

November 21

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R5459 "TRIALS ESSENTIAL TO CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."--James 1:2.

ALL those who have been called of the Lord during this Gospel Age are called with what the Apostle Paul styles the High Calling (Philippians 3:14), the Heavenly Calling (Hebrews 3:1), which is a call to share with Jesus in His glory, honor and immortality. But the call is not the *decision* in the matter; it is merely an *invitation* with certain definite conditions. We are called, not only to righteousness, but to walk in the Master's footsteps of suffering and self-sacrifice. These are the only terms on which any are received as disciples of Christ. We understand the Scriptures to teach that during the Millennial Age there will be other terms of acceptance with God, offered the world. But there are no conditions offered now other than those of becoming followers and disciples of Jesus, to walk as He walked.

The Apostle James intimates that temptations may overtake these followers of Christ, into which they will fall as into a snare. As for an army, traps are set by the enemy, so the great Adversary sets traps and snares for us. He endeavors to misguide our minds and to lead us away from proper conceptions of truth and righteousness. We should be very careful to avoid his snares. Nevertheless, in spite of diligence, we may fall into a trap.

The Apostle says we are to rejoice when we fall into various temptations--not that we are to rejoice if we fall into *sin* when tempted, but that we may rejoice if we find ourselves suddenly precipitated into temptation. Temptation is not sin. If we could but keep in mind the fact that every temptation, every trial, every persecution, every difficulty in life, permitted to come upon us who have made the covenant of sacrifice with the Lord, is intended to *prove us*, to test our love, to see whether or not our characters are *fixed*, rooted and grounded in righteousness and being built up in love, it would put all these trials, difficulties and temptations in a new light before us, and greatly assist us in fighting a good fight and overcoming. When we find ourselves suddenly in temptation, trial, we should say, If by these temptations, or trials, the Lord is proving my love and devotion to Him, then, however trifling they may be or however important, I will diligently use them as favorable opportunities to demonstrate to my Lord the fulness of my love and devotion to Him and His cause. I must fight a good fight against this thing--the world, the flesh or the Adversary --whatever it might be that had brought the snare.

Thus viewed and thus met we can rejoice in every such experience; every trial and every difficulty will prove a blessing; for we shall, first of all, have an opportunity to show the Lord that we will endure, and not compromise His cause or our own position as His servants. We can rejoice also

mellow, willing and obedient to the Lord. Let the good work go on. Let us rejoice if our trials have brought us lessons of any kind that are profitable to us;--that have tended to make us stronger in character, more firm for truth and righteousness, more aware of our own weaknesses, and more on guard against the same. Even those conflicts

because we know that under such trials our characters will make advancement toward crystallization, if we overcome; and because we know that the Lord would not let us fall into any temptation which He would not cause to work out for us a blessing if we are wholly loyal. Let us dwell often upon the words of the Apostles: "Beloved, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." "Greatly rejoice, though now for a season ye are in manifold temptation, that the trial of your faith, being more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Blessed is the man that endureth [faithfully under] temptation; for after his trials he will receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, *work out* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"--if rightly utilized; if we are rightly exercised by them.--1 Peter 1:7; James 1:2,12.

"HE THAT ENDURETH"

We are assured that those who love the Lord, and who because of this will receive the Kingdom, will be those whose love will have been tested by trials and temptations on the way. Those who do not love the Lord with *all* their hearts--in whom self or some other idol has first place--will be seduced by the world, the flesh or the Adversary, into some form of rebellion against the Divine Word or Divine providences. They will have schemes and theories which they will prefer to the Lord's Plan. These when analyzed will usually be found to be based either upon selfishness or upon ambition or an evil spirit of envy, hatred, etc. The Lord's leading and the Lord's words lose their attraction to such, and they lose their interest correspondingly. Like those who turned away from the Lord at the First Advent, declaring, "This is a hard saying," they walk no more with Him.

