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The Foolishness Of God

The Bible speaks of the foolishness of God (I Cor 1:25). How can foolishness be attributed to God? How can God be God if there is a trace of foolishness in Him? Yet, in the infinite wisdom of God are certain traits that might appear to be foolish to man, and yet supersede all human wisdom. We will consider some of God's decisions that appear foolish to man and discover that the foolishness of God is indeed wiser than men...

(i) When man fell, would it not have been easier for God to get rid of Adam and Eve and start all over again with another new sinless race, rather than continue to work with the fallen man? Remember, He started with the fallen man, it is more than 6000 years now, and He still hasn't finished! Doesn't that sound foolish on God's part? Not at all! God does not make His decisions based on what is easier. Only we lazy humans will do such things. For God, man is not just a toy to play with for sometime and throw away. God loved man so much that He could not do away with him just because he fell. Secondly, discarding the first man and creating another man would in a certain sense be a victory for Satan over God. So, to pick up the fallen man and work in him would be the logical way of fighting back with Satan. It has taken millenniums for God to bring man back to his pristine state. But He has not given up on man. And this so-called foolishness has only worked to bring to light the love and the zeal of God concerning man.

(ii) After knowing the nature of Israel from its history of rebelling against God, turning frequently to idolatry, stoning the prophets, etc., was it not foolish on God's part to come down personally? And guess what happened! He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. They did what they had always been doing, and more! They crucified Him! But in that rejection of Jesus Christ by Israel, the plan of salvation of all mankind was designed. When they crucified Jesus, God's work did not stop; instead, the Father's business went international!

(iii) The disciples of Jesus were unreliable men. The Bible often reported that they did not understand what He said (Mk 7:18; 8:17; 9:32; Lk 18:34). He also rebuked them often with words, like, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you" (Lk 9:41), "How is it that ye have no faith?" (Mk 4:40), "O ye of little faith" (Matt 16:8), "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Lk 9:55), etc. They argued amongst themselves as to who was the greatest. One of them used a sword and also denied Jesus. They all fled when danger beset them. They were men of many mistakes. Yet Jesus said, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk 12:32). Isn't that foolish? How could God let these fallible men take charge of God's Kingdom and continue the work that Jesus started? This is like giving a car to a 5-year-old to drive! And yet, God has the greater glory in handing the church over to weak men and make it grow through the centuries, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.

(iv) In your personal life too, God might be doing certain things that seem foolish. And you may have a few intelligent questions to ask Him. His silence, His delays, His reasoning, His callousness about the things happening around you, His saying and not doing immediately, etc., might all appear irrational and silly. But trust Him, remembering that He can see beyond man's horizons. Remember how He can make all things beautiful in His time. And remember how His foolishness in the past has always been wiser than all the wisdom of men... o

By Faith

(Sl.No.11)

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful Who had promised" **(Heb 11:11).**

Though God gave a wonderful promise to Abraham about his seed, he had to keep praising God and wait with patience for a long time for God's appointed time. "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him Whom he believed, even God, Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be...He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom 4:17-20). Thus Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. If we believe God, not only will we see the glory of God, but will also be blessed as said in Galatians 3:9. To receive the fulfilment of the promise of the seed, Abraham's faith alone was not enough; Sara also had to have faith. She received the strength to conceive only by faith in God as she too was weak in body. If the husband and wife in a family have faith in God, many blessings will come upon that family. They will receive answers from God for all their prayer requests. God will bless that family out of Zion. "Now the just shall live by faith...we are...of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb 10:38,39). So by faith you can receive strength in all areas of your life.

Sara received strength to conceive seed through faith. We who are living in the last days of the Grace Period need much strength as the devil is working with great wrath knowing that he has but a short time. We need to be strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power (Col 1:11). Jesus was concerned that His disciples be filled with power (Lk 24:49). By the grace of God, this excellent power of the Holy Ghost is being poured upon the world since the Day of Pentecost. Every day thousands of people are receiving this glorious power here and there in the world. This holy power of God is working in our life and in our ministry in many ways. And finally, by this power, our vile body will one day be changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil 3:21). The power of the blood of Christ, the power of resurrection, the power of the sacrifice of Christ, the power of the Word of God, the power in the name of Christ and many other powers are also available for our spiritual growth and perfect victory.

Since there are many evil powers in this world, we need all the power of God in order to overcome them all. The ministry God has entrusted into the hands of the saints

is to destroy all these powers. Jesus came into this evil world to destroy all the works of the devil. And He said, "When you are endued with power from above you may be witnesses unto Me even to the uttermost part of this world."

