Acts - Commentaries by Unknown Author

Christian Friend: Volume 8, Dorcas; Or, Garment-Making for the Poor

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TABITHA, or rather Dorcas, has obtained a most unlooked-for notoriety. Almost every church and chapel boast of their “Dorcas Societies;” and “Dorcas” meetings are becoming well known even to those believers who are in professed separation from human systems and organizations. The aim, both in the one and the other, is laudable; and, doubtless, even if the objects of such charity are often not well chosen, the sufferings of many are thus alleviated. Without the slightest intention, therefore, of discouraging such efforts, it may still be well to examine a little the history of Dorcas, and to inquire what instruction there from the Spirit of God intended us to apprehend.

It is to be remarked, in the first place, that her activity was not confined to clothing the naked. “This woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.” (v. 36) This is a wonderful epitaph for a saint of God, and with this remarkable distinction from many such epitaphs written by men, that it was recorded by the unerring pen of the Holy Ghost. Her good works were therefore good works—such as God had before prepared that she should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10), and such, on this account, as could only have been produced in the energy of the Spirit of God. It is profitable to remind ourselves of what is really good works; for while we have been taught the danger of restless activity and occupation with service, and have been led to admire, and to desire to possess, the good part which Mary chose (Luke 10:42), we would also remember the words of Paul: “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.” (Titus 3:8) Philanthropic efforts of many kinds are often dignified with the title of “good works,” and are thus calculated to deceive many a simple soul; but good works, those that are such before God, can only flow from the power of the Holy Ghost, and therefore in accordance with His mind and will. They can thus be wrought only by believers, and only by believers as actuated by divine power, and in subjection to the word of God. “The coats and garments which Dorcas made” (v. 39) were of this class by an infallible verdict.

The “alm-deeds” of Dorcas are recorded as well as her good works; and from the usage of the word (see Matthew 6:1; 2:34; Luke 11:41; 12:33; Acts 3:2; 3:10; 10:2, 4) there is no reason to doubt that these consisted in the ministration of money or food to those that were in need. The apostle, writing to Timothy, says, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (there is no foundation whatever for the marginal rendering “sociable”); “laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal” (rather, on that which is really) “life.” (1 Timothy 6:17-19) Dorcas was thus in the spirit of this exhortation. She was rich in good works, and she was ready to distribute, willing to communicate of her substance; for she had learned “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9); and by that same grace she had become His representative in the world. She was a giver, because God, who had brought her to Himself, was a Giver. Knowing therefore that she was not her own, and that whatever she possessed she held only as a steward for Him, to whom she belonged, she placed both herself and her substance at His disposal, and served with both according to His will.

The objects of her charity or ministry are distinctly specified. When Peter had arrived, and had been introduced into the chamber of death, we read that “all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.” It is noteworthy also that these widows are distinguished from the saints. (v. 41) There may be a reason for this—not to imply that none of these were saints, but rather, as we judge, to show that she labored for widows as a class, and perhaps, too, in the spirit of the apostolic exhortation, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:10) It may then be concluded that her charitable activities were not solely expended upon believing widows; but, as one who knew the heart and mind of God, she sought to minister to need wherever it might exist, while owning the special claims of the household of faith. Every reader of the Old Testament must have been struck with the constant expression of God’s care for the widow and the fatherless (and the two classes must often be found in combination), and James gives a voice to this for us when he says, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27) Paul likewise has given special instructions concerning these two classes. (1 Timothy 5)

It is thus clear that Dorcas had the mind of God in the special work to which she was devoted. And indeed what service could be more blessed than to clothe the naked and feed the hungry? The Lord Himself, in the judgment of the living nations, when He shall sit on the throne of His glory, specifies these things services rendered to Himself in the person of His “brethren.” He says, “I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat... naked, and ye clothed me.” (Matthew 25:35,36) This, as He explains, done unto one of the least of His brethren, was done to Himself. How unspeakable then the privilege to feed and clothe Christ in the person of one of His members. It is what He has done for us; for the apostle says, “For in this (our tabernacle house) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked” (that is, without Christ). (2 Corinthians 5:2,3) To clothe the naked and to feed the hungry and He Himself is our food (John 6) is consequently to act in His own spirit the existence of the need drawing forth the affections of Christ from the hearts of His people.

A distinct lesson or two for our own guidance may be profitably collected from the whole history, confining ourselves now to that which is specially mentioned—making the coats and the garments.

First, it should be observed that the work of Dorcas was individual. There is not the slightest trace of any association with others. Evidently it was the special service to which the Lord had called her, and to which she willingly yielded herself. Her example cannot, therefore, be cited for anything beyond her individual line of service. Nothing is more blessed in Christian activity than fellowship— fellowship in the Lord. But the great danger of a day like this is association— association with others to obtain an object through the energy of cooperation rather than in the

power of the Spirit. Satan often succeeds in this way in arresting even what might have been at the outset the action of the Spirit of God. Thus the Lord has laid some special thought of service upon the heart of one of His people; and instead of going forth to its accomplishment in the power of Him who has called to it, the effort is often made to associate others with it, or even to form a society for the end in view, and immediately the service, even if outwardly prosperous, is on the road to failure. Moses may well be a warning to us on this head. He complained to the Lord that the burden of the people was too heavy for him. The Lord permitted him to have seventy associates; but He took of the Spirit that was on Moses, and put it on them. (Numbers 11:11-17) Not only was there no gain of power by the association, but enormous loss by the importation henceforward of seventy judgments into every question that had to be decided. No; service is intensely individual; for every servant is individually responsible to the Lord, even in garment-making, and hence cannot afford to subordinate his convictions to those of another, or to seek to walk upon the level (be it higher or lower) of another's faith.

Secondly, this history affords distinct guidance for sisters as to the occupation of their leisure time in their homes, or at least for such as have the means to purchase materials, and capacity to use the needle or the sewing-machine. It is to be noted very especially, that if Dorcas spent any of her time in fancy-work (and we by no means contend that she had not liberty to do so), the results of her labor in such a direction are not mentioned. This will surely be significant to every spiritual mind. It is "the coats and the garments" only that find a place in the word of God teaching, at least this much, that it is labors of this kind that command the Lord's approbation. This is plain from the fact that Dorcas was raised to life again. Her loss was so keenly felt by the disciples that they sent for Peter, "desiring that he would not delay to come to them." The apostle went, and was permitted to restore her to life; and "when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive." (v. 41) Thus the Lord interposed at the cry of His people, and comforted their hearts.

A last instruction may be added—one already obvious from what has been said—viz., that the work of Dorcas was for cases of need. There is some danger, if not watchful, of seeking to gratify ourselves in ministry of a Dorcas character; of expending our efforts upon selected cases, of choosing such as commend themselves to us in one way or another, so that it will often happen that the needs of some of the poor saints are abundantly met, while those of others are almost entirely overlooked. The antidote is to have Christ Himself before us as the object of our ministry, only remembering that, as it was not our merit, but our necessities, that drew forth His heart in service for us, so likewise the only incentive to our loving ministry to His own should be their needs. In other words, all our service must be drawn forth by the constraining love of Christ; for it is possible to bestow all our goods to feed the poor and yet to be without divine charity (1 Corinthians 13), and hence without any promptings of the heart of Christ. Christ, therefore, must be the motive; Christ must be the object, and Christ must be expressed in all our service.

E. D.

Christian Friend: Volume 3, Light From Heaven Above the Brightness of the Sun, A

I would desire particularly to ask the question, Why was it that Jehovah said to Moses—who was a good man, as we should popularly term it—"Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from oil thy feet" (Ex. 3:5); but to a wretched rebel like Saul of Tarsus, in the hour when his malignity against Christ was at its height, God, as it were, draws nigh to him, addresses him by name, and then and there takes him up to make him a pattern of the grace that is in His own heart? There surely must be some weighty reason to account for the different way in which the blessed God acted in both these cases. Let us look a little at both. Moses, as I have said, was a man remarkable in his day for the very opposite of that which distinguished Saul of Tarsus, raised up as well as fitted of God to lead forth Jehovah's people out of Egypt; and yet, when he ventured to draw nigh and look at the burning bush, he is not permitted, Jehovah Himself insisting on distance between Moses and Himself. Surely it is not that the blessed God is in any sense indifferent to the sorrows or afflictions of enslaved Israel. What a beautiful word that is— "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows!" And yet, to the man who is to carry out all that is expressed in such words, Jehovah says, "Draw not nigh;" and Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

The very contrary and contrast of all this is supplied in what is commonly called the conversion of Saul. Why is it that God keeps up distance with Moses, and Himself draws nigh to a persecutor like Saul? The answer is at once simple and plain, His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, had died upon the cross, and in death had so completely glorified God respecting all that was contrary to Him, that what God was not free to do in consistency with His own character in the day of Moses, He is perfectly free to do in the day of Saul of Tarsus. In the day of Exodus 3, and up to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, man, as a child of Adam, was recognized by God, and although fallen and ruined, had demands made upon him by God in righteousness; in other words, God was requiring from man what man was both unable and unwilling to give. Man was still on his trial, and because so, to him as such God says, You cannot come near Me; "draw not nigh hither." The blessed God may, and does, bear with man, test him and prove him in every way; but nearness to God is that which cannot be known, while as yet the first man is allowed a standing before God.

But it may be said, Why could not God have granted nearness to Himself, or Himself drawn nigh to a sinner, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, on the ground of the sacrifice of Christ TO BE offered? The answer is as simple as it is plain: so long as the history of the first man (or man as connected with Adam) is not closed or ended, as long as man is allowed a place, though on trial, God must, while demanding from him, keep him at a distance, else we should have a willful, rebellious creature allowed on that ground, and brought into that relationship which is true only of the one who is in Christ a new creation; and beside all this, as long as the first man is a recognized existence before God, God must, in consistency with Himself, demand from him; but this very demanding from him is in itself keeping man at a distance, as he cannot meet the claims of a Holy God. When I speak of the first man, I mean man as he is by nature connected with Adam, who brought ruin upon the race; and when I speak of a recognized existence, and God making demands upon it, I mean that judgment had not been executed upon it: God looked at man as still to be tested and tried, and consequently looked for what became Him from man.

But to turn to the history of Saul of Tarsus; how different it is there. God comes to give righteousness, not to look for it or demand it. His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, had been to earth, had died on the cross, and by His precious death had both completely and fully glorified God, as well as judged and condemned sin in the flesh, and in doing so He most blessedly and righteously supplied an answer to every righteous claim of a holy God. God can now come out and express His love for the sinner, yea, for the very chief of sinners; and here it may be well to look at what

made Saul of Tarsus the chief of sinners. It surely was not that he was an immoral man, or an outcast from society, as we say: were he of this character he would never have been selected for, and charged with, the mission on which he was running when God stopped him; on the contrary, Philippians 3 tells us that Saul was one unequaled among his fellows for morality. “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

What then constituted him chief of sinners? not immorality, not the gross wickedness at which refined society blushes, but the dreadful will and malignant opposition with which he set himself against the purpose and mind of God. Hear his own account of it: “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” (Acts 26:9-11) Who could conceive willfulness or hatred of Christ and God more desperate than this? To force from city to city the scattered saints of God, and not this only, but to compel them to blaspheme the one who was to them above everyone; on whose account they are suffering at the hands of this relentless hater of Jesus of Nazareth.

Oh, what contrasts rise up before the soul as we think of it! With our natural thought of God and His ways, what should you predicate would be the course He must adopt with a wretch like Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the object of his terrible hate? Why, of course you say, Almighty power would sweep from the earth such a plague; the sword of divine vengeance and justice must be unsheathed to overtake such an one in his wild wickedness. But oh, how different from all this natural thought of God was His blessed way with poor Saul. Stop him God will; but with what? with the pit? No; but with glory. A light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shone round about him. At midday, when the sun is brightest, Saul is arrested by that which is brighter still. What a sight! A scorner, despiser, hater of Christ in heaven, awakened, arrested, addressed by that very blessed one Himself— “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” That very one Himself, too, who had been on the cross, under the judgment, because of man’s sin—that very one Himself who, in that wonderful moment, knew what it was to be forsaken of God, that such as Saul might never be forgotten of Him; now risen up from among the dead, and received up into glory. He it is who commands the rays of that glory to fall upon the persecutor’s path, draws nigh to him, speaks to him, comes not to hurl him into the bottomless pit, but to take him up, in the riches of grace and mercy, to give him forgiveness, righteousness, glory, to make a pattern man of him, a chosen vessel unto Himself, to bear His name before the Gentiles, kings and children of Israel. Such is the way of His grace now, even to the vilest sinner. Christ has died, and by His death righteousness has been established; the love of God, which was not set free to travel out to sinners until righteousness is established, now goes out worldwide. There is not only salvation for the vilest sinner, but glory. It is the very joy of the heart of God to minister now everything from Himself to sinners, even the vilest of the vile, and to make them not only vessels of mercy in themselves, platforms as it were upon which the blessed God makes declarations of His grace and goodness; but He delights to make them living witnesses of what His own Son the Lord Jesus can be to them, as well as what great things He has done for them.

W. T. T.

Girdle of Truth: Volume 6, Divine Intercourse

How finely the voice from heaven varies its tone in the story of Saul's conversion, as given to us in Acts 9:1

When it challenges the persecutor, how peremptory it is! how loudly it speaks 1 When it addresses itself' to the disciple, (Ananias) how it approaches him as with the accents of a well-known voice, and in the style of full personal intimacy 1 When it rebukes the servant, (this same Ananias) how decisive! and yet giving witness that love was undisturbed, unchanged, because the rebuked servant was still, and immediately put into further service as one trusted and valued.

Precious are these various ways of Him with whom we have to do. How ought we to trust the one whose love can thus array itself in these its different suits and styles! He will challenge us when our condition demands it; rebuke us, or speak intimately to us; and His love approves itself equally in each, for our good and blessing is the end proposed and accomplished.

And man, under the drawing and teaching of the Spirit, answers this voice in beauty and fitness also.

The persecutor fell under it at once. He could not but do so. It was as Adam behind the trees of the garden. Saul could not help calling Jesus " Lord" at that moment. It was the necessary utterance of one in such a condition. But as this one is led of God, he follows in beauty and fitness. I mean this: when called by the voice from the glory that had laid the sentence of death in him, to arise and stand on his feet, he did so, and appears from that moment as one separated to that voice, or to what had now happened to him. Like Peter, in a kindred moment of conviction, he thought not of the sinking boat, so occupied was his soul with the impressions of the glory or of God upon his spirit; and so Paul now. The three days' want of food anal the loss of sight, were, I believe, as nothing to him. He had been separated to that moment in its full power. He had looked on Him whom he had pierced, and was apart; as in another kindred moment, the house of David and of Shimei will be, husbands and wives. (Zech. 12)

But there is another answer which the voice from heaven gets in this striking scene. Ananias answers it as well as Saul; and according to the relations in which he stood to it answers it likewise in beauty and fitness.

The voice, as we have seen, addressed him in all blessed, gracious intimacy. Ananias' style shows that (Abraham-like) his spirit was at home in the presence of it-in the presence of the glory from whence it came. He takes his place instinctively before it. " Behold, I am here, Lord," he says; and then, the voice giving its orders and revealing its secrets, Ananias replies, (Jeremiah-like, or Peter-like in such cases,) intimating that the Lord seemed to be making some mistake, that these directions needed some correction, or at least, interpretation. And surely, this was answering the intimacies of grace with the confidence of faith. This was like Moses speaking face to face, as a man would speak with his friend. And this was indeed beautiful in its place. Such a spirit of faith, being of divine operation, was acceptable to God, and sweet to us. It was as Jonah in chap. iv. l„ though not so marked; and, like Jonah, Ananias has then to be rebuked and corrected, and is given to know that

the error was all his own, and not the Lord's.

When Ananias had questioned the orders he had received to go to Saul of Tarsus, " Go thy way," says the Lord to him. This was a third voice from heaven, as we have already seen; and this voice, like the earlier voices, is answered in all beautiful fitness. Ananias at once goes, and the moment he sees Saul, he addresses him on the sole authority of the voice he had now heard, and in the spirit which that voice inspired. The Lord had said, " he is a chosen vessel unto me;" and Ananias now addresses him " brother Saul."

How perfect, like all the rest, this is!

The first voice, convicting the sinner, is answered by the sinner separating himself to it. The second voice, addressing the saint, is answered by the saint in like confidential intimacy. The third voice, rebuking and arresting the servant, is answered, not only by an act of obedience, but by that act being conducted and carried out in the very style and spirit which that voice was inspiring, in fullest concord with the mind which had directed and awakened it.

This scene gives us, then, in the person of Ananias, an instance of that intimacy with the Lord which faith has reached, and deems itself entitled to. And, let me say, faith has not, in this, over calculated its rights. Grace warranted this intimacy at the very beginning, at the creation. God then, as we know, delighted in the work of his hand as it grew up and came forth day by day, and when all was completed at the close of the sixth day, looking on all, He tasted rich delight, and consecrated the seventh day in memory of this His rest and refreshment.

But in addition to this, man becomes the source of special delight. Man had been signalized as the chief point in the whole workmanship, and the head of the whole scene. Peculiar care was used in setting him in the garden, enriched and blest, crowned and espoused, and altogether satisfied. And then the Lord seeks his company. " The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?" He was seeking companionship with that chiefest and most excellent work of His hands, as though companionship with him was to complete His enjoyments. The Lord sought man. " Adam, where art thou?" " His delights were with the sons of men," as He says in another place; and then, as at the very beginning, He gave warrant and title to man to know this intimacy. I need not say how Adam disappointed this divine desire towards him. But the desire survives, and it is still said, " My delights are with the sons of men."

Among those of the people of God who have specially illustrated this personal intimacy with the Lord we might first notice Abraham. The Lord, in. deep and full grace, warranted this, and drew Abraham into it; but Abraham, in faith, read his title to it, and used it. I need not notice the occasions; they shew themselves clearly in the progress of the story. Moses afterward is seen in the same place. He converses with the Lord as a man with his friend. He debated matters with the Lord, as one that would know divine secrets and reasons, and give his own mind, and express his own difficulties and sorrows.

As we advance we find Jeremiah of this same class. He would speak to the Lord about His doings and judgments, and inquire of Him respecting the grounds and meaning of His commands.

Jonah, also, another among the prophets, gives us another instance of the same. He is very bold, telling the Lord how it was, and how he had known it would be, between God and himself.

And this intimacy is not reduced when we enter the New Testament. I speak not, however, of the intercourse disciples had with he Lord in the days of His ministry among them; but of that intercourse and intimacy which faith still held with Him after He was glorified, when He took, in a divine sense, the relationship to them which He had had of old with patriarchs and prophets.

We see samples of this in Ananias, to which I have already referred, in Acts 9, in Peter in Acts 10, in Paul in Acts 22 Now these three reasoned certain points with the Lord, the glorified Jesus, as Abraham or Jeremiah and others had reasoned points with the Lord God in their earlier days. Ananias, Peter, and Paul may all be, in error, more or less, and have to be rebuked, and get their judgments corrected; but still they enjoy an intimacy which it is blessed to think of. They are dealing with one well known by them, and on a title fully approved and justified, Surely again I may say, it is blessed to think of it. And I ask, Is this still to be so? Is the soul to know it, in this day of the Holy Ghost and of an absent Jesus?

The posture of Lazarus at the table with his Lord, and at the side of his Lord, expresses this character of communion. It is found in company with the worshipping Mary and the serving Martha-all beautiful in their place and season. (John 12)

And so the soul knows its present title to the same, though it as well knows how poorly it enjoys it, and how nature and the enemy will hinder it in that, its right and joy. But so it is. We are straitened in our bowels, not in our calling; in our experience, not in our condition. Through the Scriptures, and taking occasion by reason of our daily circumstances, we may use this place which has been open to the elect from the beginning. It is surely ours in this day of the Spirit, if it were theirs who walked with God in the infant-day of patriarchs, or in the advancing times of prophets, who had not, however, reached the dispensation of the Spirit, given on the ascension to glory of the Son of man. as we have done.

And I still ask, Is this still to be so? Is this eternal in its character? Is this to be the same in the coming days of the glory, as it has already been in days of patriarchs, of prophets, and of apostles, and as it is now? The holy hill, where we see the glorified, answers this. Speaking of Jesus there transfigured, the evangelist says, " And behold there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

Here was intimacy of just the same character as at the tent in the plain of Mamre, or within the cloudy tabernacle in the wilderness, or in the court of the prison at Jerusalem, or outside the gate of the city of Nineveh, or on the roof of the house of Simon the tanner, or in the temple with Paul. All is unchanged. Scenes change as much as they well can, in all this vast variety-tent-doors, wildernesses, prisons, house-tops, temples, and the like; but the realms of glory, where the translated saints have joined their ascended Lord, claims to be another of the same places, and to witness and exhibit that intimacy which began at the beginning, and has been continued throughout.

All ages, then, give us samples of this intimacy, this divine intercourse. Patriarchal, Mosaic, prophetic, evangelic ages, all illustrate it, and the days of the glory will do the same. This intercourse is something of its own kind. It is not grace giving a gift and faith accepting it. It is not the soul exercised in prayer, or intercession, or thanksgiving, or praise; These things are so, I need not say; but it is none of these. It is of its own

generation, and bespeaks the title which the believer consciously enjoys of coming near to God, not as a suppliant, or as a worshipper, but as one that has been let into His confidence.

And I believe till we take this place, till " we thus walk and talk with Jesus," we have not fully obeyed that form of doctrine which God, in the riches of the grace of His gospel, has 'delivered to us.

Wonderful! save that God is God. He laid Himself out for this enjoyment of His creature, when His creature was untainted and in innocency. The entrance of sin did not hinder this, but this intercourse continued among the fruits of that grace which put sin away, and if the entrance of sin has not hindered it, neither shall the display of glory. The garden, the ruined world, the kingdom in its glories are alike the scenes of it; each and all maintains and witnesses the divine intercourse, this companionship of God with man.

The Evangelist: Volume 2 (1868), "I Am Jesus."

Acts 9:10-15.

ONE thing that gives intense interest to this Scripture is, that the Lord Himself is acting in it. We are prone, in thinking of the Lord’s work, or even in witnessing it, to be taken up with what the visible actors are about, —what Peter, or John, or Philip, or Stephen may be doing, —what this preacher or that gift may be occupied in; and surely these things have their interest, and ought, in the souls of God’s people. The Holy Spirit acts by men on earth as well as in them, and therefore it can never be wrong for Christian people to love, help, and pray for those whom He is using for good, and this irrespective of personal likes or dislikes. I must be very narrow-thoughted if I do not see that God is working in various spheres, and by different individuals, who would not, perhaps, act together. I am speaking of things as they are. In the beginning of the history, in the early chapters of this book, things were blessedly as they ought to be— “all with one accord in one place,” as we get at the opening of the second. They had previously waited together in the upper room, continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication—earnest of coming blessing surely, which the day of Pentecost made good. And then the effect of the Holy Ghost in power among them was to make them of one heart and of one soul, caring for each other as members of one common family—the new family formed by the faith and hope of the gospel. From thence testimony flowed; and though there was soon a dispersion—a scattering if you will—yet it was not in heart. The scattered disciples preached the gospel; diffused with joy the tidings of a crucified and risen Lord; knew He was in heaven; had their hearts filled with Him; loved to recognize one another as having interests which the world around knew not of; as being, in short, a peculiar people—in the world, and not of it. Their mission was to tell of Jesus, to make known His love. Now it is the activities, of the Spirit of God, if I may use the expression, that we find in the opening chapters of this book, His working in these dear people as the witness of Jesus, and particularly by some of them, who were full of the Holy Ghost. (4:8, 7:55.) Jesus had gone into heaven; they had spoken of Him as being there; their testimony was a testimony to Him as being there; but now a great blow is being aimed at the Church—a fierce persecution arises; and what is so intensely interesting is, that at this crisis the Lord Jesus Himself appears in the work. No servant now. The Lord of all will meet the persecution. “I am Jesus.” This is something worth notice. His interest in all that concerns His sheep, His feeble flock, is not a whit less deep in heaven than when He suffered for them on the cross. (Love in God is eternal, unchangeable; ever fresh, and ever free. It is a living love, the same today as yesterday, the same forever.) He will superintend the case of Saul of Tarsus Himself; and in thus doing, having laid him low, He speaks to Ananias in a vision. This is what I would notice. He calls Him by name. Jesus speaks. O blessed communication! The disciple hears and answers. The sheep knows the Shepherd’s voice. The communication is most interesting; for the Lord tells His disciple all that was happening in another house, and to another soul. He lets him know it as friend communicates to friend. He tells him that which interests himself: “Behold, he prayeth.” And is it not a wondrous consolation this, that the Lord is interested in a poor stricken sinner’s prayer? How little do we read His heart! But look again. The servant speaks to Him, —tells out his fear, —tells his simple tale as freely as he would to his fellow-man. And this is blessed surely! The soul that knows the Lord can tell Him all things. Here is complaint as well as fear. “This man” is an object of dread to Ananias. He has done evil—evil to the saints—thy saints. What a terrible thing, such an accusation going up from one afflicted soul against another! But who does it go up to? Does it not remind you of Elijah, on another occasion (1 Kings 19), his face in his mantle, and his heart poured out to God in intercession against Israel? “Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and dragged down thine altars; and I am left alone; and they seek my life, to take it away.” ‘Who, I say, does it go up to? God, the blessed God! Does He not see it all? He does. But what is He looking at? The faithful remnant. “Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel that have not bowed the knee to Baal.” God is patient. “You, my servant, must have patience too. Your path is through the wilderness, and thence to heaven.” And if in that day there was light amidst the darkness, by the revelation of God, is it not so still? If the cloud of sorrow was so thick upon the servant’s eyes that he could see only the evil and the ruin—if he needed the voice of the Lord Himself to remind him or to tell him of the remnant in his day, may it not be still the same? Is Ananias heeded when he tells his tale? He is. But he has to learn that the thoughts of a risen and a glorified Lord Jesus are higher far than his thoughts; that let the swelling wave rise high and furious as it will below, the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier; and not only so, but “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2); or, as the margin has it, glorieth against judgment. “Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name.” Ah, wondrous love and grace! Pattern of all long-suffering! Who would not praise, and bless, and magnify this gracious, heavenly Lord Jesus! All authority and power, all might is His. “Go thy way” is His commandment. Do the gracious work I give thee; but His love, His condescension, tells the secret of His heart— “He is a chosen vessel unto me.” No fear now, Ananias; the service is not terrible now. Blessed be His holy name! Who would not fear Him! Yea, who would not love Him too—the Lord, the restorer of all!

Kentucky Conference: 2011, Acts 9:9-31

Reading

There is, but I'm waiting on the brethren. Is there? What's the brethren thing? The Lord put something on your heart that carry it through though. What do you think, Robert? We go on from verse 10 or? It'll be fine. I I think we did comment on that verse, but that's a good place to get the thought connection. Acts Chapter 9 and verse 10. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. And to him the Lord said, The Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the street which is

called straight, and inquire in the House of Judas for one called Saul Tarsus. For behold, he prayeth. And that seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him. That he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done. Should I think that Jerusalem? And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on my name? But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way, for he is the chosen vessel unto him to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hast sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scaled, And he received sight forthwith, and rose, and were baptized. And when he had received meat he was strengthened. Then saw then was Saul certain days. With the disciples which were at Damascus, and straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this He that destroyed them, which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hit her for that intent, that He might bring them bound unto the chief priests. But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill Him. But they're laying in wait. It was known of Saul, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down by the wall in a basket. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he is saved to join himself to the disciples. But they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming and going out at Jerusalem any state, boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians. But they went above to slay him. Which when the brother knew, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judeans, Galilee and Samaria, and ratified. And walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, he multiplied. I think it's very significant here that the Apostle Paul was forced to go to the assembly, the brethren of the assembly there in, in, uh, the Damascus to get his instructions. The Lord appeared to him and, and smote him down on the way. And he, he learned to say, uh, yes to the Lord, that is to own the Lord's authority in his life.