As there are some substances which are short and brittle, so are there some which have fibre, strength, endurance. The Lord chooses for Himself such characters as have the strong, enduring qualities--fortitude, patience, long-suffering, etc. Some there are who walk close to the Lord, who will not be driven from Him by any of the arts and wiles of the Adversary. They are such as are at heart fully the Lord's--not their own; they follow wherever the Lord may lead, because they have no will except the will of God. These will follow the Lord in the narrow way of trial, discipline and testings during the present life, and by and by, as He has declared, "They shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy."--Revelation 3:4.

He who escapes all trials and temptations and difficulties has every reason to doubt that he is really in relationship to God as a son. If he were a son, the Lord would surely find it necessary to give him trials and difficulties. If he does not have these he

which have resulted in only partial victories have possibly been to our advantage....Even on points in which there may have been absolute failure, the result may be a strengthening of character, a crystallization of determination for greater zeal in that direction again, and a humility of heart before the Lord in prayer. Z. '02-133R3001:5

should go to the Father and make sure that there is no impediment on his part--make sure that he has put himself in the proper place where he can be prepared for the Kingdom. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."--Hebrews 12:6.

FAILURES AS "STEPPING-STONES"

All will rejoice when the testings are over and we are accepted as overcomers, to share with the Lord in His Throne. But patience, trust and love must first do a refining work in our hearts, making us mellow, submissive and obedient to God. Let the good work go on! Let us rejoice if our trials have made us stronger in character, more humble and Christlike, more aware of our blemishes and imperfections, more watchful and earnest in our endeavors to correct them so far as possible.

Even the conflicts in which we have had only partial victory may have resulted in blessings to us. Even in those experiences where we have suffered absolute failure, there may be, through the humiliation and the pain of defeat, a strengthening of our character, a firm determination for greater watchfulness in that direction, and a more fervent prayer for the Lord's sustaining grace, the need of which has been more deeply impressed upon our hearts. Thus even failures may become "stepping-stones" by which we rise toward God and Heaven. Only through much tribulation shall we enter the Kingdom of Heaven at all. If, therefore, the Lord's people find themselves involved in temptations, tribulations, instead of feeling downcast they are to rejoice and say, These are evidences that the Lord is preparing me for a place in the Kingdom. This should give one courage to fight the good fight against the world, the flesh and the Adversary. The flesh is suffering; but the new mind, the new will, has this joy; and the New Creature can rejoice, knowing that these trials are not for his harm, but for his good.--1 Peter 4:13.

A WAY OF ESCAPE PROVIDED

The Heavenly Father will with every temptation provide a way of escape. Hence when we find ourselves in difficulty we are to say, The Heavenly Father is permitting this trial--the Lord Jesus will help me, and so I will rejoice in the fact that the Lord will not allow me to be overthrown; for He has promised that all things shall work out for my good.

As our text expressly says: We are to count it all joy when we *fall* into temptations--not when we *walk* into them. We are not to seek temptation. In our own fallen condition and that of those around us, with the Adversary alert to harm us, we know that there will be plenty of temptations without our walking into them. But if we fall into temptation we are to say, I have been striving against this thing, but the Lord has permitted it; and there must, therefore, come some blessing out of it for me. Even

temptations that come through negligence are not to be disesteemed. Some of our greatest lessons in *carefulness* have resulted from the effect of our own *carelessness*.

Our joy is largely dependent upon our study of the Word and our knowledge of the precious promises contained therein for those who overcome. The Lord wants those who will endure a great fight of afflictions, who will endure patiently, though the temptations continue long and the tribulations become more and more severe. But if they should lose faith, all their previous good resolutions and standing for what is right would not make them overcomers.

These trials are intended to develop in us patience -- that this quality may be deeply ingrained. We are building character for all eternity; and patience could not be thus developed and maintained except by repeated difficulties, tests--by our resolving again and again to be stronger and firmer in building the character-likeness of our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Original "Convention Report Sermons" 1915 Page, 71: "The Uses of Adversity" by Bro. F.H. Robison

"Troubles and afflictions are intended under the dispensation of Divine grace to bring out the deeper capacities of the heart. Experiences that are calculated to deaden the calloused mind will develop consecration, richness and devotion in the thoughtful.

