth its anathemas against polygamy; and polygamy is pregnant with other evils. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only purifier, and the only real elevator of the human race. Without Divine revelation no

true real character can be built. Only those who fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life, escape the wiles of Satan. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

(9) *Millennial Dawn*. – This system is a most shocking one. It overturns the verities of Christianity. It robs Christ of His Divine attributes. Its votaries are very zealous, and travel in every direction to make converts. Particular attention is now paid to the Highlands of Scotland. A house to house canvass is made for orders for "religious books." These books bear titles, which are not in accordance with the contents, for the books sold are full of deadly errors. A warning should be issued against buying books that subvert the gospel of Jesus Christ. I shall give a number of the errors taught by this well-organised and aggressive body. (1) Denial of Christ's Divinity – Christ is not equal with the Father. (2) In eternity, Christ "was a perfect spiritual being," but a creature. (3) On earth, Christ "was only a perfect human being." (4) Denial of Christ possessing two natures in one person. (5) Christ's death was only that of a perfect man. (6) Christ did not rise from the dead. (7) Christ's body was dissolved into gases, or supernaturally removed from the tomb, or is still preserved somewhere as a grand memorial of God's love. (8) Because Christ sacrificed the human nature He was, after his death, exalted to the highest nature – the Divine. Since His resurrection "He is a perfect spiritual being of the highest order." It is to be noted that all the divinity Millennial Dawnism ascribes to Christ is that "He is a perfect spiritual being of the highest order." (9) The Church will be exalted with her Lord to the divine nature. Here Polytheism is taught. (10) Christ was Adam's substitute. Christ by His death could redeem only one life. (11) Man and "the angels of heaven will always be mortal." Nowhere in Scripture is it stated "that angels are immortal, nor that mankind restored will be immortal." (12) Man is no more than the highest of animals. (13) None but the Lord's favoured little flock has sufficient light to incur the final penalty – the second death. (14) All mankind will have a second chance. (15) Death is simply extinction. (16) Denial of eternal punishment. "It is absurd to suppose that God would perpetuate Adam's existence for ever in torment for the comparative small offence of eating forbidden fruit." (17) In the resurrection the Gospel of salvation will be preached to the unsaved. The great mass will believe, but those who do not will be annihilated. (18) The Person and work of the Holy Spirit are ignored. (19) Christ came in 1874. (20) Christ's saints were raised up in 1878. (21) The professing Christian Church was rejected in 1878. "The spring of 1878 marks the date when the nominal Church systems were spewed out: from that date they are not the mouthpiece of God, nor in any degree recognised by Him." (22) 1881 marks the close of special favour to the Gentiles. (23) The end will be in October, 1914.

(10) *Sabbath-breakers*. – The Sabbath-breaker tramples the law of his Maker and Preserver under his foot. He defies God; he robs God of His due. God has given six days to men to attend to their lawful callings, and has reserved only one day in the week as a day of rest – a day set apart to be kept holy unto the Lord. A gentleman, on his way to church on the Lord's Day, saw a company of big boys amusing themselves. He approached them and said, "I want to tell you a story. There was once a good man who was noted for his kindness and liberality. As he was pursuing his way along a lonely road he met a man who represented himself as having suffered a great loss, in consequence of which he was in deep distress. With his usual kindness the good man instantly drew out his purse, and after examining it he said, 'I have only seven shillings with me; but I think that with one shilling I can get to the end of my journey, and you shall have the rest.' With this he handed the man six shillings. Wasn't that generous? Wouldn't you have thought that the beggar must have gone off feeling very grateful and contented? Certainly we should have expected this; but he did no such thing. He was not a beggar at all, but a robber; and seeing that the good man had still one shilling in his purse, he knocked him down with a club, and stole it from him." All the boys cried out against this base and wicked conduct of the robber. Indeed, one exclaimed that he

did not think anyone could be found quite so wicked as that. "Now, stop," said the gentleman; "let me tell you, boys, this is just what *you* are doing. God has emptied not His purse but His heart for your benefit. He has given you freely six days out of seven for your own use. He has kept only *one* for Himself, to be kept holy and spent in worshipping Him, and yet *you* are so *mean as to rob Him even of that.*" The big boys, ashamed of their own conduct, went away and did not resume their play.