We need the power of God to do anything, physical or spiritual. Without the strength of God we can do nothing; but with the power of God we can do all things. St.Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil 4:13). Once Jesus told Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." So Paul says in response, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He enjoyed the power of Christ in his personal life and in all areas of his ministry. That is why he was able to fight a good fight and finish his course and keep the faith. In these days many children of God are not tarrying in God's presence to be strengthened. So they are unable to shine for the glory of the Lord. The more we receive the strength of God the more we can serve the Lord. Basically, we have no strength. Power belongs only to God. Sara received the promise of issue and later also received the strength to conceive. In the same manner, God will strengthen us also that all the promises we receive from God, might be fulfilled in our lives.

Once King David blessed the Lord and said, ``In Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all" (I Chron 29:12). God can strengthen anyone, especially to do a ministry for the glory of God. God can strengthen us for living a victorious life also. Yes, your loving Lord wants to strengthen you for His glory. Power belongs only to God (Psa 62:11). "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them...They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psa 84:5-7). Those who go from strength to strength go to Zion. We are living in the end of the Grace Period. The God of Zion is calling you to get the strength from Him to go to Zion and appear before Him. Will you obey His call?

God created Adam expecting a godly seed (Mal 2:15). But Adam worked against the eternal plan of God. So the last Adam, Jesus, came into this world to form a spiritual generation according to the will of God. That godly work of creating a godly seed is going on in this Grace Period. "Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psa 2:8). "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong" (Isa 53:12). That spiritual seed must be perfected to be found at the Coming of Christ. We who are co-workers with God must have strength in order to work for the Lord day and night in this regard. So St.Paul says, "We preach...that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col 1:28,29). This spiritual seed is a group of saints in the Church who have overcome everything. "She brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne" (Rev 12:5).

"Sara was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful Who had promised." She had faith in the promise-keeping God. Though she had no strength to conceive and give birth, honouring her belief, God gave her conception and also the strength to deliver. She proved that nothing is impossible with the Almighty God (Lk

1:37). In the Bible we can find more than seven thousand promises. But if we have no faith we cannot enjoy any of them. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him Amen unto the glory of God." We must not be weak in faith. We should not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but be strong in faith giving glory to God, fully persuaded that what He has promised, He is able to perform. If we do so it will be imputed to us for righteousness. Peter says in his epistle that we are given exceeding great and precious promises that by them we may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. We who have faith in the promises of God must wait patiently for their fulfilment (Heb 6:12). Our Lord Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn 14:1-3). Wait for this Jesus with patience. You will not be put to shame. You will be caught up at His coming. Believe; He Who promised is faithful and He will do it. o

An Army of Worms

"My people shall never be ashamed'' (Joel 2:26). The Lord had been with His people in their ups and downs though at times they were stiffnecked. Now He tells them that they'll never be put to shame and calls them His people. He joined together the high and the low, the rich and the poor and made them one. This is the great purpose of God. He has made us one here that we may be one in His eternal Kingdom. It's necessary for us to experience here itself the things we`ll experience in eternity. He wants to lift us higher to the life He expects of us.

If we are to be brought back to a place where we may not be put to shame and where we may show forth His glory, we must seek Him and acknowledge our offence. See Hosea 5:15. (i) Acknowledge our offence —i.e., how we have offended the Lord and thereby become an offence and stumbling block to others. The Lord has drawn nigh to us but if we continue to be an offence and an offender, He`ll withdraw. He`ll be displeased if we continue a life of dragging along and not coming to the life He expects. God desires, not that we be perfected in our weaknesses, offences and faults, but that we shake ourselves of these and go forward. (ii) Seek His face—Restoration is not by seeking consolation here and there but by going direct to Him. It's not in increasing activity in the church. We make the biggest noise in the worst condemnation—like empty vessels. ``Being empty'' is different from ``making ourselves empty''. Talents, gifts, prosperity etc., will never be able to cover even a small fault of ours, but will only ultimately destroy us. We may abound and gloat over the blessings we have received in different areas but one single fault will defeat us. He withdraws Himself; He is unable to stand by and guide us since something has gone wrong with us. We're trying to play on to the wrong note. We have to come back to the right note if there is to be harmony in our lives.