But the Lord doesn't tell him directly what he was to do. He was told that he would be told when he went into the city. And and so in that way, the Lord connected the work that he began with Paul Saul of Tarsus and, and identified him with the work that was already ongoing. Because this instrument, though he was a chosen one of God for special work, must work together. With the assembly that was there. It's interesting too. Very instructive as we see here in this chapter that the, uh, man that's just saved here, Saul, needed to be trained in the school of God. He had been trained in the school of Camelio, but now he was going to spend some time in Damascus and in Arabia, and you have this little phrase that the Spirit of God uses. In umm verse 19 he says, and when he had received meat, he was strengthened, then was solved certain days with the disciples which are were at Damascus, and then in verse 23. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him. And then we find in verse 30 that umm that he was sent forth to Tarsus. It might be good to just turn to Galatians chapter one and see what he says there. Of Umm chapter one of Galatians, verse 17, he says neither when I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and returned against Damascus. After three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him 15 days. And so we know that he was there for three years in Arabia and Damascus. How long he was in each place were not certain, but he says there by the Spirit of God that he was there three years. And then we know that he was in Tarsus for approximately 2 years. And so he was in the school of God and it was there in, uh, Tarsus that, uh, Barnabas went to get him. When that work in, uh, Antioch had taken place and by the Spirit of God, he went to Acts Chapter 11, verse 25, then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Saul. Well, the whole point here is that, umm, he was in the school of God and umm, how we must appreciate that. We ought to appreciate it when we're younger in the faith that the Lord deals with us as individuals and trains us as individuals. In a very loving and careful way, Paul now, or Saul was going to learn something of the Lord in private, and so he didn't begin his work immediately among the Gentiles. It does say that he preached the gospel there in Damascus and he was faithful in, umm, presenting that the Lord Jesus was very Christ, but he was in the school of God. And so we need to recognize that the Lord deals with us in this way. In the, as individuals and be thankful for it. And so if you're young, perhaps a young brother, uh, a young sister in this, uh, little company, this AF this morning. Umm, and you wonder why, you know, maybe the Lord hasn't just given you something to do right away and you're saved and you just want to get active in the things of God. And it's a nice desire and, umm, do the little work that the Lord does give you a little bit of gospel work. And that's how Paul started. He began to preach Christ. But then a little bit later on, when he was trained of God himself, why the Lord sends Barnabas just at the right time? And he begins to do his work among the Gentiles. Wonderful thing. So there are two things that are necessary, I suppose, in all of our lives, not just at the beginning of our our lives as Christians, but as you and Doug have brought out, we need to be alone with the Lord in the school of God. We need to learn lessons quietly in his presence. We cannot effectively serve the Lord in whatever sphere and ministry he's given each one of us. Unless we spend those times in His presence learning from Himself, and then we need our brethren as well. And not only to work in fellowship with our brethren and that which God has established, but our brethren teaches, God uses our brethren to teach us many things too. And they're a check on us as as well. And you find, and I was thinking of what Doug said at the beginning, you find with the Apostle Paul or Saul as he goes on, and later the apostle Paul and so on, that even as an older man in many years of service in the position.

And ministry that God gave him and it was a wonderful he had a wonderful ministry, but he always appreciated the fellowship of his brother and he delighted to associate with fellow laborer laborers and he delighted to make sure later on he was on intro as on a Lord's day. Why? So he could break bread in fellowship with his brethren at the Lord's table and in the presence of the of the Lord Jesus. Gathered to his name and in answer to his request, and I believe it's, it's vital God gives us all a little service. And I'd like to just say something very practical and I, I don't want to pick on those who are younger because we all need to be reminded of these things. But again, we're thankful for and I'm thankful for the energy of and zeal of you. I'm not as young as I once was and I'm thankful for those who are coming on behind who have a lot of energy and. Desire to please the Lord and serve the Lord. But remember this, there's a pattern in the act that shows that whatever ministry or service the Lord gives us, and He gives us each something to do for Him. We need to be exercised to do it in fellowship with the Lord, yes, but also in fellowship with our brethren, in fellowship with that which God has established as His testimony and where the Lord Jesus is in the midst. And we do not have to step out of that, that of the fellowship of the brother of the of our brethren gathered to the Lord's name, defined opportunities to serve the Lord. There are plenty of opportunities and ways that we can serve the Lord, be it in our home sphere or perhaps in a little wider sphere if the Lord calls us to that. But there are plenty of opportunities. And we don't have to pray for opportunities as much as we need to pray that our eyes will be opened and our hearts ready to avail ourselves of the opportunities that present themselves. But I used to hear an expression when I was a young person. In our service for Christ we need to keep one foot in the assembly and I believe that's good advice for us all. We need to keep one foot in the assembly and just give you, we won't take time to turn to me, just allow me to give you 2 scriptures that have been a help to me over the years in balancing this subject. One is Paul said to the Corinthians, we labor that whether

present or absent, we may be accepted of him. And in our service for Christ, that is our first responsibility. And Paul was misunderstood by the Corinthians. They questioned everything about his service and his ministry and his apostleship and his ability to deliver his ministry. He said that's OK, we're laboring for his acceptance. But there's a little, there's a, there's something that needs to go with that. It says of Asher in Deuteronomy. Believe it is, it says and of Asher, let him be acceptable to his brethren. You'll never effectively serve the Lord and your brethren if you don't do it in a way that is acceptable. And if the Lord has a little service for you to do and the time is right, not only will He not allow your brethren to stand in the way, but He will work in their hearts so they recognize it as a service for Christ. And you will have the fellowship of your brethren. You can't please all the people all of the time. But the Lord will work in their hearts. And you see that with the apostle Paul, don't you? Yes, he had many misunderstandings. Yes, he had many things said that could have discouraged him. But as Paul, Saul is led on in his service and ministry, we find that slowly. Yes, but the brethren recognize that this was a servant of God, raised up of God, and that he worked in their hearts. So that generally speaking, his ministry was accepted and the brethren realized that this was a work of God. It's the truth of the one body, isn't it?

Happen to say every member of my body, and there's a lot of different members of my body is directed directly from the head. So it is in the body of Christ. Directions must come from the head. But this finger of mine, if it gets directions that are to be severed from the rest of the members and to activate in another area, it's not going to happen. It's not going to work. It has to operate in conjunction with the other members. And that's the check that you mentioned. And I think that is really important. Remember, the Lord directs His people. And we need to have a sensitivity before him as to what he wants us to do, but then to do it in conjunction with our brethren around. It's important. Another thing that characterized the apostle Paul from the beginning is what we had in the end of verse 11. And I know we made a comment about this in connection with prayer being the breath of the divine life and the confirmation to Ananias that there'd been a real work in solidarity, soul and real conversion. But we find when we trace the ministry of Paul, that prayer was what characterized his life. It was the secret of the of the power. Of Paul's ministry you wanna have power in your service for Christ you know we sometimes read the stories of. Individuals in the scripture or the missionary story, early missionaries and we, we shake our heads and we say, wow, they sure had a lot of power and fruit in their in their ministry and their service for Christ. But you read carefully their lives and you find that they were men and women who were characterized by prayer. We cannot have power and ministry, our power in our ministry and fruit in our testimony. Unless we're characterized by prayer, and so often we find Paul in writing to the Saints later on, not only praying for himself, but praying for his brethren. What gave him a heart for the people of God? It was prayer. What gave him power in ministering to them? It was a love and a prayer. And so we need to be characterized as servants of God by by prayer. There's no other way to have real power. You mentioned Robert, about that each one of God's services put through school, uh. Can you say a little bit more about that? Are you still in school, brother? We never get out of school. But, uh, it's interesting how the Spirit of God works with each one of us differently. And we find that, uh, Joseph was in prison and, uh, treated in, uh, an awful way unjustly and, uh, thirteen years. And then he comes into public service. He comes before Pharaoh. And it says in the Psalms, I think it's 105th that the word of the Lord tried him. And he must have wondered having those dreams. And here he was that the Lord had said to him in a vision, a dream, two dreams, that his family would come to bow down before him. And he wondered about that. Then you have Moses. And he was framed in the wilderness 40 years. He learned what it was to be humble before his God. And so I just mentioned this in connection with the apostle Paul at the beginning of his Christian walk with the Lord. He was going to have to learn what it was to be humble. He came to Damascus in great pomp and, uh, public ceremony and, uh, so on and, uh, pride. But he left Damascus in a basket going over the wall. And the Lord knows how to deal with each one of us to recognize that we might recognize his power, his authority, our own nothingness. And it was sweet in Paul's life as he learned these things that. It was going to have to be in the power of the new light and not one being the power of the flesh that anything was going to be done for God that would be of any fruit. And so the energy of his youth. He was a young man and then it says it's still Steven stoning and then one year later God answers Stevens prayer approximately 1 year later and Saul is saved. Lay not this sin to their charge and God heard his prayers save them. And so this first lesson is humility and we mentioned it yesterday.

It's an important lesson in every servant of God must learn it. Robert, I'd like to just back up and ask a moment in connection with what you've just said about Moses to the 7th chapter. I think there's a very significant comment that Steven makes in his final presentation to the leaders in Israel concerning Moses might just say that when you read the Old Testament, you don't find Moses life delineated as far as it spelled out that it was three sets of 40 years. But when you come to the 7th of Acts, Steven takes it up in those three segments. Of 40 years, but I just want to notice versus 23 and four, No versus 22 and three. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds. And when he was fully 40 years old it came to his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. We find that for the 1St 40 years of Moses life, as you say, he spent it in the court of Pharaoh, in the schools of man. And the schools of man teach us that man is everything that we can do it. There's a spark of divinity within each one of us. And if it's placed in the proper environment and flamed and it'll flame up into something beautiful and wonderful, and you've got natural abilities and used those abilities to their full and so on. And so the schools of man teach us that we're something. But you know, when he came out of school of, of man, he was a man mighty in words and deeds, but that wasn't the kind of material God could use. Now it's interesting that he had a heart for his people at 40 years of age. But he wasn't ready to really serve the people of God in the capacity that God had for him. In fact, if we read on, we find that his spirit really wasn't right. His heart was right, but he hadn't learned the lessons that God had for him. He'd learned the lessons in the school of man. And so we find then that he spends the next 40 years of his life in what Robert and Bob have been talking about, the school of God. And it's interesting if you go back to the Old Testament when the Lord appeared to him. Uh, after that and SE was gonna send them to Pharaoh, he said, oh Lord, I can't go in and stand before Pharaoh. Why I can't even talk properly. He as much as said, well, I just stutter and stammer. That's not the man we just read about coming out of the school of man. He was a man mighty in words and deeds. But in 40 years he learned that man is nothing in himself, that you have to depend upon God. But when he came out of the school of God, that was the kind of material God could use, a man who had learned. His the faithfulness of God and his own nothingness. And so he was to go forward depending on God. And we know that God then sent him to Pharaoh and used him in a mighty way, and to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt and across the wilderness, and so on. You say, but God won't have a great work for me to do like that. No, but for every little service and ministry we must come from learning that man in himself is nothing. That God is everything, and that we can go forth with that in that little ministry depending on God, and be used for the blessing of the people of God and in testimony to others. So we need not the schools of men, and Paul had been in the school of men, as you say, but in Philippians. After he got out of the school of God, he counted the things, even the things that he had learned in the religious schools of men and all those natural things. And religion after the flesh, he said. I count them, but nothing. I leave them behind. They're nothing. I've got Christ now and that was his whole goal and object before him in the 7th of Acts there, Jim, where you're talking like they call attention to verse 35 in connection with Moses says this Moses, whom they refused saying, who made thee a ruler and a judge, the same did God send to be a ruler. And to deliver by the hand of the Angel which appeared to him in the Bush. Interesting those two comments, a ruler and a judge.

It's relatively easy, brethren, to be a judge of matters, to see things that are not right and say that's not right. But what did it cost Moses to become a ruler and a deliverer? It was those 40 years in the desert when he learned. Or shall we say he unlearned all the wisdom of Egypt, and he learned in the school of God that God was sufficient. Then God could use him not as a ruler and a judge, but as a ruler and a deliverer. Brethren, I must say it's been a challenge in my own soul. So often we see difficulties amongst God's people. It's relatively easy to be a judge of those matters. Are we deliverers or are we judges? And that's why we need the school of God and we're all in it. And like you say, Robert, we really never get out of the school of God. But there is a time when God prepares his servants. In the case of Saul, it was Arabia. There were three years there. We don't read what happened in Arabia. We don't know. He was alone with God. And it's important to get our bearings with the Lord. I see sometimes young people really want to serve the Lord. It's nice you appreciate that, but you've got to get your bearings with God. That's so vital, so important. And then we have to work in conjunction with those that are fellow members of that same body. But it's important to get our our direction from God. But I think it takes the the school of God. To bring us down to where we can be not rulers and judges, but deliverers of God's people. What a tremendous man of God Moses turned out to be. You might say 40 years most is what are you doing out there in the desert? 40 years? You're wasting your time out there taking care of a few sheep. Come on, Moses, you were learning all the wisdom of Egypt. It wasn't wasted time for God. And what a man of God Moses turned out to be. The other case you mentioned, Robert of Joseph, often thought of those 13 years. Because he was 17 when he went out of his father's house. He was 30 years when he came to the throne. 13 years. Everything seemed to go wrong. Just everything. Nothing seemed to go for poor just. But he kept on. And one day. Just one day you woke up in prison. At the end of that day, he was Prime Minister of Egypt. What a story. What a story. Oh, young people, be faithful to the Lord. Don't question the circumstances in your life that you can't seem to understand. God is in it, and if you can take it from the hand of God, it's going to be a blessing for you now. Just like to call attention to Moses as well. Just to add to what you said, brother Bob, in Exodus chapter 32 and verse 30. And here you see the effect of being in the school of God in those forty years. Instead of being a ruler and a judge. Now he's an interceder for his people. Exodus chapter 32, verse 30. It came to pass on the Morrow that Moses said unto the people, he has sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord, her adventure. I shall make an atonement for your sin. Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, O this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold, yet now with thou wilt forgive their sin. And if not, block me, I pray thee out of thy book which thou hast written. Well, you know, he interceded for the people of God and, uh, a true shepherd he had become. He put himself in the harm's way, if you will, and uh, would desire the blessing of God's people. And so instead of just ruling, it says, umm, in connection with Ruth. Uh, I'm not going to quote it, right. So maybe it will just turn to the book of Ruth. The first verse I think it is.

It came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, Not when the judges shepherded, not when the judges interceded for the people of God, but when they ruled and perhaps they their heart was not right with the Lord. Oh, what a lovely to see how Moses had a care and love, a genuine care and a love for the people of God. You find it with Paul too, and the Lord values that. That Paul the Apostle could pray for the Saints and those two prayers are recorded in Ephesians and, uh, many other prayers to the apostles. So we find in Acts Chapter 9 here the first prayer that he prays. And he's got to get right with the Lord, but the Lord works with them for five years, that he might intercede for the people of God. There are three things here in verse 15 that Ananias tells, uh Saul that the Lord told him. Says that the Lord said unto him, Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me. To bear my name before Genti, the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel. We've been speaking about the school of God and, umm, it would seem that Paul. Here Saul, umm, the first thing given to him is Gentiles, but really in his life it seems like in the reverse order he applied them. And the school of God finally, in the end, gave him to, uh, express, uh, extend his ministry principally to the Gentiles. I don't say that that was all wrong about Paul, but it's, uh, those three things that he was commissioned to do. And he had a real love for his brethren. And it probably took precedence in his ministry in the earlier years. And it got him into trouble, as it were, when he went up to Jerusalem. With the thought that he could still do something towards them. But it does prove the heart of God towards Israel in the way that he did it. His motive was right. In it. And so it is, uh, it's nice to see that how the Lord uses, uh, a servant like this who was so faithful and he did fulfill these three things. It's also important to see that. The large, the one that gets the work. And in fact, he chooses the work. That a vessel does. We say. I need to do something for the Lord and God puts that desire in our hearts to do something for the Lord. But the actual it's God's work. It's not man's work, it's God's work. And and God in doing his work has chosen to use people to do it for him. And he decides who's going to do what. And he tells each one what he wants them to do. And sometimes it's just well to set before the Lord and. Weighed upon him to make a choice as to work to be done and then communicate that and as it's done here. In truth, Ananias knew because the Lord told him, but he isn't the one that tells Paul what his work is. Ananias didn't say Paul, the Lord wants you to do this, that or the other. And so when Ananias goes his way and he's been told this. But. The Lord says to Ananias in verse 16, I will show him, not you will show him, but I will show him. And the Lord isn't going to tell you to tell me I'm going to suffer this or that for his namesake. But the Lord directly with Paul is going to have to say to Paul, you are going to suffer this for my name's sake. When it comes to that side of it, uh, we would like to tell somebody maybe a great thing or a nice thing that they can do for the Lord. Well, what about the other side? Would we wanna say, you're gonna really run into trouble when you do this or that? No, the Lord himself as Lord enters directly into the matter. And in verse 17 he says, 16 I will show him how great things he must suffer. And then when Ananias actually sees him in verse 17, what he says to him is the Lord even Jesus hath appeared unto thee in the way that thou camest.

And has sent me what? That thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately that takes place. And we have the fellowship, uh, that Paul needed. And the use of Ananias is in service to him and so on. Just to further show the same point, go back to Moses. Umm calling if you will to service in Exodus. Chapter 3. I Yes. Chapter 3. Here's how Moses is told what he's gonna do for service for the Lord. Verse 7, Moses is out in the desert. He's feeding his father in law's flock. He's not thinking about what am I going to do for the Lord. He's just doing what he does. What had been given to him He had no, he had a heart for the people of God, but that wasn't the reason to be doing anything really in itself. He's just living out his daily life at this point. And, uh, the Lord had prepared him, unknown to himself. He didn't know he was 40 years being prepared for something, although he was. And he's living his daily life. And so he says, the Lord appears. Uh, and not to get too much detail, he says, verse 7, the Lord says to him, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. Now who's going to do what? Per SE, I, Jehovah the Lord, and come down to deliver them. That's the first words out of his mouth of the Lord with respect to something that's going to happen. I, the Lord have come down to deliver. We already talked about Moses being a great deliverer, but in truth, the beginning of it wasn't Moses. And the emphasis that's kept in Moses heart for the whole of his life and his service from this point forward is. Always, from the very beginning, the Lord having said to him, I, the Lord, am come down to deliver. Out of the hand of the Egyptians to bring them out of the land and so on. And uh, verse 10, he now says to Moses, Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh. And uh, Moses objects. I think there's 10 objections he gives to doing what he was being told to do and to do the service that he was being called to. I think he objects over 10 things until finally, as it were, the Lord says Moses, stop objecting and just obeying and get on with it. And Moses does that. And, uh, the work begins and goes forward. But again, I say, brethren, it's, it's important to start with. God has a work to do and he chooses servants to do it. He then

communicates to his, the one that he has chosen to do that work. And then you get the fellowship of others seen in it. You can see it in Acts 13 where the, the, there's several servants sitting there waiting. Well, let's turn to it. Only take a moment more to finish the thought. Acts 13 and verse one. Now there were in the church that was in Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas sent me in, that was called Niger and Lucius of Cyrene and Mayon, which had been brought up with Herod the teacher, Arkansas. Now here you have a, you might say, uh, A room. And there's these capable men of God sitting there and seemingly idle. But what's the work of God? Well, verse two, they ministered to the Lord and fasted and the Holy Spirit said, separate me, Saul and Barnabas. Now of the collection that was there, the Spirit of God made a choice. The Spirit said I want this one and I want that one and the Spirit chose them. And for the work wherein I have called them, as he only could do the calling, they couldn't choose among themselves.

We see at work over here, we see a need over here, which one of us should go do it. Umm, and, and off they went. But it says verse 3. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, here's the fellowship side of it. They recognized together in fasting and prayer that yes, this was really a word from the Spirit. And then they go and show the fellowship with them and send them away. It's true we see later instances where for example, Paul was called come over into Macedonia and help us and so on. And there is that expression of need, but. And request for help and so on. But in the principle of it, it's always God's work. He chooses the servants. The servants are sitting there as that were available and waiting. He communicates the word to them and then they go do it. Going on to the next verse, UH-16, we have the suffering. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. Now, I don't believe that was just a punishment upon Saul for the way he had lived. Uh, he had persecuted the church and God works all things together. Yes, Paul would have to accept and say, yes, I deserve to be persecuted myself because I, I did it to others. But the wonderful thing about it, this, this really is, I believe, a path of blessing. This is learning something of our risen Christ in glory, uh, the suffering man who was delivered and taken up into heaven. And I believe in a certain sense it characterizes us in Christianity. We're following a savior that was rejected. And in as much as we associate with him in heaven, we have to accept a part of suffering here on earth rejected. The testimony of Christianity is not an accepted religion openly well received in the world. It is the opposite. And so it is a good thing for us to learn this, that we're not following a hero that's well accepted. It's good to learn that we are following a rejected savior, though He's been delivered from this world and there's much this could lead us down along, uh, meditation, I'm sure the, the subject of suffering, but I just like to turn to. Philippians chapter 3 to see how that I believe Paul learned the blessing of this following the Lord Jesus, uh, and being suffering for it in Philippians chapter 3. Uh and uh, verse, uh, I'll begin with verse 8. Paul is speaking here. Yeah, doubtless I count all things but loss for the Excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but done, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know him. That's Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering being made conformable. Unto his death. It's so beautiful to see and Paul hear one who realized experimentally in his life the blessing of accepting this course of being persecuted. And suffering and what a what a testimony it wrought in his life as a servant of Jesus Christ, he became so occupied with the wonder of his person. There isn't man in glory that he had seen that all of these things here on earth became.

Unimportant as far as the the suffering part of it. And he really counted it a privilege to follow this kind of a path. I think this is a real secret for us as Christians to learn a little in some measure the reality of this. I know we aren't outwardly persecuted in this country like in early Christianity, but still there's a stigma and you have to go against the current. As it were to be faithful to Christ and be rejected. Uh, it may not be nails and whips and lashes, but there are insults and other kinds of persecutions that we must bear. And in, in as much as we do that, I believe we will learn to know more of this man in the glory Christ Jesus that Paul, uh, got acquainted with through the experiences of life. Philippians 1/29, right? For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his safety. So there are really two kinds of ways we can suffer. As Doug has pointed out, many of our brethren today are suffering physical persecution, imprisonment, and facing martyrdom. But as Doug has said, we may never face that kind of thing. And I used to read a verse and ponder it and wonder how it really applied to us in North America and other countries. And that is the verse that says all they that will live godly in Christ Jesus. Shall suffer persecution. It doesn't say they might, but they shall suffer persecution. How do we suffer persecution in our circumstances here? Well, there's another kind of persecution that Doug alluded to, and that's reproach. We may not suffer physically, but there will be a reproach connected with the measure in which we live godly reflects something of Christ in our lives. And seek to follow him and serve him, but particularly brethren, in connection with what Paul presents to us. Part the ministry that Paul was going to be given was not going to be a popular ministry. And Paul suffered much not simply because he became a follower of Christ, but because of the ministry he was given as to the truth of the one body and the heavenly calling of the believer. And I believe that in the measure in which you and I seek to walk in the good of Paul's ministry. And we seek to practically express what is brought before us in Paul's epistles in our lives. We're going to find that it's not going to be popular and I'm going to dare to say it not simply in the world as far as the ungodly, but amongst the Christian testimony. You know, Paul at the end of his life had to say all they in Asia have turned from me. They hadn't turned from following the Lord necessarily, but they had turned from Paul. Now I know that was true physically in Paul's day, but we can take the application. I believe the moral application there is that in the measure in which we seek to follow what Paul sets before us by inspiration, we can't expect to be popular even in amongst other believers. And but, and yet Paul could say to the Ephesian elders in the 20th chapter. While he had had in every city bonds and afflictions, and he served the Lord with many tears and so on, he spoke of finishing his course with joy. There was a joy in the heart and soul of Paul at the end of his ministry, and you and I can finish our course with joy if we seek by grace to walk in the practical good of what Paul presents to us. I think that's what it means. Uh, Jim and Colossians, chapter one.

Where Paul is speaking about, uh, being made a minister and he says in verse 424, now rejoice in my sufferings for you fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church where I am made a minister. Suffering is not something pleasant. But it is something necessary since we live in a world we're passing through, a world where Satan is its God and Prince. We're going to have to suffer. And it is in suffering there is the proper testimony to our heavenly calling. Judaism was a religion given for people in this world. It was something recognized in the Earth. And the constant effort of the enemy is to make Christianity something great in this world too. But it isn't that, brethren. We are called to heaven in heavenly glory. And I think that's why Paul suffered and why he was such a tremendous instrument of suffering, because he brought in the heavenly calling of the church, and that was bitterly opposed. By those who wanted to make it something great in this world, then even today if you say you don't get into politics, that's not our sphere. You're looked down upon by Christians, they said. That's your duty to get involved in the political world and do what's right. And they refer back to those in the Old Testament, like Daniel, like Joseph, who were high in the political world. But that was in a time when it was, uh, the calling of the people of God was in this world, but we are called to heavenly glory. So there is a particular reproach connected with it. It's not easy, but it is real, brethren. We should make it clear too that we don't court suffering or persecution. We don't go out and look for opportunities to suffer. I

know there are some that feel some Christians that feel we need to go out and look for opportunities to suffer and create those opportunities and so on. That's not the thought, is it? And you find in this very chapter, Solitarsis wasn't courting persecution. He didn't live on the edge, so to speak, on purpose. And when there was a difficulty, they let him down out of the basket and he escaped. He God gives us wisdom as as well. But the thought the the point is, while we don't court persecution or go out and look for opportunities to suffer in the measure in which we are faithful to Christ and the truth of God, there will be those opportunities not because we looked for them, but because we were faithful to Christ. My mother-in-law had a little text on the wall. And she asked me to repair it about 30 two years ago, needed a little bit of work on it and it was just very simply. No cross, no crown, and it made a deep impression on me at the time. No cross, no crowns. But I think here in connection with the Apostle Paul at the beginning of his testimony for the Lord, it was for his namesake. It was the name of the Lord Jesus that he had hated, but now there was no more name that was more precious to him. And it's the name of Christ that we ought to adorn and to mention upon our lips as we love and have affection for that blessed one. And as you think of it, it cost Paul his life to give you this, these epistles that we have, the 14 epistles that he wrote. It cost him his life. He suffered even unto death, and it cost the Lord Jesus. But as you say, not to court umm, a persecution, but ineffection to mention the name of the Lord Jesus in a faithful way.

It's interesting that the Lord Jesus, the end of his pathway, seemed to, as far as life down here in this world is concerned, seemed to be a total failure. Same is the case with the Apostle Paul when he is encouraging Timothy at the end that all those in Asia have turned away from me. Seemed like it was a total failure in his life. Brethren, it's not to make something great down here that we are here. We are called to heaven, heavenly glory. And so if it seems like things are not. That nice down here is because God is preparing us for something greater up there. John the Baptist was another, wasn't it? You know, he might have thought his ministry was a failure. In fact, he says he was a voice of one crying in the wilderness. And I often think you get out in the wilderness place and start talking. You say, well, nobody's listening to me. Nobody. Nobody's here to hear me. But the Lord placed the value on his ministry. And that's what we need to do, is serve the Lord in whatever he gives us and leave it for his commendation. And the Lord said of John the Baptist, there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist. John might have felt his ministry was a failure, but the Lord placed the proper value on it. I just want to say too, that Paul, Saul of Tarsus here, when he goes to up to Jerusalem, they're afraid of him. Well, he can well imagine why they don't take him in right away. Did he let that discourage him know he had Christ before him now? And I just want to say in a practical way, maybe sometimes you try to do something for the Lord. And you say, well, nobody appreciates it. They just don't accept me for what I what I am and just you get discouraged. This didn't discourage Paul. He had some lessons to learn and he seemed to realize that it was going to take time to gain the confidence of his brother. And you know, it does take time to gain the confidence of your brethren. Sometimes you do something from for the Lord and maybe your brethren are a little skeptical. Maybe there's been something in your past and they just find it hard to say. Has there really been that kind of a change? And is that per. Really directed for the Lord now, but give it time. Let the Lord, let the Lord work. The Lord worked in the hearts of these brethren eventually, so they recognize that there was a real work work of God. But don't be discouraged by what seems to be the negative attitude and reaction of your brethren so often. Leave that again for the commendation of the Lord. Just like. Comment to that thought too oftentimes as especially as we're young, we we would like to understand the Lord's ways and the circumstances that arise in our past. And many times it's not for us to understand what God is doing. And it may be that at some future time will understand a few things, but it's best for us to pray for the peace that passes understanding. And. If, if we can follow your Lord. And, and if we're talking about going through the school of God, and there's often times as we're going through the school of God, especially when we're young, that we just don't understand the Lord's way. We would like to be able to understand, but it's better if we learn. The peace that passes under. There's something better than understanding the Lord's ways. That's the peace that the Lord gives that passes understanding. I'd like to just read, uh, second Timothy chapter 2 and verse 15. And this is a part of the thing, part of, uh, what will help us to understand God's ways with us and appreciate them. Second Timothy 2 and verse 15. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the worst of word of truth. Well, you notice here that. Saul spent three years in Arabia and Damascus, but then he spent two years in Tarsus. Now why does God tell us this?

