

"WITH HIM – CALLED AND CHOSEN AND FAITHFUL."

BECAUSE considerable interest is being manifested, by our readers, on the subject of the Gospel Age call, and the prospects of those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord since 1881, we take this occasion to present some thoughts supplemental to what we have already presented, in our issue of Nov. 1, 1901, and in Dawn, Vol. III., pages 212-216.

The terms of the gospel are necessarily those of a call or invitation; leaving the matter of acceptance open and optional with the invited ones. Hence we read, "Many are called, but few chosen;" and note that, the invited are advised, not commanded, to make their "calling and their election sure," by compliance with the terms of their call. (Matt. 20:14; 2 Pet. 1:10.) *Commands* to accept an invitation to joint-heirship with Christ, and penalties for not accepting that invitation, would be as incongruous as to have given a call or invitation to keep the Law Covenant, or, in the Millennium, to invite the keeping of the Laws then to be promulgated. We cannot even suppose that the holy angels are merely invited to obey the divine mandates. We must suppose that they are under a law commanding their obedience. We must assume that they have much of the spirit expressed by our dear Master, who is represented as saying, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is written in my heart." If this were not their attitude they would surely not be *holy* angels.

The reasonableness of a Creator, through his representative, giving his just and good commands rather than invitations, becomes so apparent upon a little reflection, that we want to scrutinize all the more closely this question: – Why did God, during this age, apparently depart from so reasonable a rule, and, instead, to allure us with a high-calling, *inviting* us to become joint-heirs with his Son in the Kingdom?

Why does he send word to us saying, – "Ye are not under the Law, but under grace" – favor?

The reason is, that divine law can demand no more than even-handed justice; and the Lord's purpose during this Gospel Age is to select a "little flock" along lines of self-denial, sacrifice, – beyond what Justice could demand. Hence of necessity this must be accomplished by a call – an invitation, with exceeding great and precious promises attached as incentives; "that by these we might [be encouraged to faithfulness, and so] become partakers of the divine nature," – in the Kingdom. – 2 Pet. 1:4.

God *foreknew* us; we were "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." "And whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate must be conformed to the image of his Son." He determined in advance that as the Son must pass through severe tests before being accepted to the divine nature, so also, all who would be acceptable to joint-heirship with him must exhibit and demonstrate that they have his spirit; that they are copies of him; – the very image of him, in their hearts. And the object of this Gospel Age is to call, and find, and test this predetermined class. – I Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:29.

The promises made to the seed of Abraham (though appropriated by the twelve tribes of Israel, [R2941 : page 24] without divine disapproval) belonged really to anti-typical Israel – spiritual Israel. The natural seed, as natural branches in the olive-tree (representing divine favor) were allowed to grow for a time and be tested, but on failure they were broken off; – new branches coming forward continually, until our Lord's first advent. The branches then in place were specially favored with the offer of the highest spiritual favor – not under the Law, but under Grace.

But few, "a remnant," were in the heart-condition to appreciate and accept this great favor. The majority clung to attempts at self-justification; and like their fathers were broken off. Then the message was broadened; the invitation went to the Gentiles, "wild olive

branches" to fill up the places of the broken off natural branches; – to complete the foreordained number of the elect. The total number of branches in the tree is 144,000, springing from twelve main limbs or tribes. Keeping up the Scriptural figure, we may say that as we who were by nature Gentiles, are grafted into the Abrahamic Covenant, we are reckoned as members of the original twelve tribes, – sealed, spiritual Israelites – until the predestined number, 144,000, shall have been completed.

The methods by which the Lord has proceeded to call these "elect" are worthy of careful notice.

(1) Our Lord declares that he called "*sinner*" in Israel "*to repentance*." This call was no part of "our high calling" to a share with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom; but it was a preparatory step: guilty sinners are not invited to, nor desired in the Kingdom. The call to faith and repentance, if heartily accepted by the sinner, brings him *justification from sin* – release from divine condemnation – reconciliation with the Father.