The Israelites had a good time but an army that consisted of only worms destroyed them. Sometimes when the Lord points out our trifling thoughts, words, friendships etc.,

we don't think they'll do much harm. Our lack in areas like, prayer, comparing our life with God, waiting in His presence, etc. seems to be a matter of no account to us. These are the little worms that destroy saints. If our mind is not in its right place, our face will not shine in the right way. We may shout, jump and sing aloud but something does not ring within us. The joy of the Israelites was dependent on the different things they experienced. Soon their stomachs were empty, their hearts were empty, and their minds were troubled. Going to church, praying, reading the Word of God, all seems a formality. Step by step, the worms destroy its surroundings in different ways (see Joel 1:4). The Israelites were a mighty nation but now they were trembling and even a small thing disturbed them. A little blood clot is enough to kill us in ten minutes though we may be whole, active and healthy. We need to be therefore careful about little things that enter our life stream. It is difficult to show a moralist his sins since ``good'' is always an enemy of ``best''. We see our good more than we see our weaknesses that endanger our life.

(1) The Palmerworm—The Ephesians had lost their first love. This is the first and most important thing that the devil wants to do in us. It is accomplished step by step. First we lose the firmness and grip that we have in the first love. We lose our love for the church and the saints, and become critics. The Ephesians were very good critics by the knowledge they had received of the Word of God. The devil will tell us that we do only good to the church and others by talking such things. We go about poking our noses into everything and thereby become unable to see ourselves. We must gossip the gospel i.e., always speak the good news. Our senses must be dead to the evil around us. If not, we are not filling up but losing out and running dry. When the trumpet sounds our ears will be deaf to its sound and our body will not respond to the change that is to take place. Instead of ``up from the grave'' we'll be ``down in the grave'` still finding fault. If we just allow love to decrease in our lives, it's enough to ruin everything. It is love that keeps us bound to God, to the altar of sacrifice, enabling us to sacrifice many things and even forego our necessities. God wants only the love that we have for Him. The love of God received at the baptism of the Holy Spirit must grow and abound in us. Only then can we go forward in our life. If not, the locust comes to eat up the remains.

(2) The Locust—When love goes, fear comes in—fear concerning our life, fear of future etc., that brings torment. The fear of the Lord that is contained in love, which helps us to walk with God and grow in Him, departs. All kinds of other love
enter our life.

(3) The Cankerworm—Then we experience a lack of desire to go forward on to perfection. The devil says, "Go, but not too far." We begin to say, "Not so, Lord; not the mountains but the plain, not the big city but at least the little city, not Zion but a lower state will do." The past is forgotten but we must be careful that we do not put our foot in the wrong place in the future. If we still do not walk in the path that He has kept for us, He can do nothing with us. He has forgiven and accepted us in spite of our past, but He can do nothing if we are unwilling to go on with Him. He wants to see only willingness in our life, and He's ready to give us grace and help us on.

(4) The Caterpillar—Lukewarmness has entered. This is the final stage. God is holding His mouth with great difficulty that He might not spue us out. He says, "I have to

somehow take you to the throne, so repent". We have a God Who does not judge by the outward, but sees the state of our heart. He looks for genuine repentance, a broken and contrite heart (Isa 57:15). When Israel repented, not one counted himself greater than the other. Then the Lord showed them favour. He will deliver us from all the worms. Then no one, no devil, no temptation can pull us down. o

- **What doyou think?**

The 119th psalm is written in a poetic style called acrostic. Each of the first 8 verses of the psalm begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet `aleph'. Hence the title. Each of the next 8 verses begin with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet `beth'. In this way, every set of 8 verses in this psalm begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, using up all the 22 letters of the alphabet. With all these restrictions, God has breathed His message into that psalm inspiring the psalmist to write only what God wanted him to write.

Your life may be fraught with weaknesses and limitations. But the wise and mighty God can still stamp His image in your heart, so that when He appears, you may be like Him.

Pastor Don Spiers—A Shining Life

(Serial No.42)

``less than the least''

When Pastor Don joined the ministry, no one had any idea he had held a position of authority in South America, and had worked with Oral Roberts. He hailed from a very rich family and his father was highly educated. He himself was an engineer and had been holding a high position in his profession. But he just humbled himself and accepted the position of a new worker. He served the Lord with all humility all his life.

His actions and reactions spoke only humility—they are speaking to us even now. He had done so much for the Lord, he had imbibed the beautiful character of Jesus, and had been such a blessing to everyone, and yet, while conversing with a brother a few months before his passing away, he repeatedly said, "There is no good thing in me!" No wonder he had such a close relationship with the Lord. "I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit," the Lord says.

Brother Don's humility is a pattern for all Christians, and especially for church leaders. He demonstrated the submission of the Son in his joyful obedience to those over him, even when those who were younger and junior to him were promoted above him. His desire was always: "I must decrease and others must increase."