Tarsus was a city of learning. It was also the place that he was from. And so there needed to be a testimony before his own brethren in his own home, as he was there before as, uh, Saul of Tarsus in a different way. But now he was going to render a different testimony. And I believe the Lord allowed him to be there in Tarsus, that city of learning, that he might study the word in a different way, and he needed to be in the word. I'll just say this is an encouragement. Perhaps there's a young brother as a young person just wants to do a little bit for the Lord, spend time in the Word and, uh, study to show thyself approved unto God. So Paul learned, read the word of God in a different way, and he was there in parses for two years. I've been impressed in this 18th and 19th verse where, uh, Paul gets his initial introduction to the Saints and to the things of God according to the revelation of God, much further than what he had as a Jew. And, uh, immediately. In verse 18. He was to receive a sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost and immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scaled. So now he is receptive to take in the things of God and he received sight was the first thing in verse 18 he received sight. He received it. There it was. He was exposed to it, just as we all are. In Western civilization, which is called Christendom, even as we are, as we grow up in the home, especially receiving these things from our parents and hearing them in the assembly, they were before the Apostle Paul. What did he do with it? Well, there are two options you can. You can, uh, put your finger in your ear or you can receive it. And he received it. It was there and he received it forthwith, not with hesitation. He was ready now to receive these things. And so he did. Then he arose. That takes energy. And he was baptized. Well, this is something that he didn't put off until he felt like it. There was the opportunity and he was baptized. That's the putting in the place of death the old man. There's no profit for him in that in the old man anymore. And so he is baptized. Then there's the third thing he was he received me in verse 19. It was there was provided for him at the place where he was taken. He had the opportunity for it. And again, he didn't sleep through it. He diligence himself, opened his ears to listen to these things. There was meat there, and he received it. And in doing that and what he had already previously done. Receiving sight, baptism received me. He was strengthened. And so are we as we take in the Scriptures. These are vital. These things are vital. That's why we're having these reading meetings and that's why. That opens the Bible in the evening and the family and reads and explains these things. It's a tremendous Bible school, the home when you have Christian parents that bring these things before you. So he was strengthened. Then was Paul, Saul, certain days with the disciples. That's the collective side. He he chose his friends. This is important. He chose his friend. He was with them. He picked who he was going to be with. There was the opportunity, of course they were there. And so it is with each of us here and this is, this is such a vital thing. He trafficked now with the disciples. Who are we going to spend our time with when we have the opportunity to spend time, you know, when we're not at work or at school and even there, there are opportunities. When I was in the Navy, in a squadron, there were 30 people there.

I think there was only one other believer that I knew of. But the fellow that I flew with, I was in the back seat, he was in the front. Spent two cruises flying with that man. He got saved. And one of the persons that I was in the same stateroom with the department on the ship. He got

saved and they're still going on for the Lord. And they're picking those, uh, with whom they will associate with the disciples. And then there is finally, as just a flowing forth from this in verse 20, straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogues. Well, he knew that was going to be hard work. He knew what goes on in the synagogues and how that would be received. But with the boldness of faith and character, he did it anyway. He preached Christ in Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. His person. Well, there are six or seven things in these just short two or three verses, I think that we can lay hold up with both hands and make them our own. And it's the life that's profitable that now is. Like to say a word in the end of verse 17. One of the things that. Ananias said to Saul is that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost, and it's interesting in the book of the Acts to see how often it mentions those who are filled with the Holy Spirit. In the book of Ephesians chapter 5, we find an exhortation in that connection that I think is helpful for us. Says in verse 18. 518 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. Every believer has the Spirit of God dwelling in him, but. Question of filling of the Spirit of God. There's a responsibility on our part and I think that's why it's given an Ephesians as an exhortation be filled with the Spirit. Sometimes we are filled with other things that impede the Spirit of God. Filliness says in John chapter three. I think it is God giveth not the Spirit by measure. And we are the ones that determine, Are we going to let the Spirit of God fill us? Oh, it's a beautiful thing when you see a person that is so occupied with Christ. There seems to be the filling of the Holy Spirit. Don't say that we should be occupied with ourselves, but that's God's desire is to fill these vessels of ours with His Spirit. Steven was one who was filled with the Spirit of God and it's interesting in Acts chapter 6 to see some of the characteristics that are mentioned about those filled with the Spirit of God noticed in chapter six of the Acts verse 3. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out seven men of honest report. These are the deacons that we're going to do serve the tables. Full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Wisdom is characteristic of them. Verse five, the same place, the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. There's another characteristic full of faith and the Spirit of God and then verse. Eight and Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles amongst the people.

But in Chapter 7 you find him at the end of his life there and his testimony. Verse 55 of Chapter 7, He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. Person that is filled with the Spirit of God is not occupied with himself. Nor even with the Spirit of God. He's occupied with the Lord Jesus. And so Stephen looks up and he's filled with the Holy Spirit. So God wants us to be filled with the Spirit of God. That's His desire. What are we allowing in our lives that impedes Him filling us completely with His Spirit? Sometimes give the illustration in that verse and that and Ephesians 5 says be not filled with wine. Wherein is excess person that's filled with wine? You can tell it. By the way they walk and by the way they talk. Person that's filled with the Spirit in the same way, brethren, by the way they walk and by the way they talk. May the Lord help us that we would be filled with the Spirit. I think that's very important because there's a lot of emphasis on spirit field as a self occupying or being occupied with the Spirit of God. There's a verse, a couple of verses in John 16 that give us the ministry of what the Spirit of God is. That might help us to to see that it's not being occupied with the Holy Spirit itself that makes us full of the Holy Spirit. It's, uh, really, umm, the Spirit of God is, well, let's read the verse here, uh, John 16, John's Gospel chapter 16 and verse 13. Albeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak of himself or from Himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall He speak. Then He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, that's Christ, or He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you, and so on. This this Lord Jesus gave in his dissertation to the apostles before he left in connection with the Holy Spirit coming down. And it tells us the mission, what the purpose of the Spirit of God is. And so that when we're filled with the Spirit, totally guided by it, we're not talking about the Spirit itself nor ourselves. We're. Occupied with Christ and the things that concern him, this is the mission of the Spirit of God. And so it's good. It's it's Christ in glory, that sense, the Spirit that is before us. Just in that, sorry, but go ahead. Just like to add, Brother Bob, there's three other things in the portion that you read in Ephesians chapter 5. You have verse 1920 and 21. I'll just read them. It says speaking to yourselves in psalms and Psalms and hymns. And spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submitting yourselves 1 to another in the fear of God. So you have those three things that are really evidence of being filled with the Spirit. You have a joyful spirit, you're joyful in the Lord, and then you're thankful to the Lord. It says spirit of Thanksgiving and thankfulness for what he's done. And then their submission. It's not the will at work, but a spirit of submission because we love one another. Those two things. Just say also, too, in connection with these comments, that what Doug brought before us is perhaps summed up again in the Upper Room ministry. But in the end of the 15th chapter, when he speaks of the Spirit of God, he says He shall testify of me. And then I was thinking of what Bob pointed out in the in the 7th of Acts in connection with Stephen. You know, it's interesting that Steven, when he looks up, he's occupied with the man in the glory as a man full of the Spirit. And then Bob, you're talking about what we say in the very next verse. He opens his mouth in his last testimony on earth and he says, behold, I see heaven open. Doesn't say I'm full of the Spirit. You ever hear somebody tell you they're full of the Spirit?

I doubt whether they're full of the Spirit if they're telling you so, but Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost last testimony, and what a testimony it was. He says, behold, I see heaven open and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. Now if someone comes to you and brings you something of Christ and occupies you with Christ and the man in the glory, then maybe you can say, well, there's a man full of the Spirit, not because he told you he was full of the Spirit, but because he was so occupied with Christ in glory. That he couldn't help but share it with you and that is a great mark of someone who is filled with the Spirit. That they are sharing something of Christ with others, whether it's in testimony, in the gospel, or in sharing with one another as believers. We can thankfully say that in a large way that characterized it also fall throughout his life. And he was faithful in many ways. Uh, and he threw him. We received the teaching, the revelation of these things, not just in a teaching format, but in an exemplified way in his life that went along with what he taught. That's consistent in, in a great measure. We can be thankful for it. And so that's why the apostle Paul's ministry is, is so important to us. In this day, the closing days of the church that its occupation with Christ and glory, uh, that will preserve us on. And the Lord has gathered the people, uh, to his name that are aware of these truths and in feebleness seek to carry it on in this day. And this is a great heritage of truth that we have. As gathered to the Lord and seeking in much failure we know, but yet in a certain appreciation of our relationship with Christ and bearing witness of it in our lives, and may the Lord keep us and that these things not be given up. It's so easy to in a practical way, give up the reality of our relationship with Christ. Not that we ever lose our relationship, but that we can lose the enjoyment of our relationship to him by becoming earthly minded here on earth. And that's the great effort of Satan. We have a, a glamorous world out there. Uh, there's a lot of things to do. Your your days can be so full of occupation with things that aren't necessarily bad in themselves, but they are just earthly things. And they don't bring us into the good and blessing of our relationship with the Lord Jesus in heaven. And so they are a hindrance to us. And so we are. We ought to appreciate Paul's ministry as it's initiated here in these early chapters of the Acts. Might be nice just to comment on the last verse that we read here. In verse 31 it says then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified walking in the fear of the Lord and in comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied. I'd just like to point out in Isaiah chapter 32 a verse that we know well

in verse 17 it says the work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. Now we know that they have a little bit of rest. There was a time of peace that the Lord allowed for the assembly, and we ought to be thankful for those times of rest and peace. But there was going to be further conflict later on. But the Lord allowed that there was a restful time. How thankful we can be for it, and we yearn for it and seek to present those opportunities in the assembly not to trouble the Saints and to desire that there would be a peace among our brethren.

Kentucky Conference: 2011, Acts 9:1-9

Reading

Maybe the 1St 31 verses. Acts Chapter 9 and verse one, and Saul yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, right under the high priest, and desired of him letters to the Damascus, to the synagogue, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them, bound them to Jerusalem. And at the journey he came near Damascus, and suddenly they're shined round about him alight from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou meat? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecuted, It is hard for thee to kick against the ******. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journey with him stood speechless. Hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Paul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man, but they led him by the hand and brought him unto Damascus, and he was three days without sight. And neither did he nor drink. And there was a certain disciple of Damascus named Ananias. And to him said the Lord in a vision Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the street which is called straight, and inquire in the House of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. For behold who prayeth? And have seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him. That he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered More, I have heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done to thy Saints at Jerusalem, and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, for I will show him how great things he must suffer. For my namesake And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way of thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scaled, and he received sight forthwith, and a rose. And was baptized, and when he had received meat he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that He is the son of Bra. But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them, which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hit her for that intent, that he might bring them bound under the chief priests. But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very price. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him. But they're laying in wait was known as Saul, and they watched at the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down by the wall in a basket. And when fall was come to Jerusalem, he is saved to join himself to the disciples. But they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him. And how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus, And he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem, any faith boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians. But they went about to slay him, which, when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then have the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee and Samaria.

And were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied. Ethnic Moses of the last meeting, the reading meeting I made yesterday, we sang that him God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. I really enjoyed the the the meditation of that him in connection with this book of Acts, though I know that is not the intent of the author of that hymn. The mysterious ways are more in connection with the practical. Trials and involvements of Christian life. But it fits too in connection with the development of what the Spirit of God is doing in opening up the Christian testimony through the disciples. And we see it beautifully displayed in this chapter, where Saul an enemy of the Christian testimony who was fighting against Christianity, putting people to death. If we think about it, it's like converting an Osama bin Laden to a Billy Graham. That's no stretch of the imagination to say it in that way. This man saw was that kind of a person persecuting Christians. And God says, OK, you have that deal, I'll take you and use you for my cause on my side. And so he arrests Saul of Tarsus and brings him to the knowledge of who Jesus is. In heaven, this was what converted and changed Saul to become the great apostle to the Gentiles, and he used that zeal. So you see how the Lord Jesus in heaven is in complete control. And the Holy Spirit is here, active on earth, and none of the confusion and persecution. And the events that are taking place against Christianity could thwart or stop God's intent in gathering of people to himself. Earlier, for example, even you have the the umm, Gamaliel of the teacher, uh, when they were with the situation saying you can't fight against God. He realized that God was doing the work. That was the beginning of the Christian testimony. We may lose sight of some of that power in the weakness that prevails around us, but the same God is working today, and we need to realize these principles in the last days in all our weakness, and not give up the Christian faith, but hold to us in our day as we see here. What how the the Church began and its relationship with Christ and glory. Just to back up a moment to what we have in the previous chapter, At the end of the previous chapter, I was thinking of it in connection with what our brother Dawn said in the address, because there is a great deal of talk about replacement theology. But as you go through the book of the Acts, you very quickly see that while we said yesterday it is a transitional book, yet Christianity is not a makeover of Judaism. Or an extension of it. The Lord Jesus said himself. Do men sell new cloth on an old garment? Do they put new wine in old bottles? What the Lord Jesus was really saying is that there was something going to be brought in that was brand new and a capacity that was never known and appreciated, nor could be under the old order, old Jewish order of things. And that was going to be set aside and something brand new brought in. And it's interesting that the conversion of salt of tarsus, just before that we have the Ethiopian eunuch coming up to Jerusalem.

I say it's significant because we find that when the Ethiopian unit came to Jerusalem, he found a very different Jerusalem than his predecessor, the Queen of Sheba. I have no doubt that the Ethiopian unit came up to Jerusalem based on report that he had heard handed down in the Kingdom from which he came from, a report of a glorious Jerusalem. And a man on the throne who was exalted and known worldwide. And so on. No doubt that report had been handed down. After the queen of Sheba had gone home, and generations later, the

Ethiopian eunuch comes up to prove that report for himself. But he found a very different Jerusalem, didn't he? He didn't find Jerusalem in his glory. He found Jerusalem in its shame. The holy city had rejected Christ. They had taken him outside their walls and had him nailed to a Roman cross. The temple was no longer God's center. As it was in the days of Solomon, they had rejected the true Solomon, and the true Solomon was the man taking a journey into a far country to wait for his Kingdom. The true Solomon had gone back. To heaven, the Lord Jesus was now the rejected one, but also the ascended glorified one at the right hand of God. And the Ethiopian unit could not find blessing at Jerusalem. He'd come too late for that, so to speak. With Jerusalem in its shame and the true Solomon rejected. If he was going to find the blessing, it had to be outside the walls of that city that had rejected the their Messiah. It had to be outside in a wilderness place, directed by, uh, the word of God in his hand and directed by an evangelist. To explain that this was prophetic of the Lord Jesus. He begins at the same scripture and preached his preaches to him, Jesus, but not Jesus in Jerusalem. This was Jesus, the one who had gone to the cross yet as the 53rd of Isaiah where he was reading had prophesied. But this was the Jesus too, that was now risen and exalted, and if he was going to receive the blessing? It was to be connected not with Jesus at Jerusalem, but Jesus as the Lord, as the man and the man of glory. And so this pre is the, uh, predecessor of what we have in this chapter then, and that Jesus that the Ethiopian eunuch had found, and not a re not to be reintroduced to Judaism and so on, but introduced to Christ in glory. Then that's the one that from the glory then arrest this man Saul of Tarsus in his course. This is the one that Saul of Tarsus becomes connected with, and this is the one then that Saul of Tarsus is sent to present to the Gentiles. It's a little light to Lord Jesus in the ninth of John when he, the man that had been healed, was cast out of the synagogue. Then Jesus went and looked him up after he had been cast out and revealed himself to him. And so after Judaism had failed and proved itself unworthy a blessing, the Lord Jesus is not stopped in his way of blessing. Then he opens up heavenly blessings and he sends the Holy Spirit down. And you see the development of that in these early chapters of the book of Acts. And, uh, in that case that you mentioned Jim, about the Ethiopian eunuch, uh, the Lord in glory sent Phillip to meet him along the way as he wrote, uh, as he wrote in his chariot and, and he preached from Isaiah 53, it proves that the Lord in heaven. Knew all that was going on on earth, and that's what you see developed in our chapter 2. The way Saul is converted here it he's brought to Northeast. Realize that Jesus is livingly linked with his people on earth and cares for them.

Might be good to look at Galatians chapter one and you get that heavenly connection and the authority that umm from heaven instead of Jerusalem in that link as you say in Galatians chapter one and verse 15. It says, But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen. Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and returned again into unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter in a boat with him. 15 days. Well, it tells us there, and what we have brought out in this chapter, very beginning of it. Is it Paul or Saul here? He went to Damascus, and he had authority from Jerusalem to persecute the Jews, to persecute Christians, and to destroy. The name of Christ, but he was arrested, as you say, on that road walking away from Jerusalem. He goes to this, uh, city of Damascus and, umm, there he gets authority from heaven to preach Christ to the Gentiles and to magnify that name. And it's a power that, uh, he never had, had, never experienced in Judaism ever. And so that's one of the things that characterizes Christianity. So it's late, but the person of Christ. I'd like to bring out an additional line of thought in addition to the Christianity being in contrast to Judaism. Turn to 1St Corinthians chapter 15. Reverse. First Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 22. Whereas in Adam all died, Even so in Christ shall all be made alive. And then over in Second Corinthians chapter 5. 2nd Corinthians, chapter 5. And verse 14. For the law of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead, and that he died for all. That they which lived should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we? Uh, no, we no man after the flesh. Yeah, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, or a new creation. All things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and have given to us the ministry of reconciliation. This is an additional line of thought that is introduced, or truth that's introduced to us in the Person of Fall. Our saw and it's this up until the Lord Jesus died, man under as he is in Adam was under responsibility and being tested as to whether God could have anything from man from the first man, Adam or his race, and Saul represents the best of that race. In the Old Testament, if you trace it out, King Saul represents the best in the Old Testament economy. Both of the salts. I wonder if God used their names to be the same for that reason. But Saul was the very best that man in the flesh could produce. He How many of us in this room could say we as Paul looked at the 10 commandments? Every single outward expression of them his life expressed. The one that got him was the inner one. Uh, thou shalt not covet. But as far as man could see him after the flesh, he was the best example of it. But when the Lord Jesus is crucified, it's the end of God seeking anything from man after the flesh. And even Saul was the best of religious flesh.

Because what God recognized at that time of man after the flesh was Judaism, and he was the best that Judaism could produce. He was the model Jew, if you will, as to what could come from that. And this new thing, Christianity or the followers of Jesus were antagonistic to that religion as far as they thought, so they tried to get rid of it. And he's the most zealous 1 presented to us is trying to get rid of this new thing that has come along. But God is saying to us in it, in Adam, all die. There's no thing for God in Adam's race. There's nothing for God after the flesh. So in Christ God begins something new in Christ, in resurrection. God begins to work with mankind in a new and different way than he had publicly if you will. He had worked in seouls before, but now as a as a work collective thing, it's new in the earth. And he takes that which represents the worst or best if you however you look at it, because the worst, the best of the flesh, was the farthest from God. It's not. Really incorrect to say he was the chief of centers, because the farther a man goes in the flesh, in truth, the farther he gets from gone. It's a solemn thing, but, and it's something you have to meditate on to see because we say, oh, but he didn't do this. He didn't do that. So he wasn't quite as bad as somebody that did this or that. But as far as his opposition to God, he was the ultimate expression, opposition to God. And in that way he's the chief of sinners. So God takes what man after the flesh is in his best condition, which is really an expression of his worst condition, and he says, I can take that. And I can start a new creation. So 2nd Corinthians 5 is the expression of Christ that are all dead was a statement about Adams race and so Christ coming in the flesh dies to that condition of things is separated from it never takes it up again. But in resurrection he is the beginning of a new creation and in that new creation God begins to work to form something that. Has no connection with the old and because. Christ is in resurrection the heavenly man. He immediately associates the new work and new creation with a different origin. Adam was of the earth earthy. The new creation is a divine creation which begins with heaven and it has a heavenly character and the apostle Paul becomes the model. Of new creation in his life. He is the model Christian. He is the pattern of Christianity as God has given it to us. The Lord Jesus even is not that because He was of the old order until His resurrection. So we don't see in His life the pattern of new creation, but we see it in the Apostle Paul. And that's what this 9th chapter of Acts is also introduced in. To us is the whole change from the old to the new, including the religion of the flesh, which was Judaism, which is totally put aside that there be something, if you want to call it religious Christianity, but it's a Christianity that begins and is connected from its origin with new creation and heaven, where the old had

been in Adam with the earth and that which is earthy. It might be nice to read the first Timothy one, the verses that substantiate this uh, of Paul being the pattern, umm first Timothy chapter one and verses.

15 and 16 This is the faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief, albeit for this 'cause I obtain mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter. Leave on him to ever like everlasting. And then he burst out in praise. What a wonderful thing, this pattern that God gave us in Paul. And that's why it's so important for us in Christia and our Christian testimony to to hold to the doctrine that Paul gave us, because it's the foundation of the Christian faith. And you cannot give up all doctrine without making shipwrecks. Uh, in Christianity Today, in fact, that's how the book of Acts really ends up is a picture of that in the shipwreck when they gave up Paul's advice and the testimony, uh, was broken up pictured in that shipwreck. So God gave us in this book of Acts, uh, beginning here with Paul, uh, the foundation crews of Christianity are. Are given through him. He is that chosen vessel directly from the Lord in heaven. That's what differentiates Paul's ministry from the other 12. They got their ministry from the Lord when he was a nerd and then carried over and went into the Christian testimony. Yes, but they had learned to know Christ on earth. Paul learned to know Jesus in heaven here in this chapter. It's interesting too, to see that in the book of the Acts. Through the 12Th chapter, there seems to be the major, uh, person that is focused on uh. But from the 13th chapter on, it's the Apostle Paul and. I don't know, maybe this is touched on yesterday, but I have really enjoyed it. In chapter uh, seven is the last testimony to the Jews as a nation, and it's rejected in the stoning of Stephen. He's the messenger that's sent back to heaven to say we will not have this man to reign over us. And immediately in the 8th chapter, the testimony extends beyond Jerusalem. Do some area and like was mentioned to this Ethiopian unit, the 9th chapter of the apostles of the Gentiles is saved. In the 10th chapter is where Peter to whom was given the keys of the Kingdom of heaven. Takes the second key, if you want to put it that way, and opens the door of letting to the gentiles. So just it's interesting how I developed into the gospel going into the whole world. And then in chapter 12, you get Peter miraculously delivered from prison. And then Peter from that point on only appears once more in the 15th chapter. That's from the 13th chapter on the apostle Paul, who is the major. Forecast that the spirit of God in the extension of the gospel and he's the one that takes it into Europe for the first time and Philippi was the first entry into Europe so the work continues to this day of the gospel of this world it's beautiful to see how the spirit of God directs the work of the. The church and the development of the church. It's helpful too, in that regard to realize that as you go through these chapters, you don't the Spirit of God is very careful to guard, lest we think that there's ever any of the ever more than one church. What you have in the 8th chapter with the Samaritans brought in and then in the 10th chapter where the Gentiles are brought in is not a repeat of what happened on the day of Pentecost.

Or something separate. It is a little extension of it. The baptism of the Holy Spirit took place on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God descended and they were baptized into one body. And the Spirit of God came to indwell each individual believer to link those believers together and to dwell collectively in this new unit that was formed the church and to link them with their glorified head, the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God. And I, I think we need to take a minute and and stress this because a lot of confusion today. And I know some of our young people hear from their Christian friends. About the baptism of the Holy Spirit and are you baptized with the Holy Spirit and so on. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is something that took place once and for all on the day of Pentecost, never to be repeated. As such. I'm going to use the an age-old illustration. I don't want to depart too much from this, but since Bob alluded to it, I think it's helpful. Going to use an illustration that helped me when I was younger and it's been used many times. On the day of Pentecost, there were about 120 believers or so. It's not definite. It says about 120 believers gathered in obedience to the word of the Lord in the upper room. And when the Spirit of God descended, it was like we would say we can illustrate it this way. It was like we would have about 120 beads on a table in the middle of the room here, and they are individual beads. But now we take those beads and we string those beads and we make a new unit. They're still individual beads, but collectively they form a necklace. And so we have a necklace with about 120 beads on it. But let's suppose as time goes on, we get some more beads. Now what do we do? We don't form a new necklace, but we take that same necklace and we add to it. And that's why at the end of Acts chapter 2, it says the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved. And brethren, that's what's going on now. There's not more than one church. And so in the 8th and 10th chapter, the Spirit of God is careful lest we ever think there's a Jewish church and a Samaritan church or a Gentile church, or we ever think there's a Jewish Gentile church with A-NO. What God established at the beginning, He has added two sins. Now there had to be a special work of the Spirit of God, and I know it perhaps doesn't convey completely by the, I'll say again, there had to be that special work of a little extension of what took place on the day of Pentecost, like reopening the necklace and adding those other beads that we found so that the Gentiles could the Samaritans and the Gentiles could be brought in in that way. But I say again, it's important to realize that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not something that has been or is repeated today, and it is not an individual thing. People say you're baptized with the Holy Spirit. I'm in dwelt with the Holy Spirit, and we all need to be exercised to be filled with the Spirit. But the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a collective thing for the formation of the church. On the day of Pentecost, one other little comment in this regard, Saul of Tarsus, when he struck to the ground here in this in this chapter, he immediately from heaven receives the seeds of the truth that he himself is used to later develop. And that is when the Lord speaks to him. He doesn't say, Saul, why are you persecuting the believers? It's true, he was persecuting the believers. He doesn't say, why are you persecuting the Christian? He was persecuting the Christian. He says Saul, Saul. And he, Saul is one of seven individuals in Scripture who when he received a call, who, when they received a call from God or the Lord in the New Testament, their names were repeated twice. Saul, Saul, why persecuted? Thou notice it's very important me solve Tarsis. Though he perhaps didn't understand it at the time, he immediately is given the truth that in touching one of the Lord's own on earth, he was actually touching the Lord. He wasn't just pre persecuting believers, he was persecuting the Lord Jesus their head in heaven. So close.

Were these believers linked with the Lord Jesus as a result of what took place on the day of Pentecost, that in touching one of those believers, they were, he was actually touching the Lord. And that's why you have to then go to Paul's ministry where this truth is developed to get the real truth and meat of what the church is our position and calling and blessing Saul of Tarsus as the apostle Paul. Is then later used to develop, but he gets the seed of it right here. Jimmy mentioned that, uh, today we are received the Holy Spirit when we believe the gospel of our salvation. And I suppose we can say to end that that moment we are added to the church. God, so much confusion in today's world about this question of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I found it helpful if you want to go back to the first chapter and you had it yesterday. In the baptism of the Holy Spirit that occurred on chapter 2 is mentioned in verse five of the first chapter. John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Not any day again. Then go over to the 11Th chapter in connection with what took place in Cornelius's house. Chapter and it uses that same expression verse 16 of Chapter 11 and remembered I this year speaking the word of the Lord, how that he said John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. That was like saying and extension. Of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and it was it took place one in the beginning of the church period to form the body of Christ, and from then on believers are

added to that church. The baptism with water is an application to the natural man for cleansing and appropriate holiness before the law. The Lord to be prepared to meet the Lord John baptized in preparing the way for the people to receive their king, the Lord Jesus. So that's an an action to the natural man. But the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to the Newman. It's new life. It's the it's conveying the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus. When we get saved, then they were sealed with the Holy Spirit. And that's not an action just on natural man. That's the new creation that Don was referring to earlier, which is our relationship with the Lord Jesus in the church. The only way we could be linked with the Lord Jesus was after he died and rose again, because in the first creation there's no way humans can be linked with the Lord Jesus in oneness. But in new creation it's possible. And it's that's how we are linked with the Lord Jesus in the church is by new birth we're born again, we receive a new life. It's the life of Christ that he conveys to us through faith in Him. The Holy Spirit brings it to us. Day of Pentecost was the collective action of it, but there was an individual action there too. It was two parts to the work of the Holy Spirit, uh, individual and collective. Just a comment in connection with Paul. We rightly, I believe, refer to this as his conversion. And uh, the mark of it is in verse five. And he says, who art thou, Lord? We know from Romans 10 that thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead. Thou shalt be saved. And every person that really comes into a knowledge of salvation is that work in the heart that confesses Jesus as Lord, and Paul does it here. Who art thou Lord? The man in John 9?