(2) "Being justified by faith [after repentance], we have peace with God [realizing that our sins and imperfections are covered] through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also [additionally] we have access into this grace wherein we stand, [viz.,] rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God," – the hope of sharing the Kingdom glories of our Lord Jesus. How did we gain access into this grace, after justification? By another call or another part of the one call – God "*called us* to glory and virtue [excellence]." – 2 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 5:1,2.

In a general way all repentant believers, justified, are called or invited to consecrate themselves to the Lord; because, as each starts out desirous of doing *right* – (with no thought of self-sacrifice), he goes but a short distance until he finds great opposition to right-doing, and even to right-thinking. He finds his opposition coming not only from the world and the devil, as he might have expected, but also from his own flesh, and from nominal Christians. These four opponents harass

the newly justified will – whiles in anger, whiles in pity and sympathy – declaring that the *right* way is an impossible one, and that an attempt even to follow it will mean the ruin of every earthly prospect.

THE EFFECTUAL CALLING.

This is a testing time. Will the justified one heed the voices of the world, the flesh and the devil, and choose a downward or, at least, a compromise path? Or will he heed the voice of God, inviting him [R2941 : page 25] to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, in the "narrow way" which leads to glory, honor and immortality? If he obeys God's invitation, he is one of the *effectually called*. His acceptance means a full consecration to God; – a renouncing of all earthly hopes and prospects, to obey God rather than self or others; and to have the blessings God has provided for his faithful: (though at this stage he cannot clearly discern the reward). This is *self-sacrifice*. God's acceptance of the sacrifice (the consecration) is guaranteed by the terms of the general call: further, it is attested by receipt of "the spirit of holiness," "the spirit of the truth": additionally, by an ability to discern spiritual things, and "to comprehend with all saints the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of the love of God." – Eph. 3:18.

Since our standing is the result of our *acceptance* of God's gracious call, and since the Father seeketh only such as worship and serve him in spirit and in truth, it follows that, in the exercise of our free wills, we may if we choose renounce our consecration, withdraw our sacrifice, and thenceforth walk after the flesh, and not after the spirit. But whoever does so, of course loses the spirit of God, the spirit of his begetting to the new nature, – he is no longer to be classed among those begotten of God; – he is of those who "draw back unto perdition," destruction, Second Death, nonentity. He who is in the begotten condition "sinneth not [willingly, designedly, of preference] because his seed [the holy spirit] remaineth in him:" while it remains he cannot love or willingly serve sin. – Heb. 10:39; I Jno. 3:9.

THE PREDESTINED NUMBER OF THE ELECT.

The more our knowledge and experience expand our judgments, the smaller is apt to be our estimate of the number who ever reach the point of making such a consecration or self-sacrifice as we have above delineated. And, on the other hand, growing experience is apt to convince us that comparatively few of those who have consecrated themselves, fully and intelligently, ever draw back; – in the sense of *willingly* and heartily renouncing the Lord and their covenant obligations.

The large numbers who profess conversion during "revivals," etc., and soon fall away, are not to be reckoned as of this class. They merely heard a *call to repentance* and reformation; a call which any and all are authorized to make, at any time. The majority never progressed beyond repentance, even to the extent of *justification*; – the chaffy, confused presentations of most of revivalists, and so-called teachers, being quite insufficient knowledge to lead even to justifying faith – much less to sanctifying faith.

Accepting the word "called" as applying only to those who come under the conditions of justification, and subsequent *full* sanctification through a belief of the truth; and admitting that these, in all, have been very few at any period – truly a "little flock" – can we suppose the number so small as 144,000 from Pentecost until now?

Examining our own day, and the views of consecration now prevalent, and the general scarcity of that quality; – remembering that *love* for the truth and the brethren is among the tests of devotion to God; – remembering, too, that a *knowledge* of present truth is to be an indication of those now close to the Lord in favor; – we are inclined to look into the past with far less optimism than in years past. With a clearer eye than formerly, for what constitutes a saint, and a martyr "*beheaded* for the witness of Jesus," we incline to think that but few of the millions of martyrs were really saints, – from the Scriptural standpoint.

