

Articles by W. Ross Rainey

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Abraham The Intercessor

Our Associate-Editor, W. Ross Rainey, has favoured us with another interesting article, an article to challenge all of us, to alert us. How often we have failed to recognize the presence of the Lord! Few attain the intimacy Abraham had with the Lord.

Scripture Reading: Genesis 18:16-33

Three times over in the Bible, and each in an entirely different context, Abraham is called “the friend of God” (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23). In 2 Chronicles 20:7, King Jehosaphat prayed to the Lord in a time of national crisis and referred to Abraham as God’s “friend for ever”; while James, at the close of his argument about faith and works, refers to Abraham as “the friend of God” (2:23). Best of all, however, is the fact that in Isaiah 41:8 the Lord Himself calls Abraham “My friend.”

Chapters 17 & 18 of Genesis, perhaps as no other passages, reveal the familiarity and intimacy that Abraham had with the Lord, but what Abraham’s portion was should be —in far greater measure — the portion of every believer today. The friendship of God is offered to us in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:15).

Regarding our specific study and consideration of Genesis 18:16-33, let us observe first of all:

The Purpose of God (18:16-22)

In verse 16, either the two angels (as in v. 22), or the Lord and the two angels, “looked toward Sodom.” A guilty people, or nation, may well tremble when God

fixes His gaze upon them. He waits a long while before He unleashes His judgment (e.g., Gen. 15:13-16; 2 Chron. 36:16; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 16:19), but eventually it comes. It is noteworthy that Abraham accompanied his guests on their way in order to direct them to Sodom, and this act of courtesy opened to him a marvelous opportunity of intercession.

It is a revelation of condescending grace that the Lord desires, as evidenced in 18:17, to share His purposes and secrets with the godly (cf. Ps. 25:14; 103:7). How much do we really know of such intimate and enriching fellowship with Him? Of Abraham's experience at this time, W. Graham Scroggie has concisely yet instructively stated, "God takes certain men and women in His deep counsels, and reveals to them His purposes, and in this way history is set forward. That is the meaning of Hebrews 11. One God-fearing man is made the means of universal blessing; but that man reaches the world through his family and that nation of which he was the origin."

In 18:18 we have the reason for the Lord's condescending grace, and just as Abraham was caught up in the purpose of redemption, so also have all true believers (see Rom. 8:28-30). God's purpose in making Himself known to Abraham was that He might bring into being a family that would give witness to Him, enabling Him to fulfill His promises (18:19). Today, this purpose and witness are being carried on through the Church, the Body of Christ, until such time as the witness of the Church on the earth is completed at the rapture and God once again starts His time-clock with respect to Israel.

There is one important detail in 18:19 which has both pertinent and practical significance today, and this is represented by the words, “command his children.” Parents have a definite responsibility to train their children in the ways of the Lord and to evangelize each generation (cf. Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4). Part of this training includes the responsibility of believing parents to bring their children regularly to the local church, thereby making the place of worship and testimony an integral part of their family life.

No doubt the Lord addressed the angels in 18:17 and 20, but Abraham was permitted to hear what was spoken and was thus taken into the Lord’s confidence. Using common human terms, the Lord’s action 18:21 is similar to that of 11:7. Here, the two angels appeared as men, though sometimes angels appear as horses and chariots of fire (cf. 2 Kings 2:11; 6:17; Psa. 68:17). God went down to Sodom in the person of these two angels as His representatives (Matt. 13:41).

While there is most certainly a time and place for corporate prayer, Abraham waited until he was alone with God before he began his intercession (cf. 18:21 with Matt. 6:6).

We come now to:

The Prayer of Abraham (18:22-23)

This is the first great prayer in the Bible, and it is noteworthy that it is intercessory. Observe two main things about it, the first being:

A. Its Basis

1. The Consciousness of God (18:22)

The words “drew near” remind us of James 4:8a, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” (see Eph. 2:13; Rom. 5:1-2). To pray aright one must believe that God is, even as he must come to God in faith (Heb. 11:6).

2. The Covenant of God (18:17-19)

Abraham had been taken into God’s confidence and fellowship regarding His world-wide redemptive purpose.

The second main thing to observe about Abraham’s prayer is:

B. Its Characteristics

1. It Was Reverent

Believers today should show the same spirit of reverence reflected throughout this intercessory prayer, even though it is true that we have a far greater boldness of approach and access in the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:16; 10:19ff.).

2. It Was Earnest

There is no mistaking the earnestness with which Abraham prayed (notice the occurrences of “oh” in verses 30 and 32).

3. It Was Discriminatory (18:24-25)

Abraham discriminated between the righteous and the wicked, and he was concerned for both. Of course, he was thinking primarily of his nephew Lot (19:29), and his prayer indicates that he understood what constituted righteousness in God’s sight. Lot manifested almost no

practical righteousness at all, yet he was — like Abraham — justified by faith (2 Pet. 2:7).

That God distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked is clearly set forth in His Word (e.g., Prov. 17:15; Matt. 25:46).

4. It Was in Accord with God's Character (18:25; see John 14:13; 1 John 5:14-15; Jude 20).

Abraham's knowledge of God's character was used as a basis for action, not inaction. He did not take a fatalistic attitude about things as some are prone to do (see James 4:3).

5. It Was Definite (18:28-32)

It may be that much of our praying is so general as to be pointless, at the same time lacking earnestness and fervency. General praying will never be rewarded by particular answers, and at that, Abraham himself could have been more definite than he was.

6. It Was Persevering

Six times over Abraham asked that Sodom might be spared, and each time God gave him the exact answer to his petition.

7. It Was Humble (18:27)

Abraham never lost sight of the One to whom he was praying.

One of the great lessons of this passage is that the wicked owe far more to the presence and prayers of the righteous than they would be willing to admit. This is indicated elsewhere in God's Word (e.g., Acts 27). Had there been ten believers in Sodom, the Lord would have spared the city. A further noteworthy lesson is that

Abraham stopped praying before God stopped promising. Perhaps he could have gone on petitioning, requesting that the city might be spared for just one soul, but he did not take this liberty, no doubt assuming that there would be at least ten believers in Sodom between Lot and the members of his family.

In these “last days” of this present age of grace, with the world hurtling headlong toward God’s sure judgment, let us press on to realize more and more of our Lord’s purposes through a diligent study of His Word, remembering that one of the chief ways of getting to know both His purposes and Person more fully is by prayer. Abraham’s example is a good one for us today. May we be encouraged by it to frequently “draw near” to our Saviour-God, even this very moment.

A Business Woman Believed

Food for the Flock 11:6 (June - July 1965)

Paul's Second Missionary Journey was well under way when the Apostle and his companions were stopped by the Spirit of God from taking the Gospel of Christ into Asia and Bithynia, the result being that the Holy Spirit thrust them over into Europe. Having crossed the Aegean Sea this party of Gospel pioneers landed at Neapolis, the sea port of Philippi, and then proceeded on their way to Philippi proper. A new Alexander had come with a new power to conquer Europe for Christ, God having used Alexander the Great and Caesar to prepare the way, and the far-reaching effects of the events recorded here in Acts 16 can be hardly overestimated. Philippi, originally called Crenides (from its many springs), was seized by Philip of Macedonia in 356 B. C. In 168 B. C. it passed to the Romans with the rest of Macedonia, and in 42 B. C. it was made a Roman colony — "a bit of Rome away from Rome." Soon it was to feel the impact of the gospel.

The situation in which Paul and his fellow labourers found themselves was not a promising one, but as always proves true, "little is much when God is in it." It is apparent that Philippi, being a military outpost, had few Jews. There was no synagogue in the city, but a mile west of the city by the Gangites River an enclosure had been noticed which they "supposed ... was a place of prayer" (16:13, ASV). A new era for women and for Europe was about to dawn, Lydia being the first convert on the continent of whom we have record.

In pursuit of the Holy Spirit's brief biography of Lydia we wish to stress two particular things about her, the first being:

Her Opened Heart

The Providence Which Led to It. Lydia's birthplace was undoubtedly Thyatira in Lydia, the latter having been a Macedonian colony in Asia Minor. It may be that she was named after her homeland. One of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation was located at Thyatira (see Rev. 2:18-29), the city having been especially noted for its dyers. Lydia became "a seller of purple" (16:14), purple being a name for a dye which was made from shellfish. The fluid from them was first placed on wool, which turned it blue. It was then exposed to sunlight, which turned it green, and finally purple. When it was washed in water it became a brilliant crimson, such material being widely desired and bringing a high price. Lydia apparently became a woman of considerable means, eventually carrying on her lucrative business away from her home city. However, money cannot buy peace of mind and heavenly joy, and she was typical of multitudes in her day, as well as the present day, groping after reality midst the vice, vanity, and vexation of this earthly scene.

It is evident that she was seeking. She wanted that which would satisfy her heart. It may be that Lydia was a widow who perhaps had become a Jewish proselyte in her home city, for at that time there was a Jewish settlement in Thyatira interested in the dyeing industry. At any rate, the superstitions and pagan practices of her day could not satisfy her inner longings, so she sought the monotheism of the Jews.

It is also apparent that she was sincere. In the darkness of her soul Lydia truly longed for heavenly light and peace, and I am convinced that anyone who really and truly desires to know God will eventually be given light from God Himself. Lydia meant business with God, and through divinely-directed circumstances light did come to her in the persons of Paul and his companions.

The Power Which Lightened It. Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy were absolutely helpless in themselves to open Lydia's heart and mind to Christ and to the truth of God's Word. They were but instruments in the hand of God, but as they conversed with these women by the riverside, presenting the claims of Christ upon the soul, Lydia truly believed on the Saviour, realizing that here at last was the answer she had been sincerely seeking in regard to the problem of her sins. Having heard the way of salvation, her heart was opened by the Lord as she heeded the things spoken by Paul (see 16:14 with Rom. 10:17).

The Person Who Lorded It. The entrance of the Lord Jesus Christ into her heart and life led quickly to the enthronement of Christ over the same. Lydia readily submitted to Christian baptism, thereby publicly confessing the Lord Jesus before all. It is not important to know whether she was saved that particular Sabbath or not. The fact remains that she was truly brought to know Christ, and also her "household" (16:15), all taking their stand in the waters of baptism. Of whom did her household consist? Undoubtedly they were the women she employed who also had heard Paul's preaching and, like Lydia, had their hearts opened to the Lord. It may be that Euodias and Syntyche formed part of her household (see Phil. 4:2-3).

At any rate, the Lord Jesus Christ had been placed on the throne of Lydia's heart and life, not just on the threshold. To her. Christ was indeed Lord Of All!

The second prominent thing about Lydia is

Her Opened Home

The Lowliness Which Prompted It. Having willingly submitted to water baptism, this in itself being a token of her faithfulness to the Lord, Lydia asked Paul and his fellow labourers to abide in her house, that is, if they had judged her to be faithful. She wanted her house to be used for the glory of her Lord, knowing that it could serve as a splendid base of operations for the furtherance of the gospel of Christ. Actually, "if" in verse 15 should read "since" Lydia, knowing that Paul and his companions had already judged her to be faithful, and so she made known her desire toward them.

The Love Which Provided It. Note the closing words of verse 15: "And she constrained us" (the only other place in the New Testament where the word for "constrained" is used is in Luke 24:29). It is apparent that Paul at first demurred, the Apostle preferring to be independent and thereby burden no one, not even a woman of wealth. However, as the famous New Testament scholar A. T. Robertson has said, Lydia "had her way as women usually do" (Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. 3, p. 254).

It was genuine Christ-like love which provided a home for these pioneers of faith. Apart from such homes the early missionary movement would hardly have been possible, and there is a continuing need for similar

homes today. Is your home opened to the Lord and to His own?

Some years ago there appeared in "Letters of Interest" a timely little article simply entitled, "Hospitality," and signed anonymously by "A Grateful Preacher." Whoever this preacher may have been he expresses well the deep and continuing appreciation of a host of preachers, myself included, whose experiences have been similar to his own in the opened homes of God's dear people. The article is quoted in full.

"This is an anonymous tribute to saints who show hospitality to the Lord's servants. Their unselfish devotion and sacrificial labors have won my deepest admiration and constant gratitude.

"Perhaps the best way to express what I feel is to cite four examples of gracious hospitality.

1. "In one home I was given the master bedroom while the young host and hostess spent the night, no doubt uncomfortably, with the children in the latters' beds.
2. "In another home I learned quite by accident that a selfless Christian couple had occupied couches while the preacher enjoyed their bed.
3. "At another time two teen-agers curled up in sleeping bags in the livingroom so that the Lord's servant could have their comfortable upstairs room.
4. "Three adult Christians, one in her eighties, slept in the basement while guests (including the preacher) occupied the two bedrooms in the home.

"All of this was done so quietly that the facts were not known until it was too late to protest, and even then the protest would no doubt have been futile.

“What shall we more say of those who meet trains at inconvenient hours, of sisters whose home cooking evidences such skill and untiring labor, of those brethren who arrange meetings and provide necessary transportation.

“Contact with such Christians makes us aware of their royal lineage and inspires us to emulate their example of devotion to Christ. I know I speak for many in Christian service when I say to those who have ministered of their substance, ‘Ye... received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.’

“May all such hear the Saviour say to them, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me’ (Matthew 25:40).”

The Liberality Which Permeated It. What a “Haven of Hospitality” Lydia’s home must have become (16: 40)! Those of God’s people needing shelter and comfort were afforded a warm welcome. Perhaps it became the meeting place of the first assembly testimony established in Europe, just like the church in Philemon’s house (Philem. 2). Though Lydia is not named, she is undoubtedly included in the women mentioned in Philippians 4:3. Furthermore, it is quite probable that she was used by the Lord to carry the gospel message back to her native city of Thyatira, one of the very areas Paul and his companions had been forbidden by the Spirit to go (see Acts 16:6-8).

It is significant that the gospel of Christ in Europe had its beginning in the hearts and lives of women and, in a sense, the Macedonian call was that of a woman — namely, Lydia.

Have you ever heard such a call? Have you
“endeavoured to go” (16:10)?

A Charming Christian

In his tragedy entitled, *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare through the person of Juliet asks the question so often cited: “What is in a name?” In the Bible, especially in the Old Testament Scriptures, names generally bear a spiritually significant meaning.

Sometimes Bible personalities live up to the meaning of their names, and sometimes they do not. Incidentally, if you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour, you bear the name Christian, which literally means, a follower of Christ. Are you living up to your name?

The complete Bible biography of Epaphroditus is recorded in Paul’s “Letter to the Philippians” (2:24-30; 4:18) and, other than what the beloved Apostle says about him, we have no details of his fragrant and fruitful life in Christ. His name means “charming,” and he lives up to it!

In our study of Epaphroditus, we want to centre our attention on three prominent features of his biography which serve as a summary of his career in Christ.

His Spiritual Standing

The early history of the church at Philippi is recorded in Acts 16. In that action-filled chapter, we note the planting of the seeds of the assembly which eventually flourished in that Roman colony. Some years had passed and Paul was again in prison, only this time at Rome. That he was familiar with the inside of the prison at Philippi is well known. Like many another local testimony, the Philippian church was born out of

suffering and persecution for the Name's sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The saints at Philippi, who dearly loved the Apostle Paul, had in the summer sent him a gift through their messenger, Epaphroditus. According to the scholar David Smith, it was now the month of November and Paul was soon to send Epaphroditus home, having been unable to acknowledge their gift up to that time.

Somehow, word had reached Philippi that Epaphroditus was seriously ill, and Paul was anxious to relate to them that while their faithful messenger had been "nigh unto death" (2:27-30), the Lord had graciously spared his life. Seeing Epaphroditus again would relieve their anxiety and at the same time Paul could acknowledge their gift.

With these pertinent facts in mind, let us direct our careful attention to Paul's simple yet sterling commendation of Epaphroditus regarding his relationship and spiritual standing with the beloved Apostle.

In the family of God: Paul calls him "my brother." The term "brother" was assuredly endeared to the heart of the Apostle from the very beginning of his Christian experience when, in the house of Judas on the street called Straight in the city of Damascus, Ananias put his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul ..." (Acts 9:17). When he called Epaphroditus "my brother," he did so with a full sense and realization of the affection and intimacy of such a blessed and personal relationship as this which existed between them because they were both in the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In the field of service: Paul refers to him as his "companion in labour." Here was another vital link of

identification and relationship between these two servants of Christ. To be called and be classed by the Apostle “a companion in labour” was undoubtedly esteemed a great privilege on the part of Epaphroditus. Both men were in the field of service, working at the same task, serving the same Lord, that God might be glorified in them. How good it is to realize that we are not only linked together in service, but to realize that with all true believers, “we are labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9).

In the fight of faith: The beloved Apostle refers to him as his “fellow-soldier.” Both were fighting “the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7), facing the same foes, sharing the same hardships, and securing their supplies from the same source.

Although Paul had the position and authority of an apostle, it is to be observed that he did not place himself above his brother in Christ.

His Selfless Sympathy

When Epaphroditus learned that the Philippian Christians had heard of his illness, his selfless sympathy was revealed in the words of Paul, “For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick” (2:26).

That Epaphroditus became deeply depressed in spirit was not because of his own trial. On the contrary, this was because the news of his illness had reached Philippi and had caused anxiety among the Christians there. The anguish of Epaphroditus was caused by his knowledge of the Philippian Christians’ anxiety on his behalf.

The keen love of all these Christians: Paul, Epaphroditus, the Philippian saints, and Timothy also (2:19-23), for one another, each for all and all for each, is plainly indicated. Would that more of this same divine love that “seeketh not her own” abounded among the believers today as it did then.

Epaphroditus is a splendid example of a man whose life was devoted to helping and serving others. This is what made him so much like the Lord Jesus Christ Whom he loved, for His was a life lived and given in spotless purity on behalf of others.

A quaint incident is told regarding the return of Sir Bartle Ferere from India. The carriage was sent to the village station to fetch him to his home, but the newly acquired footman was at a loss to know how he would recognize him. His aged mother instructed him, “Look out for somebody helping someone else.” True to form, when the London train had eased its way in, the footman observed a gentleman assisting an old lady to the platform. As the servant watched, back went the gentleman to the carriage to get the lady’s luggage. Going directly to him, the footman confidently asked “Sir Bartle?” Yes, it was he. What a noble reputation to have!

Over the life of Epaphroditus it could be written: “Not I, but Christ.”

His Sacrificial Service

As for the sacrificial service of Epaphroditus, let Paul’s concise record speak for itself: “Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me” (2:30). The

expression, “not regarding,” is actually one Greek word which means “one who rashly exposes himself to danger,” “to be venturesome” or “reckless.” Used in regard to one’s life, as was the case with Epaphroditus, it means “to expose one’s life boldly,” “jeopard life” or “hazard life.” This man of God, Epaphroditus, worked so hard and fervently in the service of Christ, literally hazarding his life for the gospel’s sake, that “he was sick nigh unto death” (Phil. 2:27-30). Like Paul and Timothy, his life was wholly dedicated to the Lord as “a living sacrifice,” and in seeking to diligently follow God’s appointed path, no risk was too great, no venture too costly, no hazard too dangerous. W. Graham Scroggie has aptly remarked: “It cannot be said, with this passage before us, that to overwork in Christ’s service is a sin, though I would be inclined to say that to take it easy is a sin.”

In a chapter which presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect pattern of lowliness, Epaphroditus is a shining example of one in whom was the mind of Christ. Like the Lord Jesus Who “made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant” (2:7), he sought not the things concerning himself, but the things concerning Christ and others, serving the Lord sacrificially.

How Paul must have thanked God for Epaphroditus, and others like him, who served faithfully and fervently with him in the work of Christ as well as ministering to his needs from time to time (2:25)! Surely, every devoted child of God shares the same thankful attitude as the fragrance of this godly man’s life and testimony comes before him. Through the long centuries since Pentecost, the Church of Jesus Christ has been blessed and

benefited by hundreds, even thousands, of dedicated men and women who have carried on a “labour of love” for the glory of God, many of them unsung and unheralded in this life, yet working for Christ even to the point of death. Praise God for every, Epaphroditus in the service of the Saviour!

What about you and me? Are we willing to hazard our lives in the service of Christ in an age when opportunities abound as never before to practise and proclaim the glorious verities of the gospel of Christ? The life of this zealous man of God serves as a rebuke as well as a challenge to any of us who, in the service of Christ, may be shirking instead of working, holding back instead of holding forth, and letting up instead of letting God have complete command of our wills, our minds, our hearts, our lips, our hands, our feet, our bodies, our all.

Whatever our failures may be, certainly the outstanding character and example of this ardent servant of Jesus Christ should cause us to blush with shame if we have merely been working at Christianity instead of truly living Christ. Many today are diligently working to proclaim and further a sinister and evil doctrine called Communism, both hazarding and giving their lives for such a satanic ideology, while many professed Christians settle down in a complacent, self-satisfied, lethargic, lukewarm attitude. It is a sad and shocking commentary that today there are professing believers who are not willing to put themselves out, let alone hazard their lives, for the Lord Jesus Christ, for other Christians, and for those who know not our wonderful Saviour.

A Living Legacy

A writer's or speaker's style is generally punctuated by words, expressions and phrases which, though perhaps interestingly varied, nevertheless become typical of the individual. Such words and expressions are found in the style of the human authors of the Bible, for while it is hastily affirmed that the Bible is the Spirit-inspired Word of God, the Holy Spirit did not abrogate the personality of the individual writer. In other words, God did not make some sort of human dictating machine out of those through whom He wrote the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16. 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

The Apostle Peter was especially fond of two words which most certainly permeated his thinking and conversation, even as they found definite expression in his writings. The two words are "precious" and "living," and it is this latter word which engages our attention presently.

Every true Christian possesses in Christ a living legacy, and Peter both in conversation and letter has placed in focus specific aspects of that wonderful legacy.

The Living God

When the Lord Jesus Christ asked His disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?", it was Peter who spoke up and declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:15-16). From this occasion forward there can be little doubt but what the word "living" became more and more endeared to Peter's heart through the continued illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It is a word which is made much of in this jetomic age, especially by the advertising media. which bids the public to watch in "living color" or to "come alive" by joining the "Pepsi generation," whatever that might be. Today many of us often see on car bumpers those stickers which read, "MY GOD IS ALIVE Sorry to Hear about Yours." What a great time Peter would have had in this so-called "now generation" confidently and joyously declaring those truths concerning the Living God, and that Christ is indeed "the Son of the living God"!

Do our lives and conversation spell out and tell out the fact that we are daily in touch with the Living God? Is it because we are not walking with Him as we should that some try to tell us He is dead?

The Living Hope

Paul has been called the "Apostle of Faith," John the "Apostle of Love," and Peter the "Apostle of Hope," Peter speaking of that hope as "a living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3).

The world today is full of dead and dying hopes, but the Christian has a sure, steadfast and living hope in Christ, a hope that some day shall be realized in all its glorious fullness. What is this living hope? It is none other than the coming again of Jesus Christ, remembering that He Himself is the very personification of the believer's hope (1 Tim. 1:1). Does this blessed hope motivate our lives day by day? (cf. Rom. 8:24-25; Tit. 2:11-13; 1 John 3:1-3). Is it really a living reality to us?

Here, in 1 Peter 1:3, we have the declaration of the Christian's hope, while in 1:13-16 we have the display of

that hope and the practical influence it should have in the believer's life and testimony.

As to the Christian's living hope, observe:

A. Its Beginning

It begins, we enter into its possession, by the "new birth," for Peter addresses these who have been "begotten ... again" (cf. John 3:3, 7 with 1:11-13; Rom. 8:17).

B. Its Basis

1. "according to His abundant mercy"
2. "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (cf. John 20: 1-10).

The basis of every blessing in Christ is His bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12-19).

Regarding the Christian's living hope, Dr. James M. Gray has observed:

1. Its Source - "abundant mercy"
2. Its Ground - "begotten again"
3. Its Means - "the resurrection of Jesus Christ"
4. Its Nature - "an inheritance"
5. Its Security - "reserved"
6. Its Consummation - "in the last time"
7. Its Effect - "wherein ye greatly rejoice."

The Living Word

"Being born again (lit. having been born again) not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23). The

context of this verse reveals that the Bible is the eternal, as well as the living Word of God (see 1:25). As such, we observe the seven following things about the Bible:

A. It Cuts (Heb. 4:12; see Acts 7:54; 13:6-13).

B. It Converts (Psa. 19:7; Jas., 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; see Acts 4:4).

C. It Cleanses (Psa. 119:9; John 15:3).

D. It Corrects (2 Tim. 3:16).

E. It Confirms (John 8:31).

F. It Comforts (Psa. 119:50, 54; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

G. It Consecrates (John 17:17).

The Living Stone

In 1 Peter 2:4 the Apostle refers to Christ as the “Living Stone.” William Lincoln in his helpful little commentary on 1 and 2 Peter has pointed out that, as a rule, in the Old Testament our Lord is referred to as the Rock, while in the New Testament He is generally called the Stone. He condescended to become the Stone in order that mankind might comprehend something of His blessed Person and come to truly know Him as Saviour and Lord (see John 1:14; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-80 etc.). However, it was as the Rock, that is, as the God-Man that Christ was smitten on the Cross of Calvary; this precious truth has been clearly stated in A. Toplady’s classic hymn, “Rock of Ages.”

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee;

Let the water and the blood,

From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save me from its guilt and pow'r.

The Living Stones

As the Lord Jesus Christ is the “Living Stone,” so His people are “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5; cf 2 Pet. 1:4). At this point in his letter, Peter’s heart and mind must have recalled the scene of Matthew 16:13-20. And what of that earlier scene in his initial contact with and conversion to Christ? No doubt Peter reflected on this experience as well and recalled in particular the words of the Lord Jesus addressed directly to him, “Thou art Simon, the son of Jonah; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone” (John 1:42). Christ delights to give men new names, and He still does it, for all who trust Him are given a new name. This was Peter’s new name and in later years he became rock-like in his bold stand for Jesus Christ, eventually sealing his testimony with his life’s blood.

What is so dead as a stone? However, by coming to Christ, the “Living Stone,” believing sinners are made “living stones” in and by Him and are “built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5; cf. Eph. 2:1; see also 1 Pet. 2:4 with Isa. 53: 3).

Notice the words, “To whom coming...” (1 Pet. 2:4). Have you come to Christ for salvation? (Matt. 11:28). If so, then as His people we need to come to Him continually for spiritual strength and sustenance, keeping in mind that wonderful promise — a truly great

one for times like these — “he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded” (1 Pet. 2:6).

On Christ, salvation rests secure;
The Rock of Ages must endure;
Nor can that faith be overthrown
Which rests upon the “Living Stone.”
No other hope shall intervene;
To Him we look, on Him we lean;
Other foundations we disown,
And build on Christ, the “Living Stone.”
In Him it is ordained to raise
A temple to Jehovah’s praise,
Composed of all His saints, who own
No Saviour but the “Living Stone.”
View the vast building, see it rise:
The work how great! the plan how wise!
O wondrous fabric! pow’r unknown
That rests it on the “Living Stone.”
But most adore His precious name:
His glory and His grace proclaim!
For us, the lost, condemned, undone,
He gave Himself, the “Living Stone.”
—Samuel Medley

A Successful Failure

The Psalmist said: “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace” (Ps. 37:37). The adjective in this verse, “perfect,” is the same word used in 1 Kings 8:61, and its real meaning implies whole-heartedness, sincerity, single-mindedness for God. John Mark, in spite of failure, was one who manifested these characteristics, and it is well worth our time to mark John and take note of his biography recorded for us in Scripture. Much has been written of Paul, Peter, John the Apostle, and other outstanding saints and servants of the New Testament, but often the lessons to be learned from a study of the lives of such men as John Mark are easily overlooked simply because little is said of them in comparison with others. However, much in Scripture is recorded of him, more than might be expected.

The life of Mark may easily be divided into three distinct chapters: his promising future; his personal failure; and his perfect finish. In this order, then, we shall proceed to take up the study of his interesting and spiritually instructive biography.

His Promising Future

The first mention of Mark is in Acts 12:12. From this verse, we have an insight into his background and upbringing. Through the context of the chapter it is seen that Peter was miraculously delivered from prison, but, while Peter had been in chains, a prayer meeting had been going on in the house of Mary, the mother of Mark. Prayer had continually gone up to God on behalf of Peter

(Acts 12:5), and God marvelously answered the prayers of His people.

Mary was undoubtedly a very godly woman and, since a prayer meeting was held in her home, there is good reason to believe that her house was typical of the local assembly or church in those days. The home of Philemon is another example of this same thing, for Paul writes “to the church in thy house” (Philm. 2). Because she was a godly woman, Mary was faithful in bringing up her son “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” and the fruit of her faithfulness was manifest in the life of her son Mark. This same thing is clearly illustrated in the case of Timothy also. Paul wrote of the “unfeigned faith” of Lois and Eunice, Timothy’s grandmother and mother respectively and, because of their faithfulness, Timothy was brought up in the way he should go, with the result that Paul was able to write to Timothy as one who saw in him this same “unfeigned faith” that was found in his grandmother and mother (2 Tim. 1:5).

Acts 12:25 refers to the return of Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch, and they “took with them John, whose surname was Mark. Mark had proven himself in the ministry as a young man, and Paul and Barnabas believed that he would be an asset to them as they set sail on the first missionary journey to take the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to other shores.

In Acts 13:5 we find the missionary trio at Salamis, and here Mark is seen as one assisting in the work. The word for “minister” literally means “under-rower,” and might better be translated “attendant.” However, as the trio proceeded on their journey and arrived at Perga in Pamphylia, something happened which in turn disrupted

the missionary career of Mark, and we are brought to the second chapter of his biography.

His Personal Failure

In Acts 13:13, it is recorded: "And John departing from them returned to Jerusalem." Just what caused Mark to turn back is not revealed, but something came along to discourage him sufficiently to turn his hand from the plow and go back to Jerusalem. Perhaps this was the first time he had been away from home and, like many a young man, he became discouraged in his work for the Lord, and turned back. How many have been like Mark! Perhaps the longing for home and loved ones, plus the rigours of his circumstances, were sufficient to cause him to depart from the work and become, for a season of time, "unprofitable" (2 Tim. 4:11). Whatever the nature of his personal failure, Mark returned to Jerusalem not being able to face up to the work set before him.

