

## DANGER, FOES AND WARNINGS

(By Bro. Ted Smith of the Bellingham ecclesia.)

Opening Hymn: #145 - Keep Me Lord.

We study and hear so much about the development of Christian love today. I am beginning to wonder if we are giving sufficient attention to the DANGERS, FOES AND WARNINGS connected with the Christian life. I even wonder if we are aware that there are serious DANGERS AND FOES in the Christian way, and that we are constantly WARNED OF THESE DANGERS AND FOES. There are DIVINE PROTECTIONS against our DANGERS AND FOES, but if we are not sufficiently alert to our DANGERS AND FOES, then we will not make use of the PROTECTIONS.

Love is the pinnacle of Christian character but not the foundation. Love is upon a foundation and this foundation must be clearly understood and carefully constructed and maintained. This can be illustrated by a great mountain with its towering and small snowy peak. The peak is at the top, and is supported by the mountain. Or we could illustrate this with the pyramid figure—the pyramid has a ponderous foundation and has a small tip at its summit. So with Christian character—love is at the top and rests upon a foundation of qualities that are extremely important to develop and maintain.

Incidentally, let us not make the mistake of thinking that we can stand everything that comes our way by self-assurance—we think of our beloved Brother Peter as an illustration of the extreme danger of self-assurance. No, we must rely on DIVINE PROTECTIONS and these are found in God's Word and in the possession of the Holy Spirit.

Have we ever considered that our Lord was in danger during the 3½ years of the first advent? He was in danger from two sources—(1) he had a mighty opposing foe in the person of Satan—(2) he was in danger from his own human will—that the New Creature should keep it completely subdued. Both of these dangers confronted him when he came from the wilderness after his long fast of 40 days. He was severely tempted by Satan and his will as a new creature was severely tested. He came through with flying colors, and we have a prime illustration of how we are to be victorious.

When Satan presented his 3 temptations, did Jesus say to Satan, I am not going to fall for your temptations, because I have a strong will which is stronger than your will? Is that what he did? No, indeed he did not! What did he do? He used the power, the strength, the protection that was provided by the Father. In all three temptations, he countered with the words, "IT IS WRITTEN!" And then he quoted a scripture that was directly contrary to what Satan suggested. This was the power he used—SCRIPTURE, and this

furnishes us with the correct method to use in overcoming foes and dangers as they confront us.

And Jesus' New Creature will was tested—would he drop down from his starting position, as he stated it so clearly—“Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God?” (Heb. 10:7) He knew from the prophecies and types that he was on earth to sacrifice, and not to fall down and worship Satan so he could have “the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them” as proposed by Satan's temptation found recorded in Matt. 4:8, 9. “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (V. 10)

Again Jesus countered the danger to his New Creature will when he resisted the suggestion of Peter. Our Lord was telling his disciples that “he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” After hearing all this, “Then Peter took him [aside] and began to rebuke him saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” But our Lord did not parley with Peter's suggestion given in love, “But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” (Matt. 16:23) Our Lord knew the danger to his will as a New Creature, and so he promptly rebuked the suggestion of Peter, the disciple he loved very deeply—his love for God's will was greater than his love for Peter's will.

We stated at the beginning that love is the pinnacle of Christian development, and not the foundation. We take our cue from the words of Peter found in 2 Pet. 1:5-11: “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness charity [or *agape* love]. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Taking careful note of Peter's exhortation, he tells us that we are to “give all diligence.” And according to Strong's concordance this means that we are to exercise “earnest care.” We are to exercise “earnest care” in adding certain qualities to our faith, and using the same order as Peter, we are instructed to add virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness (i.e. reverence for God), brotherly kindness and finally love. Peter does not single out love here with special emphasis, but tells us to exercise care in the adding of all these qualities to our faith, and top it all off with love.

And he tells us that “if these things be in us” (all of them, not just love) then we shall “neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We will understand Christ, be able to fellowship with him in the balance of the Holy Spirit. And he warns us that if we “lack these things we will be blind, and cannot see afar off, and forget that we have been purged from our old sins.” This would be a pretty sad condition of spiritual affairs—not being able to see anything very deeply. Then Peter says to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, and that our “calling and election will be sure” if we do these things; and “we shall never fall” and in this way we shall have an abundant entrance into “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” So the divine protection that is provided for us is in the obedience we give to “earnest care” in adding of these various qualities to our faith: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and finally love.