One time we had a summer hailstorm, which beat on the flowers and foliage. A bed of nasturtiums that grew near the door suffered most. When the door was opened the air was full of sweetness from the crushed and mangled vines. They were returning good for evil in the misfortune that had come upon them. For every wound that the hail had made they were giving out the fragrance of a beautiful spirit. Though bruised and broken they were filling the whole atmosphere with an aroma, which was in pleasing contrast to the adverse rain of hail. Blest is that life which can yield its sweetest fragrance when the storms are at their highest. We have all know men and women who when lacerated with pain, prostrate under the hands of God, have made their very atmosphere redolent with the incense of Christian hope and trust...

If the trial seems of a peculiar nature or seems more intense than we can bear, let us

consider whether or not we are trying to meet it in our own strength."

R5147 "THE PHILOSOPHY OF OUR DAILY EXPERIENCES

"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"--Heb. 12:7.

Ordinarily the word chastisement is used to signify correction for wrongdoing. But in the Bible, it is especially used to convey the thought of discipline or instruction in righteousness...

If a man were about to train a dog for the circus, he would first choose the right kind of animal for that special service. He would not think of selecting any chance poodle that might come to hand, but would find a dog that was capable of being taught. In carrying out his course of instruction, he might find it necessary to chastise the dog in order to teach him...

So with the Church. They need practical lessons in character-development of a very high order, and consequently they are receiving experimental knowledge such as no other creatures in the universe receive...

We revert to our illustration of the dog under training for a special purpose. The dog must yield himself submissively to his teacher. Another dog that was watching the process by which the one was being trained might think that he was suffering unnecessary hardship, and might feel that if it were himself, he would assert his rights and not suffer so much. But in the end the trained animal would prove to be the more valuable, for the one that had escaped the suffering would remain only a commonplace dog.

So it is with the Church. There are people who say of us, "Those who endeavor to do God's will suffer more than do those who do not try; we do not care to undertake any such experience." These people may succeed in having fewer trials in the present life, but they will have blessings of a lower order in the world to come, when the faithful Church will be glorified with her Lord and Head.

These experiences with trouble are the very tests of character necessary for our development...

Let us be thankful that we are of those who appreciate the privilege of being trained in the School of Christ--of suffering with Him now and of reigning with Him by

"Then let our hearts be surely fixed where truest joys are found,
And let our burning, loving praise yet more and more abound;
And gazing on the 'things not seen' eternal in the skies,
'From glory unto glory,' O Savior, let us rise!"

R3000 (From Harvest Truth Database V8.0 2013)

YEARLY RECKONINGS--SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTS

"Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward: they can not be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."--Psalm 40:5.

BUSINESS MEN are at great expense to secure accuracy in their accounts. Millions of dollars are spent every year in details of bookkeeping, an important part of which is to enable proprietors to know definitely upon which items of their business there is a profit, and upon which there is a loss,--to the intent that the profitable branches may be increased, and the unprofitable ones corrected. This is admittedly a wise procedure.

If the case be such with those who are seeking temporal wealth and its honors, how much more careful accounting should be attempted in connection with spiritual matters! The Lord's people are not merely seeking for wealth, which will last for a few years, and

then must be parted with--at the tomb, if not sooner;--they are seeking for the riches which perish not, and which thieves do not break into and steal. More than this, with the heavenly riches they are assuredly seeking also heavenly honors and glories-- even joint-heirship with the King of kings and Lord of lords, in the Millennial Kingdom, and in the glorious opportunities which it will bring in connection with the promised blessing of all the families of the earth.

The general settlement day with the world is at the close of the old year, and the beginning of a new one, but with the Church an equally appropriate occasion, or, indeed, a still more appropriate

and by. In this school we are learning valuable lessons of experience. Here we receive chastisements, many of which are not punishments for sins, but preparation for the work of the next Age. Let us remember that unless we are willing to learn these lessons and to endure hardness, we shall not be prepared to enter into the eternal glory.--2 Tim. 2:3; I Pet. 5:10."

R5650 "THE NECESSITY FOR PATIENT ENDURANCE...

