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1

The Purpose of God

"..... that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19b).

In these few words we are reminded by the Spirit of God, that God's full purpose in saving us is that we might be filled with all God's fullness. God will not be satisfied unless we have such a happy experience. That is why we are given the Word of God to show how we can be filled with such fullness. Even though we have been ruined by sin completely and have become useless and worthless, because of the efficacy of the precious blood, we can be so transformed that one day we can be filled with His fullness completely. This is repeated many times in the Bible. In Col. 2:9, 10 we read, "Ye are complete in Him." Complete in the Lord Jesus Christ in whom dwelleth all God's fullness. He wants us to have everything in abundance. With that purpose, God made the first man. We read that God gave the first man dominion, authority and power over the whole creation, not only over the earth but also over animals, creeping things, birds and fishes (Gen. 1:28). God gave the first man Adam a very strong and healthy body to enable him to have dominion, authority and power over whole creation. He provided every kind of food necessary for his health and also He put the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9). Adam had the privilege to eat from that tree of life at that time (Gen. 2:16, 17). If only he had eaten from that tree he would have rejoiced fully and he would have fulfilled God's purpose straightaway. God desired fullness of joy for man from the beginning of creation. That is why He put in the garden, the tree of life and gave man, power, authority and dominion in order that he might enjoy himself fully.

God made man to show him His love. The love for man was very great. His love is for eternity and He declared it in Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." The same thought is repeated in Eph. 3:18, 19. The tree of life is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. If the first man had eaten from that tree, he would have been filled automatically with the very life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then he would have been able to enjoy all that was around him. But because of disobedience, Adam lost that privilege. Now what Adam lost by disobedience is being recovered by the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God wants us to be filled completely with His power. It is by that power we conquer our temptations, trials and difficulties and by the same power one day we shall have immortal bodies (Rom. 8:11). It is the power of resurrection, that power which God manifested in raising up the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Upon the earth, we are being quickened daily with the same power to overcome our temptations and burdens. By the same power we shall be given immortal bodies in heaven and by that same power we shall enjoy eventually our share in God's fullness. It is only by the power of resurrection that our inner man can be strengthened,

and that we can be deeply rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:16, 17). We see all trees on mountains. Let there be any big storm, the trees do not fall down, because their roots go very deep over large areas. That is why no storm can uproot them, rather they go on growing taller and taller and the roots go deeper. In the same way by the power of resurrection, in the inner man, we are rooted deeply in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let there be any trial, persecution or hardship, it will not shake us. We will rejoice in our trials and at the same time we will become stronger spiritually. As we grow spiritually, we know that eventually we shall be filled with God's fullness. Thus we will find in a practical way the love of God filling us more and more. We become loving, tender, patient and gentle as a result. We can love our enemies. We can love the unlovely and pray for those that hate us and curse us. That is the evidence of the fact that we are being deeply grounded in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope is that one day, we will be filled by His fullness. May God help us to learn that secret more and more.

The purpose of the loving God in seeking us and finding us is that we may be filled eventually with the fullness of God. The work begins on earth and goes on till we are filled. The very fact that whatsoever is being offered by the Lord is being offered in abundance, is the proof of God's fullness (John 10:10). As far as God is concerned, He offers life, and that more abundantly from the very beginning. It may take us many years to have the experience of abundant life. But that is not God's plan. He offers it to us in the beginning itself, because we read, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." But because we do not trust Him fully and - obey Him, we do not enjoy that life for many years. But the God of love is offering us abundant life. Similarly, He is offering abundance of peace and abundance of truth (Jer. 33:6). Just as He is offering abundant life, in the same way He is offering abundance of peace and truth. Again we find that very few of us have abundance of peace in the beginning. As we go along, we discover by experience all that God wants us to have. As we begin to obey God fully, and do His will in small matters, we find that peace of God growing in our hearts.

In John 15:11 and 16:24, He offers us full joy again, not in a small measure. Unless we learn to rejoice in suffering, our joy will not become full. In Acts 5:41 we read that, when the disciples were persecuted, they rejoiced and later, after opposition and persecution, they were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52). As we learn to thank God for the privilege to suffer for His sake, we find our joy multiplying in proportion to our gratitude. When we live in God's presence, we find our joy becoming full (Psalm 16:11). So we have to find time to wait upon the Lord, read God's Word, meditate, worship and pray. Then our joy will become full.

Our Lord wants us to be kept full and constantly overflowing with the Spirit. That is why He says, "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). It is only as we learn to find God's perfect will in small matters, we are filled

with the Holy Spirit. It will not be possible otherwise. To be able to find God's will for every matter, we have to say, "Lord, not my will but Thy will." The more we die to ourselves and our will, the more we are filled with the Spirit.

Just as He offers abundant peace, joy and life, He also says, "All power is given unto me" (Matt. 28:18). He wants us to exercise that power. As we obey Him, follow Him and serve Him, that power will be given to us. With that message the Lord sent His disciples saying "Go and tell everybody that all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." And those who believed Him enjoyed that power day by day. As they obeyed and followed Him, they received the power (1 Cor. 1:18).

The Lord is offering us His fullness in abundance, not in a small measure. He is a God of abundance, and He wants to give us all things in abundance. Whatever we may receive from Him, whether it is life, peace, truth, joy or power, He offers in abundance. The fullness of the Holy Spirit, all things of the earth and also of the new creation, are given to us by faith. It is said, "All things are yours", all the things of the new creation but not of the old creation (Rev. 21:7). But we must learn to overcome our doubts, fears and unbelief, and then go on claiming all things of the new creation. For all that we require, there is abundance of divine wisdom. That is why the apostle Paul prays in Eph. 1:16-17, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." The Ephesians were highly taught in the doctrines of salvation, because men like Paul, Apollos, Timothy and John, apostles and mighty men of God, were sent to teach them. Yet Paul prayed for them, that God should give them still more knowledge and wisdom, that they might enjoy all that God had purposed and planned for them. All of us require that wisdom, divine and heavenly wisdom, which is from above. With that wisdom we can understand the things of God. We receive it by faith. The Lord wants us to have this, so that we may be filled with His fullness. It does not matter what our past failures, shortcomings and weaknesses have been. Once we are purchased by the precious blood and become His purchased possession, we can claim every privilege that He gives to believers. Eph. 1:3 is a promise for every believer, not only for a few, chosen believers who are serving God, like the apostle Paul. Our loving God wants every believer, to receive all these spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus. We have to exercise our right and claim our portion. We do not deserve it. The God of love is offering these gifts to show His love for us.

That is why, in Eph. 3:19, Paul prays first of all that they may know God's love. Individually we cannot comprehend it ; even though we spend centuries in meditating upon God's Word, we will never know the mysteries by ourselves. In olden days, Roman Catholic monks thought that by living a lonely life, they would become more holy. That is why we find many monasteries in Palestine. I saw monasteries on every hill. They were built many centuries ago, with the intention that by living in lonely places,

without seeing anybody and by meditating upon God, the monks would become more holy. In so doing they brought in many customs and rituals which made them worse, instead of better.

We find a secret here, God's love can only be comprehended by the help of the saints, as shown in Eph. 3:17-19. His love is beyond human comprehension. All of us have to be brought together again and again. You will find our fellowship together as fellow believers is very inspiring and helpful. Unbelievers cannot have such fellowship. That fellowship will be among those who have the same experience of eternal life (1 John 1:3). So all fellowship begins for us in the Lord Jesus Christ and in God the Father. Whatever we receive in our own meditation and waiting upon the Lord, we should share together. Otherwise we shall not be able to grow.

We read in Acts 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles, doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." These are four anchors that God has provided for our growth. In Acts 27:27-30 we read that the ship was in danger of colliding with the hidden rocks. The sailor cast four anchors, two in front and two at the back, to save themselves from the two dangers, hidden rocks and the waves. With the help of the four anchors, they were kept steady and safe from the rocks. Our Christian life is like that ship. We have to face many storms of life. All these storms and dangers are overcome with God's help by these four anchors (Acts 2:42, 43). That is why, the early Christians continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers.

God's love can be truly comprehended as we learn to have fellowship with fellow believers every where. You have to make some sacrifice to gather God's people for prayer, for worship, for Bible study and for service. By that fellowship we are told that we will know the love of Christ with perfect knowledge and by such love we are made to understand, why God wants us to have that share in His fullness. His love is so great that He wants us to receive all that He has. As loving parents take pleasure in giving their children all that they possess, even so the Lord wants to give us all that He has. Now we are being taught how we have to be prepared upon the earth for such privilege in heaven, to enjoy God's fullness.

In the early days that truth was made clear by the consecration of the High Priest in Exo. 28:1, 2 and 4. In Leviticus 8, we have the details as to how Aaron and his sons were set apart for that great service. Whatever happened in the Old Testament was a shadow of that which is now happening in our period of the New Testament (Heb. 8:5). The Lord Jesus Christ is our true and everlasting High Priest (Heb. 7:24-26). The Lord Jesus as our heavenly High Priest is constantly interceding, that we may be presented eventually spotless, blameless and filled with His fullness (Jude 24). He is able to save us to the uttermost, because He is willing to make intercession for us. He wants to present us spotless and blameless before the angels and the saints. And He wants to make us partakers of His glory and fullness (1 Pet. 5:1).

