

Biblical blessings.

#1. “The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it” (Prov. x. 22). pp. 197 - 199

Pursuing our intention of including, in the articles appearing in this periodical, ministry of a more simple character, as a set-off to the somewhat harder reading that the nature of our witness often necessitates, we draw attention to a series of “Biblical blessings” found in the Scriptures, believing that the contemplation of such cannot but be an encouragement to us all.

At the outset we are met with the fact that the Scriptures, as translated into English, present to the reader two words, “happy” and “blessed”, as the translation of *ashere* in the Hebrew, and *makarios* in the Greek. The two conceptions in the words “happy” and “blessed” need to be kept apart. To be strictly applicable to the believer, “happy”, in its English constituents, contains too much the idea of that which falls out by “hap”. It would, however, introduce the very feature we wish to avoid in these particular articles, were we to conduct the reader along the paths of enquiry that lead to a true differentiation of *ashere* and *barak* in the Hebrew, and *eulogeo-etos* and *makarios-izo* in the Greek. For the present, then, let it suffice that *makarios* was used by the Ancients for the “Immortals”, and indicates a bliss that does not draw from external sources, whereas *eulogeo*, “to eulogise”, means to be well spoken of by others, and therefore has more reference to external sources.

Leaving these refinements for a more fitting occasion, we turn our attention to the word *ashere*, translated both “blessed” and “happy”. One or two marginal references found in the A.V. will give us an idea of the general, underlying, meaning of *ashere*, “blessed”:-

“They which *lead* thee” (margin ‘*call thee blessed*’) (Isa. iii. 12).

“The *leaders* of this people” (margin ‘*they called them blessed*’) (Isa. ix. 16).

“They that are *led* of them” (margin ‘*called blessed*’) (Isa. ix. 16).

Here we discover that an element of uncertainty existed in the minds of the translators, owing to the fact that, in the Hebrew, “blessing” is derived from the idea of “going forward”. If we examine the word *ashere* that gives us “blessed”, we discover that it means:-

(1) TO PROCEED, GO FORWARD.

“Forsake the foolish and live, and GO in the way of understanding” (Prov. ix. 6).

(2) STEPS.

“None of his STEPS shall slide” (Psa. xxxvii. 31).

(3) THE RELATIVE PRONOUN “WHO”.

The relative pronoun enables a sentence to “proceed” easily.

“The salvation of the Lord *which* He will show you” (Exod. xiv. 13).

“The Egyptians *whom* ye have seen to-day” (Exod. xiv. 13).

Both “which” and “whom” are translations of *ashere*. If the reader will attempt to re-write these sentences and avoid using “which” or “whom” he will appreciate the Hebrew use of the word that “goes forward”.

There is close affinity between *ashere* and *yashar*, “straight”, and the root idea of “blessedness”, as expressed by the Hebrew word *ashere*, appears to be: “Prosperity as the necessary accompaniment of uprightness.” The reader will probably turn to Psa. i. 1 as a pointed illustration of this meaning. This we must consider later: for the moment we are concerned with the statement of Prov. x. 22 as to “the blessing of the Lord”.

This blessing of the Lord, we learn, “maketh rich”. We must now introduce the reader to another feature, not evident in the translation, but very evident in the original. We have seen that the word “blessed” is *ashere*: we now learn that the words “maketh rich” translate *ashar*. The vowels with which the two words commence are not the same, though expressed in English by the letter “a”. This play upon words is a feature far more common than many think, and, as the following examples show, impresses the mind with the truth conveyed:--

“And the earth became *tohu* and *bohu*” (without form and void) (Gen. i. 2).

“The gods that have not made (*avadu*) the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish” (*yevadu*) (Jer. x. 11).

Blessing and enrichment are evidently to be thought of together.

What a plenitude of riches constitutes the blessings of the Lord as unfolded in the N.T.! There we read of riches of *goodness*, riches of *glory*, riches of *wisdom* and riches of *grace* (Rom. ii. 4; ix. 23; xi. 33; Eph. i. 7; ii. 7; iii. 16). And, even so, we have not named the blessing of the Lord as a whole, for there are two sides of His benediction. Positively, the blessing of the Lord *maketh rich*. Negatively, He addeth *no sorrow* with it. The Scriptures abound with references to the fact that “riches” and “sorrow” often keep company:--

“They that will to be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through many sorrows” (I Tim. vi. 9, 10).

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (I Tim. vi. 17).

“He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (Matt. xix. 22).

Here, then, we pause and contemplate the source, nature and the essential distinctiveness of Biblical blessings:--

- (1) THE SOURCE.—“The blessing of the Lord.”
- (2) THE NATURE.—“Blessing” has to do with progress and uprightness.
- (3) THE ESSENTIAL DISTINCTIVENESS.—(a) It maketh rich, and
(b) adds no sorrow.

It shall be our blessedness together to consider, in subsequent articles, some of these distinctive Biblical blessings. May the Lord make us rich in so doing.

#2. The blessing that accompanies confession (Psa. xxxii. 1-5). pp. 231 - 234

Let us commence our review of some biblical blessings at the book of the Psalms, and divide up our subject according to the five-fold division of that book. The sign that marks off these divisions is a double Amen, which we find at the end of Psa. xli.; lxxii; lxxxix. and *cvi. (*only one here). Book I therefore comprises Psa. i.-xli., and in it we have four distinct biblical blessings: blessings that are from the Lord, that make rich, and that add no sorrow:--

The blessedness of CONSISTENCY (Psa. i. 1).
The blessedness of CONFIDENCE (Psa. ii. 12; xxxiv. 8; and xl. 4).
The blessedness of CONFESSION (Psa. xxxii. 1-5).
The blessedness of CONSIDERATION (Psa. xli. 1).

Instead of starting at Psa. i., let us commence at Psa. xxxii., where all must begin, with a blessing that must be known and enjoyed before any manifestation of life and grace is possible:--

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile”
(Psa. xxxii. 1, 2).

The Psalm is divided into four portions by the word *Selah*. Among the purposes which *Selah* fulfils is the useful one of calling upon the reader to pause, think of what has been said, and compare with what immediately follows. Without burdening the reader of these simple lines with an elaborate structure of the Psalms, we feel that the arrangement of its parts, as indicated by the recurring *Selah*, is too important to pass over:--

1-4 Blessedness. Contrasted with grief.
 Selah. Think of this. Now consider what follows.
5 Acknowledgment and Confession.
 Selah. See the progress, how Confession leads to Praise.
6, 7 Prayer and Song.
 Selah. Then shall I teach transgressors Thy ways, said David.
8-11 Subsequent Instruction.

The Psalmist speaks of “transgression”, “sin”, and “iniquity”, and he may well have had Exod. xxxiv. 7 in mind. There (in Exod. xxxiv.) the Lord reveals His glory, His goodness and His grace.

We have given reasons in Volume XXI, page 24, of *The Berean Expositor*, for rejecting the translation: “Thou wilt by no means clear the guilty”, and for rendering the passage: “Thou wilt clear him who is not clear.” In Volume XVI, pages 183-191, we have traced the various shades of meaning contained in the words “sin”, “transgression”, and “iniquity”. It is not our purpose to go into the meanings of these separate terms, or to give proofs, all that it is necessary to say here is that the essential meaning of “sin” is *missing the mark*; of “transgression”, *rebellion*; and of “iniquity”, *perverseness*. No wonder David exclaims at the blessedness of the man who is forgiven such rebellion, whose utter moral failure is covered, and to whom the Lord no longer reckons, or imputes, such inherent and radical perversity.

It is natural to express this aspect first. If we speak as we find, both in ourselves and others, our awakening concern is our sin, its nature, and particularly its liability to dreadful punishment. As we grow in grace our realization of the exceeding sinfulness of sin increases, and our heartfelt appreciation of the grace, the love, and withal the righteousness displayed in our forgiveness, causes us to repeat, with perhaps fuller meaning than before, “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven covered not imputed”. For the word “forgive” means “to lift up and take away” and finds its full meaning in the words of the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29).

It would be pardonable if the English reader who understands the meaning of the O.T. word “atonement” were to conclude that the *covering* of sin referred to in this opening verse of Psa. xxxii. was a translation of the Hebrew word *kaphar*. Such, however, is not the case: the actual word that is used is *kasah*. This word means “to conceal” (Gen. xxxvii. 26), “to cover”, as nakedness (Exod. xxviii. 42), and “to veil” (Gen. xxiv. 65). When God conceals, covers, or veils sin, it is done righteously. He never touches sin—except in wrath—apart from the sacrifice that atones and puts it away.