Acts 15:36-41 continues further his biography. The first missionary journey was now Church history, and on the outset of the second missionary journey Barnabas was determined to take Mark along with them and give him a second chance in the work. Colossians 4:10 reveals that Mark was the cousin of Barnabas, and the truth of the saying, "blood is thicker than water," is brought out.

The issue is debatable as to who was right, Paul in his harshness or Barnabas in his favouritism. Perhaps it may be said that both were correct in their stand, the Holy Spirit using the personal disagreement between them to foster and further the spiritual growth of Mark. The uncompromising position of Paul no doubt awakened Mark to the seriousness of his failure, while the genuine love of Barnabas served to encourage him not to give up

because of his past “weakness. Whether both were right or one in particular was wrong is difficult to determine, but a rift resulted among the trio and Paul and Barnabas had a falling out. Barnabas as a result went to Cyprus, taking Mark with him, while Paul chose Silas and departed for Syria and Cilicia. It is quite apparent that the church at Antioch sided with Paul, for it is recorded that he was “recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God” (Acts 15:40).

It is always unfortunate when differences arise between or among servants of the Lord, but the Word of God reveals the failures as well as the successes of men, and in this respect the Bible is unique in its biographical records of men both great and small. God, however, blessed the labours of both parties, and the day came when Mark proved himself “profitable.” Even though the Lord brought, and often does bring, blessing out of bitterness, it is wise to remember that “a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Prov. 18:19).

1 Peter 5:13 indicates that the Apostle Peter deeply loved Mark, since he refers to him as “my son.” Their relationship would remind us of the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Timothy was Paul’s “own son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2), and he referred elsewhere to him as his “dearly beloved son” (2 Tim. 1:2). The Gospel of Mark is written in a style similar to that of Peter’s letters, and the influence of Peter on Mark is evidenced. In fact, some have gone so far as to suggest that Peter wrote the Gospel record attributed to Mark. Such a notion, however, has no real evidential basis and is entirely unwarranted.

We now come to the third and final chapter in Mark's biography.

His Perfect Finish

Mark had failed, but the beloved Apostle Paul, writing to Philemon some years later, refers to him as one of his "fellowlabourers" (v. 24). Sometime during the intervening year the rift in the fellowship between Paul and Mark had been restored, nor is it to be presumed that the contention between Paul and Barnabas was of long duration, as indicated by 1 Corinthians 9:6 and Galatians 2:1, 9. What a blessed relationship Mark now had with the chief of saints, called and classed by him as a fellowlabourer! The picture has happily changed, the blot on Mark's biographical record has been blotted out, and he has become one of Paul's noteworthy "fellowlabourers."

The last reference to Mark is found in 2 Timothy 4:11: "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Here, in his last letter, Paul openly pays tribute to John Mark. Not only does he declare him "profitable to me for the ministry," but he desires his presence that he might enjoy face to face fellowship with the one who was once a failure in the work of the Lord. Mark could be classed with Onesimus as one who ran away but later became "profitable." The same Greek word for "profitable" in 2 Timothy 4:11 is used in 2:21: "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." The phrase, "meet for ... use," is the way in which the translators of the Authorized Version alternately rendered this same root word. Mark

had become a “useful,” a “profitable” vessel for the ministry, and by the Spirit of God had been brought from failure to fruitfulness.

A verse that appropriately sums up his life is Philippians 1:6: “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” This grand verse can most certainly be applied to the life of every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The crowning culmination of Mark’s life and his perfect finish is that the Holy Spirit used him to write the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark is the Gospel of action, and it is significant that the Lord Jesus Christ in that Spirit-inspired account is presented as the Perfect Servant. The imperfect servant, the servant who failed, was divinely chosen to write of the Perfect Servant!

Perhaps the chief lesson to be learned from Mark’s life is that a failure such as he had does not mean the sure finish of the effective service and witness of a believer. Even though we fail the Lord, and fail Him miserably as Peter did, never let anyone place himself on the shelf of uselessness because some past deficiency or delinquency had muddied the clear water of what was formerly a bright testimony and a promising future. True, a child of God cannot go back and undo what has been done but, whatever the nature of a personal failure, the promise of 1 John 1:9 is the way back to fellowship with the Lord if a black cloud of sin has come into the life of a Christian to break that sweet communion. How blessed and assuring are the indelible and eternal words of our faithful God given to us through John, the “Apostle of Love”: “If we confess our

sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Mark did not allow his failure to discourage him to the point of giving up completely, but he picked up where he left off and became a “useful” and “profitable” vessel in the service of his Lord.

Here, then, was a young man with a promising future. He started out well but soon met with a personal failure. Nevertheless, by God’s grace he was able to resume his ministry, which culminated in a perfect finish. John Mark was a successful failure, and to one degree or another all of Christ’s ambassadors at best are successful failures. Therefore, with the Apostle Paul we must ever remind ourselves, as Mark could well testify: “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10).

* * *

A gentleman, walking over a beautifully kept farm one day with the owner, in admiring the magnificent sheep asked how he had succeeded in rearing such flocks. The simple answer was, “I take care of my lambs, sir.”

* * *

Christ will be a sure Friend, and even if we begin to sink in the water He will stretch out His hand and lift us up. It is sweet to have His hand in any case, even if by our failing foot He has been led to stretch it out.

An Open Door

For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9).

It’s a great thing when the Lord sets before His servants an open door. It has been pointed out from this text that there are three ways to look at an open door. First, it’s a door of opportunity. Let’s be sure and seize the opportunities the Lord affords us. Second, it’s an obligation, a personal, individual, inescapable assignment—unto me. Third, it sometimes involves opposition. If God is pleased to work through us, generally we can be sure Satan and his infernal cohorts will be there to oppose us. Let’s walk through that door today.

An Upper Room Scene

This interesting study of Paula ministrations in an upper room by our Associate Editor will be appreciated. It is so suggestive of many other matters of spiritual worth.

There are at least four upper room scenes in the New Testament (cf. Luke 22:14-39 with Matt. 26:7-30; Mark 14:17-26; John 13:1ff.; see also Acts 1:13; 9:36-42), including Acts 20:1-12. While the upper room scene of the Gospels is the most significant and precious of all, still the Holy Spirit has been pleased to record these other scenes as well, and we would not part with any one of them.

The first dozen verses of Acts 20 are packed with many details, and we wish to consider them under two simple headings, the first being:

The Journeyings in Europe (20:1-5)

With the uproar at Ephesus over, Paul was led to leave that city and again go into Macedonia (v. 1), having described his life at this time “in journeyings often” (2 Cor. 11:26). Such is the experience of every true evangelist, and in Paul’s particular case he faced many and extraordinary perils (2 Cor. 11:26). The specific purpose of this trip was to collect the contributions of the churches of Macedonia and Achaia for the relief of the poor saints at Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8-9). It may be that Acts 20:2 involved an entire year. After again visiting Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, exhorting and encouraging the believers and writing 2 Corinthians, the apostle went to Corinth, remaining

there three months (v. 3), during which time he wrote Galatians and Romans. The year was about 58 A.D.

Some of the Corinthian Jews hadn't forgotten Paul and plotted against his life (v. 3 with Acts 18:12). Having learned of their murderous intent, he forsook his original plans and returned through Macedonia, crossing the northern section of the Aegean Sea from Neapolis to Troas (see vv. 3, 6). Troas was a small town below the west entrance to the Dardanelles. Both in his journey from Neapolis and at Troas, Paul was not alone. Seven friends journeyed ahead and met him at Troas, Paul having been accompanied by Luke and probably Silas (see vv. 4-6). Had Luke, the beloved physician, remained all this time at Philippi? Of this we cannot be certain, but the last "us" is found in Acts 16:15-17.

We come now to our second main heading — namely:

The Joys at Troas (20:6-12)

What a blessing true Christian friends are, and what joyous memories these ten must have had both in the past (16:8-9) and during their week at Troas (v. 6)! Here we have what might be called a "Workers Conference," the local assembly at Troas having received the benefit and blessing of Paul's and his fellow laborers' ministry. How much their visit must have meant to the believers there!

Several joyous keynotes are found in these verses, so let's consider them one by one in the order of their occurrence.

1. The first day of the week (v. 7; see Rev. 1:10). The Jewish Sabbath was no longer the day of worship; the Lord's Day, "the first day of the week," had displaced it,

something that our “Seventh Day Adventist” friends have not yet learned. The shadow (Col. 2:16-17) had given place to the substance of the believer’s rest of faith in Christ (Heb. 4:9-10), the resurrection day (John 20:19, 26), and the day of the Holy Spirit’s descent (Acts 2).

2. The Lord’s Supper (v. 7). From the very beginning of the Church the Christians had broken bread in accordance with Christ’s command (Acts 2:42 with Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:24-25.) At this time there was probably a fellowship meal, called the Agape or Love Feast, followed by the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:17-31; Jude 12). Of the Lord’s Supper itself, W. Graham Scroggie has aptly stated, “At the Holy Table the Christian looks back in Faith, looks out in Love, and looks on in Hope. The Supper is therefore a Commemoration, a Proclamation, and an Anticipation. Between the Cross and the Crown is the Communion.” As a result of various abuses, the Agape became separated from the Lord’s Supper and eventually died out.

It is clearly evident from this particular upper room scene alone that there was a great “togetherness” about the early Church believers (see also Acts 4:31; 11:26; 14:27; 15:6, 30; 19:7-8; 1 Cor. 5:4) Have we perhaps lost something of that “togetherness” in these modern times? If so, are we prepared to do anything about it?

3. Preaching (v. 7; see Rom. 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 1:18-25). Though living in a day of tremendous emphasis on dialogue, preaching is still one of God’s primary ways in which He is pleased to reach the lost and build up His people.

One of the best books I have read in more recent years is Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones', *Preaching and Preachers*. It should be required reading for all who, in any measure, aspire to the holy and responsible task of preaching, "To me," says Dr. Lloyd-Jones, "the work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called. If you want something in addition to that I would say without any hesitation that the most urgent need in the Christian Church is true preaching; and as it is the greatest and the most urgent need in the Church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also" (p 9).

4. Attentiveness to the Word of God (v. 7). To be sure, the saints at Troas counted it a great joy and privilege to have Paul as their preacher. Their appetite for the Word was seemingly insatiable. Time was disregarded, and God's message through His messenger was given priority over all else. What preachers they had in those days! Yes, and what hearers, too!

5. Eutychus (vv. 8-12). Sometimes unusual things happen during a sermon. Out of my own experience a runaway horse stuck his head in the doorway one evening when I was preaching in a rural district of northern Ontario. He went on, evidently not caring for what little he heard. On another occasion two kittens pranced down the aisle, completely "breaking up" the audience (not to mention the preacher). Still another time my oldest son, Paul, when just a little fellow, ran up on the platform during my message. All he wanted was to be with his Dad, and from a father's viewpoint that's great. It's just that his timing was poor.

At any rate, Paul's sermon was unexpectedly and startlingly interrupted. The heat, the crowd, the flickering and smoking lamps, the late hour, the long sermon, and a tired body were too much for Eutychus (a common slave name) who was precariously perched on the sill of a third loft lattice window. Having succumbed to a deep sleep, he fell down and was taken up for dead. Dr. Luke seemed to agree with the view of the people around Eutychus (v. 9). Nevertheless, the Lord was pleased to restore physical life to this young man through Paul (v. 10; of 1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34), and a momentary tragedy became a triumph of the grace and power of God. The name Eutychus means "fortunate" and in spite of his sudden and short-lived misfortune, he was indeed fortunate to hear God's Word, to hear the Apostle Paul preach, and to have been miraculously raised up.

By the way, this incident is not a solemn warning to those who fall asleep in church (though such should not do so), nor is it a rebuke to preachers who go overtime. It is, however, a small "comfort" to some of us preachers that even the best of preachers have people in their audience fall asleep. There are definite reasons why Eutychus ended up in the "arms of Morpheus."

1. He may have been a slave and, if so, he would have been understandably weary after his day's work.
2. The atmosphere was conducive to sleep, the warm air no doubt having constantly enveloped Eutychus in his rather unusual circumstances.
3. All are not able to listen attentively to a long address.
4. Paul's preaching was not light (see 2 Pet. 3:15-16), and Eutychus was young (v. 9).

As we take leave of this interesting and instructive upper room scene, consider two further points. First, Paul's intense concern over Eutychus may be thought of as a parable in action. We should all have a genuine concern for the Eutychuses (or should it be Eutychii?) of the local assembly — namely, the young people. And second, we read that Paul and the others continued their fellowship together “even till break of day” (v. 11). In a spiritual sense, let us be sure and make the most of the “togetherness” which we have in Christ, and which by His grace He has made possible, and midst the deepening darkness of this increasingly evil world may we continue faithfully in that holy and happy fellowship until the break of “That Day” of His return.

Are You Ambitious?

Food for the Flock 12:9 (Nov 1966)

The concept of ambition, or being I ambitious, is found three times in the New Testament (1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Cor. 5:9; Rom. 15:20), and it comes from a Greek word meaning “to love or seek after honour, hence, to be ambitious” (G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 471). Some people are ambitious to do evil, but in the New Testament the exhortations to be ambitious are, of course, to do good.

A. T. Robertson, the celebrated Greek scholar, has said: “A preacher devoid of ambition lacks power” (Word pictures in the New Testament, Vol. IV, p. 30). This statement might well be extended to embrace all Christians, not just preachers, for surely one of the primary reasons for powerlessness among so many of God’s people today is a lack of proper ambition — ambition to pray, to praise, to proclaim, yea, ambition to truly practise the revealed will of God as set forth in His precious Word.

The three New Testament exhortations to be ambitious are most timely and trenchant for the present hour. The first of these which we want to consider, all three having come from Paul’s pen, is Romans 15:20 wherein the zealous example of the great Apostle to the Gentiles urges upon all believers to be

Ambitious to Preach the Gospel

The Apostle Paul’s primary consuming passion was the spread of the gospel of the grace of God. Writing to the

Romans, he says, "Yea, so have I strived (made it my ambition) to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." The word "strived" is actually in the present tense, so that we may freely, yet accurately, render the opening words as follows: "And so, being continually ambitious to preach the gospel..." The Roman Catholic Jerusalem Bible translates it, "Making it a point of honor to limit this mission to those regions where no one called on Christ."

Even when in prison Paul's supreme interest was not to get himself out of prison, but to get the gospel out while he was in bonds (see Col. 4:3-4), being assured that he was exactly where God wanted him, for in reality he was Christ's prisoner, not Rome's (see Eph. 3:1). If others waxed bold to preach Christ because he was in chains, in this he rejoiced, even when the message of saving grace was proclaimed out of envy and strife instead of love (see Phil. 1:15-18).

It is readily recognized that Paul's ministry was unique (see Acts 9:15-16). There was only one Apostle Paul. Nevertheless, like the beloved Apostle, every true Christian has a definite responsibility to make the gospel known. But are we really ambitious to diligently fulfill our responsibility? Paul was particularly ambitious to preach the gospel where the Lord Jesus Christ had not been named. Thank God for those who, from generation to generation, have laid hold of the torch of the Apostle's concentrated, consuming and costly ambition. Yet, not all of us can personally go to places where Christ has never been named, except as we do so by our prayers, gifts and any other resources open to us. However, we all can and should go to people who have never really

heard the gospel message, people living right in our own neighborhood. True, such are without excuse before God, but this does not excuse us from carrying out our sacred commission to "Go ... preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15; see also Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). What the Lord Jesus Christ told the healed demoniac of Gadara to do He has commissioned each of us to do, and that is, "Go ... TELL" (Mark 5:19).

In one of his many writings Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse relates the account of an uneducated miner in Scotland who began to preach with great power among his fellow workmen. Soon his witness took him far beyond the confines of the mining towns. Someone asked him how he had received his call to preach. He replied, "Oh, I had such a burden on my soul for those who did not know the gospel, I argued with the Lord that I had no education and no gift. But He said to me, 'Jamie, you know what the sickness is, don't you?' I answered, 'Yes Lord, the sickness is sin.' 'And you know what the remedy is, don't you Jamie' I answered, 'Yes, Lord, the remedy is the Lord Jesus Christ.' And He said to me, 'Jamie, just take the remedy to those who are sick.' That is my call to preach." This is God's call to every believer ("Broadcast Notes," Vol 2, No. 5, p. 5).

"O Zion haste, thy mission high fulfilling,
To tell to all the world that God is light!
That He who made all nations is not willing
One soul should perish, lost in shades of night.
"Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace,
Tidings of Jesus, redemption and release.
"Behold how many thousands still are lying

Bound in the darksome prison house of sin,
With none to tell them of the Saviour's dying,
Or of the life He died for them to win.

"Proclaim to every people, tongue, and nation
That God, in whom they live and move, is Love:
Tell how He stooped to save His lost creation,
And died on earth that man might live above.

"Give of thy sons to bear the message glorious;
Give of thy wealth to speed them on their way;
Pour out thy soul for them in prayer victorious;
And all thou spendest Jesus will repay.

"He comes again: O Zion, ere thou meet Him,
Make known to every heart His saving grace;
Let none whom He hath ransomed fail to greet Him,
Through thy neglect, unfit to see His face."

—Mary A. Thomson

The second of the three New Testament passages
centering upon the concept of ambition urges upon
believers to be

Ambitious to Please the Lord

Writing to the Corinthian saints, the Apostle Paul said,
"Wherefore we labour (make it our ambition), that,
whether present or absent, we may be accepted of
Him" (2 Cor. 5:9). As in Romans 15:20, the verb
translated "we labour," and conveying the Greek
equivalent to ambition, is in the present tense. Here,

Paul expresses that it is his continual holy ambition that, whether in the body or out of the body, he may be found “well-pleasing” or “acceptable” (see the following passages for the same word: Rom. 12:1-2; 14:18; Eph. 5:10; Phil. 4:18; Col. 3:20; Tit. 2:9; Heb. 13:21) to the Lord when He calls him to examination. In verse 10 Paul explains why we should make it our constant ambition to please the Lord, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

It is well and good to think about the rapture of the Church and the joyous possibility that we may be among that privileged number of believers who will be alive on the earth when Christ shall return to the air for His own (1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51ff.). But so many of God’s people seem to lose sight of the fact that after the rapture we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account, not of our sins, but of our service. If nothing else will motivate us to so live as to be approved by Him in that day, this sobering truth should.

Generally speaking, we all have a natural inclination to please ourselves. This is the bent of the old nature. However, all believers have a new nature, and not only a new nature but the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit within. He it is who enlightens and enables us to holiness of life, and as part of that holiness of life there is the important matter of being continually ambitious to please the Lord. Furthermore, it is the Spirit’s ministry to show us Christ who “pleased not Himself” (Rom. 15:3), and who could truly say concerning His voluntary

and submissive relationship to the Father, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29).

If we have the smile of God upon our life and service, we need not be concerned about the frown of the world.

We come now to the third and final New Testament passage dealing with the subject of ambition. Though we have placed this passage last in our study, chronologically it stands first since it is found in the earliest of Paul's letters, and in it the Apostle exhorts believers to be

Ambitious to Pursue Quietness

Having just exhorted the Thessalonian saints to "increase more and more" in divine love toward one another, Paul goes on to say, "And that ye study (be ambitious) to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thess. 4:11). Actually, the opening words of this verse, "study to be quiet," present somewhat of a paradox, the idea being that of a restless striving after tranquility.

In their joint remarks on The Epistles to the Thessalonians, C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine have commented on this text, in part, as follows:

The ambition of the world lies along the path of emulation and strife toward the goal of personal distinction; this the child of God is to eschew, that he may lead a tranquil and quiet life (1 Tim. 2.2), and that in him Christ may be magnified (Phil. 1:20).

But though he may escape the excitements of social and political life, the Christian is exposed to the more subtle dangers of religious excitement always a chief hindrance to love of the brethren, for as fever prevents the due

discharge of the functions of the body, so does excitement the healthy activities of the “spirit” (p. 124).

The word “quiet” means tranquility of mind (see Luke 14:4; 23:56; Acts 11:18). Alas, how few in this hurrying, hectic and harassing “jetomic age” really strive to be quiet! Many physical and spiritual ills existing among Christians would be cured if this precept were practised as it should be, but when selfish ambitions govern the life there can only be unrest. It is only when the Lord Jesus Christ is allowed complete control that there will be rest and the fulfillment of this exhortation to be ambitious to have no ambition of our own. The remainder of the verse reveals that such an ambition involves two things: the minding of our own business, and working with our own hands.

There was apparent restlessness among some of the Thessalonian saints because they foolishly believed that since the Lord’s return would be very soon there was no need to work. As a result, their idleness made them restless and their restlessness gave way to two things: meddling in other people’s affairs, and sponging off other Christians in the assembly. That Paul’s exhortations went virtually unheeded is indicated in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. The great purpose in the fulfillment of these exhortations in the lives of God’s people is that an honest or decent testimony might be exhibited before unbelievers. While Christians are admonished not to be conformed to the standards of the world, at the same time we must so live our lives in the world as to fulfill what unbelievers would reasonably expect of those professing to know Christ and be His followers. A godly life will exhibit to unbelievers the difference between idleness and diligence, confusion

and order, sponging and honorable independence. All too often the truth is evil spoken of because of careless or indifferent Christians and, of course, because of those who say they are Christians and are not (see 2 Pet. 2:2).

Here, then, is what the New Testament reveals on the subject of ambition. Are you ambitious? Ambitious to preach the gospel, ambitious to please the Lord, ambitious to pursue quietness? How are you answering this question in your life?

Builders Beware

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Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Midst today's sphere of Christian profession it seems especially easy for many believers to be impressed to the point of being "swept away" by men's personalities, rather than by or with their spiritual work. As a result, large numbers of believers are often "taken in" by someone who will not really build them up in the Lord, although considerable entertainment is afforded to his listeners and would-be followers, such entertainment having a definite appeal to the flesh. In dealing with this, and other matters in 1 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul compares true Christian service to building a house, thus pursuing the metaphor of 3:9.

The Firm Foundation (3:10-11)

Continuing with the thought of building, Paul relates that as a "wise" or "skilled master builder" he had gone to Corinth, preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified thereby laying the foundation, and now it remained for all other preachers and teachers to "take heed" how they built on that foundation. The Apostle took no credit for himself, but with manifest humility stated that whatever was accomplished was as a result of God's grace given to him.

Having preached the Person and work of Christ to them, he declares in verse 11 that there is only one foundation — namely, Jesus Christ. No other will do. Yet, some had either come to Corinth or else had risen from within the local assembly who were effectively preaching divisive doctrines contrary to God’s Word. Of such they needed to be warned.

The Fiery Test (3:12-15)

These verses and their context relate particularly to preachers and teachers, although extend, of course, to all true believers.

The Scriptures disclose at least three judgments of the Christian:

1. In the past as a sinner (Isa. 53:6; Gal. 3:13; Rom. 5:8; 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:17).
2. In the present as a son (1 Cor. 11:29-32; Heb. 12:5ff.; 1 John 5:16).
3. In the future as a servant (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:9-15; 2 Cor. 5:10-11).

It is this last judgment with which these verses are concerned. It is yet future and will take place either “in the air” or somewhere within the precincts of Heaven itself. In the Word of God it must be distinguished from two other future judgments which take place after this one. They are:

1. The judgment of the living (existing) nations at the “throne of His glory” at the beginning of the millennium (Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:4).
2. The general or “great white throne” judgment of the wicked dead after the millennium (Rev. 20:11-15).

The erroneous Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is based on passages like 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, but these verses clearly reveal that the fire will try the works of the individual believer, not the worker himself. Thus, the service of the believer, not his salvation and security, is the issue of the judgment seat of Christ.

As already stressed, this judgment has only to do with believers, and it is on the basis of the quality of their service that rewards will be given. The standard of judgment will be faithfulness, not success (1 Cor. 4:2), and with Christ as the Judge. A sobering note is struck in verse 14. Some believers will receive no reward, but will “suffer loss.” What does this expression really mean? Elaborating on this point J. R. Caldwell has given the following helpful explanation:

“What loss, then, will he suffer? I say he will be an eternal loser. He will lose the reward that he might have received. There is a kingdom coming, a manifested kingdom. Christ will be the King and His saints are to reign with Him. It is with reference to that coming kingdom that our works will be tried. The place we shall occupy in that kingdom — the place of honour and authority — will be determined according to faithfulness in the smaller stewardship of our service on earth. This is shown in the parable of the nobleman (Luke xix. 12, etc.). The same is taught in 2 Peter 1:11 ‘For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’ This may be illustrated by the cases of Abraham and Lot; the one was called ‘the friend of God,’ and maintained the path of faith and obedience. Such an one will have an abundant entrance into the coming kingdom. Lot, on the other hand, was ‘saved so as by

fire” — all his works destroyed, a saved man — but his life was a lost life” (The Charter of the Church, 1, pp. 96-97).

W. E. Vine has interestingly pointed out that in Greek contracts a workman who put in bad work was fined (First Corinthians, p. 52).

What kind of materials are we building on the one foundation (3:12)?

Let us make sure that we seek at all times to build for the eye of the Architect.

The Fearful Warning (3:16-17)

The opening “know ye not” in verse 16 marks the first of a series of such appeals in this letter (cf: 5:6; 6:2; 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:23, 24).

While it is true that every believer is a temple of God indwelt by the Holy Spirit, here the collective aspect of the local church is in view, the same being God’s temple. Verse 17 forth-rightly declares that if some professed teacher comes along and in any way wrecks the local testimony, God will destroy him. Obviously, false teachers are in view, yet Vine has given the following caution: “Those who teach the Word of God should tremble lest even unintentionally they injure the structure they are seeking to erect” (Ibid., p. 53).

At this point we do well to recall the words of James, who wrote: “My brethren, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment” (James 3:1).

The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom (3:18-20)

“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this age, let him become a fool, that he may be wise” (3:18). These words readily recall the teaching of 1:18-25 (see 4:10). Those who are true followers of Christ are esteemed as fools in the eyes of the world.

A number of years ago I recall a friend of mine telling about a Christian man who used to walk the busy streets of a large mid-western city wearing signboards and seeking opportunities to witness to curious passersby. To be sure, he must have been an unusual sight to all who encountered this “sidewalk evangelist” sauntering along with his head sticking out between two signboards. On the front board were the words, “I’m a fool for Christ’s sake,” and on the back signboard was the question, “Whose fool are you?”

Not all Christians would agree with this dear man’s method, but we certainly can’t argue with his message. How infinitely better to be called “a fool” for Christ’s sake than to end up being the Devil’s fool.

The opening words of verse 19 — “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” — sum up the teaching of 1:20-25. In turn, Paul uses two Old Testament quotations (Job 5:13; Psalms 94:11) to confirm God’s estimate of human wisdom.

The Fathomless Wealth of Believers (3:21-23)

Christians are not to glory in men, not even in a Paul or an Apollos, as though somehow we belonged to them. On the contrary, they belong to us. In other words, all

the gifts which God has given to the Church are for the benefit and blessing of His people.

As I sit at my desk and write this article, just to my left are numerous shelves holding hundreds of volumes, and I see such names as Barnhouse, Chafer, Darby, Gaebelin, Goodman, Hodge, Kelly, Lloyd-Jones, Mackintosh, Morgan, Robertson, Scroggie, Thomas, Unger, Vine, Walvoord, Wolston, and dozens of others. Some of these gifted men I have been privileged to know personally, while others wrote long before I was born. Now, the point is this, God gave these men as gifts to the Church, and as a member of that Church, they all belong to me. They were placed in the Body of Christ for my blessing and edification — and for yours, too — and many times I have expressed my gratitude to our Lord for these gifted servants whose writings and ministry have been, and continue to be, such a blessing and help in my own personal study of God's Word.

Someone has called verse 22 “an inventory of the possessions of the child of God.” Christian workers, the world, life, death, things present, and things to come all belong to us because we belong to Christ, and Christ is God's (3:22-23). What folly, then, to form parties and cause divisions in the church!

In conclusion, observe that in this passage (3:10-23) there are three kinds of service: 1. indestructible (3:14); 2. invalid (3:15); and 3. injurious (3:17).

What kind of service are you rendering in your life?

Builders Beware!

Christ Walking on the Water

W. Ross Rainey (John 6:15-21)

In the preceding miracle of the loaves and fishes (John 6:1-14), the Lord Jesus Christ is seen as the Source of Life, whereas in this fifth “sign” of John’s Gospel He is revealed as the Sustainer of Life. While the multitude recognized Christ as “that Prophet” (6:14; see 1:21) of whom Moses spoke (Deut. 18:5), they utterly failed to see the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour of sinners and their deep personal need of Him. Instead, Christ in His omniscience “perceived” that they would seek to take Him by force and make Him their political leader and sovereign (6:15). In view of this, He withdrew Himself from them, this not having been the first time He took such note of men’s motives (see 2:24-25).

The crowd had failed Christ as Prophet, and now they wanted to make Him King, but they failed to realize that before He could reign as King He had to be Priest, offering Himself as a sacrifice for sins (Heb. 9:28). As to the Saviour’s kingly office, it is well to remember that He was born “King of the Jews” (Matt. 2:2), and needed not to be made such.

The Scene

While Christ dismissed the crowd, He in turn had sent the disciples westward across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. Thus the Lord was fulfilling His purposes in their lives as they obeyed His instructions. As the disciples sailed across the sea, darkness was upon them, even as it is in a spiritual sense upon believers today in this ever darkening age in which we live. While Christ is

physically absent from this earthly scene, believers are His lights, or luminaries, in a dark world. However, some day all Christians will eternally dwell in the light of the New Jerusalem, for it is written: "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). Meanwhile, it is the blessed responsibility of every believer to keep on shining (no whining please!) for Christ (Phil. 2:15).