2

Garments of Glory and Beauty

The garments designed by God for the High Priest are able to show forth God's glory and beauty which He desires to share with us. That is why these garments of the High Priest in the Old Testament are called 'Garments of Glory and Beauty.' On the one hand God was showing that nobody was worthy to go into the Holy of Holies. All had sinned and so nobody could go there. Only the High Priest had the privilege to go behind the veil once a year to make atonement. On the other hand God was showing through the garments of glory and beauty of the High Priest, that He wants us also to become glorious and beautiful, although we have been ruined completely by sin, and have to say like Paul, "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Really, none of us are worthy to enjoy the presence of God in the Holy Place. But the High Priest could commune with God on that one day in the year. Through these garments God was showing how our joy and our love can be full, how our nakedness caused by sin can be covered completely and how we can become glorious in the presence of God.

Those who saw the High Priest walking up and down in the tabernacle or the temple were being spoken to by God. "Oh My people who are away from Me, I want you to be near Me and enjoy My fullness." We have to learn the same secret of enjoying fully our share in God's fullness and not to be satisfied just by having our sins forgiven and obtaining some corner in heaven. We have to learn it by faith. The Lord Jesus Christ is my garment of glory and beauty (Eph. 3:16). In Him we can see all these seven garments and thus we can be filled more and more with His fullness.

Preparation of the High Priest:

We read in Lev. 8 that Moses had to go to Aaron, first of all, with the garments, by the putting on of which the high priest fulfilled the Lord's ministry. Then Aaron and his sons were washed with water before the congregation (Lev. 8:6). Physically they were washed with water before the public, not because they were dirty but for a purpose. The water in the Bible represents the Word of God (Eph. 5: 26). As they were washed with water before everybody, they were showing to the people that they were being set apart for God's service for the whole nation, and they had to be kept under the Word of God for everything. He was not to follow any man-made custom or tradition but only God's Word. Many people, instead of following God's Word, follow traditions, practices and customs of man. That is why they do not grow spiritually. We find this in every country. At the time of childbirth, marriage or funeral they follow the customs of man rather than the Word of God. They are more bound to the customs of man than the Word of God.

We have instruction given in the Word of God for all our needs, problems and activities. Unless we honor God's Word fully we have no right to claim our full share in His fullness. We lose our share in God's fullness by ignoring the Word of God. We have to make a very strong decision and promise to God saying, "Lord, I will obey Thy word implicitly in all my activities, ways and plans." With that vision, the Lord led us in the work in Madras thirty years ago. We saw believers everywhere slaves to customs and traditions of man. We noticed that those who were free from customs of man had gone on well with the Lord, but those who were slaves to customs were blind spiritually. They cannot enjoy God's Word fully and they cannot know God's plan and purpose for their lives. That is why, before the congregation of many lakhs of people, Moses washed Aaron and his sons. It was not for the public display but for an example.

First of all, Aaron had to be blameless. The least blemish in any part of the body would have disqualified him from being High Priest (Lev. 21:18). If you go to any part of the world, you will not come across any person of that type. There is bound to be some blemish in any man, either upon the feet or on the hand or on some part of the body. How could Aaron hide the blemish from such a large company of people? As an ordinary man he must have some blemish. But I believe that by God's power he became alright. As God chose him by His own mighty hand, he came without any blemish. Similarly, if we try our best to be without any blemish, we will never succeed. We are bound to have some fault, failure or weakness somewhere, some time. It is not by our human efforts we are righteous. The Lord, Jesus Christ is our righteousness and justification. He makes me complete and perfect not by myself but as we read in Col. 2:10, "ye are complete in him." This is a very helpful and important verse The Lord Jesus Christ is my completion and my justification. That is why we pray in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Knowingly or unknowingly we declare, "Lord, by myself I have no right to come unto Thee, but because of what Thou hast done for me, I come to Thee."

I believe, that the mighty God made Aaron complete, that he might be free from every blemish. God had chosen him, just as He chose Moses. Moses never chose himself. In fact Moses was saying to the Lord, "Who am I Lord, that thou hast chosen me?" In the same way He chose Aaron. So by choosing Aaron, he was freed from every blemish. God was reminding Aaron that if he had to serve Him, he must keep himself in subjection to God's Word completely in everything. He was to make it a practice saying daily, "Lord, is there anything in my life which is not pleasing to Thee? Kindly show it to me. Give me the grace to put things right. I do want to obey Thy Word in every detail and in every matter." Then only he was given clothes as we read in Leviticus 8:7

3

The White Robe and Girdle

First of all, a long beautiful white robe was put on Aaron. These details are given in Exodus 28. The first garment to be worn was a long white robe which speaks of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which we receive by faith (Rom.1:17; 10:3-10; 2Cor.5:21). It is by faith we are made righteous. We acknowledge first of all, "Oh God, it does not matter what I do, or what I like or what I suffer or where I go, but make me righteous by faith." It is not by tears, fasting prayer, sufferings or by our own efforts we become righteous. It is only by believing from the heart that the Lord Jesus Christ our Creator and our Savior took our place on the Cross. He died in our stead, for He did no sin and knew no sin. Willingly He emptied Himself and died in our stead. By that faith we become righteous and not by ourselves nor by any effort of any kind on our part. That our nakedness could not be covered by ourselves is the first message shown in the long white robe. Our friends, relations and other people and our charity cannot cover our sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ by His life and through grace covers our nakedness because He died for us.

All the garments were made with divine wisdom at God's command. They were not made by clever tailors or designers all the details were given to Moses on the mountain in writing. God had made the plan, and we read that He had filled the people with His wisdom for the execution of that plan (Exo. 28:3). It was not earthly wisdom, it was heavenly wisdom and pure wisdom of His fullness. Every detail of this garment and other items were given by God Himself. It is only by the Holy Spirit we can understand the way of salvation (1 Cor. 2:14). Unless we believers abide in the Holy Spirit, our preaching is in vain and unless we are anointed by the Holy Spirit, people will not understand what we say.

The Lord was showing His people how they can be partakers of His glory and beauty. The garments were not meant for worldly glory, for there were no such garments in any part of the world. They were heavenly garments. Nobody has ever had these garments. Judging by the color and design everything came from heaven itself. So first, we have to learn the meaning of righteousness to enjoy our share in God's fullness. Many of us take pride in ourselves. We say in our hearts sometimes, "I am not like so and so. I am not as weak as he is nor so foolish." But later on we discover that all of us do many foolish things. We do many wrong things and often fall into temptations. The very second we depend upon our own will power and our ability, we fall away. You may put your foot on a piece of soap with out looking at it. You may slip and fall and fracture your leg. You do not want to do it, but yet you fall and stay in bed for many months. So knowingly or unknowingly we act like this. We speak a word in foolishness and suffer afterwards. God is showing that we are weak and foolish. But by faith we have to say, "Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness. I am not depending upon my own righteousness, prayers, books, garments nor upon my own personality." Thank Him for becoming your righteousness.

Then, day by day we have to appropriate the very same righteousness.

Our life is in the blood. As the blood flows in us we know that we live. As soon as the heart stops beating, man dies and the body starts stinking. As long as the heart is beating, even though the body is very weak and sickly for many weeks and months and has no proper food, the body is alive. When we die, the body starts stinking that very second and that is why the body has to be buried or burnt. Similarly we have to be conscious of His life flowing in us constantly, not occasionally (Col. 3:4). When we feel the pulse, we know that life is still present whether the person is walking, sitting or lying down and that the heart is beating and the person is alive. There is some consciousness of life. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ flowing in to us constantly and freely, keeps us alive. Any pride, hatred or other sin can stop or lessen the flow.

In some homes, there are water taps. One morning water may not flow freely but only a few drops come through. At the same time there may be a full flow in other homes. When the pipe line is opened, much dirt may be found in the pipe, but when the dirt is removed, again there is a full flow. How is the life flowing in you? Is it just in drops or is it full and free? God wants us to have abundant life. He wants to give us everything in abundance - abundant life, abundance of peace, abundance of power and He wants to make us abundantly fruitful. Whenever we are conscious that the flow has decreased, that peace, joy and strength are becoming less, we must search our hearts, examine ourselves, humble ourselves and say "Lord, why has my peace become less? Why is it that I do not feel Thy presence so strongly? I do not have the same strength for my temptations, nor the same hunger for God's Word, nor the same burden for prayer." There is some blockage somewhere and that must be removed. Then we can affirm, "Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness and I lay hold on Thee." Do not depend upon your will power. Go on claiming His life. Say before going out any where, "Now, Lord, I commit myself unto Thee." Generally, we do so for a long journey: "Lord, we are going to the Holy Convocation, please be with us and prepare us." But on the other hand, we do not pray for small journeys and not even at the end of the journey. That is our nature. We only pray for big things and thus we are deceived by the enemy. We become careless and negligent, and lose our peace and joy. It is the daily appropriation of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, that gives us the fullness.

We read further in Lev. 8:7 that the girdle had to hold the robe in place. It was a long, loose robe and the girdle held it in the proper place. The girdle speaks of faith and reminds us that we have to claim the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ day by day, and that we should not depend upon our own abilities in serving Him. We must depend upon His strength all the time, and receive His life by faith. Usually we forget to do this, and that is why we fail so often to serve Him effectively, and find at last that our labors have been wasted. It may take many such failures for us to learn to put our faith in Him. So the girdle reminds us that it is by faith we receive strength to serve Him, and not by our own talents nor by our own wisdom.