The wisdom of this is manifest when we consider the work to which we are called--the work of blessing all the families of the earth, as God's Millennial Kingdom, in joint-heirship with the Only Begotten Son of God, our great Redeemer. That will be a mighty work; and it is eminently proper that Jehovah should require that those whom He shall account worthy of that exalted position shall not only appreciate His goodness and His glorious character, and prefer His service to sin and iniquity, but demonstrate their thorough loyalty to the principles of righteousness and to His will to the extent of a joyful willingness to suffer on behalf of these principles. A transitory endurance of one or two or three brief trials would not prove the individual to have an established character for righteousness; but a patient, cheerful, endurance even unto death would be necessary to demonstrate such a character."

R5499 *"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."--James 1:12...*

The reference is to the retaining permanently of the attitude of *patient* endurance and faithfulness when tempted, of remaining true to God under temptation and stress. Temptations come from a variety of sources. They may come from friends, who may tempt us to live a life of more or less self-indulgence, to relax in a measure our fidelity to the Lord. The enticements of wealth or worldly society, a natural love of ease and disinclination of the flesh to endure hardness--any or all of these may prove strong and subtle temptations to the Christian.

But if we love the Lord supremely, that love will become the chief impulse of our lives."

one, comes with the annual remembrance of our Lord's death as our Passover Lamb--and of our participation with him in his sacrifice; and in the Easter celebration of his resurrection, and of our figurative rising with him to walk in newness of life--in prospect of the actual resurrection in which, if faithful, we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to be like our glorious Redeemer, to see him as he is, and to share his glory.

Let us see how our spiritual accounts stand for the year past--since last we broke together the emblems of our Redeemer's sacrifice and of our own participation with him. Let us note whether or not the year's experiences have brought us nearer to the Lord, or have in any measure separated us from the warmth of his love and fellowship, and from fellowship with fellow members of his body. Every year should find us nearer to the Lord, not only in the purposes of our hearts, but in the conduct of our lives,--nearer to the perfect standard. We should be making progress, growing in all the graces of the spirit, and growing also in our knowledge and appreciation of the Lord and of his wonderful plan.

We trust that each reader, as he takes a conscientious view of the situation, whichever way he feels that the balance stands (favorable or unfavorable, as compared with a year ago), can nevertheless thank God that by his grace we are what we are, and where we are;--still *his*, with *hearts* striving for things of the spirit, and not for things of the flesh. If any have slipped to some extent backward, let such thank the Lord that matters are not worse than they are, that they have not wholly let go of his hand, and relinquished their share in the exceeding great and precious promises of his Word. Let them thank God that this day of reckoning and reviewing of accounts finds them desirous of being on the Lord's side, and making a better record during the year before us. Let us look together at our text, and see if we cannot joint heartily with the Prophet in the sentiment expressed. He divides the subject into two parts. (1) Thankfulness to God for his wonderful work of grace already done or accomplished; and (2) for his thoughts, his plans, his purposes, toward us, which are not yet accomplished, and which we have grasped by his promises, with our arms of faith.

Looking back at the things that God already has done for us, we see that the Prophet has defined some of these, saying, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." (*Verse 2.*) If we can apply this heartily to ourselves, what a cause it is for thankfulness. As we look about us, and see the whole world lying in the Wicked One, without God and having no real hope,--merely vague impressions--and when we look back and see how the Lord has delivered us from the horrible pit of condemnation and sin, how he has had mercy upon us and delivered us, and established our feet of faith upon the rock foundation, Christ and his redemptive work, well may we give thanks, and tell his mercies all abroad. Looking back we may see that happy day that fixed our choice upon our Savior and our God, as being the time from which our goings have been *established*,--our course no longer vacillating. It was there that we obtained a fixed purpose, a ballast which has hindered us from being upset when tossed, hither and thither, by the varying winds of philosophy and human speculation. Praise God for this which he already has done for us! No wonder, as the Prophet proceeds to say, we realize that "He has put a new song into our mouth,--even praise unto our God." The new song is not one of doubt or of fear, nor concerning anguish of sinners; but a song of God's Justice and Mercy and Love,--reasonable and harmonious in its every cadence. Thank God! It has brought a new life to us; a new pleasure in life, as well as new aspirations and new hopes for others as well as for ourselves. We can never thank the Lord enough for the blessings which we have already received at his hands,--for the things which he has already done for us.

