

THE MARK OF NEWCREATION

- Articles of Seventh Angel

THE MARK OF NEW CREATION

*A compilation of the writings of Pastor Russell on
The Mark of New Creation.*

*“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 3:14*

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REPRINT ARTICLES

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PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

--Phil. 3:13,14.--

FEW IN the nominal church see any particular mark or any particular prize with definiteness; --to be sought and to be attained. The majority are merely fleeing from an imagined eternal torment, which pursues them as a fear, a dread, a nightmare, a horror, from the cradle to the tomb. Others of the Lord's people (chiefly of "this way") have had the eyes of their understanding illuminated by the holy spirit through the divine Word, and have gotten a glimpse of the great *prize* which God has set before the elect Church of this Gospel age. No wonder if these are enthused with the glorious spectacle which (the natural) eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive of, but which "God hath revealed unto us by his spirit!" No wonder, either, if they have given more attention to the prize than to the mark which must be attained ere the prize is won.

Full of enthusiasm and appreciation of divine love, these have entirely lost the fear of eternal torment, and have learned that this doctrine is of Satan, and not of God; from man, and not of the holy spirit; from the dark ages, and not the teachings of the inspired words of Scripture. They have learned, too, that what scriptures seem to give any color of sanction to this blasphemy against God's character and plan are certain parables, symbols and dark sayings which misinterpretations have more or less glossed and colored in the common translations of the Scriptures.

It is quite common for this latter class to think and to speak of "running for the *prize*," and to measurably lose sight of the fact that it is not the prize that we run toward, but the *mark*: that the prize is entirely beyond our grasp;--as the Apostle expresses it above, "I press toward the mark." Whoever reaches the mark of character which God has established for the elect will receive the prize; and whoever fails to reach that mark of character will fail to get the prize. It is therefore a very serious error to run for the prize and forget or ignore or disregard the "mark," which must first be attained.

The thought that a certain standard or mark of character is necessary to all who will pass divine approval as "overcomers," and hear the Lord's "Well done!" is an astounding one to many. Many have thought of the Christian race as merely an avoidance of open sin; others have included an avoidance of secret faults; others have gone still further, and have included a general disposition to sacrifice many interests of the present life; others have gone still further, and have understood the test of discipleship to be full self-surrender to the Lord, a full sacrifice of earthly life and all of its interests to the will of our Head, the Lord;--but almost none have the thought that all our sacrificings and experiences and self-denials must lead up toward and eventually bring us to the "mark" of character which God has set for the "elect;"--else they will not get the prize of joint-heirship with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. Nothing, probably, has contributed so much to this oversight of a "mark" or fixed standard of character than the false interpretation given to our Lord's conversation with the dying thief on Calvary.*

It is indisputably reasonable, that God has some standard or test by which he will determine who are worthy to receive the great blessings and honors offered to the elect--who are worthy to be members of the body of Christ and to share his Millennial Kingdom --what shall constitute *faithfulness* in those who "seek for glory, honor and immortality," and who are "the called and chosen and *faithful*." The Apostle, in our text, unquestionably declares that there is such a mark, and that all who are running with any hope of attaining the desired prize must be running toward that mark, and must attain it or lose the prize. And we see, too, that the Apostle judges himself according to this standard, and declares that at the time he wrote he had not yet reached this mark or standard of character-development. Such reflections cannot but awaken in the hearts of all who are in this race earnest desires to see distinctly the mark toward which we must run: and it should stimulate each and all of us to run the more patiently and the more perseveringly, and to watch day by day the measure of our progress toward the grand mark which the Lord our God has set before us.

We notice that the Apostle has in mind foot-races, and we see the forcefulness of the illustration: (1) As the racers must enter the race-course in a legitimate manner, so must we get on our race-course in a legitimate manner, through the only door--faith in the precious blood which redeemed us and justified us before God. (2) Those who enter the course must be regularly recorded or registered as runners; they must positively declare their intention, else they will not be in the race. So with us: having been "justified by faith," and having been informed of our privileges in connection with this race, and the attainment of its prize, it was incumbent upon us to declare our intention--to make a covenant with the Lord, and to thus be regularly entered--our names being written, not upon earthly church rolls, but in the Lamb's book of life--"written in heaven."--***Heb. 12:23***.

With foot-racers there is a prize offered also, but it is not the prize that is hung out to their view while on the race-course; it is not the prize toward which they run, but the mark. There is the quarter-mile mark, the half-mile mark, the three-quarter-mile mark, and the mile mark at the close of the race; and each racer watches for and encourages himself as he passes one or another of these marks by the way, until finally he reaches the last one, the mark for the prize. And this watching of the marks by the way, and reckoning up to the standard, is a great incentive to him--an encouragement as he speeds along, a reminder if he is going slackly. So, too, it is with the Christian runner in the narrow way *toward the mark* of the great prize which God has promised--joint-heirship with his Son, the Lord of glory. It will encourage us to note the marks on our way, and to perceive our progress--if we are coming nearer and nearer and nearer to "the mark for the prize"--the mark which wins the prize. And if any be careless, indifferent, slack, in his running, nothing could be a greater stimulus to him than the knowledge that only his own carelessness or slackness can lose him the prize.

WHAT IS THIS GREAT "MARK" OF CHARACTER SET BEFORE US BY OUR GOD?

We answer, it is stated under various names; as for instance, our Lord Jesus mentioned it when he said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." (***Matt. 5:48***.) The same mark is mentioned by the Apostle when he says that God predestinated that all who will be of the elect must be "conformed to the image of his Son." (***Rom. 8:29***.) These two statements differ in form, but are the same in substance. The same mark is mentioned again by the Apostle when he says, "The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." And again he tells us that "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." (***Rom. 8:4; 13:10***.) Here, then, we have an aggregated definition of what constitutes the "mark" of Christian character, in the elect: it is godlikeness, Christ-likeness, Love. The requirement, therefore, would seem to be that the Lord's people, holy and elect, must attain to

the same character or disposition of love that God possesses and that was manifested also by our Lord Jesus.

But some one will say, How can we, "who by nature are children of wrath, even as others," ever hope to attain to so high a standard or mark of character as this, that we should love as God loves, as Christ loves? We answer, that we need never hope to attain to this high standard as respects the flesh, for so long as we are in these mortal bodies, and obliged to use their brains, we will necessarily be more or less opposed by the selfishness which through the fall has come to have such complete possession of our race through the mental, moral and physical derangements incidental to six thousand years of depravity.

The attainment of this mark of perfect love is to be an attainment of the heart, of the will--the new will, "begotten, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," through the holy spirit. Nor do we find, nor should we expect that the new mind would come up to this standard at the beginning of our Christian experience. The new mind, altho inspired of God through the exceeding great and precious promises of his Word, is nevertheless our own will, and more or less circumscribed by its channel and instrument, the human brain. Hence the Apostle informs us that the new mind must constantly fight a battle against the flesh, and that its victory means the death of the flesh--that it cannot be actually perfect until the "change" shall come, by which this newly begotten will shall receive its spiritual body in the first resurrection. But since the receiving of a spiritual body in the first resurrection will be the receiving of the prize, we see that the race toward the mark and the attainment of that mark must be made by the new mind while it is still in this mortal body or "earthen vessel."--**2 Cor. 5:2-4.**

In a word, the new mind must grow, must develop. As the Apostle exhorts, we, as new creatures, must grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God--the growth here corresponding to the running in the figure under consideration. We must run or press nearer and nearer to the mark day by day, week by week, year by year, until it shall be attained,--if we would gain the prize. Nor is it merely a question of time, for we all know some who have been a long time in the race and have made comparatively little progress in the cultivation of the gifts of the spirit, the sum of which is comprehended in the one word, perfect love--the mark.

And we probably all know some others who have been a comparatively short time in the narrow way who have made great progress,--going from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge, from glory to glory-- rapidly nearing the mark. And we know some who, so far as human judgment can discern, have reached the mark; but of these more anon.

That we may clearly comprehend this subject, let us notice how small were the beginnings of this grace of love in our hearts; and let us hope that many, as they trace the matter here, and compare it with their own experiences, will be able to find large developments in their own characters--that they have passed one after another of the quarter-mile marks in the way, and that they are rapidly nearing, if they have not already reached, "the mark of the prize."

(1) The beginning of our experience as Christians the Apostle expresses, saying, it was not that we first loved God, but that "he first loved us"--that attracted us to him. (**1 John 4:19.**) A sense of justice told us that since God had so loved us as to redeem us at so great a cost, and to provide for us so great salvation, it would be as little as we could do--it would be *our duty* to love and serve him in return. This beginning of love we will designate as *duty-love*. It lacked in many respects qualities which now permeate our love for God, which is of a higher, a more advanced character, because we have grown in grace, and in knowledge, and in love. The Apostle seems to speak again of this same duty-love, when he says, "The love of Christ *constraineth* us [draws out our love in return]; for we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead [under divine sentence, the curse]; and that we who live [who have been

justified to life through faith in Jesus' redemption] *should* henceforth live not unto ourselves but unto him who died for us." (2 Cor. 5:14,15.) Here again it is the "*should*"-love or duty-love,--the first, the crudest, the simplest development of our love toward God, our starting-point in the race toward perfect love.

(2) After we had exercised the duty-love and sought to obey God, not only in the avoidance of sin, but also in sacrificing our earthly interests and rights for his sake and the truth's sake, in obedience to his will--in obedience to duty-love--we began to find in our hearts an appreciation of the *principles* of righteousness; we began to love righteousness--justice, mercy, love: not at first with a fervency of love, but rather with respect for the glorious qualities of the divine character, plan and law. This was our first quarter-mile mark, so to speak--love of principles of righteousness.

(3) The more we learned to love these elements of divine character, the principles of righteousness which find their perfect representation in the divine being, and through which the divine being is revealed to the eyes of our understanding--in that proportion the true love to God (based upon principles rather than upon duty), comes into our hearts. So to speak, here in the race-course we had gained the second quarter-mile mark--love of God's character; even tho we had not yet discerned the length and breadth and heights and depths of that character, we had begun to love the Lord in the true way--from appreciation not only of what he had done for us, but also and specially for what he is;--from appreciation of his character.

(4) Love of God from this latter standpoint as the representative of every grace and every virtue, as the representative of righteousness, and the opponent of every injustice and inequity, led us to seek and to follow out these principles amongst our fellow-men, as well as in our own characters. As we began to love truth, purity, nobility of character, wherever it could be found, we found some of it in a mottled and streaked condition even in the world of mankind: we found that the original law of God, written in the heart of father Adam, altho largely erased and obliterated from the hearts and consciences of his children, is not wholly gone;--that to some extent, especially under the influence of Christianity in the past eighteen centuries, some features of this perfect law may be dimly discerned amongst men.

But our scrutiny, backed by our increasing love of these principles of righteousness, found nothing satisfactory amongst natural men--nor even amongst those professing godliness--professing to be followers in the footsteps of Jesus. We found these all, like ourselves, far short of perfection, far short of the glory of God. But as the true love, of right principles, burned in our hearts more and more fervently, we learned to *sympathize* with the entire "groaning creation," and to "*love* the brethren;" for in the latter we perceived a class inspired by the same spirit by which we ourselves had been begotten of God, the spirit of the truth; we saw some of them struggling as we had struggled, with appreciation only of the duty-love; we saw others who had gained a higher conception than this, who had learned to appreciate the principles of righteousness and to love them, and to hate iniquity, and further, to love the God who is the embodiment of these. And the realization that these "brethren," like ourselves, were gradually approximating the divine standard--"pressing toward the mark"--filled us with interest in them and in their battle against sin and its weaknesses, and against the Adversary and his beguilements. We became more and more interested in their welfare and overcoming in proportion as we were striving and making progress in the same "narrow way." This love of the brethren we did not have at the beginning; it marks a distinct progress in our race toward the "mark;" we might term it the third quarter-mile mark. But altho a grand attainment was achieved when this love of the brethren reached the point of willingness to "lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16), yet it was not the *full* attainment of the "mark" for which we are running.

(5) The "mark of the prize" is a still higher attainment in love;--the one which we understand the Scriptures to point out as the very highest attainment is that of *loving our*

enemies--not merely tolerating them, abstaining from injuring them, etc., while thinking evil of them; but far beyond this, it signifies the full purging out of all anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife, not only from our actions but also from our words, and even from our thoughts, our sentiments. It means such a *complete triumph of love in our hearts* as not only loves God supremely and delights to sacrifice in his service from love of the principles represented in his character, and love for the brethren, which makes us careful of their feelings and interests, and ready to lay down our lives on their behalf, to deliver them from evil, or to avoid putting a stumbling block in their way, but it means additionally that the love of God has been so thoroughly shed abroad in our hearts that we can love and do love every intelligent creature, and delight to do good unto all men, and to serve all men as we have opportunity, especially the household of faith.--**Gal. 6:10.**

This does not mean that the love which we have for the world must be of the same kind that we have for the Lord, who is the personification of righteousness, and for the "brethren," who are striving to have Love, the righteousness of the Law, fulfilled in them through Christ. It means rather a sympathetic love; a benevolence such as God himself exercised toward the whole world of mankind. It does not mean that we are to love the world in the sense condemned by the Apostle when he said, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." (**1 John 2:15.**) It does mean the attainment of the condition indicated in the expression, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." (**John 3:16.**) It is a love for the world, which will not only be glad to see them lifted up out of degradation and sin to holiness and purity and righteousness, but which will be glad to cooperate to these ends as opportunities may offer--not, however, anticipating God's love and the development of his plan of the ages; but co-working with God in that great plan which he has promised shall eventually bring, during the Millennial age, blessing to every creature through the elect class now running in this race for attainment of the "mark," to win the great prize of joint-heirship with his Son. This perfect love, which, including the other developments, extends even to enemies and those who injure us and speak evil of us falsely for Christ's and righteousness' sake, is the fourth mark in the race--"the mark for the prize."

While it is well for us to notice these various steps in the progress of our race toward the "mark," we are to remember that the illustration does not fit perfectly, but that rather while there is this order of progression it is less distinctly marked in our experiences, in which duty-love but gradually leads into the higher forms, remaining, but subordinately, to the end. It is a part of the blessed arrangement of God that those who are running in this race are not reckoned with according to the flesh, but as "new creatures," according to the spirit, the mind, the will, the intention. We may never hope to attain to this grand "mark" of perfect Love in our flesh, so that every act and every word would give full proof of the real spirit of love which fills our hearts. Some may have greater weaknesses and defects in the flesh than others, and hence may be less able than others to uniformly and thoroughly show the real sentiments of their hearts. But God looketh at the heart; it is the heart that he sees running in this race; it is the heart which is to attain to this "mark" set before us in the Gospel--this mark of perfect love, which includes even our enemies. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

If now we see clearly that perfect love is "the *mark* of the prize," we see something to strive for in our daily lives; a condition which we can by God's grace attain, and which must be obtained if we would be counted worthy a place in the Kingdom. The Lord is not selecting the members of the Bride of Christ by an arbitrary election; neither is he selecting them on the lines of a mere sentimentality; he is selecting them on the lines of character, heart-development; and those who attain this likeness to his Son, this "mark" of the prize, this standard of what is pleasing and acceptable to the Father--these, and these alone, may have

confident hope of joint-heirship with our Lord. How important, then, that each runner in this race follow closely the Apostle's injunction to lay aside every weight and hindrance, and to run with patience the race set before us in the Gospel--"looking unto Jesus," the author of our faith, until he shall have become the finisher of it (Heb. 12:1)--giving us grace to conquer, and keeping us through his Word and through his providence unto the end of the race.

Each one on this race-course should examine himself, rather than examine others, in respect to progress in this narrow way; for each knows his own heart condition and the weaknesses of his own flesh better than any other knows these, the Lord alone excepted. Let us each note just where he is in the race-course, rejoicing that he is in the race at all; considering it a great privilege to be thus called and privileged to enter in this race. If we find that we have passed the first quarter-mark, let us rejoice and press on. If we find that we have passed the second also, let us rejoice so much the more, but not slack our running. If we find that we have passed the third quarter we may properly rejoice so much the more, and press with vigor on; and if we have attained to the fourth mark, of perfect love, which includes even enemies, we have indeed cause for great rejoicing. The prize is ours, if we but remain faithful. But, as the Apostle says, "Having done all, *stand*"--with all the armor on; stand in various testings which will then, as much as ever along the race-course, be brought to bear against us to divert us away from the mark, before the great Inspector and giver of rewards shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."--Eph. 6:13-17.

It is indispensable to those who have reached the mark of perfect love that they shall keep actively engaged in the service of the Lord, laying down their lives for the brethren; because he who loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, what assurance hath he that he really loves God, whom he hath not seen? (1 John 4:20.) Such must stand, not only as representatives of God and of the principles of righteousness, but as representatives of those strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, and in the faith of his Word,--ready and willing and efficient in the encouragement of other runners in the race-course, that they likewise may attain to the "mark." As the Apostle says: "As many, therefore, as are perfect, should be of this mind; and if in anything you think differently, God will reveal this to you; but to what we have attained, let us walk by the same line. Brethren, become joint-imitators of me, and watch those who are thus walking, as you have us for a pattern." --Phil. 3:15-17, *Diaglott*.

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THE MARK OF CRYSTALLIZATION OF CHARACTER

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."--Phil. 3:13,14.

IN THE EPISTLE to the Philippians, St. Paul expresses his full appreciation of his opportunity to gain a prize, something worthy of laying hold upon, of grasping fully, of getting possession of. What was that for which the great Apostle was striving and which he had not yet attained? He spoke of this thing as a *prize*, which he was pressing along to win.

We may view "the mark for the prize of the high calling" from two standpoints, both of which are correct. From one standpoint, this mark is that of *heart-likeness* to God's dear Son, of perfection of intention, of love for righteousness, for God, for the brethren of Christ, and for the world, even our enemies. This degree of character-development should be attained as early as possible in our Christian experience, and should be such that, were we to die at any time after its attainment, God would count us worthy of a share in the First Resurrection.

From the other standpoint, this "mark for the prize of the high calling" is that of crystallization of character in the likeness of our Lord. After having attained a heart-likeness to Christ, we must *hold it fast*, and see that in all the testings which the Lord permits to come upon us, we are counted by Him as overcomers, not in our own strength, but in that of our Redeemer. This mark of *crystallized* character is not attained so early in our Christian experience as is the mark of character-development. But by fighting the good fight until the end of our course, we *crystallize* our characters in love for the principles of righteousness, for God, for the brethren and even for our enemies. If thus faithful, we shall win the prize of glory, honor and immortality.