4

The Blue Robe

The next garments of the High Priest we shall consider are the blue robe and the ephod which were worn over the white robe. The blue robe and the ephod teach us another important lesson. In Matt. 5:13-15, the Lord compares us to salt and light. We have this two - fold thought in the blue robe and the ephod. The blue robe and the ephod stand for salt and light. We have to be like salt to our fellow-believers. When we gather as believers for worship and prayer, we help one another to enjoy God's presence. Only believers can really partake with us at such times. Thus like salt, we are useful to one another.

For unbelievers we have to be like light. The life which we live as Christians will be of great help to them. They will be blessed by the life of Christ which they see in us, and will be inspired through our testimony. Thus the blue robe and the ephod show us the two-fold responsibility we have towards believers and unbelievers. Believers are few in number as compared with unbelievers. Yet they have a powerful influence in the world, like the small quantity of salt which gives taste to our food. Believers who are comparatively few in number, form the Church of God upon the earth and show forth God's glory to the world.

The blue robe was called the robe of the ephod. There was a hole in the top of it and there were golden bells and pomegranates around the lower hem. The pomegranates were of blue, purple and scarlet and between every two pomegranates there was a bell of gold (Exo. 28:31-35).

The blue robe reminds us of our vocation and heavenly calling as co-workers with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are co-workers with God (I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 6:1). We have a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). Every believer has a share in the calling. That is why in the very same passage (I Cor. 3:9); we are told that we are God's building. For a building we require many things such as stones, bricks, mud and timber. For a big building we require big stones as well as small stones. On the surface of a stone building you may see big stones, but when you look at the gap between the stones, there is space for small stones. We cannot build the building with big stones alone. We require both large and small stones. In the same way, we require mud, timber and many other things. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has a share in the building of God's House.

We are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). We are building the house of the Lord Jesus Christ and we are that house (Heb. 3:6). The blue robe indicates our heavenly calling, to build the heavenly habitation of the Lord Jesus Christ under His headship. In order to enjoy the fullness fully, we must take our share in the building of the house of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the hem of the blue robe there were pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet. A pomegranate looks like a single fruit but when you cut it open, you will find it composed of many compartments, each containing deep red, juicy, fleshy seeds. Pomegranates in Palestine are very large in size. This fruit is a symbol of the Lord's people. Even though believers are scattered in every part of the world, all of them together make one Church. All those who are purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, are the members of the Church. There is only one Church. The Church is being built by the Lord Jesus Christ, with those who are of one mind and are free from jealousy. Only then you can be a co-worker with the Lord Jesus Christ in building His Church. Just as the seeds of the pomegranates are put together in many compartments making one fruit, by the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are kept as one body. It is a sevenfold unity of believers that makes one body. One body, one Spirit, one hope, one calling, one faith, one baptism and one Lord and Creator. Lord wants this sevenfold oneness among His people. In the beginning many began to say, "I am of Paul; I am of Apollos; I am of Cephas", and this brought division. No human name can be given to the Church of God. All those names and titles which are given to the so-called churches bring division. Today we have more than 470 such names for Christians. Such names cause division. It is by oneness we are able to build the heavenly Church. The pomegranates remind us of the living Church but not of any building.

In every detail of the blue robe there is spiritual meaning. God was teaching in a symbolic way at that time, how the people could enjoy fullness and grace in abundance. Num. 15:37-41, indicates the meaning of the blue color. God was telling His people through Moses, that they should have blue fringes on their garments. This way they were reminded that they were God's people, that He had saved them by His grace and that they had to obey His commandments. In the same way the blue color reminds us that we are a holy nation and a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9). If you really want to enjoy God's fullness, then learn of His heavenly calling. The call is to build a heavenly sanctuary or a heavenly Church under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Purple stands for kingship. You will remember that before the Crucifixion, the soldiers put a purple robe on the Lord Jesus and mocked Him saying "Hail, King of the Jews" (John 19: 2, 3). Only kings wear garments of this color. So the purple color in the pomegranates, convey the message that God wants us to come under the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must be willing to be governed and led by Him in everything.

In Heb. 9:19, we read that Moses used scarlet wool which speaks of the sprinkled blood. As co-workers of God, we need to have a clear conscience, free from guilt, and this we can receive only by being cleansed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can never be cleansed by shedding tears or by offering long prayers. If you come to the Lord humbly and pray, "Lord Jesus, I am defiled in thought, word and deed; cleanse me with Thy precious blood",

immediately He will cleanse you. There is no need for you to wait for any vision or unusual experience. The moment you ask Him, you will be cleansed. It is very essential for those who are servants of God, to be kept cleansed from every defilement.

Thus the blue, purple and scarlet say to us that we need to hear His call, know His kingship, and lead a clean life in order to take part in building His Church and enjoy His fullness.

There were golden bells between the pomegranates. They were not copper bells or steel bells but they were golden bells, producing heavenly music. As the high priest moved to and fro, these golden bells produced a peculiar sound. The sound of these golden bells represented the sweet sound of the voice of God. Just as the sound of the golden bells is unique and entirely different from the sound produced by copper, steel or other bells, the voice of God is entirely different from man's voice. When we hear the voice of God we know by experience that it is not the voice of man but it is the voice of God. It is the still small voice. It is the heavenly voice. It is a sweet voice and it is a loving voice with authority. Joy comes to our hearts as we hear His voice.

The golden bells proclaimed that only by hearing the voice of God we can take share in building the Church of God. Now-a-days people think that by spending much money and great activity they can build the Church. They forget that unless they hear God's voice constantly, and understand God's plan for the church, they are not qualified to take a share in the work of building God's house. So through these golden bells God reminds us, that if we want to be His co-workers in building His everlasting sanctuary, we must first learn to hear His voice. That is why we have to stay upon our knees for a long time and say, 'Lord, speak to me, give me Thy message, let me hear Thy voice ; show me Thy way ; keep me in the right path, carry me through, strengthen me and give me Thy grace.'" Those who are not born again can never hear the voice of God nor can they be co-workers with God.

5 The Ephod

Let us consider the ephod which the high priest had to wear on the blue robe (Lev. 8:7). It was made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen (Exo. 28:6). This ephod made of five kinds of material was a beautiful and attractive garment. It stands for light and reminds us that we are the light of the world. Wherever believers may be, in schools, in workshops, in hospitals or anywhere else, they must shine as lights. Our lives must show forth the virtues of our Lord Jesus Christ; His love, holiness, meekness, patience and gentleness must be seen in us by all around. People who do not believe the gospel will notice our dress, conversation, manners and walk of life and will be constrained to acknowledge that we are different from them.

On the top of the ephod, on the shoulders there were two pouches or pockets of gold and two onyx stones. One onyx stone on the right side shoulder and the other on the left (Exo.28:8,9). They were part of the ephod. The twelve names of the sons of Israel were engraved on these two stones, six names on one and six names on the other, according to the order of their birth (Exo. 28:10). This shows that the twelve tribes were equally precious to the Lord. This also shows that God is willing to bear all our burdens upon His shoulder.

When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we all have some fault or failure or weakness in us. Nobody is free from such. We inherit these weaknesses from our fathers and they from their fathers and so on. We are born in sin (Psa. 51:5). If the father has a bad temper, invariably the children will have it. If the father is greedy for money, the children too, are of the same type. If the father has a haughty, proud spirit, the children will have the same. Thus we inherit the weaknesses of our parents. We cannot overcome our weaknesses by reformation or tears or other things. But the Lord Jesus Christ can transform us as we humble ourselves and confess our failures and weaknesses day by day.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our High priest and He bears our weaknesses on His shoulder. We are privileged to go to Him with all our weaknesses, shortcomings and failures. So by faith we say to Him, "My Lord, I confess my shortcomings, failures and faults. Have mercy upon me. Give me victory over all these." As our High Priest He bears our burdens also (1 Pet. 5:7). Believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has a very strong shoulder to carry you through any kind of weakness, shortcoming or failure. He is our strength in our weaknesses and failures. He is our Advocate (1 John 2:1). By His advocacy all our shortcomings are transformed into divine virtues (Heb. 7:25). These virtues of the Lord Jesus Christ are symbolized by the five materials of the ephod: gold, blue, purple, scarlet and fine linen. Through these garments, God shows us how the virtues of Christ should be woven into our lives. Five is the number of grace. Divine virtues are given to us as we willingly obey Him. Here

the gold speaks of the divine nature by which we are enabled to know heavenly things, and which is manifested by Christ like virtues. These virtues become apparent when we, with strong faith endure patiently trials and temptations (1 Pet. 1:7).

Threads of gold were woven into the ephod. First of all, the gold had to be melted and taken through the refining fire seven times. The fire beneath the gold would melt it, and fire above the gold would remove the dross from it. In the same way, it is only by the fire of sufferings and persecutions that the believer's life can be refined and made to show forth God's glory. So do not be surprised if you are despised, hated and persecuted by the world. God will allow such fiery experiences in your life in order to make you like pure gold.

The molten gold had to be beaten with the hammer and made into a plate. Then it was cut into thin strips. Each strip was passed first through the large hole in an iron plate, then through the next hole which was slightly smaller. In this way it was passed through all the holes in the iron plate until it was finally passed through the smallest hole and came out as a golden thread, fit to be woven into the ephod. The bar of gold could not be woven, so it had to be taken through all these processes. It had to be melted in the fire, beaten with the hammer, cut into pieces and passed through many holes, and converted into fine golden threads.