And yet the things that we already enjoy of the Lord's favor we are assured are but a foretaste of the blessings yet in reservation for them that love him --blessings which eye hath not seen, nor heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to see or appreciate, but which God hath lovingly declared, and which we grasp by faith, seeing through a glass only obscurely, as yet, the glory, honor and immortality promised to the faithful. What we now have are not realities so much as promises and hopes. Present experiences being but the beginning of our comfort, we agree with the Prophet, that the number of God's favors cannot be reckoned, computed. We are exceedingly his debtors; we can never discharge the obligation. But then we are his children; he is pleased to *give* us these things, and his request in return is that we shall act toward him in such a manner as will betoken our gratitude, and that we are indeed his offspring, begotten of his spirit.

Let us proceed in our calculation of present assets, and in our

balancing of the year; and let us not be content simply with generalities in the balance. Let us retrospectively scrutinize the privileges and mercies enjoyed during the year, and the use we made of them and the blessings we derived. Let us carefully note which features of our daily course have been most helpful to us, and which have to any extent retarded our spiritual progress, hindered our fellowship with the Lord, prevented our running with patience or with best results the race set before us in the Gospel. These items will necessarily vary with each individual--for no two are alike in temperament or environment. Each in his counting should weigh the advantages derived from fellowship and communion with the Lord in prayer; and should determine whether or not this feature of his spiritual interests could be advantageously expanded during the beginning year.

Each should consider, also not merely how much time he had spent in *talking* to the Lord, but also how much time he had spent in *listening* to the Lord's voice--in searching the Scriptures; in seeking to know the divine mind, the divine plan, as it pertains to himself individually and to the Church and to the world. Included in this matter of listening to the Lord's voice, he should reckon the helps to Bible study provided by the Lord through the brethren, the members of the family, the members of the one body of Christ;--remembering the statement of the Apostle, that God himself had set the various members in the body as it hath pleased him; and that he set these members for the very purpose of blessing one another, edifying the Church, building it up in the most holy faith. True, we are to consider that the Apostle were set first, foremost, and hence, that their teachings are paramount; and that all other teachings are to be submitted to the test of harmony with the testimonies of the apostles and the prophets.

If any, on reckoning up, shall find that they have not made such good progress as they had hoped, or perhaps apparently less progress in the narrow way, than some others about them, let them consider to what extent this failure to progress was due to a *failure to use* the divinely appointed means for growth in grace and knowledge and love;--namely, the Word and the brotherhood. If the progress has not been so great as could be hoped, let another point be examined: see whether or not you have been as active as was possible in serving the truth. Consider that you have consecrated your entire life to the Lord, and that by his direction it is to be laid down, sacrificed, yielded up in the interest of his brethren, the Church. Consider, count, reckon, whether or not you have been faithful in this matter of laying down your life during the past year--faithful in serving the Church, the body of Christ, to the best of your ability. Remember that it is a part of the Lord's provision, that he who watereth shall himself be watered, that he who serves the truth to others may appropriate to himself the more abundantly at the Lord's table of grace and truth.

EXAMPLES OF PROPER COUNTING, VALUATION, ETC.

In our counting let us take some hints and suggestions from the inspired apostles; let us note how they counted matters and things--which matters they set down to the profit account, and which to the loss account. Harken to the Apostle Paul's words: "Neither count I my [earthly] life dear [precious, valuable] unto me." (Acts 20:24.) Again, "I count all things [earthly] but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. 3:8.) Paul's estimation was not merely that the future glories were worthy of some loss in the present time, but that even the *knowledge* of Christ (including the knowledge of God's grace toward us through him, and the knowledge and consequent opportunities of running the race for the great prize)--was alone worth the price; he estimated that the loss of all things, in order to obtain this *knowledge* (and its opportunities), would be a great bargain. Let us thank God if we have this good asset--a knowledge of Christ,--a knowledge of his character, and a deep appreciation of it, a knowledge of the plan which centers in him--no matter what it has cost us of earthly good; if we have this knowledge, if to us he is precious, we are rich today, thank God! The same Apostle proceeds to say that already he had suffered the loss of all things and did "*count* them but dung," that he might "win Christ, and be found in him"--a member of his body.