Like St.Paul, his confession was, "I am less than the least of all saints." So the Lord gave him special revelations; he was a man of great wisdom and good discernment. "He had the mind of God and fed us with the words of God," is the testimony of one child of God.

The quality of humility had been cultivated in Pastor Don even in his early years. When he was working in Argentina he had with him a brother who was only 14 years old. During that time Pastor Don once went away to a mountain to fast and pray. The day he came back, this

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14-year-old preached on Nebuchadnezzar. After the message Brother Don went to him and said, "I went away to pray because I felt I was becoming proud and it scared me. The Lord has now used you to speak to me about Nebuchadnezzar."

"What actually spoke to me and touched me when I joined as a junior worker, was his humility," testifies a brother, "I could never imagine a person could be so humble. And I thought, `O, this will all pass away.' But I praise God, I have met him many, many times after that over the last forty years, and I have seen that the love and the humility of Christ in him lasted throughout his life.

Pastor Don tells in this message that it's the humble who can really know Jesus.

The Lord wants us to know Him, but He has great difficulty revealing Himself to us. Jesus once looked up to the Father and said, "I thank Thee, O Father...because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Although God is Almighty and all-knowing, in His character, He is humble. Therefore, in the pride of man, we cannot know Him.

I once visited the home of a poor widow. She had very little education but oh, she knew God. It was such a joy to spend time with her. One day she said, "Bro. Don, I was reading in the Book of Revelation and I said to the Lord, "Lord, the churches today are like the church of Lakodika." I thought, "I have a college education and so I have a right to correct her." I was just about to tell her, "Sister, the word is pronounced as Leyodicea" when she said, "The Lord Jesus then said to me, "Yes, pray for the church. It's just like the church of Lakodika!" God's not concerned with our good language and high education stuff. He loves to reveal Himself to the humble and the lowly.

When I was in Boston a pastor invited us to his church. After preaching we prayed for a lot of people and twenty people received the Holy Spirit. Then the Pastor and his wife came for prayer too. He had been the pastor of that Pentecostal church for twenty years, and neither he nor his wife had received the Holy Spirit. He said, ``We're not discouraged. We've been prayed for hundreds of times, but we never received the Holy Spirit. So before the meeting tonight my wife and I said to each other, "Look they're going to pray for us again. And we're not going to receive it again. Let's not be discouraged this time too." I thought, "What a hopeless case! They've made up their mind they're not going to receive it!" Next morning, I was trying to explain to them how easy it is to receive the Holy Spirit when their little child, a one-year-old, came toddling in—"Bla, bla, bla, bla." All of a sudden I said, "Look Pastor, the Bible calls that perfect praise—`Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise.' Can't you do that?" Immediately he burst out speaking in tongues, and so did his wife. See, God reveals things to babes and sucklings—things which the wise people cannot understand.

In John Ch.4 we read about a Samaritan woman. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews. Moreover, she was an immoral woman. But when Jesus began to tell her about the Messiah she said, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ." Then Jesus told her, "I that speak unto thee am He." So we see He revealed Himself to the despised Samaritans and immoral people.

But the priests, the scribes and the Pharisees did not know Who He was. This must have been very heart-breaking to God the Father. God in His divine nature is humble. So the things of God, God does not reveal to the wise and the prudent. It's not that God

does not love them, but His nature cannot be communicated to them.

The Jews had a most marvellous system of religious works. But with all their religious duties they could not come to God. *I talked with a certain brother one day. He had been in religion for years and years and years. But as I talked to him, I realized that he did not know the Lord.* That's the trouble Jesus had when He came. People were steeped in religion but they did not know the Lord.

My father was a great theologian. He had studied in great seminaries in America and in

Europe—he had graduate degrees in theology from the New York Theological Seminary at Manhattan, and from the University in Switzerland. He had a library of multiplied thousands of volumes and he knew those books very well. But he preached that the Bible didn't mean what it says. When I last saw my dad he was 89. I said, "Look what the Bible says! Look what the Bible says!" But he said, "No, no, it doesn't mean all that. You've to interpret those things." When I talked to him about the Second Coming, he said, "No, Jesus is not going to come again. It doesn't mean that." And when I spoke about the blood of Jesus, he said, "One cup of blood fell to the ground and dried up 2000 years ago. What can it do for you? The whole Bible is a parable. You should know what it means. You have no education. What can you teach me? I have this vast library, and across my desk every week comes the cream of the intelligence of this world. You can't teach me anything."
I'm not a scholar like my father, but I know many things my father didn't know. With all his great learning, the most simple things in the Bible he did not know. He did not know we're saved by faith. He did not know we're saved by the grace of God. He did not know you must be born again. He did not know about water baptism. He did not know about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He did not believe in the Rapture. He did not believe in the coming kingdom of God. So with all of that rich understanding, he was ignorant. And he could not understand how I, with no education, could understand the things of God. But that's the riches of God's grace. Paul is writing to poor people—they were not great theologians. He says, God has given you the riches of the full assurance of understanding to the knowledge of the mystery of God.

