

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE.

BECAUSE two of the Lord's dear sheep of the Allegheny congregation recently lost their lives in an accident, while returning home from meeting and discussing the sermon, many of the brethren have been surprised. The inquiry arose, Do we not believe that God's consecrated people are specially the objects of his care? And if so, how was such an accident possible?

These same questions are liable to arise in many minds, and hence we discuss the matter here for the benefit of all.

We advise that each WATCH TOWER reader shall peruse afresh the tract entitled, "Calamities: Why God Permits Them." In it we discuss this topic at considerable length – from the standpoint of accidents to the world, and accidents to the Church. Now we will confine our remarks to the latter phase of the subject, suggesting: –

(1) It is the Scripture teaching that every member of the Church must die somehow. This was the purport of our consecration – "even unto death." Each member of the "royal priesthood" became a member by consecrating, – presenting his body a living sacrifice as did our High Priest, Christ Jesus. And just as it was necessary for him to finish his course of dying in actual death, so will it be with each of us.

(2) As the Master's death was not on a "flowery bed of ease," neither, probably, will be the death of any of his footstep-followers. And, if it be a choice between a bed of tedious sickness and a sudden death by "accident," many would choose the latter as the less painful – the quicker "change."

(3) But it is not for us to *choose* on this more than upon other subjects. It is ours to accept with patience and full resignation

whatever divine providence may permit; and this may vary. Under some circumstances it may be better that death come through a lingering illness in which God will be glorified, and the power of his truth to sustain shall be demonstrated in the patient, loving spirit of the dying sufferer. Or, at another time, the Lord may see best to permit death to come upon his dear ones suddenly – as a shock, as a calamity; to test the faith of some, and to awaken others from lethargy to vigilance, – from drowsiness to a fresh energy in running the race toward the mark for the great prize. The suddenness of the death of the two dear sheep of this Allegheny fold certainly has had a good effect upon many of the dear ones most intimate with them, and who knew them both as most saintly characters – ripe in the Christian graces, and fully ready and waiting for their "change." Undoubtedly many not so prepared have been awakened to fresh vigilance, and a renewal of consecration vows, and zeal in self-sacrifice, by this incident and the thought – Would I have been ready had the call thus suddenly come to me?

(4) If to some the question arises, – But what about the little children needing parental care? The answer is, that these parents had already placed their children, as well as themselves, under divine care; and that care is still over the children: as able to care for **[R2682 : page 250]** them now, as for both parents and children before. This is a place for trust – for faith. Whoever cannot trust his children to divine care does not as yet properly know his Heavenly Father, and needs to give renewed diligence to this important study. Such an one has not yet attained the faith that would be acceptable to God, and without which it would be impossible to please God, – the faith of an "overcomer."

(5) The shock connected with our dear Redeemer's death was no doubt a severe test of faith to some of the early disciples – it seemed as tho it proved that our Lord was in disfavor with the Father – "We did esteem him smitten of God, and afflicted." Yet to those who stumbled not in unbelief the shock of our Lord's cruel death became

afterward a great lever of sympathy for good as they fully grasped the thought, "He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for sin which brings peace to us was upon him, and [R2683 : page 250] by his stripes we are healed." The apostles also suffered violent deaths and learned to regard such calamities not as marks of divine disfavor, but the reverse.

(6) There can no "*accident*" happen to the Lord's consecrated ones, viewed from the divine standpoint. Not a hair of their heads can be injured aside from the Father's *permission*, and what God purposely permits cannot be properly considered an accident from his standpoint, nor from the standpoint of those who fully trust his providence and grace. We might even suppose a calamity in which ninety-nine children of this world and one of the Lord's consecrated met death together. It might be purely accidental so far as all but the Lord's one was concerned: but, to that one nothing could occur unforeseen of God – nothing that God could not have fully controlled, and which permitted must mean a blessing to his child who rightly and in faith accepts it, – "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." So it was in our Lord's case. As he testified, the Jews could not touch his life before because his "hour was not yet come." And when his hour did come, our Lord testified to Pilate, – "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." The same is true of every member of the body of Christ, the royal priesthood. But this divine supervision does not watch for the unconsecrated of the world – except as they may be children of the saints, or others whose affairs and interests are interlinked with theirs.

(7) Expecting as we do that the living members of this royal priest or "jewel" class will all be gathered to glory sometime before A.D. 1915 (and so far as we are now able to surmise by 1910), we are bound to suppose that a considerable number of these will, in some manner, die sudden or violent deaths. And happy for us will it be if this thought that our "change" may come at any moment, shall be so

impressed as to assist us to be always ready to answer the summons with joy.

Let us each permit this thought to arrange our business affairs, our family affairs, our relationship to the "brethren" – our relationship to the world in general – all our words, and thoughts, and doings; and thus it will bring us great blessing and assist in making us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

The Editor will not be surprised if his death should come suddenly; nor if by divine permission it should come in some unpleasant form that might, for the moment, seem to "jolt" and interrupt the "harvest work." Let all of the consecrated be on guard against such a wavering of doubt respecting the divine power to care for and carry on the work. If such a trial does come, it will no doubt in part, at least, be intended of the Lord to show that the work is his and not ours; and that he is perfectly able to carry on his work, using one or another of his children as his servants to set the food of his providing before the household of faith.

All of our affairs in daily life are shaped to these ends: to the development and bringing forward of others ready to the Lord's hand, should he at any moment call for the transfer of our stewardship and bid us "Come up higher." And the same applies to the financial means and interests which the Lord has entrusted to our care. Let none be surprised, then, at anything which may happen to us, but, on the contrary, glorify God on our behalf, and press along the "narrow way" with redoubled energy.