Through all this we learn that, as believers, we can never become Christ like if we do not go through sufferings. Those who have had no experience of hardships and difficulties will remain hard-hearted and unsympathetic. They will not be meek, gentle and kind and therefore they cannot show forth the virtues of the Lord Jesus Christ. After they have gone through sufferings, they will become gentle and meek. You may have noticed that a person who has gone through much suffering can bear a rebuke without resentment and does not mind even if people hate him and curse him, while another who has lived only in pleasure, gets very much offended at the least provocation. Therefore to make us kind, gentle and sympathetic like Christ, God takes us through the refining fires of afflictions and trials.

The blue speaks of the heavenly wisdom we are given, as we bring ourselves in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ completely. The more we come under subjection, the more the Holy Spirit reveals Himself to us. Such wisdom is given to us through strong faith. That is why the gold thread and the blue material are woven together. The purple speaks of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have the privilege of binding Satan in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 18:18). The authority of the Lord Jesus Christ comes into us to defeat the devil and with the same power we can claim for others deliverance or healing (John 14:12-14). The scarlet speaks of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. So often we say, "I am not worthy, I dare not go near the holy place." But because of our faith in the precious blood we can go into the holy place very boldly and claim God's promises, God's power and God's

grace (Heb. 10:19). The fine twined linen in the ephod speaks of the pure life of the Lord Jesus Christ which flows into us (Gal. 2:20). As we obey Him, others can see the humility, kindness meekness and longsuffering of the Lord Jesus Christ in us.

The golden thread was woven together with blue, purple, scarlet and white linen in a peculiar heavenly design. No artist in the world could have thought of such a design. God revealed it to Moses and through him to the skilled workers. Just as the design was unique, the life of a believer too must be totally different from that of worldly people. This difference will become more and more evident as the believer grows spiritually and God's glory and beauty will be revealed through him increasingly. Thus he is prepared for his share in God's fullness.

6

The Breastplate

Now let us consider the breastplate which the high priest had to put on over the ephod (Ex. 28:15-21). It was the most beautiful garment worn by the high priest. The same materials as were used for the ephod were used for it: gold, blue, purple, scarlet and white linen. Twelve stones were embedded in the breastplate and these were the most precious stones in the world. They were arranged in three rows of four each. They were shining, precious and beautiful. Anyone could see the shining stones on the breastplate of the high priest as they passed by. God was saying: "O my people, even though you have been ruined by sin completely and there is no hope left for you, you can become like these stones by My grace and power." Every ruined sinner can be transformed to become like these bright, shining stones. It does not matter who you are and how many sins you have committed, by His grace and power you can be transformed into new creatures.

I know it by experience. Nobody could have been more sinful than I was. I knew that I was the worst sinner. In 1919, in blindness and folly I tore the Bible and for ten long years I went on speaking words of blasphemy against the Bible and against the Lord's people. Even though no Christian did any harm to me, and no one in my family or among the Sikh priests ever uttered a single word against Christians and the Bible, yet I found in my heart hatred for the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Bible and for God's people. I led a very shameful life for more than three years and even said that there was no God. Yet the God of grace sought me and found me, cleansed me and changed me. He loved me even though I was the worst sinner. He loves every sinner, whoever you may be, we appeal to you again and again not to live any more in your own wretched and sinful condition. Do not let the devil gain ground in your life. May the Lord Jesus Christ save you, transform you and make you like these bright, shining, beautiful stones.

The breastplate was one span in length and one span in breadth (Ex. 28 : 16). A span is a human measurement. In olden days when cloth was measured, the fingers and hand breadth were used. It is still done in the villages. By this, God was showing that salvation is for every man today. By His grace the Bible is being printed in 1500 languages and is within the reach of kings and all classes of people.

We become to God very precious like those bright, shining, precious stones. Take a piece of black coal and put it very deep in the earth. After many centuries, by heat and pressure, the coal will become a diamond. If a piece of black coal becomes a diamond by heat and pressure, how much more can His blood make us a pearl of great price. In the eyes of God we are very precious. Others may call us by other names. Our neighbors and relations may make fun of us by different names and say that we are foolish and stubborn, but the Lord Jesus Christ says that we are His peculiar treasure as we are redeemed by His precious blood (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 14:2). The

name Jacob means deceiver but Israel means prince. Before we were born again, we had Jacob's black nature, full of deception. By coming to Him and being transformed we become princes, Israel. The breastplate speaks of those who are purchased by His precious blood. They are very, very precious unto Him. He paid all that He had to purchase them.

In Matt. 13 : 44-46, we read about a person who is in search of a field. Being a man of experience, he discovers hidden treasure in a field. He sells all that he had to buy that field. His eyes could see that hidden treasure. In a similar way gold was found near Bangalore. There is a place called Kolar near Bangalore. For many years it was only a wilderness and a jungle. One day a soldier, who knew something about geology discovered that there was some gold in Kolar. He went on digging and digging. He found gold in one or two places. Then he went and bought that land. Similarly the Lord finds some hidden treasure in us. Our fellowmen cannot see it. They can only see our foolishness, our weaknesses and failures. But our Lord Jesus Christ, being the Creator, could see in us the hidden treasure. He gave all that He had to buy us. He left His throne and His glory. He became a babe and was born in a manger. He emptied Himself completely. Eventually He gave His hands to be pierced, His back to be scourged, His hair to be plucked and face to be spat upon. By His precious blood He purchased us, who are full of sin and corruption, to make us precious stones.

God's fullness is to be revealed finally through His Church (Eph. 1:23). It cannot be revealed through angels or other heavenly beings. Similarly God's manifold wisdom, God's glory, God's power, God's life, God's grace and purpose are revealed through His Church. That is why the church is so precious unto Him. He wants us to be a part of the Church and He uses every possible means to make us a part of the Church. This preciousness is symbolized by the twelve stones on the breastplate, which stones were engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. In the next four chapters we shall consider the spiritual lessons derived from these twelve names.

Judah, Issachar and Zebulun

The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraved on the twelve stones of the breastplate in their marching order. This order had also to be maintained whenever they halted and camped on their journeyings from Egypt to Canaan. This was the order : the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun had to camp on the east side ; Reuben, Simeon and Gad on the south ; Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin on the west; Dan, Asher and Naphtali on the north (Num.2). This order was never to be changed and it revealed the order of 12 spiritual experiences necessary for us if we are to be very near to the heart of God. You may remember that the names on the onyx stones were in the order of their birth (Ex.28 : 9, 10). Now for their marching and camping God has changed the natural order. He was showing that He was not governed by any human qualifications. Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16 : 7).

The Lord sent Samuel the prophet to find a man in the place of Saul. Jesse brought before him Eliab his eldest son. Samuel looked at his height and his countenance and said that he was fit to be the king. But God said, "Don't be deceived by outward appearance. He is not my choice and I cannot use him." Jesse brought all his sons one after another to Samuel, and the Lord said that they were not His choice. When finally David came before Samuel, the Lord asked Samuel to anoint David. Thus you may be deceived by outward appearances. You may also deceive others by your words, by your face and appearance. Others may admire you and say "What a fine Christian! What a kind man! How devoted he is!" But in your house you are a different person, full of temper and wickedness.

God was saying that we should come into His divine order and into His heavenly plan to become precious. As we are inwardly transformed and willing to be in His heavenly plan, we are brought near to His heart. God was saying in a simple way, "You are very precious unto Me and I want you to be near to My heart that I may love you freely and love you for eternity and pour into you My fullness."

We have to face many trials and temptations in our lives which the enemy tries to use, to keep us away from God, and very often He succeeds. So God had graciously made adequate provision for us to overcome the enemy's devices and draw nearer to the Lord. These twelve experiences signified by the twelve stones of the breastplate will help us to keep near to the heart of God. Through them we shall understand His grace, love, peace, joy, longsuffering, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith and meekness.

Judah : On the first stone in the first row was written the name of the tribe of Judah. Judah means "Praise." As the children of Israel started marching, Judah had to take the foremost place and lead the others. In our lives also praise and worship must take the first

place and we must learn how to worship and praise Him at all times. This is the foremost spiritual experience that we should have.

When we are born again our first desire is to have Bible knowledge. We think that by having more Bible knowledge, we grow more spiritual. It does not matter how many books we read or how many degrees we have, nobody grows spiritually by Bible knowledge alone. It is by learning how to thank Him, praise Him, adore Him and magnify Him always for everything, we grow spiritually. Before you begin the day, spend a few minutes in pure worship without any request or supplication. Say to Him, "Lord, I come unto Thee and into Thy presence just to be with Thee, to feel Thy presence, to hear Thy voice and to see Thy glory and beauty." When you feel His presence, worship Him because He is the King of kings ; praise Him for his mercy, kindness, love and grace ; thank Him for every trouble. Thank Him for your hard life and do not feel sorry for it because God cannot make a mistake, for whatever He permits in your life is for a purpose. So for every thing we must thank God (Phil. 4:6). Even though our Lord may keep us in any difficult situation, in sickness, or in poverty or in trouble of any kind, we can still praise Him, adore Him and magnify Him, because all things are allowed by Him for a purpose. The more we worship Him, the more we grow.

Praise and worship are the secret of victory. Once a great army came to fight against Judah. The people were filled with fear at the very sight of the enemy's strength. But God sent to them His prophet who foretold that Judah would be victorious in the battle. The people -believed his word and marched to the battle singing praises unto God (2 Chron. 20:21-22). Without any fighting on their part, their enemies were destroyed. In the same way, if we know how to worship, magnify and exalt the Lord in all circumstances of life, we shall be able to put to nought very easily all the attacks of the enemy against us. Many people try to defeat the enemy by their Bible knowledge, or by fasting, or by long prayers. They will soon find out that such means do not avail against the enemy, and they themselves will be defeated. Thus the first stone teaches us the first spiritual lesson of defeating the enemy through praising and worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth (John 4:24 ; Ps.34:1-3; 89 : 1 ; 104:33; 105 : 5).