We turn now to Paul’s sermon to the elders of Ephesus. He had asked these elders to come and see him at Miletus where Paul had to wait for a time until the ship was ready to sail again. The faithful Apostle was alerting these elders, these under-shepherds that there was great danger in store for the Lord’s people of that time. Let us read his words verbatim so we can get the full force of what he said: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

Let us stop to analyze what Paul is saying to these elders. In the 28th verse he is exhorting the elders to take heed unto themselves and to all the flock. “Take heed unto themselves” would surely mean that the elders should watch their own heart sentiments that there be no selfish motives marking their conduct. They must not become heady in their position as overseers, but be sincerely concerned in feeding the flock, for that is why they are constituted overseers. And they must use the food, the Truth that is provided by God to feed the flock, and be careful not to substitute their own ideas and feed adulterated food to the flock. It is a striking thought too that is given in this verse that this flock has been purchased with the precious blood of Jesus, and the overseers are merely caring for sheep that do not belong to them, but belong to the Redeemer who died on the cross.

Then Paul goes on in the 29th verse saying that “after his departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you.” Among whom?—among the elders and the flock, “not sparing the flock.” What do wolves do with sheep? They devour them; and this has been the history all down through the Gospel age—wolves entered into the Lord’s sheepfold and lorded it over the sheep, living off them for their own gain.

Coming down to the end of the age, we have the same thing in the form of “higher critics” and evolutionists, who do not feed the sheep but take salaries from the sheep, living off them and taking away from them the precious truths of the Gospel.

Then Paul touches upon another danger. Not wolves this time, but “Men of your own selves” who would depart from the Truth “speaking perverse things” for what purpose? —“to draw away disciples after themselves.” “Speaking perverse things”—what is meant by this? The original meaning of this word is “distort”, “misinterpret.” So then, when we spot distorted ideas concerning the Truth, or Bible truth misinterpreted so we no longer have a harmonious understanding, then we want to be alert and not allow ourselves to become disciples of those who are teaching such things. And Paul was deeply concerned about this—he did not want to see the flock be misled. He wanted the elders to be good overseers, and so he said, “Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

It is interesting and instructive to note what Paul did not say. He did not say, Now brethren, you do not need to worry, just develop love and everything will be all right. He did not say that at all! Rather, he used strong words of warning: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God.” And he said grievous wolves would enter in among the elders and flock and the flock would be sadly treated. It is helpful to understand the meaning of the Greek word which is translated “grievous”—it means “burdensome.” The same Greek word is used in connection with 1 John 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous”—not “burdensome.” Wolves are truly burdensome. They do not feed the flock, but fleece the flock for their own selfish gain.

And Paul said that “men of your own selves would arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves.” We need to pay close attention to the warning words of Paul and not be impractical Christians, thinking that much talking about love is going to protect us from our own selfishness or “grievous wolves” or unsound teachers who want a following of disciples.

That reminds me: there is a lot of talk today about “love of the brethren is the final test”—something that was actually said or written by our Pastor. It is interesting to see what the Pastor really did say on the subject. This is found on Reprint page 2453, par. 9 to 12. When we analyze what the Pastor actually said, we find not one word about “love of the brethren” in connection with teachers. He is not talking about brethren who are bringing in ideas that are somewhat different than the truth we hold, and that we should specially love these and be patient with them. Rather he is talking about our willingness to lay down our lives for the brethren. He said we must not restrict our love along

“narrow channels of sectarianism.” He said if any of our brethren are in “Babylon” or “out of her,” “asleep, fettered and blinded by false doctrines and superstitions” it is our privileged duty to do everything we can for them; yea, even to the laying down of our lives for them. He said further that we must “sympathize with the trials of our brethren who are awake and assist them to put on the sandals and to adjust every piece of armor.” And “Should any be specially weak and liable to stumble, he will not despise him, nor revile him, even as the elder brother, the Captain, would not do so. On the contrary, he will be the more watchful and helpful toward the weaker, even though he most enjoy himself in the company of the stronger.” We need to carefully reason on this subject and not be living in a dream world, but be vitally awake and be aware of dangers. If we specialize on this “love of the brethren” theme we will be confused and blind to great dangers in the Christian brotherhood.

We need to pay strict attention to everything the Apostles say about dangers in the Christian way. Our Pastor was wide awake and exhorted us clearly and faithfully. All through his writings we find him giving careful and constant attention to the dangers, foes and warnings of the scriptures, and pointing out the provisions God has made for our protection and safety. He wasn't constantly drumming on the “brotherly love” theme to the ignoring of the very great perils confronting us in the Narrow Way.

In Rom. 16:17 and 18 we find these words of Paul: “Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” Now here is something that is very definite and clear for our guidance. In a general way I think we all understand what divisions mean—a separation of brethren, and separation can mean that we don't feel united to one another, even though we might be physically meeting with one another. And separation in the full sense would mean that we do not meet with one another. As to offences, the meaning seems to be “occasions of stumbling”—some by good words and fair speeches cause stumbling amongst the Lord's people.