For instance, St. Bartholomew's day – and its slaughter of French Huguenots: Have we any sound reason for supposing that the hapless victims were any more saintly or more sinful than the Galileans who suffered death at the hands of Pilate? – or than the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them? – or than a like number slain today in Paris, or London, or Berlin, or Vienna, or Rome, or St. Petersburg, or Washington? Today, when religious questions have been largely removed from the arena of party strife, it is somewhat difficult for us to realize that, in olden times, all politics turned chiefly on religious questions. Suppose that the Boers were Catholics and the British Protestants, or the Filipinos Protestants and the Americans Catholics, – and then imagine how partizan historians could write up both sides of these wars, and describe their victims as Christian martyrs.

We are not meaning by this to intimate that there were no true saints martyred in olden times, anymore than we are denying that some true saints may have fallen in the South African and Philippine and Cuban and Chinese wars. What we do mean to imply is, that any estimate which would rank all those millions of the past (who, nobly, and ignobly, died for their convictions), as "saints," "overcomers," members of the "little flock," – would be nearly as gross a mistake as to suppose that all who have fallen for their convictions in modern warfare are such. We must remember that the records of martyrs such as Cranmer and Latimer, and others less notable, who surely gave strong evidences of saintship, and whom we hope to meet in the Kingdom, were exceptions, and by no means the rule.

Our estimate of the past must and should be based considerably upon our findings of the present: and reckoning thus, 144,000 would seem not only ample, but large, as an enumeration of the "copies of God's dear Son." Let us not forget that in the Primitive Church the congregations were small, and usually met in private houses. (Acts 1:13; 5:42; 12:12; Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15; Philem. 2.) It was not until the apostles fell asleep in death, and errors came in and attracted the

unconsecrated – by false threats and false promises – that the numbers became large, and costly edifices were erected. And yet, the apostles dealt chiefly with Jews, who for centuries had been under the Law Covenant, whose mission was to guide them to Christ. Out of all the millions of Jews in Palestine only a few thousand "received the word;" – so few that Josephus did not even mention them in his histories of that time.

That the result of the Apostle Paul's renowned missionary journeys was only small congregations, as a rule, seems evident from the records; – because [R2942 : page 26] he set forth the gospel so clearly, so uncompromisingly; – showing the narrowness of the way, as well as the glories of the reward; – not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. Yes, it was afterward – after the apostles fell asleep – that the mixed and misrepresenting preaching drew and drove multitudes into an apostate system; – "tares" to choke the "wheat."

And even though the apostles, through faithful preaching of the truth, kept out the "tares" in their day, we find that the congregations which they established were not by any means all saints. St. Paul's epistles generally indicate this; for he sometimes addresses them to "the saints *and* faithful *brethren*" and to those "*called* to be saints." In these epistles, too, he intimates that many are called compared to the number who will make their calling and election sure. He urges them to take heed lest any should seem to come short of the requirements; but to so run as to obtain the prize. Hence we could not count *all* of the "household of faith" then, anymore than now, in the number of the final overcomers, – 144,000.

If we keep in memory the Apostle's statement, that God's special favors, light, etc., have come upon "the ends of the ages" (I Cor. 10:11), and note its correctness, – that special light and favor came at the first end, and now also at the latter end of this Gospel Age, – it will be helpful in this study. We might almost be justified in expecting that the

first and last half-centuries of this age have not only enjoyed special light and favor, but possibly may supply a full half of the elect number.

THE GREAT COMPANY WHOSE NUMBER NO MAN KNOWS.

But, another matter is to be considered: The 144,000 are the "called and chosen and faithful;" the "overcomers;" whereas the real converts, the true saints, in the apostles' day and since, include not only the "overcomers" who make their calling and election sure, but also those [probably few] who "draw back" and become subjects of the Second Death (Heb. 6:6; 10:39), and also those who – while not rejecting the Lord, nor turning to love sin – still fail to fulfill their sacrifice with zeal; and, becoming overcharged with the cares of this life, can only be "saved so as by fire," and must "come up out of great tribulation and wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb," and take a lower place than that to which they were *called*. – Rev. 7:9-14.