PERFECTION, NOT CONSECRATION, THE MARK

There is no reason to think that our *consecration* is the mark; for our testing, our proving comes *after* our consecration, and not *before* it. No one would be at the mark merely because he is consecrated, but because he had endured the testing, thus proving that his consecration was from the heart and that he was sincere in the devotion of his every power to the service of God. We cannot suppose that the mark is reached the next moment after consecration. Some degree of character-development must be possessed; there must be some mark of character, in order that God may count that person worthy of everlasting life.

God's standard of character is perfection, which must be manifested by loyalty and obedience under whatever tests He permits to come to individuals upon *any plane* of life. No one will get the prize of everlasting life unless he successfully passes those tests. We realize that the Church has been under trial throughout the Gospel Age, as to her worthiness to obtain "glory, honor and immortality"--joint-heirship with her Lord.--**Rom. 8:17.**

From the Scriptures we learn that throughout the Messianic Age the world will be tried by The Christ, and that even after passing that test they will not receive the reward of everlasting life until God shall have proved them at the end of Christ's reign by loosing Satan for a "little season." (**I Cor. 15:24; Rev. 20:7-10.**) The fact that the world is thus to be tried by both The Christ and God confirms the thought that God has a standard, or mark, of character to be attained by all those who are loyal and obedient to Him--on any plane of existence.

While this mark of character to be attained by the world during Messiah's reign is not the one to which St. Paul refers in our text, nevertheless there is such a character-mark to be reached by mankind. Those who then attain the mark will have everlasting life on the human plane. But those who attain the mark to which the Apostle refers will be given eternal life on the divine plane.

THE MARK OF CHARACTER-CRYSTALLIZATION

The Apostle was a noble example of one who had reached the mark. So far as we know, he was ready to die at any time; hence it was not this mark of character-development to which he had not attained. He had not yet attained to the *prize itself*, and could not do so until his change should come. He was constantly pressing along, trusting that God would give

him all the things that are in reservation for "them that love him." (*1 Cor. 2:9*.) We could not think the Apostle to mean that he would reach this mark of character-development *just at the moment before death*. This would be an absurdity of thought.

Our Lord Jesus was at the mark of perfect character at the time of His consecration; and He maintained Himself at the mark. As a sacrifice He would have been acceptable at any time. It was His part to consecrate His life and not to hold it back. It was the Father's part so to arrange matters that the Jews might not take our Lord until the Father's hour for Him had come. In everything that He did He submitted Himself to the Father's will. Our Lord spoke of His "cup" as the one which the Father had prepared for Him.--*John 18:11*.

If our Lord had determined for Himself the time and the manner of His death, then *He* was pouring the cup. If the Jews had determined these points, then *they* were pouring the cup. But neither our Lord nor the Jews did so, for both time and manner were foretold by the Prophets. Our Lord took the cup and accepted it *as the Father's providence for Him*. If the Father's providence had led to His death a year sooner or two years sooner, if the Father's will had been expressed in our Lord's crucifixion at an earlier time, even then it would have been well with Him. But He "learned obedience by the things which He suffered."--*Heb. 5:8; 2:10*.

At Jordan our Lord was shown to be perfect and to have made a perfect consecration, both by the descent of the Holy Spirit and by the voice of Jehovah. (*Matt. 3:16,17*.) He had also a perfect body--though it was earthly --in which the New Creature operated. But His *obedience* must be *tested--His loyalty even unto death*. Whatever the degree of testing to which our Lord might have been subjected, it was just the *right amount*, according to the Father's wisdom. Our Lord would have been just as much an overcomer had He died at any time after His consecration. But if He had died sooner than He did, it would merely have proved that the Father did not require as much *evidence* of our Lord's faithfulness and loyalty as He did require.

OUR LORD AN OVERCOMER AT CONSECRATION

Here some one may ask, "Is it proper to say that our Lord was an overcomer as a New Creature at the time when He made His consecration?"

Our answer is, Yes. An *overcomer* is a *victor*. The word does not imply that a man has completed the victory, however; for we sometimes say, He will lead them from victory to victory. So with our Lord. He continued faithful as an overcomer down unto death; but He was not counted as an overcomer unto death. Between the Father and our Lord as a human being there was no Mediator, and as a New Creature there was neither Robe to cover nor Advocate to represent in case of any deviation from the will of God; and the slightest deflection therefrom would have meant the Second Death.

The Scriptures give us two pictures of our Lord as an overcomer at His consecration, where He gained the first great victory over His flesh. The first of these pictures (*Lev. 16:11*), the killing of the bullock on the Day of Atonement, represents the death of our Lord's humanity at the moment when He consecrated Himself at Jordan. There He gained a victory and continued victorious until the end of His course.

The second picture is found in *Rev. 5:2-7*. Here our Lord is represented by a newly slain lamb. He was not this newly slain lamb at His death when He had finished His course, but at His consecration, when He began His course. The proclamation which the Revelator heard was, "Who is worthy to open the Book, and to loose the seals thereof?" We read that John wept much. "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the Book and to loose the seven seals thereof...And He came and took the Book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the

Throne." Our Lord alone was worthy of the honor of receiving the Divine Plan into His care. We also read that John looked and saw the newly slain Lamb open the Book.-- Rev. 6.

After our Lord had entered upon His consecration He was the newly slain Lamb. Then the Father gave into His hand the scroll of the great Divine Plan of the Ages--the scroll written on both inside and outside. The outside He was already able to read. But the inside, which contained information on spiritual things, remained sealed.

As soon as our Lord came up out of the water after His baptism, He was begotten of the Holy Spirit and began to understand spiritual things. "The heavens [higher things] were opened unto Him." The time when He began to be considered the slain Lamb, the time when the scroll was delivered to Him, was the time of His consecration.

SUBMISSION THE FIRST REQUISITE--PATIENT ENDURANCE THE SECOND

A good illustration of the process of character-development and crystallization is afforded by the work of a potter. First, he must select the right kind of clay, for some clays would produce very coarse ware, others would crack or warp in the drying, and still others would not stand the intense heat. Having selected the proper clay the potter subjects it to very many processes of grinding, mixing and wetting until it comes from the mill a soft, plastic mass of the consistency of tough dough, ready for the potter's use. Then comes the moulding into the article desired. The dish is formed, or shaped, with care and dried. Next it is placed in the kiln and fired with an intense heat for two or three days and nights. Then it requires a long time to cool before it can be removed from the kiln. But even then it is only a porous, leaky vessel, altogether unfit for use until it has been dipped into a liquid glaze, or slip, which it readily absorbs.

Again it is subjected to the heat of the glaze kiln, which not only melts the glaze, but converts it into a perfectly transparent glaze all over the surface, making the article beautifully smooth and comely. But if the vessel is of very choice porcelain, to be made still more attractive to the eye by decorations, the ornamentation and gilding must be done at this stage, and the vessel must again be placed in the kiln for a third firing. Some vessels which have stood all the other tests, fail at this point and are cast into the waste heap. But if the vessel passes successfully the last test, it is ready for the service for which it was designed.

So in our Lord's case. Not only was He perfect as a man, but His own *will* was in complete subjection to the *Father's will*. When trials came, there was no swerving, no twisting, no bending. He was of the proper material. His heart (applying this word to the mind) was of the proper character. So must it be with us. Those who will be accepted and found worthy of the great reward will be of His character-likeness in this respect; they will be *loyal to God's will*. Not only will they endeavor both to ascertain and to do the Father's will, but they will be in heart submission to that will *in every degree*. The "cup" they will be required to drink is the same that our Lord drank--and "*all of it!*"

To follow in His steps, we must first reach this mark of character-development; and having done all, we must *stand* there. It is well to repeat the thought that it will not do for us to think that one reaches the mark of proper character-development just at the *moment of death*. Character should be attained as soon as possible. But having reached this character-development called the "mark," it is for us to *stand faithful*, and not be thrust away from it by the opposition of the world, the flesh and the Devil. All such opposition must be endured before we can win the prize. Some of the noblest characters, who have been in an acceptable condition, and used of the Lord, did not get to the *mark* until they had passed through certain severe experiences.

"WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST"

The thought of the Apostle seems to be, Here is a certain line of conduct and character-development which God has marked out; and it is the same for all who are in the race. The life of Christ is the rule. If we would attain the mark, obtain the prize, we must follow this line, or rule, or mark.

The Apostle Paul had but one mind or will. "This *one thing* I do," he said. He was not a double-minded man, at one time thinking he would like to serve the Lord, at another time himself, and then again the Adversary, etc. He had accepted the Divine proposition to give *all* his talents to the service of the Lord. He had before his mind the great promise that God had made. For him there was but *one thing* in life.

The Scriptures tell us that during the Gospel Age God has sent out a special call, or invitation, and that those who have accepted that call have "exceeding great and precious promises" of wonderful things to look forward to. All who accept the call should practically forget all the trifling things of life in order to attain these promises. There is but one way to win the prize--by manifesting to God faithfulness, obedience and loyalty. *Character*, not *talent*, makes us acceptable. God could give any one intellectual powers as good as ours or better. He will not grant any one a place in the Kingdom on account of physical strength or endurance. He will not admit any one to the Kingdom because of worldly prosperity or honor of men, or because of riches.

CONDITIONS REQUIRED IN THE RACE

What then is God seeking? To what has He called us? The Apostle Peter says that God has "called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:3.) Certain conditions God requires of those who will run in the race. He requires that none be proud, but that they possess humility. And He will have no one in the Kingdom of His Elect who is weak, vacillating, so far as his mind is concerned. He may not have a strong intellect; but he must manifest to God that he has a strong will and firm determination, and that he has cut off everything in life in order to win the prize. He must also demonstrate his loyalty to God. He must not merely seek glory, but he must recognize and appreciate his responsibilities to God.

Loyalty is one of the great tests of character-- loyalty to God, to His Word, loyalty to principle. Whatever follows, the Christian must be submissive to God, trustful and faithful. To such alone could we expect God to give the great blessings promised to overcomers. Hence we see that the Apostle was quite right in giving up all that he might serve God, that he might please the Father, and thus attain to this glorious reward of joint-heirship with His Son.

"EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVETH"

Not necessarily all who *make* a *consecration*, but all whose consecration God *accepts*, all whom He begets of His Holy Spirit to become New Creatures, will have the opportunity of reaching this mark of *crystallization* of character before they die. These will have full testing-- "Every son *whom He receiveth.*" (Heb. 12:6.) This promise guarantees that they shall have trials and difficulties to develop them in the proper character-likeness of our Lord; and that none of their experiences will be cut short of this attainment. God will see to it that they have the full opportunity to develop character-likeness to Christ. Those who turn to sin wilfully, deliberately, will fall into the Second Death. Others may fall from the priestly class into the Great Company. But even these must have sufficient time to manifest their loyalty to God.

At the time of His consecration, our Lord was at the mark by virtue of His *perfection*. We are not at the mark at the time of our consecration; for we are *imperfect*. But we wish to do the Lord's will; and we have given ourselves to ascertain what that will is in order that we may render intelligent obedience thereto. In our Lord's case He had no such imperfection to overcome as we have. At the time of His consecration He loved His neighbor as Himself, and He loved God with all His heart.

When we consecrate ourselves, we agree to do this; but we do not know what it means; just as St. Peter "wist not" what he said at the time of the transfiguration in the Mount: "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." (*Matt. 17:4*.) Neither did the two Apostles know what they were asking when they requested Jesus that they might sit the one on His right and the other on His left hand in the Kingdom. Our Lord said to them, "Ye know not what ye ask."--*Matt. 20:22*.

Since at the time of our consecration we do not fully understand what we do, therefore we do a great deal of running to reach the mark. This our Lord had no need to do; for He was perfect. At consecration He was at the mark of perfect character, so that had He died at any subsequent time He would have received the reward of the Father, who said, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (*Matt. 3:17*.) At His baptism our Lord was at that mark of character which merited the promised reward of the Father, and to which we must attain before we can secure everlasting life, either on the plane of glory or otherwise.

Stephen, who was martyred very soon after Pentecost, must have lived habitually near to the Lord; for he, like Nathaniel, was an "Israelite indeed" in whom was no guile. The fact that the Truth of God came to such as these men means that so far as their heart attitude was concerned they had been very near to the Lord under the Law as their schoolmaster (Greek, pedagogue,) so that when brought to Christ they could quickly learn of Him. So it appears to be with us now. The differences in our natural education in right and wrong, in truth and error, are such that we cannot tell just how long it will take for each to attain to the character-likeness of our Lord and thus to prove worthy of eternal life.

"PUT YE ON THE LORD CHRIST"

We have suggested that the Lord's people, at the time of their consecration and begetting of the Holy Spirit, are not ready for the Kingdom, but require development, which time alone can accomplish. Notwithstanding this suggestion, is there not a sense in which God's people are regarded *perfect* at the time of their consecration--at the moment of their acceptance? Our answer is, Yes; they are *counted* so, but are not so actually. The flesh is reckoned perfect so that God can accept their offering.

But at this time the New Creature is merely a babe in Christ and has not yet attained to the stature of manhood. Therefore, the necessity exists for entering the School of Christ and for "putting on Christ," as the Apostle expresses it. We begin to put on Christ after consecration, and after our begetting of the Holy Spirit. The babe grows into a child, and the child into a man. (*Eph. 4:14,13*.) The work of growing up into Christ is necessary before the child of God would be fit for the Kingdom. The difference between a babe in Christ and one fit for the Kingdom is that the latter has been tried and tested and has proved himself to be an overcomer.

When our Lord Jesus was at Jordan He was an overcomer. (*Heb. 10:9*.) He was perfect and had correspondingly a larger appreciation of what He did than we have respecting our course when we consecrate. But He tells us, "Fear not, little flock," "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."--*Luke 12:32; John 16:33*.

Yet even in our Lord's case, while He was an overcomer at the moment of His consecration, He really did not win the prize of the divine nature until the end of His race-course, until there had been *demonstrated* a sufficiency of worthiness for that high exaltation; and we know that the Father continued tests of obedience even unto the death on the cross. It was not until after this that our Lord was fully accepted as an overcomer, to whom it was granted to sit with the Father in His Throne.

THE GREAT TEST IS TO REMAIN AT THE MARK

The possession of perfection necessarily means that one is at the mark, as in the case of Adam. The test is, not whether one can *reach* the mark, but whether one will *remain at the mark*--"having done all, to *stand*." (*Eph. 6:13.*) When we reach the mark of character which God approves in every sense of the word, let us *continue there*. When our Lord came into the world He was perfect, loyal, at the mark--God's standard, perfection. Whether or not He would be moved away from the mark by the contradiction of sinners against Himself, was to be proved. But none of these tests led Him to abandon His determination to continue at the mark. So it should be with us--to the best of our ability.

The Spirit of God is the same whether manifested in Himself or in angels or in men or in New Creatures. We do not find the Spirit of God manifest in the majority of men, because of sin. We would find the Spirit of God manifest in angels. We should find the Spirit of God very manifest in the saints, who should carry with them into the new relationship all that they have naturally of the character-likeness to the Lord. The graces of spirit exhibited in the Lord's people are properly to be considered fruits of the Holy Spirit; for their possessors have become New Creatures, have entered into the race for the prize of the high calling. Some saints might be able by reason of natural qualities to make more rapid progress than would others in developing and perfecting these fruits and graces of the Spirit.

"RESPECT UNTO THE RECOMPENSE OF THE REWARD"

Sometimes the question arises, Should not the Lord's people preferably strive for character-likeness to Christ, with no particular desire as to what the Lord's reward will be? We answer, No. We should have "respect unto the recompense of the reward." In order to have the proper respect for the reward which God promises, it is necessary that we hold it up before us continually, and that we never lose sight of the prize.

Our Lord Jesus does not deprecate this looking at the prize. Listen to His words: "Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine Own Self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." (*John 17:5.*) Thus He prayed to the Father for the reward which the manifestation of His obedience would bring. So it should be with us; not that we have a right to insist that our efforts be rewarded, but that we should think of the blessing which God has promised those who love Him, as "exceeding great and precious." Many in the nominal church do not see these things.

Let us keep the goal distinctly before our eyes. Doubtless the Lord meant the knowledge of the prize to serve as a stimulus for our upbuilding and strengthening. We look for "glory, honor and immortality"; and it is right for us to seek for them. Any other attitude would be false modesty. If the thought that it is presumption for us to aspire to the high calling comes before our minds, let us remember that our Lord wants us to be so inspired by the "great and precious promises" that we will work for these things which He has set before us, and that it would be presumption for us to *refuse* what He *offers* to us.

FREE MORAL AGENCY A FACTOR IN CHARACTER-DEVELOPMENT

Character may be viewed from two different standpoints. When Adam was created, he was a man of great and good character--"crowned with glory and honor." He was perfect, the image of God. There is a difference, however, between a character thus *given*, and one that is *developed* and *tested* by the exercise of *free will*. Our Heavenly Father desires that His intelligent creatures exercise their wills. Therefore instead of giving Adam a part of His own character-likeness and eliminating that which we call moral choice, He chose to give Adam His character-likeness, including free moral agency. "So God created man in His own image." God foreknew the fall of man and all the circumstances connected with it. He knew that the permission of evil for a time would ultimately result in great blessings for all. He knew that the time would come when every creature in heaven and in earth would be obedient to Him, not only because there was no opportunity of doing otherwise, but from *choice*.

Those who are appreciative of God's character should desire to have this character-likeness. Only such will merit everlasting life amongst either angels or men. God is testing along these lines the worthiness of those who are on trial for life eternal. Hence, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him" as "worship Him in spirit and in truth"--*John 4:23,24*.

WE MUST "LOVE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATE INIQUITY"

In the formation of character, we see that the lessons which we learn in the School of Christ are very helpful to us. Originally, man was made in the image of God. Yet in us the image is blurred, indistinct. Those who learn the lessons now and appreciate them to the full will be given no further trial. Those who have not had a sufficiency of opportunity will have a full trial in the Age to come. Under the discipline, the chastenings and the rewards of that time, they will learn how much better is righteousness than sin, Truth than error. They will develop in the character-likeness of God, which Adam lost, and will see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. They will learn both to *will* and to *do* righteousness. All who fail to learn this lesson will be judged unworthy of eternal life.

We see that the angels willed of themselves whether they would be obedient, or be disobedient and enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. All the holy angels, who are now in favor with God, are such as have had their testing and have come off victors. Their example will prove more and more a lesson to us as we come to understand it. As a result of this knowledge, we see in God the noblest sentiment that could actuate our Creator and Father in dealing with His creatures; and we are glad that we have chosen to do His will concerning us.

Finally it is important that we should keep in mind the fact that since true love on our part will manifest itself in *obedience*, then *disobedience* is an evidence of a *loss of love*, as viewed from the Lord's standpoint, a deflection from loyalty, a failure to endure the tests. We must agree that the Lord's standpoint of judgment is a reasonable one. Should one ask, How would it be if we should disobey through ignorance? The answer is, that the Lord has made provision against our ignorance: first, He has given us the Word of Truth, "that the man of God may be perfect [perfectly informed], thoroughly furnished unto all good works"; and second, He has promised to supply such helps to the spirit of holiness and the understanding of His Word, as will enable us to do what is pleasing in His sight.--*2 Tim. 3:17; John 16:13,14*.

