

In the world ye shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." Thus we can be tranquil, brave and strong, very courageous, even though a thousand fall at our side and ten thousand at our right hand; for only with our eyes shall we behold the reward of the wicked, who say and do not.

THE BASIS OF EVERY SIFTING

We might have personal preferences here and there in the selection of elders among our little ecclesia or among officers and directors in the Society. But recognizing that the will of the Lord as expressed in the voice of the majority decides these matters, we can cast all our care in these, as in all things, on him who careth for us, knowing that all things are open and plain unto him with whom we have to do. He is working all things through Christ according to the counsel of his own will; and as he causes the deeds of evil men to praise him, restraining what would not, so even more assuredly he will overrule for his glory and our good if any error should come in through the earthen vessel of those who serve in his order and arrangement. (Galatians 2:11, 12) Let us take heed

that there never be in any one of us an evil unbelieving heart in departing from the living God, through which we become hardened by a delusion of sin.

Every sifting has rested on attacks upon the agency through which the Lord has sent his message. Not receiving it, but rejecting it and claiming to point to a definite time when the Lord cast it off, these while teaching error themselves are condemning "another man's servant," whom he, the Lord, is able to sustain (Romans 14:4) and to whom he gives evidence of his approval in supplying the proper meat at the proper time.

"For ye have need of patience [patient endurance] that after having done the will of God, ye might receive the promise [to rule with Christ]. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just [my just One] shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition [See John 17:13], but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."—Hebrews 10:37-39.

TWO CAUSES OF DISSENSION IN THE CHURCH

A man is merely what his will is and what that will can make out of the body and its circumstances. And so at the very beginning of our discipleship, the first thing is to see that we are dead as respects our will, and alive toward the Lord Jesus Christ. All who do this God calls new creatures. He grants them the Holy Spirit, that the new mind, the new will, may be theirs. In proportion as they obtain the new mind, the new will, in that same proportion will the oneness with one another exist.

That which causes dissension amongst the Lord's people is either a lack of loyalty or a lack of knowledge. If it is a lack of loyalty, the disloyal will gradually drift away. The Lord does not choose to force any of his family. He is choosing such as worship him in spirit and in truth, such as are in every respect loyal. He has set aside for the purpose of selecting this class the entire Gospel age. This great work has been in progress for more than nineteen centuries; and this

company will be a little flock. They will, evidently, be a very select class. They are required to walk by faith, not by sight.

Not many have the loyalty to God and to righteousness to walk that way and to count the world as loss and dross—as nothing, with all its projects. As the disloyal ones leave the ranks, more and more the loyal ones will find themselves drawn together, and more and more of oneness will be found among those who are faithful. This would necessarily be true in every time and in every country. All who are thoroughly loyal would desire to do the Father's will, desire to lay down their lives in the Father's service. And this desire would make them one.

The Lord speaks of his disciples being perfected in one. As each individual member of the church makes progress, he becomes more worthy to fill the place or use the opportunity provided for him. And thus the body of Christ becomes more efficacious.

THE TABLE OF THE GREAT KING

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."
—Psalm 23:5.

To serve in the courts of an earthly monarch has ever been considered a great privilege, and to sit at the royal table is an honor enjoyed by but a favored few. With this thought in mind we can especially appreciate the condescension of Jehovah as illustrated in the beautiful words of our text. Why should he come to this sinful, accursed realm and select even a handful of earth's inhabitants to be his sons and to serve them, as members of the divine family? If the Lord, the great King of the universe, has been pleased to prepare a table laden with "meat in due season" for his household and to invite us to partake thereof, it would be a most ungrateful, unworthy guest indeed who would spurn such a blessing and turn away from the food which God himself had set before him.

Our text indicates that to sit at the Lord's table would be to expose ourselves to the envious gaze of enemies, headed by Satan. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Those who have been enlightened by present truth, who have been privileged to feast on the good things which the Lord has spread before his children during the past forty years, can appreciate the significance of this statement. One by one the harvest saints have left the Babylonish "tables of vomit" (Isaiah 28:8) to partake of the meat of present truth. In each instance it has meant persecution, and oftentimes vilification and ostracism which have been very hard to endure; yet in it all our cup of joy at the privilege of feasting upon the truth and of suffering for Christ's sake has literally overflowed.

"NOT IGNORANT OF HIS DEVICES"

With each publication of harvest truth, gladdening the hearts of the Lord's people, there has been manifested a corresponding hatred on the part of all the enemies of the truth; for indeed these "Helping Hands for Bible Students" have been plagues to ecclesiasticism.—Revelation 15:5-7.