Issachar : the second stone was found the name "Issachar" which means "God is my reward", or hire or wages (Gen. 30:18). This name teaches us not to seek any earthly reward nor look for any man's favor. Whether you do an act of kindness to anybody, or whether you do a job in the house of God, do it without expecting a reward from any man because our Lord Himself is your reward. Do all things as unto the Lord (Col.3:23).

There are some school teachers who work very, very hard one week before inspection. The rooms are kept very tidy and clean. The students are taught nicely and when they are questioned by the Inspector, the children answer correctly. The Inspector will be impressed greatly and pay compliments to the teachers and to the

school administration. But after the inspection, things are left to themselves, the school becomes untidy and the children are not taught well. They do all things for the school Inspector.

There are some people who pray for a long time in meetings and hardly three minutes at home. Some do things to please men and there is no reward for them. Do every job lovingly, faithfully and sincerely either in the office or in God's house. Learn to be faithful even in small things (Luke 16:10). Whatever we do or say let it be only unto Him and for His name's sake. This is the second experience. The first experience-worship and then comes the longing to do all things faithfully. This also will draw us nearer to God.

Zebulun : On the third stone in the first row was the name of the tribe of Zebulun and this signifies the third spiritual experience that will help us to draw nearer to the Lord. Zebulun means "Dwelling" (Gen. 30:20). My heart and my body must become His dwelling place. My home must become His dwelling place and my church must be His dwelling place. They go together. The same lesson was seen in our consideration of the blue robe. If we want to build the house of God, first of all our bodies must become the temple of God (1 Cor.3: 16,17). Here is a very solemn warning. If we want to take our share in the building of the house of God, we must keep our bodies clean and holy, fit to be God's dwelling place. We must keep our life and every part of our body clean. Then the Holy Spirit can work in us and live in us freely. Otherwise He cannot accept our labors. Every time we defile ourselves by thought, word or deed, we can claim His precious blood for cleansing. Thus we can keep our whole body clean, pure and unspotted for His use.

In the same way our house must be His dwelling place. We read about a house in John Chapter 12. It is an outstanding house, a happy home where the Lord Jesus could live. Although there were many homes in Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus never stayed overnight there. He went back in the evening either to Bethany or to the mount of Olives. By His continual presence that home became a happy home. There the Lord Jesus Christ had become the living Head, not in word but in actual practice. The presence of Lazarus at the home in Bethany, as we read in John 12, speaks of the power of resurrection. We have to know as a family, how to claim the Power of the resurrection. The food speaks of the Word of God which we enjoy through fellowship. Martha speaks of joyful and loving service without murmuring and jealousy, and Mary speaks of full devotion, thanksgiving and praise. It is with all these we have a happy home where the Lord Jesus can live. So, for a happy home we require five things. The headship and the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ, the power of the resurrection for our earthly trials ; the Word of God for our daily meditation and guidance, joyful service to others, whether they are rich or poor, love for all in humility and devotion under all circumstances.

In the same way we can build the Church of God by recognition of the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the resurrection, by the Word of God given with power and authority, by serving and helping others, and by learning to worship together. It is by all these the Church becomes God's dwelling place. As we take our share in building the dwelling place of God, we shall experience God's presence very near to us.

Every believer has a part or share in the building of the house of God. When our bodies become the temple of God, He will tell us automatically how to serve Him and others. Then the heavenly plan is revealed to us for the heavenly Church, in which every believer has a share. Many believers go to the Church, the house of God, only for sermons or for singing or for some other purpose but very few go for His service, to minister unto Him. We can find out by prayer, what service He requires of us. Pray, "Lord, do you want me to help anybody in need ; or comfort anybody in sorrow and discouragement? If so, Lord, give me Thy thought and Thy message for somebody in weakness and poverty, sickness or discouragement." Thus we can take our share in the building of this dwelling place for God.

Reuben, Simeon, Gad

Reuben : The second row of stones bore the names of the three tribes : Reuben, Simeon and Gad. Reuben means "Jehovah seeth" or "the Lord hath looked upon my affliction" (Gen. 29:32). Whatever your trouble may be, believe from your heart that the Lord has seen all your afflictions, sufferings, poverty and trials. Do not seek human sympathy. The Lord alone knows how to comfort you in your sorrow and help you in your difficulties. All you have to do is to let God see your afflictions.

Paul suffered extreme sufferings (2 Cor. 1:3-10). He had none to comfort him. He was pressed beyond measure. In fact he had no hope of remaining alive. Then God came to his rescue and delivered him. For this reason Paul said that he himself was now able to comfort others. God allowed such afflictions in his life so that he might know how to help others in distress.

Perhaps, troubles have come upon you and you have murmured against God and said, "Lord, I have done nothing wrong against You! Why have You allowed such afflictions in my life?" The Lord has not sent these afflictions to you as a punishment for your sins, but only to train you that you may be a source of comfort to many others who are in similar need.

Through all these sufferings, sorrows and difficulties, God is preparing us for a heavenly vocation. We know that through all these we are strengthened spiritually. For example, on high mountains strong and tall trees grow.

How do they grow so tall? They grow so tall because of the strong wind. When the fierce wind blows, the roots of the trees go deeper and deeper. Every storm makes the roots go deep, and thus the trees are not uprooted. That is why they become very thick and tall. In the same way every storm of life, whether persecution, or poverty, or trial, or sickness, or loneliness or family strife, is not intended to punish us but is allowed to make us strong spiritually. For the same purpose, the Lord allowed David to go through many sufferings (Ps. 18:4-6, 16-19). Every affliction, hardship, trial and distress brought David into a large place spiritually (Ps. 66: 10-12). That is God's plan for all of us.

I thank God with all my heart for my sufferings after my salvation. From the year 1927 to 1935, God permitted every kind of suffering in my life. I thank God for them. He gave me grace. I do not know of any time when I murmured. I believe that it was God's plan for me. In those days He taught me many spiritual lessons and He became real and precious to me. We will never learn these things by reading any books or going to any college.

There is no need for you to get worried when you face any great difficulty in your life. In His own time and in His own way, God

will deliver you. As the heavenly King over His people, He will protect you and help you. Earthly kings usually want to exercise authority and receive honor. But the Lord who is our heavenly King wants to save us and serve us. To show this, at one time He washed the feet of His twelve disciples. We also must learn to serve one another ; if we remember that the Lord has seen our afflictions, we shall be comforted and brought very near to the heart of God, so much so that we shall be able to serve others by comforting them.

Simeon : The next name on the breastplate was "Simeon", and it means "God hath heard" (Gen. 29:33). God has promised, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer ; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24). There is no need to wait for signs and evidences. Believe His promise and start thanking the Lord for hearing and answering your prayers. The Lord Himself said, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). The faith that the Lord hears and answers us is the secret of effectual prayer. Do not doubt God. He will do things which we think are impossible. The life of faith is a life of joy. You can trust God for everything.

In our own experience we have found this to be true many, many times. Let me give some instances. We were led to arrange Holy Convocation gatherings at Guntur, for the first time in 1954. God had spoken to us clearly and we fixed the dates. However, we had not yet been able to secure suitable buildings and premises for such gatherings. We expected about 5000 people to attend and we knew it would not be easy to find a place large enough to accommodate that number for nine days. Yet we believed that the Lord would provide, and we had not the least doubt about it.

One morning a brother in the Lord came to me and suggested that we go into the city and look for a place. We drove three miles and reached a compound which we understood belonged to Mr. Chowdury, a Hindu gentleman. We went in to see him and explained to him our desire to conduct Holy Convocation gatherings in Guntur. Immediately he put his hand into his pocket and offered us Rs.25/- for the expenses. We told him that we had not come to collect any contributions, but that we needed accommodation. He was very pleased to give us the whole compound of several acres and also offered us several of the spacious rooms in his bungalow, a three-storied building. The secret of the blessing we received is that we believed the Lord even before He supplied our need.

Financially, when we started the preparations we had with us Rupees ten only, yet we fully believed the Lord would supply all that was necessary to feed the 5000 people whom we expected. The Lord honored our faith and fully supplied.

We can trust God for everything. Once when I was traveling from Bombay to Hyderabad, I went to the station to enquire at the booking office whether any berth was available in that train. The clerk replied in the negative but I told him that I would take a

chance and I bought the ticket. The train arrived and I enquired at two compartments. There was no room, but God had provided. I walked to the front of the train and saw an unoccupied berth in a two-berth compartment. I enquired of one of the passengers in it and he answered me it was vacant. As I entered I asked him how he knew this. Smilingly he said, "I asked for one ticket and one berth and paid for them. I do not know why they gave me two berths. I believe it is for you." This is one among many similar incidents in my life. It shows how God provides for our every need.

Since I came into God's service 38 years ago, I do not think there has been any occasion when God has not supplied my need. Some years ago, we had a gospel campaign and had to pay a rent of Rs.335/- for one week for a public hall. So I was praying in my room very quietly, "Lord, for Thy glory we are having meetings. We must pay the rent in time. Will you kindly send the money required within three days?" On the third day I got a letter from a man from Calicut, who wrote, "I am sending you a money order for Rs.335/- at the request of my daughter. She has been sick for a long time and unconscious for more than two weeks. When at last she opened her eyes, she asked me to send you something. Then I said to her that we had no money in the house. So she requested me to sell her gold chain. I sold the chain and I am sending you the money." This amount was just sufficient to pay the rent for the hall.