The reason why the Psalmist is so exultant, and uses this word, is discovered in verse 5, where it occurs once more: “I have acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I *not hid*” (*kasah*).

In Prov. x. 12 we read: “love covereth all sins”, and love is seen at this gracious work in Psa. xxxii. 1. Again, in Prov. xvii. 9 we read: “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love”, and we who have received mercy at the hand of the Lord should indeed ever be merciful. On the other hand, Prov. xxviii. 13 says:--

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

David had “covered” his sin, and had endured agony and grief as a result:--

“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long” (Psa. xxxii. 3).

“Roaring” and “silence”, at first sight, seem incompatible; but they are to be considered as on two different planes. All David’s “roaring” was unheard by reason of the non-confession of his sin. David was guilty of murder and adultery, and in the language of another king equally guilty of a similar double crime, we may catch a faint echo of that troubled silence that dried up his moisture as the drought of summer:--

“Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand and pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect

May one be pardoned and retain the offence?
In the corrupted currents of the world
Offence’s gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft’tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law; but ‘tis not so above” (*Shakespeare*).

The whole Psalm turns upon that word “acknowledged” of verse 5, and David’s blessed experience was, that when he ceased “hiding”, guiltily, his sin, God could then “hide” it righteously and in grace. It is not possible to “be pardoned and retain the offence”. Prov. xxviii. 13, already quoted, says not only “confess” but “forsake”.

Here then is a biblical blessing that lies at the very forefront of all spiritual experience. Without this, all other blessings are but names, and can never be experienced, but with this initial blessing, come crowding around the accepted believer many marvelous outpourings of love and mercy. These we wish to investigate and enjoy, and we trust that our study together may be profitable indeed, leading us by many avenues and roads back to the opening text of the series:--

“The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it” (Prov. x. 22).

Biblical blessings.

#3. The blessing of confidence (Psa. ii. 12; xxxiv. 8 and xl. 4). pp. 28 - 30

The first blessing we have considered is the blessing of confession (Psa. xxxii. 1-5). The first logical step for any thus blessed is to trust unreservedly the One Who so graciously and wondrously delivered from the bondage of unforgiven sin. Trust is the logical outcome of faith.

We remember a famous tight-rope walker who seemed as much at home upon a rope as most folks seem upon solid earth, asking a spectator whether he believed that he, the tight-rope walker, could carry him across the rope on his back. “Yes”, replied the spectator, “I believe you could”. “Will you let me then?” asked Blondin, for such was his name. “No”, replied the spectator. In a crude way this suggests to us the difference that we must make between “believing” something as a fact, and “trusting”. Most of us “believe” the date “1066 William the Conqueror”, but such belief makes no appreciable difference to our lives, our hopes or our destinies. James tells us the demons “believe” that there is one God, His Word and His Work, we trust Him, thereby concluding that He is worthy of our fullest confidence. This “Biblical blessing” finds a place in the first book of the Psalms:--

“Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psa. ii. 12).

“O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in Him” (Psa. xxxiv. 8).

“Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies” (Psa. xl. 4).

Two words are used in these verses for the idea of “trust”. In Psa. ii. 12 and xxxiv. 8 the word conveys the idea of a “refuge”, such as might be afforded by a “rock”, a “shadow”, a “shield” or a “wing”. In Psa. xl. 4 the word means rather to “hang upon” or “cling”. In order to make our “trust” intelligent, let us see one or two illustrations of the use of each word.

Trust as a “refuge”:--

“Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted?” (Deut. xxxii. 37).

“Under whose wings thou art come to trust” (Ruth ii. 12).

“He is a buckler to all them that trust in Him” (II Sam. xxii. 31).

Trust as “clinging.”—As a noun this word means a “melon” which clings by tendrils, and so supports itself (Numb. xi. 5). As a verb it is translated “make me hope” in Psa. xxii. 9, where the figure of a child clinging to its mother is used.

W. Kaye in a note on Psa. ii. 12 says:--

“The object of this trust must be a divine Person (‘The Son’). See Jer. xvii. 5-8: which is a paraphrase of Psa. i. 2, 3, and this serves to bind Psalms i. and ii. together.”

Let us turn to this passage in Jeremiah:--

“*Cursed* be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like *the heath in the desert*, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a *tree planted by the waters*, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jer. xvii. 5-8).

Psa. ii. is prophetic of the day of the Lord, and will be a word in season when the kings of the earth assemble together against the Lord and against His Anointed.

Psa. xxxiv. 6-8 strikes a personal note:--

“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles
. . . . O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.”

It is doubly blessed when we not only enjoy the goodness of the Lord ourselves, but can give personal testimony to this blessedness: “This poor man cried”; “O taste and see.”

In Psa. xl. we have a most wonderful description of the horrors of sin, its defilement, its terrible power, and the hopeless and helpless condition of all who are under its dominion, followed by the exultant feeling of security, the blessed relief, the exchange of miry clay for solid rock, and the establishing of one’s goings. Then the song of praise and the testimony of others:--

“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust” (Psa. xl. 2-4).

Here then is the second Biblical blessing of the Psalms, the blessing of trust, the blessing of confidence, the blessing of a mighty refuge, a rock of ages, a shield and buckler; someone to whom the weak may cling and be at peace.

If we know the blessedness of sins forgiven, we may also know the blessedness of perfect trust:--

“The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it” (Prov. x. 22).

#4. The blessings of consistency (Psa. i. 1). pp. 77 - 79

We have called the blessing recounted in Psa. xxxii., the “blessing of confession”, and that found in Psa. xxxiv. 8, the “blessing of confidence”. We now turn to a third aspect, which we find in the first book of the Psalms—“the blessing of consistency.”

“Walk”, in the Scriptures, indicates a way of life. To “walk worthy” of one’s calling is the ideal set before every believer. We read of “walking after other gods” (Deut. viii. 19), of “walking in His ways” (Deut. xxviii. 9), of “walking uprightly” (Psa. xv. 2). Speaking of Enoch and his righteousness, the Scriptures record: “And Enoch walked with God” (Gen. v. 22). In the N.T. we read of a walk that is in “newness of life”, a walk that is “by faith”, a walk that is “in the spirit”, and a walk that is “in love”.

And now we come to the subject of the present article. We open the Psalms, and in the first verse of the first Psalm, the opening sentence of the whole book, we read:--

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.”

As an example, from Scripture, of the negative side of this verse we may take Ahaziah, King of Judah:--

“His mother’s name also was Ahtaliah the daughter of Omri. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was the *counselor* to do wickedly. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab: for they were his *counselors* after the death of his father TO HIS DESTRUCTION. He walked after their *counsel*” (II Chron. xxii. 1-5).

The blessedness of Psa. i. 1, however, is not limited to walk. There is a progression. First there is the *walking*; then the *standing*; and finally the *sitting*. “Walking” has in it the idea of movement, of progression. “Standing” suggests resolution, the taking up of a position. We read of standing “to minister”, of standing “in the Lord’s counsel”, of standing “in grace”. And here in Psa. i. 1 it is “standing in the way of sinners”. The blessing of the Lord that maketh rich is not for those who either walk or stand in evil ways. Neither is it for those who sit in the seat of the scornful. “Sitting” often indicates some aspect of rule or authority. “Lot sat in the gate of Sodom” (Gen. xix. 1); “Thou satest in the throne judging righteously” (Psa. ix. 4).

Psa. xxvi. has a good deal in common with the opening verse of Psa. i.:--

“I have *walked* in mine iniquity” (verse 1).

“I have *walked* in Thy truth” (verse 3).

“My foot *standeth* in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the Lord” (verse 12).

“I have not *sat* with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers” (verse 4).

The teaching of Scripture on the character and end of the scornful is a solemn study. There is but one other reference to the scorner in the Psalms:--

“The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from Thy law”
(Psa. cxix. 51).

The Book of Proverbs, on the other hand, speaks of the scorner no less than eighteen times. The last reference is in chapter xxiv. 9: “The scorner is an abomination to men.”

Psa. i. 1 is expressed negatively: “Blessed is the man that walketh *not*, *nor* standeth *nor* sitteth.” While a negative attitude is not ideal, let us not under-estimate the fact that, although to do good is more blessed, to abstain from evil is blessed also. Those who are timid should be encouraged by this verse. What though your strength is small, and the way you have traversed a negligible quantity? What though you have not yet reached the height of walking worthy of your calling, or of walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing? Is it not something to have refrained your foot from evil? To have entered into the blessedness of *not* walking with evil, is but the prelude to the further and fuller blessedness of walking with God. If we cannot yet look upon our stand for the truth with any sense of approval, let us not miss the blessing that is assured to those who do *not* stand in the way of sinners. If we have not reached, in our experience, the realization of our position as “seated” in heavenly places—which is blessing raised to its superlative degree—we may still experience the blessedness that attends those who have *not* sat in the seat of the scornful.