Satan has been increasingly active in his endeavors to distract and to distract the minds of the Lord's people, and to draw them away from the table of truth which has been prepared for them. In some instances he has succeeded. It seems strange that any one who has once been privileged to

enjoy the food of the Lord's providing would on any account leave the King's table and household, and return to the emptiness of the world. Nothing has incensed the adversary more than has the seventh course of "meat in due season," which the Lord in his providence has seen fit to spread before us. While it has strengthened and refreshed thousands of the Lord's faithful children, "the seed of promise," it has been as a grievous plague upon the ecclesiastical lords, "the seed of Satan." Numerous are the insidious arguments that have been propagated by our wily foe to draw away the Lord's people from the food—arguments designed either to nauseate or to frighten them. More than ever has it been true, as expressed by our text, that this last feature of present truth was spread before us "in the presence of our enemies."

To those who are familiar with Satan's tactics it should hardly be necessary to suggest an offset to his arguments. Yet in order to strengthen the faith of those whose hearts are right, but whose minds have become temporarily confused, we are pleased to set forth a few positive evidences that none other than our Lord himself has served us with the truth of Ezekiel and Revelation, which at the same time constitute the last plague upon Babylon. Let us not say: "Why should we accept it as present truth?" Rather let us say: "Why should I not accept it as meat in due season from the Lord?"

THE "HAIL" OF PRESENT TRUTH

Did not the Laodicean messenger, "that wise and faithful servant," promise us throughout his ministry and in the hour of his death, that the church should expect and would receive an exposition of these two prophetic books? Have they not now been explained thoroughly and clearly and in accordance with all other features of the divine plan? Did not the same channel or agency which the Lord has been pleased to use in publishing the preceding messages of the harvest period also publish these truths for the comfort and encouragement of the church in its hour of direst need? Is not the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society the one and only channel which the Lord has used in dispensing his truth continually since the beginning of the harvest period? Did not this last published message contain the "hail" of truth which the Scrip-

prayer! (Psalm 62:8) Appreciation for Jehovah leads to a warm relationship with him, like the one that the faithful man Abraham enjoyed as God's friend. (James 2:23) But when praying to the Sovereign Lord of the universe, we must comply with his requirements for approaching him.

REQUIREMENTS FOR DRAWING CLOSE TO GOD

⁶ Is money needed in order to approach God? Many people pay the clergy to pray for them. Some even believe that their prayers will be heard in proportion to the size of the donation they make. However, God's Word does not say that a monetary offering is required for us to approach Jehovah in prayer. His spiritual provisions and the blessings of a relationship with him in prayer are available without price.—Isaiah 55:1, 2.

⁷ What, then, is required? A right heart attitude is one essential. (2 Chronicles 6:29, 30; Proverbs 15:11) In our heart we must exercise faith in Jehovah God as the "Hearer of prayer" and "the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Psalm 65:2; Hebrews 11:6) We must also have a humble heart. (2 Kings 22:19; Psalm 51:17) In one of his illustrations, Jesus Christ showed that when approaching God a humble tax collector with a lowly heart attitude proved more righteous than an arrogant Pharisee. (Luke 18:10-14) As we approach God in prayer, let us remember that "everyone that is proud in heart is something detestable to Jehovah."—Proverbs 16:5.

⁸ If we desire to have God answer our prayers, we have to cleanse ourselves of sinful conduct. When the disciple

6, 7. Though God does not demand payment to hear our prayers, what does he require of us when we pray?

8. If we wish to have God answer our prayers, of what must we cleanse ourselves?

James encouraged others to draw close to God, he added: "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you indecisive ones." (James 4:8) Even wrongdoers can come into a peaceful relationship with Jehovah if they repent and leave their former way of life. (Proverbs 28:13) We cannot have audience with Jehovah if we merely pretend that we have cleansed our way. "The eyes of Jehovah are upon the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their supplication; but the face of Jehovah is against those doing bad things," says God's Word.—1 Peter 3:12.

⁹ The Bible states: "There is no man righteous in the earth that keeps doing good and does not sin." (Ecclesiastes 7:20) You might therefore ask: 'How, then, can we approach Jehovah God?' The Bible answers: "If anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one." (1 John 2:1) Though we are sinners, we can approach God with freeness of speech through Jesus Christ, who died as a ransom for us. (Matthew 20:28) He is the only channel through whom we can approach Jehovah God. (John 14:6) We must not take the merit of Jesus' ransom sacrifice for granted and deliberately practice sin. (Hebrews 10:26) However, if we are doing our best to refrain from what is bad and yet err at times, we can repent and ask God for forgiveness. When we approach him with a humble heart, he will hear us.—Luke 11:4.

OPPORTUNITIES TO TALK TO GOD

¹⁰ Jesus Christ valued his relationship with Jehovah

9. Through whom should we approach Jehovah, and why?

10. When it comes to prayer, how can we imitate Jesus, and what are some occasions for private prayer?