Do not doubt the Lord! Do not question Him regarding any delay. Do not be perplexed, but believe that the Lord has heard your prayer. The Lord will see your faith and He will reward you accordingly. Some people pray, but afterwards they go about with a sorrowful face. This shows that they have not believed that the Lord has heard them. Do not be weak in faith like such people. If you have really believed that the Lord has heard you, then thank Him for answering you.

We have proved that He is our loving God who never fails. Oh, how we doubt God and suffer much by looking to man! If we believe that our Lord died for our sins, loved us and gave all that He had to save us and redeem us, surely He will not fail us. He said, "Lo, I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20), and "I will never leave thee....." (Heb. 13:5). This is the fifth spiritual experience which we need to bring us into the enjoyment of closeness to God's heart.

Gad : The last name on the second row of the precious stones on the breastplate was "Gad", which means "a troop or army cometh" (Gen 30:11). Gad was the first son of his mother Zilpah, but Leah believed that a troop was following after him. She saw something great in that which was seemingly small. We also should learn to look far beyond the small beginning and see the great things that will take place later. For example, in John 4:4 we read that the Lord Jesus Christ left Judea for Galilee. There were two roads to Galilee. One via Samaria and the other via mount Carmel. The Jews would never go via Samaria (John 4:9) but the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to go through Samaria. The Lord said to His disciples, "I have decided to go through Samaria" but they replied, "Why go

that way? Who will give us food to eat and water to drink?" The Scripture says, "He must needs go through Samaria." What was the reason? For the sake of one woman, He went there and the whole of Samaria was shaken. Through one soul, He won the whole country (John 4:39; Acts 8:5-8).

We think that the Lord works more through big crowds. That is not God's way. Through small things, He does great things. One day a man came in tears to see us. He said, "Please pray for my wife, she is very ill." He was a Hindu. We went to see her, gave a short message then prayed and left. The Lord healed that woman and through her husband many people came to the Lord in that area. On another occasion, a lady came to see me in Madras. She said to me, "Please pray for my husband, he is very, very sick in the hospital. The doctors are not able to cure him." We spent only a few minutes with them in prayer, gave a short message and came away. Afterwards, the whole family which was from Hyderabad came for fellowship. In the year 1950 they wrote to me, requesting me to go to Hyderabad and that is how the Lord began to work in that city through a small thing, not through great things. That is what we learn from Gad.

Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin

The seventh and eighth tribes of Israel were Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim means "God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction" and Manasseh means "to forget" (Gen. 41:51, 52). When Joseph gave these names to his sons, he did not realize what God had in His mind concerning them. He never thought of their need, their sufferings, their hardship and their troubles. But God was using them as co-workers to show His people, His heavenly purpose for their future.

Ephraim means "fruitful." How abundantly fruitful our loving Lord wants us to be ! Such a life of fruitfulness will not be easy. If you want to be near to the heart of God, then you must be prepared to bear much fruit spiritually. First of all, by abiding in Him you can be fruitful (John 15:4). Secondly, by longing for His life to be poured into you constantly and freely, just as the sap flows into the tree and the branches, you can be fruitful. Sometimes, one branch of a tree will be withered because that branch is affected by some disease. You have to search yourself constantly to be sure that the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is flowing into you freely and abundantly. If it is not, examine yourself to determine what is preventing the flow, and confess such a sin and know the Lord's forgiveness.

Thirdly, He says, "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it" (John 15:2). Watch the gardener purging the branches of the vine. Every branch is cut in such a way that it yields bunches of grapes. At Hamton court Palace, near London, a vine was planted about two hundred years ago. It is a very old vine but it is wonderful to look at, as it fills a large dome shaped room. When it starts yielding fruit we can see thousands of bunches. For two hundred years it has been yielding fruit because it is pruned very carefully. Our Lord is saying that we need to be pruned and purged to bear fruit. Only a careful gardener knows how to purge and prune. That is why God permits painful sorrows and trials to make us more fruitful, not to punish us.

God made Joseph fruitful through affliction. Jacob refers to this fruitfulness of Joseph while blessing him ; "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall" (Gen. 49:22). How did Joseph become fruitful? When he was a young lad his own brothers hated him because he refused their company and would not be a partner with them in their bad habits. Their father Jacob loved Joseph, so they were jealous of him. They wanted to kill him, but ultimately they sold him as a slave. Thus he was brought to Egypt and he became a slave in the house of Potiphar. Here, he was falsely accused and put into prison and forgotten entirely for two years. These afflictions lasted for about fifteen years altogether but when he was thirty, the Lord lifted him up and brought him into favor with Pharaoh.

These fifteen years of affliction were not wasted. God used them to prepare Joseph for a very high position. During days of food rationing, the Government requires many faithful and efficient officers to be in charge of the Rationing Department. Yet, because of bribery and corruption, both in the department and elsewhere, they are not able to solve the food problem satisfactorily. Much food is wasted and people suffer. But this one man, Joseph, was able to supply food not only to Egypt, but to other nations as well, throughout the seven years of famine.

In Psalm 105:16-22, we read how Joseph suffered as a slave and then as a prisoner. Finally, he was set free by the king and made "lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance : To bind his prisoners at his pleasure ; and teach his senators wisdom." Generally princes (Government Officers) and senators (Members of Parliament) become corrupt and dishonest. No doubt Pharaoh was not able to trust his officers because of their corruption and dishonesty. So he gave full authority to Joseph to punish the corrupt princes and senators. These men must have been rich and powerful men. How was Joseph to bring them under discipline? It was a very difficult task, but Joseph had been disciplined by his afflictions, and he was able to teach wisdom to these proud and stubborn men. To qualify Joseph for such a difficult task God had to take him through fifteen years of suffering.

From his childhood Joseph had learnt to depend entirely upon the Lord. He was forsaken by his relations and forgotten by his friends. At times, he had no one to help him or show sympathy to him. He received no encouraging or comforting letter from any one. I believe during those days the Lord became very precious to Joseph and he must have spent much time in prayer and communion with God. In this way the Lord trained Joseph for the high position he was to hold one day.

When God blessed Joseph with a son he called him "Ephraim" because he now understood clearly that God had not forgotten him or forsaken him, but had always loved him and knew what He was doing. In the same way, God wants us also to be very near to His heart through many afflictions. He is preparing us to hold a very high position, not only in this life but in the next one also. However painful these afflictions may be, we must always thank God for them. If you do not pass through all these afflictions, you will live only an ordinary life. But if you want to hold a high position with the Lord in His Kingdom, you must be prepared to go through the refining fire of every trial the Lord thinks fit for you.

Every believer without exception must go through afflictions. All the saints of God of whom we read in the Scriptures had to go through many severe afflictions. Having gone through many trials, David says, "He brought me forth also into a large place" (Psa. 18:19). The apostle Paul gives a long list of the forty or more difficult experiences he had to go through (II Cor. 11:23-30). So we have to thank God for the honor He has given to us also to be prepared and trained for the great responsibilities He wants to give us later on.

Manasseh : After Ephraim came Manasseh (Num. 2:20). Manasseh means "to forget", "For God", said Joseph, "hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house" (Gen. 41:51). As Joseph forgot the past so must we : rather we must look to the future for something better (Phil. 3:13). We enjoy talking about our past sufferings to get human sympathy. We say : "See how much I have suffered through all these past years. Nobody could have such an unhappy home as I have. If you knew the condition of my home, my parents or my friends, you would realize how much I am suffering." However to grow spiritually we must forget completely every past suffering of any kind.

Sometimes we look at the past and remember with joy what the Lord did for us so many years ago. We keep on telling others what happened ten, twelve or fifteen years ago. Some times with tears we talk of those wonderful days, and long to get back to the good old days, at least for a while. Married people look back to the first few months or years of married life and long to go back to those days not realizing how much greater blessings the Lord has for them in the future. Perhaps God has been extremely good to you, and you have seen Him working mightily in the past. Do not forget that He has something far greater in store for you in future. So look forward with eager expectancy for these greater things. Paul says, "I press forward". It is only when you press forward for the better things the Lord has to give you, that your faith is kept alive. Such expectation and faith will keep you near to the heart of God. He will not be satisfied until He has filled us with His fullness and brought us into perfection. He wants to give us His whole Kingdom which is our full spiritual inheritance. That is why He asks us to press forward. Thinking of the good old days and maintaining the same attitude that we had seven or eight years ago will hinder our spiritual progress and fruitfulness.

We all need the experience of "Manasseh." Whatever happens we must remember that the Lord has better things for us in the future. He wants us to enjoy fully all that He has planned for us from eternity, because He says "all things are yours" (1Cor. 3:21). However, merely repeating these words is not sufficient; we have to claim His promise. God says, "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee" ; (Heb. 6:14). That is God's promise and according to it, He will go on multiplying His blessings to us in abundance for eternity. For this reason we must forget the past, however good it may have been and expect greater things to happen. We must go on claiming the full share of our heavenly inheritance in His Kingdom and in His Throne.

The wonderful thing is that although we have failed Him and grieved Him, He does not make us forget our blessings, but He has made provision by His blood to cleanse us, and to give us all that He has prepared for us in the future.