Would it be safe to estimate that this "great company whose number is known to no man" (because, unlike the "little flock," it was *not predestinated*, and consists of such only as fail to reach the standard required) would be twice as numerous as the "little flock"? If so, it would mean that the total number of the truly sanctified and spirit-begotten, during this Gospel Age, has been 432,000. But we are not to forget that no more than the 144,000 could be under invitation at one time; because it is not reasonable to suppose that God would ever invite anyone for whom there would be no place if he proved faithful.

A COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE OF THE ELECTION.

Suppose, for instance, that 45,000 made full consecration during the remainder of the first century, and that one out of three gained the victor's crown; that would represent 15,000 of the "elect;" the result say of 68 years' labor of the Apostles, – garnering the ripe wheat of the

Jewish nation and starting the work among such Gentiles as were "feeling after God, if haply they might find him." If for every period of 68 years, from the year 100 to the year 1881, A.D., we estimate the results to have been one fourth what they were under the very favorable Apostolic ministration, it would probably be very liberal, viz., 3,750. We are not to forget that in Israel, as the Master said, the fields were already white for harvesting. In those fields the Apostles needed not to do sowing, but merely to gather in the fruitage of the Law dispensation. After the cream of the Gentiles had also been gathered in, the work would surely go more slowly.

Calculating on this reasonable and liberal basis, the year A.D. 1881, would see 112,500 who had already finished their course with joy as "overcomers," – and a remainder of 31,500 yet needed, to complete the predestinated number. Or, if the perfect fruitage of the Apostolic period were estimated at 12,000, and the remainder on the same basis, the total number garnered up to 1881 would have been 90,000; leaving a balance of 54,000 to be perfected since 1881, A.D., – up to, – say 1910.

For our estimates, let us take the former figures, as being very conservative; – viz., 31,500, to be developed – during, say 30 years. This would be considerably above the ratio estimated for the Apostolic period; but we are not to forget, on the other hand, that this is the harvest time for Christendom; – many times more numerous than was fleshly Israel. We are not to forget, either, that not only present-day inventions, conveniences, etc., permit each laborer to do more work, but also, that education being much more general now, a more extensive and intensive "harvest" work is possible now, than in the Jewish "harvest." On the whole, we cannot think that these figures can be considered immoderate.

"THE WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND." – DAN. 12:10.

This brings us to another point. We believe that the Lord meant us to understand, that one evidence of faithfulness today, would be a knowledge of *present truth*. This seems to be the only possible deduction from the Parable of the Ten Virgins, from the Apostle's words in I Thes. 5:4, etc. And is it not as reasonable to suppose that the "elect" will all learn of our Lord's *second presence*, as that every Israelite indeed was informed of our Lord's first advent, in that separating of wheat from chaff? We are to remember, however, that some of those who at first were in such darkness that they persecuted the faithful, were subsequently rescued from their blindness, and became zealous brethren and servants of the truth. So here; – our thought is, that none could now be esteemed "overcomers," victors, while ignorant of our Lord's *parousia*, etc.; but we believe that many, if not the majority of the above mentioned 31,500, still in darkness, may yet prove amenable to **[R2942 : page 27]** their consecration and come into the light of present truth.

As is generally understood, we believe the prophetic Scriptures to teach that the general call or invitation ceased in 1881; and on the foregoing calculation this would imply that the conjectured 31,500 consecrated, were written in the Lamb's book of life at that date, as fully sanctified persons, who had presented their all to the Lord in living sacrifice, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Our hypothesis being correct, these 31,500 have been on trial, for now over twenty years; and, meantime, the only chance for others to come into this elect class has been as the trial time of some of these may have lapsed, without their making their calling and election sure; – their names being blotted out of the Lamb's book of life, and their claims upon crowns of life being forfeited, as our Lord forewarned (Rev. 2:10; 3:11), – they being numbered either among God's enemies (Heb. 10:26,27) or among those whom the Son will deliver, "so as by fire," in the "great company" of Revelation 7:9,13.

If we are correct in supposing that a knowledge and confession of present truth are essential to overcoming, now, we may give a fair guess at the number thus far faithful from the *Watch Tower* lists and our general knowledge of the friends. A liberal estimate would be 10,000, walking in the light of present truth, and *sanctified* thereby. This would leave 21,500 yet in darkness; and probably most of them in "Babylon." Of the 10,000 whom we will assume that we know, our estimate would be that nearly or quite one half of them were not consecrated in 1881, – not amongst the 31,500. Accepting this as a basis of estimate it would teach us what?