The Storm

The Lord Jesus had sent His disciples into the darkness and subsequent storm for the primary purpose of testing. This experience was a real test of their faith and patience, and in like manner our loving and lovely Lord tests all His own in the storms of life which He purposes and allows, in that coming eternal day there will be no more sea to remind us of the wicked or of the storms of life (see Isa. 57:20; Rev. 21:1). Nevertheless, for the present, storms are necessary for our spiritual growth and development.

John Milton said, "Who can suffer best, best can do." Another has rightly stated, "The worth of a man's religion is determined by the help which it affords him in dark days." And still another has written, "There are no great souls without great trials."

Sometimes the Lord makes us wait midst the storms of life before He reveals Himself in order that we might see His hand at work in an unusually wonderful way and thereby appreciate Him more. This truth is readily illustrated in the record of John 11. Christ remained two days where He was instead of going immediately to Bethany to heal the sick Lazarus whom He loved, by

design allowing Lazarus to die, but only that He might subsequently go and restore Lazarus' body back to life after it had been four days in the grave, thereby revealing the glory of God in a much greater way than if He had immediately gone to Bethany and simply healed Lazarus' sick body.

Meanwhile, until the Lord sees fit to reveal Himself to us in the storms of life, we can and always should rest completely upon such precious promises as Isaiah 30:18, Matthew 28:20 and Hebrews 13:5. If we but seek His will, all shall ultimately "work together" for His glory and for our good (Rom. 8:28).

The Saviour

The Lord Jesus Christ was by no means indifferent to the needs and circumstances of His disciples, and so with us (Matt. 6:32; 1 Pet. 5:7). All along He had been observing them, but remaining out of sight until He had tested them. It is to the credit of the disciples that midst the darkness, storm, and lack of the Lord's physical presence they continued rowing. Mark describes them as "toiling" (Mark 6:48), conveying the idea that they were fatigued by their strenuous efforts, all serving to instruct our own hearts that we should keep pressing on even when "in the dark" and "all at sea" about our circumstances. However, about the fourth watch (Matt. 14:25; Mark 6:48), or about 3:00 A.M., the Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples some three to four miles from where they started. He does not promise His own deliverance from trial, but He does promise deliverance out of it (see Dan. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:13).

The faith of the disciples was weak in that they did not expect deliverance, while Peter's experience of walking

on the water to Christ is not recorded by John (cf. Matt. 14:28ff.). As a result of his unusual experience Peter knew what it was to be “kept by the power of God,” perhaps this very incident serving as the background of his words in 1 Peter 1:5. Just two parts of Christ’s infinitely gracious and comforting message to His disciples, spoken as He approached them walking on the stormy sea, are recorded by John. The Lord’s full statement was: “Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid” (Mark 6:50; this is one of the three “good cheer” statements of Christ recorded in the Gospels: see Matthew 9:2, John 16:33).

W. Graham Scroggie has aptly said, “Why should we wonder that Jesus went to His disciples walking upon the sea, or that, on His arrival the wind ceased? Christ is Lord of both the bread and the billows. He can multiply the one, and mollify the other.”

The Significance

Looked at as a whole there are many profitable lessons to be gleaned from this miracle found in Matthew, Mark and John, and these lessons may be classified in a twofold manner: parabolically and prophetically.

Parabolically. (1) Storms are God’s will and obedience to Him in the midst of life’s storms will yield fruit for His eternal glory and for our good. However, some storms may be the result of our own disobedience to His Word (e.g., Jonah). Just as Jonah was brought to the end of himself (Jonah 2:9), so the Lord may have to bring us to the end of ourselves through life’s storms, making us realize our utter helplessness apart from Him. In addition it is well to remember that sometimes Satan, “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2), is behind

life's storms (e.g., Job; Paul's "thorn in the flesh"), as was probably the case here. (2) The Lord was continually mindful of His disciples even though He did not immediately reveal Himself. (3) The Lord's perfect will is not perceived apart from toil and continuing on with Him. (4) Midst the storm Christ keeps us safe.

Dr. Scroggie has said, "Christ has not promised His people a smooth passage, but only a safe landing. In embarking upon the Christian life we are not guaranteed a sun-lit sea, but, rather, are advised of a storm-tossed ocean; but we are promised the presence of Christ; and it is far better to be in a storm with Him than in a calm without Him. The trouble is that too often we do not recognize Him when He comes."

Prophetically. From the details of this miracle a number of significant lessons may be gleaned which suggest the Lord's ministry on behalf of His own in this present age. (1) In John 6:15 the Lord Jesus departed (cf. Acts 1:9). (2) While the disciples were toiling midst the darkness and storm, Christ was praying for them (cf. Heb. 7:25). (3) Midst the darkness and storm Christ is coming again for His own (John 14:1-3; Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58).

It is noteworthy that at first the disciples did not recognize the Lord in the storm (John 6:19). It was not that their sight was dimmed, but that their minds were dulled. May we not fail to recognize our Lord's presence in the storms of life, nor may we fail to be expecting Him when He at last comes again to take us out of the darkness and distresses of this sin-sick world (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; Tit. 2:13). The spiritual secret of such readiness is found in 1 John 2:28.

All is well when the Lord Jesus Christ is received into the ship of life (John 6:21), and so with the “ship of state” (cf. Psa. 33:12; Prov. 14:34). In Matthew 14:33 we read at this particular point that the disciples worshipped Christ. Today the Lord is seeking worshippers. Have you gladly received Him into your boat?

Christian Victory

Traveling in both Canada and the United States I have discovered that on the material level there is a great variety of standards of living, and the variety that can be seen materially is also visible spiritually. Midst the rampant materialism of this present age, what is your spiritual standard of living as a Christian? Our Saviour-God has both purposed and provided that we should live a victorious Christian life, yet such a life among God's people today seems to be the exception, not the rule. It was so at Corinth in Paul's day. Some, who had been living a true standard life, were actually living a very low standard life. Such were called "carnal" (1 Cor. 3:1-4), for they were immature, party-spirited, envious, walking like natural men (i.e., the unsaved), and "dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:11).

Therefore, the question is asked, "How may I rise from the low or mediocre standard to the true, high standard of a victorious Christian life?" It is the purpose of this study to try and intelligently answer this important question by consulting the Holy Scriptures. Our first consideration in regard to this question and its attending subject is

Its Profound Significance (1 Cor. 2:14-3:4)

Right at the outset of our study there are two things we need to clarify immediately. First of all, in order to live a victorious Christian life a person must be a Christian — he must be "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17). Many are trying to live a Christian life who have never been born again. A person becomes a Christian not by heredity, self-

determination, the religious ceremonies of man, the keeping of ordinances, environment, education, or by joining a church, but by receiving a Person — the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12-13). Secondly, living a victorious Christian life does not mean living a life of sinless perfection. Paul readily answers this aspect himself (Phil. 3:12-14), no one having lived any more victoriously in Christ than he, yet making no claim to sinless perfection in his practice.

Living a victorious Christian life is realizing that we are in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He in us (John 14:20), the key to Paul's victorious Christian life being summed up in his own words in Galatians 2:20—"not I, but Christ liveth in me."

It was Captain Reginald Wallis who said that the greatest thing he had learned since becoming a Christian was that he could not live the Christian life. Rather, Christ, in all His fulness, must be permitted to live in and through us, not just on the threshold but on the throne of our lives, for only then can genuine spiritual growth, practical holiness, and conformity to Christ be as they ought to be in our daily experience.

We come now to the second main consideration of our subject, being a development of what has been briefly set forth in our preceding comments, and that is

Its Primary Secret (Rom. 6:1-13)

The Christian's union with Christ not only involves the blessed reality of his being in Christ, and of Christ being in him, but also his identification with Christ in the Saviour's death, burial and resurrection. Someone may say, "Well, theoretically, this is all fine, but what about

the practical reality of it in our experience?” The secret and thus the answer, to such a valid query is clearly revealed in Romans 6:1-13, there being three key words to lay hold of in this classic passage. The first one is:

“Know” (Rom. 6:3). God wants us to know that, having truly believed on Christ, we have been judicially identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. This is not something we attain to, nor is it some sort of crisis which takes place in the believer’s life through something he does. Rather, this is a fact which is true of all believers from the moment of their salvation. We individually believed on Christ for salvation in view of our knowing what He did for us at Calvary; now we need to know and believe that we died with Him on Calvary, that our old sin nature — the cause of all our trouble — was nailed to Christ’s cross.

How does this operate in our actual experience? This question is answered by the second key word in our passage:

“Reckon” (Rom. 6:11). The reality of our identification with Christ, and its consequent power, comes in response to our reckoning on this great truth, the Holy Spirit our re-source in the matter (Rom. 8:13). We need to reckon that as Christ died to sin, so also have we died to sin. In other words, I am done with it; sin and I have parted forever. And not only do I reckon that I am dead unto sin, but that I am “alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

One of the best definitions of a Christian is that he is a man back from the dead. This is exactly what Paul is teaching here, as well as in Galatians 2:20.

Finally, our third key word is:

“Yield” (Rom. 6:13 with vs. 16-18). Sin must not be allowed to reign in our mortal bodies; we must not obey its lusts (Rom. 6:12). Instead of continually yielding my members as instruments of unrighteousness, I must once-for-all yield myself to God, even as there is that added sense wherein I should daily, hourly and momentarily yield myself to Him, remembering that heart-obedience is the secret of being God’s free man—free in Christ from the reigning power of sin.

We come now to the third main thing in this important matter of victorious Christian living

Its Practical Safeguards (Acts 2:42)

In order to live a victorious Christian life we need to be in that place whereby we can appropriate the provisions and resources our Lord has given to us. To carry out, in life and practice, the example of the early Christians will, in large measure, assure us of being in that place, so this is the reason for directing you to Acts 2:42. Like the early Christians at Jerusalem, we need to continue steadfastly in:

1. “The apostles’s doctrine” (at that time referring specifically to the oral teaching of the apostles concerning the facts and meaning of Christ’s life, but for us today embracing the N.T. Scriptures). In other words, the daily and diligent reading and study of the Bible is of utmost importance in the believer’s life (cf. Josh. 1:8-9; Psa. 119:105, also vs. 9 and 11; Jer. 15:16; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:2).
2. “Fellowship” (the sharing of spiritual blessings and material mercies, genuine Christian fellowship being

one of the greatest blessings this side of glory; cf. Heb. 10:25).

3. "Breaking of bread" (the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper; cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23ff).

4. "Prayers" (cf. Psalms 5:3; Daniel 6:10; Luke 18:1; Acts 1:14; 6:4; 13: 1-3; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 2:1; 4:2, 12-13; Jude 20).

In concluding our comments on the "how" of victorious Christian living, consider—

Its Promised Sequel (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

Having redeemed us by His marvelous and matchless grace, the Lord desires to reward us for faithful service. One of the five New Testament "crowns" (ie., rewards) proffered to Christians is the "Incorruptible Crown," having been referred to by some as the reward for victorious Christian living (1 Cor. 9:25-26). It is within the grasp of every Christian and should be sought with all diligence as a sequel to a victorious Christ-centered, Christ-empowered life, all such crowns being made possible through Him who was willing to wear that "crown of thorns", (Matthew 27:29). However, there is a price to be paid and, as A. Plummer has summarily said, "No cross, no crown."

"What we need," writes Erich Sauer, "is a permanent attitude of faith, a continual, practical 'Yes' to the Lord, which at the same time means an actual 'No' to sin, a living practical fellowship with Christ as the Crucified and Risen One" (In the Arena of Faith, p. 187).

The provisions for a victorious Christian life are at our disposal; it remains for us to possess and use them.

Christians and Courts

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

As the Apostle Paul continued to deal with the disorders of the Corinthian assembly, the subject of judgment is carried through into chapter 6, thus linking chapters 5 and 6. Here, in 6:1, the question of lawsuits is introduced, and then, in 6:2-11, it is dealt with.

Let's look at these verses from this twofold standpoint, the first thing being:

Paul's Surprise Expressed

In the Greek text the opening words of verse 1 are very emphatic. "Another" means, of course, a fellow Christian. Now, this passage does not teach that a Christian should never go to court. This is something which at times would be impossible for believers to avoid. Even Paul himself, when falsely accused before a Roman governor, said, "I appeal to Caesar" (Acts 25:11). Also, the apostle did the right thing at Philippi when he demanded that the authorities make a public admission that he and Silas had been treated wrongfully and accused unjustly (Acts 16:35-40). Both these things were right and proper, but here it was a different matter altogether, for it involved Christians dragging other Christians before the world's courts.

The thought, then of verse 1 is: how inconsistent for the justified to go before the unjustified for justice! We come now to our consideration of verses 2-11, or what we may call

Paul's Solution Explained

Three times Paul uses the expression, "Know ye not?", or its equivalent (vv. 2, 3, 9), and it is around these three occurrences that he presents the solution to this problem.

A. Christians Shall Judge the World (6:2; cf. Revelation 20:4).

Because we are linked with Christ, to Whom all judgment is committed (John 5:22; Matthew 19:28), we shall some day sit in judgment on the world. This being the case, we should be able to presently judge trivial matters that arise among ourselves (Psalms 133:1 with Galatians 5:15).

B. Christians Shall Judge Angels (6:2-8; cf. John 5:22; 2 Peter 2:4, 9; Jude 6).

Still further, Paul reminded the Corinthians that some day they would judge angels. Since this is so, how much more should Christians be able to judge the things pertaining to this life.

A translation problem arises in verse 4, and it is best remedied by placing a question mark at the end of the statement. In this way, it reads, "Are you setting them to judge who are least esteemed by the church?" Verse 5 presents an ironical suggestion that there may not be a wise person among the "wise" Corinthians.

"Fault" in verse 7 may be translated "defeat," the point being that going to court against a brother represents a loss of the case already. But someone might say, "Paul, you really don't understand, this brother cheated me out of a legitimate and lucrative business deal." The apostle's answer is, "Why not take the wrong? Why not

allow yourself to be defrauded?" Two wrongs don't make a right, and it's a lot better to receive a wrong than to commit one.

The words of verse 8, however, make it clear that the Corinthians were not willing to accept the wrong and be defrauded. Instead, they were doing wrong and in reality defrauding their own brothers in Christ (cf. Matthew 5:38-42 with Romans 12:19; see Matthew 18:22; Psalms 136).

What havoc, hatred, revenge, and retaliation have wrought in the world, and on occasion, even among God's people. The Lord's Word for His own is "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:30-32). If we disobey God's Word, we not only grieve the Holy Spirit and hurt other people but end up hurting ourselves as well.

The account is told of a tenant farmer who from time to time renewed his lease. He had worked long hours year after year and had made the farm a model of its kind. One day the agent mentioned to him that the owner would require the farm for his son, who was about to be married. The farmer was greatly upset and made a number of offers in hopes that his terms would affect the owner's decision. All his overtures, however, were in vain. The day drew near when the farmer had to vacate the home, and then he did something he had decided upon in his weeks of angry brooding. He gathered seeds

of all the pests of the land, and when it was dark he moved up and down over that fertile, clean soil sowing the bad seed. The next morning bright and early the agent rode up to the door and informed him that the owner had changed his mind, his plans having fallen through, and he would be glad to renew his lease. The agent did not understand the farmer's cry, "Oh, what a fool I've been!"

C. Christians Alone Shall Inherit God's Kingdom (6:9-11).

The unrighteous are not qualified to judge; only the righteous may judge. Paul is not implying that Christians can practice such sins as listed here and be lost, but that those who practice such sins are not Christians.

And what a sordid list it is! The apostle cites fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. Of this list, Dr. A. T. Robertson, the famous New Testament Greek scholar, has said, "All these will fall short of the kingdom of God. This was plain talk to a city like Corinth. It is needed today. It is a solemn roll call of the damned even if some of their names are on the church roll in Corinth whether officers or ordinary members" (Word Pictures in the New Testament, IV, p. 119).

"And such were some of you..." (6:11). What depths there are to the grace of God! "Washed," "sanctified," and "justified" represent the new position of the Corinthians. The fact that "sanctified" is mentioned before "justified" poses no problem since Paul is stressing positional truth (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30), not the chronological order of their experience in Christ.

Keep in mind, though, that there is a sense in which every Christian was sanctified before he was justified (cf. Ephesians 1:4). These three things, then, speak of the Corinthians' cleansing, calling, and standing, respectively. "Justified" stands last as a fitting climax to the argument about seeking justice before the unjust (6:1-8).

It is important to observe that 6:11 testifies to the doctrine of the Trinity. All three Persons of the Godhead are active in the believer's washing, sanctification, and justification.

How blessed to be able to sing from the heart:

O joy of the justified, joy of the free!

I'm washed in that crimson tide opened for me;

In Christ, my Redeemer, rejoicing I stand,

And point to the print of the nail in His hand.

O sing of His mighty love,

Sing of His mighty love,

Sing of His mighty love,

Mighty to save!

If at any time we are tempted to take another Christian to court, let us abide by the clear teaching of God's Word and, if necessary, be willing to suffer wrong for the sake of love. After all, where would any of us be if the Lord brought us before His judgment bar and gave us what we justly deserve? Happily and thankfully, as the Psalmist tells us, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psalms 103:10). Furthermore, the Lord Jesus

Christ is our standard and He has left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21), the steps of this One Who “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

Christ's Most Public Miracle

W. Ross Rainey (John 6:1-14)

This miracle has been generally called, "The Feeding of the Five Thousand," but this was the number of men only (Mark 6:44). In view of this fact, it has been more effectively entitled, "The Feeding of the Fifteen Thousand." If we allow a wife and child for each man, it is certainly not unreasonable to assume the conservative figure of 15,000 people (bachelors notwithstanding!) as the number who witnessed and benefited from this important miracle of the Lord Jesus Christ. This miracle, or sign, is of special significance because it is the only one recounted by each of the four Evangelists — Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The only other miracle resembling it is Christ's changing of water into wine, as recorded in John 2:1-11. All other miracles wrought by the Lord — at least those that we know about — during His earthly ministry were characterized by amending or restoring something already in existence. These two miracles clearly and conclusively demonstrate the Deity of Christ, manifesting His glory. He is the Creator. Of additional interest and significance is that together these two particular signs concern bread and wine, symbols of the Lord Jesus Christ's body and blood.

Arthur W. Pink has suggested four reasons why this sign was singled out by the Spirit of God for special prominence: 1. Its evidential value (it was the most public of all the Lord's miracles), 2. Its intrinsic nature (There was a creation of food), 3. Its typical import (the Person of Christ is especially set forth, while In His other miracles His power is stressed), and 4. Its

universal application (it contains important lessons for all, believers and unbelievers alike).

The Lord Jesus wrought only a few miracles after this one. It closed His public Galilean ministry, for hereafter He devoted Himself mainly to His disciples.

The Circumstances

The opening words of John 6 refer to what has preceded in 5:1-47, while Mark 6:30 discloses that the disciples had just returned from their first preaching tour. The tenses of the verbs in 6:2 indicate that it was a customary thing for the multitude to see miracles performed by Christ. While multitudes followed after Him out of curiosity or some other similar reason, how tragic that so few were truly drawn to Him as the Saviour, thus acknowledging their sins and helplessness. Is there not a striking parallel of this to be found in our own day and age? And so has it been down through the centuries.

Withdrawing for a season from the unbelieving multitude, Christ retired with His disciples to a mountain (6:3), impressing upon us the necessity and importance of the Lord's servants being alone with Him (cf. Mark 6:31; see Psa. 27:14; 62:5; Isa. 40:31).

Furthermore, it was Passover time, typifying Christ our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7 with Ex. 12:1-28). In the Jewish observance of this feast it was eaten with unleavened bread for a week after, the typical significance of this being fulfilled in Christ (see 6:22-59, especially vv. 35 and 48). However, what had once been one of the feasts of Jehovah, filled with meaning for God's covenant people, had now degenerated into merely "a feast of the Jews" (6:4). It was ritual without reality.

The Disciples

Since the dignity and glory of the Son of God are stressed by the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel, Christ's "compassion" is not cited here as in Matthew 14:14 and Mark 6:34. The disciples lacked compassion (Mark 6:35), and on this occasion two of them in particular — Philip and Andrew — come into focus. Note well that trials come to test us (6:5-6). Philip, absorbed with the circumstances instead of the Saviour, looked to mere natural resources, calculated, and came out wrong. Apparently all that the disciples had collectively was 200 denarii (each denarius was worth 16 cents and was then equivalent to a day's wage), and Philip knew that this was not enough money with which to buy bread so that each one in the crowd might take a little. Philip unfortunately forgot that Christ had previously changed water into wine and if necessary could change stones into bread. As W. Graham Scroggie has said, "Forgetfulness may make an infidel out of you."

While Andrew at least made a suggestion and went one better than Philip, he nonetheless doubted. Scroggie has said that "Andrew is like a person who goes to bathe, but who, feeling the chilly water, fears to take the plunge. If only someone would push these people in!" At any rate, Andrew's suggestion proved fruitful, the record here giving us something of an insight into his manner and personality. He must have been a very persuasive type of person. If you don't think so, try talking a hungry lad out of his lunch!

The fact remains that both disciples calculated without Christ, looking at natural resources midst their circumstances, at the same time being occupied and

overcome by the circumstances themselves. Dare we criticize the unbelief of Philip and Andrew in the light of our own lives and failures? Sometimes I feel awfully like the man of Mark 9:24, who cried, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

The Sign

Although the disciples failed in their faith they did not fail in their obedience to the Lord's commands. He directed them to make the crowd "sit down" (6:10) so that they might be fed in an orderly fashion. Our God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). By means of the "green grass" (Mark 6:39) Christ comfortably cushioned the crowd.

Verses 11 and 12 disclose the Lord's action in regard to the young lad's lunch and the accompanying miracle. As the loaves and fishes were passed from one to the other their substance was multiplied through the creative power of Christ, so much so that there were twelve baskets filled with fragments that remained (perhaps a basket for each disciple! — Luke 10:7). The gathered leftovers supply us with a strong case against any kind of wanton wastefulness, in addition to demonstrating that there was more than enough food for all to be filled.

The Lessons

Besides those already brought out in our study, there are other spiritual lessons to be gleaned from John's account of this highly significant miracle, the following important lessons being among them. (1) The lad with the loaves and fishes had to be willing to give what he had to the Lord. No matter how little we may think we have, let us be willing to yield it to Him, for there is no telling to

what extent He may bless and multiply it to hungering souls, remembering such things as Shamgar's ox goad, Gideon's 300, David's sling, and Dorcas' needle. (2) The disciples were the distributors of the food as Christ's servants (1 Cor. 3:9), significant of the fact that He has chosen human instrumentality to dispense the gospel. (3) The Lord Jesus gave thanks for the loaves and fishes, leaving us His example that we should give thanks for our "daily bread." (4) Christ is revealed as all-sufficient for every need. (5) Christ is further revealed as the Source of Life, demonstrating what He later taught concerning Himself as "the Bread of Life" (in 6:53), "eat" and "drink," both in the aorist tense, speak of believing on Christ for salvation; whereas in 6:56, "eateth" and "drinketh," both in the present tense, speak of daily and habitual feeding on Christ for spiritual strength and sufficiency). (6) The bread itself suggests Christ's body given for us, reminding us that in His flesh He endured the oven of God's fiery wrath and righteous judgment against sin when He suffered, shed His precious blood, and died on the cross (cf. Psalms 22; Isaiah 53; 2 Cor. 5:21; see the Gospel accounts of His sufferings and death on Calvary). (7) "Only Christ could provide for 5,000 unexpected guests. Sit down when and where He tells you, and open your mouth wide" (W. Graham Scroggie).

The words at the end of 6:14 unfold a little discernment on the part of the multitude, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world," yet they are a disappointing sequel to so great a revelation of divine doing. How like the multitudes today who utterly fail to realize who the Lord Jesus Christ really is, and that He alone is the Saviour!

Deciding the Doubtful

“Is it right for me as a Christian to do this, or go there?” is a question often asked, especially by young people, who at times are puzzled by the righteous or unrighteous character of some proposed course of action. The question, “Is it right for me to rob a bank (even if I give the ‘take’ to foreign missions)?” is clearly answered in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament (cf. Ex. 20:15; Eph. 4:28), but there are those problems of conduct which are questionable or doubtful and pose real problems that must be faced by all of us.

At the outset of our study we want to clarify four things:

1. The Bible has either the definite answer to, or the guiding principles for, every circumstance and problem in life.

2. While it is true that the Christian is “under grace” (Rom. 6:14), unquestionably the most exalted position of the ages, grace has its rules, the believer being “under...law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21).

Nine of the Ten Commandments are reiterated in the New Testament where they are greatly widened in their application. The letters of Paul contain many restrictions, taboos and prohibitions (e.g., Eph. 4:17 ff.; Col. 3:5-4:6), these being presented in either a positive or negative way. While Christianity is emphatically positive, the negative is by no means eliminated. Grace, or liberty in Christ, is not license, although some have twisted it in this way. Nevertheless, such a distorted view of grace in no way nullifies its motivating power.

Charles C. Ryrie has well said: "Grace not only provides the motive but also the standard for conduct today. God has given clear instruction in His Word concerning the daily walk of the believer, and these teachings of grace, entirely separate from any other rule of life in the Scriptures, stand complete in themselves. Furthermore, these standards are the very highest in all of God's Word, and although most Christians will admit this fact, there is sometimes ignorance of the specific criteria which God has set forth for the daily life under grace" (Our Hope, Jan. '53, p. 494).

3. There must be a willingness to do God's will (John 7:17).

"Perhaps ninety per cent of knowing the will of God is to be willing to do His will before you know what it is" (Donald Grey Barnhouse).

4. Prayerfully believe that the Lord will guide you (John 16:13; see also Psa. 25:9; 32:8; 48:14; Isa. 58:11). Now let us pursue two main themes in the development of our vital subject, the first being

Questions to Ask and Answer

1. Will it glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31)? If the doubtful matter is something on which the Lord's blessing cannot be truly asked, then it is best forsaken. Some things may not be wrong in themselves, but because they are practised in ungodly places with ungodly people, participation in them would make us enemies of the cross of Christ. Such cannot be said to glorify God. The glory of God is the manifestation of any or all of His attributes, and to glorify Him is to manifest His holy character.

2. Is it Christ-like (Eph. 5:1 with John 1:18; 14:9; 1 Pet. 2:21)? Is it in accord with the pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ's life (John 4:34)? This represents the how of glorifying God.

3. Is it a weight (Heb. 12:1-2)? G. Campbell Morgan has said that "the things which hinder are not necessarily low or vulgar. They may be in themselves noble things, intellectual things, beautiful things. But if our participation in any of these dims our vision of the ultimate goal in the purpose of God, holds us in our running, makes our going less determined and steady, they become weights and hinder."

4. Does it tend to enslave (1 Cor. 6:12)? Here, it is not a matter of what harm it will do, but rather of what good it is. Things may be quite lawful in themselves (e.g., secular reading, sports, TV, hobbies), yet because they so occupy our time we neglect more important matters. Many habitually indulge in something yet claim they are not slaves to it. Why not give it up just to prove it?

5. Will it strengthen me against temptation? To frequent places or engage in practices that expose us to temptation are things to be shunned in the Christian life (Matt. 6:13; Jas. 1:13-15).

6. Is it expedient (1 Cor. 10:23)? Is it something profitable that will honor God and help my fellow-man?

7. Does it edify (1 Cor. 10:23; 2 Cor. 10:8)? Will it build up our Christian character, service and witness, and will it enable us to build up the local church?

8. Is it characteristic of the world or of the Father (1 John 2:16)? If our purposed course of action is characteristic of the world, we have a clear-cut answer

in 1 John 2:15. Let us not lose sight of the Bible's warnings in such cases as Demas (2 Tim. 4:10), or fail to keep before us such exhortations as the words of Colossians 3:1-2.

We come now to the second main aspect of our study

Principles to Apprehend and Apply

In Romans 14 the Apostle Paul treats at length the subject of doubtful things, and in that important chapter there are several vital principles to apprehend and apply which we want to briefly consider in this second, and concluding, major division of our subject.

1. The liberty of judgment (Rom. 14:3). No Christian has the right to judge another Christian, or Christians, in matters wherein he holds opposed opinions. Simply because someone says a thing is wrong doesn't mean that it is.
2. The Christian is accountable to God alone (Rom. 14:4, 12). The Lord Jesus Christ alone has sovereign right over our actions. Be he pope, archbishop, bishop, elder, or minister, in the final analysis of things we are accountable to no man but to God alone.
3. The right of personal conviction (Rom. 14:5). Do we really make our own decisions, or do we pattern ourselves after someone else's opinions or actions?
4. The forbearance of other believers in doubtful matters (Rom. 14:4, 10, 13). We should so regard the actions of our brethren as we would want them to regard us in our actions. It is not our prerogative to criticize and judge the actions of our fellow-believers, unless the Word of God is clearly violated and discipline is required (e.g., 1 Cor. 5).

5. The right and responsibility to limit our liberty out of love (Rom. 14:13, 21; see also 13:10; 15:1; 1 Cor. 8:13). No man lives to himself (Rom. 14:7), and the believer has the right and responsibility, out of love, to relinquish his rights on behalf of a weaker brother. We are to order our lives in such a way that they will never be a hindrance or a snare to other believers (Rom. 14:13, 21), the same extending to unbelievers as well (cf. 1 Cor. 10:32; Col. 4:5).

We have a splendid example of this principle in the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 9:19-21), and in all our associations how much we need to appropriate the blessed promise of James 1:5 day by day.

6. "When in doubt, leave it out" (Rom. 14:22-23). During my high school days at the Stony Brook School for Boys, L.I., New York, I had an exceptionally fine English teacher, Mr. Pierson Curtis (a grandson, incidentally, of the noted author, editor and Bible teacher, Dr. A. T. Pierson). Well do I remember Mr. Curtis saying, when instructing us in the use of commas in our writing, "When in doubt, leave it out." This is exactly the principle set forth here. Always give God, not Satan or yourself, the benefit of a doubt.