Positive statements immediately follow what we get in Psa. i. 1, but the verse itself is negative. The next verse completes the story with its “delight in the law of the Lord”, and meditation therein “day and night” (Psa. i. 2).

We have already seen the blessedness of confession and of confidence. We now see the blessedness of consistency, another of the blessings of the Lord that make rich, and bring no sorrow with them.

#5. The blessing of consideration (Psa. xli. 1). pp. 117 - 120

We have now to consider the fourth ground of blessing that is mentioned in the first book of the Psalms, and this we find in Psa. xli. 1:--

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”

Psa. xli. is one of the Messianic Psalms. When we say this, let us not be misunderstood. Christ is the sum and substance, the Alpha and the Omega of all Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Every Psalm, therefore, speaks of Him. Some, however, speak prophetically of Him in a special way, as, for instance, Psa. ii. and Psa. xxii. Among these we must place Psa. xli. Verse 9, as originally written by David, referred to Ahithophel who betrayed him, and as Ahithophel had some connection with Bathsheba there were some grounds, humanly speaking, for his action. The Lord Jesus quotes this verse with reference to His own betrayal by Judas. It is important, however, not only to observe what the Lord quoted, but what He omitted. He quoted the words: “He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me.” But He did not quote: “Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted” (John xiii. 18). Judas was a devil, and known as such by the Lord from the beginning (John vi. 70), and as such could never have been the Lord’s own familiar friend. Neither could it be said of Christ that He “trusted in” Judas for it is written that “He knew what was in man” (John ii. 25).

We shall find some things in these Messianic Psalms that are true of both the Psalmist and of Christ, but there are others that belong strictly to the Psalmist himself as the fallible type. For example, the words of Psa. xli. 4, “I have sinned against Thee”, could never have been spoken by the Saviour. Even though He bore our sins, and was made sin for us, it was ever true that He knew no sin, and that He did no sin.

The English reader of Psa. xli. 1 is most likely to read it as though it inculcated kindness to the poor, almsgiving and charity. While we would not say anything against a simple act of kindness, but would rather urge a more responsive spirit on the part of most of us, the thought of kindness is not the meaning of this passage. The word translated “consider” occurs 72 times in the O.T. and the following are the translations found in the A.V.:--

“Behave wisely, guide wittingly, be instructed, wise, consider, consider wisely, deal prudently, give skill, have good success, have understanding, instruct, make to understand, make wise, prosper, teach, understand, expert, maschil, prudent, skilful, understanding, wise, wisely, wisdom.”

“*Blessed is he that the poor.*”—How shall we translate this word? What is its special meaning?

In the first place, the “poor” may refer to the impecunious (Exod. xxx. 15), the weak (Gen. xli. 19), or the sick both in mind and body (II Sam. xiii. 2). The word translated “poor” can be used of the son of a king; we must, therefore, take care not to limit its meaning. The translations of *sakal* (“consider”) already given, preclude the idea of almsgiving or of charity. The emphasis all through its upon wisdom.

There is but one way of arriving at the solution, and that way is too long to be included in an article. We must all, personally, read the history of David, from the rebellion of Absalom and the betrayal of Ahithophel in II Sam. xv., throughout the heart-breaking history of chapters xvi.-xviii., on to the chapters of restoration, xix.-xxi. There we shall read of Zadok and his two sons, and of Hushai, who though loyal to David, and willing to share his exile, went back to Jerusalem and defeated the counsel of Ahithophel, so that Ahithophel, like Judas, “hanged himself” (II Sam. xvii. 23; Matt. xxvii. 5).

Whenever we are faced with a difficulty in the translation of an O.T. passage, it is always a wise thing to see how the translators of the LXX version have rendered it; for it is clear that these Hebrews, 200 years B.C., knew something of their mother tongue. We find that they used the word *sunemi*, which is translated 24 times “to understand”, once “be wise” and once “consider”. About half these occurrences are found in the quotations made from Isa. vi. and the explanations that follow. This is very suggestive, for Israel as a nation have not “considered the afflicted” but have refused Him. In Eph. v. 16, 17 the word is associated with evil days as it is in Psa. xli.

We regret that in this article we have been obliged to deal with our subject a little in the manner of the lexicon. It would have been easier to have enlarged upon the blessedness of having compassion on the poor, or of passing on one’s blessings in fellowship, but such a treatment would have been a betrayal of the truth, and we shun the slightest approximation to the counsel of Ahithophel. These men “considered wisely the afflicted” and received blessing from the Lord.

How far can this passage be true of ourselves? The Lord Jesus is denied His lawful sovereignty here, and has left us in this scene of His betrayal, and we, too, are called upon to remember Him, His rightful claims and His coming glory. Quite apart from our assured acceptance in the Beloved, we are told that “if we endure, we shall also reign with Him” (II Tim. ii. 12).

The Psalmist in Psa. xli. 1 speaks of deliverance in the day of evil. In like manner, the apostle writing to the Ephesians as overcomers, says:--

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having worked out all, to stand” (Eph. vi. 13).

A comforting thought is expressed in the third verse of the Psalm: “Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness” (Psa. xli. 3). The margin reads “turn”, as in Psa. lxvi. 6: “He turned the sea into dry land.” The meaning of the verse is rather as follows:--

“It is no longer a sick bed, for Thou hast healed him of his disease” (*Perowne*).
“Thou hast changed his bed of sickness into health” (*Translation of “Four Friends”*).

The blessing of the Lord that maketh rich, which is promised to each one who takes his place with the Lord in His rejection, is manifold. He delivers in the day of evil; He preserves and keeps him alive (the word also includes the thought of resurrection); He blesses “upon the earth” (i.e., in spite of the usurper each shall yet stand in his appointed sphere of blessing, heavenly or earthly); He will strengthen him while sick; and finally change his sickness to health. What was physical to David is spiritual to us, but whether then or now, these are Biblical blessings that enrich indeed, and add no sorrow with them.

#6. The blessing that satisfies (Psa. lxxv. 3, 4). pp. 150 - 153

The second book of the Psalms (xlii.-lxxii.) contains only one “blessing”, but it is of sufficient fullness to stand alone. The passage is Psa. lxxv. 4:--

“Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple.”

It would be inappropriate in a series like this to devote too much time to analysis, and we therefore give only the merest suggestion of the structure of the Psalm in which this blessing is found:--

Psalm lxxv.

- A | 1. Praise. Silence.
- B | 2. All flesh.
- C | 3, 4. “Blessed” (*ashere*); “dwell”; “satisfied with goodness”.
- B | 5, 6. All ends of the earth.
- C | 7-13. “Thou blessest” (*barak*); “dwell”; “crown with goodness”.
- A | 13. Shout. Sing.

It will be seen that the blessings of verse 4 are balanced by those of verse 10, although we must remember that two different words are employed. The blessings of verses 3, 4 are associated with spiritual things—“iniquities, transgressions, Thy courts, Thy house”—whereas the blessings of verses 7-13 are the blessings of field and furrow, fatness and flocks.

The Psalms seems to have been written to celebrate the goodness of the Lord in giving a bounteous harvest. Possibly during a drought, vows had been made, and now in a solemn silence these vows are performed. One rendering of verse 1 is: “Praise waits all hushed”; and this solemn hush is in contrast with the “shout” of the concluding verse. The words, “A psalm and song of David” need not necessarily mean that David was the

author, but, as *The Companion Bible* indicates, they may imply a prophetic anticipation of the day of David's greater Son. The reference to the "temple" in verse 4 also points in this direction, for no temple existed until Solomon's day.

Leaving these considerations, however, let us give our attention to the blessings specified in this passage. It is most important that we should not forget that this record of blessings commences at verse 3:--

"Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away."

It may at first seem strange to commence a list of blessings with "prevailing iniquities". But until the believer has come to an end of himself and has realized his complete ruin and hopelessness, fullness of blessing cannot flow out from God into his heart. It is the empty vessel that He fills. The margin indicates that the word "iniquities" should read either "words" or "matters", and the LXX translates it *logoi anomon*. The Psalmist was overwhelmed by the record of his sin; he felt himself condemned, and ready to cry out with the "wretched man" of Rom. vii. 24. The blessing of Psa. xxxii., the blessedness of covered transgression and of forgiven sin, is here repeated: "As for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away." The way is now open for the special blessings of verse 4.