I was quite interested to see how our Pastor treated the text we are now considering; and so I used the Reprint scripture index and read his comments which he made over the years. Most of the comments had to do with unchristian conduct which would be contrary to our doctrine or teaching as to what kind of people we should be. One comment in particular had to do with a teaching which was strictly belief, viz. the ransom. This is found on Reprint page 1453, col. 2, par. 1 which reads in part as follows: “Surely, among all the doctrines taught us by Christ and the apostles and prophets, no other is of so vital importance as the doctrine of the ransom. Hence those who reject the Scriptural statement that our Lord Jesus gave himself a corresponding price, a substitute,

a ransom for all, are to be rejected from recognition as brethren, and even to be avoided.” As far as teachers are concerned, would not this include the J.W.s?

Are there divisions that are contrary to sound doctrine as to how we should live and act? Yes, and let us consider a few of these—we note one of these on Reprint page 1571, par. 3. Here it is brought to our attention that Paul “reproved the Corinthian church because of a tendency toward sectarianism among them (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3-6). They were dividing into Paulites, Apolloites and Peterites, while a few rightly clung to the name Christian.” How would this apply in our day? Should we divide the Christian brotherhood along the lines of loyalty to an organization? CERTAINLY NOT! And if any have this tendency, such are to be marked and avoided. We should not even profess to be “Russellites” and we know our Pastor would endorse this wholeheartedly. He wanted us to be Christians in name and in spirit.

Let us take another example: in 2 Thess. 3:11 we read: “For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.” Our doctrine concerning Christian conduct exhorts us to work and not expect the Christian brotherhood to support us, and we are taught not to meddle in the affairs of others. And Paul goes on in the 14th and 15th verses: “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” There are some interesting comments along this line on Reprint page 1575, par. 5. Back in Dec., 1908 there is mention made of brethren who took a bitter stand against the taking of the Vow, and such were very unkind in their attitude toward those who did take the Vow. We are taught in our doctrine concerning conduct that we are not to speak harshly toward one another. Brethren who act this way, are to be marked and avoided for they cause trouble in the church. This would come under the heading of causing offences in the sense of stumbling the brethren with false reasoning concerning the taking of the Vow. The Vow is nothing more nor less than a restating of our vow of consecration in certain particulars. (4299-8; 4327-2; 4540:2-6)

On Reprint page 4461:2-2 we found an interesting comment. The Pastor was speaking of inviting some to conventions. Here is what he said: “All believers in the Atonement by the Precious Blood will be welcomed if they have the Spirit of Christ. But ‘grievous wolves,’ ‘back-biters,’ ‘slanderers’ and ‘contentious’ persons are not invited. Should such attend these or any meetings of truth people, they should be treated so Scripturally as to make them ill at ease and very unhappy at these Love Feasts. Mark the Apostolic delineations and admonitions and be of good courage in obeying the same. Read Jude 10-12; Rom. 16:17 and Phil 3:17.” This was the time when some former brethren were causing so much trouble in their opposition to our Pastor’s teachings on the Covenants. Their unchristian conduct was contrary to our doctrines concerning the proper conduct

we are to have. Hence such should not be made welcome to our conventions and Love Feasts.

We are clearly taught that we are not to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing (1 Pet. 3:9) We are not to violate this important doctrine concerning Christian conduct. There are some who seem to resist the idea that our pastor was “That Servant.” But this does not give us the right to render evil for evil nor railing for railing against those who use bitter words against our Pastor or those who refuse to accept him as “That Servant.” (4483:2-3, 4)

Back in 1909 there was bitter opposition to the better understanding of the Covenants, and it was a severe test upon the brethren to hold their tongues and control their thinking toward those brethren who not only were bitterly opposed to the better reasoning regarding the covenants, but who showed their opposition by the use of bitter and scandalous words. (4531:2-1 to 4)

In 2 Pet. 3:17, 18 we find these words: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and forever. Amen.” There is an interesting paragraph on Reprint page 3215, par. 3 which reads as follows: “Let us observe the manner in which the Apostle would have us guard against being led away by the error of the wicked. Is it by a careful investigation of all the claims which every new false prophet that arises may intrude upon our attention thus giving heed to every seducing spirit (1 Tim. 4:1)? No, that would be quite contrary to the teaching of ‘our beloved brother Paul,’ to whom Peter so affectionately refers, and whom he so fully endorses; for Paul had given no uncertain counsel on this subject, saying, ‘Shun profane and vain babblings for they will increase unto more ungodliness and their word will eat as doth a canker;’ and ‘I entreat you brethren, to mark those who are making factions and laying snares contrary to the teachings which you have learned, and turn away from them; for they that are such are not in subjection to our anointed Lord, but to their own appetite [for honor and praise among men, as great teachers—1 Tim. 1:1, 7]; and by kind and complimentary words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting... I wish you to be wise with respect to that which is good, and harmless with respect to that which is evil.’—2 Tim. 2:16, 17; Rom. 16:17-19.”