If, after asking all pertinent questions and applying all scriptural principles, we are still uncertain about a matter, then it remains for us to keep praying for the Lord's guidance as to what He would have us do (cf. Psa. 84:11; Phil. 4:6-7; Jas. 1:5, 7).

Perhaps the nutshell secret of the whole subject is found in the words of F. W. Grant, who once said: "The only test of a thing is how it appears in the presence of Christ."

Enoch

The Man Who Walked With God

Scripture Reading:

Genesis 5:21-24

Luke 3:37

Hebrews 11:5-6

Jude 14-15

The Holy Spirit's biography of Enoch is brief but blessed. Of only two men in all the Bible is it written, "he walked with God" (Genesis 5:22, 24). Do you know who the other man was, in addition to Enoch? The words of Genesis 5 clearly reveal that sin issues in physical death, and an almost monotonous refrain builds up throughout the chapter: 'he lived, he begat, and he died'. However, no sooner is the reader virtually lulled by the repetition of these expressions than there is a surprising break in the sequence. While we read of Enoch that he "lived" and "begat sons and daughters," we discover that he did not die. Rather, we learn that "he was not, for God took him" (Genesis 5:24). What was it that made this man's life so different and so outstanding? It was simply this, "Enoch walked with God:'

In our study of Enoch's Bible biography, we want to consider seven things about his walk with God. And in so doing, what a challenge his life and testimony are in view of the New Year opened to us. May our God and Father who deigns to walk with His children instruct our

hearts more fully concerning His desire and design for us that we might walk with Him.

As to Enoch's walk with God, note first of all

Its Start

When did Enoch really start to walk with God? We learn from Genesis 5:21 and 22 that "the first sixty-five years Enoch spent as most people do, accomplishing the common task, but in a common way, with time and sense for his horizons. He believed in God, and offered the daily sacrifice, yet, something was lacking in his life. But one day a son was born to him, and Enoch was different from that day. After Methuselah was born, his father 'walked with God' for 300 years" (W. Graham Scroggie).

It is apparent that God, in a special way, revealed Himself to Enoch when Methuselah was born. While we do not know the details, the name of Enoch's son implies that God had given him a definite revelation.

Methuselah means "when he is dead it shall be sent." It was as though God told Enoch that the life of the world hung upon Methuselah's life, for when the latter died, then judgment would come. Increased responsibilities, parenthood included, should cast us more and more upon God. It was so with Enoch, for with God's revelation to him in connection with the birth of his son he began to walk with God, something he had not done previously.

Our Lord alone knows what this New Year holds for each one of us, and it may be that He will bring someone or something into our life to draw us out to Himself in such a way that we might truly walk with Him. Surely, "in times like these," with the revelation of Christ's

imminent return and the coming Judgment Seat of Christ, these are sufficient in themselves — or should be — to motivate us to walk with God if we truly know Him and desire to please Him.

The second thing we observe about Enoch's walk with God is

Its Secret

What was the secret of Enoch's walk? For the answer to this question we must turn to Hebrews 11:5 and 6 where, first of all, we read in verse 5, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death." Still further, in verse 6, it is declared, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him." It is only "by faith" that the sinner can come to God and commence to walk with Him (Ephesians 2:8-10), and it is only on the principle of faith that the believer can continue to walk with God (Romans 1:17). Stedfast faith was the secret of Enoch's walk with God, even as whether or not we are genuinely walking with Him will be determined by our complete and continual dependence upon Him, or the lack of it, as the case may be.

As a further thing about Enoch's walk, consider

Its Significance

Walking with God implies at least seven things, and instead of my developing them, you are invited to do this on your own.

Peace (Col. 1:20ff.; Rom. 5:1 with Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 3:15).

Purity (1 John 1:7-9).

Pilgrimage (Heb. 11:8-10, 13; 1 Pet. 2:11).

Perseverance (Heb. 11:27; Rev. 2: 10).

Patience (Heb. 10:36-37. Jas. 5:11).

Progress (Heb. 11:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:18).

Prospect (Phil. 1:23; Heb. 11:10, 14-16).

Wait a minute! Did you really take time out to look up these references and meditate on each point?

Note, also, Enoch's walk as to

Its Spirit

Again the points are given with a view to your reflective development of them.

Pursuit after God (Psa. 42:1; Matt. 6:33; Heb. 11:6).

Submission to God (Jas. 4:7).

Humility before God (1 Pet. 5:6).

Occupation with God (Isa. 26:3; Col. 3:1-2).

Realization of God (Psa. 63; John 20:26-29).

Another vitally important feature of Enoch's walk is

Its Separation

Enoch's walk with God was one of complete separation from the world and all else that is opposed to God.

Enoch's name means "consecration," and he lives up to its meaning. Regarding his separated walk, C. H.

MacIntosh said, "It is very evident that Enoch knew nothing whatever about the mode of 'making the best of both worlds.' To him there was but one world. Thus it should be with us" (Notes on the Book of Genesis, p. 82).

Concerning Enoch's godly life, W. Graham Scroggie has commented, "Such a life is invincible. Enoch did not

cease to be a public man and a family man (Gen. 5:22). He stood in his lot and accomplished his task as before, but now from a new motive, and in a better way. Consecration does not lift us out of the world, it teaches us how to live in it."

A sixth pertinent fact about Enoch's walk with God is

Its Saviour

For 300 years, and in an increasingly dark and difficult day, Enoch had this testimony, "that he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5). Of only two men in all the Bible is such a testimony recorded — namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man (John 8:29), and Enoch. Christ, of course, has the pre-eminence in all things, and no less so here, for He alone could say, "I do always those things that please Him." No believer, not even Enoch, could say this. Nevertheless, we should continually make it our ambition to please God in all things (2 Cor. 5:9, 1 Thess. 4:1). A further fact about Enoch's testimony is that the Holy Spirit has forever placed his name in the lineage of Christ (Luke 3:37). a point generally overlooked by those who trace his Bible biography.

Finally, as to Enoch's walk with God, we note

Its Sequel

Both Moses and the author to the Hebrews tell us the joyous sequel of Enoch's walk with God: "and he was not; for God took Him" (Gen. 5:24); "by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him" (Heb. 11:5).

A little girl once said of Enoch's translation that "one day they walked so far and it was such a long way from

Enoch's home, that God said, 'Enoch, it's getting rather late, and you'd better come home with Me.'"

Forever at home with the Lord, such is the bright and blessed prospect of all who know the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is something especially meaningful to all who, like Enoch, seek to walk with God. And it is a prospect that could well be realized in this New Year.

In God's prophetic program, Enoch reminds us of two special events: (1) He pictures the translation of the Church by virtue of his own translation (1 Thess. 4:16-17). He prophesied the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 14-15).

A truly JOYOUS NEW YEAR to you all, and indeed it will be such if we seek to walk with God, as Enoch did in his day.

Epaphras

Food for the Flock 12:2 (Feb 1966)

A Man Of Prayer (Col. 1:7-8; 4:12-13; Philem. 23)

Real men of prayer are not often found, especially in this busy, fast-moving, “jetomic” age, which age an anonymous wit has summed up as follows: “Hurry, worry, and bury.” Yet, in every period of man’s hectic history, God has always had those who have spent much time in secret communion with Him, even to this very hour. Apart from such prayer warriors the Church of Jesus Christ would be virtually powerless. If we but knew what we owe as believers to the ceaseless intercession of our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, coupled with the faithful intercession of men and women of God, surely we would afresh be driven to our knees in true praise and thankfulness to our Lord, at the same time availing ourselves more often of the priceless privilege of prayer.

Epaphras was a man of prayer and though his Bible biography is brief we are reminded of the fact that “little is much when God is in it.” Tradition relates that James, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus, was called “Camel Knees” because of his calloused knees as a result of long hours spent in prayer, and Epaphras might well be thought of as another “Camel Knees” of the Bible.

Actually, two outstanding things characterize Epaphras, the first being:

His Faithful Service

It is apparent that Epaphras was brought to know Christ as his Saviour and Lord sometime during the period of Paul's three years' ministry at Ephesus (Acts 20:31). Following his conversion experience, he was called by God to take the Gospel of Christ to the unevangelized. In one sense, this is the call and responsibility of every true believer. Engaging in the primitive missionary work committed to him, Epaphras took the message of the Gospel of God's grace to Colossae, then sometime later visited the Apostle Paul who had been imprisoned at Rome. The favorable report which he brought to Paul was a source of joy and encouragement to the beloved Apostle, and later he was sent back to Colossae bearing Paul's letter to the saints of that city.

The Holy Spirit's sterling commendation of Epaphras is both searching and challenging. First of all, from Philemon 23, he is seen at one time to have been a "fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus" with Paul himself. William R. Nicholson has suggested that Epaphras and Aristarchus may have alternated as the Apostle's fellow-prisoners, Epaphras being such while "The Letter to Philemon" was written and Aristarchus serving in the same capacity while Paul's "Letter to the Colossians" was written. Whatever the circumstances may have been it was indeed an honor to have been linked with Paul as a fellow-prisoner in the Lord. Secondly, linking himself with the Colossian Christians, Paul refers to Epaphras as "our dear fellowservant" (Col. 1:7). Though such service was often toilsome, tiresome, and tearful, what a blessed relationship this was, something which Epaphras must have truly cherished. Thirdly, Paul refers to Epaphras not only as "a faithful minister of

Christ" (Col. 1:7), but as "a servant of Christ" (Col. 4:12), the words "minister" and "servant" having the same root, *doulos*, which means "bondslave" (the same word is used of Christ in Phil. 2:7). The keynote struck in Colossians 1:7 in regard to Epaphras' service is that he was "faithful." How important this is, especially in a day wherein unfaithfulness abounds, and how much steadfast service means in the sight of God! "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). Are you consistently faithful in reading God's Word, prayer, upholding the Person and work of Christ, witnessing, assembling yourself with the Lord's people, and in every other aspect of the Christian life?

As a part of Epaphras' faithful service he had brought back a true report of the Colossian saints' love in the Spirit" (Col. 1:8). His declaration regarding the spiritual health of these believers was not exaggerated, minimized, or self-centered. There are times when a big question mark might be placed over certain "glowing reports" which are heard or read in these days when it is so common to exalt man and his attainments, and we preachers in particular need to be ever on our guard to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" when we are led to give any report, either spoken or written, concerning what God by His grace has wrought. Selah.

We come now to the second outstanding characteristic of Epaphras and that which the Spirit of God chiefly underscores through Paul's pen — namely:

His Fervent Supplication

At least three significant things keynoted Epaphras' prayer life.

He was persistent. As the Apostle Paul draws his letter to a close, he reveals the persistency and the faithfulness whereby Epaphras prays for the Colossian Christians, by saying, "...always labouring fervently for you in prayers" (4:12). In other words, there was no letting up or letting down in his prayerful remembrance of them (see 1 Sam. 12:13; cf. Luke 18:1; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 1:3; 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17; Jude 20).

He was persevering. Epaphras prayed things through. Prayer was not a form, but a force in his life. As conveyed by the words "labouring fervently," which are but one word in the Greek text, he literally agonized (*agonizomenos*, Gk.) in the presence of God, and this, for others (4:12). How Christ-like this man was (cf. Mark 10:45; Luke 4:43; 23:35; John 10:16)! Paul uses the very same word in connection with his own prayers on behalf of the Colossian saints (1:29; 2:1).

He was particular. Epaphras did not pray sketchily, but specifically. General petitions will only bring general answers, but specific petitions will bring specific answers coupled with the blessings which accompany such answers. Epaphras' particular petition on behalf of the Colossian believers may well be considered from a three-fold standpoint. First of all, he prayed that they might "stand." How important it is for the people of God, individually and collectively, to both stand and take a stand (cf. Acts 5:20; 1 Cor. 16:13; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 6:13-14; Phil. 1:27; 4:1)! Much of the moral chaos, confusion, and corruption in this present age is directly traceable to the fact that no stand is taken for what is right and righteous. Next, Epaphras prayed that the saints might be "perfect" (contr. 1 Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:12-13), that is, "mature" in spiritual life and growth. A good bit of the

trouble and division which mars and marks God's people stems from spiritual immaturity. Any thought of sinlessness is out of the picture here. Such a state this side of glory is impossible for the believer in Christ, plus the fact that the word for "perfect" is never used in the New Testament in regard to sinlessness. However, those who are making progress in the things of God should, while not sinless, sin less. Finally, he prayed that they might be "complete in all the will of God," that is, that they might be fully assured in all their associations with Him, of all that He has promised and certified through His Word that He is to them, and of their union in Christ. These things we learn by means of our Lord's revealed will through the Scriptures, and such a petition only serves to stress the importance of reading the Word of God day by day, as well as meditating upon it (cf. Col. 2:2; Heb. 6:11; 10:22).

In Colossians 4:13 the Apostle Paul attests the "zeal" of Epaphras in both service and prayer on behalf of the Colossian saints, though the emphasis is primarily upon his prayer ministry, the word for "zeal" meaning "labor," "travail," "pain" or "anguish."

It is related that during one of D. L. Moody's Atlantic Ocean crossings a fire broke out in the hold of the ship. A friend is reported to have said to the famous evangelist, "Mr. Moody, let us go to the other end of the ship and engage in prayer." The heavenly-minded yet down-to-earth Moody replied, "Not so, sir; we stand right here and pass buckets and pray hard all the time."

Such truly reflects the spirit of Epaphras and his ministry, a man of

God who may be looked upon as one of the Elijahs of the New Testament (cf. Jas. 5:16). God grant that in these “last days” the Church of Jesus Christ might be blessed with many more prayer warriors such as Epaphras was in his day. Will you be one of them?

Even while preparing this article a letter came to me from a close friend and fellowlaborer in Christ, assuring me of his prayerful remembrance. Enclosed with his letter was a copy of a poem which serves as a fitting postscript to our study of Epaphras. It was written by Marianne Farningham and is entitled, “Pray One for Another”:

“I cannot tell why there should come to me
A thought of someone miles and miles away,
In swift insistence on the memory—
Unless there be a need that I should pray.
Too hurried oft are we to spare a thought,
For days together, of some friend away;
Perhaps God does it for us, and we ought
To read His signal as a call to pray.
Perhaps, just then, my friend has fiercer fight,
Some overwhelming sorrow or decay
Of courage; darkness, some lost sense of right;
And so in case he needs my prayer, I pray.
Friend, do the same for me! If I unsought
Intrude upon you on some crowded day,
Give me a moment’s prayer, in passing thought;

Be very sure I need it; therefore pray.”

God's Will Concerning You

God's Will Concerning You

W. Ross Rainey

A missionary summed up his desire for the future in one statement: "to be in the center of God's will." There is no higher ambition in the Christian life than to daily "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom.12:2) and, having proved the will of God, to love it and to walk in it.

One means for the Christian to learn God's will is to search the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11); then the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is performed, bringing Christ before the believer and allowing God to speak to the heart, so that the child of God can enter into the experience of the Psalmist: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).

The Bible is the revealed will of God, containing exhortations specifically stated to be His will. If we would seek His will, these precepts must become part of our daily walk.

Three closely linked purposes, relative to His will for His saints, are expressed in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Rejoice Evermore:

Christ and joy cannot be separated. Though He was the "Man of sorrows," "obedient unto death" (Isa. 53:3 Phil. 2:8), the Lord Jesus Christ has given millions of

believers a joy which the world can neither give nor remove. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). A joyous Christian is a strong Christian.

After his conversion and baptism, the Ethiopian eunuch "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). This is as it should be. Can it be said of my Christian life that I "rejoice evermore?"

Godly believers who have passed through deep trial are generally of sober countenance, but each manifests the joy of the Lord, the strength of the soul.

Rejoicing has a prominent place in the Bible. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22). Christ petitioned His Father "that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). The apostle John said: "And these things write we unto you, that your joy might be full" (1 John 1:4).

Peter and others "departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). He reminded his persecuted readers of their salvation and its joy: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice... Whom having not seen, ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:6, 8). James exhorts us to "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (testings)" (Jas. 1:2). Paul exhorts us to "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). He used the words "joy" and "rejoicing" eighteen times throughout the Philippian

epistle. He wrote to Corinth about being “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (11 Cor. 6:10), and to Rome about “that blessed hope” and the coming glory, exhorting the believers to be “rejoicing in hope” (Rom. 12:12).

If all we knew about a person was the fact that he rejoiced evermore, we could be sure that he was saved; going on with God; and bringing Christ before others. If these things can not be observed in our lives through the joy we manifest, we are not fulfilling His revealed and perfect will.

Principal Rainy defined joy thus: “Joy is the flag which is flown from the castle of the heart when the King is in residence there.”

May our lives reveal the joy of the living Christ, and may we be known as those who “rejoice evermore!”

Pray Without Ceasing:

The importance of Christian prayer cannot be overestimated. But what does it mean to “pray without ceasing?” It cannot mean that we should be on our knees all day; such would be impossible. The Greek adverb translated “without ceasing,” is found in a papyrus letter uncovered in the Middle East; the word was used to describe an “incessant” cough; in other words a “recurrent” cough.

This clarifies the meaning of “pray without ceasing.” Prayer should be a continually recurrent exercise in the life of the believer; without this heavenly communion between the Father and His own, God’s heart is grieved and the Christian’s testimony loses its power. Daniel had stated times of prayer: “He went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem,

he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God" (Dan. 6:10). We too, should set aside time for prayer. To be faithful soldiers for our Captain, we must "wait upon the Lord", or we shall fail to triumph over Satan and his hosts. Satan wants no Christian to pray, to read the Word of God, to herald the gospel, to live for Christ, to watch for the Lord's return, or to fulfill God's revealed will at all.

Prayer is an attitude of the soul, aptly summed up thus:

"Prayer is so simple;

It is like quietly opening a door

And slipping into the very presence of God;

There, in the stillness,

To listen to His voice,

Perhaps to petition

Or only to listen,

It matters not

Just to be there

In his presence

Is prayer."

May we come to know more of what it is to "pray without ceasing."

In Everything Give Thanks

Prayer and praise go hand in hand; holiness is linked with both. Paul often links prayer with thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6. Col. 4:2. 1 Tim. 2:1); his prayers are saturated with praise (Eph. 1:15-23; 3:13-21. Col. 1: 9-14). Many of us lack the "peace of God" because we do not pray

and praise enough. How sad, if the saints are worriers instead of warriors, fretful instead of fruitful!

Unthankfulness is a sign of the last days prior to the Lord's return (2 Tim. 3:2). What a tragic commentary on the Christian life when a believer yields to the sin of ingratitude. Sir Moses Montefiore had a fine family motto, "Think and Thank." The Anglo-Saxon word for thankfulness means "thankfulness." Christians need to think only for a moment of their blessed Saviour Who, in the purity and majesty of His adorable Person, condescended to suffer and die on Calvary's cross; praise be to God our Father!

It is not easy to give thanks in everything. Nevertheless, it is God's will that we should be "giving thanks always for all things unto God our Father" (Eph. 5:20). Note the preceding exhortation: "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

Job said: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). Only the Spirit of God can evoke such confident praise as Job displayed in trial. It is God's design for all believers to manifest this same thankful, triumphant trust in all circumstances, but the manifestation of such trust is only in proportion to our yieldedness to the Holy Spirit.

Following grievous losses, Jeremy Taylor kneeled and thanked God that his enemies had left him "the sun and the moon, a loving wife, many friends to pity and relieve, the providence of God, all the promises of the gospel, his faith, his hope of heaven, and his charity toward his enemies."

Every loyal Christian can expect testing (Jas. 1:2, 1 Pet. 4:16), but he should reckon them among the “all things” (Rom. 8:28) which bring glory to God and good to himself (Rom. 8:18. 2 Cor. 4:17-18).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect example and fulfilment of 1 Thess. 5:16-18: He taught His disciples to rejoice (Lk. 10:20); to pray (Lk 11:1-13); and to give thanks (Jn. 6:11-23); He exemplified His own precepts. He desired His joy for His own (Jn. 15:11; 17:13). In His earthly life, His fellowship with the Father was unbroken; the Gospels give us glimpses of His habit of prayer (Matt. 14:23. John 17). When unrepentant cities rejected the Saviour, He gave thanks (Matt. 11:20-27); in view of His death, He gave thanks for the bread and the wine (Lk. 22:19-20). In submission to the Father’s will, the Lord Jesus Christ gave thanks in all circumstances; He delighted in God’s will (Heb. 10:7). As a result of His obedience, the Father said: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Hence, we should ponder these words of the Holy Spirit: “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21).

“It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13); it is our responsibility to be “doing the will of God from the heart:” (Eph. 6:6). Let us press on to greater heights of spiritual victory in our Christian experience.

May the God of all grace grant to each of us the kind of life that declares what it is to: “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give than for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

God's Guide For Christian Giving

2 Corinthians 9

There are two lines in John Bunyan's immortal allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which you may readily recall:

A man there was, though some did count him mad,
The more he cast away, the more he had.

We are naturally so self-centered that even as professing Christians we can be deluded into thinking that the greatest happiness in life is getting rather than giving. Such an erroneous idea, however, is immediately dashed to pieces by the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Acts 20:35. In Acts 20 Dr. Luke recorded the Apostle Paul's parting and final words to the Ephesian elders—one of the most touching scenes of Scripture—exhorting them “to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” The verb for “said” is in the present tense, indicating that this was something continually, or customarily, spoken by Christ. What a revelation to us of His blessed character!

The happiest people in the world are those Christians who give joyously and generously to the Lord. If you do not believe this, then the challenge is set before you in God's Word to try it and see for yourself.

Let's proceed now to a careful and practical study of our sometimes touchy yet important subject as unfolded in 2 Corinthians 9, noting first of all

The Prudence Of Paul's Approach (9:1-4)

When the saints were in need the Apostle Paul was the best beggar imaginable, and the tactful, courteous, prudent manner of his approach serves as a classic pattern for us all. He had already appealed to the example of Christ. (8:9); now he presses on them other points of persuasion.

He begins by telling the Corinthians that they did not need to be reminded of their responsibility to give of their material means, but just the same he did remind them (9:1)! In this instance, of course, the various offerings, including the one from the Corinthian believers, were to be used to help the poverty-stricken saints of Jerusalem and Judea. As A.C. Gaebelien has said: "Gentile believers were to show their appreciation for the blessing which they had received through the Jews, for salvation is of the Jews. We also see in this an illustration of the oneness of the body of Christ, how the members are to minister to earth other" (The Annotated Bible, III, p.181). Surely, Scripture passages like this should prick the social conscience of Christians in wealthy, luxury-laden America, for it appears evident in many ways that we as members of the evangelical community have not ministered as generously as we might to the needs of other believers whose standard of living would appall us if we really entered into their circumstances. Granted, much has been done, but probably very few would argue the point that much more could and should be done (cf. Galatians 6:10). It's like the old saying, which may be applied to virtually every area of life, "When all is said and done, more is said than done."

At any rate, Paul had praised the Macedonians to the Corinthians (8:15), and this, in regard to the former's generous giving, for the Macedonians had given out of their own deep poverty and affliction. Now he tells the Corinthian saints that he had boasted of them to the Macedonians regarding their generous giving, and that those of Achaia had been ready with their collection a year before. In turn, the zeal of the Corinthian believers had inspired many others to give generously (9:2). Having, then, pledged themselves to help, Paul was afraid lest, after boasting of them, he should find them unprepared, and thus be ashamed of having spoken so confidently of them (9:3-4).

Some Christians may object to pledges, but do we not make a pledge to the landlord, the mortgager, the department store—anywhere that we buy on the installment plan? Is God's work of so little importance that we cannot risk a pledge in support of it and His workers?

It was necessary, therefore, that the Corinthians be stirred to their responsibility in this matter, so the apostle pressed upon them

Some Principles Of Christian Giving (9:5-14)

A. It must be "a matter of bounty" and not of extortion (9:5, R.V.). Paul wanted to avoid any appearance of acting like a tax-collector to obtain what they had pledged. "...I should like it to be a spontaneous gift, and not money squeezed out of you by what I have said" (9:5, J.B.P.).

B. He that sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that sows bountifully shall reap bountifully (9:6). This is

a well-established principle which speaks for itself (see Proverbs 3:9-10; 11:24-25).

C. God loves a “cheerful” (Gk. “hilarious”) giver (9:7).

Once upon a time a chicken and a pig were walking down a road. Coming to a church building they saw a sign on it which read: “Ham and Egg Breakfast Here - 8:00 to 10:00 A.M. - Proceeds to Missions.” Said the chicken to the pig, “Look! You and I are now in missions.” The pig complained, “Yes, we are both in missions, but with this difference—you only have to give a contribution, but I have to make a sacrifice!”

The Christian should give:

1. Cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7).
2. Secretly (Matthew 6:2-4).
3. Sacrificially (2 Samuel 24:24).
4. Freely (Matthew 10:8).

A church bulletin had an interesting article entitled, “Cirrhosis of the Giver,” which declared: “This disease was discovered in 34 A.D. by a husband and wife team, Ananias and Sapphira (see Acts 5). It is an acute nervous condition which renders the patient’s hands immobile when he is called upon to move them in the direction of the billfold or the purse, and thence to the offering plate. Remedy: The patient may be removed from the environs of the house of God on Sunday, since it is clinically observable that the condition does not occur on such surroundings as the golf club, supermarket, or restaurant. A more constructive remedy is to point out to the patient how many income tax deductions may be claimed by overcoming the malady. Of course, the best therapy and that which leads to a sure and lasting cure,

is to get right with God, as this affliction is a symptom of a heart need.”

What a wonderful promise is found in verse 8 (note the occurrences of “all”)! God is the One who multiplies the seed and gives the blessing (9:9-10).

D. Giving is an evidence of righteousness (9:9). This verse is a quotation from Psalm 112:9. It must not be taken to mean that we are justified by our giving, nor by any other good work or works. It is here simply a reiteration from the Old Testament that one who truly “feareth the Lord” (Psalm 112:1) manifests the genuineness of his faith in God by such good works as his giving generously to the poor.

E. Their liberality caused thanksgiving to God (9:11-13). The generosity of the Lord’s people caused the recipients of their gifts to truly thank and praise God, and as a result God was glorified and the needs of fellow believers met. Also, such giving is a proof of genuine Christian profession (9:13).

F. It led the recipients to pray for the donors (9:14). J.B. Phillips translates this verse as follows: “And yet further, men will pray for you and feel drawn to you because you have obviously received a generous measure of the grace of God.” In other words, believers who are helped by the gifts of other believers are caused to pray for their benefactors. It is the one recompense—and generally the only one—that the beneficiaries can make on behalf of the donors, being a very precious and meaningful recompense at that. All who live off the gospel can attest to the truth of the principle set forth here.

As fitting now to capstone to the subject, we come now to

The Praise For God's Unspeakable Gift (9:15)

Here, Paul concludes his exhortations on giving by thanking God for "His unspeakable Gift" (the word for "unspeakable" is similar to the Gk. words used in Romans 11:33 and Ephesians 3:8). In the King James translation the word "unspeakable" occurs three times in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 9:15; 12:4; 1 Peter 1:8), but the Greek word is different in each instance.

Bishop H.C.G. Moule has said that the words of this glorious text are both a challenge and a charge. They are a challenge to never forget God's love (John 3:16), and a charge to give as He gave.

A Methodist labourer in John Wesley's time by the name of Captain Webb, when informed of the salvation of someone, would ask, "Was his purse converted, too?"

By the sacrifice of his Person (Romans 12:1), Praise (Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:5), and Purse (Hebrews 13:16), the believer in Christ genuinely and acceptably worships God.

Headship, Headcoverings and Hair

This article by the editor has not been written to stir up controversy over what has become an increasingly touchy issue among the Lord's people. Rather, it is intended to edify and to remind His people what God's Word teaches on a subject which unfortunately has become "old hat" (pardon the expression) in many assemblies today. To my chagrin I have discovered that public ministry on this theme is neither appreciated nor wanted in some quarters.

A fellow servant of Christ, who read with a critical eye a copy of the editor's manuscript, feels I have "begged the question" in the second sentence of paragraph two. In reply to him I stressed that 1 Corinthians is a church letter dealing largely with problems and abuses which had arisen in the local assembly at Corinth. I then asked in what other context other than the local church could this passage be logically interpreted and applied today?

It is not expected that all our readers will agree with the editor's conclusions on this admittedly controversial passage, but any constructive criticisms are both wanted and welcome.

The frequently taught, much misunderstood and highly controversial passage of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 deals essentially with the public worship of Christian women in the meeting of the local church. This eleventh chapter unfolds the third of four main difficulties dealt with by the Apostle Paul in the major division of the letter from 7:1-14:40. They are: (1) marriage (7:140); (2) food offered to idols (8:1-11:1); (3) Christian worship (11:2-34); and (4) spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40).

The first problem Paul tackles concerning Christian worship centres on women praying or prophesying with uncovered heads. His ruling on the matter was that women must cover their heads whenever the local church gathers together, and this, apart from anything to do with local custom (11:16).

Multitudes today, many of them professed evangelical Christians, are espousing the cause of the “Women’s Liberation” movement and loudly proclaiming the equality of the sexes. In view of this, some may find it difficult to accept the teaching of God’s Word relative to their sphere of conduct and service unto the Lord in the local church. Nevertheless, we must accept and obey the teaching of Scripture rather than be influenced and led about by the fads and fancies of the modern and mod (or is it mad?) world around us.

Some think that the teaching of this passage was applicable only in Paul’s day. Others are extreme in their viewpoint, contending that these verses reflect the apostle’s prejudice against women, since at the time he wrote this letter he was single (probably a widower). Still others accept the passage in a simple way, humbly seeking to carry out its teaching, even if a few details are difficult to understand.

Paul advances three main lines of argument to support his view that women should wear veils, or head-coverings, in public worship, the first being:

The Established Order Of God (11:2-6)

The apostle begins by commending the Corinthians for the way in which they had remembered him in everything and had held fast the “ordinances” or

“traditions” delivered to them (v. 2). By commending them as he did Paul was, among other things, using good psychology before directly dealing with their besetting difficulties. “Traditions” is a reference to the oral teaching they had received through him, not to water baptism and the Lord’s Supper, or to practices that had developed in the local church.