These blessings are connected with (1) Choice, (2) Approach, (3) Dwelling and (4) Satisfaction.

(1) "*Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest.*"—This initial blessing, the blessing of God's choice, rests upon nothing but the sovereignty of God and moves entirely in a realm of grace:--

"The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers" (Deut. vii. 7, 8).

This initial blessing separates the recipient, in the eyes of Him that chose, from all else:--

"The Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. xiv. 1, 2).

In Psa. cvi. 5 the Psalmist desires to see and rejoice in:--

- i. The Good of Thy chosen.
- ii. The Gladness of Thy nation.
- iii. The Glory of Thine inheritance.

When we turn to the N.T. we find the same insistence upon the sovereignty of the Chooser, the peculiarity of the chosen and the glory of their inheritance:--

“God hath chosen the weak things of the world” (I Cor. i. 27).

“He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. i. 4).

“The purpose of God according to election not of works, but of Him that calleth” (Rom. ix. 11).

(2) “*Blessed is the man whom Thou causest to approach unto Thee.*”—Those who were chosen before time began, were chosen in order that, in time, they might draw near to the Lord Who chose them for Himself. Eph. i. 4 speaks of our election; Eph. ii. 18 speaks of our approach:--

“But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph. ii. 13).

“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. ii. 18).

It is of the utmost importance that we observe the order here. We are made nigh by the *blood*, before we draw nigh by the *Spirit*. Those whom the Lord “caused to approach” in Psa. lxxv. were those who knew something of “prevailing iniquity” and of “covered transgressions”:--

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (I Pet. iii. 18).

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb. x. 19-22).

Once again we must draw attention to the order here. We have no full assurance *of faith*, unless we have boldness by *the blood*. The blessings of Psa. lxxv. 4 must be preceded by the blessing of covered sin in verse 3. So must it ever be with regard to all the blessings that shall be enjoyed in whatever sphere; we must all start as sinners saved by grace.

(3) “*Chooseth causest to approach that he may dwell in Thy courts.*”—Just as true home life is at the centre of all national life, and largely the gauge of its stability and purity, so we find that the conception of home is an integral part in the purpose of grace. Soon after Israel were delivered from Egypt, the Lord planned the tabernacle in order that He, the Holy One, might be able to *dwell* with His people: “Let them make Me a sanctuary: that I may dwell among them” (Exod. xxv. 8). The Psalmist, when he wrote, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want” had in mind the goal: “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever” (Psa. xxiii. 1, 6). All the intervening verses are but steps that lead to home.

When at length the apostle sees the new heaven and the new earth he also hears a voice which says:--

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will *dwell* with them” (Rev. xxi. 1-3).

Whether we think of the Lord God walking with man in the garden of Eden, the tabernacle in the wilderness, the temple of Solomon, the words of John xiv. concerning the “many mansions”, the indwelling of Christ by faith in Eph. iii., the “Shepherd

Psalm”, or the apocalyptic vision, we see that all Scripture speaks in glowing words of that blessed dwelling-place, the home of those who were chosen and are made nigh.

(4) “*We shall be satisfied.*”—All possible blessing is summed up in the word “satisfied”. Satisfaction cannot be found “under the sun” (Eccles. i. 8; iv. 8). It belongs to the life to come:--

“I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be *satisfied*, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa. xvii. 15).

#7. The blessing of anticipated victory. pp. 201 - 203

The third book of the Psalms (lxxiii.-lxxxix.) contains a fourfold blessing, and this fourfold blessing belongs to the second part of this book, namely, Psa. lxxxiv.-lxxxix.:--

“Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house” (Psa. lxxxiv. 4).

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee” (Psa. lxxxiv. 5).

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee” (Psa. lxxxiv. 12).

“Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound” (Psa. lxxxix. 15).

The first of these Psalms is written for the sons of Korah, and when we remember that the sons of Korah were “Keepers of the thresholds (margin) of the tabernacle” (I Chron. ix. 19), we better appreciate the words:--

“I had rather be a doorkeeper (Heb., *sit at the threshold*) in the house of my God, than dwell (Heb., *Go round about, have free access*) in the tents of wickedness” (Psa. lxxxiv. 10).

The blessing of Psa. lxxv. 4 (“chosen”, “made nigh”, and “dwelling”) considered in the last number of this series, and which we found “satisfied”, is evidently satisfying the Psalmist here. He has not yet reached the day when he shall awake, satisfied, in the likeness of his Lord, but he lives in blessed anticipation of it, for the Lord he serves will give “grace (now), and glory (then)” (verse 11). Consequently he adds, “Blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee” (verse 12).

The Psalmist, by using the figure of the swallow and the sparrow, helps us to realize the sense of security, warmth and peace that he found in the dwelling-place provided for him:--

“Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, Even Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, My King, and my God” (Psa. lxxxiv. 3).

George Herbert has sung in much the same strain:--

“Oh let me,--when Thy roof my soul has hid,--
Oh let me roost and nestle there,
Then of a sinner Thou art rid,
And I of hope and fear.”

In Psa. cii. we find the pelican, the owl, and the sparrow grouped together, a threefold symbol of loneliness: “I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top” (7). The way in which the swallow has endeared itself to man by its habit of building its nest under the eaves of his very roof is a commonplace in prose and poetry. The allusions to birds and beasts in the Psalms would make an interesting study in itself.

The writer of this Psalm is most certainly an exile. His soul faints with its longing once more to stand in the courts of the Lord. He envies the sparrow and the swallow which make their nests under its very roof, and calls them blessed indeed who dwell in the house of the Lord. From meditating upon the house of the Lord, the Psalmist turns to the thought of pilgrims making their way through the valley of Baca, the vale of tears, sustained by the strength of the Lord, and upheld by the prospect of arriving at the house of the Lord:--

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee;
In whose heart are the ways *of them*” (Psa. lxxxiv. 5).

As translated in the A.V. the second line does not make sense. The R.V. reads: “In whose heart are the high ways *to Zion*.” The LXX reads: “In his heart he has purposed to go up the valley of weeping”, thereby running two verses together. *Davidson’s Hebrew Lexicon* reads: “They fondly think of the roads leading to Jerusalem.”

This blessed hope turns the Valley of Weeping into a place of springs, and of goings from strength to strength, until the pilgrims finally appear before God in Zion. Thus encouraged the writer utters his third blessing:--

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee” (Psa. lxxxiv. 12).

“Trust” here is “confidence”. God is his Sun and Shield: the Lord will give both grace and glory: He will not withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly.

The remaining blessing of this book is but the anticipation of that blessed day when the outcast and the exile shall indeed be gathered home:--

“Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound” (Psa. lxxxix. 15).

What joyful sound? It is nothing less than the Jubile, when all forfeit is recovered, all bondage has ceased. It is nothing less than the sound of the trumpet that means victory. It is an anticipation of the sounding of the seventh trumpet when all the enemies of the Lord shall fall and the kingdom of the Lord be established. The word that is translated “joyful sound” is *teruah*, which is rendered, “blowing of trumpets” (Lev. xxiii. 24), “trumpet of the Jubile” (Lev. xxv. 9), “Shout”, at the fall of Jericho (Josh. vi. 5). In the

verses that precede the blessing of Psa. lxxxix. we have great stress laid upon the strength and victory of the Lord. Rahab is broken in pieces, enemies are scattered. As Psa. lxxii. closes the second book of the Psalms with a glorious picture of the reign of Christ, so Psa. lxxxix. closes the third book with a picture of His mighty triumph.

We too in our sphere are strangers, pilgrims, exiles. We too are sustained by hope, and are blessed indeed, because by faith we know that Jubilee sound, and can even now call ourselves “more than conquerors through Him that loved us”.

Biblical blessings.

#8. The blessedness of patience continuance. pp. 38 - 40

The fourth book of the Psalms contains two blessing:--

“Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord,
And teachest him out of Thy law;
That Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity,
Until the pit be digged for the wicked” (Psa. xciv. 12, 13).
“Blessed are they that keep judgment,
And he that doeth righteousness at all times” (Psa. cvi. 3).

This book of the Psalms corresponds to the book of Numbers. Psa. xc. is a Psalm of Moses; and the Rabbinical rule is that all succeeding Psalms, until a new author is named, are from the same pen. Consequently xci. is also a Psalm of Moses; so that all our Lord’s quotations in the temptation in the wilderness were from the writings of Moses. The succeeding Psalms, from xcii. to c., must also be ascribed to Moses.

Psa. xc. deals with the wilderness experiences of those who, being twenty years old and upward, perished during the forty years’ wandering.

Psa. xci. gives the experience of those under twenty, who were preserved during the forty years and led into the land of promise.