I was quite interested in the Pastor’s comment on the words of Paul on how to treat “wolves” in our midst. Here is what he said: “The Apostle did not counsel the handling of these wolves very gently, as some teachers of today advise. He did not say, You must call them all brethren, and tell them they are probably as near the truth as you are, and that you have a broad charity for all sorts of vain philosophies, etc., etc. No Paul was not the man for such compromise.” And then he quotes a number of scriptures. The Pastor’s

quote is found at the top of page 1559 in the Reprints. The spirit of compromise is thoroughly condemned if we are to have God's approval—the truth was given to us for a specific purpose and if we compromise we will lose the effect of the truth in our lives. There are some interesting comments on the spirit of compromise found in the top half of Reprint page 1589.

Speaking of divine protection, we have the armour of light provided for us to enable us to stand while we are surrounded by deceptions and false teachers. We note the words of Paul in Rom. 13:12: "The night is far spent. The day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Why is this called the "armour of light"? Light is a symbol of truth, so our armour is the truth itself. It is called the armour of righteousness in 2 Cor. 6:7: "By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left." We are completely surrounded with divine protection, if we make use of it.

Paul in his epistle to the Ephesian brethren has a lot of detail about our armour and the great danger that confronts us. Without this armour, we would be completely routed. Let us read Eph. 6:12 to 18: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

What are these dangers that we wrestle with? They are called "principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places." Let us see what we can learn about these dangers. First what is meant by wrestling? This is used only once in the New Testament, and in Strong's concordance has the number 3823, and the word "vibrate" seems to be in the definition. There is another Greek word that seems to be combined with the translation to wrestle and it is defined as "wring out" or "throw." In any case, whatever the meaning is, we are confronted with superior forces, and we must use the protection provided by God or we will be overcome. If we stop to think, we can realize that in every direction we are faced with opposition to the Christian life. Satan the god of this world is enemy in chief command and position. We are opposed by nominal church people; by all the elements of society; by our relatives and friends of the world; and lastly by our natural flesh that doesn't want to sacrifice and doesn't want to change.

Now then, let us see how the whole armour of God, the armour of light, the armour of righteousness protects us. We note the 13th verse suggests that the armour has two functions. It enables us to withstand and then stand. We withstand by resisting something, to stand against it, to oppose it. We stand by staying put, by not retreating, to stay in a solid position, not deviating from our position. So we resist and then stay put. Paul says, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” If we girt our loins, we are servants of something; and in this case we are servants of truth, not servants of error in any way or in any sense.

Then we have on the breastplate of righteousness. We do not stand in our own righteousness, but in the imputed righteousness of Christ. This protects us from all feelings of pride and superiority; it protects us from all influences that would appeal to our pride to follow something else than the teachings of the truth.

Our feet “are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” We are not to promote strife for the sake of being combative, but be peacemakers as much as we can. This overcomes the quarrelsome disposition.

And above all the Apostle says, “taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” We are to have absolute faith in God’s goodness and faithfulness, so when fiery darts of scorn and shame are shot at us, we will ward them off with our shield of faith. These darts will not touch us at all when we have the strong shield of faith in God and his Word.

And we are to take the helmet of salvation and what a strong helmet we have today in all the wonderful explanations of the Truth, so that God’s plan appears to us as superior to all other plans of men and of ourselves—a plan that is adequate to take care of every requirement for the blessing of mankind, and a plan of lovingkindness toward the church that is overwhelming in its significance and as an evidence of our heavenly Father’s tender and generous love for followers of his Son.

And we take “the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God” and we use it as JESUS DID—“It is written.” It is important that we make every reasonable effort to become familiar with our Heavenly Father’s Word so we can protect ourselves with “IT IS WRITTEN.”

There is another interesting thought brought to our attention by Paul in Eph. 5:15, 16: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Walking “circumspectly” means to look around and walk carefully, not as unwisely as would be the case with fools, but wisely. And “redeeming the time” would mean that we make good use of our opportunities, knowing that evil influences would tend to attract our attention away from our consecration vows.

Paul writing to Timothy penned these words: “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” (1 Tim. 6:8-12) And there is a companion thought expressed in the 6th verse of the same chapter: “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” The desire for riches or gain in the form of material wealth or power is very strong in some individuals. If allowed to be active, it could, as Paul’s words suggest, cause us to err from the faith and “pierce us through with many sorrows.”

Paul tells us to flee from “foolish and hurtful lusts” (desires), and follow after “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness.” And we are to “fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto we art also called.” Yes, we do have a fight of faith in this Christian life. There are enemies that oppose us on every side and we must have faith in God’s word and plan so that we will resist and subdue anything from any source that would tend to be contrary to our vow of consecration.