Benjamin : Ephraim and Manasseh were followed by Benjamin (Num. 2:22). Benjamin means "Son of my right hand" (Gen. 35:18). When Rachel was in great pain and was dying, she called

her new born son, "Benoni" — "Son of my sorrow." But Jacob changed his name from Benoni to Benjamin, "Son of my right hand", meaning that Benjamin was going to receive power and strength rather than sorrow. It is the right hand that is most useful for every job. Only a few use their left hand. So when Jacob said, "Son of my right hand" or "Son of my strength", he meant that this son would finally have more strength and more joy because of the sorrow in which he was born. Benjamin's mother died in child birth and so he did not know a mother's love. But it was through Benjamin that his brothers were brought into favor with Joseph later on. Although Joseph was hated by his brothers, his heart melted when he saw Benjamin and he not only forgave them but even rewarded them.

Thus we find that Benjamin speaks of those sorrows which bring us to God's right hand. Sorrow is a precious and costly experience which brings us close to God and makes us enjoy His strength. The Lord may take us through experiences of extreme sorrow. He may take away our parents at an early age. He may take away our children, our husband or wife, or some one whom we love. We may not understand why this should happen to us. But through the sorrow caused to us, we will be brought into divine favor. We have seen many cases of servants of God being called to glory at an early age. In Acts, we read how Stephen was stoned and killed in the prime of life. He had been a mighty man of God and a source of great joy to all his fellow believers. Saul of Tarsus was a witness of the stoning of Stephen ; in fact he was a helper. From that time he could never forget the vision of Stephen saying with a shining face, "Father, forgive them." Later Paul himself had to suffer, much for Christ's sake (II Cor. 11:24-28). We can say that it was through the triumphant death of Stephen that Paul was transformed into such a strong witness for the Lord. When his own time came to be stoned, Paul endured it with rejoicing, and also gladly suffered stripes, poverty and shipwreck. In this way the Lord has brought salvation and blessing to many people through the suffering and death of His saints. For instance, Bro. G. Samuel of Delhi was called to glory at a comparatively early age. When we started the service at his funeral, it was raining. It continued to rain as the body was being taken to the cemetery and in spite of the downpour, many high officials both Hindus and Muslims came. We had prayed, "Lord, will You please stop the rain?" As we came near the cemetery the rain stopped and the weather remained clear till we finished the service. I have never seen any other funeral where the Lord worked so mightily. Only eternity will show what God did that day in the lives of those who attended that funeral.

Through very painful experiences we learn how to bear other people's burden, and this, in turn, qualifies us to come to the right hand of God and into divine favor. Your sorrowful experiences may not all be caused by the death of loved ones. They may be caused through misunderstandings with friends and relations from whom you expected love and comfort, and who on the contrary, have disappointed you and even betrayed you. All these experiences are allowed by God to bring us to His right hand : from the experience of Benoni, "Son of my sorrow" , to the experience of Benjamin, "Son of my right hand."

Dan, Asher, Naphtali

Dan : We now come to the fourth and last row of precious stones on the breastplate of the high priest. On the first stone of this row was the name of Dan (Num 2:25). Dan means "God is my Judge" (Gen. 30:6). We, as believers are not supposed to take revenge against those who hate us, curse us and harm us. We should not retaliate when we are falsely accused (Rom. 12:19). It does not matter what people say about us, we must leave it with God, for He is our judge. Sometimes He may delay His judgment. For example, Elijah thought God would kill Jezebel right away because she was trying to kill him, but this was not God's way. He gave both Jezebel and Ahab further opportunity to repent, until at last His time came to punish that wicked queen.

Many years ago a pastor in Karachi wrote many articles against me accusing me falsely. He had them printed and distributed abroad as well as here. I was told about this, but I took no notice of it. In fact, whenever I met that person I shook hands with him and always showed such a friendly attitude towards him that he never guessed that I was aware of his activities against me. A friend of mine requested me to give him the power of attorney, so that he could sue this pastor for what he was doing and thus bring the truth to light. I replied, "According to the Scriptures, we have no right to go to the court, nor harm those who harm us. On the other hand, we have to pray for this man and bless him. God is our Judge, He knows how to defend me and how to judge him." After sometime this pastor became very ill and had blisters on his whole body, even on his lips. I went to see him and I prayed for him. He held me by my hands and begged for forgiveness. Thus God dealt with him in His own time. When people say nasty things about you, do not retaliate nor do any harm to them. God will defend you and also judge them in His own time. He is a loving God and will not let you down, on your part, you should draw nearer to God and refrain from judging others.

Asher : The eleventh name on the stones of the breastplate is Asher (Num. 2:27). The meaning of Asher is "Happy am I" and Leah added "for the daughters will call me blessed" (Gen. 30:13). God Himself is our happiness : not our talents, nor our gifts, nor our ministry. In the beginning of our spiritual life we long to possess Bible knowledge or to perform many miracles ; we covet extraordinary talents like the gift of healing. Later on we realize that none of these by themselves bring us true happiness. The Lord Himself is our happiness. It is our privilege to be in His presence and talk to Him. David says, "in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for ever more" (Ps.16:11). You may have noticed that the moments you have spent upon your knees in worship, devotion and communion with Him, and in the reading of His Word, are the happiest moments of your life. This joy cannot be compared with any other joy in the world.

There is a true story about a king who plundered the temples of India. When he crossed the Indus river, he said to his soldiers, "I want to reward you all for your faithfulness. You suffered with me all these many years." He opened the bags of treasure that contained diamonds, rubies and many precious stones. Then he asked the soldiers to make their choice and to take whatever they wanted. All came up to take their share except one soldier who kept standing near the king. Then the king asked him also to go and take his treasure, but this, soldier said, "I choose you. I do not want these things. You give me the privilege to stay with you." We are told that he eventually received more than all the others, for all that belonged to the king became his, when the king died. Many people think of blessings in times of what they either want or have. They say, "Lord, give me this and give me that." They do not want the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the giver of all good gifts, and by faith in Him we receive every thing. As we love Him and honor Him more, we will receive every thing automatically. He is our Asher. He is our true happiness.

Naphtali : The name on the last stone of the breastplate is Naphtali which means "wrestling with God" (Num. 2:29 and Gen. 30:8). Jacob wrestled with God and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen. 32:26). Abraham interceded with God for Sodom and Gomorrah with reverential persistence. We also have the privilege of going to God to travail and intercede for God's people and God's servants scattered in different parts of the world. We cannot go personally to every place, but we can pray (Eph. 6:18). Such intercession is wrestling with God. When we come to know the needs of different people, their sufferings and their problems, we should begin to wrestle with God for them. As our prayer circle goes on widening we will find that we are drawn closer to the heart of God.

Many years ago I was in Victoria, Canada. I received a message from an old lady who fractured her spinal cord and was encased in plaster of Paris. She was in much pain for most of the time. When I went to see her in the small room where she lived, she told me, "I am thankful to the Lord for keeping me in bed like this. This gives me plenty of time to pray for many of the Lord's servants." Several years before, she wanted to become a foreign missionary but for some reason had been unable to do so. "But now", she continued, "When I am in pain and unable to sleep, the Lord reminds me to pray for one servant of God and another in different parts of the world." This was the ministry given to her by God. Victoria is a sea port and ships from many parts of the world halt there. Thus missionaries from many countries pass through this town. This sister had a list of all servants of God who were passing through and she would invite them to come and see her. Someone informed her about me and so she gave an invitation to me also. When I went to see her, her face was shining with happiness. She told me how she had been praying for me for many years. Only in eternity shall we know the great things which God has done in answer to her prayers and in and through the lives of all the saints, and servants of God for whom she had been interceding. That is Naphtali. We all can have this privilege of wrestling in prayer.

I have found traveling by train very helpful for prayer. I have spent whole nights in praying for people all over the world ; for their salvation, safety and anointing. While traveling in crowded trains, without any reservation even, we can spend time profitably in prayer. Thus we shall forget our discomfort, and shall rejoice in praying for others. That is how we are drawn near to the heart of God.

By faith say, "Lord, give me the experience of Judah Issachar, Zebulun, Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher and Naphtali and keep me near Thy heart. Make me like these precious stones. Prepare me for my share in Thy fullness." Now believe that He will do it.

11

Urim and Thummim

Behind the breastplate containing the twelve precious stones were the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30). With the help of these two stones the high priest could find the will of God for any person in relation to any matter at any time (Num. 27:21). It has always been a mystery how these stones functioned. Apart from the high priest they could not be seen by anyone. They were the most important part of the garments of the high priest. During Old Testament times, they were the only means of finding God's will. That is why we find David constantly asking the high priest, Abiathar, to bring the Ephod to find out God's will through the Urim and Thummim (I Sam. 23:2,4,9,11).

When David went to the high priest at Nob, he received shewbread and the sword from him. King Saul came to know of this and killed 85 priests but Abiathar escaped. He took with him the Ephod and the Urim and Thummim and went to David, who was hiding in the cave of Adullam at that time (I Sam. 22:1, 20, 22). All who were in trouble and difficulties came to David, to stay with him in that cave and it was there David found God by experience. While he was there David wrote Psalms 34, 57, 107 and 108. There he learnt the secret of finding God's plan. Even in small things David began to know the mind of God through the high priest who had the Ephod with the two stones (I Sam. 23 : 1-5, 13). That privilege was available to all but only a few used to go to the high priest to find God's will. Often that is our condition. It is only when we make many mistakes and fail many times that we say, "O Lord, help me today to find Thy will." We ought to learn this lesson at the beginning.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our living High Priest. Now all of us can find God's will through Him. We have just to kneel down and pray with faith asking God to show us His will. If we remain very close to God's heart, we can easily find God's will even in small things. For instance, when we go for shopping we need not waste our time, and in the end be cheated by the shop-keepers as usually happens. If we would only pray, "Lord, I want to buy such and such : please take me to the right shop and do not allow me to waste my time, money and energy", He will undertake everything for us. There will be no need for us to waste time in bargaining and then to feel sorry for the loss we have incurred.