Uh, the blind man, the change in his life, he didn't know who. The one that was given him taken away his blindness, he had never seen him. He had been told to go do something in his blind condition. He does it, he receives his eyesight and he never physically seen the person that did it at that point. So when he cast out of the synagogue and the Lord Jesus comes to him and talks to him, he, he says, well, who is he? more than I may believe on him. Peter's conversion is given to us and. Luke's Gospel chapter 5 And Peter had known the Lord for a while before. He isn't instantly saved the first time he gets to know who the Lord Jesus was. But when the Lord uses his boat and takes him out on the lake, and then he sees the load of fishes, he comes and puts himself at Jesus feet and he says to him, depart from me. For I am a sinful man, O Lord, and that's Peter's conversion at that point. And so it is. We all come into the Christian faith with a work, not always at the same time with our understanding, but in the heart. There's a submission to this person and that submission to his person, and faith in the fact that God raised him from the dead. Is Jesus is Lord? And we see that with the thief on the cross too, didn't don't we? We see those two things. He turned and he said, Lord. But then he said something else. Remember Me when thou cometh into thy Kingdom. He was looking toward resurrection, wasn't he, in a future day? And so it says in Romans chapter 10, If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, or Jesus as Lord, really the thought, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead. Thou shalt be saved. So it confirms what you said. Another interesting comment made about Saul Two, that when Ananias is told to go and to see him and lay his hands on him, you can just imagine the beer. And this man said, well, Lord, this man persecuted the believers, and he's come with the intent of hauling all the Christians he can round up away to prison and so on. And he had letters of authority, and you want me to go and make myself known to him? But it's interesting the confirmation that Ananias is given. As to the reality of the work of God in his soul and his conversion, just notice it at the end of verse. Well, I'll read verse 11. And the Lord said unto him, Does the Lord talking to him, and I arise and go into the street, which is called straight, and inquiring the House of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. Now notice this, for behold, he prayed. That was the confirmation to Ananias, that this was a real work of God in this man's soul of Tarsus soul. Because prayer is the breath of the divine life and it's one of the proofs that there has been a work of God in the soul. And I think it's a good little test for us all. And when we hear of someone who says they've got saved, here's a another confirmation. They recognize, as Don said, Jesus is Lord, their submission to that. But there's also then that attitude and spirit of prayer. Prayer is the expression of dependence and confidence. And I say it's the breath of the divine life. So no, this was confirmation meant there was to be no doubt in the mind of Ananias of the work of God, and to go and to confirm, uh, and lay his hands on this man and confirm him and draw him into the circle of those who had already believed. So Ananias says Lord in verse 10 too. Behold, I am here, Lord. Saul says Lord twice and uh, maybe someone has a thought on that. It's uh, verse five he says, who art thou, Lord? And then in verse six he he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

One is connection with who Jesus is and the other is. Who what he would have him to do? I said I said it's a good model for us. Maybe someone has more thoughts on that because it's really in owning the headship of Jesus as Lord in the church that things will function well if any one of us get out of sync with the Lord. The function of the body of Christ is not gonna go on well, but here you see it functioning well. Ananias is waiting on the Lord, and he does what he didn't expect to do in that chapter. The Lord in heaven is controlling the whole theme here. He's working a mighty work. Each one doesn't know what the other is doing, but the head in heaven knows. First time that Paul says Lord, he didn't know who the Lord was. So he says, Who art thou, Lord? And. Umm, but it's interesting, he says in verse five. It is hard for thee to kick against the bricks. Interesting all. It has tricks of conscience that I would guess as. Saul relates his time saw even die. By stoning with his face shining like an Angel. And that's been a tremendous testimony. Pricked his consequence terribly. So this is kind of a confirmation of the fact that there was something wrong and now. When he asked, Who art thou Lord? And Jesus said, I am Jesus, soon thou persecuted. Then he says, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? That's the natural consequence. Once you know who Jesus is, he is Lord. Then if he is the Lord, brethren, we in effect are saying I renounce any authority in my life anymore. There's somebody else who is in command here. One other comment along with respect to this term or. Title, Lord, in contrast to the word or title or Christ. Uh, turn over to Ephesians chapter one. Ephesians, chapter one. And verse 20 which he wrought in Christ. Not Lord, but Christ, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And have put all things under his feet, and made him Christ, and putting the Word in there, the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of Him that felleth All in all. When Christ is brought before us, in the epistles of Paul particularly, it's the headship overall, the whole the body, and we individually, as members of that body, are identified with the head of Christ. But whenever he is referred to as Lord, the emphasis is individual in contrast to collective, and E everyone of us, while we're brought into a collective relationship with Christ as our head, we are also at the same time in a very individual relationship. With the Lord, and consequently there are some collective things that are brought before us with a very individual emphasis connected with them. The Lord's Day, the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, and so on are all to appeal to our conscience for obedience in a very individual way, and sometimes because of collective failure in these things.

We step aside from the Lord's individual authority over us, no matter what the condition is, in a collective way, and we don't act in obedience to his individual authority over our lives. But even though Paul was to bring out the glorious truth of the church as a whole, of the body of Christ as a whole, of the Assembly of God as the House of God, the different characters of this new thing. At the same time, his initial and immediate relationship to that one was Lord. And every one of us needs to recognize that and own it in our everyday, every moment life. When I say Jesus is my Lord, I am saying this person has absolute authority over every detail of my life. So it's one thing to have Jesus as our Savior, and that's wonderful. And we all thrill when we hear somebody say, you know, I just came to know the Lord Jesus as my savior or

someone says, you know, so and so they just got saved and they've made a bright confession. But you know, I'm just as thrilled when I hear about somebody who says, you know, I really want to follow the Lord. I really want to own the Lordship, whatever he has for me. Wherever he directs, that really thrills my soul. You know, when I hear about a young person who says I really want to follow the Lord, I really want him to be Lord of my life, I don't worry too much about that young person anymore because I know the Lord wants to then show them the way. And Saul of Tarsus, when he confessed Jesus as Lord and asked what he should do, the Lord said, I'll show you. And if we truly own Jesus as Lord, then he'll show us what he has for us. It may not be a path like the Saul of Tarsus to be raised up and in the way he was. He had a special Commission given to him as an apostle and, as we pointed out, a pattern for those who would hereafter believe. But if you're willing to own Jesus as Lord of your life to, as Dawn said, give him complete sway and control over your life, to, in other words, set aside your rights. For his rights and claims over you, then he wants to show you what he has. And if I don't know or you don't know what the Lord has for you, it's not a lock on his part. And so it says. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he might direct bypass no, and he shall direct thy path. And Saul of Tarsus learn to acknowledge him here on the Damascus Rd. And I believe for all his life, Saul of Tarsus, as the apostle Paul, he acknowledged. Jesus as Lord, the Lord directed him. Not that there weren't times of discouragement or even failure, but he acknowledged overall the claims of the Lord Jesus in his life and what a path he was shown and what a service. And in a practical way for each one of us. Who knows what a blessing we can be if you and I are willing to own Jesus. Lord, you know we used to sing. When we were young people, that him Lord of my life, I crown thee now, thine shall the glory be now. Brethren, I trust there's no thought even in corners of our heart as to the Lord reigning outwardly now. We see not yet all things put under Him. He's the King in rejection. And again, as we said yesterday, there's been a lot of confusion in this regard. The Lord is not raining out now. This is not the Kingdom period, but He does want that place in our hearts. We sometimes sing rain Thou within our hearts alone. That's where He is to reign now and should be reigning now. Not outwardly in this world, but He should be reigning and have absolute sway. In your heart and mind as Lord of our Light. And just as with solid Parsons it will be showing you what you will do, so it will be shown every one of us when we come to that point in our lives. But like you say, gym runs. I think Robert had a word to say here, Bob, just, uh, excuse me. I just was, uh, uh, enjoying brother Doug in connection with, uh, your question here. There's a sequence of events that takes place and it says, uh, in the end of our street, a light from heaven.

And the light from heaven had to shine first before the apostle or Paul, Saul here. Could say, Lord, who art thou Lord? And uh, just, uh, with this point out in Matthew's Gospel chapter three, I think it's chapter 3. It's chapter 4. It says of the Lord Jesus. In verse 16, the people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in region and shadow of death, light is sprung up. And so the Lord Jesus is the light, the greatest light that ever shone in this world. And so he shone, and the children of Israel, his own people rejected the light. But now Paul sees not the light on earth, He sees the light in heaven. And that's what characterizes ministry. And so here he says, Who art thou? The Lord? And he's speaking. To that one in heaven and if you just turn over to Acts chapter 22 you see that there's the spirit of God gives us a little more progress if you will in connection with the testimony. It's not so much that Paul is important here in Chapter 9. The light is important and what God was going to do with this vessel. And so in chapter 22 of Acts it says in verse eight he says I answered. Who are the Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth. That defies 1 The rejected one whom thou persecutest men in verse 10. What shall I do, Lord? And then a little bit further on in verse 18, just the three words. And I saw him, saw him well. We're going to own the Lord Jesus as our Lord if we see him as the risen man in the glory. And that's what Paul calls my gospel. He saw the Lord Jesus in heaven, a heavenly man. And umm, so it's just important for us, I believe, to realize that, uh, we have to have a sense that there is a risen man in the glory. Before we really can truly acknowledge Lord. And after Paul saw that light, he remained 3 days blind. He didn't see anything else for three whole days. And God gave him, the Lord gave him plenty time to contemplate that light. Excuse me, Bob. I, I, I saw Robert over there trying to have something on his heart, and I interrupted you. Excuse me. So I just wanted to play a condition with what Jim was saying that what you say about practically only in the Lordship of Christ and this and individual thing runs totally contrary to the culture which we are part of. Humanistic, and we are taught to do what we want to do. You have the right. Supposedly this is the case in the democratic society. And if you're talking about democracy, I suppose that is true. But Christianity is something completely different. And I think it is important to see that the culture we're passing through, brothers. Makes us think that we do have rights and in the measure that we think we have rights to bring that attitude to assembly meetings, there's going to be trouble. Do not have rights. If there is any rights we do have, it is in the lake of fire. But beyond that, Jesus has saved us now. He has the right. And it's so important in our lives here in this world to recognize His Lordship and everything. And also, Paul asked a very important question and he asked two important questions and they asked them in the right order. First question is who are thou? And until we know who the Lord is, we won't have a clue as to what to do for Him. It's true in any service you get a job in the company, the first thing you need to know is who you're working for and what their purposes are. You can't just simply walk in and say, well, I know I'm qualified to do this and start doing something. So, so Halton, instead there's Saul says, Who art thou, Lord? This is the first place in our lives to know who the Lord is. And to know about and then he says, Lord, what's going to happen to do? And this is a common question. I mean the question that exercises a lot of young people. Perhaps we start asking that question before we ask the first question. We can at least begin to feel as we grow older, we have mobility. The life is opening before us. We want to know what we want to do. We want to do something for the Lord.

It's the first question just get answered is who is the Lord? You get to know him. Then we can ask the question. Well, without happy to do. And they often said, well, I, I have used the building because I have these opportunities and uh, we get these ideas of things that we might do. It's interesting. Paul came to Damascus, he left, he set up for Damascus with a lot of plans. So when the Lord told him what to do, did the Lord give him a set of plans? No, the Lord gave him one thing, he said Go into Damascus. Basically with the large plan but go into the masters and list. The joint of the mastiff. And it shall be told you what you must do. Should be told me what now Let's do. His responsibility when he got to the masses and was to listen. And until we learn to listen to the Lord, we will never know how to search. And Paul had to learn to listen. He had an education. I'd like to suggest that after some time, as a matter of fact all his life, that we finished that on our own experience is taking a lifetime to learn to listen. But it's amazing. But it's aversion like to suggest First Thessalonians. Chapter 4. Verse 11. And that you study to be quiet and to do your own business. We don't know how to be quiet, but before the Lord will never know how to serve. I could just, uh, point out if there is an uncertainty between 2 translations and the, uh, the King James translation adds a little bit more in these verses. It, it, it adds, uh, what Bob Bob brought out about, uh, uh, uh, picking against the tricks. But it also adds that second question, what without having to do in, uh, in Darby's translation. There's only one question, and that is who our art thou, Lord? And then there is there is instruction of the Lord as to what you should do. And Darby's translation, he doesn't ask what he should. He recognizes the Lordship of the Lord Jesus and under His Lordship he follows his directions. And I would suggest there's a lesson for us in that. If we truly do feel the lordship of the Lord Jesus, we will wait for his instruction. We don't need to be occupied with what my Lord wants me to do. And I think that we, we often fail in this. We, we, we think that we need to help him out in his Kingdom service, but really all we need to do is listen for his instructions. And so I just bring out that little discrepancy because I think they're and if we it's, it's nice that we turned over later on in Acts. When, uh, Paul was, was giving his

account, uh, that that, that, that part that the King James translation ads is not in there. So it may be an indication that it wasn't in the better manuscripts that you should begin with. I'd like to make an additional comment on the light if you turn over to Acts 22. As Doug mentioned. The natural sight for three days. And uh, it's because of the light. But when he recounts the instance and tells us why he couldn't see in Acts 22 and verse 11, he says and when I could not see, for the glory of the light. Now go over to First Timothy chapter 6. First Timothy, chapter 6.

And verse. 16 First Timothy, 6/16. Who, referring to the Lord Jesus, only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach, unto which no man hath seen, nor can see, to whom the honor and ever honor and power everlasting. Amen. And then one more verse before commenting on them and the Lord's Prayer. John 17. In John 17 and verse 22 he says, And the glory which thou gave us, may I have given them, that they may be one even as we are. Blonde and his essential being dwells in light. That is so. Majestic. Umm, that we the creatures, will never enter into that in the full essence of what God is. It is beyond even the revelation of Himself to us. He dwells in light which no man can approach unto, and which no man ever will. But God has come out of His essential glory to display His glories in that extent to which we, the creature man. Can enter into them, but the glory of God in that way was not seen in the Old Testament day. But Christianity also brings us into something new in that way. Uh, Moses wanted to see his glory and he said, you can't, Moses, I'll show you my back part. That's as much as you can enter into. But now when Paul sees the light, it's also. In introducing us into something, that's another thing that's new. In the ways and revelation of God, he's entering, he's beginning to open up to us, entering into the enjoyment of the glory of God in a way that had not been revealed to man before. And the glory is connected with God, so it's connected with his essential being, which is outside earth. And so he begins to open it up. And Paul is going to be the one specially suited to start to make known these glories to us. In his ministry and as the Lord Jesus in his prayer in, uh, John 17, because we are linked to him as the glorified man. So the Lord is going to make us participate in some of those glories. I say some of them because the glories is a big subject and there are glories that he has as. As God the Son. There are glories he has as Jesus the Man. There are glories that are His as the Son of Man. There are glories that are His as connected with his work and what he's accomplished and so on. There are various aspects to the glory, but those that are shareable. Some of his glories could never be shared with any. They're part of his being. But there are those glories which are shareable. And he's saying in John 17, I want to bring my body, my church, to participate with me in these glories. And in doing so, the apostle Paul, immediately, he's blinded for three days because he's being introduced into something that the creature has never known before. And it's an elevation of his condition, his state before God, that is. Hard for him to. To take hold of, to add it a little bit more, when you go back to the Lord on the mount of Transfiguration and millennial glory was shown when the Lord Jesus displayed himself in the shining garments and Moses and Elias are seen with him on the Mount of Tribulation Transfiguration. What was the effect on him? Wow, this is wonderful. No, it was fear.

They were brought into a glory which in their condition at that time, they really couldn't enjoy. With peace and so on. And uh yeah, we are introduced and we gradually in our souls are brought to enjoy the glory of the Lord. And there are glories that he said in that Saint John 17 I will that they be with me, that where I am that they may behold my glory. That we don't yet have revealed, haven't seen yet, that we won't be able to enter into until we're in a fit condition to be able to enter into those floors and and and not be afraid, but be able to see them and and enjoy them as glorified Saints in heaven and one other connected with it. The Apostle Paul was taken into the third heavens. And the effect upon him and making him the model believer was to totally take out of him as to any desire for anything in the world or the earth. He had been given to see a vision in his soul in a condition whether in the body or out of the body, didn't know because he wasn't really yet in that state of being with the glorified body. So he couldn't even talk about the body aspect of it. But he was taken in to get a glimpse of the future glory in that instance, in a way that totally spoiled him for this earth. He wasn't interested in anything that man goes after, after the flesh and God. Chose him as a special vessel to give him that experience, that he might live it out in his life and be the living example to us. Of what it is to be a heavenly citizen, a heavenly man, heavenly by calling, and not have an interest in the passing things of the world that says we will not have this man. There's another contrast in this chapter that's lovely to see, and that is that Saul, or Saul was going out with great pomp and with authority from the chief priests and coming to Damascus with a, no doubt a great company of people. And he was used to that great display of power and authority and Judaism. But here we find that a man, a simple man, Ananias in humility, we don't even know really. Who he is, it just happens to be a certain disciple in verse 10 at Damascus and uh, named Ananias and he said to him. Good morning and said to him, and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias and he said, Behold, I am here Lord, he sowed. Humility is one of the things now that is prophet for us and what characterizes Christianity in the large part, if we're going to imitate Christ is humility. And Ananias instead of some Peter or the great apostle coming and laying his hands on Saul, know what was going to be this humble man. Who was walking with the Lord? And that the Lord could trust, as it were. And I think it's a real encouragement to those in this room, every one of us. And it's a good thing to be a nobody and to really not walk in a noticeable way that would attract attention to ourselves. And I see that Ananias was one of these people that God could trust, but the Lord Jesus himself could go and could see Saul there in his condition and speak to him. And I think that's a lovely experience and a lovely. Encouragement. So humility. Let's just remember that this is what is part of Christianity. 200 and 12:00. 212. As Hillary's here received a heavenly mole, our portion in the age of the Sun. We are constraining this year in Vermont's trade a home on earth or streaming by the Graves nightclubs discovered highs for the wildest fear sites off our treasure in a brighter sphere 212.

I worship him in the day disguise. Her all about the same. I never breathe, mine cannot help me. Umm. Really. I can't run.

The Springing Well: Volume 5 (1902), Our Bible Lesson Column

Golden Text.— “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” — Acts 9:15.

“And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.”—Acts 9:20. Read Acts 9:1-20.

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

1, 2. “Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.” What an evil breath he had! The word translated “breathing out” is used only this once, and means to breathe in or out, to breathe, to live. His very life was to hate Christ and Christians, and yet the time came when he could truly say “For me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

3, 4. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” Thus spake Jesus of Nazareth to him in the Hebrew language (26:14), and arrested him in his mad career, for God had determined concerning him, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further” (Job 38:15). Whoever touches a Christian touches Christ Himself, but not even the devil can go one step beyond God’s permission (Job 1:10: Dan. 4:35: Zech. 2:8).

5, 6. “The Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” He recognizes a superior, and asks, “Who art Thou, Lord?” The answer fills him with trembling and astonishment, for Jesus of Nazareth is actually speaking to him. Seeing Him to be indeed the Christ, the Messiah, whom the prophets had foretold, he at once acknowledges Him as Lord, and meekly asks what he is now to do.

7, 9, “He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.” The men who were with him fell to the earth, seeing the light, and being afraid. They also heard the voice of someone speaking, but did not hear the words, for those were for Saul only. Compare 22:9; 26:14.

10-12. “Inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for, behold, he prayeth.” Thus said the Lord to Ananias, a devout disciple, and one who had a good report of all the Jews at Damascus (22:12). He, like Philip in a previous lesson, is prompt and obedient, one on, whom the Lord could rely to do His bidding.

13-16. “He is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name.” Ananias hesitates just a little as he thinks of Saul’s reputation and authority and his madness against Christians. The Lord graciously bears with Ananias in his objections, but repeats His command to go, and assures him that Saul is to be His special messenger to the Gentiles.

17-20. “Receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” Thus said Ananias to Saul as, having found him just where the Lord said he would, he put his hands upon him and told of the Lord’s commission. He received sight, both natural and spiritual, confessed Christ in baptism, took food for the body, and was strengthened, and immediately preached in the synagogues that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God. Old things are passed away, all things are become new, the Spirit has clothed Himself with Saul (Judges 6:34, R.V., margin), and now henceforth he does but one thing, knows but one Master, and for Him is ready to lay down his life.

Eastern Manners and Customs Illustrating Various Bible Passages, Eastern Manners and Customs: "Kick Against the Pricks"; "Scrip"

" It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."-Acts 9:5.

Pricks or goads are carried by every plowman in the East. They are long poles, with one end pointed as a prick, the other furnished with a sharp, flat piece of metal, like a chisel, which "is used to clear the share from earth and weeds, and to cut the roots or thorns that catch or choke the plow. It was to sharpen this part of the goads that the Philistines permitted the Jews to have a file in the early days of Saul." The use of the goads, then, is to guide into the right path, to keep the right way, and to urge on to exertion. Hence "the words of the wise man are as goads," (Ecc. 12:1). " To kick against the pricks" is said to have been " a proverbial saying, taken from the action of an unruly ox, which when pricked by the goads, kicks back in anger, and thus wounds himself more deeply, suffering for his folly and rebellion. R. A. W.

"And likewise his scrip."-Luke 22:36.

The " scrip" which our Lord directed His disciples on their journey to take with them, was probably like the " shepherd's bag even a scrip" into which David put his five smooth stones from the brook. To this day such scrips are carried by shepherds and farmers of the Holy Land, and in them they carry their simple provision, a little bread, a little cheese, and some olives. Their manufacture is not a complicated matter. " All shepherds have them," writes Dr. Thomson, " and they are the farmer's universal vane mecum. They are merely the skins of kids stripped off whole, and tanned by a very simple process." R. A. W.

Bible Treasury: Volume 5, Scripture Query and Answer: Conferred Authority to Preach

3.

Q. What think you of the following note of T. Scott on Acts 8:4? “The difference between statedly and authoritatively as a herald, and by office and authority, preaching to regularly convened congregations, and simply declaring what a man knows of Christ and salvation, amongst relations, juniors, ignorant neighbors, or ignorant persons of any sort, without assuming any authority, seems of great importance. No doubt in this way a man's sphere will often gradually enlarge, till he appears something like an authoritative preacher; but would it not then be proper that pastors and rulers should send some Barnabas to confirm what has been done, and to confer due authority? And would it not be right in this case for the person himself to seek from the pastors and teachers of the Church their sanction to his labors, now become more public than he at first either expected or intended?”

- T.

A. The notion is quite unfounded, and directly at issue with the very Scriptures before the commentator's eye. Neither Barnabas nor any other man ever conferred authority to preach as a herald, or even in the most unpretending form. It is true that the word descriptive of the preaching in Acts 8:4 is . But this word is frequently applied to the preaching of the Lord and the apostles, as well as of others. (Comp. Luke 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1; Acts 5:42; 8:12, 25, 35, 40; 13:32; 14:7, 15, 21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18; Rom. 1:15; 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17, &c.; Gal. 1:8, &c., &c.) The other word, , which means to proclaim as a herald, has not the smallest connection with office and authority, or regularly convened congregations, more than . It also is used of the Lord and the apostles, (Matt. 4:17, 23; 10:7, 27; 11:1; 24:14, &c., &c.,) but it is predicated, just as freely, of others too. So it is applied in Mark 5:20 to the delivered demoniac, and in Phil. 1:15 to the brethren at Rome, some of whom were preaching Christ of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill. Of both, however, it is declared, that they . That is, the word employed about these unappointed brethren is the expression of authoritative proclamation as a herald. In short, the commentator in this note was supplementing and unwittingly corrupting Scripture, instead of fairly expounding it. When Barnabas and Paul visited and confirmed the assemblies, they ordained, not persons to proclaim the gospel statedly to regular congregations, but elders or presbyters in each assembly. But an elder was a local official whose function was to rule; it was needful that he should be apt to teach, but he might never preach the gospel in his life; and if he did, it was not in virtue of any conferred authority (which was with a view to government), but of the gift of evangelist, if he possessed it. Thus, Philip who was one of the seven was also an evangelist. In virtue of the one he discharged his diaconal duties at Jerusalem, in virtue of the other he evangelized or heralded, (for both words are used of his preaching,) in Samaria and elsewhere.

Acts 8:1-25

It is a striking fact which is found in this scripture, and is true at all times, and in all places in the world, that the displays of God's power are always manifested in delivering from the active positive power of evil which has been working beforehand. No matter what the circumstances may be, God's power is ever thus displayed. It is the coming in of God into a scene where the power of evil and Satan are, to deliver from it.

Now this putting forth of power is not rest, for God cannot rest where there is evil. The time will come when we shall enter the heavenly Jerusalem, and then we shall have rest; because then the glory of God and the Lamb will be displayed in a scene where nothing that works abomination or makes a lie can ever possibly enter. This is rest. There will never be rest till then. The power we read of in this scripture is not rest, for it is exercised in a scene where evil is. In the heavenly Jerusalem evil is forever put away. In the Church we find lie-makers;

Ananias and Sapphira arise and lie to the Holy Ghost. This is not rest. In the heavenly Jerusalem there will be no lie, or, as it is expressed in other words, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth."

It is not a question whether there may not be joy where God's power is working. The power that overcame Satan in Samaria caused great joy in that city, but Simon Magus was there. It was power where evil was, giving joy, but not rest.

And then too we have the sorrowful side—that where God's power works, there is in man the principles and roots of decay. This is always true, whether we speak of the Church which, alas, is so striking an example of the decay of the power which is in this chapter, or whether we speak of the individual soul.

The power of God is working in a sphere of evil, and where the roots of decay are sapping the power that has been displayed. Thus, we see, it is not rest. We may get discouraged by the evil. That is all wrong. We are not to be "weary in well doing," so it becomes a question of patience in a scene of failure and decay, and of grace to overcome as the evil goes on. We see it thus all through the Word. Wherever God set up anything, this principle of decay appeared. God made this earth and saw it "very good," and rested from His work; but man never entered into that rest. He sinned—evil came in, and the rest was gone. Look too at all the distinct putting forth of power, whether in Israel, or in Solomon, or in the Church; and all closes in evil.

We need then power to be applied to the evil, that we may overcome. It is never rest here, but overcoming evil to enter into God's rest. I do not deny that there may be seasons when the power of evil is less felt, God in His grace granting us refreshings by the way, just as the ark in the wilderness went on one occasion a three days' march before the people to seek out a rest for them. There are these mercies in detail. So, in our chapter, after the persecutions, God gave His people a season of quietness; and in the next chapter we read, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Acts 9:31. But these are seasons of occasional rest only. It is not rest in result. It is not the rest that remains for the people of God. Now what we need is the faith that overcomes in the scene of Satan's power, as we read in the Word so often of "him that overcometh." We need a power superior to the evil through which we have to pass, as in the Psalms, "They go from strength to strength: each one will appear before God in Zion." J.N.D. Trans. The secret of this strength is in the heart living with Christ, and growing up into Him who is above the power of evil which we have to overcome, entering into fellowship with the Father's delight in the Son, which is beyond all the range of the evil that is against us, and carrying this kind of rest through the conflict, however varying the circumstances may be.

Take Israel for an example of this. We know what they went through in the wilderness, learning themselves and learning what the wilderness was, often murmuring and chastened of God; but under all they never lost the cloud, the token of God's presence, a guide at all times according to God's mind, a witness of God's power with them. It led them on all their way. It could not rest in the wilderness, but it wandered with them; and when, by their unbelief, they were turned back for thirty-eight years, the cloud turned back with them. It could not rest, but it never left them, leading them by day and by night, until in the days of Solomon we find it taking up its abode in the Temple.

Now this is what we need- to have our hearts above the evil and the principles of decay which are in ourselves, living with Christ and carrying this rest, where God Himself rests, with us through the world.

There are two things in connection with this presented in our chapter. The disciples preach "Christ," and those who believe have the Holy Ghost. I was very much struck with that verse in reading the chapter through -"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." He "preached Christ." It does not say he preached to poor sinners, though we know he did; but the Spirit of God puts before us what is before all other objects. He "preached Christ"; his primary object was not "sinners," but "Christ," the delight of God before ever the world, or evil was.

Let us see the sphere of blessing this opens out to us. The gospel is the proclamation of One who is God's own eternal delight presented to us an object for our hearts, the "wisdom of God," and the "power of God."

It is just as we carry the secret of the preciousness of Christ by faith through the wilderness, that our hearts will have an object superior to all the circumstances of sorrow and evil that we are in. In the wilderness we need God's wisdom to guide, and His power to overcome. Christ is both. The spirit of faith makes all the difference which we find in Israel on the one hand, and Caleb and Joshua on the other. They all went through the same trials, and were in the same sphere of evil, but the grapes of Eshcol brought out the murmurings of the people; they thought of the children of Anak, and were in their own sight as grasshoppers—they lacked faith to connect the power of God with themselves, so that it was only a question of what their enemies were, and what they were in their own sight; whereas Caleb and Joshua, bringing in by faith God's power and love, found the report good, the grapes of Eshcol strengthened their faith, they thought of God's promise to them, and said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Numb. 13:30. What were the walls of Jericho to faith, though they were builded up to heaven? Because God was with those who had faith, the walls could not stand against the blast of rams' horns!