The Apostle John gives us something to think about in 1 John 2:15, 16: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.” John mentions three things that are in the world that we are to avoid—“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.” The New English Bible translates this: “all that panders to the appetites or entices the eyes, all the glamour of its life.” The Berean notes are very understandable on these points: “Lust of the flesh”—undue cultivation of all the appetites and passions common to the whole human family. “Lust of the eyes”—ambition for worldly fame, power, social distinction. “Pride of life”—exultation over those in humbler walks in life. In faith we are to turn away from these things and cultivate our heavenly ambitions.

This reminds us of the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 9:25-27: “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” The Phillips translation reads this way; “I am no shadow boxer; I really fight!” The Williams translation says: “that is the way I fight, not like one who punches the air.” I presume we have all seen

boxers punching punching bags—but no shadow-boxing with Paul; and no shadow boxing with us. No we have some real things to combat—the weaknesses or powers and desires of the flesh.

Recently I read something that the Pastor said of himself. He said the first thought he tried to entertain on awakening in the morning was, “What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits toward me. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord [for grace to help]; I will pay my vows unto the Most High.” He stressed the point of gratitude toward God—that we can render something to God for all his benefits—to take a strong hold on the cup of salvation that is offered to us, to show the Lord that we appreciate his offer to us—his special dealings with us.

In Gal. 6:9 Paul wrote: “And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” This is a real danger and we can use strength found in the Bible to buoy us up. For instance Heb. 12:1-4: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” How true—we have not resisted to the point of death as Jesus did, when he actually poured out his blood on the cross. And the “contradiction of sinners”—have we thought on that sufficiently? When He was on the cross, He was taunted, “IF THOU BE THE SON OF GOD.” And He was “contradicted” all during his ministry by the scribes and Pharisees. They did everything possible to discount his claims of being the Messiah and the Sent of God.

We find some very encouraging words by James in Jas. 5:10: “Take my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience.” If we are inclined to get weary, we can benefit greatly by reading the 11th chapter of the book of Hebrews. The lives of the Ancient Worthies are wonderful examples of faith and patient endurance. Another source of comfort and encouragement is found in the words of Jesus in Matt. 5:11, 12: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

There is another great danger to our stability. We must be aware of the fact that the Lord has not promised earthly prosperity or tranquility. Paul in Phil. 4:11 and 12 said: “Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound, everywhere and in

all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Many people have false ideas about the blessings of the Lord in the Christian life. I remember a T.V. program just recently. It was called Black Journal and was sponsored by Blacks. There was a very sincere Black lady giving the idea to her followers that if they became followers of Christ they would automatically experience prosperity and possess all the good things of this life. I do not know what she does with the text that reads, “all those that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” The faithful of God, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament have experienced hardships and this is intentional as a test of loyalty to God and righteousness.

Paul in Heb. 3:13 writes: “Exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Here we are warned that it is possible for us to be “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Phillips renders this, “through the delusive glamour of sin.” Goodspeed writes: “By the pleasantness of sin.” The Amplified Bible translates as follows: “by the fraudulence, the stratagem, the trickery which the delusive glamour of his may play on him.” We must never get careless and off guard, but make straight paths for our feet ALWAYS because under certain conditions some sins can have a glamour and play tricks on us.

Peter writes some words of warning in 2 Pet. 3:17, 18: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” How do we protect ourselves from being led away with the error of the wicked, and falling from our own steadfastness? By growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jude gives us wholesome advice in verses 20 and 21: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” We have work to do—we must “keep ourselves in the love of God.”

Let us turn to 1 Thess. 5:5, 6: “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” Is it possible for us to sleep as Christians? Apparently so, for that is exactly the language the Apostle uses. We must keep ourselves wide awake by study, prayer, assembling and activity “doing good unto all men, as we have opportunity, especially unto the household of faith.” (Gal. 6:10)

Jesus said, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” (Mark 14:33) There is a double exhortation here—watching and praying. We are in trouble if we think we are in no danger of entering into temptation. Some have become self-assurant and have paid dearly for their pride of heart. We are never to relax our guard concerning temptations. Paul says: “The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of

darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” (Rom. 13:12) It is easy to do the works of darkness, but we must revise our thinking and conduct and put on the armour of light—of truth and righteousness. A somewhat similar exhortation is found in Rom. 13:13, “Let us walk honestly as in the day.” We should do nothing that we would prefer to keep hidden, but have our conduct in full view of all the light of truth. That reminds me of a trite saying that I heard many years ago—“if you always tell the truth, you will never have to remember what you have said.”