The Lord's Day, to a great extent, is turned into a day of pleasure and amusement; and trade is busily carried on as if God had never said, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." Socialists make a special point of holding their meetings on the first day of the week. At these meetings, attended at times by 30,000 or more, Labour questions are discussed, proposals made for settling strikes, and arrangements made for strikes. This is an utter disregard of God's holy and just and good law. It has come to this, that the major portion of the Labour Party reject the commandment of God, and thereby bring the curse of the Almighty on the land. A clergyman, who had for many years been chaplain to a large penitentiary, made searching inquiry as to what first led the criminals to go astray. In 99 cases out of 100 he found that Sabbath desecration was the beginning of their evil career. "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil" (Isaiah 56:2). "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord: and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah 58:13,14). "Thus saith the Lord, take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath-day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath-day, neither do ye any work; but hallow ye the Sabbath-day as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not my voice, neither inclined their ear. And it shall come to pass if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden on the Sabbath-day, but hallow the Sabbath to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain for ever" (Jeremiah 17:21,25). "But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jeremiah 17:27).

The soldiers of Jesus highly value the Lord's Day. It is to them a day of holy rest; the day of light; the queen of days; the portal of God into the week; "day of all the week the best; emblem of eternal rest."

"This is the day God made;
In it we'll joy triumphantly.
Save now, I pray thee, Lord; I pray,
Send now prosperity."

Philip Henry used to say of a well-spent Sabbath: "If this be not the way to heaven, I know not what it is."

"A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content,
And strength for the toils of the morrow;
But a Sabbath profaned, whate'er may be gained,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow."

Surely, then, the imperative duty of all the soldiers of Jesus Christ is to display the Banner of Truth given to them by their Commander: to hold fast that which He has given them: to hold forth the Word of Life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom they shine as lights in the world. The soldiers of Jesus must show themselves approved unto God; workmen that need not be ashamed; rightly dividing the Word of Truth. “War a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, continue thou in them; for, in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). “Flee also youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).

IV. – *The Fight.* – It is:

(1) *A life-long fight.* There is no discharge till death comes. The enemy confronts the soldier at every step, and harasses him on his way to the celestial city. This fight is a noble fight, a profitable fight, an indispensable fight, an holy war. It is good to carry on a righteous war against all manner of evil. If we do not conquer the evil it will conquer us.

(2) *The good fight.* The Commander is essentially good. He is the fountain of all goodness. He is not only good, but of His rich bounty He has provided of His goodness for the poor. The soldiers have not only a present enjoyment of that which is good, but they have an eternity of it in store. Here they enjoy it in the calm and in the heat of the conflict; but no language can describe what awaits them in the country where war is never known. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9,10).

(3) *The good fight of faith.* It is not only a fight, and a good fight, but it is the good fight of faith. The soldiers are called the children of faith, the household of faith. They fight by faith, not by sight. The eye of faith, resting upon the Commander, is great strength in the day of battle. A sight by faith of their Commander leads them on to victory. The soldiers of the good fight of faith triumph over error and hold fast by the Truth and put down evil. The good fight of faith purifies and sanctifies and ennobles, and brings one into closer fellowship with the Commander. Faith leads the soldier to the throne of God. By faith many of Christ’s heroes were, out of weakness, made strong; yea, they waxed valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens.

In this army there is

(1) *The Bank of Faith.* The “gold tried in the fire” is here. The soldiers draw daily upon the Bank. The Commander Himself is the Banker. That is sufficient guarantee that all cheques presented, bearing the name of the Commander and the name of the soldier, will be honoured.

(2) *Music.* The new song is put in the mouth of the soldiers by God Himself; yea, He encompasses them with songs of deliverance. God’s loving-kindness is with them in the day-time and His song in the night; and their prayer is to the God by whom they live. It is the sweetest and most reviving song on earth, and is the only song that lasts for ever. Paul and Silas, cruelly scourged, thrust into the inner prison at Philippi, at midnight sang praises unto God. It ended in additional praise in the jailor becoming an enrolled soldier in Christ’s army. A huge multitude of Ammonites, Moabites, and the inhabitants of Mount Seir came against Jehosophat, King of Judah. Jehosophat called a solemn fast throughout all Judah. “And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.” Jehosophat prayed: “O, our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (2 Chronicles 20:12). Singers were then appointed to go before the army; and when they began to sing, the enemy quarrelled among themselves and slaughtered one another – no one

escaped death. When Jehosaphat and his army came upon the scene, the land was covered with the slain. Not a sword had to be drawn. Note the connection between the singing of Judah and the slaughtering of the enemy. Here was a song-victory – a most remarkable victory, gained while singing the songs of Zion.