Briefly, Paul sets forth three great relationships in the universe involving subordination (v. 3). First, the head of every man is Christ. Second, the head of the woman is man. And third, the head of Christ is God. These subordinations have been established by God and they are basic in His control of the universe. That God is the head of Christ in no way affects our Saviour’s deity, the reference being to His voluntary subjection of Himself to the Father’s will in becoming incarnate in order that He might accomplish the work of redemption. As to His blessed Person, the Scriptures make it quite clear that the Lord Jesus is equal with God the Father (Phil. 2:6; see John 1:1; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3, 8; etc.) Granted Christ’s incarnation affected the outward form of His deity but not the inner essence of it.

Though in God’s order the woman is subject to the man, there is no thought here of any inequality of the sexes (cf. Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:3). Subordination does not necessarily involve inequality. For instance, as a man, a private in the army is in no way inferior to the commanding officer of his particular military unit. In character, he may actually be superior to his commanding officer. As a private, he is “inferior” only in rank; consequently, he must submit to his commanding officer in this capacity. Headship is not the same as

lordship. Man is head over the woman as God the Father is head over the Son.

Man's headship goes back to Genesis 3:16, where we read: "Unto the woman He (the Lord God) said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

The subject of the woman's subordination to the man may be summarized as follows:

1. The man was made first (Gen. 2:15).
2. The woman was made from the man in order to be his companion and suitable helper (Gen. 2:18-23).
3. The woman, having been deceived by Satan, was first in transgression; Adam sinned after being tempted by his wife (Gen. 3:6; 1 Tim. 2:14).
4. The woman is the weaker vessel (1 Pet. 3:7).

It is noteworthy that the reason for God having given the man authority over the woman does not stem from New Testament principles but from Old Testament principles based on the creation and fall of both the man and the woman. From this truth is developed the reason for the Christian woman wearing a head-covering in the local church.

Now, returning to 1 Corinthians 11, just as the woman has an order to follow, so also does the man. As stated in verse 4, his head must not be covered; "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head." On the one hand, it would be totally out of order for a man to pray or preach with his hat on; while on the other hand, verse 5 states that "every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head

uncovered dishonoreth her head, for that is even all one as if she were shaved.”

Admittedly, verse 5 is difficult to interpret, but it would seem correct to presume that the Apostle Paul is by no means approving the actions of the women at Corinth praying or prophecy with their heads uncovered. On the contrary, he was simply referring to the unauthorized conduct of the women in the Corinthian church.

In support of this view, Charles Hodge (1797-1878), the famous Calvinist theologian, has aptly stated, “It was Paul’s manner to attend to one thing at a time. Here he is speaking of the propriety of women speaking in public unveiled, and therefore he says nothing about the propriety of their speaking in public itself. When the subject comes up, he expresses his judgment in the clearest terms, 14, 34. In here disapproving of the one, says Calvin, he does not approve of the other.”¹

“Head” in verse 5 clearly refers to the womans’ physical head, not to her husband, while in verse 6 Paul’s ironical words simply call for the reproach to be made complete: “For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.” This text, by the way, makes it crystal clear that a woman’s hair is not the covering the apostle has in mind. To prove this point, try reading verse 4 with the word “hair,” then with the word “hat.” Now do the same with verse 6.

In view of the chapter as a whole, it would seem that the public worship meetings of the assembly are alone involved here and that the divine order of things does

not concern, say, the home or other circumstances outside the local church.

We come now to Paul's second main line of argument, which is:

The Explicit Revelation Of The Word (11:7-12)

There are two Biblical reasons why women should wear headcoverings in public worship.

1. The facts of creation (11:7-9; 11, 12). The man was created in the image and glory of God (Gen. 1:26-27). It is helpful at this point to again quote Hodge, who states: "The only sense in which the man, in distinction from the woman, is the image of God, is that he represents the authority of God. He is invested with dominion. When, in Genesis 1:26-27, it is said God created man in his own image, the reference is as much to woman as to man; for it is immediately added, 'male and female created he them.' So far, therefore as the image of God consists in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, Eve as truly, and as much as Adam bore the likeness of her Maker. But in the dominion with which man was invested over the earth, Adam was the representative of God. He is the glory of God, because in him the divine majesty is specially manifested. But the woman is the glory of the man. That is, the woman is in this respect subordinate to the man. She is not designed to reflect the glory of God as a ruler. She is the glory of the man. She receives and reveals what there is of majesty in him. She always assumes his station; becomes a queen if he is a king, and manifests to others the wealth and honour which may belong to her husband."2

Who alone but God can fully know what has been wrought for His glory and the blessing of mankind by husbands and wives working together? We are familiar with such statements as, "I could never have gone on without my wife's love and encouragement," and "Whatever success I have achieved I owe to my wife."

In verses 8 and 9 the two prepositions "of" and "for" reveal the woman's place. She has her origin and purpose of life in the man (Gen. 2:21-25). Every woman taking a new name at marriage tacitly affirms Paul's teaching.

Verses 11 and 12 show the other side of the truth. "Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, but the woman for the man. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God." The man and the woman are necessary for each other in the Lord. After all, the man exists by the woman. Both are of God. Were it not for the woman there would be no Redeemer!

2. The presence of angels (11:10). Good angels, of course, are in view here. Since they live in the presence of God (Psa. 138:1; Luke 15:7, 10; 1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:21), they are present in worship meetings. Angels were witnesses of the woman's insubordination in Genesis 3, and any insubordination on part of women in refusing to acknowledge the authority of their husbands would most surely offend angels, since they know no insubordination in their appointed tasks and ministry. "Power" means "authority," the headcovering being the sign of man's authority over the woman.

In his third and final main point of argument, the Apostle Paul appeals to:

The Evident Teaching Of Nature (11:13-16)

“Judge in yourselves,” challenges Paul, and then he asks two questions: “Is it seemly that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?” (vv. 13-14). Nature itself suggests what is fitting for the dress of the man and woman in public worship by virtue of man’s short hair and woman’s long hair. That the woman’s hair is not her head-covering has already been clearly demonstrated from verses 4 and 6. If this were the case, the entire force of verses 2-14 would be nullified.

The alternate translation of 11:47, which appears as a footnote in The New International Version of The New Testament, is a classic example of some of today’s miserable and misleading scholarship, and this, among evangelicals.³

“But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God” (11:16). The words “no such custom” mean that there was no custom of women worshipping in the local assembly without veils. That this was something not peculiar to Corinth is revealed in the expression, “the churches of God.” That the practice applies to today is supported by the fact that each of Paul’s reasons for women wearing a headcovering is taken from permanent facts.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. has indicated that Paul did carry his point, for early church history bears witness that in Rome, Antioch, and Africa the practice became the norm. And he further stresses that, in reality, the headcovering isn’t the important thing. The important thing is the subordination for which the headcovering

stands, and the presence of both, of course, is God's ideal.⁴

There are at least four classes of Christian women in relation to the matter of wearing a headcovering in public worship: (1) ignorant; (2) indifferent; (3) unbelieving; and (4) obedient.

Finally, consider the following points:

1. The passage implies that the headcovering can be put on and off with ease.
2. The length of the hair and the size of the headcovering are not the issues, although as for the hair it should be short enough on a man so that he does not look like a woman and long enough on a woman so that she does not look like a man. Selah.
3. Which fashion are we following — earth's or heaven's?

Conclusion

The established order of God (11: 2-6), the explicit revelation of the Word relative to the facts of creation and the presence of the angels (11:7-12), and the evident teaching of nature (11:13-16) are the primary points of Paul's overall argument that women should wear a headcovering in public worship. Each point must be honestly and objectively answered before this admittedly controversial passage can be lightly dismissed as applying only to the local circumstance of the apostle's day. That the teaching of the passage is not considered applicable to the present time is crassly evident in most evangelical groups today. Even among the assemblies of God's people, where this doctrine has been faithfully

taught and practiced for generations, it has obviously fallen on hard times.

To divide local churches over issues such as this is most certainly not God's will, any more than it would be God's will for local elders to plunk hats on ignorant, indifferent or unbelieving women as they enter the local assembly, whether they liked it or not. After all, for this practice to be meaningful it must be obeyed from the heart.

Nevertheless, it is the holy responsibility of spiritual leaders — and God's people as a whole — to rightly divide the Word of Truth, and as much as lies within us to love and obey His will for His sake and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, even if the matter involved may seem insignificant in the minds of most.

As a fitting close to our subject, we quote from the words of Mr. Feben of Reading, England, who has written as follows:

“Someone may ask, ‘Why be bothered about such trivialities, when so many souls are perishing?’ But the matter has to do with the conduct of a sister after she is saved and when she is in church fellowship, so that she may walk worthy of the high calling of God, Eph. 4:1. Elder sisters should be careful to teach the younger this follow-up work of salvation. Small things are not trivial when seen from God's point of view, although we may find it difficult to understand the absolute holiness of our God and the obedience that His holiness demands. For example, Moses smote the rock instead of speaking to it as commanded of God, Num. 20:8-11. For this ‘trivial’ act of disobedience Moses was denied the privilege of leading the children of Israel into the

promised land. But someone may persist, 'Isn't it a triviality, when we think of so many of our brethren and sisters in Christ in other lands suffering persecutions for their Lord?' Yet those suffering for Christ's sake try all the more to be obedient to His Word. It is when things are 'easy' that believers tend to become lax in obedience to God's Word."⁵

1 An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, pp. 208-9.

2 Ibid., p. 210.

3 The New International Version of The New Testament, p. 378.

4 The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1248.

5 Precious Seed, Sept.-Oct., 1972, p. 150.

How To Deal With Temptation

It was Martin Luther who aptly I said: “You can’t help the birds flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair!” Luther’s classic remark reveals two pertinent facts about temptation: (1) temptation comes to everyone (Luke 17:1); and (2) such temptation can be resisted and overcome.

Remember, it is not a sin to be tempted, but to yield to temptation is sin. The Lord Jesus Christ was sorely tempted (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; 16:23; 22:18; Luke 22:28), but He never yielded to temptation (Heb. 4:15). He knows all about temptation, feeling it as no man ever felt it, and only in Him can the Christian effectively deal with it and overcome it (Heb. 2:18).

In the brief development of our subject we want to focus our attention on five main things, the first being

The Clarification Of Terms

In the Bible the words “tempt” and “temptation” are used in two distinctly different ways. They are often used simply to mean “test” or “testings” (cf. Gen. 22:1; Jas. 1:2), yet they are also used in the sense of enticement to sin or solicitation to do evil (cf. Jas. 1:13-15). God “tests” with a view to our good and His ultimate glory; Satan “tempts” in order that he might solicit us to do evil through enticement of our sin nature. God’s “testing” is from without; Satan’s “tempting” is from within.

It is this second meaning of the words “tempt” and “temptation” that concerns us in our present study, and

how we may overcome temptation of this sort through God's gracious provision.

This brings us to a consideration of —

The Causes of Temptation

The Primary Cause. Satan is the primary cause of all temptation. Solicitation to rebel against God, and thus sin, is the work of the Evil One (cf. 1 Thess. 3:5; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Rev. 2:9). While Satan's role in temptation is usually assumed rather than stated, there are many Scriptures where his role is definitely asserted (e.g., Matt. 4:1; 1 Cor. 7:5).

The Secondary Causes. In his fine little book, *Learning and Living the Christian Life*, G. R. Harding Wood has pointed out from the Word of God four such causes which Satan uses to tempt us.

1. **Circumstances** (Mark 4:17 with Luke 8:13). From the circumstances of affliction and persecution — perhaps sent by God — temptation may come. However, the subjective use of such trials wherein the Christian may be tempted to sin cannot be attributed to God (Jas. 1:13; cf. John 15:20; 1 Pet. 4:12-13).

2. **Worry** (Luke 8:14 with 1 Pet. 5:7). A believer given to worry is generally a defeated believer. From such worry one may be tempted to disbelieve God, as well as to distrust Him.

3. **Money** (Mark 10:23-24; Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:10). Never lose sight of the fact that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10, ASV). Many a Christian has made shipwreck of his life and testimony as a result of love for the "mammon of unrighteousness."

4. Pride (Isa. 14:13-14; cf. Matt. 26: 33-34; 1 Cor. 10:12). How necessary at all times that we “be clothed with humility” (1 Pet. 5:5).

We come now to our third main point in the development of our subject

The Course of Sin in Temptation

The legend is told of an Arab camel driver asleep in his tent during a bitterly cold night in the desert. In the middle of the night he awoke to find his camel with its nose under the tent flap. Then in successive stages through the night the camel poked its head and hairy neck into the tent, then its front legs and hump, and finally, ALL of “Mr. Camel” was in and “Mr. Arab” was OUT.

As a rule, in temptation sin gets hold of us much as “Mr. Camel” worked his way into “Mr. Arab’s” tent — subtly, not suddenly; craftily, not quickly. There are four distinct phases of sin in temptation: a sinful thought, imagination, desire, and then the deed. James, in his highly practical letter, gives us the course, or genealogy, of sin (Jas. 1:13-15), and the classic Bible account which aptly illustrates the phases of sin in temptation is Eve’s deception by Satan (Gen. 3:4-6).

For the sake of brevity our next main point is presented in outline form only, each division virtually speaking for itself, so that little or no comment would be necessary anyway.

The Consequences of Yielding to Temptation

Yielding to temptation not only issues in sin, but brings:

1. Defeat.

2. Disgrace (Gen. 3:7).
3. Depression (Gen. 3:7-8).
4. Deprivation (Gen. 3:16ff.).
5. Degeneracy (e.g., Lot, Judas Iscariot, Demas).
6. Dishonor to Christ.
7. Death (Jas. 1:15).

Our fifth, and final, main consideration brings us to the very heart of our subject

The Conquest Over Temptation

Having sought to clarify the words involved, and having considered some of the causes and consequences of temptation, as well as the course of sin in temptation, the question naturally arises, "All well and good so far, but how can I trample Satan under foot and thus overcome temptation?"

Briefly, the summary secret is simply this: by saying "NO" to Satan, and by saying "Yes" to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now let us break this point down into some practical courses of thoughtful action, the use of which will enable us to deal victoriously with temptation. Basic to all else in the Christian life is that we:

1. Receive the Saviour (John 1:12; 1 John 5:4 with Matt. 12:43-45). Many go through periods of reformation, but they have never really experienced regeneration. As a result, such have no power whatsoever to resist the onslaughts of satanic forces.
2. Refuse Satan (Jas. 4:7). As believers, James tells us: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." As indicated

by the Greek tense of the verb “resist” (aorist), we must take a decisive, once-for-all stand against Satan.

3. Redirect Your Attention (Heb. 12:1-3). For instance, evil thoughts are bound to present themselves from time to time, especially in a culture like ours where sex is one of the chief gods and things are geared to appeal to the lustful appetite of man. That evil thoughts present themselves is not sinful, but entertaining them is, and if we are tempted to dwell on such, then the secret of victory over them is to immediately redirect our attention, specifically to the Lord Himself, remembering the words of Proverbs 18:10: “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”

4. Resort Always to Watchfulness and Prayer (Matt. 6:13; 26:36ff.; Mark 14:38; 1 Thess. 5:6, 17; Col. 4:2).

5. Rely on a Victory Already Won (Rom. 6:1-13; cf. 1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 2:14; Col. 2:15). An Indian legend relates that there was once a massive Hindu warrior who in battle fought with such ferocity and vigor, killing masses of the enemy, that no one could overcome him. Eventually, however, he met with one stronger than himself and in the ensuing struggle his head was cut off. But so strenuously was he battling that even when his head was off his body went right on dealing out deadly blows. In this way he killed several more soldiers, until at last someone shouted, “Look, your head’s off!” At that he fell down dead.

At Calvary the Lord Jesus Christ cut the head off sin, but the monster goes right on injuring and slaying multitudes because they don’t tell him so. Martin Luther is reputed to have thrown his inkwell at the devil on one occasion (poor Mrs. Luther who probably had to clean

up the mess!), but it takes more than that to triumph over the Wicked One. Every Christian needs to daily lay hold of, and completely rely on, the victory that Christ won for us on the cross. It has been rightly said that "Sin has no power, except to unbelief." Emperor Constantine, referring to the cross of Christ, is reported to have said, "In this sign conquer." And one who knew the power of our Saviour's victory won for us at the cross, and what it was to truly rely on that victory, has written:

"Earthly cares can never vex me,
Neither trials lay me low;
For when Satan comes to tempt me,
To the secret place I go."

How To Lead Souls To Christ

Soul-winning should have a prominent place in the life and service of every true Christian, yet how few today have the outlook and passion which possessed William Carey, the great missionary to India. When just a young man he was asked the question, "What is your business?" To which he promptly replied, "My business is winning souls. I cobble shoes to pay expenses."

While we should be prayerfully thankful for all Christ-honouring efforts in mass evangelism today, the great need of the hour is for personal evangelism. It was so in the first century; it is so in the twentieth century. The Apostle Paul could say of the gospel in his day, "...which has been preached to every creature under Heaven" (Col. 1:23, RSV). Would that we could say this today!

Yet, had every Christian in each generation been a soul-winner, this would have been the case presently.

In our brief development of this vital subject we want to center our thoughts around three main things, the first being

The Precious Responsibility

According to some of the latest statistics, which could already be somewhat out-dated, the population explosion is such in our age that in every twenty-four hour period 245,000 babies are born into the world. The death rate for every twenty-four hour period is 120,000, or an increase of 45,500,000 more people in the world today than a year ago. How are we going to meet the

tremendous challenge of our day posed by these factual figures? Personal evangelism — every Christian a soul-winner — is the only solution. If you are interested in further statistics, the lead article by Dr. R. E. Harlow entitled “A Multiplying World,” published by Literature Crusades in the Speakers’ Panel, World Missions Congress (Dec. 1966), is recommended reading, as is the entire book.

It is true that the Lord does not intend for all Christians to go to a foreign land with the gospel, but He does intend, yea, He commands that all believers be witnesses (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Contacting others with the “glad tidings” is the task of every Christian, not alone the job of so-called “full-time workers.”

A. T. Pierson has rightly stated: “It is Christianity’s job to rivet the eyes of the world on Christ. The final triumph of the Gospel is as sure as the promises of God. But we are to use prophecy not as a sedative and narcotic, but as a tonic and stimulant. Duty is ours; results are God’s. We are not responsible for conversion, but we are for contact. We are to go everywhere and preach the Gospel. All are to go to all. We are to bear our witness among all nations, and leave our God to bear His witness in confirmation of our own.”

Such a sacred responsibility as soul-winning is indeed precious because:

1. In God’s sight one soul is worth more than the whole world (Mark 8:36-37).
2. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was the price paid for every soul (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

3. Every soul won to Christ is in turn a potential soul-winner.

4. Only in this life will there be the blessed opportunity to win souls to Christ.

5. The Lord Himself says: "He that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30; cf. Dan. 12:3).

Someone may say, "Well, I'd like to be a soul-winner, but I don't know how." Remember, we learn to fish by fishing; and we learn to win souls — or become fishers of men — by the simple practice of witnessing. The greatest of all soul-winners, the Lord Jesus Christ, said: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19; see also Luke 5:10). Learning to win souls is a process, and if we are willing to follow Christ as true disciples He will teach us, but our training will not be wrought over night, but over a life-time.

Many Christians fail to become soul-winners for a number of reasons, among them: (1) laziness — the cure is definite action; (2) natural reserve, or the fear of rebuff (Prov. 29:25) — the cure is doing the things we fear; (3) the fear of making mistakes — the cure is to press on in spite of conscious mistakes and seeing to it that we do not make the same mistake twice; and (4) the excuse of not being qualified — through earnest prayer and diligent study of the Scriptures the Lord will make us fit and qualified IF we are willing to carry out His will.

We come now to the second main consideration in connection with our subject

The Primary Requirements

Regarding the Message (1 Cor. 15: 3-5). The message is “good news,” simple yet profound, and it is the most powerful thing in the universe because it is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16).

Such great texts as Isaiah 53:6, John 1:11-13, 3:16, 5:24, Acts 4:12, Romans 3:23, 5:6 and 8 are excellent verses to use in dealing with an unsaved person about his soul. However, the use of too much Scripture should be avoided. In regard to the texts you feel led to use, get the person you are dealing with to read the verses for himself and seek to point out exactly where and how he fits into the picture.

Remember, the Word of God is the instrument of the new birth (cf. Rom. 10:17; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23), thus the importance of having a good working knowledge of the Scriptures and knowing just what passage to use in meeting a particular need or circumstance (cf. Eph. 6:17). This is extremely important to keep in mind when dealing with a soul, lest we tend to interject too much of our own thinking or lean too heavily on apologetic arguments.

Regarding the Motive (1 Cor. 13:3). Love for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the souls of the lost should be the all-important foundation in seeking to lead others to Christ. Charles Wesley said: “Let the fervor of my zeal be the pure flame of love.” Daily we should pray that the love of Christ might grip our own soul, fill us, and flow out to others. Coupled with love there must be: (1) prayer; (2) patience; (3) courage; (4) tact; (5) humility; and (6) perseverance.

In connection with the above, C. H. Spurgeon's words are most fitting: "I commend cheerfulness to all who would win souls."

Regarding the Method (John 3:8). There is no "cut and dry" method of winning a soul to Christ, but the wise application of certain principles are both helpful and often highly effective.

In their fine little book, *The Way*, Godfrey C. Robinson and Stephen F. Winward have aptly suggested two phases in the process of winning a soul to Christ, with five steps under each phase.

A. Wooing.

1. Intention (i.e., a definite intention or resolve to attempt to win others for Christ).
2. Intercession.
3. Initiative (i.e., go to the individual, even as the Sower "went forth to sow" — Matt. 13:3 — and the Good Shepherd went "after that which is lost" — Luke 15:4).
4. Identification (i.e., as far as possible place yourself in the person's shoes with whom you are dealing and, a part from sin, become one with him; cf. 1 Cor. 9:22; Phil. 2:5, 7).
5. Interest (i.e., the interests of the person with whom you are dealing should provide you with topics of conversation and points of contact).

B. Winning.

1. Confidence (i.e., seek to make friends with the person first).

2. Confession (i.e., tell the person what Christ means to you, thus presenting the “good news” to him, and to the testimony of Scripture be prepared to add anything out of your own personal experience that would be relevant to your friend’s need).

3. Conviction (this is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit, yet it may be necessary through the Word of God to bring before the unbeliever the true nature of sin that the Spirit might thus make him aware of his sin).

4. Conversion (the unbeliever should be urged to make a definite act of personal commitment to Christ; the Lord Jesus must be received by faith).

5. Continuance (this, of course, involves follow-up work in connection with a new “babe” in Christ).

We come now to our final main point

The Promised Reward

The particular “crown” or reward promised to the soul-winner at the coming Judgment Seat of Christ is the “Crown of Rejoicing” (1 Thess. 2:19). But soul-winning has its reward in the present, as well as in the future, and both aspects are revealed in Philippians 4:1. The Philippian saints (see Acts 16 for the background) were Paul’s “joy” in the present; his “crown” in the future. And, of course, the present joy shall continue on and endure through all eternity.

How to Pray

In his instructive little book, *Method in Prayer*, W. Graham

Scroggie has aptly said: "One of the greatest mistakes that a Christian can make, is to imagine that increased social or spiritual activity can be any compensation for the lack of secret communion with God. A prayerful life is always a powerful life; and a prayerless life is always a powerless life. If we cannot pray aright, we really can do nothing aright; but how slow we are to believe that. We find a spiritual law at work in the uniform experience that the more we pray, the more we need to, and want to; and the less we pray, the less is the desire to do so" (p. 11).

This study is not meant to be an exhaustive treatment on prayer, but rather an earnest attempt to thoughtfully consider several basic principles of prayer, and this, with a view to gaining a fuller knowledge and understanding of effectual praying. In order to more conveniently handle the numerous elements which enter into our subject, we want to develop it around five couplets, the first being

The Pattern and Prominence of Prayer

The Pattern. The perfect pattern, or example, of prayer is the Lord

Jesus Christ. It would be well for every believer to read the Four Gospels through with the express purpose of marking and studying the prayer life of Christ. His

revealed prayer life may be looked at under four simple headings as follows:

1. His prayers at the great events in His life (Luke 3:21; 9:29; 22:39-46).
2. His prayers in the course of His ministry (Mark 6:46; Luke 5:16; 11:1).
3. His prayers at His miracles (Mark 1:35; 6:41; 7:34; John 11:41).
4. His prayers for others (Luke 22:32; 23:34; John 17:6-19, 20-26). It may be a well worn point, yet it's nonetheless true, that if it was necessary for Christ to pray as He did during His earthly ministry, how much more for us! Also, let us never lose sight of our Lord's present and continual intercession for His people during His present session at the Father's right hand (Heb. 4:14; 7:25ff.).

The Prominence. Throughout the New Testament, apart from appealing to the Old Testament, God's people are exhorted to pray (e.g., Luke 18:1; Acts 2:42; 8:13; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Pet. 4:7; Jude 20).

Our second couplet concerns —

The Place and Posture of Prayer

The Place. Prayer may be offered to God anywhere. There is no limitation whatsoever as to place, but the best kind of place is revealed in Matthew 6:6 (don't be too lazy to look it up!). Our place of prayer may be a room, a quiet little nook, or even a secluded spot out-of-doors when the weather permits our use of it.

The Posture. Generally speaking, the best physical posture in prayer, and the one set forth most frequently

in the Scriptures, is kneeling (e.g., 1 Kings 8:54; Dan. 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 9:11, 18, 40; 20:36; 21:5). However, much more important than the physical posture is the inward posture of the heart (cf. Matt. 21:22; Jas. 1:6; see the illustration of 2 Kings 13:14-19). Our third couplet involves

The Phraseology and Parts of Prayer

The Phraseology. The Word of God plainly teaches that prayer should be addressed to the Father (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2), in the Name of the Son (John 14:13; 16:24; Acts 4:7-10; 1 Cor. 5:4), and in the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20). There is no Scriptural basis for praying to the Holy Spirit, though it is in order to address the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer (John 14:13-14). However, the specific divine order is succinctly expressed in the words of Ephesians 2:18.

At this point it might be well to interject a few comments on another aspect related to the phraseology of prayer. In our praying, both privately and publicly, the question is sometimes raised as to the pronouns we use in addressing God. With numerous modern day translations much in vogue, the familiar “you,” “your” and “yours” are employed by many, especially by today’s young people, as opposed to the more formal “thee,” “thou,” “thy” and “thine.” I do not for a moment question either the sincerity or earnestness of those who use the less formal language in their praying, yet the writer strongly favors the more formal address, both from the standpoint of reverence and the needful realization of the God with whom we have to do (cf. Phil. 2:12-13). Perhaps you will disagree with me on this matter, and if

so, I am hopeful that (to use an old platitude) you will “agree to disagree without being disagreeable.”

The Parts. W. Graham Scroggie has ably summed up the parts, or elements, of prayer as follows:

1. ADORATION, the worship of God (Psa. 9; 66; 1 Sam. 2:1-10).
2. CONFESSION, the acknowledgment of sin (Psa. 66:18; Matt. 5:23-24 with 1 John 1:9; 3:20-22; Isa. 1:10-18).
3. PETITION, faith’s claim for personal need (Jas. 4:3 with 5:17).
4. INTERCESSION, the soul’s ministry at the Throne of Grace on behalf of others (Col. 4:12-13; 1 Thess. 1:3).
5. THANKSGIVING, the heart’s expression of joy in God (Psa. 105:1; 107:1; 118:1; Eph. 5:19-20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:12).

Our fourth couplet centers upon --

The Promise and Perseverance of Prayer

The Promise. In John 14:14 the Lord Jesus Christ said: “If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it.” These words embrace the requirement, extent, condition and promise of prayer. The closing words may be literally rendered: “I will get to work” (there is no “it” in the Greek text).

G. R. Harding Wood has said: “Over your barren life today there hangs a cloud of blessing — just what you need. Your believing prayer is like the current of air that brings the shower down upon the hard soil.”

The Perseverance. Though this has always been one of the mysteries about prayer, the Word of God plainly teaches perseverance in prayer (e.g., Gen. 18:23-33; Dan. 10:2ff.; Luke 18: 1-8). It is well to remember that God, in His perfect wisdom, does not always answer our prayers in the affirmative. If He delays in answering our prayers, His delays are not necessarily denials, but may be for one of several reasons:

1. Our asking may not be in faith (Jas. 1:6).
2. Our asking may be for self, rather than for the glory of God (Jas. 4:3).
3. We may be harboring unconfessed sin (Psa. 66:18; Isa. 1:15).
4. God's revealed will may be contrary to our asking (2 Cor. 12:8-10).
5. God's unrevealed will may be contrary to our asking (Rom. 8:26).

We come now to our fifth, and concluding, couplet which concerns —The Price And Practice Of Prayer

The Price. Adequate TIME for prayer is an absolute necessity, the most natural times for it being in the morning and in the evening (Psa. 5:1-3; 92:1-2), with some of the saints establishing set times, as in the case of Daniel (Dan. 6:10). Whatever your daily habit of prayer (if you have one at all!), it should be unhurried and faithfully kept.

The Practice. Like the disciples of old we sense our need to be taught to pray (Luke 11:1). Happily, the Lord has given to us the necessary teaching, along with all other needed provisions, in order that we might learn to pray intelligently and effectually. We have, of course, Christ's

perfect example in the Word of God, the complete and fully adequate revelation of the Scriptures themselves, and the Holy Spirit who indwells every true believer (cf. Heb. 5:7; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 8:26 with 1 Cor. 6:19-20). The key thing is to PRAY!

Prayer will be no problem when there is a burning love and devotion in the heart, as was the case with David (Psa. 42:1). Such love, such hungering and thirsting after God to whom we owe our all will make prayer a delight, something that is as natural and necessary for us as breathing, and that which will issue in a life of continual and deepening fellowship with Himself (cf. Neh. 1:1ff.; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17).