Paul in Heb. 10:38 says: “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” This is the way God feels toward those who draw back. In the 37th verse Paul says, “For ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” Well, if Paul says we have need of patient endurance after we have done the will of God, if we are to receive the fulfillment of the promises, then we better get ourselves into this frame of mind. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (1 Pet. 4:11, 12) We gather from these words that we need to take care and not allow ourselves to forget that the Christian life is supposed to be filled with fiery trials. If we forget this there is danger of our becoming confused and discouraged. We never want to say “Why does this have to happen to me?” We have been clearly and constantly warned about the experiences of the Narrow Way. This is plainly stated in 2 Tim. 3:12, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

In 1 Sam. 15:22 we read: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” It is important to grasp the fact that God is very pleased with an obedient heart—he is not interested in gifts, for he does not need anything. Saul made the great mistake in thinking that he could offer a gift and God would be pleased, and this would make up for his lack of obedience to God. Saul paid dearly for his disobedience.

In Hab. 3:17 and 18 we read: “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Why do we suppose this was written? I think it was to encourage us to get the knowledge of God into our heads and hearts to the point where we would have absolute confidence in the love and wisdom and power of God that we would trust him regardless of our temporal circumstances; Job put it this way—“Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” (Job 13:15)

Jesus said in Luke 21:34: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” We appreciate the Berean comments on this verse: “With surfeiting

—worldly revelries, time-killing pleasures. And drunkenness—intoxication with the spirit of the world as respects wealth, business, dress, music. Care of this life—it is proper to be charged with the cares of this life to the extent of our necessities and responsibilities, but not to the extent of crowding out spiritual interests and aspirations.”

In Mal. 3:2, 3 we read: ”But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” So we are being refined and fiery experiences are used to purify us of dross. We need to pay careful attention to the exhortations of God’s Word and respond properly to all these refining experiences. There is dross in our make-up and it must be brought to the surface and eliminated, so the gold can shine out with bright purity—there is nothing like a trial to bring to the surface that which is down deep in the heart.

The wise man said; “Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil.” (Prov. 3:7) This proverb implies that if we are wise in our own eyes, and fail to have proper reverence for the Lord then we will not depart from evil. This is an important principle to recognize—that if we are wise in our own eyes we will not pay attention to the Lord’s Word and will continue to think evil, speak evil, and perform evil deeds. Paul writes in Eph. 4:31, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.” We need to watch out for the subtle forms of these evil things—bitterness, wrath, anger, and malice in the heart—we can have hatred in the heart! Jesus magnified the law by telling us that evil conditions in our heart are violations of the law of God. That reminds us of Song of Solomon: “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines.” (2:5) We must be careful of the little evil tendencies that are in the heart.

In Ezra 10:11 we read: “Separate yourselves from the people of the land.” This was addressed to natural Israel. There was great danger in fraternizing with people who did not belong to Israel itself, for they would be in danger of being influenced away from the law of God and take up with the ideas and practices of foreigners. We, as Spiritual Israel have a similar danger—if we mix intimately with outsiders we are in danger of dropping down from our high standard and adopting the ideas and habits of the world. This is very strikingly true in a marriage relationship or a business partnership. Could this not be true too of the reading matter we would use or the entertainment we might indulge in? We would want to use discretion in what we read habitually, or what programs we might select on the radio or T.V. Even with good reading matter, and good programs on the radio and T.V. we should use discrimination and not spend too much time if this would deprive us of spiritual activities or interfere with spiritual activities. We have need of relaxation at times, but we can overdo this if we are not careful.

In Psalm 19:12-14 we find some important words of warning: “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.” There is a very powerful thought in the Manna for Aug. 12th. “He who seeks to live a life of holiness and nearness to the Lord by merely guarding against outward or presumptuous sins, and who neglects the beginnings of sin in the secrets of his own mind, is attempting a right thing in a very foolish and unreasonable way.” Yes, it is the little secret faults that are dangerous and they can burst out sometime and reveal a heart condition that is not acceptable to the Lord. This reminds us of the words of Paul in 2 Cor. 10:5: “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” This suggests that we, as new creatures take possession of our thinking processes and see to it that they function in line with the ideals and purposes of the Christian life.

In 1 Thess. 5:19 the Apostle exhorts: “Quench not the spirit.” The new creature itself would not quench the spirit, so the Apostle must mean that the old thinking processes would be inclined to do this, and we must oppose any suggestion that would be contrary to the life of consecration. And not only that, but we must endeavor to crush such thinking and permit only those thought processes that are in good harmony with our Christian calling. Eph. 4:29 shows how thoroughly the new creature is to dominate and direct the thinking: “let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” We are in great danger if we permit “corrupt communication to proceed out of our mouths”—our thinking would be misused and harmful to our own hearts and harmful to those we associate with. Paul said plainly that he could be a castaway unless he brought his body under and brought it into subjection. (1 Cor. 9; 27) The earthly tendencies of our body then, are dangerous—we must realize what they can do to us that are harmful, and we must use the Lord’s directions for keeping them under and subject to the will of the new creature. The Vow is a very practical tool for keeping the body in its proper place and its powers subject to the will of the new creature.