A further suggestion as to how to count is found in the Apostle James' words, "Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience," etc. (James 1:2.) No doubt, as each looks back for a year, we see that there were numerous snares and temptations in our pathway. Over some, no doubt, we gained victories, readily; others perhaps we conquered with a severer struggle; and still others perhaps were only partial victories,--they were partially reverses, partially victories for our enemy.

What did these temptations bring us? What has been their value? One value, as the Apostle suggests, is the lesson of forbearance. They proved to us that we are still in the schooling time, in the testing time;--to demonstrate our loyalty to the Lord, and our worthiness, through his merit, to a share in his Kingdom. ⁽¹⁾All wish frequently, no doubt, that the testings were all over, and that we were accepted to a place amongst the overcomers; but patience and faith and trust are to do a refining work in our hearts, making us mellow, willing and obedient to the Lord. Let the good work go on. Let us rejoice if our trials have brought us lessons of any kind that are profitable to us,--that have tended to make us stronger in character, more firm for truth and righteousness, more aware of our own weaknesses, and more on guard against the same. Even those conflicts which have resulted in only partial victories have possibly been to our advantage. Surely so, in proportion as we contended *earnestly* against our weaknesses or against the besetments of the Adversary. Even on points in which there may have been absolute failure, the result may be a strengthening of character, a crystallization of determination for greater zeal in that direction again; and a humility of heart before the Lord in prayer, which has caused us to remember the throne of grace afresh, and that thither we may flee in every moment of temptation and find the succor which we need.

The Apostle Paul summed up his account, and balanced it, as follows: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"--the faithful. (Rom. 8:18.) In our reckoning, in our account for the year, let us similarly reckon the things which we have suffered, whether they be few or many, small or great--whatever we suffered for Christ's sake, for righteousness' sake, for the truth's sake,-- let us rejoice therein, and endeavor for the coming year, to be so much more faithful in all these respects, that it may be our high privilege of suffering something further for the name of Christ, for his cause, and for his brethren.

As we reckon the profit and loss sides of the account for the year, let us be thankful that amongst the shortcomings which all may have to deplore none of *us* find one item of evil which the Apostle mentions; *viz.*, none of *us* "count the blood of the covenant, wherewith we were sanctified, an unholy [ordinary] thing." Thank God, we still appreciate the precious blood of Christ; we still appreciate the fact that we are accepted, not in any merit or worthiness of our own, but in him who loved us and who bought us with his own precious blood. Oh, how much we have to be thankful for in this one feature of our experience, even if, as we look back, we find that there have been vacillations or slips or slidings in the pathway! How much we may thank the Lord, that by his grace we still are what we are, and still have the opportunity of persevering and running with renewed zeal and patience the race set before us,--looking unto Jesus for our example.

HOW THE LORD IS ACCOUNTING RESPECTING US

Finally, in our account of matters, let us take courage from the Lord's statement respecting how he counts things, and let us count accordingly. The Apostle said himself, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he *counted me faithful*, putting me into the ministry." (I Tim. 1:12.) Ah, yes, what a blessed satisfaction it is to us to know that while the Lord knows of our every word and every deed he is pleased to count us something different, even from our words and our deeds--something better! Our words do not always represent the full sentiments of our hearts; our conduct does not come up to the standard: after the words have been spoken and after the deeds have been done--perhaps to the very best of our ability--we realize that they have come short of the glory of God, and short of our own ideals, desires and efforts. How consoling it is to us, then, to know that our imperfect work shall be acceptable through Christ to God; that the Lord *counts* us according to our intentions, according to our wills. Praise his name! We would have no hope of coming up to any standard of perfection which he would approve, were it not for his gracious arrangement by which our imperfections are covered by our Redeemer's perfection and sacrifice, and our works accepted according to the intentions and desires of our hearts.