But it is well for us to remember also, that if God was with them, one Achan in that camp is detected, and the power is withdrawn. It is not that He forsakes them, but He teaches them that He cannot go on with evil. We must have all brought to light. These inward exercises are humbling, but most profitable. We get broken down and humbled by them. God cannot fail, we know; but if I take a wrong way, He will not go with me in it. I shall find that there is no strength. But I will suppose that the soul is walking with God; and as Joshua and Caleb replied in faith, "If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey." Numb. 14:8. So with us, we find what God's thoughts about us are, in His delight in Christ, which lifts us above the evil we are passing through. Our strength is that the Lord has delighted in us, and is leading us on through all the evil, to bring us out of it all to Himself.

Now what do we find that the testimony of Philip was? He "preached Christ unto them." That which the Holy Ghost ever ministers is Christ. Philip preached this wondrous fact of Christ, who was God's delight before ever the world was. We thus get at God's mind about Christ before ever the scene of evil began. It is Christ, the object of the Father's delight; and the world is only a scene come in by the way-an important thing, it is true, because it is the platform on which God's eternal thoughts about Christ were to be displayed. But we go back to God's counsels, and see His delight in Christ before ever the world or evil were.

Now all depends, dear friends, upon knowing this blessed Object of the Father's delight, living in Christ as He is in the thoughts of God from all eternity, seeing Him "set up from everlasting," God's eternal delight! When I begin to look at myself, it is a perfect contrast to Christ; but before ever evil was, this blessed Object of the heart of God was. After the world is over, He will still be the delight of God's heart.

Things New and Old: Volume 6, Striking Contrast, A

(Read Acts 8:5-40) We are furnished, in this passage of holy scripture, with a very vivid and instructive contrast between the magician of Samaria and the eunuch of Ethiopia. Let us contemplate these two characters, for a few moments, and seek to bear away some wholesome instruction.

The passage opens with a record of Philip’s preaching in Samaria. “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.” Blessed theme! The only one for the true preacher! “And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did..... and there was great joy in that city.” Thus it must ever be. When Christ is preached, and people give heed and receive the tidings, “great joy” must be the result. The business of the preacher is to “preach Christ;” the business of the people is to “give heed and believe.” Nothing can be simpler.

But, alas! all this brightness was speedily overcast with the dark clouds which self-seeking is ever sure to produce. It was all simple and happy, fresh and bright, while Christ was exalted and souls were blessed by the knowledge of salvation. “But there was a certain man called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one” Here, then, was something quite different— something which the inspired historian might well introduce with a “But.” In place of the herald of salvation exalting Christ, it was a poor worm exalting himself; and instead of people made happy by the truth, it was a people bewitched with sorcery.

Simon gave out that himself was some great one, and the popular voice was in favor of his pretensions. “To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.” It generally happens that those who put forth the loftiest claims are sure to get a high place in the thoughts of men. It does not matter how slender the basis of such claims may be; the multitude never think much about foundations — about what is beneath the surface or behind the scenes. Their thoughts are superficial. They are easily gulled by a pretentious style. The swaggering and boastful make way in the crowd; whereas the humble, the unpretending, the modest and retiring are consigned, by the men of this world, to obscurity and oblivion. Hence that Blessed One who emptied Himself, and made Himself of no reputation, had not where to lay His head — was deliberately given up for a robber and a murderer, and nailed to an ignominious cross between two thieves.

But Simon, the magician, gave out that himself was some great one, and the pompous claims of this self-important individual were readily admitted by a credulous multitude. “To him they had regard.” Why? Was it because he sought to benefit them by the strenuous efforts of a large-hearted benevolence, or to elevate them by the resources of a commanding genius? Not at all. What then? “Because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.” Such is man — such is the world. Yes; and such are Christians, too. Hearken to the following words, “For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself! if a man smite you on the face.” (2 Cor. 11:19, 20.) Here is language addressed to saints, and we know, too well, alas! how pointedly it may be used in this our day. Scripture has, truly, gone before, and “there is nothing new under the sun.” Those spurious, boastful, pretentious apostles had well-nigh displaced the genuine, self-emptied, devoted servant of Christ in the affections and esteem even of the saints of God. What a forcible illustration of those words, “He knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vain!” There cannot be anything vainer than the thoughts of men, unless indeed it be the vanity of being occupied with them.

However, the tide was turned in Samaria, by the introduction of the gospel. “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”

Now be it noted here that we do not raise the question as to whether Simon was really a converted man, or only a hypocritical professor. We can learn a most practical and seasonable lesson from his history without ever touching that question. Simon was a self-seeker, from first to last. His object was to exalt Simon. At first, he made use of magic for the attainment of his end; and when the tide of Christian profession rose and carried away the pedestal on which he had raised himself, he embraced the new thing. He placed himself on the bosom of the tide, not as one seeking rest for a broken heart and convicted conscience, but as one seeking to be something. It is evident, from the inspired narrative, that Simon was more occupied with the wonders and signs by which the gospel was accompanied and confirmed, than by the consolations which that gospel was designed to impart. It was not, in his case, a heart filled with peace by the grace of the gospel, but a mind filled with wonder by the miracles that were done. “He wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” It was on these he fixed his wondering gaze. The things which were merely designed to call the attention of the heart to Christ were looked at by Simon as things

whereby self might be exalted. In this way, Christianity might furnish materials for a more solid pedestal for self than even the magic and sorcery in which he had formerly traded.

All this comes more clearly out when the Holy Ghost appears upon the scene. “Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

What a deeply-solemn picture! What a holy lesson! Self-seeking must ever lead to bitterness. It matters not whether it be exemplified in the case of a converted or an unconverted person. Everyone who seeks to exalt self — to be somebody — to figure before the eye of his fellow, must, sooner or later, reap bitterness and gall. It cannot be otherwise. We may set it down as a fixed principle that in proportion as self is our object will bitterness be the result. Had Simon found his object in the Christ whom Philip preached, he never would have been called to hearken to Peter’s appalling words. His heart would then have been “right in the sight of God.” It is only when Christ is really the object that the heart is right in the sight of God. But so thoroughly wrong was Simon — so completely away from God, and from Christ, and from the Holy Ghost, that when exhorted by the apostle to pray God if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven, “He answered and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.” Instead of confessing his sin, he asks others to pray that he might not be called to suffer its consequences.

Here the curtain drops upon Simon. May the lesson conveyed in his history be engraved on our hearts! May the Lord, in His great mercy, give us full deliverance from self-seeking, and fill our hearts with the love of His name!

We shall now turn and gaze upon a totally different picture.

“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the South, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopian eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning; and, sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet.”

Here, the contrast strikes us at once. Instead of a sorcerer, on the strength of his magic and witchcraft, giving out that himself was some great one, we have a man of real authority, rank, weight, and dignity, looking away from himself and his position, to find the object of his worship and adoration. He was one of the great ones and had no need to give himself out as such; but instead of being occupied with himself or his greatness, his soul was thirsting after something above and beyond himself and all around. He had gone from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, to worship, and was returning, still, evidently unsatisfied.

All this is intensely interesting. We are glad to get away from the self-seeking Simon, to be in company with the Christ-seeking eunuch. It is truly refreshing to look at that earnest, solitary man, poring over the prophetic page in search of an object for his heart. We may feel assured it was a sight in which heaven was interested. As angel was dispatched to Samaria, in order to summon the evangelist from the stirring scenes of service there, and send him into the solitudes of the desert Gaza, to address himself to a single individual. How remarkable that two such men as Simon and the eunuch should be placed in juxtaposition, by the inspired penman! They form a contrast throughout. Philip found the one bewitching the people with sorcery, and giving out that himself was some great one. He found the other earnestly engaged in the study of the word of God. He found the one amid all the bustle and throng of the city, figuring before the world, and endeavoring to make capital for himself out of anything and everything. He found the other in the solitude of the desert, returning from worshipping at Jerusalem to his proper sphere of duty in Ethiopia. Thus far, they were perfect opposites.

But let us pursue the narrative of this interesting and highly favored Ethiopian. It might seem strange to Philip to be called away from such a brilliant field of service in Samaria, where such crowds flocked to hear, into a desert, where he could hardly expect to meet any one. To whom was he to preach there? Nature might reason thus; but Philip did as he was told, and he was not left long in ignorance as to his work. “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither.” How simple! How sweetly servant like! It is all the same to a right-minded servant whether he is sent to a city or to a desert, to a crowd or to a single individual. The Master’s will settles everything. Would that we knew more of this! Would that we tasted more of the deep and real blessedness of doing cur appointed work under the immediate eye of Jesus, totally regardless as to the sphere and character of that work. We may be called to stand before assembled thousands, or to make our way, in obscurity, from lane to lane, and from garret to garret — to deliver the message in crowded halls, or drop a word into the ear of some poor dying creature in the ward of an hospital. It would be quite the same to us, were we only gifted with the true spirit of a servant. The Lord grant us more of this!

“Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.” The Lord knows how and when to make the preacher and hearer cross each other’s path, and when they meet, a link is formed which can never be broken. There were those in Jerusalem who could have poured the glad tidings into the eunuch’s ear; but God had so ordered it that Philip was to enjoy the privilege of conducting this stranger to the feet of Jesus, and by His gracious providence they met amid the solitude of the desert of Gaza.

And only note the passage of scripture on which the eunuch’s eye was resting when Philip accosted him. “ The place of the scripture which he read was this, lie was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray the, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him JESUS.”

Here was the profoundly interesting question. “Who was this mysterious “He?” Blessed inquiry! The eunuch did not ask Philip to expound a text. Ah! no; he longed for something far deeper than this. He wanted to know something about this wondrous person who was led as a sheep

to the slaughter. This was all he asked. Who could this person be? It was Jesus! Happy eunuch! He had, at length, reached his object. He had gazed on the precious page of inspiration, and found there the record of “the Lamb of God” led to the cursed tree, and bruised under the righteous hand of a sin-hating God.

And for whom? Why for him — for any poor burdened one who would only come and trust the shelter of His atoning blood. Such was the glorious object presented to the eye and the heart of this earnest and interesting Ethiopian. The grand foundation truth of the gospel — the doctrine of the blood — of —a sin-bearing Christ, broke, with divine fullness and power, upon his soul. There was no astounding miracle or sign — nothing outward to add authority to the truth proclaimed. There was no need. The word came with power. The ground was good and duly prepared for the precious seed. The eunuch’s earnest-seeking had issued in a joyful finding. The sinner and the Savior had met — faith linked them together and all was settled.

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?.....And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”

Now the beautiful and significant ordinance of baptism, when rightly understood and obeyed from the heart, sets forth the burial of the old man. Looked at in this light, the eunuch’s question is full of interest. “What doth hinder me to be baptized?” Surely nothing. He had found Jesus, and he might well bury self. How simple. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.” It is not the old man made better, but put out of sight altogether, and Christ the one great object before the soul. When these things are understood — when self is lost sight of and Christ enjoyed, we can go on our way rejoicing. Thus it was with the eunuch. He came up out of the watery grave to pursue his journey along that holy, happy path which begins at the cross and ends in that bright and blessed world above.

Thus, then, we see how that, from first to last, the eunuch of Ethiopia stands in most striking contrast with the magician of Samaria. And, no doubt, those two men represent two great classes, namely, those who are occupied with self, and those who are occupied with Christ. Simon’s object was self and his end “bitterness.” The eunuch’s object was Jesus, and his end “rejoicing.”

May the Lord engrave these lessons on our hearts! May we be delivered from the misery of self-occupation in all its phases and degrees, and be filled with Christ, so that we may go on our way rejoicing!

The Springing Well: Volume 5 (1902), Our Bible Lesson Column

Golden text.— “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.” —Acts 8:4

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.”—Acts 8:5

Read Acts 8:1-17.

Reading on the Lesson, the Disciples Scattered.

3 “As for Saul he made havoc of the church.” The Revised Version says that he laid waste the church, but our Lord had said, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). So that this imprisonment of Christians and power of Saul and the authorities over them did not really hurt the church any more than the fiery furnace or the lions hurt Daniel and his friends.

4 “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.” So the disciples could say to Saul and his company as Joseph said to his brethren, “Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good to save much people alive” (Gen. 50:20). These scattered preachers of good tidings were not the apostles, but all except the apostles (verse 1), and they were just the Lord’s messengers with the Lord’s message (Hag. 1:13). If all believers now were ready to tell to others the love and grace of God, telling His salvation from day to day (Ps. 71:15, 24), how soon the gospel might be preached to every creature!

5-8. “Then Phillip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.” In verses 4, 12, 25, we get a good idea of the preaching of those days. They preached Christ: they preached the word of the Lord and the things concerning the kingdom of God. Whether the messenger be the woman of Samaria or Philip the evangelist, if Christ is preached the Spirit works, and whenever Christ is truly received there follows joy and peace (Ps. 15:13).

9, 10. The adversary who opposes God and exalts himself is always to the front ever since he slandered God to Eve in Eden.

11, 12. Bewitching people with sorcery might possibly describe many of the teachings of today which captivate such multitudes. A great following is not sufficient proof that the leader is right, nor are few followers necessarily an evidence that the leader is wrong.

13. “Simon himself believed also, was baptized, continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs.” The power of God is able to break the hardest heart, and the fact that Simon was baptized and continued with Philip after he believed, would seem to indicate a real conversion.

14. “Now, when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.” These two who are so prominent in the early chapters are still evidently the foremost among the apostles and specially honored by the others. Notice what it was the people of Samaria had received. They had received the word of God, and, like the Thessalonians, they doubtless received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in those who believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

15, 16. “Who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost.” They were somewhat like the apostles and other believers before Pentecost. They had believed, were baptized and had become children of God and temples of the Holy Ghost. All who truly receive Christ are saved and have become children of God (John 1:12) and temples of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in every believer.

17. “Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” Having prayed (verse 15). they now with expectation lay hands on them, and the special gift of the Spirit is received. So also Paul at Ephesus (chap. 19:5, 6). Our Lord’s words, “Ask, and it shall be given you,” are in connection with these others, “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit of them that ask Him?” (Luke11:9, 13).

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Several Descents of the Spirit?

Question: In a little book lately issued, an effort is made to qualify the great truth of Acts 2, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, by citing Acts 8; 10, and 19. Does scripture warrant several descents of the Spirit, little Pentecosts following the great one? Does He in fact come down from time to time? If He came down repeatedly in apostolic days after Pentecost, why may He not come down any day now? Why may He not do so more than of old? Is the argument or insinuation sound? P.

Answer: It is the common unbelief of Christendom in the personal presence of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord announced His coming as “the promise of the Father,” and to “abide forever” when come. John 14-16, Luke 24, Acts 1. Was this fulfilled or not at Pentecost? One can understand an influence renewed ever so often; but what of a person, and a Divine Person? Hence an immense difference marks off Acts 2 from the three subsequent occasions. Only then came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind filling all the house, only then tongues parting asunder as of fire which sat on each. Yet was it of high moment that the Samaritan believers, and the Gentile ones should receive the like gift, attested as at Pentecost by signs following. So at Ephesus much later, where God put honor on the apostle Paul, as at Samaria on the apostles Peter and John. But on the two great occasions, for Jews and Gentiles, the Spirit was given without the imposition of hands, which was due to special reasons in the two lesser cases. As the rule, we get the blessing now as Cornelius and the other Gentiles did at Cæsarea, while the word is spoken. The principle is just the same, though we have not the extraordinary powers then vouchsafed when it was a new thing. But the reception of the Spirit, or even His falling on all that heard the word, is not His coming or descent. His abiding presence is a cardinal truth of the gospel; and not much of its “heart” would remain, where either is undermined. For He it is Who glorifies Christ and leads into all truth. What then are we to infer justly?

These are not several comings or descents of the Spirit, but impressive and cheering communications of the blessing to others who successively believed the gospel of salvation, and greatly needed the given proof, as did the Jewish believers, so slow to credit the indiscriminate grace of God. Those of Samaria “received the Holy Spirit;” Who “fell on” all that were hearing the word at Cæsarea; as He “came on” the dozen disciples at Ephesus. Yet it was the successive operation of the same Holy Spirit Who had already been sent forth from heaven to abide forever. But Christendom, like Israel, is apt to be proud as well as poor, and boasts more, as the hour of judgment draws nigh. Unbelief is ever the down-grade.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Acts 8:37 - Not Supposed to Be in the Bible?

Question: I have seen it stated that “the whole of Acts 8:37, If thou believest with all,’ &c., is universally pronounced by Biblists as an interpolation. It exists in only one Greek MS., having no place in the other MSS. It is marked in our Greek Text as spurious, is omitted from some, and never ought to have had a place in our English Bible.” G. T. A.

Answer: The verse exists in Laud’s Uncial MS., now in the Bodleian, in Beda’s Greek (unless it be the same copy), in about twenty cursives, as well as some versions. Nor has it wanted defenders, as Wolf abroad and Whitby at home. At the same time it was certainly not read by much the weightier as well as by the most numerous authorities, and is justly rejected by the best critics, and should disappear from all Bibles. It seems to have been read by several early fathers as Irenaeus and Cyprian, if it was not inserted to support the later copies of the Vulgate. Internal evidence is, at least, as decisively against it as external.

Gospel Light: Volume 10 (1920), Self or Christ: a Striking Contrast

Acts 8:5-40.

THIS passage of Scripture opens with a record of Philip the Evangelist's preaching in the city of Samaria. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed 'unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did... and there was great joy in that city.”

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It is evident, from the inspired narrative, that Simon was more occupied with the wonders and signs by which the gospel was accompanied and confirmed, than by the consolations which that gospel was designed to impart. It was not, in his case, a heart filled with peace by the grace of the gospel, but a mind filled with wonder by the miracles that were done. "He wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." It was on these he fixed his wondering gaze. The things which were merely designed to call the attention of the heart to Christ were looked at by Simon as things whereby self might be exalted. In this wav, Christianity might furnish materials for a more solid pedestal for self than even the magic and sorcery in which he had formerly traded.

All this comes more dearly out when the Holy Ghost appears upon the scene. "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

What a deeply solemn picture! What a holy lesson! Self-seeking must ever lead to bitterness. It matters not whether it be exemplified in the case of a converted or an unconverted person. Every one who seeks to exalt self, to be somebody, to figure before the eye of his fellow, must, sooner or later, reap bitterness and gall. It cannot be otherwise. We may set it down as a fixed principle that in proportion as self is our object will bitterness be the result. Had Simon found his object in the Christ whom Philip preached he never would have been called to hearken to Peter's appalling words. His heart would then have been not right in the sight of God." It is only when Christ is really the object that the heart is right in the sight of God. But so thoroughly wrong was Simon, so completely away from God, and from Christ, and from the Holy Ghost, that when exhorted by the apostle to pray God if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven, "He answered and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me."

Instead of confessing his sin, he asks others to pray that he might not be called to suffer its consequences. Here the curtain drops upon Simon. May the lesson conveyed in his history be engraved on our hearts! May the Lord, in His great mercy, give us full deliverance from self-seeking, and fill, our hearts with the love of His name!

We shall now turn, and gaze upon a totally different picture.

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge: of all her treasure, and had 'come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning; and, sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet."

Here, the contrast strikes us at once. Instead, of a sorcerer, on the strength of his magic and witchcraft, giving out that himself was some great, one, we have a man of real authority, rank, weight, and dignity, looking away from himself and his position, to find the object of his worship and adoration. He was one of the great ones, and had no need to give himself out as such; but instead of being occupied with himself or his greatness his soul was thirsting after something above and beyond himself and all around. He had gone from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning still evidently unsatisfied.

All this is intensely interesting. We are glad to get away from the self-seeking Simon, to be in company With the Christ-seeking eunuch. It is truly refreshing to look at that earnest, solitary man, poring ON er the prophetic page in search of an object for his heart. We may feel assured it was a sight in which heaven was interested. An angel was dispatched to Samaria, in order to summon the evangelist from the stirring scenes of service there, and send him into the solitudes of the desert Gaza, to address himself to a single-individual.

How remarkable that two such men as Simon and the eunuch should be placed in juxtaposition by the inspired penman! They form a contrast throughout. Philip found the one bewitching the people with sorcery, and giving out that himself was some great one. He found the other earnestly engaged in the study of the Word of God. He found the one amid all the bustle and throng of the city, figuring before the world, and endeavoring to make capital for himself out of anything and everything. He found the other in the solitude of the desert, returning from worshipping at Jerusalem to his proper sphere of duty in Ethiopia. Thus far they were perfect opposites.

But let us pursue the narrative of this interesting and highly favored Ethiopian. It might seem strange to Philip to be called away from such a brilliant field of service in Samaria, where such 'crowds flocked to hear, into a desert, Is here he could hardly expect to meet any one. To whom was he to preach there? Nature might reason thus; but Philip did as he was told, and he was not left long in ignorance as to his work: "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither."

How simple! How sweetly servant-like! It is all the same to a right-minded servant whether he is sent to a city or to a desert, to a crow d or to a single individual. The Master's will settles everything.

"Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."

The Lord knows how and when to make the preacher and hearer cross each other's path, and when they meet, a link is formed which can never be broken. There were those in Jerusalem who could have poured the glad tidings into the eunuch's ear; but God had so ordered it that Philip was to enjoy the privilege of conducting this stranger to the feet of Jesus, and by His gracious providence they met amid the solitude of the desert, of Gaza.

And only note the passage of Scripture on which the eunuch's eye was resting when Philip accosted 'him. "The place of the Scripture which he read was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth; in His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? for His life is taken from the earth.

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray-thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth and, began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him JESUS."

Here was the profoundly interesting question.

Who was this mysterious "He"? Blessed inquiry! The eunuch did not ask Philip to expound a text. Ah! no; he longed for something far deeper than this. He wanted to know something about this wondrous Person who was led as a sheep to the slaughter. This was all he asked.

Who could this Person be? It was Jesus! Happy eunuch! He had, at length, reached his object.

He had gazed on the precious page of inspiration, and found there the record of "the Lamb of God '' led to the cursed tree, and bruised under the, righteous hand of a sin-hating God.

And for whom? Why for him; for any poor burdened one who would only come and trust the shelter of His atoning blood. Such was the glorious object presented to the eye and the heart of this earnest and interesting Ethiopian. The grand foundation truth of the gospel; the doctrine of the blood; of a sin-bearing Christ, broke with divine fullness and power upon his soul. There was no astounding miracle or sign; nothing outward to add authority to the truth proclaimed. There wag no need. The word came with power. The ground' was good and duly prepared for the precious seed. The eunuch's earnest seeking had issued in a joyful finding. The sinner and the Saviour had met; faith linked them together, and all was settled.

"And as they went on their way, they came unto, a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what loth hinder me to be baptized?....

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Now the beautiful and significant ordinance of baptism, when rightly understood, and obeyed from the heart, sets forth the burial of the old man. Looked at in this light, the eunuch's question is full of interest. "What doth hinder me to be baptized" Surely nothing. He had found Jesus, and he might well bury self. How simple! "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." It is not the old man made better, but put out of sight altogether, and Christ the one great object before the soul. When these things are understood; when self is lost sight of and Christ enjoyed, we can go on our way rejoicing. Thus it was with the eunuch. He came up out of the watery grave to pursue his journey along that holy, happy path which begins at the cross, and ends in that bright and blessed world above.

Thus, then, we see how that, from first to last, the eunuch of Ethiopia stands in most striking contrast with the magician of Samaria. And, no doubt, these two men represent two great classes, namely, those who are occupied with self and those who are occupied with Christ. Simon's object was self, and his end "bitterness." The eunuch's object was Jesus, and his end "rejoicing."

May the Lord engrave these lessons on our hearts! May we be delivered from the misery of self-occupation in all its phases and degrees, and be filled with Christ, so that we may go on our way rejoicing!

Joyful Sound: Jubilee, Joyful Sound: Jubilee: No. 2

We will now turn to the Acts. God was glorified, and the atonement was made. The disciples were commanded to sound the true jubilee—the glad tidings of God manifested, forgiveness proclaimed to every creature. They had waited at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. The Holy Ghost had come to abide with them unto the end. And now the trumpet sounds in Jerusalem: the city of His very murderers hears the wondrous news, that He whom it had slain, " God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ." They cry out in

bitterness of soul, under conviction of sin. The trumpet sounds its joyful notes of an entire change of mind. Repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus, for forgiveness of sins, they hear the joyful sound: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added about three thousand souls." Gladness and singleness of heart and praising God was what marked the first day's sounding of the glad tidings of God.

Very little, however, did the first messengers of the gospel understand the largeness of the heart of God, and His wide purpose of blessing.

Grace lingered also over Jerusalem, until the marked rejection of the Jews, in the death of Stephen, and the great persecution scattered them abroad. And they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And what was the result of the glad tidings? There was great joy in that city. Why is it not so now? What is supposed to be the gospel is preached year after year, and what is the result? Years of doubt and utter uncertainty, or worldliness and indifference. Can it possibly be the same clear sound of complete liberty and deliverance proclaimed to every prisoner, captive, or slave, on earth—to every creature?

If we examine the proclamation to the eunuch it is just the same: Philip preached Jesus unto him. He heard, believed, was baptized, " and he went on his way rejoicing" How simple, sure, and immediate the effect of hearing the joyful sound. Is it so with the reader? Have you heard, believed, been baptized, and are you going on your way REJOICING? If not, you may be utterly deceived by that which is not the true, loud sound of God's jubilee.

We will now take a very distinct case. The apostle Paul, sent forth by the Holy Ghost, arrived at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13); he proclaims the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That atoning death, as we have seen, is the only ground of the jubilee's loud sound of liberty. God having raised up Jesus from among the dead, the silver trumpet sounds the jubilee first in the synagogue of the Jews: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached [or proclaimed] unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." What a proclamation, what a joyful sound! And is this the true gospel of God? As liberty to every slave was proclaimed on the day of atonement, ever pointing forward to the atoning death of Jesus, so now that this infinite sacrifice for sins has been offered, and God has shown His righteousness in raising up that blessed, atoning victim from the dead, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to every creature on earth. And mark the joyful result, on the authority of the word of God, all that believe are justified from all things. This is what God proclaims, this is what God says to you. Do you believe Him? If you do, He says He justifies you, He accounts you righteous in His sight through the death of Jesus; yea, He assures you of this by raising your Substitute and Representative from the dead and receiving Him above all heavens. And more: God assures us we could not be thus justified, even by the law of Moses.

Mark how this answers to the proclamation on the day of atonement—the jubilee. The poor prisoner, or slave, had not one shekel to pay, not one thing to do. God proclaimed liberty by the sound of trumpet. The sinner has not one thing to do for salvation. Forgiveness is freely proclaimed to him, just as he is: if he believes the proclamation he is justified from all things, and God would have him know this. He says, " Be it known to you."

It may be said, Yes, this was the gospel to the religious Jews in the synagogue; but you would surely not say that this is the gospel to the sinner, sunk in sin and captivity to Satan. Yes, almost the whole city of the poor Gentile worshippers of demons came together to hear the very same joyful sound of forgiveness. " And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.... And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." Surely the jubilee was a most striking type of all this.

Again, see how Paul preached or proclaimed the glad tidings at Thessalonica. Not one thing had these Jews or Gentiles to do; but they believed what Jesus had done, and suffered, and that He had risen again from the dead. (Acts 17:1-4.) Men no doubt will say, Such a jubilee gospel as that would lead men to walk " the joyful sound" or jubilee. 295

in sin. Many believed this gospel at Thessalonica: did they walk in sin? Read 1 Thess. 1 for the answer. They so walked, and labored, and waited for the Son from heaven, that Paul could give thanks for them all. He says, " And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." No, the true gospel is a jubilee, a joyful sound. And God would have us know that joyful sound. It is most sad to think that even England pays its priests who deny all this; they would tell you that you never can know the joyful sound of sins forgiven, and justification from all things; you must seek this blessing at their hands by law-keeping and sacraments. But never is it with them, " Be it known unto you."

Which will you believe, God or the pretended priest? We say ' pretended’ for God has no priests now, except as all true Christians are priests unto Him. God says, I proclaim unto you, unto every creature, through Jesus, forgiveness of sins. What love, what mercy! God says, All who believe are justified. The priest says, as it were, You must not believe God. God says, Be it known. The priest says, No man knows. God says to the believer, You are justified from all things. The priest says, No, you are not. You cannot be justified by works of law, says God. You must be justified by works, says man. Oh let God be true, and every man a liar.

Do you say, This is so different from all I have been taught from my youth; do show me from the word of God what would be the effect of believing this joyful sound of free forgiveness and deliverance, of liberty as in the year of jubilee? Very good, my friend, then let us now look a little more closely at Psalm 89:15. We have seen how God says, "Be it known." Here we read, " Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound [the same word, troo-gah, jubilee]: they shall walk, Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

Is there any uncertainty here? They know the joyful sound, they know their sins are all forgiven to be remembered no more. They know they are now in the liberty of Christ, justified from all things. They know they have passed from death unto life—Jesus says so. (John 5:24.) Is this to walk in darkness, to walk in doubt, to walk in sin? No: " They shall walk, Lord, in the light of thy countenance." And surely this will give untold joy; yes, " in thy name shall they rejoice all the day." They joy in God.