It was Alford Tennyson who wrote: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." If we really believe this, then certainly we should pray more than we do.

Maybe the words I heard one day from the lips of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer best pinpoint the problem with most, if not all, of us in this vital matter of prayer. "Prayer," he said, "is hard work, and we are inherently lazy."

Jabez

Food for the Flock 11:2 (Feb 1965)

More Honourable Than His Brethren

A list of the descendants of Judah appears in 1 Chronicles 4. However, the list is interrupted about one-fourth of the way through by a brief but blessed revelation concerning one who is mentioned only here in the Bible — Jabez, a man of singular distinction.

The Holy Spirit's 'biography of this little-known Old Testament character may be considered from a threefold standpoint, the first being:

The Prominence of Jabez

Jabbez is described as "more honourable than his brethren" (v. 9). A number of times I have stood in the St. Louis County Court House looking at the names of various magistrates inscribed on brass plaques with the abbreviated title "Hon." before each name. Contemplating the different names I have often wondered how many of those men are really honourable. What was it that made Jabez such an honourable man, and this, in the sight of God? It was not due to anything the world would acclaim. If he was a man of position, possessions, prestige or the like, the Spirit of God makes no note of it. Rather, the Holy Spirit alludes to one characteristic only — Jabez called upon God in prayer. All believers are exhorted to do this (cf. Ps. 50:15; Isa. 55:6; Jer. 33:3), and what a glorious privilege it is, but whether we do so or not is another matter. One thing,

such is pleasing to God and always receives its answer in time. Is it your daily habit to call upon Him in prayer?

The name Jabez means “sorrowful” or “he causes sorrow.” Some particular distress must have accompanied his birth, and so great was this sorrow that the joy of having a son did not erase it from his mother’s mind.

Reginald White suggests that since Jabez comes into this chapter unheralded and unrelated, having no lot, possession, pedigree or ancestry, that perhaps evil ways ruined the family fortunes, broke the mother’s heart, and brought shame and disgrace on the family name, the same continuing to blight the honour and life of the home (They Teach Us to Pray, pp. 53-54).

At any rate, his mother named him “Jabez” perhaps, as Matthew Henry has suggested, to continually remind her to give thanks to God for bringing her through her sorrow; to cause her son in later years to keep in mind that this world, into which she bore him, is a vale of tears (see Job 5:7); and also to remind him to think upon his mother, to love and honour her, and in everything to seek to be a comfort to her who had brought him into the world midst so much sorrow (Commentary on the Whole Bible, p. 436). Whatever this great sorrow may have been, it is evident that any fears she may have had as to how her son would turn out were utterly needless and happily disappointed in later years.

The second thing of particular note is:

The Prayer of Jabez

Although Jabez addressed his prayer to the God of Israel as one who was under the old covenant of the law, it is

well to remember that the God of Israel is the God of the Christian today and that there are definite lessons for us to learn from the experiences of those who lived in a past dispensation (see 1 Cor. 10:11).

Someone has anonymously written: "Judging the case within the narrow limits of the history given in verses nine and ten, it would seem as if Jabez started life in an act of prayer. The image is at once graphic and beautiful; think of a young man standing at the door of his house, looking abroad at the unknown and unmeasured world, listening to the conflicting voices which troubled his native air, and then turning his eyes to Heaven and asking divine direction, before he would take a single step from the threshold of his home."

Matthew Henry has said of Jabez at this point: "He does, as it were, give God a blank paper, let Him write what He pleases: 'Lord, if thou wilt bless me and keep me, do what Thou wilt with me, I will be at Thy command and disposal for ever'" (Ibid., p. 436).

Though intensely personal, Jabez's prayer is not selfish if it is understood in its Hebrew setting. Five words keynote the content of his fervent supplication, the first being:

Prosperity. Actually, Jabez begins his prayer in the form of a condition, and literally prays, "If indeed Thou wilt bless me...." The consequence is not expressed. Here was a man who sensed his dependence on God, and who sincerely desired and sought Jehovah's blessing. The closing words of verse ten confirm the purity of his motive and his readiness to fully submit to the divine will.

Progress. "Enlarge my coast," Jabez cried. Many of God's people are content to live on a low spiritual level. Such are still living on milk when they ought to be desiring, delighting in and digesting strong meat (see Heb. 5:12-14). Jabez wanted enlargement. He wanted to go on with God: to grow spiritually. Is this our sincere desire? The Apostle Peter exhorted, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Presence. "And that Thine hand might be with me," prayed Jabez. In both the Old and New Testaments the Lord has promised to be with His people (e.g., Deut. 31:8; Josh. 1:9; Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5). We can always reckon on the fact of His presence with us, but it would appear that something more is involved here, and so in our own experience. The Lord's presence should be a force, something definitely and daily sensed in the life; something real to each believer. And dare we set our hand to this or that task except it be with a consciousness that God's hand is with us (see John 15:5)?

Protection. "And that Thou wouldest keep me from evil." Thus did Jabez continue to supplicate the living and true God. The great enemies of the believer are the world, the flesh and the devil. How intensely important that we should be guarded from these subtle and sinful influences and be strengthened to resist the attacks of the evil one. Today, by means of the Word of God and the indwelling Spirit of God, every resource of heaven itself has been granted to us in order that we might know and realize victory in the life.

Are we those who eschew evil and truly hunger after holiness?

Pleasure. Jabez closes his prayer with the request, “That it may not grieve me!” God intends that we be glad, not grieved (see John 15:11). Even midst the trials of this earthly scene it is possible to know the joy of the Lord, and this, through prayer (John 16:24; see 1 Pet. 1:6-9).

We come now to the last main thing about this honourable and honoured Old Testament saint, and that is:

The Portion of Jabez

Someone has said, “The greatest saints are the asking saints.” By this standard, then, Jabez was among the greatest saints, for we read, “And God granted him that which he requested.” Would we be honourable in God’s sight? Would we know the blessing of the Lord? Would we live pleasing to Him? Then let us pray as Jabez did — in sincerity and in truth.

To earnestly desire God’s blessing, spiritual growth, a sense of the Lord’s abiding presence, to eschew evil and to experience the fulness of His joy — this is what makes one honourable in the sight of God.

And the Lord has promised, “For them that honour Me I will honour “ (1 Sam. 2:30).

Kerala Diary

Having received kind invitations from Indian brethren both in Detroit and India, on December 26, 1988, I left Detroit's Metro Airport for Kerala, India, in company with my choice friend, John Chacko. In all honesty, India is one of the last places on earth I have ever dreamed of visiting. John, a chemist, was born and raised in Kerala. Now a United States citizen, he and his wife and two children make their home in Mt. Clemens, Michigan, and fellowship at Martin Road Gospel Chapel in St. Clair Shores, where John serves as an elder in the local assembly. I shall always be grateful to our Lord that He led John to go with me, else my first trip to India would have been much more difficult without his fellowship and expertise.

Travelling via Air India from New York to London, our flight path then took us over Belgium, W. Germany, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and on to Bombay. Wrestling with culture shock, which I experienced in Bombay, we then traveled via the domestic Indian Airlines 500 miles south to Cochin, Kerala.

Kerala, meaning "land of coconut palms," stretches 360 miles along the Malabar Coast of the Arabian Sea and occupies 15,000 square miles. As near as I can determine, it is little more than 120 miles at its widest point from west to east. Although one of India's smallest states, it is its most literate and prosperous state. With a population of 30,000,000 people, Kerala is one of the most crowded places on earth, squeezing a population larger than California's into a tenth of the space. Most of

the people live along the coast, woven with 41 rivers and thousands of canals. It produces coconuts, rubber, tea, coffee, cardamom, pepper, cashews, and seafood. Politically, Kerala has a communist administration, although not the Russian brand of communism. Its language is the difficult, rapid-fire Malayalam, the people having impressed me as being energetic and aggressive [not unlike their spoken language].

With a population of some 800,000,000, India has 16 major languages and over 800 dialects. Kerala is one-fifth Christian, one-fifth Muslim, and three-fifths Hindu. Tradition tells us that the Apostle Thomas preached the gospel there in 52 A.D., historians agreeing that there have been Christians there since the 4th century, if not before. Its narrow, rough roads abound with overloaded buses, trucks autorickshas, and numerous cars and jeeps [all honking incessantly], plus bicyclists, and, ever-present garbage-collectors—crows. Thanks to the British influence of past generations, they drive on the left-hand side of the road. Admittedly, I found riding in a car or autoricksha [and occasionally a jeep] rather nerve-racking. And most drivers, like King Jehu of Israel, drive “furiously” [2 Kings 9:20].

Dhotis and Saris

Areeparampu, Kottayam, Kumbanad, Pampady, Puthupally, Tiruvalla, and Trichur are places I had the joy of ministering God’s Word. As far as I know Kerala has more assemblies than any state in India. The circumstances in which I preached varied: assembly buildings, an upper room, a mission hospital chapel, an orphanage, under a thatched roof, the open air, a wedding, and homes. The smallest gathering was of

some 50-60 people at John Chacko's family home, while the largest was 2,000 plus at the climactic close of the week-long Kumbanad Convention.

In the Kerala assemblies, including the outdoor gatherings, the men sit on one side and the women on the other. A scene I will never forget was of 1,000 veiled women in their colorful saris at the final sessions of the Kumbanad Convention, which included a Breaking of Bread meeting. The teaching of the head covering is very strong and consistently carried out. Most of the men wear skirtlike dhotis. Sandals are generally left at the door of an assembly building.

While in Kumbanad I had the joy of meeting and fellowshiping with Miss Phyllis Shirtliff and Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Hewlett. Miss Shirtliff was commended to the Lord's work in India by New Zealand assemblies and has faithfully served in Kerala for almost 50 years. She has not been home on furlough for 18 years, mainly for two reasons: first, Kerala is home to her and, second, if she were to leave India there is the possibility that the authorities might not let her return for more than a short period of time. Doug and Ruth Hewlett are full-time workers in Auckland, New Zealand, and were on an extended ministry trip to India. Prior to arriving at Kumbanad for a few days, Doug had spent several weeks teaching at Stewards Bible College in Madras, while Ruth ministered to women's groups as she had opportunity. Neither they nor I shall forget the kind hospitality of Miss Shirtliff, since we had numerous meals with her on the wide verandah of the large house which has been her home for so many years.

Among younger and older believers, I was privileged to meet and become acquainted with many of Kerala's commended workers. They have my love, respect, and prayers. I saw in them, and in virtually all of the Lord's people there, a dedication and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ which by and large exceeds the quality of North American Christianity, and this, because of our general lack of commitment and preoccupation with material things. Evangelism among the assemblies in Kerala is strong and there is a concerted effort also to reach out to the needy and neglected areas of India, although some of the veteran workers expressed to me their concern that evangelistic vision is slackening somewhat.

English English

The winter weather in Kerala was much wanner than I expected. When we landed at Cochin on December 28 shortly after noon, the sky was clear with a temperature of 90 degrees F. and fairly high humidity. Some of the brethren used to tease me a little when I mentioned the heat. One of the them would respond something like this: "My dear brother, this is our winter; the worst is yet to come. You should return in two or three months if you think it's hot now." I never once wore a necktie when preaching, and only on one occasion did I preach in English. This was to the staff of the Tiruvalla Medical Mission Hospital. The rest of the time it was necessary to use a translator, I was told by some of the brethren who translated for me that I speak "English English." They meant by this that I had no detectable American accent and further appreciated that I spoke loudly and distinctly, making their task of translating easier. Some

days I preached twice and on occasion three times. With a twinkle in his eyes, one of the veteran servants of Christ said to me one day, "We have an expression here and it's this: 'Here comes the preacher; let us kill him.'"

Thankfully, I kept well throughout my entire time in Kerala, the Indian food having generally agreed with me, although at times I was warned about a particular dish that would probably be too hot for me.

Thekkady

On my one open day without a meeting John kindly arranged for us to visit the Thekkady Wildlife Sanctuary in the Western Ghats, a range of beautiful mountains which form the eastern boundary of Kerala. In the sanctuary are elephants, wild boar, tigers, monkeys, panthers, wild dogs, gaur [a buffalo-like herbivore], birds, snakes [including king cobras], deer, plus a variety of smaller animals. During our stay of almost 24 hours we managed to see a mother elephant and her baby, wild boar, and monkeys. Included in our "sanctuary safari" was a boat trip of several miles which ultimately led to a dam, at which point we turned around for the trip back. I found the dry, cool air of the mountains gloriously refreshing, especially after two weeks of heat and humidity in the lowlands.

While cobras are occasionally seen in the country areas where I stayed, I am happy to relate that to this day the only cobras I've seen have been in the reptile houses of American zoos.

Power and Paper

Two additional things come to mind about Kerala and India in general. First, electric power failures are

frequent. This was especially so when staying in country areas, and the further away we were from a transformer the dimmer the lights became, that is, if the power wasn't shut off altogether. I recall one late evening in particular at John's family home when I wasn't sleepy and had hoped to read for a little while. However, the lights were so dim it was impossible to do any reading. The second thing is that paper is expensive. India produces its own paper, but there is neither the abundance nor the quality of it that we are used to and take for granted in the United States and Canada. I still have in my possession notes, letters, and envelopes which, by our standards, are poor quality paper. In my personal observation it appeared that little is wasted in the way of paper used for correspondence. etc.

Homeward Bound

On January 16 we left Cochin for Bombay, having arrived there in the early evening. Since our Air India flight to London and on to New York did not leave until 7:00 a.m. the next day, we had the joy of several hours' fellowship with a few of the Christian workers in the area, including brother Silas Nair. Bombay, with its 11,000,000 people, has 28 assemblies representing eight different languages.

Thanks to a seven-hour plus delay at London's Heathrow Airport, we arrived too late for our connecting flight at New York's JFK International Airport, so at Air India's expense we spent what was left of the night at the nearby Viscount International Hotel, then the next morning winged our way to Detroit and home.

Some Final Comments

Thus ended my first sojourn to India. It remains an unforgettable and, in many ways, an indescribable experience. True, I went there as a novice and returned as one. Nevertheless, I have a much greater appreciation and understanding of India's needs, and more particularly the needs of Kerala. In some ways I will never "recover" from my trip, since certain memories are indelibly etched upon my heart and mind, some evoking joy and others sadness. As never before I pray for India, especially for the Lord's people and their continuing labors, but also for the hundreds of millions of souls in that part of the world who still sit in spiritual darkness "without Christ...having no hope, and without God" 1Ephesians 2:12. Will you not also join me in praying for them?

Were I a young man with a divine call to India, my chief burden would be to work among the children. To me they are precious jewels and I totally fell in love with them. They smile easily and are so warm, friendly, and trusting, even toward a stranger like myself. Wherever I went they immediately won my heart.

Fittingly enough, while in Kerala I read a biography of Amy Carmichael. What a remarkable woman of God! I urge you to get acquainted with her writings and biography [there are several biographies, the latest having been written by Elizabeth Elliot entitled, "A Chance to Die].

The door to India is closed to foreign missionaries, so the work of the Lord must be carried on by His people there. Nevertheless, we who have been blessed with so much, both spiritually and materially, can pray and

provide practical help on behalf of India's indigenous workers, so that they may be able to more effectively forge ahead with the glorious mission of spreading the gospel of Christ, teaching God's Word, and starting new local assemblies.

MARANATHA!

Looking For The Saviour

W. Ross Rainey (Philippians 3:20-21)

From the unsavory description of the earthly minded citizens the Apostle Paul directs his readers to consider Heaven's citizens, "For our citizenship," he writes, "is in Heaven, from where also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:20 and 21). The contrast is distinctly marked, for here are the true representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ. While the place of their present worship and witness is earthly, the actual source and center of their lives is heavenly. Christians are like the diver in the ocean. Though in the ocean, he is not of it, and all his resources for life and its sustenance come from above.

In our study of these two precious verses, let's look first at the delightful theme of:

Our Heavenly Citizenship (3:20a)

In spite of our nation's sad decline, particularly from the moral standpoint, I am nevertheless exceedingly grateful to be a citizen of what is still the best and greatest country in all the world—the United States of America (I would expect Canadians, and those from other lands, to feel precisely the same way about their own nation). The Christian, however, has an infinitely greater and better citizenship—he is a citizen of Heaven! The Philippian believers would have readily understood Paul's meaning, James Moffat having picked

up the thought in his translation, “But we are a colony of Heaven.” Philippi was a Roman colony — “a bit of Rome away from Rome” — enjoying the status and all the privileges of those in Rome. In similar fashion Christians in this world are a spiritual colony of Heaven whose Ruler is not Caesar but Christ Jesus, the Lord. Furthermore, the substance of our heavenly commonwealth is not “meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

The word for “Heaven” is literally “heavens,” setting forth the region in its fulness in contrast to earth. In his helpful book on Philippians, Guy H. King mentions a one-time medical missionary to China, Dr. Duncan Main, who was told that the Chinese equivalent of his name was “Dr. Apricot, of Heaven Below.” Applying this to our passage, King said, “That second part is... applicable to every Christian —he, she, is of Heaven Below” (Joy Way, p.92). Christians, wherever they are in this world, should be a little bit of Heaven on earth in order to make earth a little bit like Heaven.

The hymns of Christians through the years bear witness to truth set forth here by Paul (e.g., “When We All Get to Heaven”; “This World Is Not My Home”; “When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder”; “My Home, Sweet Home”; “Sweet By and By”; “O That Will Be Glory”; “Meet Me There”; “Face to Face”; “To Dwell Above”; “We’re Marching to Zion”; “I am Bound for the Promised Land”; and J. N. Darby’s great hymn, “I Shall Be Like Thy Son,” just to name a few).

As James Montgomery wrote:

Here in my body pent,

Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.

Let's look now at the second main thought unfolded by this brief but blessed passage — namely:

Our Happy Expectation (3:20b)

“From where also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” In these words both the Saviourship and Sovereignty of Christ are underscored. As the Saviour He is coming to the air to complete our salvation (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 with Romans 8:1 9ff.; 2 Corinthians 5:4; Romans 13:11), and because He is Lord He is able to carry out all He has promised to do. Nowhere in the Scriptures are Christians bidden to look for signs. Rather, we are exhorted to “look for the Saviour,” the verb for “look” meaning “to await” or “expect eagerly” (cf. Romans 8:25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; and Hebrews 9:28). That the stage is presently being set for the ultimate fulfillment of such signs as the Lord Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24 & 25 there can be no question (e.g., the Jews' return to Israel, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, false messiahs), but it is for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that we are to look. “From where” conveys the thought of location, while “Saviour” is in the emphatic position indication that it is to be taken predicatively with the full title, the “Lord Jesus Christ.” The fact that these various signs are discernable should cause us to realize how very near we must be to our Lord's return with all the more reason to be eagerly awaiting the realization of the Church's “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13).

Dr. A.T. Robertson, the celebrated New Testament scholar of a past generation, has discerningly stated: "This blessed hope exerted a powerful influence for holy living and Christian activity among the early Christians. Some of them misunderstood the promise as definitely made for their own time. The centuries have dimmed for many the brightness of this star of hope, but without reason, for a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day (2 Peter 3:8). The promise of the first coming of the Messiah seemed long in realization, but Christ did come in the fulness of time" (Paul's Joy in Christ, p. 123).

Lastly, we want to consider something of the glorious subject of:

Our Hastening Transformation (3:21)

Christ's Promise. The verb translated "shall change" has to do with outward change, as in 2:8, and may be rendered "shall fashion anew" (cf. Matthew 17:2; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 11:13). The words "vile body" are better rendered "body of humiliation," this translation having come into prominence through Archbishop Whately when on his death bed. He had his chaplain correctly render the words, and regarding the King James translation said, "Not vile — nothing that He has made is vile." The word for "humiliation" (see Luke 1:48; Acts 8:33) has reference to the fall in Genesis 3. At Christ's coming all remains of sin and sin's disgrace shall be removed.

Christ's Pattern. Our future spiritual body will be "like unto His glorious body." "Fashioned like" (lit., "conformed") refers to likeness in the inner nature (cf. 2:6; 3:10; Romans 8:29). Inwardly and outwardly our

future glorified bodies will be perfect mediums for the expression of Christ's life (see 1 Corinthians 15:35-53). Presently we do not know just what changes our Lord's body went through following His resurrection and ascension, but we do know that every physical limitation gave way to the transforming power of a glorious spiritual change. John tells us that our knowledge of the future state is very limited, but we do know that when Christ appears, "we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2).

Christ's Power. The word for "working" is literally "energy" (see Psalm 17:15). It has reference to power in exercise and is used only of superhuman power (see John 1:12; 2 Peter 2:11). Although there are many unanswered questions relative to the resurrection and change that Christians shall experience at the rapture, we need not entertain any doubts about our Lord Jesus Christ's power. The words "He is able" should completely satisfy any uncertainty about the present or future. These are wonderful words: "He is able" (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:8; Ephesians 3:20; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 2:18; 7:25; Jude 24). "Subdue" is literally "subject," and it is here revealed that God's work in Christ involves not only transformation, but subjugation, and that, not only of the body but of all things (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:25-27; Romans 8:18-20; Ephesians 1:10, 21-22; 4:10).

Are we really "strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11) in this world, or have we become settlers? Do we really love steadfastly Christ's appearing (2 Timothy 4:8)? Does "that blessed hope" have a genuine sanctifying effect on our lives (1 John 3:3)?

Messengers of Mercy

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Scripture Reading: Genesis 19:1-16

In his book, *Abraham; or, the Obedience of Faith*, F. B. Meyer entitled his comments on Genesis 19, “Angel Work in A Bad Town.” It might seem strange to think of the presence of holy angels in sinful Sodom but it is infinitely stranger to think of the holy, sinless Son of God in this wicked world! In addition to the two angels, the main persons in this account are Lot, his wife and two daughters, and the men of Sodom. Furthermore, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is the second of two Old Testament incidents referred to by the Lord Jesus Christ as illustrations of the day of judgment at the time of His Second Advent to the earth (Luke 17:28-30). The first is the flood of Noah’s day.

Abraham is seen in the background of Genesis 19 (see v. 29), yet not even the fervent prayer of the godly and faithful Abraham could avert the righteous judgment and doom of Sodom, although his persevering intercession was by no means in vain. The two angels who had visited Abraham with their Divine Master arrived in Sodom (19:1), and the history of events is continued from 18:22 concerning the movements of these messengers of mercy midst the impending judgment of both Sodom and Gomorrah.

In our consideration of this particular passage, we note the first of two main themes which sum up the major subject matter of these verses:

The Licentiousness of Sodom (19:1-11)

Though Peter calls Lot “just” and “righteous” (2 Pet. 2:7-8), he was a backslider, a grossly wayward believer. The sad account of his prodigal path is readily traced step by step and serves as a permanent warning to every child of God (cf. 13:10, 12; 14:12; 19:1). In the first two steps of his backsliding, Lot is typical of the worldling — looking, choosing, separating, journeying, pitching, and dwelling where he should not have been. And even though he had been warned, he still went back to wicked Sodom. Yet, in His infinite mercy the Lord delivered Lot from the overthrow of the city.

Lot became so deeply entrenched in the world that at the opening of this chapter he is observed sitting “in the gate of Sodom.” He had become a citizen of that wicked city, probably after the deliverance from the Elamite invasion, when, as a relative of Abraham, he would have been treated with great honour. “The gate” was the public place of the city where the business of the community was transacted (see Ruth 4:1). Lot courteously received the two angels, extending hospitality to them, but it was their desire to remain all night in the “street,” this having been an open space within the city walls where those, unable to find hospitality, would quite naturally spend the night. Knowing all about this custom, Lot was also aware of the extreme licentiousness of vile Sodom, and with no little persuasion the heavenly messengers accepted his hospitality.

It is significant that Lot baked his guests “unleavened bread,” possibly recognizing that they were angels or, as some have suggested, because they could be baked quickly (see 1 Sam. 28:24). However, they were not even settled down for the night when the inhabitants of Sodom were at Lot’s door. The deterioration of Lot’s character is revealed in the words of 19:8, though his proposal was not then viewed with the horror which it deserves (see Judg. 19:24). Though bound by the laws of hospitality to protect his guests, he was also bound by the laws of fathership to protect his daughters, and his act can only be viewed as one of cowardice to save his own skin. Observe that he called these wicked people “brethren” (19:7), but his feeble protest and debased proposal had no effect except to exasperate the Sodomites. The worldly believer will always be regarded by the world as a stranger and, while Lot may have tried to clean up Sodom, this only infuriates the man of the world.

Midst the seriousness of the situation the angels acted, using their supernatural power to cast “blindness” (19:11) on the Sodomites. However, this was no ordinary blindness, but a confusing of the vision in such a way that the brain deceived the eye (the only other instance of the word is in 2 Kings 6:18).

The contrasts between Abraham and Lot are both interesting and significant: (1) “tent” (18:1) — “gate” (19:1); (2) the heavenly visitors readily accepted Abraham’s hospitality (18:5) — Lot had to strongly urge his heavenly guests to accept his hospitality, virtually pressuring them into it (19:2-3); and (3) Sarah baked cakes for Abraham and their visitors (18:6) — Lot apparently baked bread himself (19:3).

We come now to our second main theme — namely:

The Lingering of Lot (19:12-16)

As revealed in verse 12, the angels were seeking, no doubt, to make up the contingent of Abraham's ten righteous (see 18:32). Lot had at least two sons-in-law, two sons, and four daughters, two of whom lived with him, the other two having married men of Sodom (19:12-15). It appears that Lot did not even think it worthwhile to warn his sons, but he did warn his sons-in-law. What a tremendous price he had paid for his carnal ambitions!

"Whatsoever" in 19:12 is best rendered "whomsoever" (R.V.). The believer can take no property with him out of this world (1 Tim. 6:7), but he can take his family safely out — by God's grace — if they consent to come (see Josh. 2:13; 6:23). However, Lot's warning to his sons-in-law had no effect. They simply laughed at him, and so will the world laugh and mock at the comprising believer. Lot probably spent the night feverishly trying to persuade his loved ones to leave Sodom in view of its impending doom. One thing is certain, he did not spend the night in sleep or in peacefulness of heart and mind.

Literally taking Lot, his wife, and his two daughters by the hand, the angels led them out of the city, and this, because the Lord was merciful unto them, in particular to Lot (19:16). What a picture is presented here of Jude 23!

There are many practical lessons in this passage, among them the following:

1. Like the angels, we should be willing to go wherever the Lord directs us, even for just one soul (see Acts 8:26ff).
2. As we go in the Lord's will and strength, even into the Sodoms of our day, we can trust Him to care for us (Isa. 54:17; Matt. 8:3; Luke 15:4).
3. The angels plainly told Lot of his grave danger (Gen. 19:12-13). There was no "watering down" of the message.
4. "The angels hastened Lot" (Gen. 19:15). There is an urgency about receiving the Gospel message now (Isa. 1:18; 2 Cor. 6:2).
5. Lot's deliverance was because of Abraham's intercessory prayer, Let us not give up praying for the unsaved or for backsliding believers.
6. To refuse the Word of God and the one way of escape is to suffer judgment (Heb. 10:26-27 with 2:3).
7. Sodom is a picture of the world, while the angels and their message picture the going forth of the Gospel through the Lord's heavenly citizens (Gal. 1:4, 2 Cor. 5:20; Tit. 2:14; Heb. 6:18). The world will one day be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10, 12).
8. The mercy of God is behind our salvation (Rom. 9:16). He will never forsake His own no matter how wayward they become. Lot is an example of 1 Corinthians 3:15.

Negatives for the New Year

Food for the Flock 10:1 (Jan 1964)

Many years ago there was a popular song which had as its main theme, "Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative." In true Christianity the accent is very definitely on the positive, and this is where it belongs in the believer's daily life, but the negative cannot be eliminated. It is a part and parcel of God's Holy Word. For example, Paul's letter to the Ephesians is gloriously positive in the avalanche of exalted truth it unfolds to the enlightened heart, yet the negative is by no means eliminated with regard to the practical side of the Christians life (see Eph. 4:17-32).

As we enter another New Year, not knowing what the future holds but fully committing our way to Him who holds the future, there are five negatives we need to keep before us, and not through the New Year alone but throughout the entire course of our pilgrim pathway in this earthly scene.

Fear Not

To a sorrow-crushed Jairus the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Fear not..." (Luke 8:50), and this is what He says to us in all of life's circumstances, be they sunshine or shadow, and no less so as we enter a New Year.

The San Francisco Chronicle Question Man asked eight persons, "What do you fear the most?" The first person said: "The day I have to die." The second said: "Being in an accident." The third stated that prayer and services took care of his fears. The fourth said: "Getting old, with

insufficient income." The fifth answered: "Losing my job." The sixth replied: "Earthquakes." The seventh feared that Russia may conquer us; while the eighth and last, feared for the rearing of her two fatherless sons.

That the world today, as never before in its history, is in the grip of all sorts and kinds of fears cannot be denied, but the Lord says to His people, "Fear not." Though I have never personally counted them, it has been said that there are no less than 366 "Fear not's" in the Bible, one for every day in the year, including Leap Year. The first "Fear not" in the Bible is found in Genesis 15:1. The Lord said to Abram: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." The last occurrence of these words is in Revelation 1:17 where the Lord said to the Apostle John (and we include verse 18): "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death."

The Lord is the only one who can perfectly remove fear from the human heart and mind, and the secret of realizing His perfect peace in all circumstances and truly believing His Word and acting upon it (see Phil. 4:6-7). If at any time we are tempted to fear during the coming New Year, let us remember His often spoken and commanded, "Fear not," words which give comfort, strength and peace if we will but take them to heart.

Our second needed negative is

Fret Not

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, David wrote: "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity" (Ps. 37:1), and a

little further on in the same Psalm he continues by saying: "... fret not thy self because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass... fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (vv. 7-8).