One day, when I was talking to my father about the Second Coming of Christ, to turn me off, he turned the television on. There was a man there on the television—a very dignified man with glasses—so he watched him. That man had the Bible open, and he was saying exactly the same things I had said just then. My daddy listened to all that, but still did not believe.

How beautifully God reveals these things to the babes and the sucklings! We can go to theological seminars, and come out not even believing in God; but when we humble ourselves and confess we don't know anything, then we can learn something. When we sit at His feet, He'll speak to us through His Word and give us an understanding which gives us full assurance—"I know in Whom I have believed."

A college professor was once driving out on the countryside. He got lost and came to a crossroads. He saw a little boy walking up with his dog. He said, "Sonny, where does this road lead?" The boy said, "I don't know." "Well, where does that road go?" "I don't know." "That road?" "I don't know." "This one?" "I don't know." He said, "You stupid boy, you don't know anything!" The boy said, "Well, one thing I know—I'm not lost like you are."

I may not know some of the things the world knows, but I know in Whom I have

believed. And I know where I'm going to go. And I know where my treasures are laid up. Because in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. If you know God, you know more than all the wise people in this world _ the unsearchable riches of His wisdom and understanding. The Bible says the great people of the world are ever learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth.
When Blaise Pascal, the founder of Modern Mathematics, heard of the reality of the Lord Jesus, he decided, "I'm going to seek the Lord. I'm going to do right." And with all his intelligence he was seeking and seeking God, but he couldn't find Him. Then one night, in 1654...this is what he writes about it: "From about half past ten in the evening until about half past midnight, I was reading about the crucifixion when something happened. The fire came." He said, "I found that God is not a God of mathematical truths. God's not a God of the intellectuals and the wise people. I found God with my heart, and not with my mind."

We must humble ourselves that we might know something. If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (I Cor 8:1,2). The worldling contradicts the wisdom of God. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (I Cor 3:18-20). So with the wisdom of this world, the world knew not God. But when we humble ourselves, and know that we know nothing, then God reveals Himself to us. Many theologians cannot understand even the parables. It's amazing how they study and study them and get all confused. But how beautiful when we humble ourselves and sit at Jesus' feet as Mary did!

End of Temptation

There was an end of temptation for Jesus. There is an end of temptation

for you. The power of God is going to be manifested in and through you.

The Lord Jesus Christ, right after His water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit, faced some fierce temptations from the devil, and overcame all of them gloriously (Lk 4:1-13). But there was an "end of temptation" for Jesus. What was the end of His temptation? _ ***Revelation of the mighty power of God.*** The Word of God says, "And when the *devil had ended all the temptation, …* ***Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit*** into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about" (Lk 4:13,14). You may be a person beset with temptations of various kinds; but be encouraged; there is an **"end of temptation"** for you. That is, the power of God is going to be manifested in and through your life.

It was right after those fierce temptations that Jesus fulfilled some remarkable prophecies concerning Himself. At the end of His temptations, by the power of the Spirit, Jesus came to Nazareth, and presented His **"credentials"** for the ministry. He said, "The Spirit

of the Lord is upon Me…to preach the gospel (good tidings) to the poor" (Lk 4:18; Isa 61:1,2). Often it is after being tempted, tested, and tried, that the Lord empowers us, and fills our mouth with good tidings to our fellow men who are going through the same path, which we have trodden alone. People, who are envious, hateful, and prejudiced, do not know the gravity of the temptations they inflict upon us. All the while they may be thinking that they are doing God a service. Our Saviour was tempted in all these points; but there was an "end of temptation" for Him (Psa 41:5-9). Jesus, further said, "Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (Jn 16:2). Having seen the end of His temptations, as a merciful and faithful high priest, He feels for our infirmities, and is able to help us to the uttermost" (Heb 2:16-18; 4:14-16). It was after the end of those particular temptations, that Jesus was sent to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. He did it all by the power of the Spirit. But the temptations preceded the manifestation of the power of God in such a fashion.