We have another enemy that is very strong. Peter identifies it in 1 Peter 5:8 and 9: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” These are strong words indeed—we have an adversary, an enemy that will devour us if we do not resist him properly—we are to resist him steadfast in the faith. We have faith in the word of God and we are to follow it to the letter. He that is for us—God (and our Redeemer as well) is stronger than our enemy Satan, and we have nothing to fear if we do our part.

Jesus uses some strong language about the devil—“there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44) So we can see from this that we need to come to an accurate knowledge of the truth so we will recognize Satan’s lies when we hear them. Apropos to this, Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 11:14, 15 that the Devil and his angels appear as angels of light and righteousness—deception then is employed by the devil and his angels.

In Prov. 16:5 we read: “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; ...” Pride is a dangerous state of mind. One scripture that is especially helpful to us in overcoming pride is the declaration that everything we have is a gift to us—we are the objects of grace, favor in everything we possess. Pride as a danger is pointed up by James 4:6: “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” Who could survive if resisted by God? NO ONE!

It may seem a strange thought to some, but God is humble. Consider the circumstances of sending his beloved Son into the world—born under the most humble circumstances—not of a queen in regal splendor, but born of a virgin and laid in a manger! And it was reported that he was born of fornication—just think of that for a moment! And God let this happen!

In Psalm 39:1 we find these words: “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” Why do we keep our mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before us? Because we are in danger of being influenced by the wicked and we must be constantly on our guard. We must “take heed to our way, and not sin with our tongues.” How easy it is to go along with popular currents, and allow our tongues to be used in unprofitable ways, speaking evil or speaking foolishly!

We can be in danger of becoming “wearied and faint in our minds,” as Paul reminds us in Heb. 12:3. And in the same verse he instructs us how to rise above this danger—“Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” Jesus is our example par excellence. During his whole ministry of 3½ years he was constantly opposed, contradicted by sinners, and to cap the climax he was taunted while hanging on the cross—“IF thou be the Son of God!” And that makes us think of the admonition Jesus gave his disciples when they wanted to call down fire and destroy those who would not receive them kindly in Samaria—“Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: The Son of man came not to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” (Luke 9:55, 56)

Paul says, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” “Sowing to the flesh, minding the things of the flesh” means gratification of the desires of the flesh, minding

the things that are craved by the fallen nature. (4828-5) “On the contrary, each sowing to the Spirit, each resistance to the desires of the flesh toward selfishness, etc., and each exercise of the new mind, the new will, in spiritual directions toward the things that are pure, the things that are noble, the things that are good, the things that are true, is a sowing of the spirit, which will bring forth additional fruits of the spirit, graces of the spirit, and which persevered in, will ultimately bring us in accord with the Lord’s gracious promises and arrangements—everlasting life and the kingdom.” (3323:2-2) That makes us think of Isa. 52:11: “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” We are identified with sacred things, and must remove ourselves from all forms of fleshly desires and practices that are fallen.

Are wastefulness and careless manners dangerous to our spiritual interests? Yes, they are, for the Wise Man said “He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.” (Prov. 18:9) We are in touch with the highest and best there is, and we should conduct ourselves accordingly.

Do we have any tendency to want to be looked up to—to want others to give us special recognition and service for what we do? We shouldn’t because it is a great honor to become like the Saviour and be in His service. As Jesus himself said, “Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” (Matt. 20:27) We will be in line for great rewards in the life to come if we have the spirit of service now; and we should not want an additional bonus from those we serve in the present life. If we crave and get a bonus, we could be rewarded now, and not in the future life! This is something important to think about!

Speaking of service reminds us of our Lord’s words found in Matt. 6:24: “No man can serve two masters.” We have to use caution along this line and not think we can gratify the flesh and at the same time serve the Lord—one or the other must take precedence and the Lord will judge us accordingly. Farther along in Matt. 26:41 Jesus said, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” And that reminds us further of the words of James (1:14), reading from the Moffatt translation: “Everyone is tempted as he is beguiled and allured by his own desire...” our own desires are what we have to watch carefully. Paul tells us in Gal. 5:17 that “... the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” In the previous verse, he says “Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust [desire] of the flesh.”

Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 13:6 that “Love... rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” We can test ourselves along this line if we are honest, humble and objective. Down in my heart—do I secretly feel like rejoicing if I gain something from anything that might not be entirely right, not entirely just? Would I take a benefit or gain of some kind that would not be strictly honest, something that would not be detected or

discovered by others? For instance, if we found in the examination of an old record that we had gained by a mistake on our part, and this mistake was not known by our debtor, would we just let the mistake pass and keep the gain and say nothing? If so, then we are rejoicing in iniquity and lacking in love which rejoiceth only in the Truth.