Psa. xcii. is entitled, “A Psalm or Song for the sabbath day”.

The theme of this fourth book of the Psalms is that of “rest”—rest lost and found, rest desired, anticipated, celebrated, the rest that remaineth to the people of God. Psa. xciv. 13 speaks of “rest”; Psa. xcv. 11 speaks of “rest”. Psa. cvi. rehearses the history of the Exodus and Israel’s subsequent departures from the Lord; and so balances Psa. xc.

We are therefore prepared to find the blessings of this set of Psalms characterized by chastening, adversity, and endurance. Turning to Psa. xciv., we note that the blessing which we are to consider is set in a time of trouble.

The Psalm opens with a cry for vengeance, and speaks of God as the Judge of the earth and the Rewarder of the proud. The proud seem to triumph and to say, in effect, “The Lord shall not see”. But such a conclusion is “brutish” and lacking in wisdom. He that planted the ear and formed the eye must surely be able to hear and see. He Who chastens the heathen knows full well the vanity of their thoughts.

It is in this setting that the beatitude of chastening is announced: “Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord.” Quite a number of scriptures come to mind that speak

of chastening. We are warned against “despising the chastening of the Lord” (Job. v. 17; Prov. iii. 1; Heb. xii. 5). We are assured that chastening and love go together (Heb. xii. 6), and that it is indeed a sign of sonship (Deut. viii. 5, Heb. xii. 7). Looking once more at the verse that gives us our theme, we observe that the first and third lines correspond, the first speaking of present chastening, and the third of rest from the days of adversity.

In Heb. xii. there is a “nevertheless afterwards”, and in the verse under consideration there is an “until”: “Until the pit be digged for the wicked” (Psa. xciv. 13). Abraham’s seed had to suffer affliction in Egypt because the iniquity of the Amorite was not yet full. A patient trust in the God of all grace, Who is dealing with iniquity, and training His children for future glory, should enable those of us who are “sons” to realize that it is indeed a blessing to be chastened, disciplined, corrected and warned, while others, left without discipline, tread the road that leads unto death:--

“When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (I Cor. xi. 32).

The epistle to the Hebrews gives a prominent place to the story of Israel’s failure in the wilderness (Heb. iii., iv.), and to the need of chastening (Heb. xii.), and lays great stress upon the grace of “endurance” and of “not drawing back”.

And so we find that the second of the two blessings of this book of the Psalms insists upon endurance:--

“Blessed are they that keep judgment,
And he that doeth righteousness AT ALL TIMES” (Psa. cvi. 3).

A simplified structure of this Psalm is as follows:--

A | 1-7. HALLELUJAH. Righteousness at all times.
B | 8-12. Nevertheless.
C | 13-43. Sin and Deliverance.
B | 44-46. Nevertheless.
A | 47, 48. HALLELUJAH. From the age to the age.

The structure places the term “at all times” and “from everlasting to everlasting” (from the age to the age) in correspondence. It seems to suggest the believer’s association by faith with longsuffering and patience of the Lord. He waits to be gracious. Let us wait also and murmur not. It is comparatively easy to do right sometimes, but the great test is to do right at all times, especially when adversity presses, when trials abound, when the wicked appear to triumph, when the Lord hides Himself so that the ungodly say, “The Lord shall not see”. It is then blessed indeed to have received such grace that chastening can be appreciated at its true value. Whether our efforts are attended by outward success or by apparent failure, may we ever seek the blessedness of doing right at *all times*.

#9. The blessedness of going on unto perfection (Psa. cxix. 1). pp. 74 - 77

There is need for care in sorting out the passages that speak of blessedness in the closing book of the Psalms, by reason of their dispensational character. For example, it would be quite contrary to the calling of the Church to take to itself the blessedness of Psa. cxxxvii. 8, 9. This Psalm is prophetic of the days of vengeance when Babylon shall suffer at the hand of the Lord. Again, when we read concerning children, in Psa. cxxvii.: “Happy (blessed) is the man that hath his quiver full of them”, we must remember that the blessings of Israel included “basket and store”, whereas in the dispensation now obtaining, the great apostle knew what it was to be homeless, comfortless, hungry and naked. Psa. cxxvii., moreover, is one of Hezekiah’s Psalms, wherein he praises God for the added fifteen years of his life and the promise of a son and heir. The whole question, however, of the Songs of the Degrees is too great a subject for a series such as this, so we must pass on, without attempting further explanation.

The blessings of the fifth book of the Psalms, that are true for all time, are five in number, and are found in Psa. cxii. 1; cxix. 1, 2; cxiv. 15 and cxlvi. 5. These passages naturally divide into two groups:--

- (1) The first three speak of blessing in association with the Word.
- (2) The second pair speak of blessing in association with God.

Let us take the first set and consider what is there made a subject of blessing:--

“Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments” (Psa. cxii. 1).

“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart” (Psa. cxix. 1, 2).

Psalm cxii. is an alphabetical Psalm, every line beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and in alphabetical order. The following will give the reader some idea of the arrangement, but must not be taken as a literal translation:--

A blessing is on the man that feareth the Lord,
Because he delighteth in his commandments (verse 1).
***G**reat shall his seed be upon the earth:
Descendants of the upright shall be blessed (verse 2).

[NOTE: * - *G* is the third letter in the Hebrew and Greek alphabets.]

The subject of fear needs separate consideration. It is sufficient for the moment to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that this blessed fear is not to be disassociated from delight: “Blessed is the man that *feareth* that *delighteth*.” This takes us back to Psa. i. where we read: “His delight is in the law of the Lord.”

While the Hebrew word *chaphets* is mostly translated by “delight”, “please”, and similar words, it is once rendered “move”, in the passage concerning *Behemoth*: “He *moveth* his tail like a cedar” (Job xl. 17).

It would be easy to follow the example of those who seize upon this passage as an example of slipshod translation, for, one might say, what connection is there between the word “delight” and the “moving” of a tail? Yet if the question be put in a true spirit of enquiry, an interesting lesson awaits us. The radical idea of *chaphets* is to bend, and so to incline, to be favourably disposed, to delight in. A passage in Psa. cxix. brings the word “delight” and the word “incline” together:--

“Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I *delight*. *Incline* my heart unto Thy testimonies and not to covetousness” (Psa. cxix. 35, 36).

This then is the first subject of blessedness: a heart and mind that “bend” or “incline” towards the word and will of God.

We must now pass on to the next subject of blessing:--

“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord” (Psa. cxix. 1).

Psa. cxix. is an alphabetical Psalm, but instead of each verse starting with a fresh letter of the alphabet, as in Psa. cxii., we find that it is divided into twenty-two stanzas, each of eight verses, each line in each stanza commencing with one letter of the alphabet (verses 1-8 begin with A; verses 9-16 with B; and so on).

The first stanza is divided into two parts. Verses 1-4 state truth in general; verses 5-8 give the response of the individual. It will be seen that point answers point in the structure: this we set out in a series of four parts.

- / THE WAY.—Blessedness of those who are undefiled (verse 1).
- \ MY WAYS.—Prayer that verse 1 may be experienced (verse 5).
- / BLESSEDNESS.—Those who keep and seek with whole heart (2).
- \ BLESSEDNESS.—Unashamed as result of having respect unto all commandments (6).
- / RIGHT.—They also do no iniquity (3).
- \ RIGHT.—I will praise with uprightness (7).
- / COMMAND.—To keep precepts diligently (4).
- \ RESPONSE.—I will keep Thy statutes (8).

Set out in structure form this stanza is as follows:--

A		1.	The way of the Lord.	\	
B		2.	Blessed.	\	General.
C		3.	Upright; no iniquity.	/	
D		4.	Command.	/	
A		5.	My Ways.	\	
B		6.	Unashamed.	\	Individual.
C		7.	Upright; righteous judgments.	/	
D		8.	Response.	/	

The word “undefiled”, the chief word in Psa. cxix. 1, is a translation of the Hebrew *tamim*. The root idea of this word is “to finish”, “to perfect”, “to complete”; the derived sense, “undefiled”, comes from its application to the animals used for sacrifice.

The parallel N.T. conception is conveyed by that great word “perfect” (*teleios*) which comes so prominently in Hebrews and Philippians. It suggests the “finishing” of one’s course, running with patience the race set before us, laying hold of that for which we have been laid hold of by Christ. To appreciate to the full the blessing pronounced in Psa. cxix. 1, we must bear in mind all the associations of the word “perfect”—the history of Noah who was “perfect” regarding his pedigree (Gen. vi. 9); the command of the Lord to Abraham after his justification, “Walk before Me and be thou perfect” (Gen. xvii. 1); the character of the man who shall ascend the hill of the Lord: “He that walketh *uprightly*” (Psa. xv. 2).