“God hath done great things for us,
Whence joy to us is brought.”

“Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.”

(3) *Court martial*. The Commander is the sole Judge in this Court. Impartial judgments, tempered with mercy, are invariably given. The Judge has a rod in Court with which He chastises and corrects those who do not observe the rules of war. He visits their faults with rods and their sins with chastisements – see Psalm 89:32. Those who forget the necessity of fighting daily in the strength of the Commander, and go astray from His laws, are court-martialed.

[1] Miriam, for her sedition against Moses, her brother, was smitten with leprosy, and was put outside the camp; but the removal of the leprosy restored her to the camp.

[2] Eli was chastised for being too indulgent towards his wicked sons.

[3] Jonah, fleeing from duty, was cast into the sea and swallowed by a whale; but deliverance came to him when he repented.

[4] David was moved by Satan to number the people, and pestilence broke out. The angel of the Lord was seen, having a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. Repentance and sacrifice stayed the plague.

Sin is provoking to the eyes of God’s holiness. O, the need of being continually kept by God as the apple of His eye, from the lewd oppressors encompassing us about as deadly foes! Christ’s intercession for His soldiers and the faith and repentance He bestows upon them, restore to them the joys of His salvation, and restore them in heart to their comrades in the faith.

“It hath been very good for me
That I afflicted was,
That I might well instructed be,
And learn thy holy laws.”
“I shall not die, but live, and shall
The works of God discover.
The Lord hath me chastised sore,
But not to death giv’n over.”

V. – *The armour*. – Like everything else in this army, the armour is of God. Man’s weapons are useless in this fight. No creature can provide weapons to overcome the powers of darkness. The armour has been tested in the furnace of heaven – tested by the Commander Himself. He puts into the hand of every soldier the same sword as He Himself used – even the sword of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit wields it, and enables every true soldier to wield it. It is

(1) *the armour of righteousness*. Here, then, are the righteous Commander, the righteous cause, the righteous weapons, and the righteous soldiers. This armour is for offensive and defensive purposes. The God-provided and God-bestowed weapons, handled lawfully, work wonders.

[1] *David at Ziglag*. The people threatened to stone him, but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God, and pursued and slaughtered the plunderers, and restored all that had been taken away.

[2] *Gideon*, with three hundred men, having pitchers, lamps, and trumpets, put to flight the Midianites. As they blew the trumpets, holding the lamps in their left hands, they

shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The Lord sent such consternation among the Midianites that every man's sword was set against his fellow. One hundred and twenty thousand Midianites fell that day, and for forty years the land had rest. At times the soldiers of the Lord Jesus, on account of the strong opposition they meet with, conclude that they shall never overcome. "A troop shall overcome Gad, but Gad shall overcome at last." It is said that Washington lost more battles than he won, but he won at last. So shall it be with the enrolled soldiers of Jesus. Greater is He that is for us and in us and with us than all that can be against us. "Our sufficiency is of God." Go in and possess the land. They go on conquering and to conquer.

(2) *The armour of light.* It is not like the armour of darkness. It can stand the full examination of noon-day light. The Commander is the Light of the world. His soldiers are lights of the world. They were, ere He enlisted them, not only in darkness, but they were darkness; yet they were made "lights in the Lord." All created light shall be extinguished. Every individual who is not a soldier of Jesus shall ultimately be in the outer darkness. "The lamp of the wicked shall be put out; but the righteous hath hope in his death." "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." This radiant, celestial, holy light brings joy to earth, and is bound to conquer the darkness. Substitute this armour for any human armour and you endanger your own safety; you play into the hands of the enemy. It was not by Saul's armour that the youth, David, gained the victory over Goliath and the Philistine army. The victory was gained in the name of the Lord God of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom Goliath had defied. Clad in this armour, the soldiers are bound to gain the battle. The giant's seed cannot stand before the soldiers of Jesus Christ. David's Lord and David's King shall exterminate them wholly – see 1 Chronicles 20:4-8. Victories over Satan and sin give new life and power to the soldiers and nerve them for the conflict. The more the sword is wielded, the more is one strengthened to use it.