Abraham also experienced the "end of temptation". God asked his only son Isaac to be offered for a burnt offering (Gen 22:1,2). Though a very difficult temptation, Abraham received grace from the Lord to obey Him implicitly. But the "end of his temptation" was glorious—***a revelation of God as his "Jehovah-jireh."*** "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen" (Gen 22:14). It was at the "end of temptation" that God swore to Abraham and said, ``In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed...And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice" (Gen 22:16-18). At times, does it seem to you, that God is demanding some very unusual things from you, which He does not demand from others? Dear one, it is not to destroy you; but to make you more than a conqueror and bless you eternally! You are going to possess the gate of your enemies, and you are going to be a blessing to the whole world. So do not hesitate to obey His voice, even when the temptations appear to be cruelly painful. Remember, there is an "end of temptation" for you!

The Lord allowed the Amalekites to attack the children of Israel from behind. It was a fierce temptation for Moses, Joshua, Aaron, Hur and the rest. But the "end of temptation" was glorious—***a great revelation of God, that He was their "Jehovah-nissi" their "Banner***

Victorious" in fierce battles (Exo 17:1-15). We must be resolute during the time of our temptations. Jesus said: "Ye are they which ave continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; (Lk 22: 8-30). Jesus is promising a kingdom to all those who endure their temptations. It was only at the "end of temptation" that Peter could strengthen his brethren. Peter thought he could do it in his own strength. Hence he boasted in self-confidence and failed; but the Lord came to his aid later on, and made him triumphant: "And the Lord said... when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Lk 22:31-34). The *"end of temptation" for Peter was—a bitter weeping, which resulted in his conversion, enabling him strengthen his brethren.* All through his epistles we can see him strengthening his brethren who are beset with diverse and manifold temptations and fiery trials. According to Peter, the "end

of temptation" is receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls" (I Pet 1:6,9).

Our "end of temptation" is a "way of escape" for us. He will not permit us to be tempted beyond our ability (ICor 10:13). The "end of our temptation" is a great reward. Therefore James exhorts us to be cheerful in our temptations, because the glorious "crown of life" is promised to those who endure unto the "end of temptation" (Jms 1:2,12).

There is an end for all of your sore troubles and temptations; it is exaltation, increased greatness, and God's comfort on every side in your life: "Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side" (Psa 71:20,21). There was an end for the four hundred years of temptation for the children of Israel. It was to bring them to a good and large land that flowed with milk and honey (Exo 3:7,8); and the Lord did fulfil His promise.

Sometimes we feel that God is trying us as silver is tried (Mal 3:3). Some other times we feel that we have been trapped in a net of affliction (Job 19:6). Yet at some other times we feel that God is causing men to ride over our heads (Psa 66:10,11). At times you feel like you are going through water and through fire (Isa 43:2). Don't be discouraged. Cheer up, there is going to be an "end of temptation" for you! It is to bring you out into a "wealthy place" (Psa 66:12). Like the Psalmist, claiming the promises of God, we should stand firm and face every temptation triumphantly: "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation" (Psa 118:6,10-14). If so, we shall see the "end of our temptation".

Daniel saw the end for his temptation of the lions' den. It was to make him prosper: ``So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. So this ***Daniel prospered***" (Dan 6:16,23,28). Further, by permitting trials and temptations, the Lord is showing us that we are His delight. David experienced this in his lifetime. The enemy confronted and attacked him. Saul was after him constantly to destroy him without a cause. But God's love was great for David, as He delighted in David. Though beset by temptations on every side, the Lord supported him from all sides. He says, "They attacked me at a moment when I was weakest, but the Lord...rescued me because He delights in me" (II Sam 22:19,20—NLT). David and Daniel became God's "beloveds."

Often it is in the time of temptations and adversity that God reveals His power in our lives. Temptations and chastening permitted by God are proof of His care toward us. "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty (Job 5:17,22;—NLT). In all circumstances without questioning, we should remain loyal to the Lord. If so, He will lead us to great spiritual fruitfulness and prosperity: "If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in *prosperity,* and their years in pleasures and that which should be set
on thy table should be *full of fatness"* (Job 36:11,16). When we are sent through trials and temptations, we at times feel that we are worms. Why does God make you a worm? It is to make you a sharp threshing instrument: God's

word to His "worms" is: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD" (Isa 41: 14-16). It is God's plan to bring us to our "wits' end." "Wits' end" is a state where we feel lack of skill to do things; lack of wisdom and prudence to accomplish the necessary things, etc. Why does the Lord lead us so? *It is to bring us to our desired haven.* The children of Israel went through this path. "They reel to and fro...and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses... so He bringeth them unto their desired haven" (Psa 107:27-30). When we are led to our "wits' end", Christ becomes all things to us in our weak, poor state: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence" (I Cor 1:26-29).