Love is the crown of all graces, "the fulfilling of the Law." Without a fervent, glowing love, it will be impossible to render obedience or to stand the tests for development and crystallization of character arranged for by Divine Love. Our Lord tells us that He was

beloved of the Father; and the Father Himself declared, "This is My beloved Son." We can readily see why our *Lord Jesus* was greatly beloved, for He expressed and fully manifested the Father's love. But it *astounds* us to know that this same love is exercised by the Father toward *us!* "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon *us*, that *we* should be called the *sons of God!*" "The Father Himself loveth you!"--*I John 3:1; John 16:27.*

LOVING OBEDIENCE BRINGS JOY AND PEACE

Let us, dearly beloved, be more than ever careful respecting the Word of the Lord; let us not by negligence give evidence of a decay of love. Our Lord points out that His continuance in the Father's love, as the well-beloved Son, with all which this implies, was because of His *obedience* to the *Father's will*; and that following the same line, He must require that *we* should be obedient to Him if we would *abide* in His *love* and share His Throne and glory.--*John 15:10.*

Our Lord's instructions and commandments are not intended to terrify us, nor to deprive us of happiness. On the contrary, "These things have I spoken unto you that *My joy* may be *in you*, and that your joy might be *filled full.*" (*John 15:11.*) Those who give surest evidence of living nearest the Lord well know that obedience to the Lord's words, together with the privilege thus obtained of abiding in Him and His love, is the greatest joy, a joy which wholly outweighs all the trifling pleasures which the world has to offer. It is the joy and peace which "passeth all understanding," which rules in the heart, and which brings with it the promise, the assurance, "not only of the life which now is, but also of that which is to come."--*I Tim. 4:8.*

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THE RACE, THE PRIZE, THE COURSE

UNDOUBTEDLY the Apostle does in two of his epistles more or less clearly represent the Christian as running a race to win a prize. But as is usual with all figures and parables there seems to be room for slightly divergent views of his meaning, or rather of how to apply his figure of speech to the recognized facts. Let us be glad that the *facts* are generally very clearly seen. This is the important matter anyway.

Shortly before St. Paul was executed he wrote, "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 Tim. 4:7,8.*) If this was written six months before he died or even one month or only six days should we understand it to mean that the day before he wrote or the year before it would not have been true? We think not. We must believe also, that when, some time before, the same Apostle wrote, "I am in a strait betwixt two" as to choice between living and dying, he must have felt equally sure that he was at the mark which would win for him the great prize.

But we cannot assume that the Apostle was *always* at that *mark* which would win for him the prize. Surely he, like all of us, was first *begotten* of the Spirit and subsequently *quickened* of the Spirit. Surely during the period between the begetting and the quickening neither he nor we could be at the "*mark*" for the prize.

There must, therefore, be recognized a *mark* or standard of character necessary to the overcomers, which is not possessed at the beginning of the course nor usually for a considerable time thereafter--and a mark or character development which may be possessed a

considerable time before death. Since "love is the fulfilling of the law of God" is it not proper that we consider it to be the mark or standard? We have, therefore, assumed that PERFECT LOVE is the standard of our acceptance with God to life eternal: and that to die before attaining it would insure our losing the prize, as death at any time after reaching this mark would insure us the crown of life.

Perfect love includes love for God, for the brethren, for our own, for our neighbors and for our enemies; and much of the teaching of the Scriptures is devoted to the outlining of this perfect love and to encouraging God's people to strive for it; for it represents the fruits of the Spirit which must be grown or developed as the fruits of the vine. The pruning of the branches is to bring this fruitage to perfection, for without it the branch will be cut off from the Vine.

True, some things are *imputed* to us from the time we become members of Christ; purity is imputed, but not the fruit of the Vine--Love. That must be developed. Hence it behooves every Christian to run, to strive, to attain this acceptable standard or mark. All of this is surely true whether the Apostle had in his mind a race illustration or not.

When the Apostle exhorts, "Having done all, *stand!*" it implies that the race has been run, the acceptable mark of character attained before death. And is it not thus with all the "overcomers?" Did we not begin our Christian experience with a mere duty-love toward God and the brethren? Did we not "go on unto perfection"--progressing toward perfect love? True, the Apostle says, "Not as though I were already perfect"--and we with him may well disclaim *actual* perfection. But from the time he *in heart* reached the mark of perfect love, the righteousness or perfection of the Law was reckoned or accounted to him. Hence he adds, "Let as many [of you] as be perfect be thus minded."

But what, if anything, is expected of those who reach this mark of perfect love? Ah! very much! Only after they reach it do they begin to tread in the footsteps of Jesus around and around that mark on its every side. Being actually perfect our Lord needed not to run to get to the mark, for he was actually there, even as the perfect man. It was for him to "stand" firmly and uncompromisingly at this "mark" as it is exhorted of us that after "having done all" we should stand complete in him. This *standing* at the mark is the real trial, the real test. To stand is to be an "overcomer" of the world, the flesh and the devil. The *attainment* of the mark is often tedious and slow, but it should not be. Since it is merely a state of the mind it surely might be attained speedily, whereas from lack of zeal many are long years about it and some never gain it,-- are never quickened, and will never, therefore, be born of the Spirit.

It is after we have reached the mark of perfect love that we, like our Lord, must endure hardness and fight the good fight. The encouragement held out is the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" promised to those who display special valor in the King's service.

When the Apostle says, "A man is not crowned except he strive lawfully," he in other words is saying that a man must be at the mark of perfect love (the fulfilling of the law) ere his strivings would be meritorious or acceptable in God's sight.

Another possible view of the race is to suppose a line marked out and that line to represent perfect love, each runner being expected to keep as close to that line as possible to the end of life. But this view does not allow for or explain St. Paul's having finished his course weeks or months before he died, nor his "strait betwixt two," years before that. So then whatever view illustrates the facts best to our minds let us enjoy it, and meantime rejoice that the facts are so clear and plain as to be beyond dispute.

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STANDING AT THE MARK

WE HAVE heretofore suggested what we now wish to further, if possible, emphasize; namely, the fact that there is a Divine standard of holiness, of righteousness, which, if it be not attained, will mean our non-acceptance by the Lord as members of his Elect Church; and, more than this, our unfitness for eternal life upon any plane. This standard of character, or mark of perfection, as we have pointed out, is not a standard or mark of fleshly perfection, because the Lord accepts amongst his consecrated disciples those of various degrees of mental, moral and physical degeneracy. The justification which he provides makes up for the blemishes of each, for the more blemished as well as for the less blemished. The robe of his righteousness imputed is as necessary to the noblest as to the most degraded, and renders the latter as acceptable as the former.

From this standpoint it is recognized that the heart, the renewed mind, the renewed will, is the spirit-begotten New Creature which is on trial before God. It has professed a thorough consecration to righteousness and opposition to sin, a complete deadness to it, and a determination to mortify, to deaden, the will of the flesh to the extent of its ability. From the very start this condition is pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. Nevertheless, it is Scripturally represented at first as being merely a "babe" condition, according to one illustration, and according to another merely a "begotten" condition. Progress must be made, character must be developed, and then, further, it must be tested. "Not every one who saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom." Not every one who professes consecration, and newness of life, and self-sacrifice in the interests of truth and righteousness, can be accepted as a joint-heir with Christ. Time must be given for development and for proving.

Love for God they have, from the very outset. But it is not love of the highest type. As already shown, it is largely, if not entirely, duty love. The "babe" in Christ must feed upon the sincere milk of the Word, that he may grow strong. As the spiritual food is appropriated, and spiritual exercise is taken, strength of character comes in, the eyes of our understanding open more widely, and lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the Divine character are discerned which were not visible at the first. This brings us to a higher type of love for God--a love for his glorious character.

Meantime, also, a sympathetic love for the world is gradually developing in the spiritual "babe." As the principles of the Divine character are seen and appreciated, the New Creature begins to apply these to everything in life, and hence increases in sympathetic love toward man and beast, friend and foe. Another element of love is gradually attained also: At first the "babe" in Christ loves some of the brethren--the nobler, the gentler, the better educated ones, etc.; but gradually, as the Divine character is discerned, and the Divine love becomes shed abroad in the heart, this love broadens out so that it includes every member of the family of God and every member of the fallen race--yea, even enemies. With this development comes spiritual activity, called in the Scriptures quickening--"You hath he quickened." This quickening implies activity in the *service* of God, and the *service* of the brethren, and if outside opportunity beyond this permit, it would mean an activity in the *service* of all needing assistance such as we could give.

The Christian life here illustrated, which began as a "babe in Christ," has by this time reached the standard of manhood in Christ, and is at the Mark of Perfect Love--for God, for the brethren, for the neighbor and for the enemies. Not until this point shall have been reached could such a person be considered fit for heaven, or for eternal life on any plane.

We are to bear in mind that there is no development in heaven, and hence perfection of character must be attained by the saints before they die. And, similarly, the world during

the Millennium must attain this perfect development before the close of the age in order to be fit for eternal life according to the Divine promise and standards.

Is it asked to what extent will this standard of perfect love in the heart manifest itself in the flesh? We answer, that during the Millennial Age it will manifest itself perfectly in the flesh, for the world then will be judged according to the actual attainments in their flesh, and perfection by restitution will be not only possible, but required. But as for us of the Gospel Age, we who are being judged not according to the flesh but according to the spirit, to what extent will the new mind, the new nature, when at the Mark of Perfect Love, be able to govern and control the flesh? Our answer is, that the degrees of control will vary much, according to the degrees of imperfection with which the mortal body is afflicted.

The only standard which we can set forth is that the new nature, new mind, new will, would be very regretful, very sorrowful, in respect to any laches, or errors, of its mortal body. The Lord would know (and perhaps the brethren also to some extent) of the New Creature's endeavor to control the mortal body by the degree of its grief in connection with every error, and its continually renewed effort to bring every power of the body, and even every thought, into complete subjection to the will of God in Christ. Any sympathy with sin is an evidence that the New Creature is not at the Mark. And no sympathy with sin, but constant endeavor for righteousness, is evidence that it is at the Mark.

Some may be at this Mark for a longer and some for a shorter period. Our Lord was surely at it from the beginning of his ministry. He was tested there, while at the Mark of perfect love. All the besetments of the Adversary and of the world failed to move him from that position of perfect love. He laid down his life at this Mark. St. Paul was surely at this Mark for many years before his actual death. He was continually laying down his life for the brethren, continually serving his enemies and praying for them; and surely he was continually loving and serving the Lord with his every power and talent.

No Christian should be satisfied with a long delay in reaching the Mark. The milk of the Word should be received, its strength should be appropriated, spiritual sight and spiritual energy should quickly follow, and strong meat of Divine Truth should speedily bring to full maturity the Christian character. And once attained, it should be held at any cost through all the trials and difficulties which the Adversary, and the world, and the flesh, might be permitted to bring against us. The severest temptations come after we have reached the Mark-temptations to slackness in service of God; temptations to withhold parts of our sacrifice; temptations to deal unkindly, uncharitably, unlovingly with the brethren, or unjustly with our neighbor, or ungenerously with our enemies. All of these must be resisted as we prize our eternal life, as we prize the promise of joint-heirship and fellowship with our Redeemer in His Kingdom.

Whoever sees this subject clearly must realize that as a Christian he has to do with a great proposition which will thoroughly test his loyalty, his courage, his zeal, his love. He will need to remember the Lord's comforting assurances of grace to help in every time of need if he would come off a victor and not be dismayed, nor have his courage beaten down by the Adversary's attacks.

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THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

"Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it."--1 Cor. 4:12.

SINCE GOD HIMSELF is Love, the very highest ideal of perfection which He has given to His people is the standard of Love. We cannot imagine a higher standard than this,

nor one more difficult to attain. It is the special characteristic without which none will get the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This mark of perfection was stamped on our Lord. He delighted to do the Father's will in *all* respects, even to the extent of *laying down His life* for those who, on account of Adam's sin, were under the sentence of death.

Our Lord did not, however, need to run toward this mark of perfect love; for He was *always perfect*--"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (**Heb. 7:26**.) The Church, on the contrary, are naturally imperfect and fallen by heredity; but we have been washed from all stain of guilt in the blood of the Lamb. The mark of perfect love *we* attain *gradually*. We first reach perfection of heart intention, and then we pass through experiences which crystallize our characters in righteousness. In all of these trials and difficulties, we must demonstrate that, if our physical organism were perfect, we would always do God's holy will.

As we see this quality of love in our Lord Jesus, we appreciate it, even though we realize that we are not up to the standard which God requires. Nevertheless, our great desire is that we have perfect love for everything in harmony with the will of God. After we have reached perfection of heart intention, the test is no longer upon us of *attaining* the mark, but of *pressing down upon* that mark *until our character has been crystallized*. As the Apostle Paul says, "Having done all, *stand*." (**Eph. 6:13**.) We do not progress beyond *perfect love*; for no one can do more than to have a full desire that God's will be done in him. He could do no more, whether he lived five years longer or fifty years. Perfect love is the mark toward which he pressed, and he can attain no higher standard.

While one stands at the mark of Love, the *tests* grow *stronger*. We pass through experiences--often trivial enough--which tempt us to malice, envy, anger and strife. If we are overcome by these tests, and fall away from the condition of *perfect love*, we shall lose the prize for which we are running. (**Phil. 3:14**.) One who thus falls away may get into the Great Company for development; but if he were to lose all love, he would go into the Second Death. In either of these cases, the person has moved away from the mark of perfect Love, the only standard for those who desire to be in the Kingdom and to participate in the glorious things which God has in store for those who love Him supremely.

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R4346 [set]

WHY ONE TAKEN AND THE OTHER LEFT

The question materially and properly arises, Why was Herod permitted to kill the Apostle James and not permitted to kill the Apostle Peter? Was St. James unworthy of any further part in the Gospel work, or less worthy than the Apostle Peter? Was there not enough work for all, or was St. James permitted to die because he was ready for death, because he had finished his course? And was St. Peter preserved alive because he had not finished his course? None of these suggestions seems to be the correct one. Rather let us surmise that both apostles were loyal and acceptable to the Lord and at the mark of perfect Love, fit for the Kingdom. Let us suppose that the Lord preserved Peter because he had a special work for him to do, and that he allowed the beheading of St. James, not because there was nothing more that he could do, but because by such a death as he experienced and at such a time he could accomplish the most that was possible--a work which could not have been so well done at another time, nor by the death of another person. St. James, apparently, was the leader amongst the apostles and his execution would be a great shock to the cause, awakening the followers of our Lord to renewed zeal and energy in the proclamation of the Truth. It doubtless served to increase the appreciation of the people for the apostles, causing them to

give still more earnest heed to their teachings and to realize how greatly the cause of the Lord had been made dependent upon them, the "twelve apostles" of the Church.--Rev. 21:14.

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R2877 [set]

"FINALLY, BE ALL OF ONE MIND"

"Finally, be all of one mind [harmonious--in accord], having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."--1 Pet. 3:8,9.

HARMONY does not mean alike-ness. Rather it signifies unity with diversity: and this is the meaning of the Greek word translated "of one mind" in our text. The Lord's will respecting his people does not contemplate exact sameness, wholly ignoring individual characteristics and peculiarities; on the contrary, a diversity with harmony is more desirable than a sameness; as, for instance, it is the harmonious union of the seven colors that constitutes the beauty of the rainbow. So also in music: one strikes a chord on the piano or the organ and the result is harmony, oneness, union--the variety of the notes gives a melody which could not be obtained from any one of them, or from a sameness of equal volume. This is the thought the Apostle's words give us in respect to God's people; they are of various natural temperaments and dispositions and peculiarities, and the divine alchemy by which the human is transmuted into the spiritual, the old mind into the new mind, does not wholly destroy, and is not intended to destroy, the elements of character and disposition; but is intended to take from each one its dross and imperfection and discordancy, and thus to permit all eventually to unite in and develop into a harmonious whole.

The Lord does not expect, however, that this condition of complete harmony, will be attained by his people the instant of their consecration. On the contrary, as the Apostle indicates in our text, this attainment of harmony is the result, the glorious consummation, -- rather than the beginning of the work of grace in the Lord's people: he says, "*finally*," not primarily, we are to be all of one mind--harmonious. It requires long years, generally, in the school of Christ, for his disciples to so grow in grace and in knowledge and in love,--ere they reach the glorious condition expressed in our text, even "finally."

The Apostle Paul intimates that we are to continue so to grow in grace and in knowledge, and in love, as to attain in heart, in will, the stature of a perfect man in Christ. The "babe" in Christ has not the stature of a "man," and requires first the milk of the Word, and subsequently the "strong meat," that it may grow thereby, and finally attain to the ideal condition represented in our text,--a condition of harmony with the Lord and with each other, which indicates that the work of grace has well progressed-- that the mark of perfect love has been well attained in the heart, even though it be not possible still to fully express it in every word and act of life.

While we should ever remember (lest otherwise we should be discouraged), that the attainment of a control of our own spirits, our own minds, and the bringing of these into full accord, full harmony, with the Lord and, so far as possible, into accord with all of the Lord's people who are in accord with him, is to be "finally," nevertheless we are not to delay our endeavor to reach that final and grand development to which the Apostle exhorts us in our text. We are to have it continually before us as the standard, the ideal, the aim, and although

we may fail time and again, if we are rightly exercised in the matter we will be stronger as the result of every failure; for each failure will show us more clearly than we discerned previously the weak points of our characters, naturally resulting from the fall. And if each weak point be carefully noted and guarded against as respects the future we will come by and by, by the grace of God and under the direction of our great Teacher, by his Word and example, and providential leadings, to that subdued condition, that harmonized condition, which would accord to the expression of the text. And to such, looking back, even the failures which subsequently recognized led to greater fortification against the wiles of the Adversary and the weaknesses of the flesh, may be seen to have been overruled by the Lord for our blessing according to his promise that all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

As we *finally*, in larger and larger measure, attain to harmony--to the subduing of our natural dispositions toward contention, gradually getting these combative tendencies into accord with the Lord and his Word and his Spirit, and into accord with those who are his, our fellow-soldiers in this battle for the right, our condition will be what the Apostle here describes; viz., we will have compassion one of another. We will expect to see and will see "the brethren" striving for the mastery over self and we will be sympathetic, compassionate; so that if they err through weakness of the flesh, we will be glad to restore such in the spirit of meekness, remembering ourselves also lest we should be tempted (Gal. 6:1). We will love them as brethren ought to love--heartily, thoroughly --such a love and such a sympathy, such a compassion, as would lead us to do everything within our power for their assistance;--especially along the lines of spiritual assistance, in the conquering of sin, and in growth in grace and knowledge and love;--but, nevertheless, also in temporal matters as we have opportunity, as may be possible to us.