The armour consists of the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation. The soldiers must not be clad in a part of the armour but in the whole armour. Jehovah Himself is our shield and our exceeding great reward. The shield of the soldiers is faith; by it they quench the fiery darts of the wicked and ward off the sharp, poisoned arrows of the enemy. The armoury of the soldiers is the Word of God; their robe, the righteousness of Christ; their breastplate, righteousness, faith, and love; their helmet, salvation and the hope of salvation; their shoes, the preparation of the Gospel of peace; and their breath, continual prayer in the Holy Spirit. It is said of the Commander that He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation on His head, and that righteousness is the girdle of His loins and faithfulness the girdle of His reins.

VI. – *The Commissariat.* – None but the Commander could take charge of this department, for no one but Himself could provide and attend to the clothing and feeding of such a world-wide army. He is sealed by God the Father to give the meat that endureth unto everlasting life. It is very difficult, in our armies, in time of war, to have the commissariat up to the mark. Sad tales are told of the scarcity of food and clothing in time of war. But the adorable Redeemer and Commander, in charge of His redeemed army, assures all that walk uprightly and wage this holy war, that they shall not lack any good.

When the Lord led Israel out of Egypt, by the hand of Moses, the number of men fit for war, twenty years old and upward, was 603,550; and it is estimated this number represents about two millions and a half (Numbers 1:45,46). Moses had a great undertaking to feed and clothe these, but God became responsible for the whole. Israel was forty years in the wilderness, and we are told that neither their garments nor their shoes waxed old. God gave them an outfit for the wilderness, and it sufficed until He brought them into the Land of Promise. He fed them with bread from Heaven – they partook of angels' food. The manna ceased not till they entered the land flowing with milk and honey. This is what God does

spiritually to all those who fight the battles of the Lord. They had no clothing to stand before Him, but, justified by faith, they were clothed in the spotless garb of the righteousness of their Commander. They shall never lose that garb. He shod their feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and they shall never cease to enjoy the blessings of that Gospel. "They shall walk with me in white."

Moses was on the Mount with God forty days and forty nights, and during that period he did neither eat bread nor drink water. This indicates what the Commander is to the chosen soldiers whom He calls to the Mount. He feeds soul and body by His gracious presence. He gives His soldiers at times so much of His fellowship that a solemn awe pervades their whole being. He keeps them bound to Him by His love. But these highly-favoured ones encounter great conflicts, and much to try their spirits. Provision is thus made for the trying paths that have to be travelled, and the precipitous mountains that have to be climbed. The march of the Christian soldier is not a picnic march; yet, though the path be rough, they smooth it with heavenly song. Shod with gospel shoes, and clothed with the garments of salvation, they are ready to start at the word of command, or continue the march, or halt, as the case may be. They are marching through a land in which wily and cruel enemies are entrenched, and they have to fight their way right through. Every inch is contested by the enemy except when the Lord specially interposes and hotly pursues them, or causes every one's sword to be against his fellow until they are decimated or utterly destroyed, as He did on many occasions.

(1) Joshua at Gibeon and Beth-horon, routed the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, with their combined armies. The Lord cast down from heaven great stones, which slew more than did the sword of the Israelites; and the sun and moon were arrested in their course to allow Joshua to complete the conquest.

(2) Samuel held a solemn convocation at Mizpeh, and the Philistines came against them. Samuel prayed, and the Lord sent a thunderstorm upon the Philistines, and Israel had an easy victory. This had the salutary effect of keeping the Philistines at bay for a lengthy period.

(3) In the days of Hezekiah, Judah was invaded, and Jerusalem was threatened with destruction by Sennacherib, King of Assyria. Sennacherib had an immense army, and Jerusalem was in great distress; but the Angel of the Lord slew 185,000 of the Assyrian army, and allowed some survivors to flee to Nineveh to relate the destruction of their army without any human weapon having been used. Sennacherib, although he lived for about seventeen years after this event, did not again attack Jerusalem.

(4) The Syrian army besieged famine-stricken Samaria; but the Lord relieved Samaria, by causing the Syrian army to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, a noise of a great host. The Syrians were so terror-stricken that they fled for their lives, leaving their all behind them – tents, horses, asses, provisions, etc. The signal victories the Lord bestows, often entail forced marches upon His army, but this enhances their position, for they get nearer the mansions of the King of Glory, where they shall receive their everlasting reward, and be forever free from the clash and clang of armour, and the din of battle. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

During a period of famine Elijah was sent by the Lord to Zarephthah to be fed by a starving widow. By the blessing of the Lord the barrel of meal did not waste, neither did the cruse of oil fail, until the Lord sent abundance (1 Kings 17:9). This is an instance of what the One in charge of the commissariat does in grace and providence for His own. He at one time gave Elijah a diet in the strength of which he went forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8). Often does the Blessed One give to hungry souls food in the strength of which they go for months, and perhaps for years; but all this disposes them to wait more and more upon the Lord.