The words of Psalm 37 stand in striking contrast to those of Psalm 35. The latter Psalm is full of fretfulness; while the former hymn has as its keynote, "Fret not." In his 37th Psalm David deals with the problem of the prosperity of the wicked, and from verse 9 through the end of the Psalm he works out in detailed contrast the ultimate destruction of the wicked and the sure deliverance of the righteous. It is wrong, harmful and useless to fret. True, the Lord readily hears the complaints of His people and ministers consolation, but to be given over to fretfulness is to be robbed of His joy, strength and peace, and at the same time manifests a lack of faith.

The positive secret of not fretting is manifold, and it is given to us in the injunction of verses 3-7: "Trust in the Lord"; "Delight thyself also in the Lord"; "Commit thy way unto the Lord"; and "Rest in the Lord."

Though of small physical stature, John Wesley was a man of amazing energy and endurance. His continued strength was undoubtedly owing in large measure to his freedom from care and worry. Said he: "Ten thousand cares trouble me no more than ten thousand hairs upon my head. I feel and grieve, but fret at nothing."

"If I really trust Him shall I ever fret?

If I do expect Him, can I e'er forget?

If by faith I see Him shall I doubt His aid?

If I really love Him, can I be afraid?"

Our third needed negative from God's Word is

Faint Not

In Galatians 6:9 the Apostle Paul writes: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." It is in view of the law of "sowing and reaping" (vv. 7-8) that the Apostle gives us this text which is composed of a precept and a promise, the promise being conditioned by the important words, "if we faint not." The simple yet significant teaching of the text is that perseverance will win the prize, IF we "faint not." Like the Galatians we are prone, having begun in the Spirit, to finish in the flesh. The warning precept is against discouragement, the tendency to lose hope and give up in despair, not against giving in to fatigue. Here to faint means to become lax in the discharge of our Christian responsibilities as set forth in God's Word, and this, because of one of Satan's most effective tools—discouragement. Midst the difficulties and complexities of our modern age it becomes very easy for the Christian to relax his efforts in carrying out the will of God, especially when little or no fruit is in evidence, but it is this slackening of effort which Paul strikes against in this verse, at the same time holding out a precious promise to the persevering saint.

A chaplain, seeking to minister to the needs of a dying soldier, was requested by the dying man to write to his Sunday School teacher. —Tell her," he said, "I die a Christian because of what she taught me in Sunday School." Having forwarded the message to the teacher, the chaplain received the following reply: "Last month I resigned my Sunday School class for I felt my teaching

had been fruitless. And then came the message from my former pupil. May God forgive me for my impatience and lack of faith." She went on in the letter to express her desire to return to teaching, vowing by God's grace that she would not fail again in this way.

The fourth needed negative to continually keep before us is

Forsake Not

The author to the Hebrews wrote: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (10:25). The one particular way whereby we can "exasperate" (for that is the meaning of "provoke" in verse 24, and it is the only "exasperation" permissible to the believer) our fellow-Christians "unto love and to good works" is by "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another..."

It has been pointed out that the word saint in the Bible never occurs in the singular. Commenting on this passage, H. W. Griffith Thomas has written: "Already there were Christians who were withdrawing themselves from their fellow-believers, and isolation is a certain danger and involves inevitable weakness. while we are justified in Christ solitarily and alone, we are sanctified in connection with other Christians, and we shall never know what it is to be a 'saint' unless we make much of 'the communion of saints:... Then, as at all other times, "Union is strength," (Let Us Go On, p. 134).

Togetherness was a prominent feature of the early Church (see Acts 2:42, 44, 46; 4:12-14; 11:26; 12:12;

20:7), and so it ought to be among God's people today, for as then, so now, we live in dark and difficult days.

One of the greatest hinderances to the over-all spiritual health and progress of our assemblies today is the numerous professing Christians who frequent the assembly only on Sunday morning, but who could be at the other assembly meetings if they wanted to. Such fall far short of truly carrying out Hebrews 10:25, and it would appear that their Christianity is but a duty instead of a delight. Oh, that in these "perilous times" we all might manifest that singular and steadfast devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ which shall in reality honour and glorify Him!

Let us remember "United we stand, divided we fall."

We come now to our fifth, and last needed negative, and that is

Forget Not

Filled with a sense of the Lord's lovingkindness, David begins Psalm 103 with a burst of praise: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (vv. 1-2). The sure antidote to depression and discouragement is to quietly and thoughtfully count our blessings. The Lord is gracious, in that He has not asked us to "Remember all His benefit" but to "Forget not all His benefits." It would be absolutely impossible to remember them all, and David has 'beautifully expressed this in Psalm 139:17-18: "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in

number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee.”

The next time we are tempted to pout, let us try praising.

It was out of just such an experience, no doubt, that Johnson Oatman, Jr. wrote his well-known hymn, “Count Your Blessings.”

“When upon life’s billows you are tempest-toss’d,
When you are discouraged, thinking is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the way the Lord hath done.

“Are you ever burden’d with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, ev’ry doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by.”
When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promis’d you His wealth untold,
Count your many blessings, money cannot buy
Your reward in Heaven, nor your home on high.

“So amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all,
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey’s end.”

The Bible

How To Read The Bible

The story is told of a young lady who was lent a book by a close friend. She tried very hard to read it through, understand and enjoy it, but failed completely. Then one day she met a young man. They became acquainted, fell in love with each other, and were soon engaged to be married. It turned out that he was the author of the book she thought was so dull and difficult! With a completely different outlook she again took up the book, discovering that her changed relationship with the author made the book both interesting and understandable. Furthermore, where the book was not clear to her, she could consult the author as to the meaning.

To begin to understand and appreciate the Bible you must first come to know and love the Author through the new birth (see John 1:11-13; 3:3 and 7). Then, always and at any time, you can consult Him about the meaning of His Word.

However, even to many Christians the Bible is a dull Book, and it is our present purpose to suggest how the Bible should be read in order that it might become to YOU personally the Living and Powerful Book that it is.

First of all, the Bible should be read

Daily

How many meals do you have in a week? Two? Of course not! Generally, we all have three meals a day and often some in-between snacks. Now, just as we daily, and at set times, minister to our physical needs, we should in a

similar way minister to our spiritual needs by feeding on the Word of God, and thereby to feed on Christ Himself, the “Bread of Life” (see John 6:51-58). Some people just enjoy the Bible on Sunday, but such are not by any means strong Christians. If we would be strong Christians we must daily, preferably at the beginning of the day, feed on God’s Word. To get a few snacks through the day as time permits and then to close out the day by reading some portion from it will serve to further enlighten, enrich and enable us in our individual life in Christ (cf. 2 Pet. 2:2). The Bible alone is the Book to live by, and it is the only sure and safe written Guide in life, especially in this present day and age when there are so many false guides abroad throughout the world.

Then, the Bible should be read

Dependently

The moment a sinner is born again through simple faith in Christ the Holy Spirit comes to forever indwell him, and He it is who is our Teacher to “guide ... into all truth” (John 16:13; see also 14:16, 26; 16:12-15). We should be completely yielded to the Spirit of God and ready to hear His voice when we open God’s Word, and our reading should be characterized by at least three things. First, we should read with reverence. In other words, we should respect and regard the Bible for what it is —the WORD OF GOD. Secondly, we should read with expectation. There is an old saying which goes something like this: “Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.” This adage may have its place in some areas of life, for instance, in the area of political promises made by vote-conscious candidates, but it has absolutely no place in the life of

the Christian as he opens the pages of his Bible. When we come to God's Word it should always be with the realization that it is His revealed will, the Word of Truth, and to read and receive it in an attitude of simple childlike trust, expecting the Lord to speak to us. Finally, we should read with prayer. Christ has promised, "Ask, and it shall be given you ..." (Matt. 7:7), and the practically-minded James has chided, "... ye have not, because ye ask not" (Jas. 4:2). A good verse to prayerfully use upon opening the Word of God is Psalm 119:18: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law," a familiar text to the members of "The Scripture Union."

Next, the Bible should be read

Deliberately

By this we mean slowly. Plenty of time should be allowed for reading the Bible. To read it hurriedly is like rushing through a meal—it is but half digested and assimilated (see Isa. 1:3). Learn a lesson from the cow. She slowly chews her cud, passing her food from one stomach to the other for digestion. Slow digestion of God's Word is necessary. True, it is a good idea to read the Bible through every year by taking two chapters in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament every weekday, and three of the Old and two of the New on Sundays. But it is more important to read it slowly and systematically in small portions, and thereby avoid haphazard, random reading.

One of my university professors once told us about an older man who to him seemed especially wise in all his ways. When he asked the elderly man his secret the old gentleman said that during his life he had read the Bible

through several times, meditating at least a minute on every verse.

Fourthly, the Bible should be read

Diligently

Particular care should be taken in our reading of God's Word. Just as a scholar ponders a weighty and impressive looking secular textbook, so the Christian must carefully ponder his sacred Textbook, the Bible. The Bible is not all bread and milk; much of it is "strong meat" (Heb. 5:13-14). Therefore, in our reading of it, surely no less diligence should be applied than in our reading of textbooks dealing with mathematics, chemistry, physics, the Classics, language study, and the like (see 2 Pet. 3:16).

Also, as we read, it's a good idea to keep a notebook in order to jot down at least some of the fruits of our reading. I have learned the hard way that "the world's worst ink is better than the world's best memory."

Still further, we should read the Bible

Discerningly

It has been rightly said that "A text without a context is a pretext." Always seek to read the Scriptures with the context in mind. It was John Wycliffe who, in the 14th century, expressed it this way:

"It shall greatly helpe ye to understande the Scripture,
If thou mark
Not only what is spoken or wrytten,
With what words,

But of whom,
And to whom,
At what time,
Where,
To what intent,
With what circumstances,
Considering what goeth before
And what followeth.”
Sixthly, read the Word of God

Directly

Always seek to obtain God’s message to you personally. Like Jacob of old, who wrestled with God at the brook Jabbok, we also need to, as it were, wrestle with God. Do not cease reading or meditating on the particular passage before you until the Lord has spoken and given you something to think about and fortify you through the day, keeping in mind an especially important truth as you read — namely, that the Old Testament is God’s illustration book of the New Testament lesson book (see 1 Cor. 10:11).

Finally, we should read the Bible

Dutifully

When God has spokent to YOU in and through His written Word, remember, it is your responsibility to obey and thereby carry out His Word in your everyday conduct and conversation.

Over the past decade or so there has been a virtual avalanche of new translations of the Scriptures, and

they are still coming off the presses. On my study desk I keep no less than seven translations, plus my Greek New Testament. In Christian circles, at least, the question often comes up, "What is the best translation of the Bible?" Unequivocally, the best translation of the Bible is a man or woman living a godly life in obedience to God's Word (see Heb. 5:8 with 1 Pet. 2:21). Also, let us remember that as we carry out His Word, the Lord Jesus Christ always goes with us (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:8).

In response to the questioning of a young Christian who earnestly confided to G. R. Harding Wood of Great Britain that he found the Bible dull, Mr. Wood came forth with a splendid yet simple answer centering around four of the many relationships the believer enters into with the Lord Jesus Christ at the moment of salvation. To all, whether or not this young person's problem has been yours as well, he has suggested that we should read the Bible:

1. COMPLETELY, as Part of the Bride of Jesus (just as a bride reads a love-letter).
2. CONSTANTLY, as A Traveler to the Home of Jesus.
3. CAREFULLY, as A Scholar in the School of Jesus.
4. CONSCIENTIOUSLY, as A Soldier in the Army of Jesus.

The saintly and gifted F. B. Meyer gave this word of advice:

"Read the Bible, not as a newspaper, but as a home letter. If a cluster of heavenly fruit hangs within reach, gather it. If a promise lies upon the page as a blank check, cash it. If a prayer is recorded, appropriate it,

and launch it as a feathered arrow from the bow of your desire. If an example of holiness gleams before you, ask God to do as much for you. If the truth is revealed in all its intrinsic splendor, entreat that its brilliance may ever irradiate the hemisphere of your life."

— from "Choice Gleanings" Calendar

If these, along with the other suggestions we have given on how to read the Bible, are really put to use and into practice the reading of the Bible will not be dull, or a duty, but truly delightful, resulting in genuine spiritual dividends.

G. R. Harding Wood, *Enjoy Your Bible*, pp. 17-21.

The Child With The Seven Names

W. Ross Rainey (Note: the writer, our Associate-Editor, would like to acknowledge his indebtedness to Dr. E. Schuyler English for the title of this article, for it was from his pen that he first saw these words some nine years ago and they have never left him).

Scriptures: Isaiah 9:6, 7:14

Matthew 1:21

What a mysterious, miraculous, awe-inspiring and joyous event it is when the first baby, the second, and also the third come into the home! The happy question so often asked is, "What shall we call him?" "What name shall we give her?"

Many months before our first child was born my wife and I had decided on our choice of names, although we were somewhat slower in selecting names before the birth of our second and third child.

However, there was one first Child whose name was not selected by a parent or other relative, but by God.

Furthermore, He was not given one name or two, but seven, and six of them were announced more than 700 years before His birth. This Child was different from any other who ever entered the world. He had no human father, but was born of a virgin. In His humanity He was perfect, but He was more than human. He was divine, God manifested in flesh, perfect in His deity. He was brought forth by a woman, the virgin Mary; He was given by God; and He is all His names signify and embody.

Let us prayerfully focus our attention, then, on the Christ-Child, carefully considering each of His seven names, and noting first of all

The Old Testament Prophecies.

Five of our Saviour's names are disclosed in the magnificent and majestic words of Isaiah 9:6 which text, of course, is not complete apart from the words of verse 7.

"His name shall be called Wonderful." When Christ was born the shepherds marveled at the glorious circumstances. During His earthly ministry all were astounded at the miracles He wrought, and in Luke 11:14 it is recorded, "... and the people wondered."

This very same name, or title, was used when the Angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah, the father of Samson. When Manoah inquired of the Angel of the Lord what His name was, He answered, "Why asketh thou thus after My name, seeing it is secret" (i.e., wonderful; see Judg. 13:18-19; this account is just one of many O. T. theophanies, the Angel of the Lord being none other than a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ Himself).

"Counsellor." To all who would hear and heed He gave divine counsel. He who was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14) spoke with authority (see Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22). Even the unbelieving officers, returning to the Pharisees who had sent them to arrest Christ, answered their superiors, saying, "Never man sake like this Man" (John 7:46).

In the Hebrew this same word is used in Isaiah 11:2, while the two words — "wonderful" and "counsels" — are found together in Isaiah 25:1.

“The Mighty God.” Christ is God! He was in the bosom of the Father from eternity (John 1:18), and He is revealed as the Jehovah of the Old Testament, for He and the Father are one (John 10:30).

In the Hebrew text, “El” is God, the last syllable of “Immanuel.” “El” is contrasted with man in Isaiah 31:3 and Hosea 11:9, while “mighty” is used of God in Deuteronomy 10:17 and elsewhere in the Scriptures.

“The Everlasting Father.” A better translation of this would be, “the Father of the Ages.” The Lord Jesus Christ is eternal and before His incarnation all things were created by Him and for Him (John 1:3; Col. 1:16), and by Him the ages were fitted together (Heb. 11:3). He is the Architect of the Ages, the Designer of all created things.

There is a twofold revelation in this name: 1. He inhabits and possesses eternity (Isa. 57:15), and 2, He is loving, tender and compassionate, the all-wise Instructor, Trainer and Provider.

All things find their coherence and continuity in Him (Col. 1:17).

“The Prince of Peace.” A just and lasting peace which so many sincere men seek today will never be realized until “the Prince of Peace” comes to the earth a second time. In that day He will not come as a Child, but in power and great glory (Matt. 25:31; Rev. 19:11-16); not as a Lamb to die (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:8-19), but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah to reign in righteousness (Rev. 5:5). Meanwhile, Christ is “the Prince of Peace” in other ways: 1. No one can have “peace with God” except through genuine faith in the Son of God who died on the cross for our sins and rose again, thereby freely

providing salvation and peace for the believing sinner (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20), and 2. No believer can experience the “peace of God” apart from committing everything to Him and thereby trusting Him fully (Phil. 4:4-7).

The eternity of Christ and His provision of peace are combined in the words of Isaiah 57:15-19 (see also Luke 2:14).

By the way, did you take time to look up these references?

The sixth name of our Saviour is disclosed in the familiar words of Isaiah 7:14.

“Immanuel.” This Hebrew name means “God with us.” To those who witnessed Christ’s miracles and heard His gracious words, it was evident that God was indeed among men (e.g., consider John the Baptist’s declaration — John 1:34; Peter’s confession — Matt. 16:16; Nathanael’s words — John 1:49; the Roman centurion’s realization and consequent confession — Matt. 27:54). And those who saw the Lord Jesus also saw the Father (John 14:9).

Though Christ’s physical presence is now in Heaven at the Father’s right hand, He is nonetheless with His own moment by moment (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5), dwelling by faith in the regenerated hearts of His people (Gal. 2:20).

Is the Lord Jesus genuinely at home in your heart?

The New Testament Pronouncement

This seventh name of our Saviour is revealed in Matthew 1:21.

“Jesus.” This is the name associated with Christ’s perfect humanity, the name given to Him at His birth. It is the name that the angel told Joseph, the Child’s foster-father, to give Mary’s divine Son. The heavenly messenger said, “thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.” This classic text expresses the purpose for which Christ came to the earth (see Mark 10:45). He was the only baby ever born into the world for the express purpose of dying.

Of the name JESUS, someone has made the following acrostic: “Jesus Exactly Suits Us Sinners.” Admittedly, it is somewhat trite, yet it is nevertheless true. No one could ever have met us in our deep need as sinners but JESUS.

Here, then, is our altogether lovely Saviour, the Child with the seven names. Having accomplished redemption through His death on the cross, He arose, has ascended, is today seated at the Father’s right hand in Heaven, and is soon to come again to receive His own to Himself, to judge, to reign, to be further glorified and confessed as LORD by all created beings.

No day, no season of the year can mean anything apart from Christ, the Child with the seven names, the Holy Son of God. He alone gives true peace, joy and satisfaction, and without Him life is empty and meaningless.

Have you personally looked beyond the crib in Bethlehem’s manger to the Cross of Calvary? Remember, the real reason He was born into this world was to save you from your sins!

The Divine Visitor

Our Associate-Editor, W. Ross Rainey, has favoured us with another interesting article, an article to challenge all of us, to alert us. How often we have failed to recognize the presence of the Lord!

Scripture Reading: Genesis 18:1-15

Guy H. King in his little book entitled, *Salvation Symphony*, relates a quaint story which took place in the reign of King George V. A certain London hospital was informed that England's beloved monarch intended making an informal visit. It is easy to imagine the excitement this news occasioned, and not the least among the children. One small boy could hardly contain himself. As the afternoon wore on, many people passed in and out of the hospital. About 4:00 p.m. a large party of people came in and one gentleman was ever so kind, even going over to the small boy, patting him on the head, and speaking so nicely to him. Then the group disappeared, and still more people passed in and out. Settling down for the night, the little lad was bitterly disappointed, and said to the attending nurse, "The King hasn't come." She replied, "But sonny, don't you remember a kind gentleman who came and patted your head and spoke so nicely to you, and you loved him so?" "Yes." "Well, that was he." The boy's eyes opened wide in wonderment, and with a frown he said, "But he hadn't his crown on!"

How well this little incident illustrates the opening verses of Genesis 18! The Lord does not always appear with His crown on (see Isa. 53:1-3), and so it was here on that hot afternoon that the Divine Visitor arrived

quite unassumingly and unexpectedly at Abraham's home.

Do we always recognize the Lord when He comes to us in our homes and circumstances? How He delights to do so, and what condescending grace on His part (see Prov. 8:31; 1 Kings 8:27 with Isa. 57:15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 19:1-10; 24:28-31; John 2:1-11; Rev. 3:20).

The Lord's Presence (18:1-8)

His revelation (18:1-2). Once again the Lord appeared to Abraham, this time accompanied by two angels. He is always present, but on this particular occasion He made Himself visible. Theologically, this event marks what is called a theophany, that is, a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who is often called "the Angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament (see Gen. 16:7 with 1 Tim. 6:16; John 1:18). As always, when the Lord shows Himself to His people, it is for the purpose of promise and blessing. Notice the time of His appearance here — "in the heat of the day" (v. 1). All activity had ceased and Abraham was at rest, thus in a position to receive the Lord. Sometimes the "heat" of various circumstances causes us to cease from activity, forcing us to be quiet and rest (Psa. 23:2; 46:10), and at such times we should expect that His hand is at work, preparing us to receive some blessing or further revelation of Himself.

It may be that Abraham was in a state of expectancy (v. 2) and, if so, he was not disappointed. He forgot about the "heat" and "ran" to meet the Divine Visitor and His heavenly companions, and his first act was that of worship.

Abraham's response (18:3-8). Abraham's address, "my Lord" (v. 3), does not necessarily mean that he immediately knew his Visitor's identity, since this form of greeting was used of man, as well as God.

Furthermore, if Hebrews 13:2 is a reference to this incident, then Abraham was not immediately aware of his Guest's identity.

If we are inclined to be spiritually lazy, how easy it is to let the Lord pass by. Had this been the case with Abraham that particular day he would have missed out on some tremendous blessings. The great lesson of verse 5 is that Abraham was so in touch with the Lord's mind that his suggestions and proposals were divinely commended and commanded to be carried out. The urgency of Abraham's service is clearly revealed in verses 6 and 7 (see 1 Sam. 21:8), and after his service was finished we observe that he "stood by them under the tree" (v. 8), ready to attend their needs (Psa. 123:2). Resident in the expression "under the tree" is a spiritual suggestion that no service is acceptable to God except as the sinner has looked to Calvary and taken his place under the shelter of the cross.

The action of the Lord and His angels reveals condescension and fellowship (see Luke 24:41-43), and as W. H. Griffith Thomas has said, "The supreme characteristic of a believer's life is fellowship with God."

The Lord Jesus Christ often comes in the guise of a stranger (see Matt. 25:35-45). F. B. Meyer tells the story of a little German lad who left the door open for the Lord to enter and sit with his mother and himself at their frugal supper table. When a beggar appeared at the door the lad said, "Perhaps the Lord could not come

Himself, and had therefore sent this poor man as His representative.”

The Lord’s Promise (18:9-15)

His inquiry (18:9). At this point, Abraham could have had no doubt as to the identity of his Visitor.

His promise (18:10). “He,” referring to the Lord, gave them the promise that they would become parents, even though Abraham was 99 years old, and Sarah 89 (cf 17:17; 21:5; see also Rom. 4:18-22; Gal. 4:22-23; Heb. 11:11). One thing certain, whatever we do as unto the Lord, He never leaves us in His debt. In time of drought and famine He sent Elijah to lodge with a widow and her son, and provided meal and oil for all of them for many days. He accepted an invitation from friends to a marriage feast, and then returned their simple kindness to Him by earthen jars brimming with water turned to wine. He used Peter’s fishing boat, and then gave it back nearly submerged with the weight of fish He had driven into the nets. He used a lad’s lunch of five barley loaves and two small fishes, and not only provided the lad with an ample meal but fed at least fifteen thousand other people (a conservative estimate), with twelve baskets full of leftovers.

Sarah’s unbelief (18:11-13). Sarah was separated from the Divine Guest and Abraham by a thin tent-flap, so she easily overheard their conversation. She was probably still ignorant of the Divine Visitor’s identity, but following the words of 18:13 she knew (see 1 Sam. 16:7; Heb. 11:11; 4:13). Abraham could have done her a real favor if he had just whispered through the tent-flap, “Psst, it’s the Lord!”

We can scarcely wonder at Sarah's unbelief.

His question and reaffirmation (18:14). The only fitting answer to the grand question of this text, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?", is found in Jeremiah 32:17 (see Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37). It is interesting that the word for "hard" is literally, "wonderful" (see Isa. 9:6).

Sarah's denial (18:15a with Prov. 9:10).

His rebuke (18:15b). Sarah passed from unbelief to belief (Heb. 11:11). She did not challenge the Lord's statement, her denial having been because of fear, realizing that it was indeed the Lord speaking to her. That Sarah's spiritual life was not closely akin to her husband's is evident, but, like all of us, she was rebuked and taught.

It was C. T. Studd who said, "Faith laughs at impossibilities, and cries, 'It shall be done!'" God grant us that kind of faith in these days (see Heb. 12:1-3).

The very name of Sarah's son would remind her of her unbelief, for Isaac means "laughter" or "to laugh" (18:12-13, 15). Was Abraham's laugh one of unbelief (see Gen. 17:17 with 15:4-6)? Let us assure ourselves that walking by faith, and taking to heart what God has to say to us through His Word, is no laughing matter, yet such a walk issues in untold heavenly joy and blessing.

Today, multitudes of unrepentant sinners laugh in unbelief, but some day God will laugh at them in their calamity (Psa. 2:4), for it is well to remember that in relation to all such unbelievers, He will have the last laugh.

The Tears of the Lord Jesus

The shortest verse in the English Bible is John 11:35, "Jesus wept" (in the Greek text the shortest verse is 1 Thess. 5:16). What an exquisitely simple statement, "Jesus wept"! Just two drops of speech in the English language, yet possessing an ocean of meaning. From the standpoint of the Greek New Testament the literal translation is, "The Jesus wept," the definite article having been used to distinguish Him from all others bearing the name "Jesus," since it was not an uncommon name among the Jews at that time. As a case in point, a number of ancient manuscripts have an addition to the text of Matthew 27:16. They read "Jesus Barrabbas" as the name of the prisoner. While manuscript evidence for the addition of "Jesus" is not strong, it nevertheless may account for Pilate's clarification when he said, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barrabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:17).

Only three times in the New Testament is it recorded that the Lord Jesus wept (John 11:35; Luke 19:41; Heb. 5:7), and in each instance it was either sin or the consequences of sin that caused Him to weep.

Does Jesus Christ weep today? Probably not, for He is presently our risen, ascended and glorified Lord and Saviour at God's right hand in heaven, and heaven is that place where some day all tears will be forever wiped away from the eyes and faces of God's people (Rev. 21:4). Admittedly, though, there is such abounding sin and evil in this groaning world today that we should not be surprised if Christ on occasion does weep even now.

In a way, it is strange that the Bible never records that the Lord Jesus laughed or smiled. This is not to say that He never did so, but if He did, the Holy Spirit for some reason in His infinite wisdom did not see fit to record it. That our Lord undoubtedly did laugh and smile is in some little measure supported by the revelation of Scripture. We read that He was “anointed ... with the oil of gladness above His fellows” (Heb. 1:9). Luke tells us that Christ “rejoiced” (Luke 10:21), while just prior to Calvary our Lord Himself spoke of His “joy” (John 15:11; 17:13).

Perhaps the Word of God is silent regarding the laughter of Christ in order to stress the awesome and awful nature of His solemn mission to planet earth. We are reminded that laughter is not synonymous with true joy. An easygoing, lighthearted spirit is not necessarily equivalent to genuine spirituality

Why, then, did the Lord Jesus Christ weep?

Christ Wept Because of Sin’s Inherent Penalty (John 11:32-46)

This first instance of our Lord’s weeping had its setting in Bethany (meaning “house of the afflicted one”) beside Lazarus’ grave. From among the many details describing this scene we want to single out four things centering on our Saviour, the first being:

His Sympathy (vv. 32-36). Jesus’ tears demonstrated the profound and infinite sympathy of His heart in relation to all the sorrows and trials we are called upon to go through, and remember, that sympathy has not changed (Heb. 13:8). Furthermore, His tears revealed His perfect

humanity, as well as His fitness to be our Great High Priest (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-15).

What a revelation there is here of Christ's love! What is recorded in John 11:3, "... behold, he whom thou lovest is sick," is evidenced in 11:36, "... Behold, how He loved him!" The infinite intensity of our Lord's love was attested to by the reaction of the Jews upon seeing His tears. Here is the perfect fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 4:13b, "...that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope," and of Romans 12:15b, "... weep with them that weep." In relation to Christ's tears we need to especially note that emotion did not govern but only accompanied His actions. Our weeping should be accompanied by a strong and wise faith.

His Sadness (vv. 37-40). Of this scene W. Graham Scroggie has said, "He genuinely sorrowed with those two women who were His friends, but the deepest ground of His grief was in the knowledge that by sin came death; and that fact led Him perhaps to anticipate Calvary. Christ ever had, and has, 'a heart at leisure from itself, to sooth and sympathize.' Are you in trouble today? He is beside you, and He cares."

His Supplication (vv. 41-42). The bystanders must be made to know that the Father always heard the Son, so our Lord prayed as He did. Furthermore, we learn that Jesus never acted independently of the Father (see John 14:10).

It is noteworthy that in speaking to His Father about Lazarus — and He spoke to Him about everything — He asked for nothing, but thanked Him for prayer already answered. Have we ever prayed like that?

His Sovereignty (vv. 43-45). Christ spoke and Lazarus came forth! As someone has said, “The Lord’s voice was heard in hades” (v. 43). And as others have so often noted, had not the Lord Jesus spoken Lazarus’ name the dead everywhere would have “come forth.” He is Lord of both death and life.

Have you heard His voice and experienced the power of His Word in your life? (See Matt. 11:28; Rom. 10:17; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).

We come now to the second main reason for our Lord’s tears.

Christ Wept Because of Sin’s Insidious Power (Luke 19:41-44)

Moved with compassion, the Lord Jesus drew near to a spot overlooking Jerusalem — perhaps on the Mount of Olives — and as He beheld the city He wept over it. We thus note:

His Pathos (v. 41). The Lord Jesus loved Jerusalem and its people, but alas, few of the city’s inhabitants had any love for Him (see 19:14). Furthermore, His weeping here was not just a filling of the eyes with tears along with a few muffled sighs. The Greek word for “wept” refers to audible weeping, a bursting into tears accompanied by sobs. No stronger word could have been used.

His Patience (v. 42). How patient our Lord had been with the “house of Israel”! Yet, in their wilful and sinful ignorance they were blind to the reality of His Blessed Person and redemptive mission.

As J.C. Ryle has said, "A wilful ignorance will never be allowed as a plea in a man's favour. On the contrary, it will rather add to his guilt."