And now in the light they see how guilty they have been. What was gain to them, they count loss; all of self is dung. They utterly renounce all pretensions to righteousness of their own; but they say, "And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." They need not their old rags, for now they are clothed in the best robe. They know their own utter weakness. If they were tried again they would fail, for they have in

themselves no strength. They lean on God and say, " For thou art the glory of their strength." Yes, there must be the hopper in the field before the reaper; seed sown before fruit gathered. We must know in our inmost souls the joyful sound of Gods glad tidings, before there can be the fruit of a walk in the light of His countenance.

As we have said, the jubilee of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, has passed away, never to return. And oh how soon the present jubilee of abounding grace may pass away, never to return. Before you lay this down, yea, before it is in print what a change may have taken place.

It is quite true that all this, as to the present period of grace, is in anticipation of another final fulfillment of the type of the jubilee. What is true now of an individual will then be true of the whole nation of Israel; but these are very distinct in scripture. We may trace both how this period of grace will close, and also how, after the day of vengeance, the trumpet shall sound to God's ancient people the Jews, and also how the whole earth shall be filled with gladness.

Reader, beware of delaying to hear the joyful sound. The atonement has met the claims of the righteousness of God. Now, in His infinite love, He delights to proclaim liberty and forgiveness to every slave and prisoner of sin on earth, through Jesus who died and rose again. " He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Food for the Flock: Volume 7, Wilderness, The

CT 7:55-60{I HAVE been exercised as to what the practical meaning of the passage through the wilderness is, and would now speak a few words on it in connection with what I have read and with another passage of Scripture-the story of the thief on the cross. He says to Jesus, " Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," and gets for answer that he should be with Him in Paradise that very day. These two cases connect themselves in my mind with what we go through the wilderness for, with what the meaning of the wilderness walk is.

Take the thief on the cross for instance. We get that he was fit to be Christ's companion in Paradise then and there. This makes it such a striking testimony to the efficacy of Christ's work. Nothing is more striking than his conversion; at the moment when even the disciples ran away he was found ready to say, " This man hath done nothing amiss." And he was made fit to be with Christ in Paradise that very day. It is the same truth that we find in Colossians: " Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.," and further on: " You, who were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight." It is a present thing: " In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." All this is possessed by the Christian, so that he can " give thanks to the Father who hath made us meet." We can all understand that, if the thief went straight to Paradise with Christ, he was fit to go there, and to be Christ's companion there. The thief on the cross is the most striking testimony to this truth; his body left there on the cross, his spirit gone to Paradise with the Lord.

And in the case of Stephen it is just the same thing; Stephen after going through the trials and sorrows of the wilderness comes to the very same point: he says, " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and he goes to be with Christ. If this is so in the two cases, what is the wilderness for? That is the question.

There are many souls now, sincere souls too, who are not clear as to their acceptance. If you put it to them as a test, you find that, if they look at the judgment seat of Christ, they are not perfectly at their ease. Many who put their whole trust in Christ, who have no hope in anything else, are yet not at ease in the thought of that day. They love to dwell on the cross, saying, That just suits me, He has washed me from my sins in His own blood; yet they are not at ease with respect to judgment.

Now, if we think of our standing in Christ, there is no place where we shall be so much at ease, for, when we stand before His judgment seat, we shall stand there perfectly like Him. We are there already raised in glory, and, of course, it is too late then to judge people who are in glory, I mean as to the going there; because they are there already. It is written: " As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Thus, their being there already like Him, of course there can be no question as to their fitness to be there, though of course He judges that in each which He has to. I am merely looking a little at the ground on which we are; the question I wish to speak of is further on. Our righteousness is perfect, absolute. The righteousness of God has been displayed in setting Christ at His right hand; from thence He has sent the Holy Ghost down to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: " Of righteousness because I go unto my Father, and ye see me no more." Christ, having perfectly glorified the Father everywhere, and on the cross, that terrible place, God has shown His own righteousness in setting Him who did this at His own right hand.

And we get the fruit of it all in grace. Christ glorified God as to His righteousness, as to His holiness, as to His truth, as to His grace, as to His love to the sinner. God made the captain of our salvation perfect through suffering, that He might thus bring many sons to glory. And now God's righteousness has been displayed in putting Christ up there, where we, too, are to get our place in the glory; where we are to be loved as He is loved; we are to get the full value of that grace. That is the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God has been displayed in putting Christ up there, and He must see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied in having us there too. And we with Paul can say " Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

But I turn for a little to the hindrances that meet a soul in seeking to get hold of this. As said already, sometimes even those who see forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ, when they think of the judgment seat, feel that all is not right with them. While they own that the only foundation of their hope is in Christ dying for their sins, yet there is a discovery in themselves of that which does not suit the judgment seat; there is a measure of trust, but yet things are not all straight, and so they are not at their ease.

Now many of us have learned the difference that there is between the clearing away of the guilt of the old man and the acceptance in which we are placed in the new. We read, He " was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." And: " When he had himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Thus we get first a deliverance from all our sins, and then the acceptance side which comes after it; we get not only the guilt of the old place that we were in put away, but we get ourselves in a new

place-the acceptance of Christ in which we stand.

The epistle to the Romans is quite distinct as to this. We read in chapter 5.: " Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and then in chapter 8. we get the other side of it: " There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is the point which puts me entirely at ease if I think of the judgment seat-" In Christ Jesus." Then He must condemn Christ if He condemns me! " At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." I am in Christ Jesus through the Holy Ghost. It is not merely that there is a clearance of my Adam nature, but that there is a positive acceptance of me in Christ, and this is a perfectly settled thing.

Now what hinders any soul here from getting this? If a man's debts are all paid, he meets his creditors with a gay face; but even so, if he has not a penny in his pocket, he must starve. And so it is with many souls, for there is all the difference between sins being cleared away and being set in a place of settled acceptance in Christ before God. With some souls it is only a question of God passing them by, as in the passover in Egypt; God as a judge, " of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," passing by the sinner because he is sheltered from His judgment. When Israel was in Egypt it was thus God as a judge passed over them, because the blood of the lamb was their shelter. Love provided that shelter, but, as to the act, it was the righteousness of God passing over them. And many a soul is in this state.

But at the Red Sea the children of Israel stand still and see the salvation of God. There is no death at all here. They are brought out of Egypt into a new place; they are redeemed, not passed over, now. So it is not merely that we are passed over, that our sins are put away, but that we are no longer in the old place at all. I get, very clearly and distinctly, the two things: not only that " He has washed us from our sins in his own blood," but also that He has brought us " to God," and " has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." If the sins of the old man are put away, I have my place in the new man. But, this being so, what is the wilderness for?

First, however, let me say something as to what hinders people getting hold of this settled place of acceptance in Christ, which sets me at ease when thinking of the judgment-seat, because I know that I am like Him in glory before God. The hindrance is this: souls have never given themselves up. A thousand deceits of the heart are in the way; it may be the world in some form or other, but whatever form it may take, they have not given up themselves. What they have to come to is the consciousness that the poor Syrophenician woman had when she took the place of a dog; they must come to the point that they have no righteousness at all, nothing good in them, and not even any promises of good things to them. There are blessed promises for us when we are in the path, but nothing at all before.

Souls cling to one thing or another; they do not take the place of standing before God lost. They will even admit that they are guilty, but not lost. "When I talk of guilt I refer to the day of judgment; but when I speak of being lost, I speak of 'now, of the present moment; it is now I am lost. How can I talk of being better if I am lost? The soul that can do thus has not recognized its true position before God. It reasons: I find this and that in myself; I am not what I ought to be, and how, then, can God accept me? Do you expect God to accept you because you are what you ought to be? That is the way Satan deceives souls. The desire for holiness being there, they look for it as their ground of acceptance with God; though it is true that, if there is no desire after holiness, of course there is no seeking after God at all. I have often asked, " Would you not have more peace if you were more holy?" and the answer would be, " Oh, yes!" Then that is not the blood of Christ at all. It is true that there must be " holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," but you are confounding holiness and righteousness; and you want a certain amount of holiness in yourself, so that you may be accepted before God, and that is self-righteousness.

Look at the story of the Syrophenician woman. She comes to the Lord and says, " Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. And he answered her not a word." Not only this, but " His disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us." They did not really care about her at all; they only did not want to be troubled with her. And the Lord Himself says, " I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then she comes and worships Him, and says " Lord, help me." She perseveres; she will come to Him, though there is no appearance of His being willing to do a thing for her. And He only answers, " It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." It sounded awfully hard. Why was it? It was to bring her to the consciousness that she was a dog.

It was not merely a question of His grace, of her self-righteousness, and so on, but of the fact that she had not even so much as a promise. A Canaanite had none; they were so fearfully wicked that the very land spued them out. And she was of Tire and Sidon too-their worst cities. There was no one at such a distance from grace, too hard for repentance, and without a promise to look for the fulfillment of. I cannot take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs, was all His answer. "And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Israel were the children; she, the dog; but still she could claim the crumbs. That is, There is goodness enough in God even for one who has no righteousness, who has no promise, and who is under the power of the devil. She had gone through all the question of righteousness, and she had none; she had gone through all the question of promise, and she had none; but she says, I rely on the heart of God, who has goodness enough even for me.

The Lord did not answer her until she owned she was a dog; He brought her down to the consciousness that she had no claim on Him whatever; and you will never get settled peace until He has brought you down to that same point. If God gave you peace before you got there, it would suppose that there was something good on your side. You want to find something in yourself; you are seeking something there to prove to you that you are accepted by Him; you have not given up yourself, and God looks exceedingly hard in such a case. And it is this which hinders so many souls. Christ is sitting at the right hand of God because the work is finished; and, as for myself, I can only say, " I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" I am a dog. This is real knowledge of self.

But, it is often argued, I must have forgiveness of sins before I can have peace; and I hope I am not deceiving myself in thinking that I have it. Beloved friends, it comes to this point: not that sins are forgiven, but that God has condemned sin in the flesh; not forgiven it, mind. " God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." So I say, God has condemned sin in the flesh in the death of Christ, not sins. You ask, How was that? Well, Christ was made sin for the believer, there on the cross. The believer can say, I have died with Christ. Very well, then the condemnation is past, if I died with Christ. And if I died with Christ what am I now looking for? The old man is gone.

You will never get settled peace until you have judged sin in you; nothing else but that will do it, and therefore you can look for it in no other way. But knowing this, I at once see, that that sin that I have a horror of myself, was condemned in the cross. As I read, " Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Not, as to fact, that this is all finished even yet: not until we get into

the new heavens and the new earth will sin be entirely " put away;" but the work, by virtue of which it will be, has been wrought on the cross, and now " unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin," no more question of it, that was done at His first coming, " unto salvation."

But I get this dealing with sin in my nature, and that I must learn experimentally. If, for instance, I say to some one, You are dead to sin, he may answer me, Indeed I am not; I was in a passion only this very morning. And then he will sit in uncertainty and discomfort, until his condition rests upon what God is to him, and what God has done for him, and not what he is in himself.

It is impossible that I can have settled peace in any other way. I have to learn that there is no good in me; I have to give up the thought of being able to find anything in myself. In the story of the prodigal son we find he is not fit to go into the house; he is in his rags; his only thought is to be made a hired servant. But the Father brings out the best robe and puts it on him, and we hear nothing more of the prodigal son; it is all the Father now; it is He who rejoices and is glad, it is He who is merry in having him back again. The Father was on his neck even in his rags, but he is brought into the house in all the honor of Christ. A soul gets acceptance not because of what he is to God, but because God has given him in Christ a place in the last Adam when he was lost in the first.

But mark this: if you take the blood on the door post and the path through the Red Sea, you still get the man into the wilderness. When the children of Israel got to the Red Sea, God shut them up, the devil, as it were, pursuing them into the sea. And God says to them through Moses, You stand still, and there is no sea at all. The sea even protected them: " the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left;" and " they walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea." And where were they brought to? Into Canaan? Not at all! It was into the wilderness! This is not what we get in the thief on the cross. There we see what the work of Christ did for that poor man; it made him immediately " meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and took him straight with Him into Paradise. He was Christ's comfort on the cross, and His companion to Paradise. He was the only one who comforted Him in that terrible moment. This poor man was bearing the consequences of his sins as a punishment from man, whilst Christ was bearing them as a punishment from God, and the efficacy of His work was sufficient to take this man to glory. How little the soldiers thought when they were breaking his legs, that they were sending him straight off to Paradise!

But there is something I wish to speak of which is beyond this question of acceptance; there is something else I have to learn, when, as an accepted person, I come to walk with God. God has stepped in as a deliverer, and brought us to Himself in Christ. Now I find that we are constantly confounding our journey through the wilderness with the fact that God has in spirit brought us already to Himself; but the very fact of being in the wilderness proves that we are not yet at home.

But there is something besides acceptance connected with salvation. The blood being on the door-post there was no judgment for the children of Israel, whilst they fed in peace on the slain lamb. So we read, " Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." And again, " The grace of God that bringeth salvation for all men hath appeared, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." And again, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death;" but now, " Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Thus we are brought out into the wilderness. He may take the thief straight off to Paradise to skew the value of Christ's work, or He may be glorified in the long life of Paul serving Him down here in the power of the Holy Ghost, blessedly glorifying his Master.

And now I again ask, How comes it that we are put through the wilderness? Supposing that you are settled as to the first question we have been looking at, that you know yourself accepted in the Beloved, do you think you know the difference between flesh and spirit, and all the rest that is in you? I do not think you do. So God puts me through the wilderness, because it is a question of that exercise of heart which ends by enabling me to say, " That is the world; that is the flesh; that is the devil." We have to meet this trinity: the world, the flesh, and the devil; they are here, and are often not judged in many things. We have not learned to distinguish the difference. We take many an amiable flesh for spirit. God says to us, I have justified you perfectly, I have redeemed you perfectly, I have taken you clean out of the place you were in, and I have set you in Christ, but I have still a great deal to do with you.

We have now to learn to discern good and evil according to the nature of God. Our path is now to be that of those who "yield ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness." It is that we may become servants of God. That is what God is doing in leaving us here.

Flesh was perfectly judged in the thief on the cross; it is the cross that judges flesh. But, besides this, are there not things here that you do not like giving up? Are you dead to everything here? I begin by saying I am dead. I must say it, or I shall never get on at all. And, however I may fail, yet it is true that I have " no more conscience of sins." I read, " By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Never for one moment, when I go to God, ought I to think that God can impute anything to me. " Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." This is a most important truth. You may plead that it is using liberty for a cloak of licentiousness, and ask " Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" " God forbid," answers the apostle; " how shall we that have died to sin live any longer therein?"

God then puts us through a process to teach us what we are saved from and what we are saved to. Look at Moses. He begins by killing the Egyptian. Was that the Spirit of God? Not at all! He had most blessed faith; he could give up Pharaoh's court, could give up everything, to take his place with those wretched slaves making bricks without straw; but he did not know himself. It is not a question of acceptance at all; it is this exercise of heart where I learn to discern between flesh and spirit. So it says: " Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness." Do you know all that is in your heart? Surely not. And unless you keep very close to God you will fall, and Christ will be dishonored.

" To humble, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Allow me to ask. you, Do you live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God? Do you never do anything but what is by His direction? " He fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not."

But more than this. In the wilderness we learn the patience of God. He never takes His eyes from the righteous, that is why He deals with them in discipline. It is " that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." Do you think there is never pride in your heart? He teaches us that there is; He makes us find it out. The wilderness is no part of God's purpose for man, but it is His way with him. His purpose is to bring us into the same glory with Christ-into Canaan. The Lord Himself quoted from Deuteronomy, for He had to meet all the trials and difficulties of the wilderness; He learned all it meant as He went through this world.

God's ways with His people are very precious things. He humbles us and teach es us what is in our hearts. Just think of His never withdrawing His eyes from such a poor creature as I am! He has to sanctify me according to the holiness of the place in which I am set. He exercises my mind in order that I may see His holiness. As a saved person I am brought to God, and it is His purpose not to let evil touch me. He sent Paul a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be puffed up. It is not always positive transgression that He deals with me about; with Paul it was preventive discipline. In going through such exercise we get quietness of heart, and learn God in all His patient, constant grace. " He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." Thus the flesh is judged. If I were always walking before Him in a perfectly humble spirit, I should never dishonor Christ, though I might be very ignorant. But God cannot be in communion with that which is not of Himself.

If I turn to the thief on the cross, I see that everything was judged in him. What he had been in this world had brought him to the gibbet, and there he learned, " They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," and " the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

All this he learned in the cross, but learned it in the grace of Christ who was crucified for his sin. The world and the flesh were to him on the cross; and where was his heart? " Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." It is the most unclouded faith. Just as surely as Christ is there beside him on the cross, so surely will He come in His kingdom. Such is his faith that the shame of sin is lost in his perception of Christ, and he prays that He may remember him-where? Hanging on the gibbet? It would not be very blessed to be remembered in such a place. He wants to be remembered, he who thus hung in just punishment for his sins, when Christ should come in His glory. And of Him he witnesses, " This man hath done nothing amiss."

And then he calls him "Lord." And what is his request? It is not, Take away a little of my pain. No; it is "Remember me when thou congest in thy kingdom." Just as certain he is of His coming in His kingdom as that he then saw Him on the cross. Christ was everything to him; to be with Him was all he wanted. And the Lord answers: You shall not wait for that until I come in my kingdom; to-day you shall be with me in Paradise. Thus I get in this thief a soul given up to the consciousness of what Christ is. Of course he did not know the gospel as we have had it since; he could not know Christ in the glory, for He was not yet there; but all his heart wanted, was to be with Christ where He was.

In Stephen I get quite another thing. Here it is practically the cross: he was killed for Christ's sake, so it was certainly taking up his cross and following Christ. We find Stephen looking up into the glory and saying, " Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit." He sees into the glory; but whilst he thus sees into it, he does not say one word about it; he simply says, I see the Son of man in it; and the consequence is, that he is exactly like Christ. The Lord Jesus said of His murderers, " Father, forgive them: they know not what they do;" and Stephen says of his, " Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And we may say so too, in any suffering for righteousness' sake that we may be called to go through, though we cannot say " they know not."

It is the same thing in principle for us that it was for the thief. We are called to be dead to the world, not by being on the cross as the poor thief was, but, like Stephen, through seeing the glory where Christ is. So the Christian learns to see what is of Christ in himself and what is. not. Sin in the flesh is condemned in the cross. of Christ. The whole of what the thief was as a son of Adam was gone in the cross. Man and God had both stepped in to deal with his sin, and as the consequence he goes to Paradise with Christ.

But the wilderness is the place in which I learn myself. Perhaps I wish to do right, but I must get knowledge of what the flesh is. Does. my eye affect my heart in nothing? Is there nothing that I allow in my life that is not Christ? Is Christ everything in my heart?

You will find there are three men in you. There is Christ at the bottom of my heart, and there may be a blameless walk at the top; but what has my heart been upon all this day? There is that middle man; has it been upon nothing but Christ? He is all, as a matter of fact; but is He all from day to day? Is He "all, and in all"? He is life in us, and He must be all. As to fact there is flesh and spirit, and a multitude of things between.

Now the purpose of God was to take the children of Israel out of Egypt and to bring them into the land of Canaan. He speaks of nothing else. If you look in Ex. 3:8 you will not find a word about the wilderness. God's purpose for us is to bring us into the glory of Christ, where He is. But God delights in us, and says to us, " My son, give me thine heart." I get that we are to " yield ourselves unto God;" that we are to " present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Have we done this? Is there no wish, no looking for anything here? Is there no desire for anything except Christ in us? It is: " present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your intelligent service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." You will find failure and shortcoming in carrying it out, and thus you will learn yourself and learn God too.

This is what the wilderness is. Christ's work made the poor thief fit to go to Paradise that day, but even for him the world and the flesh were on the gibbet; whilst in Stephen it was perfectly death to the world, seeing Christ in the glory, and being just like Him, but with this difference, that, when the Lord was on earth, the heavens looked down on Him, whilst Stephen looks up into the heavens and sees Christ there. Christ could not have become anything by looking into heaven; Stephen by doing so was transformed into His likeness.

Thus flesh and the world are done with; and what a blessing it is to think that, whilst we are passing through the wilderness, He is conforming us to Christ in this way. The Father's loving government comes in; He is a " holy Father," and He wants hearts that will reflect practically what is in Himself. And so we have to judge ourselves that Christ may come out in our ways. To think that it is God's purpose to have us with His Son in glory! That is what is in God's heart, what is in the Father's heart; and Christ will not see of the travail of His soul, will not be satisfied, until He has us up there with Himself.

Is it with each one of us " This one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"? The Lord only give us grace to have the cross upon self; to know what it is to have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, to be crucified to the world and the world to us as we pass through it.

Death must come in on everything here; it did so actually in the two cases we have been looking at; but, like Stephen, may we so see Christ in the glory of God that we may be like Him, and thus say, " Come, Lord Jesus."

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friends;"

Now no amount of valor will give you the mind of the Lord. The' ten thousand who followed Gideon did not -know his mind; it was only the three hundred who did; it was not until the nine thousand and Seven hundred had gone back that he said: " As I do so shall ye do." The order of battle is only given to those who prove that they prefer the glory of the Lord to any favor or mercies that can be granted to them here on earth. Many a valiant man I have seen turned aside by a favor given to him here: in Luke it was those who had received favors who begged to be excused from the supper.

What I have on my mind at this present moment to bring out is, the support that we derive from one in heaven; we do not get support from anything here, we only get it from the One there.

Now not only have you title to heaven, but you are in possession of heaven now whilst you are on earth. I make a distinction between possession in life and practical possession. You have possession in life, but you are only true to your life when you have practical possession of it. And let me tell you there are many in possession in life who know nothing of this. It is not a question whether my life really be, there, but it is quite another thing whether I am living, there. And, it is the person who has apprehended most of the portion given to him of God in Christ; who has the most trembling anxiety as to how much he is really practically in possession of that of which he is actually in possession in life. It is no light matter to me to' have the transcending power of an eternal God to do with.

In connection with Stephen we have three distinct subjects brought out, the first being what I will now speak upon; that is: what is our true spring and fountain of support while we are upon this earth. 'It does not always begin with this, but Scripture has opened it out to us thus here-there are other ways of looking at it of course.

The first thing we start with, and that is the practical difficulty, is that we learn that we are united to Christ, and that he introduces us into a scene where there is no cloud at all-into a sphere where there is no disturbance; a new day is inaugurated. The new creation of God has commenced. In the old creation God began with making the heavens and the earth-the earth, the trees, the animals, and ended with the man. The new creation has begun in the reverse direction; it begins with a Man, the Son of the Father-He is the beginning of the creation of God-and it will wind up with the new heavens and the new earth. And what the church will give up is this beginning of the creation of God; it will be spued out of His mouth because it does not maintain it. Laodicea, would be very glad to have the virtues of Christ, but it will not have the author of them; in fact that is what infidelity even would have-the apples without the apple tree.

I speak now of all of us as being introduced into this new thing, and He coming in and saying to us: " Peace be unto you." This ought not to require to be repeated; if He does repeat it, it is but to say the very same words again-there are no others-it is: " Peace be unto you." True there is another peace connected with going through this scene, but here you have to do with this risen Man. It is like a body in an exhausted cylinder; it goes up, and up, and up; you get right away up without a single check!-I say that is practically the difference-between this peace and the peace on the way; it is not " a rugged hill that

reaches up to God; " it is a rugged race down here. There are not any clouds-not if you know what it is to be connected with Christ there; union with Christ connects you with a new order of things, where there is not a cloud-where all is perfectly bright!

He comes into their midst to proclaim that character of thing. Therefore it says: "The Lord hath triumphed gloriously”—not I; for He fought the battle, and His victory is mine. How high do you see Christ?-At the right hand of God.-I place that point before you again, be- cause there is no going on until you have it. I must have to do With that blessed One risen out of everything. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above." There is the importance of it. I say to any soul here who has a cloud: You have never yet seen Christ as the One who has cleared off everything, as the one who has risen-out -of-it all. He is out of it so Lam out of it. Like-the island that rose out of the Mediterranean years ago; just so have I risen out of everything. However high up you see Christ, I am there, for His victory is my victory. You have to connect yourself with the One who loved you, and who gave Himself for you, and who says: " Peace be unto you."

Stephen already knew what it was to have possession of heaven in life; we find he is looking up into heaven. The fact of the place was not brought in yet, for in the first chapter of Acts, they were told not to gaze into heaven. But now we know that the One, who was refused life here, died for us that we might have life there. Man refused. Him life here,- and, God, in His grace, turned man's rejection into his blessing. We partake of His life; man refuted Him a place here; and God has given Him a place in heaven; and we are raised up with -Him, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. We have not only got life in His Son but we have got a place.

This the Lord is putting before us in the fourteenth of John. He deals with our conscience in the thirteenth, with our heart in the fourteenth.

He says: Now do not let your hearts be troubled; you must follow Me by faith.-What is faith?- Close you eye to everything visible, and open your ear to God. That is faith. I now by faith see that which is invisible; I have to do with that blessed One gone to the Father to prepare a place for me.

What is brought out in Stephen is that he is practically one who realizes this. Though he was not like Paul seated in heaven, yet he knew the support that we derive on earth from One in heaven; he had no support here. The Bridegroom being taken away, there is nothing to engage the heart, so you may fast. I am bold to Say every one who knows Christ really as the One Up there, however much he may love the

communion of saints, would far sooner have a time alone with the Lord.

Now it is not only that all the bad is against you, but that the good is against you. Pull up your blind in the morning and say: Well, I know that there is not a single thing in this world for me; it is all against me-even all that claims to be commendable to the human eye.-I often think what an insignificant person I should appear on the platform of Exeter Ball, if I came in after all the wonderful accounts of what such a missionary society is doing in one place, and such another in some other, if I stood up and said: He sups with me, and I with Him. What Stephen finds all round him is the wickedness of the religious world. He takes the place for God on earth; he stands before those religious functionaries coming out in all their enmity against God's servant. And what does he say?-Why, get nothing here.

This world is just going on to its consummation, and heaven is opened to me. It never was opened till now, but now it is opened by the Holy Ghost. You are united to Christ even before you know your property, so to say. One side is that I am sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise; and the other is, that He is the earnest of the inheritance.

Here Stephen, being full of the Holy, Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven. The Lord when going away from His disciples had told them in the fourteenth of John: “I go to prepare a place for you." Now I -am not here gone into heaven, but I am looking at the One in heaven. Some have a physical fear of death. If you have, be sure you are occupied with death, and not with the person of Christ; you are look-at the water instead of at the ark of the covenant. In Jordan there is not a—single thing to pass through; there is not a drop of water to be seen at all-not a. single thing to bar my entrance into the land. True, I have practically to pass through a tunnel here; I do not want to hide it from you; you have to throw all this scene into darkness that you may have the light on the other side. I am as confident about it as of anything, through His grace, that you never can find Christ but through death. He was refused life here; the sun must go down then. He was known to them in the breaking of bread-the figure of death. Christ will not appear, but at night I must find it all a scene in which the light has gone out; and then what brings in its beautiful light to me? The morning star!

Well, it is night. The sun has gone down. So many people think they can have Christ in the enjoyment of circumstances here, but I do not believe it. Many think He will give them happy circumstances here. I used to; and then I used to be thoroughly disappointed at the way in which God refused to do things for me that I expected He would do. But I never am disappointed now; indeed I am now perfectly surprized that He ever should do anything for me, instead of being disappointed that He does not do more. True, there is nothing in this world which He would not do for me. He would give me a fine day: " He that spared not His own Son, shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? " But then look at the other side: "For thy sake we are killed all the day long;" that is your side; the fellowship of His sufferings. There is no end to his love, but where do I find it? In the scene where He is Himself.

" For thy sake we are killed all the day long." That is where Stephen is, and that is my proper place. But I cannot take it, I cannot bear it, unless I know what it is to have a bright scene outside it all. I have to do with a Person who is not here, and thus I am in the wilderness. And I would just say that the wilderness is not a place; it is a bridge, and not a “bridge of sighs," but a bridge of hope, over which I pass from Egypt into Canaan. I go on to possess the land; but possession in practice implies immense suffering.

There are two things that mark the wilderness: the one, to acquire the Man who is not here; the other, to resist the man who is here.