On one occasion He, with five loaves and a few small fishes, fed five thousand men, besides women and children; and twelve baskets full of fragments were gathered after all were satisfied (Matthew 14:15-21). In His hands little goes very far; yea, He multiplies, with His own blessing, that which we, in faith, bring to Him. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich: and He addeth no sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22).

On another occasion He, with seven loaves and a few little fishes, fed four thousand men, besides women and children, and after all were filled, seven baskets full of the broken meat that was left were taken up.

If you are afraid the next step will lead you into beggary, bring your emptiness and poverty to Him, and He will disarm you of all your fears, and turn your beggary into wealth. Emmanuel being in charge of the commissariat no obedient soldier need lack any good. For our sakes He became poor that we, through his poverty, might be made rich; my God shall supply all your need according to the riches of his glory by Christ Jesus. Having such a gracious Saviour we shall not want. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's; and Christ's is God's."

Jesus is the living Bread that came down from heaven; those who eat of that bread live for ever. This bread is His flesh, which He gave for the life of the world. Those who eat His flesh and drink His blood have eternal life: they dwell in Him, He dwells in them. Those who feed on Jesus, live by Him. The Apostles knew experimentally the meaning of all this. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Paul knew it: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." "He satisfieth the longing soul; and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

He provides love feasts. He is so unlike every earthly commander; He dines with the rank and file – with the humblest soldiers. The more humble in spirit we are, the more will we enjoy of the gracious presence of the Lord, and the rich feast He provides. It is He who provides everything. He is all our salvation and all our desire; and in Him are all our well-springs.

There are wells of salvation; rivers of pleasure for the special benefit of the army. Streams from the river of life gladden the hearts of those who are engaged in this spiritual war. Here the soldiers slake their thirst. The water which Christ gives shall be in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Fountains, wells, streams, rivers, indicate the richness of the supply provided. He who provideth for the young ravens when they cry, will not forget His soldiers, who have to bear the brunt of the battle, nor those to whom other positions are assigned. Surely no one need complain for lack of supply.

VII. – *The Physician.* – No physician, but the Commander, was qualified to act for this army. He has been sent to bind up the broken-hearted: to comfort all that mourn, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. He bore their grief, and carried their sorrows. He was wounded for their transgressions: He was bruised for their iniquities, the chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and with His stripes they are healed. He is the tender, sympathetic, loving Physician – the only infallible Physician.

"Those that are broken in their hearts,
And grieved in their minds,
He healeth, and their painful wounds
He tenderly upbinds."

“All thine iniquities who doth
Most graciously forgive;
Who thy diseases all and pains
Doth heal, and thee relieve.”

He is ever ready to minister to the weak. “He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength.”

His soldiers come to Him frequently with their heart plagues and aches, and He never disappoints them. He keepeth covenant and mercy with those that love Him, and keep His commandments. A great multitude of lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and others, were often cast at His feet; and He healed them all. He went about continually doing good; healing all manner of sickness among the people. He is the same still. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.” The woman who had the issue of blood for eighteen years, and spent all she had, and was nothing the better, but the worse, heard of Jesus, and His wonderful cures, and said to herself: “If I but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole.” She went to Him, touched Him, and was instantly cured.

Are you grieved because you, in your weakness, conclude that the Commander has gone away never to return? The two on the way to Emmaus had their sorrows and unbelief dispelled in a wonderful way, and they were filled with holy joy and peace in seeing and knowing their Lord. Are you afraid you shall be cast off? Another knew he deserved it, but he pleaded, “Cast me not away from thy presence, neither take thy Holy Spirit away from me,” and God heard him. Is the state of your heart a source of trouble to you? Another was in that state, and he prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, and renew within me a right spirit,” and his petition was granted. Is the leprosy of sin getting more burdensome to you? If so, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and by and by, He Himself will pronounce you wholly clean; and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

This Physician is

(1) *Jehovah-Rophi* – “I am he that healeth thee.” We need constant healing grace, and here is what exactly meets our case: “I am he that *healeth* thee.” There is an ever-present healing cure to all the army applicants. No fee is charged. The soldier has no coin that can procure the blessings of heaven. Here is healing balm for deeply-wounded souls. The Physician Himself is the health of our countenance. Yea, our own God is He.