The "end of temptation" is going to be our expected end, planned by God: I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer 29:10,11). Israel had captivity for seventy years, but its end brought a glorious restoration to their land once again! The Lord Jesus has gone to prepare a ***wealthy, large place*** for us***.*** This is ***our desired haven:*** "And He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Jn 14:1-3; Rev 21:10-25; 22:2,3).

Your "end of temptation" is going to be gladness and exceeding joy. Therefore, ``rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (I Pet 4:12,13), The "end of our temptation" is perfection and eternal glory: "But the God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His ***eternal glory*** by Christ Jesus, ***after that ye have suffered a while,*** make you ***perfect,*** stablish, strengthen, settle you" (I Pet 5:10). So let us continue to keep ourselves in the love of God, knowing that we are going to see the end of all of our temptations! As it is written in Jude 24, the Lord "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

The "end of our temptation" is everlasting light. Yes, here, we have a time of mourning, sighing and weeping; but it is for a moment. Weeping may last for a night time, but joy comes in the morning (Psa 30:5). "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory and ***the days of thy mourning shall be ended"*** (Isa 60:19,20). Fixing up our eyes on the glory reserved for us, let us endure temptations joyfully, knowing that the "end of our temptation" is near!

A Life Par Excellence *(Part III)*

Continuing our study on living a life above the ordinary, we shall see in this issue, one character trait that keeps us on a low plane in our life viz. INSTABILITY.

When foretelling Reuben's future, his father Jacob said, `'Reuben, thou art the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, thou shalt not excel". Now, Reuben was Jacob's firstborn. He was a good boy and he wanted to be a responsible big brother. When his brothers planned to kill one of their little brothers he spoke up and saved the boy. And when his father was apprehensive of sending his youngest son to Egypt with the older boys, Reuben again showed his sense of responsibility by offering to be held accountable for him. However, Reuben did not "go forward and grow until he became very great" like his grand-father Isaac. His area of instability was maintaining a right relationship with those living with him. Young child of God, as you enter the world ahead of you, you will meet all kinds of people and you'll find yourself getting attracted to some of them. Their personal charm, their company, or even their outward beauty, may seem pleasing, appealing. The Bible warns of "the stranger which flattereth with her words" by whom many strong men have been slain (read up Proverbs Chapters 6&7). So if you are not careful to steady yourself according to the Word of God, you can be easily drawn into a wrong relationship. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Psa 119:9).

Reuben's uncle, Esau, also lacked stability. He wanted his birthright, and he wanted his father's blessings—he saw their value; but there were other things he wanted too, there were other things that were valuable and important to him. He did not *set* his affection on the right thing; his mind was not *stayed on* the really important thing. The writer to the Hebrews says that we should *hold fast* the rejoicing of our hope firm unto the end (Heb 3:6). We must *always* keep rejoicing in the living hope we have before us—of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Just "one morsel of food" was able to turn Esau aside. There may be something you badly want. Maybe there is something you think you cannot do without, something you think is indispensable for your happiness and well being in this life—a friendship, your career, your job, or some field of education. Well, it may very well be so, but have you considered the fact that it may cost you the high standard of life you are aiming at ?

Samson was a powerful instrument in the hand of God. But he too was not steady. One moment he would be ferociously attacking the enemies of the people of God, and the next moment you could see him chatting with immoral women. Young man, check and see what kind of people you spend time with, the kind of people you talk with. Boaz advised Ruth to abide fast by his maidens, to keep fast by his young men (Ruth 2:8,21). She obeyed and she got a "full reward"—as we all know. The believers of the early church continued steadfastly in the fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:42). If you don`t keep away from people whose company could be detrimental to your spiritual progress, you cannot reach the excellency you are called for.

David was a man of God who had reached excellence. But a time came when he began to take life easy. He got up from his siesta late in the afternoon and lazily strolled around with roving eyes, and down he slithered from his heights. Child of God, beware of ``innocent'' amusements and ``harmless'' recreational resorts. Beware of carelessly letting your eyes wander, allowing them to settle on anything and everything around you. Pray like the Psalmist, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou me in Thy way" (Psa 119:37). If you know something to be not befitting those in pursuit of excellence, don't ever think it will do no harm to look at it, and to toy with it.