This compassion and brotherly love amongst the spiritual brethren, even as respects temporal matters, cannot surely be less than it would be amongst natural brethren. Indeed, inasmuch as the spiritual relationship is the higher, the nobler, the grander of the two, without detracting anything from the love and affection and obligations toward the fleshly brotherhood, it would imply that the spiritual would appeal to us still more strongly, so that we would do all for a brother in Christ in a temporal way that we would do for any earthly brother--and more abundantly. The Apostle sets this standard, saying, that we are to "do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith."

This of course does not mean that we are to be negligent of those of our own immediate households and our special responsibilities to these; but it does mean that aside from these, the spiritual brethren should have the first place in our hearts and in our sympathies and in our love, and in all that this would imply in the way of sharing with them both the spiritual and the temporal good things which we enjoy, according to their necessities. Those who have reached this condition of heart-harmony with the Lord and with his gracious plan will have had such an experience in attaining to this position themselves that it will make them pitiful of others,--sympathetic in the difficulties and trials of others; and it will make them "courteous," polite, "gentle toward all."

In a word, according to the Scriptural standard, the elect Church of Christ should be the most polished, the most refined, the most polite, the most generous, the most kind, of all the people in the world;--and should be all these in the most absolute sense; not in the mere sense of an outward form and appearance of kindness, gentleness, etc., so common in the world; but a gentleness, a kindness, proceeding from the heart, proceeding from an appreciation of the Lord's spirit and the spirit of the truth, the spirit of love, and the spirit of justice, also. It is a great matter that we learn to be thoroughly just, and in all of our affairs to do unto others as we would wish them to do unto us,--that we accord them the same liberties that we ourselves would wish to enjoy. Truly, the law of God is a wonderful law, and truly

the people [R2879 : page 298] who are taught of the Lord and trained in harmony with the divine will, must be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Combative people will always (while in the flesh) feel a disposition to retaliate; but those who have learned of the Lord the lesson of self-control, and who have developed meekness and brotherly-kindness and pity, will thereby be prepared to fulfil the demands of our text,--to not render evil for evil, or railing for railing. And looking to the Lord as the pattern they will see how it was with him, that "When he was reviled he reviled not again." Not because his enemies had found in him something that could properly and justly be reviled and evil spoken of;-- nor because his enemies were so nearly perfect that he could find nothing in them to revile and speak evil of; but because he was so full of submission to the divine will that he was enabled to take the scoffs and railings of the people, and to bear these humbly and patiently, and to remember that *even hereunto he was called*, that he should endure patiently and learn the lessons, and prove himself faithful, and develop and demonstrate his true character, and feel and manifest his pity for the people, in their blindness and ignorance, and his love for them.

And so it must be with us as we grow in our Lord's character-likeness. We also will be less disposed to rail at those who rail, and to revile those who revile us. We also will be ready to suffer the loss of all things, and to do so with cheerfulness; yea, even to rejoice in the trials and difficulties of this present time, knowing, as the Apostle declares, that these are working out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. We note here the harmony between Peter's statement of this matter and our Lord's statement of it: "Bless them that curse you; bless and curse not" (Phil. 3:8; 2 Cor. 4:17; Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14). So the Apostle says we should rather render blessing. If we have not yet attained to this high standard which is at the end of the race, the mark of perfect love, where we love our enemies and are ready and willing and anxious to bless them, to help them, to desire their uplifting out of darkness and degradation, and to wish and do all that we can in harmony with this, the divine plan, let us not be discouraged; but let us press onward, that as soon as possible we may reach this point, which is the mark of perfected character. For, as the Apostle says, "even hereunto we were called, that we might inherit a blessing."

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R2755 [sel]

"WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?"

No wonder, then, the inspired Apostle declares that "Love is the fulfilling of the Law!" We can readily see that only in proportion as love is in the heart can the divine law be fulfilled by any. This does not interfere with the Scriptural declaration that "the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." The reason why the Jews could not keep the Law was that they did not have perfect love in their hearts, and the same difficulty would stand in the way of us who are of the New Covenant, were it not that our Covenant makes for us the favorable arrangement through the precious blood of Christ, that our intentions as new creatures are accepted of God as instead of our natural hearts. Those who have entered into covenant relationship with God through Christ, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, are walking "after the spirit," following *after* love, even tho they be not able to walk *up to* the spirit --up to the full standard of love in every thought and word. Their efforts in this direction are accepted as tho they were perfect, and day by day, week by week, and year by year, under the Lord's instruction and leading by his Word, and providence, they are making progress in this good way--learning more and more what love is,

as they see it exhibited in the Lord's Word and plan and character, and seeking and attaining more and more to the likeness of God's dear Son, whose perfect love was a copy of the Father's. As shown elsewhere, it is this "mark" of perfect Love, which must be attained in the heart, so that our wills will be fully in accord with it (however imperfect our expression of those wills in words and deeds, by reason of imperfections of the flesh). And to grow in this grace of love to God necessarily implies a growth also in love toward mankind; and especially toward those who are in sympathy and harmony with righteousness. (1 John 4:8,20,21; 5:1).

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R4190 [set]

"PAY THY VOWS UNTO THE LORD"

DEAR BROTHER AND PASTOR:--

I have been wanting to write you for some time concerning the matter of *proper conduct between the sexes* in the Ecclesia. Some items have come to my attention within the last few months, that I feel it incumbent upon me again to call your attention to the subject. I am not at liberty to write you as plainly and fully as I might, concerning the specific instances of which I know; but I have both heard and seen enough to become convinced that the Adversary is making a strong attack along these lines all over the country, deceiving some of the dear brethren (who are *old enough*, both in the flesh and spirit, to *know better*) into thinking that hugs and kisses and letters, laden with terms of excessive endearment, etc., are proper expressions of *spiritual affection* between brothers and sisters in no way related in the flesh.

The *consequences* of such an attitude of mind would surely be a decline of spirituality; sometimes with unkindness toward and neglect of those who have a *right* to the affections lavished on others. If the Adversary accomplishes his ultimate design, gross immorality and public disgrace of the cause we love will surely follow. Shall it come to this? God forbid! *He* can, and I believe will, deliver us. If the heart-intentions of the dear brethren are pure (as I *believe* them to be), then certainly this matter is the deception of Satan himself.

What I desire earnestly to entreat of you now, dear Brother Russell, is that you publish in the WATCH TOWER an article giving in plain and unmistakable terms *your* views of this matter, as outlined in the extract from DAWN-STUDIES, VOL. VI., pp. 489, 490, enclosed herewith. This seems to me particularly desirable, as I understand *your* writings as well as Scripture are being twisted into a rebuke to any who dare criticise this kind of conduct, as "surmising evil," etc.

Forgive me, dear brother, if I have been over-bold in presenting this matter; I feel very deeply on the subject. With kindest Christian love, I remain, yours in the King's service, HORACE E. HOLLISTER,--*Ill.*

PROMISCUOUS ASSOCIATION NOT IMPLIED

(EXTRACT FROM VOL. VI., DAWN-STUDIES, PP.489, 490)

"The Lord clearly teaches us, through the Apostle, that his preferences and favors are alike to all the New Creatures--according to their zeal, according to their love for him and the principles represented in him; and that conditions of sex, race, color, etc., of the mortal body have no bearing with him in his judgment of his people, in his estimation of them, and in the

distribution of the final rewards. Knowing the Father's view of this matter, all of the New Creation must take a similar view of it, must esteem all New Creatures in Christ Jesus as "brethren," must be kindly affectioned toward all, must seek to serve all, must know *no partiality* amongst the brethren, except such as the Lord himself showed--in that he favored and honored those who showed the largest measure of zeal for his cause.

"But all this impartiality, this ignoring of sex, color, race, etc., belongs to us as the New Creation, and only partially affects our mortal bodies, and their relationship with each other and with the world. Hence, the [R4191 : page 186] *proprieties of conduct and relationship between the sexes must be maintained by the New Creation.*

"These, indeed, should have a larger degree of wisdom and prudence than the world, by reason of their being begotten to the spirit of a sound mind. *They accordingly should realize that as a New Creation, seeking to walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, it would be appropriate for them to be even more careful than the worldly, the natural man, respecting the weakness of their flesh and respecting the propriety of certain metes and bounds of proper conduct, modesty, reserve, etc., as between the sexes.* In proportion as the New Creature is seeking the spiritual life, and in proportion as it realizes that sexual appetites war against the interests of the New Creation, in that same proportion should they endeavor, even more than the world in general, to make straight paths for their feet, and to erect as many barriers and as formidable ones as possible between themselves and temptations."

BROTHER RUSSELL'S REPLY

We believe it is our Lord's will that we publish the above letter with our unqualified endorsement of its sentiment and expression. Without surmising evil *intent* it calls attention to a world-wide tendency which we as specially covenanted people should oppose. We have already called attention to the fact that the Adversary may be expected to try various tactics of opposition during the last seven years of the harvest; and that the Lord may give him a comparatively free hand. While the hour of temptation, we are told, will try all that dwell upon the whole earth (Rev. 3:10), it must not surprise us if it comes with special force against the consecrated, the Temple class or "House of God."-- I Pet. 4:17.

TEMPTATIONS FROM OPPOSITE QUARTERS

So far as the consecrated are concerned the testings seem to be opposites. Perfect love being recognized as the *mark* to be reached and to be maintained, the Adversary, finding that he cannot keep us from it, begins to *push us*--past the mark into such earthly loves as the foregoing letter mentions. The danger must be evident to all who will think for a moment. The *spiritual love* amongst the Lord's members is as proper as it is unavoidable. The tie that binds our hearts in Christian love is the dearest and the strongest of which we have any knowledge; because like to that above. With the love goes a *confidence* in each other's integrity of motive, which, unless guarded against, might let down some of the barriers of reserve which society has found by experience are absolutely necessary for the world. We do not mean that the Lord's people have lower standards of morality than has the world; but with higher ideals they have found a new confidence in each other--not in the flesh, but in the spirit. For the time they forget all about the flesh and are all the more in danger of being ambushed by the Adversary along that very line.

On the other hand the Adversary attempts to push others of the faithful aside from the "mark" by arousing bitterness, jealousy, envy, strife. He is too crafty to suppose that such seeds would spring spontaneously in the hearts of the consecrated. Hence, so far as we can discern, his course is to plant these seeds of evil while apparently cultivating justice and

purity and truth. Ah! he is an artful enemy, and "we are not entirely ignorant of his devices," though we may little guess which will be his next move for ensnarement.

Brother Hollister, for instance, as the above letter implies, was tempted to surmise evil respecting those whose conduct he disapproves; but he gained a victory over the snare, and hence, without judging others as of bad intention and impure motive, he sees the matter as we do and as we believe the Lord does--as a snare of the Adversary against which it is our privilege to warn the brethren in love.

How long will it require for the Lord's dear followers to learn the meaning and proper application of [R4191 : page 187] *Matthew 18:15-17*? Failure to note and to use properly this rule seems to us the tap-root of nearly every difficulty amongst the brethren, in every quarter. We have made the matter as plain as we know how in DAWN-STUDIES, VOL. VI., yet are surprised and grieved to note blunders along this line made by some of the most advanced of the dear members of Christ. The usual sophistry by which the "old man" sets aside this divine rule is to conclude that "it is not applicable in this instance;" or to be persuaded that he does not know how to apply it in his case and must *ask counsel of others*--the very thing he should understand is forbidden by our Lord's words, "Go to him, and between thee and him alone tell him of his fault."

Again, few seem to understand that the conference is not to reprove or rebuke or humiliate or punish the one that be in error. All that is for the Lord to attend to--"The Lord will judge his people." Our object should be merely to get the wrong thing *stopped* and thus to "gain thy brother." It is safe to suppose therefore that our Lord's counsel is generally needed--"First cast out the beam from thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to pluck out the mote from thy brother's eye." So then before attempting to apply *Matthew 18:15-17*, it would be wise to kneel down before God and get our hearts very humble and loving and very free from bitterness, etc., before making the first move. Then read afresh the Scripture and the comments in DAWN-STUDIES, VOL. VI., and then proceed very carefully --fearing to touch amiss matters which involve so much to "one of the least of these."

We quite agree with Brother Hollister, that none of the "members" of Christ could willingly and intentionally lay snares for their own spiritual feet or those of others. We quite agree that *their danger lurks* in their *good intentions* and *over-confidence* in their control of the flesh, and in their forgetting the Adversary's cunning, even while not ignorant of his devices. But while urging that there be no evil surmisings we also urge the Apostle's words, "Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." (*Phil. 2:15.*) But suppose we could be confident of our own self-mastery and immunity from temptation, how could we judge for others or be sure that it would be so with them? Or, suppose that all Truth people had so progressed that they had brought every thought into captivity to obedience to Christ, should they not still let their light so shine before men as to assist them and to glorify their Father in heaven? Note the Apostle's argument--If my eating of meat cause stumbling to others, I will eat no meat. (*I Cor. 8:13.*) But let us not suppose our flesh to be dead. It is safer to suppose the reverse and to keep guard against every snare of the Adversary to entrap us or others.

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R4662

"THAT HE MAY ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS"

"The Lord makes you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblamable

**in holiness before God, even our Father, at [in] the presence [parousia] of our Lord
Jesus Christ, with all saints."--I Thess. 3:12,13.**

NOT TO SINNERS are these words addressed, but to saints. Not those who have not the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of love, and who therefore, are none of his, does the Apostle exhort; but those who already have been begotten of the holy Spirit of love. Increase in love signifies that love already has attained an ascendancy in the heart, a mastery in the mind, by which it is progressing, conquering and bringing into subjection all the thoughts and conduct of life. And this thought, that love is to increase in the hearts of God's people, is in full accord with the general testimony of the Scriptures, that we are to *grow* in grace and in knowledge and in love; approaching more and more and attaining and maintaining the "mark" which God hath set before us as the standard of character for which he will be pleased to award the prize in due time. It is as though a cistern were being filled more and more with pure water from hidden springs, until, increasing and increasing, it overflows with its abundance. Thus the Lord's people are to increase in love continually, until the love abounds or *overflows* in all the thoughts and words and conduct of life; not only carrying blessings to their own refreshment and to the refreshment of all with whom they come in contact, but also redounding to the glory and praise of God from whom this blessing is derived.

The Apostle specifies only abounding love toward the brethren and toward all, but this presupposes the love which, first of all, is due to God our Father. Nor is it to be expected that any man will love his fellow-creatures to the extent indicated, unless he has first learned to love his Creator, has been taught of him, and has to some extent become a copy of his dear Son. This is in thorough accord with the Lord's statement of the full meaning of the Law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, heart, soul [being], and strength, and [then] thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." No man can love his neighbor in this Scriptural sense, until he has first loved his God to such a degree as to be not only willing but anxious to do those things which are pleasing in his sight; for God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.--I John 4:16.

One reason why love does not increase more rapidly, and abound more thoroughly amongst God's people, is that so many of them have been blinded by the Adversary to the real character of God, and under the misrepresentations of his character have been unable to worship and love him in spirit and in truth. Thank God for the light of the knowledge of himself now scattering the darkness and permitting his children to see him in his true light, in his glorious character! Thank God, the eyes of our understanding have been opened so that we can now see through the deceptions of the Adversary!--Rev. 20:3.

The Apostle's words, "Even as we do toward you," are full of meaning and force. Paul and his associates were not teaching a Gospel which they did not appreciate and practise; on the contrary, they were exemplifying in their daily course of life this very abounding love, which, overflowing, was leading them to sacrifice their own interests and rights and privileges for the sake of the Lord's people everywhere. They were laying down their lives for the brethren--daily, hourly; they were sacrificing for the sake of others, opportunities and privileges as respected their earthly life, earthly pleasures, etc. It is with particular force, therefore, that they exhort fellow-Christians to follow after them in the same way of self-sacrificing, loving obedience, as imitators of Jesus. And so it should be with all who exhort others to walk in the way of righteousness and love: In order that their words may have force and meaning they must exemplify them in their own lives. As they point to the "mark" of perfect love they must approximate that mark in their own daily lives, and certainly possess it in their hearts, their wills, their intentions. So whether they occupy pulpits, or whether they exhort others merely by the influence of their daily lives, they are living epistles read and known of all men who come in contact with them. The darkness may hate them, and say all

manner of evil against them falsely, yet it must "take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus" and have learned of him; that they have the same spirit, the same disposition of heart, however crooked their natural dispositions may be.

HOW TO INCREASE AND ABOUND IN LOVE

Ah, says one, I have been desiring to increase in love and to overflow it upon others for these many years; but I know not how to cultivate it. What shall I do that I may have this overflowing love? The Apostle impliedly answers this question--that it is not what we can do, but what the Lord can do in us and for us. His words are, "*The Lord make you to increase and abound in love.*" It is the Lord's doing; we can accomplish very little for ourselves, and the sooner we learn this the better. The springs of our love must come from the fountain of love and grace and truth--from God, for "God is love." We began to receive of his spirit of love from the time we made our consecration to him, and began to live unto him, and not unto the flesh. He has various agencies and channels through which he is pleased to increase our love, and to cause it to abound and overflow and cleanse away the natural selfishness against which we, like all others, must contend.

These channels of grace are represented to us under various figures in the Scriptures. One channel or agency is the Word of God; another is Divine Providence; another is the fellowship of the Body of Christ, the saints. The Lord uses all of these agencies in causing our love to increase and to abound. First, his Word, the basis of our faith and hopes, is also the basis of our love; for by giving ear to his Word, we taste and see that the Lord is gracious; that the Lord is loving; and in proportion as we see his love manifested, and discern his gracious character, in that same proportion we have before us the pattern toward which we are to aim, and love serves as the incentive to our emulation; as our Lord expressed it, "Be ye holy, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is holy." He is the pattern, and we are to copy that pattern as much as possible in our daily lives; but especially are we to have it as the accepted *standard of our wills*, our minds.