His Prophecy (vv. 43-44). These words were fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Titus, the Roman conqueror, swept into the city, broke it down stone by stone, killing thousands, desecrating the temple, and totally wasting the city. From the time Christ spoke these words until their fulfillment, a period of 40 years elapsed wherein God graciously restrained His wrath.

Our Lord's compassion has not changed. He lovingly longs for sinners to come to Him (see 2 Pet. 3:9). Nevertheless, eternal judgment will overtake all who reject Him. Some day His patience and longsuffering will give way to His righteous wrath and indignation against sin and all unbelieving sinners. Judgment must eventually fall, but multitudes remain wilfully ignorant of this awesome truth.

We come now to the third anti final reason for our Saviour's tears.

Christ Wept Because of Sin's Infinite Price (Heb. 5:5-10)

In Hebrews 5:7 we read, "Who, in the days of His flesh, when He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." The scene of this text was Gethsemane, our Lord's last conflict before Calvary. Here, in this verse and its context, we note first of all:

Christ's Sufferings (vv. 7-8). Although none of the Gospels depict the Lord Jesus as actually weeping in

Gethsemane, we are given many details of his intense agony of soul, so we are not surprised to find this record of His tears on this significant occasion.

Of Mark 14:33-35 George Henderson has helpfully written, "Please notice these words: 'He began to be sore amazed and sore troubled and exceeding sorrowful.' They are peculiarly strong words in the original tongue. The sore amazed is an experience of coming into a condition where all the perspectives alter, and it seemed as though the soul goes into the panic of a great fear. That was what was overwhelming Christ. The word very heavy means to be so utterly crushed with depression that one sinks into despair. It is a figure of wax that is melting before the furnace. The words exceeding sorrowful mean to be caught in the very cyclone of grief. Those are the three expressions which the Spirit of God has chosen to give us some conception of the emotion that stirred the soul of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane: the panic of a great fear, the crushing of an awful depression, the cyclone of an unutterable grief."¹

Christ's Supplications (v. 7; see Luke 22:44). William Hoste has commented, "In the garden of Gethsemane the Lord Jesus saw the Cross in all its dread reality, and there He suffered by anticipation in a way never before experienced. It was the proper and legitimate shrinking of absolute sinlessness from contact with sin which was manifested in the prayer: 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' It was not fear of physical death which so distressed Him, as His own words show (John 12:27). Multitudes of His devoted followers — tender maidens as well as strong men — have faced martyrdom without a tremor. What He dreaded was the deeper,

more terrible reality which is called the second death, the divine judgment upon sin.”²

Furthermore, regarding Christ’s praying as He did in the garden of Gethsemane, George Henderson has said that it was “not that He might escape death, for He was going to do that of set purpose; but that He might be delivered from the bonds of death by resurrection.”³

Christ’s Submission (v. 8). The Lord Jesus never deviated from the path set before Him. He submitted fully and perfectly to His Father’s will and “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).

The scholar John A. Bengel has said of our Lord’s Gethsemane experience: “Awful cup! Reasonable fear! Unviolated obedience! Mighty prayer! Speedy answer!”

Perhaps there is no better commentary on the significant and sobering subject of Christ’s tears than the words of the Apostle John in 1 John 4:10: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

1 Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews, p.62.

2 Ibid., pp. 62-63.

3 Ibid., p. 63.

The Will of God

A missionary summed up his desire for the uncertain and unknown future as follows: "to be in the centre of God's perfect will." Indeed, the cry often goes up from the heart of those who really love the Lord, "I want the will of God done in my life, but how can I really know what His will is for me?" This is one of the many problems facing every sincere Christian in his daily pathway, but it is also a crucial question on the hearts and minds of Christian young people who are earnestly seeking God's will for their life-work, a question about which the writer was deeply concerned and troubled as a teen-ager.

There is no higher ambition in life than that of wanting to know, to do, and to love God's perfect will, and we are assured in His Word that we shall receive divine guidance in order that we might come to know His perfect will (e.g., Psa. 32:8; John 7:17; 16:13).

In our development of this vital subject we want to consider four main things, the first being-

The Seriousness of Discovering the Will of God

Never lose sight of the fact that God has a definite PLAN for your life. The Holy Scriptures clearly reveal this (cf. Psa. 143:10; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 5:17; Col. 1:9; Heb. 10:36; 1 Pet. 3:17; 1 John 2:17). The Lord Jesus Christ is the pre-eminent example of One who, throughout His earthly life and ministry, lived in the perfect will of God and perfectly carried it out (see Luke 2:49; 22:42; John 4:34; 6:38; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 10:9). A few other splendid, though imperfect, examples are found in Abraham,

Joseph (Gen. 50:20), Moses (Ex. 2-4), Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, John the Baptist, and the Apostle Paul (Acts 6:9 with 9:15-16; 13:1-3). Examples of men who failed to truly discern and fulfill God's plan and will for their lives are Saul (1 Sam. 9, 10, 13, 15, 28, 31), Solomon, and Uzziah (2 Chron. 26). Even Abraham missed the will of God at one highly important juncture in his life (cf. Gen. 16), and his failure has widespread effects even to the present moment.

To be indifferent about discovering God's will for your life is to miss out on the abundant life in Christ (John 10:10), as well as to "suffer loss" for all eternity at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:15). How different history would have been had Paul been careless and insensitive about seeking God's perfect will for his life (e.g., Acts 16:1ff.).

We come now to the second main thing

The Specific Requirements for Discovering the Will of God

There are at least four specific requirements in relation to this all-important subject.

Stillness (Psa. 46:10; see also Psa. 27:14; 37:34; 62:5; 123:2). The key to clearing a muddy glass of water is simply WAITING. This is the supremely essential factor in discovering the divine will — WAITING UPON GOD.

Surrender (Rom. 12:1). James McConkey has written: "Will to do God's will for your life instead of your own. Do not launch out upon the sea of life headed for a port of your own choosing, guided by a chart of your own draughting, driven by the power of your own selfish pleasures or ambitions. Come to God. Yield your life to

Him by one act of trustful, irrevocable surrender.... So shall you come steadily to know and see God's will for your life ... Without a shadow of a doubt, we will begin to know God's will as soon as we begin to choose His will for our lives instead of our own."

Separation from the World (Rom. 12:2; see also John 15:18-19; 17:15-16; Gal. 1:4; Jas. 4:4; 1 John 2:15; 3:13). In his fine little book, *The Perfect Will of God*, G. Christian Weiss has aptly defined what is meant by Paul's words, "be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2), indicating that the Christian must not conform to the world's pattern, or principles; nor must he seek after or indulge in the world's pleasures, nor must he set his affection on the world's possessions (cf. 1 John 2:15-17).

J. B. Phillips renders the opening words of Romans 12:2 as follows: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold..."

Spiritual-mindedness (Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:1-4). "... but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ..." (Rom. 12:2). Only through prayer and the searching of the Scriptures day by day can the life of the true believer be renewed, refreshed, transformed and thereby "conditioned" to receive the knowledge of God's perfect will.

Harold R. Cook of Chicago's Moody Bible Institute has listed the general principles of divine guidance as follows: "A recognition of the need for guidance, a willingness to be led, a deliberate renunciation of a self-interest, a close walk with God so as to be sensitive to His wishes, as well as a constant use of the Word of God in earnest prayer."

The words of Isaiah 30:12 will only be our experience as we seek to truly walk with the Lord, and truly walking with the Lord is not an experience of days or even weeks, but of months and years.

We come now to our third main point —

The Sources of Discovering the Will of God

The Word of God (John 5:39 with Psa. 119:9, 11, 105; see Matt. 22:29; Acts 17:10-11). the spirit of God (John 14:18; Rom. 8:14-16; see Acts 8:26, 29; 11:12; 13:2), the peace of God (Col. 3:15), prayer (e.g., Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 4:2-4), circumstances (e.g. Acts 16:6-10), the advice of spiritually-minded and mature Christians.

What about asking God for some sort of “sign”? If we can ask sincerely and earnestly, as Gideon did (Judg. 6:36-40), then the Lord will undoubtedly guide in this way, but so often “sign seeking” manifests a lack of faith (see Rom. 14:23). Remember, Gideon did not have the entire Word of God, nor did he possess the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, nor did he have such promises as Philippians 4:19, which today are the possessions and resources of every true child of God.

The saintly F. B. Meyer was once asked how a person might unmistakably recognize the will of God, and he replied: “This question was answered for me once on board ship, as in a very dark night we were entering harbor. I asked the captain how he was able to find the narrow entrance to the harbor at night. He said to me, ‘See yonder three lights? When those lights are in correct alignment, I know I am in the right channel.’ So it is with the will of God. When the Word of God, the impulse of the Holy Spirit in my, heart, and the outward

circumstances are in harmony, then I am convinced that I am acting in accordance with the will of God.”

George Muller’s method for discovering and discerning God’s will in all matters, great and small, has been summarized by another as follows: 1 surrender your own will, 2 seek the Spirit’s will through God’s will, 3 note providential circumstances, 4 pray for guidance, 5 wait on God.

In regard to discovering the will of God, this same great man of faith has asserted: “Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord’s will, whatever it may be.”

Finally, we come to

The Sequel of Discovering the Will of God

The sequel of discovering God’s will, and doing it from the heart, is manifold. Nevertheless, observe at least seven things all illustrated, to one degree or another, in Acts 16 (I have purposely withheld any verse references in order that you might find them for yourself — and perhaps a few more “by-products” of doing the perfect will of God): 1. heart rest, 2. heavenly joy, 3. holy boldness, 4. spiritual power, 5. blessing to others, 6. growth in grace and knowledge, 7. God glorified.

May our constant ambition be: “The Will of God — nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.”

To Have and to Hold

Food for the Flock 9:2 (Feb 1963)

As part of a letter to the family of God, the Apostle John was inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen the following words, wherein is revealed one of the several reasons why he wrote his First Epistle: “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:11-12).

The most wonderful thing in all the world is to be a Christian, that is, to have been “born again” (John 3:3, 7), to have truly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Having thus become rightly related to Christ, the Word of God clearly and emphatically reveals that we have life, life that is from above, divine life, eternal life. This is so because we have CHRIST who is THE LIFE — its Source, its Secret, its Supply.

Facing death, Samuel Rutherford said: “I am in the happiest pass to which man ever came. Christ is mine, and I am His; and there is nothing now between me and resurrection, except — Paradise.” As a rule, young people are not facing death but life, and the great, all-important issue is simply this. Can you say, as Samuel Rutherford could say, in life as well as in death, “Christ is mine, and I am His?”

If, then, Christ is mine, and I am His, we need to take to heart the words of the Apostle Paul to his young colleague Timothy, “... lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim.

6:12). What did Paul mean? Timothy, who already had eternal life, was commanded here and now to get a grip on his never-ending life in Christ, to enter into that life from a practical standpoint, that life which alone is rich, real, radiant, running over and rewarding. And this command has its application to all true believers.

Now, if we have Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we have eternal life. In view of this, we have a definite charge to lay hold of that life in Him as something to be practically appropriated here and now. If we are going to fulfill our God-given charge, then certain basic responsibilities must be carried out, and we suggest three such responsibilities which we must put into practice day by day, the first one being:

Holding Faith

In the midst of “the good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18, J.N.D.), in which he participated as a young soldier of Jesus Christ, Timothy was exhorted by Paul as follows: “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19). Some, like Hymenaeus and Alexander, had made shipwreck of their faith because of a failure to hold faith and a good conscience. They are not unlike many today. Nevertheless, two things would help Timothy in his warfare and enable him to avoid the pitfall of his erring and wayward brethren. First of all, he was to take a firm hold of faith in the Captain of his salvation, an unshakeable trust in his Commanding Officer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, he was to hold a good conscience. As Guy H. King has said:... a seeing that he has no consciousness of having played fast and loose with King’s Regulations.”

Unfortunately, many people today have a seared conscience, a conscience that is like branded flesh — dead (1 Tim. 4:2); some have a defiled conscience (Tit. 1:5); while still others have an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22). May we be as those who hold faith and a good conscience day by day, holding a conscience which is truly under the control of the Holy Spirit and sensitive to His voice.

Our second suggested basic responsibility is:

Holding Fast

While Paul's words to Titus have to do with one of the required qualities of an elder, they nonetheless have their application to all believers: "Holding fast the faithful Word ..." (Tit. 1:9). If we are going to really hold faith and a good conscience, then we must be in the Word of God as a daily habit, clinging to it, holding one's self face to face with it, and this, with a view to meeting oppositions of the enemy. The Scriptures are described here as "the faithful Word," and this is so because their Author is infinitely faithful. The Holy Bible is the Book to live by, that is, to continually read, believe, obey and hold fast to along life's pilgrim pathway.

It was George Mueller, one of the truly great men of faith and prayer in more recent times, who said: "The vigour of our spiritual life will be in proportion to the place held by the Word in our life and thoughts." Out of his long and fruitful experience, he has given six suggestions on "How to Read the Bible," and they are briefly presented as follows: Read the Scriptures regularly through. Read with prayer. Read with meditation. Read with reference to yourself. Read with faith. Read in order to carry into practice.

When I graduated from university, the commencement speaker for that memorable day was the brave and famous defender of Corregidor, General Jonathon M. Wainwright. Ultimately forced by the Japanese to surrender the small, fortified island guarding the entrance to Manila Bay in the Philippines, the general and his men were imprisoned until the end of World War II. In the course of his address, General Wainwright said that upon their imprisonment all Bibles were confiscated. However, one of the men had been able to smuggle in a copy of the New Testament. Secretly they read it and it was this, the humble general said, that “held body and soul together” during those dark and difficult days, months and even years of suffering. He, with others of his men, held fast to the Word of God, and it held them fast. Later that same day, June 5th, 1950, I had the pleasure of meeting General Wainwright personally, but the pressure of time and circumstance forbade anything more than a formal greeting. Some day, however, when time is no more, I look forward to meeting him again in the Celestial City, for on the basis of what he said in his commencement address he not only loved the Word of God, but he loved its Author as well.

We come now to our third and final suggested basic responsibility, and that is:

Holding Forth

Writing to the Philippian Christians, the Apostle Paul said: “Holding forth the Word of Life ...” (2:16). In the previous verse we are reminded of our position and purpose to “shine as lights in the world,” a world that is “crooked and perverted” (J.N.D.) because of sin. With

untainted life and untinged light we each one should be shining (no whining, please!) for our Lord and His glory, showing forth His life and shining forth His light (John 8:12; Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 5:8).

If we are really shining for the Lord Jesus Christ, it follows quite supernaturally that we shall be found “Holding forth the Word of Life,” and we may also say, “Holding forth the Word of Light” (see Ps. 119:105). “Holding forth” literally means “offering” or “presenting,” and as followers of the very Lord of Life and Glory we should be willing to spend and be spent, even to the point of exhaustion, in presenting and proclaiming the Word of Life and Light midst a spiritually dark world.

Many years ago the Light of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ, flooded and filled the heart and life of a brilliant Cambridge student named Henry Martyn, setting him ablaze for God. Answering God’s call to go forth as a missionary, he said on the eve of his departure for India, “I go to burn out for God.” And he did!

Within the scope of the Philippian letter we have three splendid examples of those who, in their day, faithfully held forth the Word of Life — namely, Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus. How faithfully are we fulfilling this glad yet great responsibility today?

It has been rightly said: “Don’t expect God to use you as a lighthouse somewhere else, if He can’t use you as a candle where you are!”

In Paul’s day some were not “holding the Head” (Col. 2:19). If we have Christ, then we have life. And as those who have life in Him it should be our delight, even as it is our duty, to diligently lay hold of that life, seeing to it

that we continually hold the Head. After all, the real secret of HOLDING FAITH, HOLDING FAST and HOLDING FORTH is HOLDING THE HEAD, that is, seeing to it that from a practical standpoint the Lord Jesus Christ is given that which alone is rightfully His — the pre-eminence in all things! Let us, then, keep our eyes fixed upon Him in these “last days” and be found diligently fulfilling these blessed and basic responsibilities until our Saviour returns for His own.

Who is Great?

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Psalm 48:1

In 1715, King Louis XIV of France died after a reign of 72 years. He called himself “the Great”, having made the famous statement, “I am the state”! His court was the most magnificent in Europe and his funeral equally spectacular. As his body lay in state in a golden coffin, a solitary candle was set above it to dramatize his greatness. While thousands waited in hushed silence at the memorial service, Bishop Massillon began to speak. Slowly reaching down, he snuffed out the candle and said, “Only God is great”. Indeed, how true! Only God is great. Let us celebrate His greatness daily. -Ross Rainey
c W. Ross Rainey, Used by Permission

Why Study Prophecy?

To anyone who knows anything at all about the Bible, it should be evident that we are living in prophetic times wherein the stage for God's future program is rapidly being set for the fulfillment of long-promised events. One look at this restless, warring, sin-sick world around us is evidence enough that we are living in the "last days" of this age of grace (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1-9).

What is prophecy? Actually, the meaning of the term may be said to be threefold, being (1) a for-telling in the sense of bearing a message or revelation for God, such as Haggai who was "the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message" (Hag. 1:13); (2) a forth-telling or the actual proclamation of the message itself; and (3) a foretelling or proclamation of future events. In a more restricted sense the word has reference to future events from the time of their utterance, prophecy having been briefly defined as "history written in advance."

While there are groups of Christians which have given the prophetic Scriptures their proper place and emphasis in preaching and teaching, the Church as a whole has neglected them. As a result, various cults and "isms" have developed which have not only given undue emphasis to prophecy, but have mixed in a great deal of error with their teaching, and this, to the confusion and delusion of multitudes (e.g., "Jehovah's Witnesses," "British Israel-ism," "Armstrongism").

Many unsaved people have a veritable mania for reading, hearing and discussing prophetic subjects, but because they do not know the Lord they have no genuine understanding of God's Word (1 Cor. 2:14).

Then, too, there are some Christians who seem to be taken up with nothing but prophecy, having little regard for the rest of the Bible. The attitude of these, coupled with the uncertain sound trumpeted by the Church, causes many believers either to neglect prophecy or to avoid it altogether.

Basic to every reason that may be given for studying prophecy is the fact that no less than sixteen books in the Old Testament are prophetic with between fifty and seventy-five per cent of it prophetic in character. One twentieth of the New Testament is prophetic, making almost one-fourth of the entire Bible prophetic. To neglect or avoid prophecy, then, is to end up with a considerably abridged Bible.

In view of the preceding comments let us now consider seven valid reasons for studying Bible prophecy, the first being because

It Concerns Our Saviour (Acts 10:43; Rev. 19:10)

The Lord Jesus Christ is the primary subject of the Scriptures, and that He is the theme of the Old Testament is confirmed by Christ Himself (Luke 24:25-27, 46; John 5:39). Thus, as Revelation 19:10 declares, He is also the subject of prophecy, for the very spirit of the prophetic Word is to testify of Jesus.

Referring to the Lord Jesus, Eric Sauer has said: "He is the crown and the shining star of all prophecy" (Eric Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, p. 155). Dr. Sauer has further stated: "The Old Testament tells what Christ is, the New Testament tells who He is, and in such a way that it becomes manifest that he alone knows

‘Jesus’ who recognizes Him as the ‘Christ’, and he alone knows who the ‘Christ’ is who knows that He is ‘Jesus.’ So do the two Testaments correspond to the chief names of the Redeemer; the Old to the name of His vocation, Christ, the New to His personal name, Jesus; but both are inspired by one Spirit and explain each other.” (Ibid., p. 156).

A second basic reason for studying prophecy is that

It Confirms Our Faith (2 Pet. 1:19)

Fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest evidences that the Bible is indeed God’s Word, not man’s. Concerning Christ’s First Advent alone, not to mention the prophecies concerning Israel and the Gentile nations, there are over 300 Old Testament prophecies, all of which have been fulfilled to the letter. At least twenty-four Old Testament prophecies regarding the events centering upon the Lord Jesus Christ’s death were fulfilled within a twenty-four hour period at the time of His passion (e.g., Matt. 27:46 with Psa. 22:1; John 19:24 with Psa. 22:18).

Regarding Christ’s Second Advent there are over 300 New Testament prophecies and, on the basis of fulfilled prophecy concerning His First Advent, there is no question but what every detail regarding His Second Advent shall be fulfilled to the letter.

Thirdly, prophecy should be studied because

It Corrects Our Thoughts (2 Tim. 3:16)

Have you ever felt like the Psalmist in Psalm 73:2-16? I have! The balance of the Psalm discloses the Lord’s answer to the problems and perplexities which surround

us through the Psalmist's own experience. A knowledge of prophecy enables the believer to know what the Lord's overall purposes are, and with confidence and certainty he can look to the One who holds the future, knowing that some day all evil shall be justly judged, all sin will be put down forever, and Christ shall be enthroned throughout His creation. It is the Word of God that will keep our thinking on the right track, remembering that almost one-fourth of that Word is prophetic.

A fourth vital reason for studying prophecy is that

It Cleanses Our Lives (1 John 3:3)

"That blessed hope" should have a practical cleansing effect on our daily lives. Living in the light of it should, and will, prompt confession of sin, weed out unbecoming conduct and conversation, and deliver us from those "weights" which hinder our running well in the race set before us (cf. John 17:17).

Still another major reason for studying prophecy is that

It Compels Our Service (Rev. 20:11-15)

To contemplate from God's prophetic Word what it means for the lost around us to perish without Christ compels us to serve with our Lord in every possible way to get out the gospel message, for the time is short wherein we may do His work down here (cf. John 9:4; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5).

Sixthly, studying prophecy is such that —

It Conforms Our Ways (Col. 3:1-4; 2 Pet. 3:10-14)

The Apostle Paul's consuming ambition is expressed in Philippians 3:10 the last line reading, "being made conformable unto His death." He elsewhere expressed God's great purpose for His saints, and that is, that we "might be conformed to the image of His Son" (Horn. 8:29). The study of prophecy, and especially those passages concerning Christ's future glories, will help us to conform our ways to His that we might be true ambassadors for Him in this world and become more like Him (cf. 1 John 4:17). Christ's interests and coming glories should be our supreme interests as those who represent Him. We should seek to "follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21), which will mean a minus sign thrust through the upright "I" of self (cf. John 12:24; Gal. 2:20; see Rom. 12: 1-2).

Finally, we should study prophecy because —

It Comforts Our Hearts (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

Apart from such prophetic passages as 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 it would be a sad and grim task indeed to stand by the graveside of a loved one in Christ with no certainty of the future order of things, and always left wondering what will take place in that coming day. Such a glorious and classic passage as this dispels all doubt, filling the heart with comfort and cheer, yes, even joy midst sorrow.

Perhaps there is no more fitting capstone to our brief study of this highly important and practical subject than the words of the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:19: "The word of prophecy was fulfilled in our hearing! You

should give that word your closest attention, for it shines like a lamp amidst all the dirt and darkness of the world, until the day dawns, and the morning star arises in your hearts" (J. B. Phillips trans.).

“He Brought Me”

In the Word of God there are three particular occurrences of this brief but blessed clause, or its equivalent, “He brought me,” which are especially instructive and meaningful to the Spirit-illuminated heart and mind. Related to its separate contexts, the clause brings before us a Divine activity in each of the three occurrences under our careful and prayerful consideration. The pronoun “He” refers to the origin of the Divine activity — namely, God. The verb “brought” directs our attention to the actual operation of the Divine activity. Lastly, the pronoun “me” indicates the object of the Divine activity.

First of all, let us consider the passage which demands the primary place because of its paramount theme:

The Death of the Son

In Psalm 22, the first in that great trilogy of Psalms which reveals the Lord Jesus Christ in His grace (22), guidance (23), and glory (24), we read these startling and solemn words in verse 15: “... and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” Over this graphically prophetic Psalm which not only presents Christ’s cruel crucifixion, but also His victorious resurrection and glorious reign, might well be written the words of 1 Peter 1:2: “The sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them” (A.S.V.).

The verse from which our clause is taken discloses the exhausted strength and extreme thirst of the dying Lamb of God as He suffered the excruciating agonies and anguish of the cross. Who killed the Lord Jesus

Christ? Many different answers might be given to this question, and each answer would be true in its own way. In a sense, the Jews killed Him (Acts 3:14-15; 5:30); Pilate killed Him (Matt. 27:24-26); the Roman soldiers killed Him (Matt. 27:35); and the Devil killed Him (Gen. 3:15). Morally speaking, not any of us is excluded from the guilt of history's foulest deed, for God's Word plainly states that Christ "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (Pet. 2:24). Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that God Himself slew His own Son. This is the full import and impact of the words already quoted from Psalm 22:15, and other Scripture passages add to the sublime reality of this solemn truth. For instance, the Prophet Isaiah has written, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief..." (53:10; see also vv. 4 and 6b; Acts 2:23; 2 Cor. 5:21). So great was God's love for us that He permitted the stroke of His righteous wrath to fall with a crushing blow upon His only begotten Son, this having been planned in the council chamber of the Triune God long before the world was spoken into existence (1 Pet. 1:20). Facing all the implications of the sin problem, only by the slaying of the Son of His love could God be both "just and the justifier" (Rom. 3:26).

If I am pressed into selecting a favorite hymn, it is Anne Ross Cousin's "O Christ, What Burdens Bowed Thy Head!" One of the stanzas of this beautiful song of praise centres upon the theme of God having slain His Son on the cross:

"Jehovah bade His sword awake:

O Christ, it woke 'against Thee!

Thy blood the flaming sword must slake,

Thy heart its sheath must be;
All for my sake my peace to make,
Now sleeps that sword for me.”

And just as surely as that sword pierced the heart of God the Son, so also did it pierce the heart of God the Father. The death of Christ is the dearest theme to the heart of God, and through all Eternity we shall never lose sight of the infinite price of our redemption, for the marks of our Lord’s crucifixion shall never be erased. This is further confirmed by John’s unfolding of a future scene in Heaven in Revelation 5. Three times over in that glorious chapter the Lord Jesus Christ is described as “the Lamb that was slain” (vv. 6, 9, 12). And surely, the chief reason why Christ instituted what is generally called “The Lord’s Supper” is that we, who by nature are so prone to forget, might presently in this earthly scene remember His death for us on the cross. Alas, how many have drifted away from the simple and blessed observance of this divinely instituted remembrance feast for His own, either lightly esteeming it or else polluting it by the addition of pagan rituals and ceremonies.

We come now to the second selected occurrence of the brief but blessed clause, “He brought me,” introducing us to the best news in all the world, and this, a direct result of Christ’s death — namely:

The Deliverance of the Sinner

“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord” (Ps. 40:2-3).

While the Messianic character of this Psalm is readily recognized, a legitimate application of verses 2 and 3 is often made in connection with the believing sinner's spiritual experience and testimony. From the highest heights to the lowest depths—"even the death of the cross" — the Lord Jesus Christ came down and into this earthly scene in order that He might bring us up and out of the horrible pit of sin. When we think of who He is, what He did, and the fact that we are the objects of such infinite and condescending love, it is all the more amazing and wonderful to contemplate our Deliverer and full deliverance (see Heb. 12:2-3; 2 Cor. 1:10).

In his intensely practical and delightful little book, *Life with A Capital "L,"* A. Lindsay Glegg calls Psalm 40:2-3, "The Autobiography of A Christian." Including verse 17, Mr. Glegg quaintly points out that there are five chapters to the believer's autobiography: (1) Brought Up; (2) Set Up; (3) Held Up; (4) Tuned Up; and (5) Caught Up.

The last chapter in a book is often the most thrilling, and surely this is so here as we look forward to the joyous realization of "that blessed hope" (Tit. 2:13). In view of present-day events and conditions over the world it is not only possible, but highly probable that we shall be among that privileged group of believers who will be "caught up" when Christ descends to the air — right into Satan's territory (Eph. 2:2) — for His own (1 Thess. 4:16-17). This will be the greatest day of our lives! Come on now, if you know that favorite little Sunday School chorus, "I'm on the Rock," sing it with me. If you do, it will make your day all the better and brighter.

"I'm on the rock, Hallelujah!

I'm on the rock to stay, Hallelujah!

For He lifted me from the miry clay.

I'm on the rock to stay."

Or, if you don't know that one, perhaps you know, "He Lifted Me Up."

He lifted me up — yes, up

Up from the miry clay;

He lifted me up — yes, up,

To walk the narrow way,

He lifted me up — yes, up —

I'm bound for Heaven's shore;

He lifted me up — yes, up —

To live forever more."

We come to our last theme, and that is:

The Delight of The Saint

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love" (Song of Sol. 2:4).

As we think, then, of His "banqueting house" in this light, we do well to continually keep in mind that it is:

1. A Place of Rest.

As those who have come to Christ for rest (Matt. 11:28), there are no fears or anxieties which fill our hearts, for our text assures us that "His banner over me was (and is) love," and we know that "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

"O Christ! we rest in Thee,

In Thee ourselves we hide;
Laden with guilt and misery,
Where could we rest beside?
‘Tis on Thy meek and lowly breast
Our weary souls alone can rest.”
—James G. Deck

2. A Place of Remembrance.

“This do in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24-26).

3. A Place of Realization.

“For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).
Do we always sense the reality of His presence when we remember Him? How real IS the Lord Jesus Christ to us in our day by day experience?

4. A Place of Recognition.

“The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Oh, that we might always recognize that we are one in Christ with all who truly call upon His Name, and that this blessed oneness might be revealed in a practical way among all His own!

5. A Place of Rejoicing.

... in Thy presence is fulness of joy” (Ps. 16:11).

“With joy we meditate the grace

Of our High Priest above;|
His heart o'erflows with tenderness,
His very name is Love."
—Isaac Watts

6. A Place of Replenishment.

Is it not so that in blessing Him, we ourselves are blessed? See Philippians 4:19.

7. A Place of Renewal.

As often as we partake of the bread and the cup, it should serve to renew within us "that blessed hope," for we do so only "till He come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

The words of a stanza from another of Anne Ross Cousin's classic hymns, "The Sands of Time Are Sinking," make a fitting close to our study, and especially to this final aspect of it:

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved's mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His house of wine!
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land."