There is the daily picking up of the manna; the stooping for it; you must-make yourself small if. you want to pick up Christ. The food of the wilderness comes down from heaven, but you must be little enough to pick it up. It had to be gathered every morning before the sun was up. Now let no one reduce that to mere prayer, and the reading of a chapter the first thing in the morning. Manna is the wonderful sense of the sufficiency of Christ for every exigency of the day that I may be called to go through. I have to do with Him where He is, as I go on here day by day.

Stephen looks up steadfastly into heaven and sees the glory of God and Jesus; and, now that all is settled there, he comes back to his place here, but he changes the words. He says: " I see the Son of Man standing on the right 'hand of God;" He does not say Jesus. Jesus is that peculiar familiar name-that name of endearment-which ought never to be spoken but from heart to heart, and not breathed to the common' ear.

And now they cry out with a loud voice, and stop their ears, and run upon him, and he derives power from Christ to act like Him. I believe you derive power from Christ suited to the circumstances you are in, when you are occupied with Him People are occupied with -the thing before them, instead of with the One who can deliver them out of it. I often bring forward as an illustration of this the story of a woman in a ship in a storm; she was asked what she was thinking of in the storm,; and-he answered that she was thinking of how Jesus acted when He was in the storm. Now, if she -had been thinking of Him where He is, it 'would have made her act like Him when he was in the storm.

The-man who is making an effort to go over a fence certainly is not over it. No man ever lost his temper yet but from impotence; a man who loses his temper, proves that his ardor is greater than his ability. If he can say, Oh! I am quite up to that, he will never lose his temper over it. If your ability is up to your ardor you will be quiet.

Now here we get a man entirely superior to himself; and this is the character of the Holy Ghost's acting. Stephen has come back to this scene, and I get this wonderful fact in connection with bin.': that when everything had come to its climax, when they set themselves to refuse the One whom he offered to them, Stephen was not only superior to it all, but able to act for others in the midst of it; and this is the place of God's people upon the earth. What do you find in him? He is calm. Is it that he is able to resist it all as the rock resists the dashing of the waves? Not at all! He is not only calm, he is active. And, not as one has said, to " Wake and find him gone;"-not as in the Canticles the Bride awakes to realize the stupendous sense of what it is to be without the companion of her heart. But what says the Psalmist " I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." So Stephen was able to come out in divine activity to the Very men who caused his death; he comes out as intercessor for them; and, for my:, own part, I believe that Saul of Tarsus was the answer to his prayers. He came out and showed what a man could be from heaven, not only what a man was going to heaven.

I read it, and I am abashed when I do. Why should my spirit be put out by such a little trifle? In the power of the Holy Ghost I can be superior to every character of violence-to every order of suffering. I look to it the day is coming when we shall be tested. I do not look for outside persecution, but I look for internal persecution. Why, if I were only walking faithfully, I should be tabooed by my brethren. There never was such a marvelous thing! While such a trifle as a hot room will sometimes quite upset me, and put me all astray, here is a man who is superior

to everything. He says, I give my spirit to that Man there, for the man here is taking my life away.

There is nothing for me to enjoy but heaven. Well then, I say, I ought to enjoy it. I have to run a race, but my Gideon is before me in it, and He says: “As I do, so shall ye do." I have the most unbounded scene that ever could be known to the heart; I am to God in an ecstacy; I am in unqualified possession of it as to life, and would to God I knew more of it practically. I am going to run a race but there can be no novelty in it; that is, to my mind, the first chapter of the first epistle of John: “The life has been manifested;" He is in the race before me. Stephen looks up steadfastly at the One who has gone before; and how does this man now come out?-Why, very like the Lord! He says: "-Lord Jesus receive my spirit, and lay not this sin to their charge."

This man here takes my life from me; I give my spirit to that Man there.

There are only two things you have to learn, and how many do not accept them! One is, you are not to have the man here and the place, where he is; the other is, you are to have another Man, and the place where He is.-What am I not to have a little bit of earth?—No, not a bit! That is just what you get in the fourteenth of Luke. Those who had the blessings of the earth all with one consent began to make excuse; it is: "I pray thee, have me excused."

Stephen says to them: The Lord Jesus Christ in glory has come down and offers Himself to take a throne here; do you refuse that Man who' has come down from above?-But they stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him. And he knelt down and prayed for them; I do not believe he prayed for himself; it was: “Lay not this sin to their charge; and when he had said this he fell asleep."

Thus you see what a thing it is to bring Christ into real daily life. The general thought of every believer is to get 'the Lord to help him on in the things here where he is; he wants the human side of it. But you must begin upon an entirely new basis. I am the same tree that I was before my conversion, but there is a new kind of sap in the tree, and that sap refuses to work in wrong connections; all the wrong connections must be withered. I take you upon the ground of being dead; timber is of no use: until it is dead. Are you a father?-Well, says the Lord, I sanction that branch; the sap may flow into that. Are you a husband sanction that branch; the sap may flow in there.-Are you in a club?-Oh I cannot sanction that! there is no sap for that!-You are the same kind of tree that you were, but now " the leaf shall not wither." Many a one gets on pretty well in the summer time, but in the winter their leaf withers; but, of this tree, " the leaf shall not wither." It is the same tree that it was before, but I find a new order of sap comes into it, and that divine sap supports every branch and leaf that it sanctions. It says: -I will spare whatever was appointed of God as fit for man upon earth, but I will spare nothing else.

The Lord grant to us, beloved friends, to under stand what has been before us. May he lead our hearts to understand how practical and how blessed a thing it is to know, that, though " this world is a wilderness wide," I have got a Man in heaven above it all, whose resources flow down to me here. The action of the Holy Ghost leads me to Him; that is His upward action; it is: "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." I. find a great many saints will go in a measure as far as Stephen, but they will not go any farther; they will look up to heaven, but they will not go in. The grand difficulty for the heart is to change the place. This is only a place to have a tomb in. As Abraham says, I have no place here but a tomb. As a baptized person I take the ground of being a buried man; and, as in some countries they raise cairns over the graves, so with me; every man who goes by and throws a stone upon• me is only raising the cairn! I am a gone man.

But I am not a gone man for activity for Christ here. I have come back from the One Who is up there to express Him here, and I find His own power to sustain me in it: " I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me."

The Lord lead us to have our eye simply turned to Him as the One who is in heaven, and then I shall be bold to walk 'down here for Him, while seeking to maintain hat is due to Christ in this scene where He is not.

Men will take the water of the gospel to purify Adam's children, and leave the blood on one side. But He came " Not by water only, but by water and blood;". and the blood comes out of a dead Christ-the witness of the judgment. of Adam and his children, and a total breach with God.

J. N. D.

" Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of 'Man,. and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Except ye own that flesh is judged; and so it is His; flesh and blood separate, for that is death.

J. N. D.

Christian Friend: Volume 1, Moses in Egypt, and Moses in Midian

One great principle in all true service is the consciousness of being upheld therein by God. It was thus with the perfect Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ. “Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth.” The grand feature in His service was, that He never acted of Himself: “I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” “When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that hath sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.” The moment a servant acts independently, he acts from himself, and out of character.

There is great danger of mistaking the busy activity mound us at the present day for true service to God. I believe that God intends to mark very distinctly what man’s natural understanding and power can effect, and what the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit can effect. Our endowment, as Christians, is “the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, to make of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.”

Whenever we are living before men, instead of before God, there will be restlessness and disquiet. There may be the desire to do many things that are written in the Word, but they will not be done in quiet and peaceful joy. We are never really preserved from hypocrisy unless we are living before God. It is the very best possible cure for the over-weening conceit we have, all of us, naturally of ourselves.

But let us seek to gather a little instruction from the history of “Moses, the servant of God.”

Moses was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus. And I would just notice, in passing, that they are the only two persons mentioned in Scripture whose course we are able to trace from their birth on to the glory.

It is worthy of remark that the life of Moses is divided into three distinct periods of forty years.

The first forty he spent in Egypt as the “son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”

The next forty in the wilderness tending the flock of his father-in-law. There, at the mount of God, he had a vision of glory, such as could never have been revealed to him in Egypt.

In the last forty we have the account of the sorrowful and trying course he had to run, as the servant of God and of His people Israel, in bearing the burden of that people.

The first portion of his life was spent in Egypt. And Stephen speaks of him as being “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in wards and in deeds.” (vs. 22) But this wisdom of Egypt was not anything that God could own. Doubtless, Moses knew that God was about to use him as the “deliverer” of His people; but that which had been acquired in Egypt could not deliver the Lord’s people from Egypt.

Moses’ parents could but recognize the remarkableness of their child. (See Heb. 11:23)

And Moses himself, “by faith, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” (Heb. 11:24-26)

“When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.” (vs. 23) Whatever ease and comfort Moses might have enjoyed in Pharaoh’s house—its luxury and its refinements, “the treasures in Egypt,” were all his—his heart yearned over his brethren. He went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens.

“And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian” (vs. 24). “Mighty in deeds,” on behalf, too, of the people of God, but acting in the energy of the flesh, not as sent of God (hence what followed), Moses was thinking how Moses was to deliver the people. “He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them” (vs. 25). But no, “they understood not.” Moses had another lesson to learn. God had to teach him that He would only be served by the power and strength that come from Himself, not by the strength or wisdom of Egypt. There cannot be two things more different than a person acting in the energy of the flesh, and one acting in the power of the Spirit. In the first case, there is always disappointment and surprise at the failure of our efforts.

When Moses had spent forty years in the wilderness, doing, as it were, nothing, we find him (Ex. 3) answering God’s message, “Come now, therefore, and I will send thee,” and so forth, thus, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” When he comes to be sent of God, there is the deep sense of the responsibility of it laid upon him, and he shrinks from it. Before, when going forth in the energy of the flesh, he was bitterly disappointed at the failure he met with; now, he has learned his own insignificance, and he says, “Who am I?” And it is ever thus. When a saint feels that he is sent of God on any mission, there is always the deepest prostration of spirit. This may be brought about by painful discipline of soul, but the end of God’s training is to break down self-confidence, so that, when at last the person goes forth in service, it is with the feeling, “Who am I?” One great characteristic of the flesh we have acquired by being so long in “Egypt” is, the dislike to say, “Who am I?” But God must produce this frame of mind before He uses us. The most cultivated understanding, human wisdom, and research will not stand in any stead in the service of God.

“And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong, thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?” He only gets misunderstood by those whom he seeks to serve. When he would be the man of peace, his reward is the taunt, “Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?”

Mark this, beloved. I am speaking of Moses as one quickened, one knowing, in a sense, what communion with God was, but who had not learned as yet to throw off Egypt’s strength and wisdom. We must fail when we go a warfare at our own charges.

Many a saint runs on for a while (just after his conversion, perhaps), in the eagerness and zeal of the flesh, doing right things, but not in the spirit of dependence on God; by and bye his energy flags, and he feels as though he were entirely useless, as though God could never again employ him in His service. Now this is a profitable lesson, though a deeply humbling one. The Lord often trains an individual thus, for much after usefulness in the church.

Just so was it with Moses.

“Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian” (vs. 29).

These first forty years of Moses’ life are passed over very slightly by God. No doubt, had man written the history of them, we should have had given to us a wonderful account of all that Moses did and said in this land of wisdom. The Spirit of God is silent. And why, beloved? Because the wisdom of “Egypt “is foolishness with God, and the strength of “Egypt” weakness with God.

During the next forty years Moses is ‘lost to Egypt and to Israel. But then he is alone with God. In solitude (Ex. 3) the Lord meets him at Horeb—“the mount of God.” And I doubt not that Horeb is thus named because it was a place where Moses had enjoyed communion with God, and where he had learned a lesson which he never could have learned when in Egypt-dependence on God. In secret, he is being prepared for all those mighty achievements he was soon to be called on to perform before Pharaoh, and Egypt, and Israel.

It is in solitude that God chiefly teaches His people. The blessed Jesus sought for refreshment on this earth in being alone with God. And this is the place where the saint learns his own weakness and God's strength. He enters into the depths of his own evil, but also into the depths of God's grace. He learns to deny self, to subdue imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, He proves the necessity of the cross.

"And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." (Ex. 2) "The time of the promise" (vs. 17) had at length come, and now we find Moses about to be prepared and sent forth as the "ruler and deliverer" of Israel.

One preparation had been forty years passed in solitude, in secret training with God, in the wilderness, but there was another thing needful-the manifestation of God's glory.

"And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush." (vs. 30) There had never been aught like this seen in Egypt. Egypt was not the place for God to show His "great sight." The wonders of nature were exhibited there, in the periodical inundation of the river, and the like. The wonders of art were also there. But here was something that Moses' Egyptian wisdom failed in unraveling. "When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight" (vs. 31) for "the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."

But unless we have wisdom to understand why the bush was not consumed, we have not the real wisdom of God. It is impossible in Egypt to see the glory of the living God. It is above all human thought or conception. It is something which man has no power of explaining. We may tell people of the sight, but they will not credit us; man's wisdom is at fault. Where did Moses see the same glory? In the pillar of fire which accompanied Israel through their wanderings in the wilderness. When shall it be seen again? When the Lord shall be revealed in flaming fire which will burn up His adversaries.

"And as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold" (vss. 31-32). This "great sight" cannot be spoken of by Egyptian lips, it cannot be understood by Egyptian ears, and we must have the anointing of the eye-salve to see it.

In the poor, feeble, worthless bush, in the midst of which the fire burned without consuming it, we have a blessed emblem of that which, though weak and uncomely in itself, is encircled with the glory of God—the church. What Moses learned was this: that it was God's purpose to encircle Israel with His own glory. And how could this be (either with regard to Israel or the church) without its being consumed by that glory? It was to be encircled with God's salvation.

Until a person knows the security of the church—how precious it is to God, and that nothing shall prevail against it—he is not qualified to be the servant of God unto it. Salvation has God appointed for walls and bulwarks. One feels increasingly the importance of a deep sense of our own insignificance. All that is merely natural must wither before the glory of God.

What a marvelous thing that there should be a little weak bush, as it were, on this earth, with everything against it, and yet nothing able to prevail. Has God associated the church with His own holiness? And this is a deeply important truth. "Our God is a consuming fire." Well, we would not have it otherwise, for the bush in the fire is not consumed. He will not allow any sin connected with that church to come before Him He has judged it in the cross; sentence has not only been passed upon it, but executed. When once the cross is really understood, the very holiness of God is seen to be the guarantee of the security of the church.

"Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground." (vs. 33) We are brought by grace into the place of holiness, and to rejoice in God's holiness. There the soul learns its deepest lessons of what sin is; it sees not only its own nothingness, but its oppositeness to God. There it learns that salvation must be of grace from first to last. These things are only fully learned in the sanctuary. The moment we are rescued from the world we are brought to stand in the place of holiness, and God deals with us accordingly. The reason for His chastening and admonition is that we may be thereby partakers of "His holiness." He desires that we should be as near Him in spirit as we are in our head.

What must Moses' thoughts have been respecting all the glory of Egypt when he turned aside to see "this great sight"? And what would ours be, beloved, with regard to the world, were the eye always and steadily fixed on the glory? When Moses was engaged in solitarily feeding the flock in the wilderness there might have been some longings after the glory of Egypt; but these must have ceased when he had this manifestation made to him of the glory of God, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." So with ourselves. When we think of the true glory of the church, we are able to look at the glory of "Egypt" and feel ourselves weaned from it, as well as weaned from the wisdom and power of "Egypt." But if our souls are only looking at their own weakness, we shall very likely, be tempted to long after "Egypt" and the things of "Egypt."

Paul was qualified to serve the church by his apprehension of its being one with Jesus in the glory.

In Moses needing a spokesman (Ex. 4:10-16), we are taught that neither the wisdom nor the eloquence of "Egypt" will be of any avail in God's service.

Very often there may be busy activity in service, but not the quiet sitting at the feet of Jesus, drinking in from His lips our knowledge of truth and grace. We need much to realize that we have to do with God, even when we are serving others.

Mark what follows. "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This same Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush." (vss. 34-35)

But God must bring Moses out of Egypt first. He could not make such a communication to him there. It was the bane of Abram to get into Egypt. Abram had no altar there. And so is it with us. When we get into the world it is the same thing. We cannot have our altar. Communion is interrupted.

In the first place, God reveals His name: “I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham,” and so forth. (vs. 32) Secondly, His grace: “I have seen, I have seen the afflictions of My people,” and so forth. (vs. 34) (How blessed to be assured that there is not one sorrow of His people, not one groan, but that He knows it altogether) Then we get the formal commission: “And now come, I WILL SEND THEE into Egypt.”

“And Moses said unto God, Who am I?” and so forth. (Ex. 2) After he had worshipped God as an unshod worshipper, there was a shrinking from that which God had laid on him, though, forty years before, he had been most eager to enter upon the same sort of service. It is a most solemn thing to have to do with the people of God. The responsibility involved is that under which we must sink, if left to ourselves.

Moses now knew that he that would serve Israel must have a great deal of shame and obloquy to encounter. Hence the need of the training through which he had been put. So with regard to service in the church. If Paul is a “chosen vessel” “to bear His name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel,” the Lord, in making this known to Ananias, says, “I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” And what was Paul’s after experience? “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches,” and so forth; again, “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”

Paul had the flesh crushed at the outset, crushed again after he had been taken up into the third heavens, crushed all the way through. He never went on, in service, in the energy of the flesh, but as one who knew that it must be endurance to the very end.

How often does a young Christian think, ‘I will tell others of the Lord’s love, and they must believe me;’ or, ‘I will tell Christians of the security of the church, of the coming of the Lord, of the heavenly calling of the saints, and the like; and they must receive it.’ But no! we need to learn that we cannot carry everything before us. Where there is the most ascertained mission from God, there is always the deepest humility. Paul, in speaking of his arduous service, says, “I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

The preparation for active service is in secret with God, in learning ourselves in communion with Him There the battle is really fought. Power for active service is acquired not in active service, but in intercourse with God in secret.

Whatever we do in service we ought to do as worshippers. Our service would then be carried on in felt responsibility to God, and it would bring blessing to others and to our own souls.

I believe the saints often think that it is an easy thing to serve God. But no; it is a hard thing to serve Him in spirit and in truth. To serve God in the sense of our being nothing, and His being everything, is a hard thing. The place of the servant of God is to hide himself, and let God appear. Thus it was with THE perfect servant. The most splendid achievement, without this, is not service.

There would be much more profitable, happy, useful service if we only saw more of God’s order. One delights to see activity in service; but, then, it should be connected with the being in secret with God, and the seeing His purpose with regard to the church. Thus we should serve happily and holily, not as though God needed our service, but as desiring to glorify Him in our bodies and spirits, which are His.

Bible Treasury: Volume 12, The Lord Standing or Sitting on High: Acts 7 and Hebrews 10

THE Holy Ghost opens heaven to our view, and enables us to contemplate that which is found there; and forms us on earth according to the character of Jesus. As to the change that took place in the progress of God's dealings, it appears to me that it was the realization by the Spirit of the effect of the veil being rent. Jesus is seen still standing; because until the rejection by Israel of the testimony of the Holy Ghost, He did not definitively sit down, waiting for the judgment of His enemies. Rather He remained, in the position of High Priest, standing; the believer with Him on high by the Spirit, and the soul having thus far joined Him there in heaven; for now, by the blood of Christ, by that new and living way, it could enter within the veil. On the other hand, the Jews having done the same thing with regard to the testimony of the Holy Ghost that they did with regard to Jesus, having (so to speak) in Stephen sent a messenger after Him to say, “We will not have this man to reign over us,” Christ definitively takes His place, seated, in heaven, until He shall judge the enemies who would not that He should reign over them. It is in this last position that He is viewed in the Epistle to the Hebrews; in which consequently they are exhorted to come out of the camp of Israel, following after the victim whose blood had been carried into the sanctuary; thus anticipating the judgment which fell upon Jerusalem intermediately by means of the Romans, in order to set the nation aside, as it will be finally executed by Jesus Himself. The position of Stephen therefore resembles that of Jesus, the testimony being that of the Spirit to Jesus glorified. This makes the great principle of the Epistle to the Hebrews very plain,

The doctrine of the church, announced by Paul after the revelation made to him on his way to Damascus, goes farther than this; that is, it declares the union of Christians with Jesus in heaven, and not merely their entrance into the holy place through the rent veil, where the priest only might go in previously, behind the veil which hid God from the people.

We may remark here, that the sanctuary, so to speak, is open to all believers. The veil indeed was rent by the death of Christ, but the grace of God was still acting towards the Jews, as such, and proposed to them the return of Jesus to the earth, that is to. say, outside the veil, in the event of their repentance, so that the blessing would then have been upon the earth—the times of refreshing by the coming of Christ, which the prophets had announced. But now it is no longer a Messiah, the Son of David, but a Son of man in heaven; and, by the Holy Ghost here below, an opened heaven is seen and known, and the Great High Priest standing as yet at the right hand of God is not hidden behind a veil. All is open to the believer;. the glory, and He who has entered into it for His people. And this, it appears to me, is the reason why He is seen standing. He had not definitively taken His place as seated ( ), on the heavenly throne, until the testimony of the Holy Ghost to Israel of His exaltation had been definitively rejected upon earth. The free testimony of the Spirit which is developed, here and afterward, is highly interesting, without touching apostolic authority in its place, as we shall see. As to the Jews, till the High Priest comes out, they cannot know that His work is accepted for the nation; as, in the day of atonement, they had to wait till he came out that they might know it. Bit for us the Holy Ghost is come out while He is within, and we do know it.

Bible Treasury: Volume 3, Scripture Query and Answer: Church or Assembly

Q. Acts 7:38.—Is the word “church” right here?

Enquirer.

A. Certainly not, if the reader thereby gathers “the Church of God” as unfolded variously in the Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. The meaning is clearly the assembly of Israel in the wilderness. Hence “assembly” or “congregation” would be a better rendering, as avoiding ambiguity and leaving the reader to infer from the context what assembly is meant. The word itself is capable of other applications, as in Acts 19, where it is applied to the meeting of the Ephesians. It is technically used in Greek authors for the legislative assembly to which the citizens belonged.

Christian Truth: Volume 15, Moses in Egypt and Moses in Madian

Acts 7:20-36

One great principle in all true service is the consciousness of being upheld therein by God. It was thus with the perfect Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." Isa. 42:1. The great feature in His service was that He never acted of Himself: "I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." John 5:30. "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." John 8:28, 29. The moment a servant acts independently, he acts from himself and out of character.

There is a great danger of mistaking the busy activity around us at the present day for true service to God. I believe that God intends to mark very distinctly what man's natural understanding and power can effect, and what the power and wisdom of the Holy Ghost can effect. Our endowment, as Christians, is "the Spirit of the Lord," "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord," to make of "quick understanding in the fear of the LORD" (Isa. 11:2).

Whenever we are living before men instead of before God, there will be restlessness and disquiet. There may be the desire to do many things that are written in the Word, but they will not be done in quiet and peaceful joy. We are never really preserved from hypocrisy unless we are living before God. It is the very best possible cure for the overweening conceit we have, all of us, naturally of ourselves.

But let us seek to gather a little instruction from the history of Moses the servant of God.

It is worthy of remark that the life of Moses is divided into three distinct periods of forty years each. Most of his first forty years were spent in Egypt as the "son of Pharaoh's daughter."

The next forty years were spent in the wilderness tending the flock of his father-in-law. There, at the mount of God, he had a vision of glory such as never could have been revealed to him in Egypt.

In the last forty years we have the account of the sorrowful and trying course he had to run, as the servant of God and his people Israel, in bearing the burden of that people.

The first portion of his life was spent in Egypt. And Stephen speaks of him as being "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22). But this wisdom of Egypt was not anything that God could own. Doubtless, Moses knew that God was about to use him as the "deliverer" of His people; but that which had been acquired in Egypt could not deliver the Lord's people from Egypt.

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And Moses himself, "By faith... when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Heb. 11:24-26.

"When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." Acts 7:23. Whatever ease and comfort Moses might have enjoyed in Pharaoh's house—its luxury and its refinements, "the treasures in Egypt" were all his—his heart yearned over his brethren. He went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens.

"And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian." v. 24. "Mighty in.. deeds," on behalf too of the people of God, but acting in the energy of the flesh, not as sent of God (hence what followed), Moses was thinking how Moses was to deliver the people. "He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them." v. 25. But no, "they understood not."

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When Moses had spent forty years in the wilderness, doing as it were nothing, we find him (Exod. 3) answering God's message, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee," thus: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" When he comes to be sent of God, there is the deep sense of the responsibility of it laid upon him, and he shrinks from it. Before, when going forth in the energy of the flesh, he was bitterly disappointed at the failure he met; now he has learned his own insignificance, and

he says, "Who am I?" And it is ever thus. When a saint feels that he is sent of God on any mission, there is always the deepest prostration of spirit. This may be brought about by painful discipline of soul, but the end of God's training is to break down self-confidence, so that when at last the person goes forth in service, it is with the feeling, "Who am I?" One great characteristic of the flesh we have acquired by being so long in "Egypt" is the dislike to say, "Who am I?" But God must produce this frame of mind before He uses us. The most cultivated understanding, human wisdom, and research will not stand in any stead in the service of God.

"And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?" Acts 7:26-28. He only gets misunderstood by those whom he seeks to serve. When he would be the man of peace, his reward is the taunt, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" I am speaking of Moses as one knowing, in a sense, what communion with God was, but who had not learned as yet to throw off Egypt's strength and wisdom. We must fail when we go a warfare at our own charges.

Many a saint runs on for a while (just after his conversion, perhaps) in the eagerness and zeal of the flesh, doing right things, but not in the spirit of dependence on God; by-and-by his energy flags and he feels as though he were entirely useless, as though God could never again employ him in His service. Now this is a profitable lesson, though a deeply humbling one. The Lord often trains an individual thus, for much after usefulness in the Church. Just so was it with Moses. "Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian." v. 29.

These first forty years of Moses' life are passed over very slightly by God. No doubt, had man written the history of them, we should have had given to us a wonderful account of all that Moses did and said in this land of wisdom. The Spirit of God is silent. And why, beloved? Because the wisdom of "Egypt" is foolishness with God, and the strength of "Egypt" weakness with God.

During the next forty years Moses is lost to Egypt and to Israel. But then he is alone with God. In solitude (Exod. 3) the Lord meets with him at Horeb—"the mount of God." And I doubt not that Horeb is thus named because it was a place where Moses had enjoyed communion with God, and where he had learned a lesson which he never could have learned when in Egypt- dependence on God. In secret he is being prepared for all those mighty achievements he was soon to be called on to perform before Pharaoh and Egypt and Israel.

It is in solitude that God chiefly teaches His people. The blessed Lord sought for refreshment on this earth in being alone with God. And this is the place where the saint learns his own weakness and God's strength. He enters into the depths of his own evil, but also into the depths of God's grace. He learns to deny self, to subdue imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. He proves the necessity of the cross.

"And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." Exod. 2:23-25. "The time of the promise" (Acts 7:17) had at length come, and now we find Moses about to be prepared and sent forth as the "ruler and... deliverer" of Israel.

One preparation had been forty years passed in solitude in secret training with God in the wilderness, but there was another thing needful—the manifestation of God's glory.

"And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush." Acts 7:30. There had never been a thing like this seen in Egypt. Egypt was not the place for God to show His "great sight." The wonders of nature were exhibited there in the periodical inundation of the river, and the like. The wonders of art were also there. But here was something that Moses' Egyptian wisdom failed in unraveling. "When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight." v. 31. "The bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." Exod. 3:2.

But unless we have wisdom to understand why the bush was not consumed, we have not the real wisdom of God. It is impossible in Egypt to see the glory of the living God. It is above all human thought or conception. It is something which man has no power to explain. We may tell people of the sight, but they will not believe it; man's wisdom is at fault.

"And as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold." vv. 31, 32. This "great sight" cannot be spoken of by Egyptian lips; it cannot be understood by Egyptian ears, and we must have the anointing of the eye-salve to see it.

What a marvelous thing that there should be a little weak bush, as it were, on this earth, with everything against it, and yet nothing able to prevail.

"Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground." v. 33. We

are brought by grace into the place of holiness, and to rejoice in God's holiness. There the soul learns its deepest lessons of what sin is; it sees not only its own nothingness, but its oppositeness to God. There it learns that salvation must be of grace from first to last. These things are only fully learned in the sanctuary. The moment we are rescued from the world, we are brought to stand in the place of holiness; and God deals with us accordingly. The reason for His chastening and admonition is that we may be thereby partakers of "His holiness." He desires that we should be as near Him in spirit as we are in our head.