Just as the high priest had two stones, Urim and Thummim, to find God's will, there are two stones possessed by the Lord Jesus Christ also (Psa. 43 : 3-5). The Lord Jesus Christ is our life, our light and our truth (John 8:12 ; 14:6). When He comes into us as our Savior He becomes THE TRUTH and the living WORD. That is why, at our new birth we have unusual hunger for God's Word. Though we read it daily, we never get tired of it. Before our conversion we loved to read magazines, novels and worldly books. Now we want the Word of God in the morning, at midday and in the evening.

Unless we have the living Savior in us we cannot enjoy God's Word. Holiness becomes real to us after we experience the Lord Jesus Christ. God's plan and will are revealed to us day by day, by reading the Word of God slowly, systematically and prayerfully. The Lord Jesus Christ is our life. We say by faith, "Lord Jesus, open my eyes, give me Thy divine life and let me see things more clearly." With the help of His divine life and the Word of God we are able to find God's will even for small things. That is the greatest privilege of a believer ; knowing and doing God's will.

The whole life of the Lord Jesus Christ was lived in doing God's will (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). If we want to enjoy His love and affection and come near His heart, then we must learn to know and do His will. It is only by doing God's will we can enjoy His presence. Just as the high priest carried these stones, Urim and Thummim, and could find God's will for individuals, for families and for the whole nation, now we believe that Lord Jesus Christ is our Urim and Thummim. The Lord Jesus Christ who has come into our heart is our heavenly High Priest, our life and our truth. So by receiving God's Word into our hearts and by receiving divine life by faith, He becomes all in all to us.

We need to say when we read the Word of God, as it is written in Psalm 119:18, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." That is how we receive divine light. Let us say, "O Lord, open my eyes and pour into me the divine life. Let me see from Thy Word the hidden mysteries, and show me Thy path for today and tomorrow." It is only by reading the Word of God that the divine light comes into our hearts and we can hear the voice of God clearly.

Elijah the man of God was God's prophet. When he prayed, fire came down (I Kings 18:38). When he prayed for three and half years the rain was withheld. Again he prayed and the rain came down. The very same prophet was found under the juniper tree and he was saying it is enough, "O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (I Kings 19:4). He was discouraged. What was the reason? He did not know the mind of God. God took him to a high mountain and showed him many things. God was not in the wind nor in the earthquake. He was not in the fire nor in the storm. Lastly there came a still small voice. Then he understood what God would do and how He would judge Jezebel and others. In this way he was delivered from fears and doubts and began to see God's will clearly.

It is by hearing the voice of God, we become God's co-workers and God's partners in building God's house. We have to make it a daily practice to call upon God and hear His voice. First of all, we have to make sure that we are born again.

Secondly, we have to be certain of His presence, remembering that any kind of sin will rob us of this privilege. As Elijah became discouraged in his old age, we may also become like him. We must keep our hearts clean and we must be free from greed, enmity and defilement. By daily practice we can hear God's voice and for every problem of any kind we can go to Him.

We must wait patiently in the presence of the Lord to hear His voice. King David knew how to hear the voice of God through Urim and Thummim. But later on, he became very impatient. Without consulting and hearing God's voice, he went and joined the Philistines against Saul (I Sam. 29), but they became suspicious and sent him back. When he and his followers came to Ziklag, they found that their houses were burnt and their women were taken captive. All their substance had been taken away. There was no hope of recovery, for they were very few in number and the Amalekites were very many. David repented and sought the Lord, who spoke to him and promised recovery. David obeyed and recovered all because he enquired from the Lord with the help of Urim and Thummim.

God will not force us to do His will. We have to go to Him concerning marriage, or business or job or any other activity to know His will. But sad to say, very few believers exercise their privilege of consulting God because they will not wait patiently. The result is unhappiness and failure. They become spiritually deaf and blind. It is by coming back to God we recover everything.

Therefore let us pray, "Lord, take me through these twelve experiences represented by the twelve precious stones. Be Thou my Urim and Thummim. Help me to hear Thy voice and know Thy will even in small matters and keep me near Thy heart." We will then find our lives becoming victorious. We will become partakers of his glory and beauty which will be revealed through us.

12 The Mitre

The next item we notice in the garments of the high priest is the mitre (Ex.28: 36-38). This mitre was of beautiful white material and was a very important part of the attire. In Eph. 6: 14-17, we have a list of the parts of the armour and weapons of spiritual warfare which are given to believers, and one of these is the helmet of Salvation. This mitre on the high priest speaks to us of the helmet of Salvation (Eph. 6:17). When we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are crowned by him with loving-kindness and tender mercies (Psal. 103:4).

With great love God created man, and it was in His heart to give him many precious blessings which he had been preparing for him for eternity, before the sun and moon were created (I Cor. 2:9). In western countries young girls gather all kinds of valuable articles intended for their future home and the baby they will have one day. They begin to do this before their engagement and even before they know who their future husband is going to be. They will not allow anyone to see what they are collecting. With much faith and hope, and with much love, the young girl goes on planning and preparing for the child yet to be born. She dreams, "One day I will get married. A child will be born to me and for that child I must prepare everything that is necessary." In the same way, long before the earth was created, God thought of you and me, and planned and prepared many good things for us.

Because of Adam's sin we have lost the privilege of enjoying the benefits of God's love. But when we repent of our sins and put our faith in Christ, those blessings are given back to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. So the mitre reminds us that the crown of God's love and kindness which was lost because of Adam's sin will now be made available to us freely, if we will only repent and put our faith in Christ.

The Lord wants us to be filled with His fullness. Christ's love is like an ocean (Eph. 3:18-19). He not only wants to forgive us our sins but He wants to fill us with His fullness. Through the mitre of the high priest the Lord conveys this message to us : "Oh My children, I want to crown you with My loving-kindness. I want to fill you with My fullness." If we would only allow Him to be our Lord, and acknowledge Him to be our Head, He would accomplish all His loving purposes in our trials and crown us with His loving-kindness and tender mercies.

There is a second message which is brought to us by the mitre. It is a message of grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain ; but I labored more abundantly than they all : yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (I Cor. 15:10). We may wonder why human beings like us so frail, so weak and so foolish, should be filled with His fullness. Why does God want to fill us with His fullness? The answer is not because of what we are, nor because of

our cleverness or our gifts or our talents. But because of His grace. Perhaps you may think, a man like Paul can attain to that standard of fullness, but I cannot, because I am so weak. But Paul himself declares that he is what he is only by the grace of God. It has to be the same with you and with me. Do not think that you can receive God's fullness because of your Bible knowledge, or intelligence or other qualifications. It must be only by God's grace. Therefore we should never take pride in our family or in our education or in any thing else. The Lord shows us that if we want to be a partaker of His glory and beauty, we must then learn how to claim His grace for every thing. We are saved by His grace alone and after that, day by day, we have to claim the same grace for every need.

Sometimes, through very painful experiences the Lord teaches us that His grace is sufficient in every situation (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul, the apostle, had gone through many hardships without a murmur or complaint (2 Cor. 11:23). We read that God permitted him to suffer from a painful "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7-9a). We do not know what this thorn was. Evidently it was something exceedingly painful, because Paul says, "I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me." He never prayed like this at any other time. When he was in prison he did not say, "Lord, release me from prison." He bore every trial very patiently. But in this case, he besought the Lord thrice to remove the thorn. This proves that the thorn must have been an extraordinarily painful one. At such a time, God's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." God allowed the thorn to remain with Paul for a definite purpose. First of all, it was meant to keep him humble, lest Paul should be exalted above measure through the divine revelations given to him. Secondly, it was meant to teach him a little more of God's grace. This cannot be understood easily. Even though Paul had received many revelations and wonderful experiences, he still had to suffer this very painful thorn in the flesh in order to learn more of the grace of God. Thus we see that God permits all kinds of painful experiences in the lives of His children in order to teach them more of His grace.

We are so weak that we need God's grace every moment and in every situation. We fail Him and grieve Him many times a day but God is very gracious. In His grace He forgives us and lifts us up every time. If we are not given a cup of tea in time we lose our temper and get angry. We easily take pride in what we are, what we give, and what we can do. We can be delivered from all these weaknesses, and transformed fully and finally into God's image and into His glory and beauty by the grace of God alone. Whatever blessing we receive is entirely by His grace. So on no account should we take pride in ourselves. We are only worms before God ; yet He has lifted us up from our low estate and given us a place of honor. As we realize this, we cannot help thanking God constantly for the abundant grace He is showering on us day by day.

Over the mitre of the high priest was placed a golden plate (Ex.28:36) on which were written these words, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." This should be our daily motto, to keep us holy to the Lord. Our God is a holy God : He is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). How can weak creatures like us stand before Him? (Mal. 3:2, 3). He wants us to be partakers of His holiness and to become like pure shining gold. For this purpose, He has to chastise us constantly (Heb. 12:10, 11). These chastisements are to us like many refining fires. When the work of refining has been completed, we shall show forth His holiness, not only upon this earth, but in heaven also, and that for ever and ever.

Thus finally we shall be made partakers of God's glory and God's beauty and be filled with God's fullness.