The Apostle refers to the Word of God as water which cleanses us from defilements of sin and selfishness; speaking of "the washing of water through the Word," by which the Bride is to be cleansed and made fit for joint-heirship with the heavenly Bridegroom. (*Eph. 5:25-27.*) The Word of Truth cleanses our hearts by showing us our imperfections, in contrast with the divine perfections. And more than this, it encourages us with certain promises, the object of which the Apostle Peter declares, saying, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might become partakers of the divine nature." Were it not for these promises, these hopes held out, our strivings for increasing and abounding love would no doubt succumb before the adverse influences of selfishness and sin in the present time; but by these promises of the Word the Lord incites us to press along the line "toward the mark *for the prize.*"

Divine Providence comes to our aid at various times, to assist us in making progress "toward the mark"; to assist us in increasing and abounding in love; for if, peradventure, one who at heart is fully consecrated to the Lord should tarry by the way, and become overcharged with the cares of this life, the Lord, in much mercy and love, will perhaps permit affliction or disaster of some kind to overtake him, to be a chastisement, a lesson, an assistance, and thus, as the Psalmist expresses it, "His rod and his staff they comfort us." (*Psa. 23:4.*) It is by these providences of God that we are frequently taught lessons which we could never learn from the instructions of his Word alone. The lessons are impressed, or embossed, so to speak, upon the tablet of our hearts, and do us lasting good.

Another channel of blessing and instruction which the Lord has provided and commended for the saints, and which surely has proven a blessing to all of the household of

faith in running for the "mark," is the assistance which the Lord supplies to us through the "brethren." Sometimes it is "A word in season; how good it is!"-- perhaps a word of counsel, perhaps a word of reproof, perhaps a word of instruction. Perhaps it is merely the testimony of daily lives of the brethren, as we see them patiently enduring hardness as good soldiers, without murmuring--taking with joy, with thankfulness, with faith, with confidence, all things which Divine providence may permit, assured that they are all working out future blessing. Although this channel of blessing might at first seem to be *of* the brethren, we are sure, nevertheless, that it is *of* the Lord, though through the brethren. It is because the brethren who render such assistance in the way are the brethren who themselves are receiving assistance from the Lord; and so it has been from first to last; the Elder Brother, and all the brethren, as they become advanced members of the Body of Christ, joyfully assist, even to the extent of laying down their lives for the brethren, and all this is the work of God--the effect of his spirit. By all these various agencies God is working in us to *will*, and working in us to *do* his good pleasure--that we may increase and abound in love.

But who are the "you" referred to by the Apostle? Does he mean that God makes all men to increase and abound in love? Surely not. The vast majority of men have no knowledge of the love of God here referred to. At the very most they know only the natural love, and frequently very little of that. When the Apostle says, "The Lord make *you* to increase and abound in love," he refers to the Church; not nominal Church members, but the members of the true Church, "whose names are written in heaven"; those who trust in the precious blood of Christ, and have made a full consecration of themselves to the Lord, and been begotten again by the holy Spirit of love. These, and these only, are referred to. So long as we continue to be in and of this class we will be subject to the Father's discipline and instructions, for "What son is he that the Father chasteneth not? If any be without chastisement ...then are they spurious and not sons."

WE NOW JOIN THE CHURCH--THE BODY OF CHRIST --ON PROBATION

These chastenings, providences, disciplines, instructions in the word of righteousness, and assistances through the brethren, will be ours as long as we are members of the Body of Christ; and here we are to distinguish between the Body of Christ in its embryo condition in the present life, and the Body of Christ in its perfected condition in the resurrection. We now join the Body of Christ, the Church, on probation; with the understanding that if we are faithful we shall be accepted fully, and be members of the Body of Christ in glory; and that if unfaithful to our vows, our covenants, we cannot be members of that glorified Church. We are pupils in the School of Christ, and it is necessary for us to proceed to learn all the lessons appointed of the Father, else we shall never be permitted to graduate-- to enter into all the rewards which he has promised to those who attain to the character-likeness of his dear Son.

It is to this end that we are all exhorted to make increase of love, until it shall abound in our hearts. Any who refuse to make increase in love and to permit it to abound, will necessarily be cut off from this Body of Christ, whatever portion theirs may be. As the Lord explains in his parable of the Vine and the Branches: every branch, every individual member of Christ, that beareth fruit, the fruit of the spirit love--will be pruned of the Father that it may bring forth more and more of this precious fruit; and every branch that fails to bring forth the fruitage of love within a reasonable time, will be cut off and no longer be recognized as a branch of the Vine, as a member of the Body, and will have no opportunity of participating in the glories of those who make their calling and election sure.

It is very important, therefore, that we not only become members of the class here addressed as "you," but that we continue in this class, and maintain our standing by

faithfulness and progress under the Lord's leading and instruction. We are to remember that our part in the work is to fully submit ourselves, our wills; and to *let* the Lord work in us to will and to do his good pleasure. Submitting our wills does not mean stupor or indifference; but the setting of our energies in line with the direction which the Lord from time to time will give us through his Word, through the brethren, and through his providences, which shall shape our ways. We do not need to take anxious thought as though the Lord might forget to give us the needed lessons and experiences to bring us on, and to cause us to abound in love. All we need to do is to remember that he is faithful, and to seek grace and strength to walk in his way, as we shall see it pointed out to us by his providence and Word, step by step. "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet; a lantern to my footsteps."

THE OBJECT AND NECESSITY FOR SUCH DEVELOPMENT

The Apostle in our text tells us why it is necessary that we progress. It is "to the end," or with the object in view, of our hearts being established, fixed, settled, rooted, grounded in holiness. It is not sufficient, from the Divine standpoint, that we learn something about love, and have the feeling of love thrilling our hearts, and that generous emotions shall occasionally be ours; what the Lord seeks is "a peculiar people," "a royal priesthood," thoroughly established, firmly fixed in love for righteousness--so that all unrighteousness, all sin, all injustice, would be an abomination to them. Not only will they not love iniquity, but, as the Scriptures declare, they will hate iniquity. And whoever truly loves righteousness must in the same proportion hate iniquity. But this is only the result of *fixed* character, and time and experience and many lessons from the Word of God and from the book of experience are necessary before character becomes so settled, so crystalized, that it is fixed and unwavering in its loyalty to righteousness. It is for this reason that the Lord has hedged up the way of his people during this Gospel Age, and made the way of life, the way to the Kingdom, a "narrow" one, full of difficulties, full of trials, which thereby become tests, and sift out those who do not develop the character which the Lord approves, and for which he promises a share with Christ in his Kingdom.

Some may say, Alas! If the standard of character is so high as to be unblamable before God, who is perfect, how can I ever hope to attain it? And so all of us might say, if the perfect standard were a standard for the *flesh*; for all of us have learned, as did the Apostle, that "In my flesh dwelleth no good [perfect] thing"; and we have the inspired Word for it that "There is none righteous; no, not one." So, then, we may rest assured that God is not seeking to find in any a perfection of the flesh, and that if he should seek perfection in the flesh he would not find it. It is not such an unreasonable and impossible thing that the Apostle teaches; but something quite reasonable, viz., as he says, that our *hearts* may be established, fixed, in holiness before God our Father. Ah, yes! To have a *heart* [will--motive--intention] that is blameless, is a very different thing from having *flesh* that is blameless. The *heart* standing for the will, the intention, the desire, represents the "new creature." The *flesh* stands for itself. In its imperfection and its six thousand years of degradation as the slave and servant of sin, the *flesh* has become so imperfect that it is impossible to have it serve the law of God perfectly; impossible to have it obey all the good desires of our consecrated hearts unblamably. It is the new creature, the new mind, that must reach this stage of development where it will be *unblamable* before the Father.

Not only is this a possible attainment, but we cannot conceive of any other condition being acceptable to God, in harmony with our calling. He has called us to be his Church, his Royal Priesthood, that he might fit and prepare us for the great work of blessing all the families of the earth as members of the Body of Christ, otherwise called the Bride, called to association with the heavenly Bridegroom during his Millennial Kingdom. Surely God could

ask nothing less than that our hearts, our intentions, should be in accord with the principles of righteousness, and that these principles should control our daily lives to the extent of our ability; and that thus we should seek to put away all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the reverence of the Lord. (2 Cor. 7:1.) Anything less than this good desire and endeavor could not possibly be acceptable in the sight of God; without these we could not hope to be of the finally acceptable elect Church. But how reasonable is this arrangement! How gladly do we accept the Divine will! How earnestly we wish that every imperfection and blemish of the flesh were done with, that the testings of our new minds were accomplished in their full establishment in righteousness! How we long to have our new bodies, promised to us in the "first resurrection" --bodies in which the new mind can act perfectly, without hindrance, without restraint, and glorify God perfectly in every act and word, as well as in our hearts, intentions! This is acceptable to God. He counts it, through the merit of Christ, exactly as though we were absolutely perfect in word and in deed, since such a condition is the desire of our hearts, our wills; he is merely waiting until this character is *fixed*, permanent.

**THAT WE MAY BE ESTABLISHED--FIXED--IN THE
PRESENCE OF OUR LORD**

We perceive that this lesson comes up to date, in the sense that while it has been applicable to the Lord's people all through this Gospel Age, it is specially applicable to us who are now living in the "harvest" time, in the time of the presence of the Son of man. For mark the Apostle's words in our text, that all this development in the spirit of love is to the end that we may be established, fixed, "in the presence [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all saints." We are now in this time of his *presence*, and it behooves us to inquire carefully of our hearts to what extent we are established in righteousness, in love for it, or to what extent our loyalty to righteousness is still unsettled--wavering.

We may be sure that all who do not speedily come to this condition of establishment in righteousness will be tested, sifted and rejected; for the time for the completion of the Body of Christ is at hand. The Apostle asks, "Who shall be able to stand?" This is the question: Who shall be so thoroughly established in love that the trials and testings, necessary to prove him so, will be passed successfully? According to this we are not to wonder if various special trials are permitted now to come, thick and fast--trials which will test and prove our loyalty to the Lord and to the principles of love. Yet we are not to be discouraged with this thought of testing, but are to remember that he who began the good work in our hearts, began while we were yet sinners, by giving for us the great ransom price; that if he so loved us then, while we were yet sinners, much more does he love us now that we have accepted his grace, and are justified from all sin by faith in his blood, and are seeking to walk in his footsteps. And all who have this desire to receive the Lord's lessons, and to profit by them, and to become more and more copies of Jesus--all such have the assurance that it comes, not by their strength, but by the Lord's strength; and that if they submit themselves to him, he will perfect in them his spirit of love and righteousness and holiness; that they may be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

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"YE HAVE NEED OF PATIENCE"

The importance of endurance in the Christian's character is fully borne out by the Apostle Paul's use of the word; for on more than one occasion he places *patience* above and beyond *love*, which we have seen is the "mark" of character for which we are to run--the "*mark for the prize*." For instance, in writing to ***Titus (2:2)***, enumerating the characteristics of the advanced Christian, the Apostle uses the following order: "Vigilant, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity [love], in *patience*." Though we have all the other qualities, this final test of *patient, cheerful endurance* must be passed before we can be accepted of the Lord as members of the *very elect*.

Again, in writing to Timothy (***2 Tim. 3:10***) respecting himself, the Apostle puts this quality of *patient endurance* in the place beyond *love*, saying, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, *patient endurance*."

"THE LORD YOUR GOD DOTH PROVE YOU"

One might ask, if "Love is the fulfilling of the Law" and "the mark for the prize of our high calling," how can patience rank higher than Love? The answer is that patient endurance does not come in merely at the close of our race, but it is a requisite all the way along the race-course. We need this *cheerful endurance* of the *earliest trials* in the Christian way; and as we speed along in our race for the "mark," the spirit of *cheerful endurance* should be *growing stronger and stronger at every step of the journey*. Some might be faithful for a few days or a few months or a few years, yet be unworthy of the great Kingdom blessing of Christ.

In the Parable of the Sower, our Lord gave an illustration of this fact, saying that some seed fell on stony ground and sprang up; *it grew*; but finally, when the burning heat of persecution came, the tender plants withered away. In choosing the members of the Kingdom class the Lord is looking for a *depth of soil*, a *depth of character*, a *depth of heart* that will be *patient to endure*. Those who lack this *one* quality will not be fit for the Kingdom. *Patience* is necessary as an element of character on *any* plane of being; but with the *Christian* it is specially important to have it developed *from the beginning of the race*. We need it with us at the *first quarter mark*, and at the *second quarter mark*, and at the *third quarter mark*, and still with us at the *fourth quarter mark*, the *mark for the prize--perfect Love*.

And when we have reached this mark of the race where we love, not only our *friends*, but our *enemies*, it is required of us that we *stand up to the mark faithfully, cheerfully, patiently enduring the tests* which the Lord will even then see fit to have come upon us. God subjects [R4910 : page 409] His people to testing, *long testing*, sometimes for months and years. As it is said, "The Lord your God *proveth you*."--***Deut. 13:3***.

Hence it is that the Apostle Paul exhorts us, "Having done all, *stand*"--*endure*. Having reached the "mark," "Let *patient endurance* have her perfect work," or "*perfect her work*." Let *patient endurance* demonstrate, not only that you have the character, the qualifications of Love, demanded in the race for the prize, but also that you have love as an *element of character, deep-rooted, immutable*, so that you can *endure opposition cheerfully*.

St. Paul tells us that we have need of this *patient endurance* that, after having done the will of God [after having brought our own will into complete subjection to the Divine will], we might receive the promise. (***Heb. 10:36***.)

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R3776 [sel]

"ASHAMED OF ME AND MY WORD"

--LUKE 9:26--

The Lord is still present in the world in the flesh-- in the flesh of his consecrated members--and the world in general still despises him as at first and as he foretold--"Marvel not 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." (John 15:18,19.) The world is still ashamed of Christ. Nominal Christians, nominal Spiritual Israel, are as much ashamed of him today as Natural Israel was ashamed of him [R3777 : page 152] eighteen centuries ago. When we consider that our Lord is represented by his members in the flesh we see that love for the brethren means love for the Lord, and hence as the Apostle states this is one of the great tests of our relationship to him and to the Father. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4:20.) "Love one another as I have loved you," is the recognized test of discipleship, and he therefore who is ashamed of the brethren is ashamed of the elder brother. He counts all the younger brethren as himself, saying, He that despiseth you despiseth me; he that rejecteth you rejecteth me and him that sent me.--Luke 10:16.

It may be a new thought to some that in despising the brethren they are despising the Lord; that in being ashamed of the brethren they are being ashamed of the Lord; and that thus they would be demonstrating that a wrong condition of mind and conduct prevailed: that they were not fit for the kingdom; that they had not reached the mark of perfect love; that they had not only not learned to love their enemies but had not even learned to love the brethren--those who are striving to walk in the footsteps of the Master.

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R3544 [sel]

"AS I HAVE LOVED YOU"

It does not astonish us that the Lord directs that we love one another, but we stand amazed with the thought contained in these words, "As I have loved you." How can we love one another with the same love which the Lord has for each of us? is our first inquiry. We reply that this is impossible at first, but as we become more and more filled with the Spirit of the Lord, we approximate more nearly to this standard of perfect love to all that are his, a love that not only would refuse to do injury to another, but a love which would delight to do good to a brother, yea, to do good at the expense of one's own time and convenience. Thus Jesus loved us all and redeemed us with his precious blood, and to whatever extent we grow in grace, knowledge and love of him, in that same proportion we are Christlike and have a Christlike love. This love is the fulfilling of the Law, and whoever has such a love for the brethren will have undoubtedly a full, sympathetic love for the whole groaning creation, and will be glad to do now the little that is possible to be done on their behalf, and doubly glad that the Lord in his own good time and pleasure has a great and wonderful blessing for every member of Adam's race.

Some one has said, "Do not imagine that you have got these things because you know how to get them. As well try to feed upon a cook book." There is a good and an important thought here: it is very important that we should know these things and understand the Lord's

plans and appreciate the principles laid down in his Word, but though we had all knowledge it would not benefit us unless we used it. Let us not think of getting the benefit of the Lord's gracious provisions by merely learning how to get them, but let us take the necessary steps--see that we are fully his, see that we live close to him, see that we are fruit bearers, see that we abide in his love, in the Father's love, in the love for one another, which he has enjoyed.

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R4400 [sel]

"THERE IS A SIN UNTO DEATH"

--1 JOHN 5:16.--

The *Church's trial*, as we have seen, is now taking place during this Gospel Age. Every justified believer who knowingly and intelligently consecrated himself and whose consecration the Lord has accepted by begetting him of the holy Spirit--every such one is on trial now, for either life or death, and he can have no future opportunity. In other words, the trial of the spirit-begotten ones of this age will eventuate in eternal life on the spirit plane or eternal death, just as the trial of the world in the time of Restitution will eventuate in eternal life on the human plane or in eternal death.

Consider what this means: It means that all who will be saved during the Millennium must attain to a condition of *actual* perfection and absolute heart loyalty to God, absolute love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, if they would have eternal life. It means to you and me and all other spirit-begotten ones of this age that, if we do not reach a perfection of heart-development during the period of our trial, we shall die the Second Death. Thank God, it does not mean a perfection of the flesh, which would be impossible to us; but a perfection of the spirit, a perfection of the New Mind, a perfection of the will. But, oh, how much a *perfect heart* signifies! No wonder our dear Redeemer said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"! Any impurity of heart, of intention; any degree of evil contention, anger, hatred, strife, bitterness of heart, would mean just so much shortage of the Divine standard--perfect love.

We are not competent to judge, however. Some may have perfect love in their hearts who, because of imperfections [**R4401 : page 158**] in their flesh, make a poor showing of it. In our experience, however, comparatively few even make the claim of *perfect love*, either for God or for the brethren or for neighbors, not to mention their enemies. We may be sure that of all spirit-begotten ones in such a condition at the time of death there will be no place found amongst those counted worthy of life eternal. The only alternative for them will be Second Death.

They could not be of the "little flock" because God has foreordained that every member of it must be "a copy of his dear Son." "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (**Rom. 8:29**.) Can they not, then, be of the "great company"? We answer, No. All who would be of the "great company" must, through tribulation, attain to heart perfection, in order to be accounted worthy of life eternal. The difference between the "great company" of overcomers and the "little flock" of "more than conquerors" is that the former prove faithful under stress, when forced to the decision, while the latter class, the "little flock," possess more zeal, press forward joyfully to do, to be, to suffer, to serve; but both classes, to be overcomers at all, and to get eternal life at all, must reach the mark of *perfect love*.

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THE WORK OF GRACE IN THE HEART

"The love of Christ constraineth us."--2 Cor. 5:14.

THE WORD *constrain* has the double thought of drawing together, holding together. The Apostle had been recounting his own activities in the Lord's service, and had stated that with some his course seemed to indicate an unbalanced mind. He explained that this was not so; that he had a sounder mind than ever before. He felt himself bound to Christ, constrained by love of Christ to love Him and all who were His with a pure heart.

Why should this love *constrain*? For this reason: If we reckon that all are dead, then all need the service of the Life-Giver; and if Christ died for all, and if we now have come to life through Him, we should hereafter live not according to, or after, the flesh. We should give up the flesh entirely and live the new life which we have received from Christ. St. Paul would say, I am not mad; but I am so closely drawn to Christ that I have the same sympathetic love for others that He had. As He had laid down His life for the brethren, so would I.