(2) *Omniscient*. He is the fountain of knowledge. All true knowledge emanates from Him. This was great consolation to Job in his afflictions: “He knoweth the way that I take.” The Lord knoweth the righteous: it is a knowledge of delight. “Thy God shall rejoice over thee with singing.” “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” He knoweth our thoughts afar off. “I know my sheep.” His knowledge is an ever-present knowledge; it is unerring. Past, present, and future are one present with Him. He is the I AM. He does not require to diagnose disease. What a comfort that it is utterly impossible for this Physician to err in dealing with the troubles and diseases that afflict His patients! They know Him – “I know that my Redeemer liveth” – a knowledge of soul-comforting delight; knowledge that begets confidence in the Physician.

(3) *Omnipresent*. His gracious presence accompanies them throughout their wilderness march. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” “I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee.” The keeper of Israel slumbers not, nor sleeps.

(4) *Omnipotent*. All power in heaven and earth is His. He sends His Word in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, to heal and cheer His patients. They are kept by His power through faith unto salvation. “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

(5) *Jehovah*, self-existent, independent, the eternal, the inhabitant of eternity, fulfiller of His exceeding great and precious promises. He is the life of His blood-bought soldiers.

(6) *Compassionate*. In Him compassions flow. His is the compassion of a tender and gentle and faithful Father. Behold Him taking from death the only son of the widow of Nain, and restoring him to her alive.

“Such pity as a father hath
Unto his children dear,
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship him in fear.”

The issues from sickness and death belong to Him. He brings from the gates of death to the gates of Zion. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He not only healed King Hezekiah, but added fifteen years to his life.

(7) *Wise*. All His dealings with the soldiers, in grace and providence, work for their good. Everything is directed to the best end. Christ is made over unto them of God the Father as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

(8) *Unchangeable*. He is so in all His divine perfections. From the faithful He will never withdraw His love. His love, shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, restores them to health. His love is a rich heart-cordial.

(9) *Holy*. He is infinitely holy; His mission is to keep down and remove the cause of unholiness. The soldiers of Jesus are in degree holy, and they yearn for a richer measure of it. Their longing is for conformity in heart and life to their loving and holy Commander. That desire will have its full realisation. The standing order in the army is, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

VIII. – *The Last Enemy*. – The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. The soldiers of Jesus meet death deprived of its sting. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” It is indeed very solemn to die; but, if we were rightly disposed, we should realize daily that it is very solemn to live. A daily realisation of this is a good preparation for death. Christ is the abolisher of death; and He will finally destroy it. Christ is with His own in the Jordan of death.

“Yea, though I walk in death’s dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill:
For thou art with me; and thy rod
And staff me comfort still.”

Victory is assured to the soldiers of the Most High. They shall be, through Him who loved them, more than victors over all their enemies; yea, death, in regard to them, shall be swallowed up in victory; it shall be swallowed up of life. “Stand still and see the salvation of God.” Death frees them for ever from all their conflicts, from all their enemies, from all their impurities, and from sin itself. Death removes them from all their diseases, and the cause thereof. A young Christian soldier was told that his medical adviser considered him better. The young hero said, “Little does he know what I suffer”; and, later on, he said, “I shall be well at five o’clock in the evening.” He longed for that hour, and when it did arrive, he slept in Jesus.

IX. – *The Reward*. – The reward is

(1) eternal life. “They that overcome shall inherit all things” – all that the Commander has promised.

(2) An eternity in the immediate presence of the Captain of their salvation; beholding Him as He is, seeing Him face to face, and enjoying Him in the home where the inhabitant never says, “I am sick.”

They have this reward in anticipation. A young warrior, nearing his journey’s end, was in great pain. While his mother was one day bathing his head, she said, “My afflicted boy!” He

immediately replied, "Your happy boy, mother. You shall see that head with a crown of glory upon it."