THE WISE VIRGINS GOING IN TO THE WEDDING.

It would teach us that since 1881 about 5,000 had gone on faithfully and been granted the light of present truth, and have good hopes if they stand fast that they will finish their course with joy – in death. It implies, that the 5,000 who have consecrated and received the light of present truth since 1881, took the places of 5,000 whose period of probation ended without proving them so far overcomers as to be worthy of the light. Thus 10,000 of the 31,500 are already disposed of. Now, of the 21,500 yet to be dealt with, what may we expect? **(1)** That one third, or possibly one half the number, will yet prove themselves "overcomers" (Rev. 15:2-4; 20:4); and **(2)** that the remainder – 10,000 to 14,000 – would represent the numbers of those whom we might expect yet to come into divine favor by a full consecration; – to take the places vacated and prospective crowns forfeited by the "overcharged." And more than this: we must reckon that of those consecrating now, even in the light of present truth, there must be a testing, a sifting; and that if one half of the smaller estimate fail, it would mean 5,000 more to make consecration and stand testing; and if one half of these fail, it would mean 2,500 more, and so on.

We should not forget, however, that those entering the "race" now have many advantages. **(1)** We may assume, in harmony with reason and our observations, that a considerable number who have

consecrated since 1881, have been under the Lord's care and instruction, along the lines of discipline and character-building, with a view to their being accepted to fill the places of those failing to make their calling and election sure, – to joint-heirship in the Kingdom. (2) We may assume that, since the general call has ceased, none of these would be instructed in "the deep things of God," except as they are permitted to take their places in the race. (3) We may expect that those consecrated in 1881 must close their probation for the prize very shortly now. (4) As the [R2943 : page 27] "present truth" is now shining very clearly, and is getting more generally shed abroad, and is in a condensed form, easy of quick assimilation, we should expect that characters would form and expand and crystallize, now, much more rapidly than ever before. (5) We see that the cleavage or gulf is growing wider and wider, between "wheat" (true believers, fully consecrated) and "tares" (deceived persons misnaming themselves Christians, because mistaught by Churchianity). As the "tares" more and more openly repudiate faith in the blood of Christ, and more and more boldly declare for "higher criticism" and "evolution," the "wheat" who have been halting and fearful toward the truth and its true servants, will begin to see that they must decide quickly; – and all of the "wheat" class will decide correctly; and some of them promptly enough to be classed with the "elect little flock." (6) We anticipate continued and increasing opposition; so that it will be fair to suppose that those giving adherence to the truth will generally so well count the cost in advance that comparatively few of them will need to be sifted out.

LABOR, – FOR THE NIGHT COMETH.

Those who for some time have inclined to wonder at our sanguine expectations, respecting the progress of the truth, the growing numbers of *Watch Tower* subscribers, etc., now have, in the foregoing, our reply to their queries. We doubt not that the arguments will commend themselves to the majority, if not all of our readers. We trust that it will come to you all as a fresh incentive to energy and zeal in the harvest work. Faith and patience are qualities necessary to every soldier of the

cross. Be valiant! Quit you like men! is the Apostolic exhortation, and it is ours also. Go forth in the name of our glorified Head, giving to all true Israelites the "three signs" of the Lord's presence. And if in pouring the water upon the land it turn into blood, even your blood, rejoice and be exceeding glad. Remember that your covenant is, to lay down your life for the brethren, – even unto death.

Let each go at once to the throne of grace, petitioning the Lord, that in so far as these presentations are the truth, they may be blest to his own heart. Pray also that the Lord will send forth more laborers into his vineyard and inspire yourself and all of his faithful "brethren" (Heb. 2:11) to renewed energy and effectiveness during the year 1902. Among the estimated 21,500 consecrated brethren yet in Babylon, several thousand should be ready for the sanctifying truth this year. Watch and pray for opportunities to serve them, and for wisdom from on high to rightly use the opportunities as they come to you. May the grace of God abide with us!

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