Besides all this, the blessedness of Psa. cxix. 1 extends to the very prize of our calling as set forth in Phil. iii., where the words “perfect” and “perfection” are key-thoughts.

The first clause of the verse (Psa. cxix. 1) is immediately followed by references to the Word of God and the believer’s relation thereto. The undefiled or perfect are “in the way”. They are those who “walk in the law of the Lord”, and who “keep His testimonies”.

The blessings that conclude the series in the Psalms we must leave for another paper.

**#10. The blessedness of trust without sight
(Psa. cxliv. 15; cxlvi. 5).
pp. 124 - 127**

The two remaining beatitudes of the Psalms are those of Psa. cxliv. 15 and cxlvi. 5. Psa. cxliv. demands a careful examination owing to the peculiar change at verse 12. Some commentators have not hesitated to say that verse 12-15 belong to another period and have no real connection with the earlier verses. Such is the opinion of compilers of the Psalms chronologically arranged. The true explanation will be found in *The Companion Bible*. Verses 12-15 are the boastful words of the “strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity” (verse 11). These say: “Our sons are plants grown up in their youth”, and continue through the whole list, speaking of their daughters, their full garners, their increasing flocks, their labouring oxen, their security and contentment. “Happy”, say they, “is that people, that is in such a case”. The word “happy” is the word “blessed” which we have had before us throughout this series.

The Psalmist however breaks into this realm of contentment in the concluding sentence of the Psalm by saying: “Nay (or Yea rather), blessed is that people, whose God is the Lord.” This is a supreme example of clear sighted faith. On the one hand, all that heart could wish in the shape of peace, prosperity and contentment; on the other, the vision that all is vanity apart from the presence and fellowship of the living God.

The prophet Habakkuk endorses the sentiment of the Psalmist:--

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls;
Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. iii. 17, 18).

What do we know of this triumphant “Yet” or of that equally wonderful “Nay” of Psa. cxliv. 15? This point of view is only obtained when, like Asaph, we turn our eyes away from envying those who have more than heart can wish, and enter into the sanctuary of God. What we learn there will enable us to come out again into the world where the ungodly seem to prosper, and to say out of a full heart “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee” (Psa. lxxii. 25).

To us, members of the body of Christ, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, this sanctuary experience should be our normal attitude. In that sanctuary on high is our all, and while we look for traveling mercies and pilgrim provisions, we are enjoined to “set our minds on things above” (Col. iii. 2). When we hear others recounting the advantages of fellowship that compromises the truth, when we

hear of success that goes hand in hand with betrayal of fundamentals, let us take a glance at Psa. cxliv., and be enabled to say to all such: “*Nay*, blessed is that people, whose God is the Lord.”

The next and closing beatitude of the Psalms is found in a context that magnifies the Lord in a very full manner. There are but ten verses in the Psalm, and in order to demonstrate the emphatic place occupied in it by the Lord, we will give the entire Psalm, set out according to its structure and emphasis.

Psalm cxlvi.

- A | 1, 2. Hallelujah.
Praise the LORD, O my soul.
While I live will I praise the LORD:
I will sing praises unto GOD while I have any being.
- B | 3. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man.
- C | 3. In whom there is no help.
- D | 4. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth;
In that very day his thoughts perish.
- E | 5. BLESSED IS HE THAT HATH THE GOD OF
JACOB FOR HIS HELP.
- B | 5. Whose hope is in the LORD his GOD.
- C | 6-9. WHICH made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that therein is:
WHICH keepeth truth for ever:
WHICH executeth judgment for the oppressed.
WHICH giveth food to the hungry.
The LORD looseth the prisoners:
The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind:
The LORD raiseth them that are bowed down:
The LORD loveth the righteous:
The LORD preserveth the strangers:
HE relieveth the fatherless and widow:
But the way of the wicked HE turneth upside down.
- D | 4. The LORD shall reign for ever,
even Thy GOD, O Zion, unto all generations.
- A | 10. Hallelujah.
Praise ye the LORD.

In this first of the five “Hallelujah” Psalms that conclude the whole book, we have the Lord Himself as the centre and foundation, the source and the goal of all blessing. Man is set aside, be he prince of the blood, or man of the street. In him there is no help. The reference to his breath: “his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth” and his mortality call to mind a parallel utterance:--

“Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of” (Isa. ii. 22).

In marked contrast with man and his utter inability in the matter of “help” (saving help, salvation) is the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, the righteous judge of the oppressed, the God of providence and of salvation, the God Who shall reign for ever when the way of the wicked shall have been turned upside down. It is therefore quite in accord with the theme of the Psalm that we find placed in the centre of the structure of the blessedness of having the God of Jacob as our help. The stress upon the name “Jacob” suggests that we are dealing here with the God of all grace, for Jacob represents all that is weak and worthless, yet receiving all that is great and glorious. Not only our “help” but our “hope”.

“Whose hope is in the Lord his God” (Psa. cxlvi. 5).

It is indeed fitting that the climax blessings of the Psalms should be those that set aside all that pertains to the outer world of time and sense (Psa. cxliv. 12-15), and to man in whatever station he may found, and trusts only and completely in the God of all grace. Blessed indeed is a people in such a case.

We have now passed in review the blessings of the Psalms:--

- (1) FORGIVENESS OF SINS (xxxii. 1-5).
- (2) CONFIDENCE (ii. 12; xxxiv. 8; xl. 4).
- (3) CONSISTENCY (i. 1).
- (4) CONSIDERATION (xli. 1).
- (5) SATISFACTION (lxv. 3, 4).
- (6) ANTICIPATED VICTORY (lxxxiv. 4, 5, 12; lxxxix. 15).
- (7) PATIENT CONTINUANCE (xciv. 12; cvi. 3).
- (8) GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION (cxii. 1; cxix. 1, 2).
- (9) TRUST WITHOUT SIGHT (cxliv. 15; cxlvi. 5).

Such is one group of Biblical blessings. We trust that the consideration of them will have been a means of help to many. We hope to pursue this theme in other parts of Scripture as opportunity offers. May the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich be our experimental portion at all times.

**#11. Blessing, and its connection with purpose
and the obedience of faith.
pp. 175 - 178**

Among the outstanding figures of the O.T. that are particularly associated with blessing, we must include Abraham. There are four periods in his life linked with the thought of blessing, a study of which will shed some light on the conditions of Biblical blessing and so, we trust, be a help to us all.

The first occasion in Abraham's life on which we hear of blessing comes after his response to the call to leave country, kindred and father's house. Arising out of a consideration of Gen. xi. and xii., the following features appear to have a bearing upon our theme:--

(1) *What was the necessary condition of blessing?*

Let us answer in the words of Scripture:--

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb. xi. 8).

By comparing Acts vii. 2, 3 with Gen. xii. 1 we discover that Abraham received this call twice; once when he was in Ur of the Chaldees, and once in Haran after the death of his father Terah:--

“The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee” (Acts vii. 2, 3).

It appears that when Abraham prepared to move out of Ur of the Chaldees in response to the call of God, Terah his father, Lot his nephew, and Sarai Abraham's wife journeyed together. At first sight it would appear that Abraham did not fully obey the Lord's command, but by comparing Acts vii. with Gen. xii. it will be seen that at the first call, separation from “country and kindred” was commanded, while after the death of Terah it was separation from “country, kindred *and father's house*”:--

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee” (Gen. xii. 1).

In our next article we shall show that the Lord kept His word and that Abraham did not receive the blessing promised until the conditions were fulfilled. This, however, does not come first. While implicit and absolute obedience is the essential condition for blessing, and while Abraham did not receive the full promise until he had fully obeyed, we can contemplate with thanksgiving the fact that the intention of Abraham's heart was

noted by the Lord, just as surely as the halts and the hindrances that for the time prevented complete obedience.

At the end of Gen. xi. we read: "And Terah took Abram his son" (Gen. xi. 31). Perhaps it is impossible for us who live today to realize the authority that a parent had in those patriarchal days over his children, even though they were grown up and married. The Lord, therefore, tempered His command, and did not include "thy father's house" at the beginning. Haran, though 600 miles distant from Ur, was a similar city, and worshipped the same Moon-god. Not until Terah was dead did Abraham cross over Jordan and enter into the land.

We can say without fear of contradiction that the necessary condition of blessing in Abraham's case was obedience of faith. And the same is true of all experimental blessings in relation to all the children of God in all ages.