Our Lord's love was specially manifested toward His disciples, and chiefly toward those who were the most zealous and energetic--Peter, James and John having the particular love of the Lord. Similarly the Church is thus instructed. There is no exhortation to lay down our lives in the service of the world, but specially for those of the household of faith. We see that the benefits of Christ's sacrifice are to reach the whole world of mankind, every member of Adam's race.

Assuming, however, that the Lord knew from the very beginning who would betray Him, and that Divine discernment would know all who would go into the Second Death, we could not think that the Lord would do anything on their behalf. In other words, the blessing of God is only for the "Israelites indeed." Only those who will come into harmony with Him will have the rich blessing and favor of the Lord. These are included in the redemptive work, not because of anything in themselves, but because of the love of the Lord, which is broad enough and deep enough for all who will receive it. But God cannot love wicked characters. His blessings are only for those who are His children now, or who *will be*, under the blessings and privileges which He later on will grant. It is our duty to bless all to the extent of our ability.

THE CHIEF OBJECT OF OUR TRAINING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOVE

The work of grace for the Church during this Gospel Age is the transforming of our perverted characters and the re-establishing of them in the likeness of the Divine character, *Love*. Whoever fails to attain this transformation [R4837 : page 182] fails to attain God's will concerning him, and must, necessarily, fail to win the prize set before us in the Gospel. We are, to begin with, very poor material out of which to form likenesses of God's dear Son. We were "children of wrath, even as others." (Eph. 2:3.) The original likeness of God, possessed by Father Adam before he transgressed, has been sadly lost in the six thousand years intervening. Hence, instead of finding ourselves in the Divine likeness of love, we find that we were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity" to such a degree that instead of love being the natural, ruling principle in our characters, it is in many instances almost entirely obliterated; and what remains is largely contaminated with evil, self-love and carnal love--perversions which are in direct antagonism with the wholly unselfish love which is the essence of the Divine character.

"This is life eternal, that they might *know Thee*, the only true God"--the God who is Love. (**John 17:3.**) To *know God* means more than to know something of His loving Plan and character; it means to know God in the sense of *personal acquaintance* and intelligent appreciation of His character; and no one can have this except as he partakes of the Spirit of God, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of love. And this spirit of holiness and love cannot be acquired instantly; it is a growth; and its development is the *chief business* (and *should be the chief concern*) of all who hope to know God in the complete sense which will be rewarded with life eternal.

But since our transformation of mind or will is not accompanied by a physical transformation, or restitution, it follows that so long as we are in the flesh we shall have to contend against its inherited weaknesses and disposition to selfishness and sin. But this sharp and continual conflict not only selects a special, overcoming class, but serves to develop the desired character more quickly than will the more easy processes of the Millennial Age. In consequence, while it will require nearly a thousand years for the world's perfecting, the perfecting of the saints in character may be accomplished in a few years, under the special training of sharp discipline and the special course of instruction designed for the "little flock." But whether in a few years or many years, and whether with little or much friction with adversity, *the transformation and polishing of character must be accomplished*. This *love-likeness* of our wills to the will of God is *the end to be sought*, if we would finish our course with joy and with good hopes for the eternal glory.

WE MUST LEARN THOROUGHLY THE LESSON OF LOVE

If we possess the love of God in our hearts it will rule all the affairs of our lives and will make us God-like in thoughts, actions and words. In the School of Christ, the great lesson which the Master is teaching us [**R4837 : page 183**] day by day is the lesson of *love*, which we must learn thoroughly if we would attain "the mark for the prize of our high calling."

In the School of Christ, all the instructions of the Divine Word and providences are intended to develop our hearts and influence our conduct in harmony with the lines of *love*. While the fruits and graces--meekness, gentleness, patience, etc.--are manifestations of the Spirit, yet the Holy Spirit must be present before these manifestations could appear at all; and while the *spirit* might be perfect, its manifestations might be imperfect. The vine may be good, but for a season the grapes will be immature. So with these graces of the Spirit. They are outward manifestations of the inward condition of the *heart*, which may attain perfection before these graces are perfect. Indeed, these graces may never be perfect on this side of the veil.

At the moment of making consecration, before we had borne any fruits of the Spirit, we were not at the mark of perfect love. We were consecrated and had the right spirit, so far as we had knowledge. But we had not a sufficiency of knowledge to recognize what would be expected of us. For this we needed some development, some instruction in the School of Christ. The knowledge of what it would cost to follow Christ came gradually. If the will kept up with the knowledge, one would reach the mark of perfect love in the heart. The manifestations of the graces of character which this condition of heart produces may never be fully perfect in the present life, but only when we have the perfect bodies. The heart which shall have reached this condition will be in perfect tune with the conditions which will obtain on the other side.

"BY THEIR FRUITS SHALL YE KNOW THEM"; YET PERFECTION IN THE FLESH IS IMPOSSIBLE

We must recognize each other, in the good professions which we make to each other and in the evidences of these professions which are manifest. As a gardener might go to his vine and look through the different branches for grapes, so the Lord knows whether the heart is in the proper attitude to bring forth fruit. Of those who have openly professed a thorough consecration to the Lord, all those whose lives do not contradict their profession, and who are walking, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, may be known and recognized by us in the same way by which they will recognize us. "By their fruits we shall know them"--by the outward obedience, but not by the full fruit-development. We know each other, therefore, not by the full development of the fruits, but by the measure of the obedience and striving to obey the Lord.

Absolute perfection would mean perfection of thought, word and deed, which is not our condition at the present time. The most that any of us can have now is perfection of love in our hearts; that is, a perfect love for God, for the Truth and for the brethren. Perfect love leads to sacrifice. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15.) Those who have perfect love will fulfil their sacrifices. But at any time one may pass from the stage of perfect love to that of alienation and opposition. The person might come into such a condition of heart that the fervency of his love would become cool. Gradually he would become estranged from the Lord, and might become identified with the "great company" class. Then, if the chastisements of the Time of Trouble did not lead to a thorough reformation, he would pass on to the Second Death.

After Love's provision of the Lamb of God (the Ransom-price for all mankind laid down by Him, and the imputation of His merit to the Church, all the various steps for our deliverance from sin are along the line of developing us in the character of *love*, the character of God, which alone, according to the Divine standard, will make us acceptable before the Father and bring to us His grace of everlasting life. How important, then, that we should be "taught of God" and develop this character!

The work of grace for the world, during the Millennial Age, will be to make known to all mankind the gracious character of God and His provision for the salvation of all; and to transform all who are willing, from the depravity of sin to perfection of character-- Love; making mankind once more images of God. This transformation of their wills, accompanied by a gradual physical transformation, will remove from them all the blemishes of sin and all hereditary inclinations thereto and leave them in the likeness of God, with a recollection of the undesirability of sin and its evil consequences.

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R4444 [set]

THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE

The Divine purpose is not only to call out the single-hearted, the single-eyed, and to instruct and guide them, but also to test and to prove them. Thus we read, The Lord your God doth prove you to know whether ye do love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deut. 13:3.) The test of obedience is the divine law--supreme love for God and absolute justice to your neighbor--to love him as ourself. Additionally, the consecrated have the New Commandment to love one another as the Redeemer loved them--to the extent of sacrificing, laying down anything and everything on behalf of each other, for each other's welfare and assistance. If this test be faithfully endured, it means that the individual has not

only reached the mark of perfect love, but has stood tests thereat and has demonstrated his worthiness of eternal life under Divine terms and conditions. But if these tests be not endured, it means the rejection of the individual from the light, and that he will go from the light, so that the things which were once light to him will appear dark, and the things of darkness will appear right, just, proper. [R4445 : page 233]

It is not for us to complain, therefore, of these trials and testings which the Lord declares to be necessary; it is not for us to insist that those whom we love must be maintained in the light and ultimately be accepted to the Kingdom. It is rather for us to show our obedience to the Lord, to demonstrate our love for him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength by acquiescing in the Divine arrangements and judgments. The Lord is selecting the members of the Bride class. He has given us the privilege of being co-laborers with him in this work, but merely along the lines of his instruction. With him is the decision. If they do not maintain the single eye, the singleness of heart, the singleness of purpose, loyalty to God, to the principles of righteousness, justice and love they cannot continue to be his disciples; they cannot continue in the light; they must go into "outer darkness."

If any fail to go on in the development of the spirit of love, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of God, they will surely retrograde, and the light that is in them will become darkness--great darkness. Instead of the spirit of love exemplified by our Lord, who laid down his life for us, [R4446 : page 233] a spirit of hatred, envy and malice will come in; a spirit of murder which, although hesitating to do outward violence and come under the ban of the law, will not hesitate to assassinate character and to say all manner of evil against those toward whom they become embittered. By such fruits ye shall know them. Such thorns do not grow on the grapevine, nor on the fig tree.

The philosophy of their course is this: When they lose the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of justice and of love, of kindness, and mercy, and truth, they lose the Lord's supervision, direction and control. And having previously discarded the rules and influences which control the world in general, they are without *any* guidance or restraint in respect to their course of life. Hence they not only act contrary to the Divine standards, but violate the principles of justice and decency, in word and conduct, that assist and guide the world in general. It is for this reason that those who once go out of the light of Present Truth can think, and say, and do, more mean and contemptible things than can the worldly who still retain helps to order and decency by having in mind what their fellows in life would think of their course, their words and conduct.

WALK AS CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

In conclusion, then, we urge that all who have been once enlightened, and made partakers of the holy Spirit, who have tasted of the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come--we urge these to be zealous, to maintain the standing to which they have already attained. We urge that they be conformed to the character-likeness of God's dear Son; that they be perfected in love, that they put off all of these: anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife; for if any of these be retained, they will tend to blindness and "outer darkness." More than this, we urge that they put on all of these graces of the Lord's Spirit: meekness, gentleness, patience, longsuffering, brotherly kindness, love. These will strengthen and develop the character-likeness of the Redeemer which God has predestinated must be attained by every one who will be accepted as a member of the Bride of Christ. And then the Apostle suggests, If we do these things we shall never fail, but an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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R3759 [sel]

"THE FIRE OF THAT DAY"

Wherever perfect love has not been attained the "fire" of this day, the siftings of this day, will manifest it--the Lord will separate the deficient ones. This may cause us sorrow, as earthly ties are severed and fond hopes blighted; nevertheless the Lord's message to us on the subject is figuratively represented in the command which he gave to Aaron and his sons, when two of the under-priesthood perished because they offered strange fire before the Lord which he had not commanded them. (Lev. 10:1.) Moses as the Lord's mouthpiece declared that the survivors in the priesthood must make no mourning or lamentation for those whom the Lord had cut off. To have done so would have implied disloyalty to the Lord and a failure to appreciate his wisdom and justice and love in the matter.--Lev. 10:6.

How searching will be the tests which will prove our love and loyalty to the Lord and his divine arrangements is clearly intimated in our Lord's prophecy respecting our day when he said that the sifting would be of such a kind as would "deceive if it were possible the very elect." It will not be possible to deceive the very elect, because for these our glorious Head stands [R3761 : page 120] sponsor. They are his followers, they are his betrothed, they are his members; he is their Head and Representative and Ambassador; he intercedes, supplicates, prays for them, and their faith will fail not because they are his, because--however imperfect they may be as respects the flesh--at heart they are perfect, thoroughly loyal to him and to his cause, to their fellow-members.

So, then, we sound again, as we have previously done at this season of the year, the Master's words, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Our words, like the Master's will fall on two classes--some will make light of the warning and expose themselves to danger; others will hearken to the warning of the Master's voice, and to them it will be a part of the power of God unto their preservation.

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R3071 [sel]

LOVE OF GOD IN MOUTH AND HEART.

--DEUT. 11:20--

The essence of this command, now applicable to the Gospel Church, by and by to be applicable to restored Israel and all who, under the favorable conditions [R3072 : page 271] of that Millennial age, will be accepted as the children of Abraham, is the Law of Love. "I command thee this day to observe the Law of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways and keep his statutes, and his commandments and his judgements." It is the correct thought that love to God must be from the heart,--voluntary, in order to be of the kind which he desires and will appreciate. "He seeketh such to worship Him as worship Him in spirit and in truth." Why, then, does Moses say, "I command you"? Why does the Lord command love, through the Prophet, since a commanded love would not come up to the standard of voluntary love?

We answer that the Lord sets before us the standard of love necessary to be attained if we would enjoy the blessings which he purposes to give. He commands, in the sense of laying before us plainly and distinctly His only terms for life eternal. As previously pointed out, love is a matter of development and begins with a kind of duty love, which gradually growing out as we grow in grace and in knowledge, expands into gratitude, then into admiration, and finally ridding itself of all dross and selfishness, becomes pure and fervent

love. The Lord is pleased if in our hearts he sees this endeavor to approach in truth the way of life which he has opened through the death of his Son. He is pleased to note our expansion and development under the light of his favor. He is pleased to grant us the covering of the Lord Jesus' merit, and to reckon to us perfection, and to adopt us from the very beginning of our love and consecration; and he will be pleased when we have finished our course, when we have attained the mark, when we have come up to the standard he has set--perfect love--to grant us the blessing of life eternal, which He cannot grant upon any other condition.

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R4896 [set]

OBEDIENCE THE TEST

Another helpful "word of God" is found in I John 2:5: "Whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." Here we have a test by which to determine our development as a New Creature. Only those who have received the Word of God can keep it, can retain it and comply with its requirements. The text suggests that it is a difficult matter to keep the Word of God. On all sides we hear various reasons why we should retain, hold fast the world, the flesh, rather than that which the Lord's Word holds out to us. There are many allurements to entice us from the "narrow way." Hence these who hold fast to the Word of God are "overcomers."

The Scriptures intimate that to live righteously and godly in this present time will cost us our very lives. "Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12.) Under present conditions faithfulness means faithfulness even unto death. The intimation is that unless we have the love of God we will not undertake to be obedient to His Word; that otherwise we can neither retain the Word of God nor be in accord with it, serving it even unto death.

Our Lord Jesus illustrated the perfection of obedience to the Word of God when He said, "I come to do Thy will, O God!" Everything written in the Book; everything that was God's will, He was glad to do at any cost. Our Lord Jesus could not have reached this degree of submission to the Divine will unless He had had love for the Father. And so with us. Unless we have love for God and the principles of righteousness we cannot continue in this way.

Consequently, only those who so love God that they would surrender life to do His will, are properly keeping His Word. We may say that this condition is reached when we first make consecration, for the heart has given up its will and surrendered itself fully to the Lord--"Not my will, but Thine, be done." All those who are complying with the conditions of self-sacrifice have reached the mark of perfect love. Of course, there is another sense of perfecting which we shall attain in the resurrection. But only those who will keep God's Word by faithfulness even unto death will secure the prize and become partakers of the divine nature.

The test is OBEDIENCE. In proportion as we keep the Lord's Word, in like proportion the love of God is perfected in us; for if we have received the mind of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the effect will be to cause us both to will and to do His good pleasure to the extent of our ability. And this ability should be continually on the increase year by year. Although we may not hope to be perfected until we shall be "changed" and be granted our new resurrection bodies, nevertheless, we may keep so closely in touch with the Lord in the spirit of our minds that we may have continual fellowship with Him; and by confessing our faults daily and seeking his forgiveness we may continue to the end of our journey clean from

sin, even though we must still acknowledge the infirmities of the flesh, that in our flesh dwelleth no perfection.

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R4479 [sel]

VARYING DEGREES OF LOVE

THE article in a recent number of this journal entitled, "There Is a Sin Unto Death," appears to have created a very profound impression upon many of our readers. We are glad of this: "To be forewarned is to be forearmed." The central thought of that article suggested that possibly in the past we had underestimated the number who will eventually be remanded to the Second Death by the great Judge. It calls attention to the fact that none could reasonably and properly be acceptable to God and receive his blessing of eternal life except as they should first attain his character likeness. Because "God is love" this is the standard for all whom he will acknowledge as his children on either the heavenly or the earthly plane of perfect existence. The Divine Law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind and strength and thy neighbor as thyself," must be fully complied with. The Church of this Gospel Age must reach this glorious standard in the spirit of their minds, in their hearts; the imperfections of their flesh being covered by the grace of God through their faith in Christ. The world during the Millennial Age must reach the standard of that perfect law actually. More than this, after the standard or mark is reached the Lord demands that character in harmony with this standard shall become fixed. To accomplish this, besetments and trials and testings are permitted and are especially severe, crucial, after this mark has been attained. "The Lord your God doth prove you, whether you do love the Lord your God with all your heart or no."

These premises our readers in general will recognize as sound, Scriptural and logical. It follows, therefore, that all who do not attain this standard of character cannot have the gift of God, eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Fortunately this trial for life or death eternal is not now upon the world of mankind in general, but only upon the Church. Nor is it upon the Church nominal, but merely upon those believers who have made consecration of themselves and been begotten of the holy Spirit. If these shall fall away, "There remaineth no more sacrifice for their sins," the Apostle declares. Let us be glad that it is not ours to judge the hearts of our brethren. We are glad to wish well to all and to hope that the great Judge may see grounds for excusing many of the blemishes of the brethren, which are manifest to us, and of our blemishes manifest to them. The Scriptures declare that the Lord judgeth the heart and not the outward appearance. It is ours, therefore, to hope all things favorable and to even doubt nothing, except as we may see evil fruitage in those claiming to be brethren--fruitage of conduct and spirit positively contrary to the Word and Spirit of the Lord. Even then we are not to bring against them any railing accusation, but to leave them in the Lord's hands.

With our most generous thoughts, however, we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that not many amongst the Lord's professedly consecrated followers give strong evidence of being at the *mark of perfect love* toward God and their fellow-beings. The Apostle intimates that for such we should fear and, bringing home the lesson, we should fear for ourselves--"Let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest any of us should seem to come short of it."--Heb. 4:1.

"STAR DIFFERETH FROM STAR"

Another question arises: Since it is evident that all must reach the standard of perfect love, in order to attain everlasting life on any plane, what would be the test by which the different degrees of glory will be awarded, as suggested by the Apostle's assurance that, "as star differeth from star in glory," so also will it be in the resurrection of the Church?

We reply that since the very least one admitted to eternal life must have reached the mark of *perfect love*, it follows that these different degrees of reward will represent different degrees of loving zeal on the part of those after they shall have reached the standard of *perfect love*. For instance, St. Paul was not merely anxious to attain the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit; he was not merely willing to suffer with Christ, if need be; but his zeal led him beyond this--to glory in tribulations also; to rejoice to be accounted worthy to suffer for the cause of his Lord; to rejoice to lay down his life for the brethren. He was not only glad to have fellowship in Christ's sufferings and to drink of his cup, but he had so much zeal that he rejoiced if he could get more than his portion, more than his share. He was on the alert for opportunities for service. If others used them, well. If he could stir up the love and zeal of others, well. But if he found some work undone which he might accomplish, he delighted to do it. Well did he say that we might take him as an example in following after our Lord Jesus. Surely we may conclude that he will be one of the brightest shiners in the heavenly Kingdom and that in following his example we also may become more and more pleasing to our Lord--not by wildly beating the air, but with wisdom and prudence and faithfulness doing those things which the Lord had indicated would be pleasing in his sight, as evidencing our loyalty to him, his brethren and his Truth.