In Heb. 10:36 we read: “ye have need of patience [cheerful endurance, constancy] that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the Promise.” There is danger here—if we have carried on faithfully for some time, and then we get to feel that the Lord has given us enough in the way of trial and schooling, and now we should be given relief and taken beyond the veil. The Apostle says plainly that “we have need of patience”—cheerful endurance, for it is only by stick-to-itiveness that we show that we are stabilized as Christian characters.

Paul, when testifying before Felix, spoke of the resurrection of the dead, and then he said, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.” This is found in Acts 24:15, 16. We should take this seriously. There is to be a resurrection of the dead, and with such a hope of a future life, we should live a conscientious life, “void of offence toward God and toward man.” (3195-5) This reminds us of 1 John 3:3, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

I think we are all familiar with Eph. 6:18: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.” This is vital to our spiritual health. We found a delightful Reprint reference that is very helpful. “When we come to the Father, let us draw nigh in spirit—with the heart, the understanding, the mind—whether the prayer be long or short. Let us come with true and earnest devotion, with supplication, that he may see our intense desire in the matter... There is a difference too, between prayer and supplication. The term prayer applies to any petition, great or small; whereas the term supplication means a special, agonizing desire for a thing—entreaty with intense yearning. But whether it is prayer in the ordinary sense, or intense prayer—supplication—we should always come in the spirit, with an appreciation of the fact that we are entering into the presence of the great Creator and that in thus doing we are enjoying a great privilege. St. Paul adds ‘watching thereto.’ Watching seems to be an attitude of mental alertness. If we really believe that the Lord has indicated that we should pray for the things we need, and that he will give us these things, then we should be on the alert to recognize when we receive them. We should take heed as to the things for which we ask, and be sure that we ask for the things promised, the things for which we are entitled to ask. We should also watch for the Lord’s providential leadings. The person who, after having prayed, forgets what he prayed for, and who cannot tell whether or not he has received an answer to his petition, has certainly missed a great blessing which it is designed that he should have.” (5480-3 to 7)

In Prov 25:28 we read, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down without walls.” Surely we should take great heed to this assertion. We are in great danger if we do not see the great necessity for self-control. If we flare up and our emotions burst forth into uncontrolled words and acts we are in real character-trouble. The wise man states it pretty strong—“like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” And what does that illustration mean? It suggests a ruinous state when enemies can come in and take over—we must have all our emotions under the direction and control of the spirit and word of God. We are certain that our Lord had perfect self-control—all his powers and emotions were directed and controlled by the spirit and word of God. For instance Peter tells us in 1 Pet. 2:23 that “When He [that is, our Lord] was reviled, He reviled not again.” He did not return evil for evil.

Our Lord, when giving the sermon on the mount, said “Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt. 5:7) And in Matt. 6:15 our Lord said, “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” We are in great danger if we do not develop the spirit of mercy and forgiveness of trespasses. If someone has trespassed against us, and asks for forgiveness, and we hold ourselves aloof and refuse to be merciful, then we are in real trouble, for the Heavenly Father will not grant us mercy, for we would not deserve special grace and consideration.

In 1 Kings 20:11 we read: “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.” From this verse we get the thought that some might get to feel they are pretty good and this might indicate an immature attitude. It is only when we have endured all the tests and have patiently endured TO THE END that we could properly feel a sense of victory, and be thankful to the Lord for his keening power and the inspiration of his promises. This reminds us of Joshua 1:7, “Be thou strong and very courageous.” We are to be strong and courageous in the power that is provided by God, and not feel self-assurance when we are only part way along in the Narrow Way.

The Apostle in John 5:21 exhorts us—“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” An idol is anything that would compete with our worship and service to God—a wife, a husband, a child, a friend, social standing, public approval, or even one’s home. We are in great danger if we are not careful to see to it that God comes first as an object of worship.

And now, dear friends, this concludes our review of some of our DANGERS and FOES. I have made no attempt to follow any certain order or sequence, but have picked at random certain things that I believe merit our special attention and concern. I hope I have presented enough evidence to prove the point that there is much more to the Christian life than the development of *agape* love, and it is imperative that we give special and constant attention to the qualities of character that would be properly

regarded as foundation elements; and love must have these foundation elements if it is to function properly.

As a final thought to close our study—a Reprint reference on page 4208, par. 4, that is a combined warning of danger and how to protect ourselves. “Let us remember the Apostle’s words that we wrestle not with flesh and blood but with wicked spirits in high positions (Eph. 6:12.) Let us remember that these wicked spirits have the power in some degree to favor in us wrong sentiments; that in proportion as we would give our minds into any selfish, sinful or ignoble channel, in that same proportion these unseen adversaries of the saints would have power over them. Let us remember, on the contrary, that in proportion as our hearts are loyal to the Lord and his Word, and to the spirit of the truth, the spirit of love, in that same proportion we are surrounded by a halo of influence which would protect us, so that of such it may be written, The wicked one toucheth him not.’—John 5:18.”