(2) What underlies the blessing of God?

It is evident from the context that Abraham was not called and blessed on merely personal grounds. The nations of the earth had signally failed. The awful rebellion of the builders of Babel is found in the same chapter as the move of Terah to Haran. That rebellion was overruled by the purpose of God:--

"Let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth"
(Gen. xi. 4).

When the Lord blessed Abraham, He said, "I will make thy name great and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xii. 2, 3); as though that which had been rebelliously planned by the builders of Babel should be gloriously achieved by the mercy of God. We shall therefore be within the bounds of truth if we say that underlying the blessings of Scripture will be discovered the outworking of the purpose of the ages.

If we turn to Eph. i. 3-14, where that phase of the purpose is introduced which belongs to heavenly places and the mystery, we shall find "blessing" and "purpose" very closely related:--

"Who hath blessed us according as He hath chosen us having predestinated us according to the good pleasure of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His Own will."

(3) An essential characteristic of blessing.

This fact, that blessings are not merely personal, but are related to a wider purpose than our own immediate salvation and peace, leads us to the next observation. No blessing is given to man for purely personal and selfish ends. He is blessed that he may be a blessing:--

“I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. xii. 2, 3).

Abraham was to be the father of a “great nation” but, unlike the other great nations of history, that nation’s greatness was not to be used tyrannically, or for personal gratification. Through that great nation “all families of the earth” were to be blessed. The Lord said, “I will bless thee”; but also added, “and thou shalt be a blessing”.

There are several important things yet to be made known to Abraham, and certain further conditions to be fulfilled, before these revelations are possible or fitting, but we have here in this opening of the story three most important features, which it will be profitable for us all to make our own.

(1) Blessings, to be enjoyed and experienced, necessitate the obedience of faith. “By faith he obeyed.”

(2) Blessings are never to be considered in isolation; they are a part of the outworking of the purpose of God. The nations had failed. God blessed Abraham that he might be the father of a “great nation” through whom blessing might flow.

(3) Blessings are never to be considered as purely personal or to be used selfishly. The reception of blessing constitutes the receiver a channel of blessing to some one else. The failure to see this contributed largely to Israel’s fall. They cursed the Gentiles as dogs, instead of realizing that these nations were yet to be saved and blessed.

#12. Separation: an essential to realized blessing. pp. 257 - 260

One contributory feature in the experience of blessing that we did not emphasize in our last paper is the condition of “separation”. We shall find that this thought is prominent in Abraham’s next experience.

We observe in our last paper that there were four periods in Abraham’s life specially associated with blessing, and found that Heb. xi. spoke most pointedly of the first. It is a confirmation of our investigations that Heb. xi. speaks of the four items in turn. The special feature of “separation” is noted in Heb. xi. 9:--

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.”

“Sojourning in a tent” seems to mark the next stage, and this is focused in Gen. xii.-xiv. in the word “separate”. Although Terah was dead, and Ur of the Chaldees left far behind, Lot still remained with Abraham, and while he did so, complete

separation from his “father’s house” was not yet attained. When obedience is not voluntary, the Lord sometimes allows His children to pass through painful experience, so that what they have not done freely they shall do after being taught by afflictions:--

“Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold” (Gen. xiii. 2).

Famine had found a weak spot in Abraham’s faith (Gen. xii. 10), and now riches and plenty are going to complete the rather bitter lesson that he needed:--

“Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their inheritance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was strife” (Gen. xiii. 5-7).

Abraham, had he insisted upon his rights, could have reminded Lot that the land belonged to him by the promise of God, and that he, Lot, was an intruder. Abraham, however, does no such thing. He appears to have gained some insight into comparative values, and realizes that to get free from Lot even at a great sacrifice to himself would be worth while. Consequently, although the whole land was Abraham’s, he stands aside and allows his nephew first choice. “And Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan.” To follow the history of Lot and to mark its lessons is not our present purpose. We leave him where his choice had taken him, and return to Abraham to see what results follow:--

“And the Lord said unto Abram, AFTER THAT LOT WAS SEPARATED from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Gen. xiii. 14, 15).

Here at last, and for the first time, the promise of Gen. xii. 1 is fulfilled. In Gen. xii. 1 the Lord had spoken of separation from country, kindred, and father’s house, and of a land “that I will show thee”. Here, in Gen. xiii., when the last act of separation has taken place—for Lot was a part of his “father’s house”—the Lord shows Abraham the land. Not only did he see it, but he also received the command:--

“Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it: for I will give it unto thee” (Gen. xiii. 17).

Here, surely, is a lesson for us all. Not until there is separation can there be any real appreciation of the extent of our blessings. We cannot “lift up our eyes” neither can we “arise and walk through the land” while Lot is with us. How many times are we met with the remark, “I do not see it”. Sometimes, of course, the inability to see may be due to our faulty presentation, but sometimes we are fairly certain that the one who confesses inability to see the high calling of Ephesians, is hindered by some spiritual Lot. The Church equivalent of Abraham’s separation from Lot is found in Eph. i. 17, 18.

The apostle prays not only that the believer may have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him but, as the margin reads, “for the acknowledgment of Him”. This granted, the eyes are opened and the believer knows what is the hope of His calling and the riches of His inheritance. He is shown the land, and he arises and walks

through it. Just as Abraham's *realization* of his inheritance hinged upon separation from Lot, so the *realization* of our hope and inheritance hinges upon our "acknowledging" the truth as we see it.

The principle of separation is taken one stage further in Gen. xiv., and leads us to Abraham's "second blessing". Lot had become involved in the quarrels of the nations and, when Sodom was taken by the confederate kings, Lot and all his possessions were taken captive also. It is suggestive that when news of this calamity is taken to Abraham, he is called "the Hebrew". The word indicates "one who passes over", and so stands for the principle of separation that is in view here. To Abraham, the separated one, the news is brought; and under God he, with his small company of 318 trained servants, rescues Lot and all his possessions, together with all that had been taken from Sodom. Now comes the crisis towards which the events and experiences of chapters xiii. and xiv. have been leading. In verse 17, the king of Sodom goes out to meet Abraham. In verse 21, recognizing the valour and worth of Abraham's action, he asks that the persons who had been thus delivered should be given back to Sodom, but that all that Abraham had rescued should be his own as a reward. On the surface, nothing could appear more generous, or more reasonable, and that, between the meeting of Abraham with the King of Sodom, and the account of the king's offer, come verses 18-20. This parenthesis is the turning-point of the story. Another king meets Abraham, Melchisedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God. He brings forth bread and wine and blesses Abraham, saying:--

"Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the Most High God, Which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he (Abram) gave him (Melchisedek) tithes of all" (Gen. xiv. 19, 20. See Heb. vii. 1-4).

It was this meeting with Melchisedek and his blessing, that caused Abraham to reply to the king of Sodom as he did:--

"And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich. Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eschol, and Mamre; let them take their portion" (Gen. xiv. 22-24).

Let us observe, not only the faith of Abraham, but also his reasonableness. The young men had eaten food. He has no foolish scruples over that. He has no reason to become extreme in order to show that his faith is real. Again, notice his reasonableness with regard to Aner, Eschol and Mamre. These men had rendered valuable service, and it would have caused them to blaspheme the name of the God of Abraham, had he insisted that what was right for himself, "the Hebrew", the separated one, must also be right for those not in such relationship with the world. We feel sure that believers who attempt to legislate for the world, and how it shall spend its time and opportunities, are more like Lot, who sat in the gate of Sodom and so ineffectively vexed his righteous soul from day to day (II Pet. ii. 7, 8), than Abraham, who, though he himself refused to take the smallest fraction from Sodom, did not impose his faith upon others.

Melchisedek makes us think of the Epistle of the Hebrews. Hebrews leads out thoughts up to the right hand of God where Christ is, as the seated Priest. And this in turn leads us to Ephesians where the church is “seated together” in heavenly places.

The words of Gen. xiv. 20 remind us of Eph. i. 3:--

“He *blessed* him *Blessed* be Abram *Blessed* be the Most High God”
(Gen. xiv. 20).

“*Blessed* be the God and Father Who hath *blessed* us with all spiritual *blessings*” (Eph. i. 3).

Like Abraham, we have met with One Who directs our hearts upward to where all fullness dwells. We can therefore quite easily repudiate the things of the world that would be our legitimate rights, were we not called and blessed.

We trust that the second element in blessing is now clear to us all. (1) The first element of blessing, as set forth in the experience of Abraham, is “the obedience of faith”. (2) The second element of blessing, as set forth in the same history, is the position of “separation”.

Biblical blessings.

No. 13.

Resurrection, the sphere and power of blessing.