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R4153

HOLDING FAST AT THE MARK

THERE is no doubt that in the divine schooling there is a mark or standard of fitness for graduation to the Church in glory. When first we surrendered our wills to the Lord it was necessary that the consecration should be a whole or perfect sacrifice of our wills to the Lord's will; but our wills were not at the mark or standard of perfect love. And if our experiences could be imagined as cut short in death immediately after our consecration we could not think of ourselves as "fit for the Kingdom," because the rewards are not promised to consecrators, but to "him that overcometh." Thus in the case of the Master himself, our forerunner, it was necessary that he should suffer and thus be proven worthy of entering into his glory. In a word, as the child cannot be graduated the day he enters school, no more can we who enter the school of Christ.

The rapidity of progress in learning the lessons depends greatly on our temperament and our zeal. Some evidently make as much progress in one year as others do in twenty, and very many never graduate at all--never reach the mark or standard which God demands, perfect love. The Word of God, our textbook, informs us that "Love is the fulfilling of the Law" (***Rom. 13:10***); that "The end or purpose of the divine commandment is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience." (***1 Tim. 1:5***.) "As many, therefore, as be perfect [-willed, at the mark of perfect love] should be of this mind."--***Phil. 3:15-17***.

Those who have "thus learned Christ," he has taught the meaning of (1) *perfected love toward God*, which would prompt them to do and to dare anything in his service; (2) of *perfected love for the "brethren,"* which would prompt the laying down of life itself in their

service; (3) of *perfected love for the world, yea, even for enemies*, which would lead to do good to them that hate us and despitefully use us, and say all manner of evil against us falsely.

Alas! we cannot suppose that many of the consecrated have reached this standard or mark; hence we must expect that few have graduated as "fit for the Kingdom"; hence also the intimation of Scripture that the left-overs--non-graduates--will be "a Great Company" as compared with the Little Flock of overcomers who do attain to the mark, the fixed standard. Here, however, it is well to remember that this "mark" or standard of love is not of the flesh but of the mind or heart. As the Apostle says, "We cannot do the things that we would." Our blemishes of the flesh sometimes momentarily stumble us into an unloving word or act, which if repented of will not be reckoned against us nor put us away from the mark and the loving acceptableness of our Lord, which the mark represents.

"LET NO MAN TAKE THY CROWN"

"Hold fast that which thou hast; let no man take thy crown," seems logically to refer specially to those who have reached the mark or standard of perfect love, and not merely to those who have taken the first step of consecration, entrance into the school of Christ. The words, "Hold fast that which thou hast," implies a previous effort and attainment, and that the attainment has had something to do with the *right* to the crown; and that the position attained must be *held* if the crown would be ultimately possessed. The intimation is also clear that the holding fast will be at the cost of a severe struggle.

This may be a new and a somewhat startling thought to some who have erroneously supposed either that consecration alone was necessary, or that to attain the mark or standard of perfect love would end the struggle. Apparently, the severest struggles, tests, temptations, assail those who are *at that mark*, and this is in accord with our Master's promise that we shall "not be tempted above that we are able to bear." The stalwarts at the mark should be able to bear most and they will be most severely tried. Mark the exhortations to these, "Watch ye, stand fast, quit you like men." No longer "babes in Christ," "no longer children," their special test is as men, strong in the Lord and panoplied in the whole armor of God. Hearken again to the Word: "Having done all, stand!" These words do not fit one entering the school or entering the race; they are most appropriate to those who have reached the standard of perfect love. Those who have "done all," who have attained the mark of character and "put on the whole armor," are the ones who are cautioned, warned, to "hold fast" and "stand fast" and "fight a good fight."

"WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO STAND?"

These fundamental truths have been true and applicable to the Lord's people throughout this Gospel Age, and hence the narrowness of the way and the few there be who have found and walked therein--in all a little flock. But now, more particularly than ever before, this warning applies and probably to a larger number of the Lord's people than at any time in the past; because we are in the "harvest" time, when the ripening and gathering seems chiefly to apply. It is doubtless for this reason that so many Scriptures seem to specify our time in connection with these warnings. For instance, we read, "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand in *the evil day*, and having done all to stand!"--
Eph. 6:13.

The logic of this situation implies that during the few years immediately before us will come the severest of trials and the most subtle tests of our love: (1) For God as represented by our love for his Truth and the honor of his name; (2) our love for the Lord's

brethren; (3) our love for our enemies. And whenever the "brethren" (of whom so much might be expected) become our enemies the test of our love will be the severer. In view of these things, "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy living and God-likeness?" In view of the solemnity of the situation, how "circumspect" we all should be! How we should scrutinize our every act and word and thought! And our thoughts require our special care, because by the *thoughts and intents of the heart* we are being judged. And words and acts proceed therefrom. How often *ambition* hides its envious desires under the cloak of *duty!* How many of the fires of the "Holy Inquisition" were lighted by the torch of "duty!" Let us each be on guard. Ourselves or others we might deceive, but not God, who says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; he that doeth righteousness is righteous"--not merely he who professes. He whose acts and words are loving, gentle, kind, considerate under trying conditions gives evidence of being begotten of the God of love and of having developed much Christ-likeness! Consider our Lord's love for his enemies and his forbearance for them when railed at, "Come down from the cross!" Consider how, when reviled and slandered, he reviled and slandered not in return! Consider how gentle was his reproof of the perfidious Judas and how he merely hinted a reproof to Peter, who denied him with cursings! In his case surely Love was ready to cover a multitude of faults. Let us not be easily offended nor of implacable spirit. Let us with generous and forgiving spirit say with the Apostle, "None of these things move me"--from my stand at perfect love; it shall grow more rooted and grounded in proportion as it is tested. Let us also be on guard against the spirit which is envious of the honors, privileges and blessings granted to another. Contrariwise let us have so much of the spirit of love that we will rejoice with all who rejoice in the Lord and will mourn with all in distress. To feel even a coolness of sentiment in connection with the prosperity of a brother or a lack of interest in his welfare is a sign of serious danger-- that we have slipped from the mark. This should alarm us and lead to fresh energy.

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WHAT PASTOR RUSSELL SAID

1. MARK OR RACE COURSE--Finished Before Fighting.

Q455:2:: QUESTION (1908)--2--Do the Scriptures teach that the Church must finish its course before they begin to fight as soldiers, or are we not to fight while we are running the race to the end, so we may finish with joy?

ANSWER--There are different Scriptures which seem to present different thoughts to our mind. The subject has many sides. Just the same as if we were to take a picture of this building. We would say, What does that Auditorium at Nashville look like? One picture would be from here, and it would take in the Confederate Gallery; another from there, and another from here. They would be different pictures, but all would be pictures of the Auditorium. Then you go out and take a front view, and then to the side and take a side view, and to the rear and take a rear view. So the Lord and the Apostles have given us--God has given us by His Holy Spirit through these various channels--various pictures of truth, and of our experiences in life. One of them represents us as running the race. Now you have got to run for something. You do not keep on running forever and then just die the very moment you have gotten to the end of the race. While it is true the Scriptures do set forth in some places that we keep running, and our Christian race in some respects is like a race course all the time, in that we must never stop in our endeavor to do right, there is another picture, which seems to be a very proper one, that we run for a mark. Suppose that table is the mark. What do you mean by the mark? Why it is a mark in the sense of being something that we must reach. I run for that mark. I stop here, half way to the table; suppose I never went farther than this; I never reach the mark at all. Now there are a good many people I think never reach the mark at all. It is important for us to see what the mark is, so that when we run we may run wisely and not merely as beating the air. It is not how much effort you can put forth, but you want to do it for a purpose; there is something to be gained; there is something to be grasped. The person running aimlessly is like the person running around some road. "Where are you going?" "I don't know." He could not run very long that way with energy, but if he knew he was to take a certain course, and wanted to get back to a certain starting point which was fixed, and wanted to see how many minutes he could do it in, then he has an object in view, a motive in mind, and he can run better. So God sets before us a certain mark, and we are to run to that mark. Now when we have gotten to the mark, what do we do? Why, having done all, stand--stand at the mark; do not run away from it. Is it going to be hard to stay there? Yes. There will be a good deal of endeavor to put you away from the mark after you get there. The Adversary will try harder to put you away from the mark than he did in preventing you from getting to it. There is an intense fight coming after you get to the mark. There is a certain amount of shielding done before you get to the mark, but after you get to the mark, that is where you have our severest test. Another picture is, "Put on the whole armor of God." Where do you get the armor? God's Word. You put on this armor, put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand. Now while I am putting on the armor, the Lord grants me a measure of grace and protection that I shall not be assailed before I have had time to put it on; He gives me a reasonable time in which to put it on. He will not allow me to be attacked beyond that I am able to bear; so I have a certain measure of time in which to put it on. Now I have on the armor--and what? Now fight. You say, what is the mark for which we run? Why this, dear friends. There is a certain mark of character which God will accept, and nothing short of that character, and if you do not have that character you can never be in the kingdom. It is not just anything that God is going to take into the kingdom; He has set a certain

standard and made it favorable for you and me to reach that standard; He has promised every assistance, but He expects you and I will manifest interest and strive and labor that we may get to that standard. What standard is set before us? How little will do? No, that is not the thought. We ought to have the desire of doing all that we can, and then more; never be satisfied with our attainments. But you can readily see that there is one standard you cannot be short of and get into the kingdom, because God has determined this. You remember that positive statement of the Apostle Paul in the eighth chapter of Romans that, "God has predestinated"--that is a strong word. What did God predestinate? That all of those who will be in the little flock must be copies of His Son; if they are not copies of His Son, they cannot be in the kingdom. That mark, you see, is a copy of God's dear Son. Until you are at that mark of being a copy of God's dear Son, God's predestination is that you cannot be of the elect; and if you do reach there and maintain that stand that you may be one. Now the mark is a very important thing, is it not? In our hazy way of reading the Bible at one time we did not see the mark or anything else; it was a kind of blind way of doing. We did not know what God had said. We had not paid enough attention to what God had said. We had read the catechism and were confused. Now we have come to a time where we will see what God says in His Word, and He gives us Christ as a pattern, and as an example. Do you mean to say that we must all be like Christ? Yes, we must all be like Christ. But Christ was perfect; must we all be perfect? I did not say like Christ according to the flesh, my dear brother; I did not say in what way like Christ, but this is the way: Our Lord Jesus was perfect, and you are imperfect, and I am imperfect; we can never be like Christ in the flesh; but that is not the way in which the Lord is testing us. He says, Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in you. He is not judging you according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. What about our flesh? Why, your flesh is reckoned justified, the merit of Christ has been appropriated to you according to the flesh, covering all those blemishes and conditions; as between Christ and perfection in the flesh and your imperfection in the flesh, the merit of His sacrifice is imputed to you and to me to cover these blemishes. Don't you see then that reckonedly your flesh is perfected, while actually your flesh is imperfect. But now then the object of God reckoning us perfect is that we may present ourselves living sacrifices. According to the divine will no sacrifice might come to the Lord's altar except it was without spot and without blemish. Our Lord Jesus was the Lamb of God without spot and without blemish, and He was the acceptable One. You and I have spots and blemishes according to the flesh, and the Lord says you cannot come to the altar with those. What must we do? We must get rid of them. How? They must all be covered. What will cover them for us? The merit of Christ's sacrifice, imputed and applied by faith. This covers all those blemishes. Why, Brother Russell, are we acceptable to God's altar after that? That is exactly the point, dear brethren. That is what the Apostle says: "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God (He having forgiven your sins and provided this covering for you) that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, your reasonable service." Holy? Yes, holy. What have we done to make us holy? Christ did the thing which makes you holy. The word "holy" means "whole or complete." Christ's imputed righteousness makes us reckonedly whole, complete from sin, and from blemish. So then, according to the flesh you are no more, says the Apostle, but you are in the spirit, you have ceased to be from a human standpoint, you sacrificed that humanity as your reasonable service to the Lord; you count yourself henceforth as a new creature, begotten through the Holy Spirit. Now this newly begotten new creature in Christ Jesus, a member of the body of Christ, you see, is a different person from the old, and so the Apostle from this standpoint could speak of himself as the old "I" and the new "I." He says, I, and yet he says, not I. Here is the old and the new. Here is the new Paul and the old Paul. The old Paul, according to the flesh, is reckoned dead; the new Paul, according to the spirit, is reckoned alive. So then, this is our glorious position that we as

new creatures may offer our sacrifice, and as new creatures are acceptable to the Lord, and may fight the good fight and may win the victory, the Lord helping us all the way through. But as new creatures we must get to this stand, we must not stop; as new creatures, God tells us there is a mark, a copy of God's dear Son. Are you up to the mark? Oh, says someone, I never expect to be up to the mark until my dying moment. What makes you think you will be any nearer the mark at your dying moment than the day before? There is no reason whatever. You see, this mark is a mark of character, and you and I ought to get to that place in character. How do you mean? In this way: What was the character of Christ? In what way did He offer a sacrifice? In this way: Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God. Thy law is written in my heart. That is his standpoint-- full consecration to the Father's will, nothing short of it. And must you and I come to that? Yes. Well, what is the Father's will? The Father's will is that we should conform, according to heart, not according to the flesh necessarily, but the best you can do according to the flesh, but according to the heart you must keep His will, and His will is, that you shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy being, and with all thy strength. Can we come to that? I think so. The Lord says so. We can in our minds. With my mind I serve the law of God, says the Apostle, and with my flesh, to some extent I serve the law of sin; but the flesh is reckoned as dead, and the Lord is not judging according to the flesh. If we have the mind of Christ we will do the best of our ability in the flesh, endeavoring to keep it under in harmony with the Lord's will. But we are not being judged according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, according to the mind, according to the new creature. So here we have it, dear friends: With your mind you serve the law of God--all your heart, all your mind, all your being, and all your strength. If so, you are at the mark. Do you love your neighbor as yourself? Yes, you say. I love everybody and like to do good to everybody, and glad of it. Then you have really come to love the brethren? Yes. And you love God? Yes. And you love all mankind? Yes. Don't want to do harm to anybody? No. You don't want to do any wrong or see any wrong? You love them and would like to see good done to them? Yes. Well, I guess you must be at the mark. That is what the Lord puts as the mark. That is what Christ did. He loved the world and gave Himself for it. He loved the Father and laid down His life to do the Father's will. He loved the disciples; thus having loved his own, He loved them to the end. So that must be our spirit, and as soon as you get there, so that you love everybody, and love your enemies, you are at the mark. It is harder to love your enemies, but you must love your enemies; the Lord said so: "Do good to them that despitefully use you." If you have not reached the point of loving your enemies, you are not at the mark of the prize, because none having a less standard can be of the elect class at all. They must be copies of God's dear Son, and that is the copy; that is the mark. If you have not gotten there, run and get there as quick as you can. Let everything else go in life and get to that point. Someone may say, there is just one person that I cannot love; he is an enemy, and he has spoken such and such a thing. Never mind what he said or did; you are not living for yourself, are you? You are living for the Lord. Now the Lord says, Put away all that evil, and envy, and everything else that is wrong in your heart, and get your heart to that condition where you will love them, and would like to do good to them. That is getting to the mark. After getting there, then what shall you do? Then stand. Why, that is nothing to stand there, that is easy enough. But wait a little while; stand there a little while and see. You will find that the Adversary will get at you in various ways, and the Lord will allow him to get at you in various ways. He will do various things to make you do otherwise than love your enemies, and love the Lord, and love the brethren, and the world. He will do everything he can to turn your mind from the glorious standard of Christ. You will be assaulted in a thousand ways, more than you were on the way to the mark, because on the way the Lord protected you and said, I will not permit you to be tempted more than you are able; but when you get up to the mark you were able to stand.

Then I will allow you to be tempted as much more as you are able. He knows how much you are able, and He wants to test you as much as you are able because all of those who will be of that elect, glorified class must be thoroughly tested and proved, and it must be demonstrated that they have loyalty to God and to the brethren, and love in all of these high and noble respects.

2. LOVE--Reaching Mark of Perfect Love.

Q449:1:: QUESTION (1909)--1--Is it possible for all who are called to the high calling to reach the perfect mark of love, and how?

ANSWER.--It is possible for every human being to reach that mark, and more than that, every individual who will ever get eternal life, either as a member of the little flock, or great company, or of the restitution class, whoever will receive eternal life on any plane will have to come to that place or mark of perfect love; because God will not give eternal life to any others. The law of love is the least thing that God will recognize. According to the spirit, you are under the law, and you are obliged to live up to everything in the spirit that the Jew was commanded to do in the flesh. You remember how it reads that, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." Won't a little less than that do? No. Oh, but I have weaknesses of the flesh and cannot do the things that I would. Well, the Apostle said that the Lord is not judging us now according to the flesh, but according to the sentiments of our hearts. If it is full of love for the Lord, all your soul, mind, and strength, then you are up to that feature of the perfect mark. You cannot do more if you like, and you cannot do less. If your heart is not all of that you will not be of the Little Flock or Great Company, but such will go into the second death. All must come up to this standard in their hearts, or they will all die the second death. What about the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself?" It relates to mankind. How? Get the best of him in a trade or take advantage of him? No. You must treat him as you would want him to treat you. That would not mean, however, that you must exercise your judgment for him. If he thinks his farm is better than yours and you make a trade, you both go into it with your eyes open, but to take advantage of another would not be loving as you should. The Church must do more than that. How? This way, my dear brother: The law never requires sacrifice on your part, simply love your neighbor as yourself, but what the Father requires of those who will be Members of the Body of Christ requires more than that; namely, that you sacrifice your earthly rights and lay them down. Jesus did it and it was more than the law required. He laid down in sacrifice His earthly rights, His interests. Oh, well, you say, we sacrifice our earthly interests, but we do not think them worth much. That is right, but you must sacrifice them.

3. CHARACTER--When Crown Is Ours.

Q50:1:: QUESTION (1910)--1--At what point of character development can we say, the crown is ours, and that we are overcomers?