The Apostle rejoiced that by the Lord's counting him according to his intentions, and not according to his deeds, he was counted worthy a place in the ministry. Let us similarly rejoice, and let us remember that the word "ministry" signifies service, and the word "minister" signifies servant. Let us remember that all of the Royal Priesthood, all of the truly consecrated Church of God, are ministers, servants of God and of each other. The Lord has put us all into the

ministry; and there is a ministry, a service of kindness and of love toward the Lord, in honoring his name and declaring his righteousness; and a ministry toward the brethren, in opening the eyes of their understanding and enabling them to appreciate the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the Lord's character. A share in this ministry belongs to each one of us, and it is a great privilege. It is a ministry, or service which, if neglected, or in proportion as neglected, brings us corresponding loss in spiritual progress and character. Let us count this privilege a valuable asset, to carry over into the new year, to be used with greater diligence than ever in the service of our King.

The Apostle, in writing to the Church at Thessalonica (2 Thes. 1:5), says, "That ye may be *counted* worthy of the Kingdom for which ye also suffer." Ah, yes; this is more of the Lord's counting. We are not worthy of the Kingdom of God. No human being is worthy; but the Lord purposes to *count* his faithful ones worthy. He will do this through the merit of his own great atonement-sacrifice which permits the acceptance of our wills, our intentions, as instead of the perfect works of righteousness. Thank God for this generous accounting! Let it encourage us, and let us remember the Apostle's statement that those who will be counted of our Lord thus fit for the Kingdom, will be such as suffer something for it. Let us then strive in a reasonable, rational manner, according to the divine Word and plan, to suffer for the Kingdom's sake.

We are not to seek suffering in a foolish way, by doing foolish things. We have no such example in our Lord's case, nor in the case of the apostles. It is not even necessary that we should suffer martyrdom or physical persecution. Possibly the extent of our sufferings may be the wounding of our feelings, when--"The workers of iniquity...whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the innocent." (Psa. 64:3.) Perhaps our sufferings, even, will be still less than this, as the Apostle explains (Heb. 10:33-35): "Partly whilst ye were made a gazingstock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became *companions of them that were so used*." Let us resolve to carry this good asset over into the new year, rejoicing that we have been privileged thus far to suffer some little for the Lord's sake and for the sake of the truth, and in companionship with the brethren; heeding the Apostle's words, "Cast not away, therefore, your *confidence*, which hath great recompense of reward." God wishes us to trust him according to his promises, and will reward such faith.

We conclude this exhortation to spiritual accounting, by calling attention to the Apostle's words: "We pray always for you--that God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." (2 Thes. 1:11.) This is our prayer for you, beloved in the Lord; and we trust also that this is your prayer for us. What more could we ask than that the Lord would count us worthy of the great high-calling of this Gospel age,--to joint-heirship with his Son in the Kingdom? We have his assurance respecting the terms on which he will count us worthy. We realize that the terms are very reasonable indeed, and that what we do sacrifice in conforming to those terms would be really only as loss and dross to us, so long as we were filled with a proper zeal for the Lord and his cause. And now notice the Apostle's words, that these good things which our heavenly Father has called us to receive--to prove ourselves worthy of receiving, according to his gracious terms in Christ --are not things which he offers us grudgingly, but things which he is well pleased to bestow. There was a time, perhaps, with each of us, when, under misinterpretations of the Lord's Word, we supposed that coldly and heartlessly, our Heavenly Father preferred not to give many blessings, and would give them to but few, and to them in a grudging manner, because impelled thereto by Jesus; and that for the great majority he had determined, beforehand, that they should be delivered over to devils for an eternity of misery. Thank God for a clearer opening of the eyes of our understanding, by which now we may know him as our Father, and appreciate to some extent his wonderful plan!

And, as respects our own share, let us settle it in our hearts that these gracious things to which we are called are "*all the good pleasure of his goodness*." Let us start into the new year with good courage, remembering that if God loved us while we were yet sinners, strangers, aliens, foreigners, much more does he now love us since we have come into relationship with him through Jesus Christ our Lord;--since we are seeking to walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit; since we are seeking to be copies of his dear Son, our Lord; since we have been begotten by his holy spirit. Truly, faith may confidently exclaim, "All things are ours, for we are Christ's and Christ is God's!"

⁽¹⁾ Nov. 21 Manna, Jam. 1:2