We have followed the footsteps of Abraham from his departure from Ur of the Chaldees up to his triumph in connection with Sodom. Following the record a stage further, we come to the next point in Abraham's history that is associated with blessing.

One of the comforts that the Scriptures bring to the believer is that outstanding examples of faith like Abraham, Moses, David and Paul are revealed as men of like infirmities as ourselves. The Scripture does not mask their weaknesses or their failures. So, in the case of Abraham, we find that the double triumph of Gen. xiv. is followed by a double reaction in Gen. xv. When the excitement was over, he began to be a prey to fears. Would Chedorlaomer come back and avenge

his defeat? And so the Lord, Who knows our hearts and remembers that we are dust, came to Abraham in a vision saying, " Fear not Abram: I am thy *shield*" (Gen. xv. 1). Not only did Abraham suffer the reaction of fear, he also seems to have experienced a reaction concerning his refusal of Sodom's riches. Had he been foolish ? Was his attitude justified ? Did it necessarily follow, because his God was the Possessor of heaven and earth, that he should refuse legitimate recognition of service ? The Lord, Who knew his fears, knew also his doubts, and added: "I am thy exceeding great *reward*" (Gen. xv. 1).

This brings us to the next important step in Abraham's career—the birth of Isaac. In reply to the vision and its promises, Abraham says, in effect: " I am childless, and my possessions will all go to the steward of my house." Then comes the revelation, and the great act of faith. An old man, as good as dead, looks at the stars in a Syrian sky and dares to believe God when He says, " So shall thy seed be " (Gen. xv. 5 ; Rom. iv. 18).

If the reader were to make a graph of Abraham's faith, he would notice its resemblance to the temperature chart that hangs over a sick-bed in hospital. The line would not take an unbroken ascending curve, but would rise and fall. It would rise in Gen. xii. 1—9, but would fall again at the famine and Abraham's experience in Egypt in Gen. xii. 10—20. It would rise at the separation from Lot and Abraham's attitude toward Sodom; it would fall again at the reaction of fear and doubt in Gen. xv. 1. It would rise to a greater height when Abraham believed God concerning the promise of a son, but would sink again when Ishmael was born (Gen. xvi.). After circumcision and the repudiation of the flesh, it rises again and we reach the third statement of blessing:—

" And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but SARAH shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nationso5 kings of people shall be of her " (Gen. xvii. 15, 16).

Abraham was now a hundred years old, and his wife ninety (Gen. xvii. 17). We are assured by Scripture that all hope of becoming parents had passed, so that the birth of Isaac was, in its degree, miraculous. Rom. iv., dealing with this incident, stresses the God of resurrection as the object of Abraham's faith.

We observed earlier that Heb. xi. seems to have brought together the four stages of blessing in Abraham's history. The third is found in Heb. xi. II ;—

“Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed,
and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged
Him faithful That promised,”

The third element in realized blessing is to recognize the utter deadness of the flesh, and to trust implicitly in God, as the God of resurrection. The reader will remember that circumcision in its spiritual aspect is given extraordinary prominence in both Philippians iii. and Col. ii., and in both passages the utter repudiation of the flesh and the complete recognition of the resurrection is the dominant theme.

In the preceding article we drew attention to Abraham's reasonable concern for Aner and the others. Similarly, in Gen. xvii., Abraham is concerned for Ishmael: "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before Thee" (Gen. xvii. 18). Abraham had already acknowledged his error in connection with Ishmael, and had set forth his repudiation in the rite of circumcision. He does not, however, wash his hands of the responsibility; he recognizes it still. And God honours Abraham's tender conscience by hearing his prayer on Ishmael's behalf.

This, then, is the next lesson we learn from our study in relation to realized blessing—the necessity to recognize the supreme place that the risen Christ holds in the purposes of God. All blessing that is mediated to us through obedience or separation, is only mediated to us because He lives to die no more. All blessing that we now enjoy or ever shall enjoy comes to us bearing the image and the superscription of the risen Christ. Like Caesar's penny it has two sides, the reverse and the obverse; and we must never forget that if on one side we discover "The risen Christ," on the other we shall find "Death to, and in, ourselves." Isaac was a true type, because he was not only given by promise, but he also came when his parents were "as good as dead."

Biblical blessings.

No. 14.

Fellowship with the Father and the Son.

We now come to the fourth element in the realization of blessing, as it is set forth in the life and experience of Abraham. Abraham had obeyed the call of God, at first partially (Gen. xi., xii.), and at the last, fully (Gen. xiii.). He had learned something of Divine sufficiency through the mediation of Melchisedec, and had gone on in faith to believe the promise of God that his seed should be as the stars for multitude. His faith and his experience have led him to resurrection ground, and to the recognition of the deadness of self. At this point the Lord appears to him, saying : “ I am Almighty God: walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. xvii. 1).

Abraham’s walk from this point was by no means one straight ascending line. There are still evidences of frailty, but there are also many evidences of the favour of God. His name is changed (Gen. xvii. 5); and he is visited by the Lord before the destruction of Sodom and taken into His confidence (Gen. xviii. 17). Abraham’s intercession for Sodom is a revelation of the greatness of his faith and confidence. The promise of a son is at length fulfilled and Abraham’s tent is filled with “ laughter ” (for such is the meaning of the name “Isaac”). This leads us to the fourth element of realized blessing.

“ *God did tempt Abraham* ” (Gen. xxii. 1). It is unfortunate that in modern English the word “tempt” has taken on

a rather sinister significance. The more primitive meaning is still retained in the word "attempt," which simply means "to try." The same root word gives us "tentative," and also "tend," meaning "to aim at."

We have already found that Heb. xi. records the three phases of our subject so far considered, and it is a confirmation to discover that this fourth occurrence of the word "blessing" in Abraham's story is also noted in the same chapter:—

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. xi. 17—19)

The trial of Abraham's faith has several features that it will help us all to consider.

In the first place comes fellowship with God. Let us never miss the essential reason for "separation." There are some natures that lean towards the severe, the use of the scourge, the philosophy of the Stoic. Separation in Scripture is never merely "from"; it is always "unto." Abraham was called out from his kith and kin—only that he might become the friend of God. His separation from Lot was essential to this friendship and to the enjoyment of his inheritance. He must also realize that the blessing of the Most High God does not accord with enrichment from the King of Sodom. All this separation "from" and "to," however, pales in the light of Calvary. We can never really "know" what "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" really is, unless at some time we have stood upon that lone mountain, as Abraham did, with eyes dimmed with tears, with heart breaking, yet with faith unfaltering. It was for this climax of fellowship that the Lord called Abraham in Gen. xxii. When Abraham obeyed, he knew, so far as it is possible for man to know, what it cost the Father when He spared not His Only Begotten Son for our sakes.

We can realize perhaps more vividly, as we stand with Abraham here, what the apostle meant when he said:—

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. iii. 10).

Phil. iii. becomes full of meaning when viewed in the light of that mountain where Abraham offered up his son. As

it was with Abraham, so with Paul, he rejoices in true circumcision (Phil. iii. 3), and, like Abraham, is justified by faith (Phil. iii. 9). The fellowship of suffering common to both Abraham and Paul led on to "perfection," a "prize" and a "citizenship." For the fact that Abraham's faith was "perfected" we must turn to James; and for the "power of resurrection" that he shared with Paul, to Heb. xi.

The epistle of James is full of the thought of "trial" :—

"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptation^; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her *jirfcci* work" (Jas. i. 2—4).

¹¹ Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried, he shall receive the *crown* of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (Jas. i. 12).

Note in each case that "temptation" is explained in terms of "trial" :—

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar ? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made *furfctv*" (Jas. ii. 21, 22).

Here we have the trial of Abraham's faith leading on to "perfection." James links together the justification of Abraham, which was by faith without works, with that justification by faith which was shown to be true by works—the initial faith of Gen. xv. and its full fruition when Abraham was manifestly "the friend of God" (Jas. ii. 23). The association of "perfection" with "trial" and a "crown" or "prize" is evident both in James and Philipians.

For the fact that Abraham, like Paul, knew "the power of His resurrection" we turn to Heb. xi. 19 :—

¹¹ Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

What fulness is found in the conclusion of Gen. xxii. :—

"Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me" (Gen. xxii. 12).

"By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son ; that in blessing I will bless thee" (Gen. xxii. 16).

This is the climax experience of faith. No service however strenuous or successful, no suffering however intense, no battle however severe, is on the same plane.

Abraham's fellowship with God commenced when he turned his back upon Ur of the Chaldees. It developed as he severed from Lot and dwelt in Hebron (which means "fellow-