A life par excellence can be reached only by those who go on steadily in their ascent. Remember how the Israelites slid from their high position of being "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, high above all nations in praise, in name and in honour." ``They were not steadfast in His covenant...their spirit was not steadfast with God... they turned aside like a deceitful bow,'' says the Psalmist (Psa 78:8,37,57). In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read of the Lord saying, "They do alway err (stray) in their heart" (Heb 3:10).

The Lord wants to make us an ``eternal excellency''—see Isa 60:15—an excellency not only on this earth but also in eternity. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable. o

God Will Provide

Abraham is the father of all believers. He exercised himself in the faith he received from God and taught the same faith to his son Isaac and to his grandsons, living with them in tents. He brought up his son Isaac in the way of faith and Isaac followed his father and obeyed him in all things. As we know, to walk in the way of faith is very difficult. But Isaac endured all the hardship without disputings and murmurings. He is known to have posed only one question to his father on the way to Mount Moriah, which is recorded in Genesis 22:7. And that question too was not one regarding his personal life, but one concerning the lamb needed for a burnt offering to God. He was concerned about the things pertaining to the eternal God. He wanted to please God perfectly and that is why he asked that question. Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.'' God accepted that answer given by Abraham and provided them with a lamb, which Abraham offered for a burnt offering instead of his son (Gen 22:13). And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh. If you teach your children the life of faith, God will take you to the mountain, which shows a lofty experience in spiritual life, and from there you can see the miracle-working hand of God in your life. You can please God from there according to the plan of God and receive promises. The Bible says, "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." All the blessings of heaven are kept for those who live by faith as Abraham did.

Abraham's reply to his son's question was ``God will provide''. We see in the Bible that after this God started to provide Isaac with everything in his life.

``The thing proceedeth from the Lord''

When Abraham wanted to get a bride for Isaac he sent his servant telling him, "God shall send His angel before thee." Believing that word the servant went, and found Rebekah. When he explained to the girl's brother and father how God had led him, they said, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord" (Gen 24:50). They all understood that Rebekah was appointed for Isaac by God. Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife. Isaac did not know anything about Rebekah before marriage. He had not even seen her or spoken to her. Everything proceeded from the Lord. This is the way the Lord wants His children also to get married. They must believe that God will arrange everything (Psa 138:8). We also see that Isaac did not take any more wives. Thus he was a holy man of God in the Old Testament days. He believed the word ``God will provide'' and was waiting for everything from the Lord alone. God has the best and He will supply the best to His children. You may have the power to choose. But give that power also into the hand of God, and He will choose the best for you. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jms 1:17). Rebekah was the best help-mate for Isaac all the days of his life as she was the selection of God. After marrying her he loved her and was comforted. Isaac had not loved Rebekah before marriage. People of God must also marry like this. If so they will be comforted.

``The Lord hath made room for us''

Abraham gave only gifts to the sons of his concubines, but to Isaac he gave all that he had (Gen 25:5). Abraham had received all his riches from God by faith and now it was all given to Isaac. Isaac earned nothing; God provided him with everything. At the time of famine, Isaac did not go to Egypt but to Gerar. He sowed in the land of Gerar and received in the same year an hundredfold and the Lord blessed him. He became very great and the Philistines envied him (Gen 26:12-15). He dug wells and found water, but the herdmen of Gerar strove again and again for each well. Finally he dug a well for which they did not strive and he called the name of it ``Rehoboth'' saying, "Now the Lord hath made room for us and we shall be fruitful in the land." So we see that he waited for God, and God made room for him. We have a God Who careth for us. So we can cast all our care upon Him (I Pet 5:7). Jesus said about this, Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt 6:32,33).
Isaac lived in tents all the days of his life. God provided for him and his family. Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. So he must have been a very old man when he took Isaac to the mountains of Moriah to sacrifice him. But Isaac obeyed and surrendered himself completely to his father. So Isaac is a shadow of our Lord Jesus Christ Who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:8). Isaac had faith and also the works of faith. By faith he blessed his sons Jacob and Esau concerning things to come (Heb 11:20). Isaac was not only a man of faith but also had the experience of meditating and praying (Gen 24:63; 25:21). So we see that Isaac had been provided with everything for life and for godliness.

Isaac is the best example of a child of God. He received all his blessings from God. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich and He addeth no sorrow with it". Isaac sowed

and received a hundredfold. We must also sow the Word of God in the world in these last days believing that the God of Isaac will bless our ministry a hundredfold. The whole world must come to know the truth and the blessing one gets through it in this world and in the world to come. God is calling you, dear reader, to sow the Word of God so that you may receive all the heavenly blessings from Zion and, like Isaac, be a blessed person to the whole world. o