ANSWER--I think, dear friends, that the proper point at which we could say that, would be when we reach the mark of perfect love. For instance, you came to the Lord and made your consecration, you entered the School of Christ and began to learn of him. That was about the time you found out how short you were of the proper measure. Will the Lord ever be able to make anything out of me? Now the Lord is going to measure you according to your mind and is waiting for you to get to the mark of perfect love, which is the standard of a perfect character, for none will be worthy of a place in the kingdom or eternal life except those that

reach this mark, either now or in the Millennial Age. God has nothing for anyone except those that reach that standard in his mind and heart. He may have weaknesses, etc., and you may speak things that you are sorry for, and must apologize for, but your heart is at the mark--perfect love--and that is the reason you want to apologize, because you have reached the mark of perfect love. You love God, and all mankind, and wish to do good to all, as you have an opportunity. After a person gets where he can love his enemies, he is at the mark of perfect love. He will not be perfect in flesh, for that will not be possible in this age. Many still have to put a bridle upon their tongues, etc., you must hold in the old nature. This I have often illustrated by a bad dog which would represent our old nature, and for which the new creature is responsible. We must hold him in. Our intentions are good, as is shown by the fact that when the heat or excitement of the moment is passed, then the heart goes back to the principles of righteousness, and asks for forgiveness from the Father. He will ask for forgiveness for anything he has done. You might say, it will be harder to rectify this, than not to have done it in the first place. Surely. But that is what you must do, if you want to prove to the Lord that your heart is for righteousness, and whenever you find you have made a mistake, you must rectify it. Now, then, if you get to that place, you have gotten to the place where, to my understanding, you are at the mark of perfect love, toward God, men, etc. You desire good for all and injury toward none. From that moment, I understand, the Lord counts you as one having a crown apportioned to you. That is one thing, but seeing that no man take your crown is another thing. After granted to you it still remains that if you are moved from the mark, pressed aside by difficulties, you are not standing this test, and you will not be worthy of being an overcomer. So you see there is a mark of character, without which none will be acceptable in the kingdom, spiritual or earthly. Now we must demonstrate our love and devotion, that is what we live for to-day and tomorrow, and in all your Christian experience, from the time you enter the school of Christ, for you are to learn of him as quickly as possible and get to the mark of perfect love toward all.

4. GREAT COMPANY--Fallen from Mark of Perfect Love.

Q305:2:: QUESTION (1910)--2--Can any one who has reached the mark of perfect love fall back into the Great Company?

ANSWER--I think he could; I think he could not only fall back into the Great Company, but I think it would be possible for him to fall away entirely. That if he had reached the mark of perfect love, and been a teacher of others, he might be a castaway himself if he did not maintain his standing and relationship to the Lord.

5. MARK--Re Great Company and Little Flock.

Q454:1:: QUESTION (1910)--1--Is there a difference between the mark attained by the Great Company and the mark attained by the Little Flock?

ANSWER--The Little Flock has consecrated not only to be obedient to all the demands of righteousness and justice, but they have agreed with God that they will do his will at any cost to themselves, whether justice should demand it of them or not. What you must sacrifice is something beyond what justice does or could demand. Just so with our Lord Jesus. Justice could demand that he keep the law, but Justice could not demand that he sacrifice his life. God demands that every man keep the law, but never demands that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice; it is an invitation. God does not invite you to keep His law; he says that if you do not keep the law, thus and so will be the result; there is my standard. So God

sets before you and me this standard, that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. But you say, We cannot keep the law. No, we cannot, so far as the flesh is concerned, but we can keep it in our minds and hearts. We must do so. Anything short of that is to come short of the law of God and to find ourselves unworthy of having any eternal life. So it must be with the Great Company. They cannot come short of this standard of the law of God. They have agreed to do more, but they must come up to the standard of love. That is the standard for the world in general during the next age, which they will be obliged to come to. If they do not attain to that during a thousand years, they will not attain eternal life at the end of the thousand years. Now then, dear friends, don't you think the world will be a pretty nice set of people? I think they will be fine. When Jesus gets through with the work I tell you it will be well done, and humanity will be a fine representation of the power of God, and godliness in humanity.

6. MARK--Falling from and into Great Company.

Q455:1:: QUESTION (1910)--1--Have any of the Truth people who have reached the mark of perfect love and allowed themselves to be blinded by error any chance of coming into the Great Company?

ANSWER--To my understanding, any of God's people, not merely those who are in present truth, but any of God's people, who may reach the mark of character development that we sometimes designate as the mark of perfect love, it is required of them that they shall maintain their standing at that mark of perfect love, and not be moved away from it by the trials and difficulties that will assault them after they have reached that mark; and I would understand some of them might temporarily be moved away from the mark, and might by the grace of God recover themselves, and still be of those characters that the Lord would count worthy of a share in the prize. But I could see that some might be so thoroughly driven away from the mark into such a wrong condition of mind or conduct that they would sin the sin unto death, and never have any future. And I could see that some others might, after being at the mark of perfect love, fail to have the proper zeal, and, without especially leaving the mark, find that they might fail to maintain their standing as zealous followers of the Lord, and be counted worthy of the Great Company class.

7. PERFECTION--In Millennial Age. [sel]

Q532:1:: QUESTION (1911)--1--Will any reach perfection during the millennial age, before the end of that age?.....

ANSWER--We answer yes, some will come to perfection before the end of the age. We know, for instance, that the ancient worthies will come to perfection immediately upon their resurrection, because their trial has been passed; therefore the ancient worthies will be just such a class. We will suppose that the questioner has particular reference to the remainder of mankind, and our answer would be, that according as each one is prompt to obey the institutions and laws and regulations of Messiah's kingdom, in that same proportion he will make the more rapid progress toward perfection. Just the same as it is with us now: in proportion as we are whole-hearted, in that proportion will we sooner reach the mark of perfect love. Some are quite slow in getting to where they can love their enemies, and others get there comparatively quick, and so with those who will be on trial during the millennial reign; they will have the opportunity of coming to perfection; they must all come to perfection, or else they will die the second death; and they may come to that perfection as

rapidly as they choose. We might say that in proportion as they are obedient to the laws of the kingdom, the blessing will come to them, raising them up, up to perfection.

8. QUICKENING--And the Mark.

Q556:1:: QUESTION (1907)--1--In a recent issue of a Tower, you say we are not quickened until we reach the mark, and that some are never quickened. Do you mean that only those of the consecrated who do reach the mark are quickened to any degree or in any sense?

ANSWER--I would not like to take the position that no quickening would commence until after the mark had been reached. The Apostle uses as an illustration the natural birth: "First, begetting, then quickening, then the birth." We are first begotten by the Word of Truth; then if we continue to be related to the Lord, the time of quickening, the energizing, will come; and then if this energizing continues, and we continue to grow in grace and knowledge, we eventually in the first resurrection will be born. But I would not like to say that no one would manifest any signs of energy or quickening in the Lord's service until first he had reached the mark of perfect love, but I would think it fair to say that nobody would reach the mark of perfect love, without being quickened. That just as surely as he would get to the place where he loved the Lord with all his heart, and where he would love his neighbor, and his enemies even, he would be at the place where he would be sure to be quickened or energized in the service of the Lord and in the service of his neighbor. That is what we wished to say in the Tower.

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PASTOR RUSSELL'S OTHER WRITINGS

2HG 413 [sel]

STRIVING FOR AN INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN

DIFFERENT RACE COURSE VIEWS

The race course of the Christian may be viewed from different standpoints. From one viewpoint it is one race or striving from the beginning of his consecration to the Lord until death—until his resurrection. From this standpoint the course of many show variations, sometimes good running, sometimes slow, sometimes a standstill, and, we fear, sometimes a retrogression. From this viewpoint only the Lord himself knows positively who are in the race, and to what extent they are faithful to their talents and opportunities. From this viewpoint we may not judge one another, but rather remember that the Lord is the Judge, and that His decision will come in the end of this age and be manifested by the granting to some a share in the First Resurrection and to others, the Great Company, a less favorable change and blessing. Then every man's work shall be manifested. We may see that some who seemed to be running very slowly were really laboring against heavy odds of disadvantage through an unfavorable heredity, while others —whom perhaps we thought to be swift runners in the race — may not have so high an honor from the Lord's standpoint, or perhaps they had much advantage every way over the great majority by reason of good, natural traits and characteristics. The proper thing for each racer then is to do his best and to leave the entire matter of results to the Lord, knowing that he will receive exceedingly and abundantly more than he could have deserved as the reward for every self-denial, every faithful sacrifice in this race course in seeking to please the Lord and to win the glorious prize of the high calling now set forth.

A totally different view of the racecourse, and yet one in harmony with the letter and spirit of the Word, would represent the Christian's attainment of character-likeness to the Lord. The Scriptures assure us that all the elect will be copies of God's dear Son (Rom. 8:29); that the experience and development of character which began with our consecration to the Lord and entrance to the School of Christ culminated in the attainment of the Lord's character-likeness. This experience of the Christian may be likened to a race course, too. Only those who have accepted Christ as their Redeemer and have then made a consecration of their all to the Lord are admitted to this School of Christ of this race course. When first they enter they are, of course, very deficient—they enter that they may progress in knowledge and in grace. The start is at the point of a desire of heart to do the Lord's will; the finish of this course of study or this race will be the attainment of that degree of knowledge and of love which the Lord would approve, without which we could not be fit for the Kingdom.

If death should intervene and hinder the students from learning the lesson, or in our other picture hinder the racer from reaching his goal of perfect love, then he could not receive the crown of life, he could not be considered fit for the Kingdom which is promised only to the "overcomers." (Rev. 3:2 1) Our confidence is, however, that whoever is accepted of the Lord as a runner in this race comes so completely under the divine supervision and care that all of his earthly interests and life itself are guaranteed to be favorable to him, that he may have the opportunity for learning the lessons, the opportunity for running the race and proving himself an overcomer.

Starting at zero, we may divide this supposed race course by four quarter marks. The race is begun with a kind of love toward God—not the perfect love which will be reached at

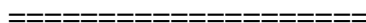
the end of the race, but nevertheless a love which is necessary toward even making a start. This we will call duty love; as the Apostle says, we realize that it is our “reasonable service” to seek to do the Lord’s will, because we are appreciative of what He is doing for us in the redemptive work of Jesus. The duty love of this first quarter will never be lost; it will always hold a high esteem in the heart and mind of the runner. But as he progresses to the second quarter of the course he finds that duty love has begotten in him a still higher character of love. While still acknowledging duty love he now has even a higher love, an appreciative love, or a character love. As we at first loved God and desired to serve and please Him because He had first loved us, so when we reach this second quarter in the Christian’s experience and race course we have reached the point where we begin to appreciate God not merely as a benefactor, but because He is good, because of the virtues of His own character, because we are learning as we become acquainted with Him to appreciate the justice which is the foundation of His throne, and the wisdom and love and power which govern all the divine course of action toward humanity.

In this second quarter of our race we learn to try our hearts before the Lord and to worship Him in spirit and in truth— because He is good, because He is worthy of worship. Thus we now have not only the duty love, but also the love of appreciation of the Creator, and we press on into the third quarter of our race, where we begin to appreciate these same elements of character even in their imperfect manifestation in the church—the bride of Christ. This stage or degree of attainment in the race toward the mark of perfect love the Apostle refers to, saying, “See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22) and again, “We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). As we progress toward the end of this third quarter mark our love for the brethren grows so deep and strong that we learn to sympathize with them as new creatures in their battlings with the weaknesses of their own flesh in a way that we could not do when first we entered this race course. Those who have attained to this degree of love know each other no longer after the flesh, with its weaknesses; but ignoring these they know each other according to the spirit, according to the heartintentions and strivings, even as the Lord knows us. Their growth in knowledge and love has thus brought them to an appreciation of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of love which they knew not at the beginning of this course, and which enables them more and more to appreciate the great divine plan which embraces all mankind in its scope and especially cares for the truly consecrated ones. Thus we start upon the fourth quarter mark of this race course, the final stage. The duty love toward God increased to love of the divine character, and this led to the loving of the brethren, because we saw in them the same spirit of the Father, Godlikeness; and this producing a deepening of our heart’s love and the emptying of our hearts of selfishness and worldly views, brings us to that broader view of the whole world of mankind which enables us to look with sympathy upon all — even upon the vilest. Not that we sympathize with villainy or impurity, but that we realize that humanity is under these defilements largely through heredity and through besetting temptations; and having learned something of the divine grace and strength needful to overcome these downward tendencies in our own mortal flesh we have a growing sympathy for the poor world which knows not the Lord and has not the Almighty arm to assist out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. This broader sympathy enables us to understand parts of the divine Word which at first were obscure to us, for we are now learning to look at the world and the sin which is in the world from God’s standpoint of sympathy, and are therefore prepared to appreciate the love of God which has provided a way of escape from sin and death, and which ultimately shall reach to every member of the race. In this last quarter of the race, therefore, we begin to be able to fulfil our Lord’s highest description of love, namely, to have love for our enemies and those who despitefully use us and persecute us. We are enabled to do this because of a fuller measure of the love of God in our own hearts and a fuller measure

of knowledge and, incidentally, sympathy for the world in its degradation and blindness. Thus we reach the climax of our love— love for enemies—the mark of perfect love, the end of this race course.

“HAVING DONE ALL, STAND”

From the very earliest moment of our faith in the Redeemer, turning from sin and consecrating to God, we are covered with the merits of Christ’s righteousness and have, to some extent, the mind of Christ—that is to say, we had a mind and will to do the will of God, and we entered the School of Christ that we might learn those lessons, or, under the present figure, we enter this race course that we might run to attain this condition of heart, which alone could be acceptable in God’s sight—the condition of perfect love. When we reach this climax of perfect love in our hearts it does not imply that we have reached a perfection of conduct so that the mortal body will always express perfectly this high standard of love. Indeed we may not reach this grand and desirable condition until we receive our new bodies in the resurrection; but so soon as we have attained the perfect love in our hearts it surely will have great influence and control over the words of our mouths as well as over the imaginings of our hearts. It will surely affect our conduct toward the Lord, the brethren and our enemies in some appreciable degree that we may discern and that our neighbors and friends can discern. The New Creature may occasionally find that with a heart full of love for the brethren or for an enemy he has not been wise or tactful in the exercise and demonstration of his love, but has given offense at the very time he intended to do good. Such imperfections of the flesh, however, the Scriptures assure us, are not charged up to us as New Creatures, but the Lord, who knoweth the heart, regards our standing of perfect love and covers all the blemishes of the flesh with the merit of the Redeemer’s sacrifice. After we have reached the mark of perfect love, what then shall we do? We answer that then, for the first time, our experiences correspond closely to those of our Redeemer, who did not need to go through the school of experience and discipline and instruction to learn the different steps of love and to attain perfect love. He did not need to run this race and to reach this mark of perfect love, because, as the perfect one, He was always there; and when we reach that degree we are merely attaining in our hearts to the condition in which our Lord was from the very beginning of His ministry. Our future experiences from that point onward are described by the Apostle, who says, “Having done all, stand”—having attained to the condition of perfect love which casts out fear, which reverences, loves the Lord in His true character, worships Him in spirit and in truth, loves the brethren and delights to lay down life in their service, and loves enemies and delights to do them good—having reached this point, stand there. But what is there to move us away from such a position when once we have attained it? We reply that the Lord permits trials and difficulties of various kinds to come upon us at this time to test us, to prove our loyalty to these principles which at this time we clearly see. Thus it was with our dear Redeemer, Who had this love, Who saw the situation and Who was controlled by this spirit of perfect love, which led Him to present His sacrifice even unto its consummation. Thus it will be in all who are copying Him; their endeavor to stand at the mark of perfect love will mean sacrifices and self-denials of various kinds, and all of these will tend to make them strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and to prove them to be conquerors and more than conquerors through Him that loved them. Let us, too, stand fast in the liberty, in the grace, in the love of God and of our Lord Jesus, exemplifying the same toward all with whom we have contact.



POEMS

R1079

PERFECT LOVE

O God! this is my plea,
What'er the process be,
This love to know.
And if the prize to gain,
Through sorrow, toil and pain
I go, e'er self be slain,
Amen! I go.

Rooted and grounded! yes,
For this I plead, O! bless
My waiting soul.
Will not this proud heart melt
Unless the rod be felt?
In mercy be it dealt,
And make me whole.

To Thee I humbly bow
And pray Thou wilt e'en now
The work begin.
'Tis all that I desire
This fulness to acquire;
This one great purifier
Dwelling within.

- E. M.

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R4694

THE MARK OF PERFECT LOVE

Oh Lord, we thank thee thou hast set
A Mark of perfect love
Which we must reach ere we can win
Approval from above.

For, in the reaching of that Mark,
Our characters are built,
Which thou requirest of all those
Whom Christ has freed from guilt.

We consecrate to follow him
Along the "narrow way";
And so we strive to overcome,
And grow, from day to day.

And "perfect love"--what does it mean?
Must we attain thereto?
And actually love, and perfectly,
Our God and brother true?

E'en so, we actually must love
Our Father, first and best,
And love our "Elder Brother," as
In him we find true rest.

And then our **enemies** we love;
We seek to do them good!
We ever try to render them
The services we should.

Ah yes, 'tis actual, perfect love
We truly must attain;
But, oh, how often do we fail!
And failure gives us pain--

Because this creature of pure love
In sin-racked body lives;
But, praise his name, our Advocate
His loving service gives.

So, perfect will and perfect love
Are handicapped till we
In his own likeness shall awake--
Like him for e'er to be!

- F. A. R.

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R2711

THE CHRISTIAN'S GOAL

Perfect love--the mark for the prize;
How shall I reach it, O Lord?
The way thou hast walked is a narrow way,
So we read in thy precious Word.
We eagerly start in the way with joy,
Thinking our love is pure;

But the Father, seeking our perfectness,
Purgeth us more and more.

Till, by dint of strokes and of tears
Made to look back o'er bitter years
Our hearts in anguish deep exclaim
"Woe is me!" "Wretched man that I am!"
We know that in us dwelleth no good thing,
But in the Beloved do we stand;
O glory and honor and praises to him
Who holdeth us in his hand!

Perfect love! O Lord can it be
Thou in infinite mercy canst see
In one so unworthy, so helpless as I,
A heart that unto thee would draw nigh?
Perfect love! Lord, can it really be
Thou hast so loved and cared for me,
That when in me did sin so abound
Thy grace more abundant was found?

Perfect love--the mark for the prize
Thou hast placed beyond the skies!
O yes, our dear Lord, we will patiently run,
With our eyes on thee alone;
Not looking back on the way we have come,
Battles fought, and victories won;
But forgetting those things which are behind
Press along our reward to find.

Perfect love--we do see it in him,
Who gave his life, our poor lives to redeem;
That we might as sons to our Father draw near,
For in Jesus we've nothing to fear,
As in the light of his glorious face
We press to the end of the race;
Standing complete in his Righteousness,
He alone our perfect dress.

--MRS. C. A. OWEN.

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AMEN!!

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

- PHILIPPIANS 3:14

“AND HAVING DONE ALL, TO STAND.”

- EPHESIANS 6:13