Government officials, successful in carrying out arduous expeditions intrusted to them, are, on their return to the fatherland, received with great acclamation and honours. Parliament votes large grants in money, and titles of honour are conferred. But here we have what eclipses everything terrestrial. In the Parliament of heaven, ere ever the world was, Christ Jesus the Lord was set apart as the Deliverer and Commander of His army, and in Him there was granted them an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. To that inheritance they are begotten in time; and when they have finished their course here, they shall have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom reserved for them in heaven.

"They shall be brought with gladness great,
And mirth on every side,
Into the palace of the king,
And there they shall abide."

It is the kingdom of their Father, and they shall there shine as the sun for ever and ever. Sweet words, "Father" and "home!" The eternal home is the home of the heroes of the faith. For ever with the Lord!

X. – *Conclusion.* –

(1) Be, at all times, loyal to your Commander. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath called him to be a soldier." None but those who strive lawfully are crowned. Be faithful unto death, and you will receive the crown of life.

(2) The enemies are very numerous, powerful, and united. They are subtle, cruel, and persistent. "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist stedfast in the faith." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

(3) Keep the faith in a pure conscience – a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men: resort frequently to the blood of sprinkling.

(4) If we are to prosper and be in health, we must, in humble dependence on the Commander, constantly fight against outward and inward foes. Pray without ceasing. Lay aside everything that hinders in the conflict. Avoid all roots of bitterness that defile. Keep up, by your good behaviour and your chaste conversation coupled with fear, the honour of the Commander and the army. "O let integrity and truth keep all who Thee attend."

(5) Never enter the fight without being clad in the whole armour of God: wield the two-edged sword of the Spirit. "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations, and everything high that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

(6) Be loving, dutiful, active, obedient, valiant soldiers; and the Commander will feed you with the finest of the wheat, and your language will be, "Evermore give us this bread."

(7) Be clothed with humility: live and walk in the Spirit: walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless, and you will be bosom soldiers of the Commander. It is a characteristic of the soldiers of Jesus that they ascribe all the glory of their victories to the Lord Himself.

(8) If all, from the king to the humblest subject, were soldiers of Jesus, true prosperity would attend us; our land would yield increase, and God would multiply us exceedingly, and would cause peace to dwell within all our borders. If we war against Christ, and His cause in the world, in one way or another He will make war upon us. "Now therefore, kings, be wise; be taught, ye judges of the earth; serve God in fear, and see that ye join trembling with your mirth."

(9) To be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, you must consult the Physician frequently. Realise that you have a disease that requires the loving attention of the Physician daily, and you shall do great exploits. When faith and repentance are flourishing great victories are obtained, and the presence of the Commander is richly enjoyed. Broken-hearted humble soldiers are in good fettle for the fight. "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for, if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

(10) Hate sin, that abominable thing that God hates. Seek daily grace to shun not only evil, but the appearance of it. Seek forgiveness daily. Keep on friendly terms with the Commander. That can only be done by your rendering to Him hearty and loving obedience. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The king of terrors will level your body; but your emancipated soul will immediately pass into glory, while your body rests in the grave till the resurrection morn. Realise the necessity of keeping the faith, and of finishing your course with joy. The day of death is the coronation day.

(11) No soldier will lose his reward. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death." "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me on My throne." "If we suffer, we shall reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will deny us; if we believe not He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself." A crown of righteousness, a crown of life, a crown of glory is in store for the warriors of the faith. The Commander Himself will crown every soldier. "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 not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

In all our Christian assemblies recruiting officers from the bottomless pit are present; and it is an evident, but lamentable, fact that they meet with great success, although the work may be carried on unobserved. These evil spirits, when they retire to their squalid dens, report their success, and make sport of the foolish ones whom they succeeded in enlisting in active service, and of those whom they succeeded in retaining in their deadly grasp, and of inciting to further stages in evil. But Jesus Christ the Lord is also present in the assembly of His saints; and He is most heartily inviting sinners to join His army. If you then wish to be delivered from the powers of darkness, and from the sport of the spirits of darkness, and from being eternally stung by the second death, accept the offered invitation. Delay not. It does not pay to fight against God. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." To-morrow may never be yours. Faith in to-morrow, instead of faith in Jesus Christ to-day, is Satan's nurse for man's perdition. Procrastination is the thief of time. Perish not, and such a Saviour offered to you. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

May we then be, all our days, faithful and true and loving soldiers of the Captain of the Lord's hosts; and to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shall be ascribed all the praise and the power and the glory eternally. Amen.

[October, November and December 1912.]