What must Moses' thoughts have been respecting all the glory of Egypt when he turned aside to see this "great sight"? And what would ours be, beloved, with regard to the world, were the eye always and steadily fixed on the glory? When Moses was engaged in solitarily feeding the flock in the wilderness, there might have been some longings after the glory of Egypt; but these must have ceased when he had this manifestation made to him of the glory of God, "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

So with ourselves. When we think of the true glory of the Church, we are able to look at the glory of "Egypt" and feel ourselves weaned from it, as well as weaned from the wisdom and power of "Egypt." But if our souls are only looking at their own weakness, we shall very likely be tempted to long after "Egypt" and the things of "Egypt."

Paul was qualified to serve the Church by his apprehension of its being one with Jesus in the glory.

In Moses' needing a spokesman (Exod. 4:10-16), we are taught that neither the wisdom nor the eloquence of "Egypt" will be of any avail in God's service.

Very often there may be busy activity in service, but not the quiet sitting at the feet of Jesus, drinking in from His lips our knowledge of truth and grace. We need much to realize that we have to do with God, even when we are serving others.

Mark what follows. "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made three a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush." Acts 7:34, 35.

But God must bring Moses out of Egypt first. He could not make such a communication to him there. It was the bane of Abram to get into Egypt. Abram had no altar there. And so it is with us. When we get into the world, it is the same thing. We cannot have our altar. Communion is interrupted.

In the first place, God reveals His name: "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham," etc. v. 32. Second, His grace: "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people," etc. (v. 34). (How blessed to be assured that there is not one sorrow of His people, not one groan, but that He knows it altogether.) Then we get the formal commission: "And now come, I WILL SEND THEE INTO EGYPT."

"And Moses said unto God, Who am I?" etc. (Exod. 3) After he had worshiped God as an unshod worshiper, there was a shrinking from that which God had laid on him, though, forty years before, he had been most eager to enter upon the same sort of service. It is a most solemn thing to have to do with the people of God. The responsibility involved is that under which we must sink if left to ourselves.

Moses now knew that he that would serve Israel must have a great deal of shame and obloquy to encounter. Hence the need of the training through which he had been put. So with regard to service in the Church. If Paul is a "chosen vessel" "to bear" His "name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel," the Lord in making this known to Ananias says, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." And what was Paul's after experience? "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches"; again, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." 1 Cor. 12:15.

Paul had the flesh crushed at the outset, crushed again after he had been taken up into the third heaven, crushed all the way through. He never went on, in service, in the energy of the flesh, but as one who knew that it must be endurance to the very end.

How often does a young Christian think, I will tell others of the Lord's love, and they must believe me; or, I will tell Christians of the security of the Church, of the coming of the Lord, of the heavenly calling of the saints, and the like; and they must receive it. But no! we need to learn that we cannot carry everything before us. Where there is the most ascertained mission from God, there is always the deepest humility. Paul, in speaking of his arduous service, says, "I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." 1 Cor. 15:10.

The preparation for active service is in secret with God, in learning ourselves in communion with Him. There the battle is really fought. Power for active service is acquired not in active service, but in intercourse with God in secret.

Whatever we do in service, we ought to do as worshipers. Our service would then be carried on in felt responsibility to God, and it would bring blessing to others and to our own souls.

I believe the saints often think that it is an easy thing to serve God. But no; it is a hard thing to serve Him in spirit and in truth. To serve God in the sense of our being nothing and His being everything, is a hard thing. The place of the servant of God is to hide himself, and let God appear. Thus it was with THE perfect Servant. The most splendid achievement, without this, is not service.

There would be much more profitable, happy, useful service if we only saw more of God's order. One delights to see activity in service; but then it should be connected with the being in secret with God, and the seeing His purpose with regard to the Church. Thus we should serve happily and holily, not as though God needed our service, but as desiring to glorify Him in our bodies which are His.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Confusion in Acts 7:16

Question: Acts 7:16. You have recently shown Dean Alford’s error (borrowed from rationalists) as to ver. 4; but how is the apparent confusion of ver 16 to be cleared up? Yet one feels with Stier that it seems “almost infatuation” to accuse Stephen’s wonderful exposition of Israel’s history as a “demonstrable error,” where scripture so plainly distinguishes the grave of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from that of Joseph and the rest.

A. B.

Answer: The true solution lies, not in Calvin’s idea of “Abraham” as a wrong reading for “Jacob,” but in the elliptical compression with which Stephen, like other Jews, referred to the well-known facts. Abraham’s grave was at Hebron, bought of Ephron the Hittite; Jacob bought ground at Sychem of the sons of Ramon. In the former notoriously were buried Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But as ancient scripture tells us that Joseph was laid in the second, so Stephen intimates here that his brethren were also. Josephus is opposed to Jewish tradition in fancying that they were buried in Hebron; and Jerome confirms Sychem as their grave, affirming that it was seen as a fact in his day for all twelve. The difficulty is due to bringing both together as Stephen did. Ignorance is rather with those who do not enter into his manner, and so are apt to impute their own blundering and irreverent haste to a discourse of the profoundest character with an astonishing mastery of principles as well as facts throughout scripture. Without speaking of the Holy Spirit (and this of course if admitted incalculably condemns such criticism), it is rash beyond measure to impute to such a man a mistake which a child might detect. The late Archdeacon Lee in his book on Inspiration points out the same system of combining incidents; as, for instance, comparing ver. 7, with Gen. 15:13, 14, and Ex. 3:12; ver. 9; but especially ver.

43, with Amos 5:27, “Beyond Damascus” clearly referring to the Assyrian deportation of the ten tribes; whereas Stephen combines in his way that of the two tribes to Babylon. This the Dean might have as fairly assailed; but he contents himself with saying that “fulfillment of the prophecy would make it very natural to substitute that name which had become inseparably associated with the captivity.” This apology is as unworthy here as his attack there.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, "Church" or "Assembly" in Acts 7:38

Question: Acts 7:38.—Is the word “church” right here?

Enquirer.

Answer: Certainly not, if the reader thereby gathers “the Church of God” as unfolded variously in the Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. The meaning is clearly the assembly of Israel in the wilderness. Hence “assembly” or “congregation” would be a better rendering, as avoiding ambiguity and leaving the reader to infer from the context what assembly is meant. The word itself is capable of other applications, as in Acts 19, where it is applied to the meeting of the Ephesians. It is technically used in Greek authors for the legislative assembly to which the citizens belonged.

The Transforming Power of Seeing Christ Where He Is, The Transforming Power of Seeing Christ Where He Is: Part 1

ACT 7:54-60As in the thief on the cross I get the model sinner—the pattern illustration of grace, so in Stephen I get the model Christian—God's pattern specimen of a saint on earth, linked with Christ in heaven. I show you a man of like passions with yourselves, going out of the world, and yet superior toeverything in the world, before he goes out of it. If Moses of old said, " I will turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt," we may well occupy ourselves for a little, with the wondrous nature and extent of proper, distinctive, Christian position and power, as exhibited in the Scripture I have read. We behold a poor, feeble creature like you or me on this earth, mark, in the midst of the most trying circumstances in which you could conceive a man to be placed, subjected to the uncontrollable fury of religious bigotry, issuing from the masters in Israel—the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries in the land—the victim of the ungovernable rage of a cruel and excited mob, thirsting for his blood; yet grandly borne by a power not his own, so entirely and magnificently above and beyond the whole concentrated strength of the opposition of the nation, that his very enemies have to own they see his face shining like that of an angel. Could anything exceed this-beloved?

But what fills his vision all this time? On what is his attention rivetted? Is it on anything on earth? No; an all-absorbing, unparalleled object meets his entranced and delighted gaze, as he looks through the opened heavens. He sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Full of the Holly Ghost, his eye is steadfastly, undeviatingly, and unflinchingly fixed on this great, this stupendous sight, and lie is equal to anything, surmounts every obstacle, and is carried in triumph above every opposing element around him, He is lost in the contemplation of a Savior in glory. Does this exempt him from suffering, or make an easy path on earth? Let the gnashing of teeth, and the stones answer. Does the suffering or the persecution turn him aside from beholding Jesus, or divert his eye from that allengrossing heavenly object? Assuredly not. His occupation is undistracted and uninterrupted; and that, too, in spite of the most formidable, difficulties against which it' is possible to contend. Nothing moves him. He is commanded and controlled by what he is beholding, and he practically reproduces on earth what he sees in heaven. Now, I ask you to mark this model, It is a picture you ought to have in every one of your houses. I do net mean materially, but you ought to have it before your minds. I direct your attention to a wonderful fact, in connection with what is before us, and press it. Heaven was never opened to a mere man on earth before. Enoch was translated, and Elijah went up in a chariot of fire.. The heavens opened on. Jesus when here; but He Was more than man. But never till this did heaven open to a man like you or me down here in this World, and, beloved friend it has been open ever since. From that moment to this it has never been closed. It is no longer what the angel said to the disciples in the first chapter, " Why stand ye gazing, up into heaven?" Then, the earth was not done with. In answer to the, prayer of our Lord upon the cross, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," God, in the riches of His mercy, gave the nation a further opportunity of receiving their Messiah in glory, even after they had rejected Him on earth. Alas, we know how they treated this additional token of 'God's long-suffering patience, this lingering over them in love, and compassionate reluctance to give them up. They refused Christ in glory, as they had refused Him in humiliation. They would not have Him on earth, neither would they have Him in heaven, and Stephen is the messenger, they are about to, send after Him, to say: " We will not have this man to reign over us."

But God had something in reserve. Failure hag succeeded failure in every dispensation in whichman has been placed here, but after each failure God has brought out some further blessing. To this very messenger, the sending of whom seals the nation's doom., and leads to the definitive setting aside of earth, as a place of blessing for the present, heaven is opened before he goes, and the unfailing One is presented in an unfailing place, and, instead of it being said, " Why stand ye gazing up into heaven," that 'becomes the very thing for the Christian to do, for we read: " But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked 'up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Earth is closed, so to speak, heaven opened, and this is henceforth to be the Christian's occupation. The remarkable change in the dealings of God in Acts 7, as contrasted with chap. it is of the utmost moment to note, if we are to answer to the thoughts of Christ about His, people now. I get even-a further thing in Paul still. In Stephen get heaven opened 'to a man on earth, who is going out of it, superior to everything in it, yet going out of it; but in Paul I get a man, who is caught up to the third heaven, and then sent back again to the earth to communicate to us the wonders of the place. Not only heaven for a saint going to die; but heaven for a saint going to live; and as to going, there are three states of soul, which I will enumerate, and give an example of each. In Simeon I find one who is ready to go; in Stephen, one who is happy to go; and in Paul, one who longs to go. I am anxious every one of you should clearly apprehend, that what we have here is the introduction of a new dealing of God. It is an inauguration scene. It is the opening out of what is distinctive. We always get the special features of a thing at the time of its inauguration. There are two characteristics which I desire to bring before you at this time, as taught here:—I. Association with Christ, where Christ is. II. The power of Christ, where Christ is not.

Let me try, by God's help, to trace for you first, the former of these two characteristics, viz.,

ACT 7:54-60BUT we must look at the other side. The second characteristic is—THE POWER OF CHRIST WHERE CHRIST IS NOT.

Stephen is not only associated by the Holy Ghost with Christ in glory; but by the Holy Ghost he has the power of Christ down here. The Holy Ghost is not only the bond of union with my representative up there; but He is in me, as the power to represent and reproduce Him down here. I have association with my Savior where my Savior is, and I have the power of my Savior where my Savior is not. What is the principle on which the efficiency of this power depends? How is it rendered operative? By looking. Nothing could be simpler. You get an illustration in the case of Elisha with Elijah (2 Kings 2). Elijah is ' about to be taken up, and Elisha asks for a double portion of his spirit. Elijah replied, " Thou halt asked a ' hard thing, nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." The condition was, that he should see him taken, that he should fix his eye upon him as he went up. This is how the power is realized in us practically. The principle is, just open your eyes and look, dear friends. It is beautiful in its simplicity. You know that water always rises to its level. The same law holds good, here. Whatever you see of Christ you possess. The point at which you see Him is the point to which you are raised. If you are looking at Christ at God's right hand, that is the height of your elevation. He, from where you view Him, is the measure of your power. It transpired that Elisha did behold Elijah taken, and what happened? His mantle fell upon Elisha while witnessing the ascending Elijah; and what, let me ask, was the first thing he did on getting it? Some one will answer, Ike crossed the Jordan! No, that was the second thing. Read it more carefully. He laid hold of his own mantle, and rent it in two pieces. He does not want his old clothes; he can dispense with them, he has got something better. He is the possessor of Elijah's mantle, and in this new power he now walks. He can do what is supernatural: He crosses the river. How did he obtain it? Through simply looking at the taken Elijah. To make it still plainer, turn to Matt. 14:13-33. We have (1) the martyrdom of John the 'Baptist, and its bearing on the Lord. If they have dealt thus with His forerunner, what can the Lord Himself expect, but to share the same fate. If John has been put to death, what will they do to Jesus? He is apparently moved by it, and retires under the sense of anticipated rejection to a desert, where He (2) feeds the multitude. This is ministry; and I say we have this, and thank God for it. I was once at a reading where a certain clergyman read this chapter down to the end of verse 21St. It was evident what he read it for, because it referred to ministry. I said there is ministry, we are all thankful for it, divine ministry through instruments for the spiritual nourishment of the saints; but I said let us read the rest of the chapter, and we shall see another thing (3) the man of faith and power that leaves the ship to walk on the water. A path of pure faith and power, with no ship, no boat, nothing external or human. It is to this I invite your attention for a' little. But you may say, " You do not expect us to do such an extraordinary thing as to walk on water." I reply I do. I maintain it, and I hope to demonstrate it, that it is tl only kind of walk suitable to the new power, which characterizes Christianity. It is not some high attainment of a saintly few. Many would like that very well, because they know, if they admit that this is the thing for a Christian as such, you have a pull on them if they do not exhibit it. This is all very fine you say; but if " I attempt to walk on 'water I will be sure to sink." Your flesh will, and a very good thing if it does; but I tell you this for your encouragement, there is one consolation, you never can be drowned. How do you make that out? Because your Had is above everything, and you never can perish with the power of Christ ever ready to support you. What do you mean? Where is your Head let me ask you? At the right hand of God. Do you think you would be afraid to take to the water now It is an immense thing, you see, to get hold of where your Head is, to begin with. Peter leaves the boat; and what is the boat? A boat is the natural contrivance of man to prevent him fromsinking in a fluid element. The boat is sense and sight, not power and faith. Anyone could cross a lake in a boat. There is no power other than what is natural to any man, whether he' has faith or not, in doing that. Do you 'call that Christianity? Listen to our Lord, " Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy; hut say unto you love your enemies, bless them that curse you.... For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in. heaven is perfect." Christianity claims a great deal snore than the boat. Peter's epistle tells the same tale. I admit the difficulties, I do not ignore them; but what I find in Christianity is, neither the removal of the difficulties nor the resort to human expedients to shirk them; but power to surmount them when they are in full force. It is power to walk on water in short. I grant it is above nature and above sense; but I deny that it is contrary to either. It is certainly supernatural; but any man of sense, not to mention a man of faith, can, see that all that is required to enable a man to walk on water is power. He may not see where the power is to come from; but given the power, there is not much difficulty in conceiving the accomplishment. It simply resolves itself into the question, is there power? I affirm that there is, and I am going to prove it. Look at Peter, and observe as to the actual walking, it is a matter of personal, individual faith in the Lord Himself. "If it be Thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." If it is not the Lord, there is no use attempting it for no power but His can enable you to do it; but He can and does enable Peter to do it. He says, ‘" Ha walked on the water to go to Jesus:" Do knot you say it is impossible, then. So long as he kept his 'eye on the Lord he walked 'as well as the Lord. Was that not power." the power of Christ? How could Peter walk on the water without the power of His Master?

You get, besides, the principle of its operation, how it is actually made good in you, as an efficient. Realized once, viz., by beholding an Object outside you: as we have remarked already, it is by looking. But remember, the moment the eye is off, the Lord, you are in no laceat all for man to walk. It cannot be done-in any over of man, only by the power of Christ. Peter began to sink. He looks at the difficulties, gets occupied with the surroundings, and while his eye is on them, it cannot be on the Lord, and immediately he feels himself going down. Peter could have no more walked, on a smooth sea than on a rough one without the power of Christ; and with that power he could walk on a rough sea as well as a smooth one. It was a question of faith and keeping his eye on the Lord, not of the sea whether boisterous or calm. Even though he was sinking he was a great deal better off than those who had never left the boat. He experienced the power of the Lord which enabled him to walk while he looked, and when sinking he knew what it was to feel that arm lifting him up, the blessed grace of the Lord giving timely help, as well as learning from, the rebuke, the secret of his failure.

Well, I see it is possible, says some one, to walk on water; but can it be done without sinking? I reply, of course it can. As long as Peter looked on the Lord there was not a symptom of sinking. Well but is it possible for any one on this earth to look so constantly as not to sink? I answer it is, and now I take you to Stephen to prove you that also. I am sure every one of us is conscious of how little he is up to it; but I will show you how it has been done; and moreover that it is characteristic of the Christian's walk now.. You cannot say Stephen was in smooth water anyhow, for perhaps never has it been the lot of man on earth to pass through a more tempestuous storm, where the waves seem as if they had been running mountains high, and dashing in fury over him; yet, he sinks not, for his eye is never for a moment off his Savior in glory. “He, being full of the Holy Ghost looked steadfastly up." This is the difference between him and Peter. No looking at the boisterous waves here. There is undivided occupation, with an Object in glory; a fixed, unvarying, unflinching gaze on Jesus at the right hand of God, and there

is nothing he is not competent for. He possesses the very power of the One he is looking at, by the Holy Ghost, and he is not only superior to everything, but he is the practical exhibition of Christ Himself down here. See how wonderfully like his Master Stephen is when we take Psa. 22 and note how much of what the Lord went through there is confronted by Stephen. There, are seven things in that psalm the Lord met. The first is sin; as to suffering for this of course Christ stood alone. The forsaking of God none but Christ could endure. He exhausted the judgment, and for Stephen all is brightness Godward. He looks up and sees everything clear, without the shadow of a' cloud. Sin is completely gone, and the One who bore it is seen at the right hand of God. The second thing is " the reproach of men," " despised of the people." Stephen was surrounded by his countrymen, the people among whom he had lived, the elders and scribes whom he had been accustomed to look up to and revere; can he stand to be reproached and despised by them? Can he face that wave? Yes, by the power of Christ he can rise above that. The third point is the " bulls." " Many bulls have compassed me." Those religious magnates, arrayed in council to judge him, and gnashing on him with their teeth. Is he equal to that wave? By the power of 'Christ he can walk on that wave, too. Bodily weakness is the fourth thing in the Psalm. Christ said, " I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint." As regards Stephen, what about his poor body? His body is battered with stones, but, by the power of Christ, he is superior to it all. Then we 'get the " dogs " as the fifth thing. They were the 'Gentiles. In Christ's case the Jews delivered Him to the Romans. In Stephen's case there were no Gentiles, and this does not apply. The sixth point is " the lion's mouth." Satan. All his power and wiles are brought to bear on Stephen to divert his eye from the Lord. He tempts him in this way and that to give it all up. By the power of Christ he fears neither man nor devil. Lastly, we get the " horns of the unicorn," supposed to represent the pains of death. What could be grander than the manner in which Stephen meets death.. A man on this earth, exposed to all the fury and rage of the multitude, gnashing on him with their teeth and knocking the very life out of his poor body with stones; yet borne, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, in the power of Christ, so astonishingly superior to everything and everybody, and so like his Savior that he actually spends his last breath in praying for the very people who are murdering him. So carried above all the abuse, shame, contempt, pain and suffering that man can heap upon him or inflict, that he forgets his suffering and pain, and even himself, to think of others. He knelt down and cried with „a loud voice, “Lord lay not, this sin to their charge. Having said this, he fell asleep." There is walking on water without sinking, because looking with a gaze that was unflinching on that blessed One in the glory of God, and filled with the Holy Ghost. I do not expect you all to be Stephens, God has not called us all to pass through such circumstances or suffer martyrdom; but in all the trials you have in your daily life you want 'the power of Christ to walk above them. Be it the tempers of your children, or anything else, you are not to be overcome by evil, but to be superior to it, to rise above all trials by the power of Christ? Re it -evil attractions, afflictions, sufferings of any or every description, and in every situation, what Christianity presents is not the exercise of power to remove these things out of your way, but allowing them to come upon you with unmodified force, supplies a power, the power of Christ down here, with whom you are associated up there, which makes you superior to them all, while you look steadfastly up to that blessed Object in glory.

Christian Treasury: Volume 9, Acts 7:55, 56

ACTS 7:55,56

HEBREWS

"Full of the Holy Ghost"

"Looked up ...into heaven"

"Steadfastly"

"Into heaven"

"Glory"

"Saw ... Jesus"

"Son of man"

"Standing"

"On the right hand of God"

"Gifts of the Holy Ghost" (2:4)

"Look for Him" (9:28)

"Looked for a city" (11:10)

"Hold ... our confidence

steadfast to the end" (3:14)

"Christ ... entered ... into

heaven" (9:24)

"Ye have in heaven a

better ... substance" (10:34)

"His Son ... brightness of

His glory" (1:2,3)

"Crownest Him with

glory" (2:7)

"Bringing many sons unto

glory" (2:10)

• "We see Jesus" (2:9)

"Jesus the Son of God" (4:14)

"Even Jesus, made a high

priest" (6:20)

"Jesus made a surety" (7:22)

"Looking unto Jesus" (12:2)

"Son of man" (2:6)

"When He ... purged our

sins, sat down" (1:3)

"After ... one sacrifice ... for

ever sat down" (10:12)

"On the right hand of the

majesty on high" (1:3)

"On the right hand of the

throne of the Majesty in the

heavens" (8:1)

"At the right hand of the

throne of God" (12:2)

N. Berry

Young Christian: Volume 13, 1923, Eye on Christ in Heaven, The: Acts 7

You never find heaven opened save when the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is in question. Whatever man may be, whatever I am, there is One Person on whom the eye of God can rest with perfect delight—and nothing God can do to express it, is too much.

There is nothing the children of God need to judge themselves about so much as not walking with their eye fixed on Christ. If God has taken you out of power of circumstances on earth, it is to shut you up to Christ above. Heaven is now the only place you have.

“Full of the Holy Ghost.” Do we Christians think enough of the possibility of that little word? The effect of it on Stephen was, that he looked up steadfastly into heaven; not an expression of the indwelling Spirit, such as man might expect, but his soul brought into what occupies God’s thoughts. O! for more of this bringing of our thoughts and hearts under all circumstances into that place where God is unhinderedly showing forth His power, and that in a Man in heaven.

Nothing has let saints of these days down spiritually so much as want of intercourse with the living Saviour at God’s right hand. I am left here, not that I may know myself saved, or to do a great deal, but to walk in communion with Him. Am I doing this?

Stephen gets that same light which was to fall a little while afterward on Saul of Tarsus. Christ let the glory of His Father fall on him. God presented to his soul that which enabled him to be perfectly quiet as to the scene of wicked men’s darkness, whence His Son has been cast out. We see what the power of it is.

“Stephen calling upon (or invoking), saying, Lord Jesus.” It is a distinct act of worship to the Lord Jesus. Stephen was there in weakness, and he must have the whole expression of the love of the heart of Christ. If you have been walking today with God as a people whom He has saved, and will have in the glory, you will have seen a quantity of things in which your need could only be met by communion with the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven.

“Stephen kneeled down.” The collectedness of his spirit is remarkable. What a contrast between human thoughts and divine, in a man’s heart! The rancor and hatred of the Jews, because God had uncovered Stephen’s heart to see the glory of Christ, and Stephen, like the Lord, praying, “Lay not this sin to their charge.” He received an answer to his prayer in Saul of Tarsus.

Christ is always before God, filling His eyes—Are you occupied with Him? And favored by the revelation of Him? If you are, He is more than an answer to your circumstances.

It is no light matter, but serious and solemn in the extreme, as well as most blessed, to have to do with God, to be brought near to Him, to stand in the relationship of a child, and to be the object of. His unchanging favor. It is to be feared that there are many who, while gladly appropriating to themselves all the blessings of such a position, have yet but a very feeble sense of the responsibility it entails. They have never yet apprehended the truth that God will not be mocked, and that, being what He is, He must have reality in those who draw near to Him. He has been sought by such, not for what He is, but merely for what He can give, and hence they have no sense of the deep blessedness of His presence; they have never known what it is to be at home with Himself, to find it enough to sit before Him.

Reader, have you known what it is to be alone with God-to isolate yourself for a moment, however brief, from the busy throng around, and from the crowd of circumstances in which you live-to be really alone with Him, and not only there without one fear or doubt, but to find your soul filled and satisfied with a sweetness and a blessedness that you know and experience, but cannot express in words; for human language fails to convey what the Spirit-taught soul alone can understand or enjoy? To taste it in any little measure ensures two things which, though distinct, ought never to be separated-the drawing out of the affections, and the exercise of the conscience. He whose affections are most drawn out will be the one whose conscience will be most deeply and healthily exercised; for there will be in it, in that case, nothing of the spirit of the legalist, no thought of what I must or I ought, but only what will suit and please the One that has got my heart.

There are many, it is to be feared, who do not wish to get too near to the blessed Lord, who would not care for the place of the beloved disciple-leaning on His bosom (John 13:23)-but who would find themselves more at home and less constrained with the servants of the high priest. (Luke 22:54-60) And yet who would deny that the greatest nearness means the greatest blessedness? and that the Giver must of very necessity be far better than His gifts? And if the thoughts and purposes, the ways, and works, and actings of God, be so wonderful and glorious, what must He Himself be when revealed in His own essential blessedness? and if the soul does but apprehend, however feebly, something of what He is, how can it do otherwise than desire to be near Him 2 It is an immense thing to know something of the heart of God, to know His own eternally-formed and unalterable purpose to bless us, and to be able to measure every circumstance in our history by a love that will never give us up, but that will, in spite of ourselves, turn everything to account, and thus make all things work together for our good.

Man’s thought of blessing is too often limited to mere earthly things, while in reality all true blessing consists in knowing God, being acquainted with Himself. Reader, do you know Him, more intimately than any earthly friend, so that your soul expands in His presence, a presence that to you brings no constraint, but only fills you with untold blessedness? Such blessedness as this is all unknown by those who allow themselves in anything that will not do for the Lord, and who imagine that words, mere empty words without corresponding acts, that profession without practice, that truth in the head without reality in the heart, will do for Him who is also the Holy and the True, and who cannot therefore tolerate what is inconsistent with the deep perfections of His being, while the more His presence is realized and manifested, the more intolerant is He of all evil-that is to say, of everything that is opposed to His nature.

The scripture at the head of this paper is a solemn instance of the holy government of God upon persons who had been guilty of no gross outward sin, but who sought to earn a character for greater devotedness than they really possessed. They presumed upon the forbearance of God, and imagined that He would take no notice of an unreality and a false profession of which their fellows knew nothing, but which was only most hateful to Him, to whom indeed-for He was present there-they had lied. They had brought but a part of the proceeds of the sale, while falsely pretending they were offering the whole, and God being there, their sin was exposed at once, and met with immediate judgment; for He could not be mocked with impunity. If His presence is less realized now in the assembly, and His forbearance more manifested, it is well to remember that His nature is unchanged, and though His power in government may not be displayed in so public a manner as it was in the above-noted instance, yet He can never give up what is due to Himself, and will most surely, sooner or later, unless it be truly repented of, visit in His holiness every act of unreality, and all mere empty profession, with the chastisement it deserves.

Unreality is the sure sign either of ignorance, indifference, or inertness of soul. It tells the sad and solemn tale, that he who bears its mark has not responded to the goodness of God, and that all the blessings so lavishly bestowed upon him have failed to awaken that holy and healthful gratitude which always proclaims its existence by the inquiry, How can I now please the One that has so loved and favored me?

When the truth that is professed produces no corresponding result in the soul, when the words spoken remain but words, and have never been clothed with life and made good in acts, there a hardening process soon begins to manifest itself; the conscience becomes less sensitive, while the affections are less drawn out. The crust of profession may yet remain, but when such a soul is approached by others who may have less intelligence but more spiritual energy, less knowledge but more communion, the hollowness and emptiness are painfully felt.

Unreality is one of the most terrible weapons in the armory of Satan. It dishonors the Lord; it degrades the testimony; it exposes the saint that is marked by it to the scorn and derision of the world; it awakens in every true-hearted believer the feelings of sorrow and shame, while others only too gladly shelter them- selves under its example. The spiritual perceptions are dulled, the conscience no longer in healthy exercise, the whole man (spiritually) is paralyzed and rendered incapable of forming a right judgment in any matter that may arise touching the Lord’s interests. Reader, beware of unreality.

If there are some that cannot but be conscious of the distance there is between their profession and their practice, it must not be forgotten that there are many whose unreality, while patent to others, is all unknown to themselves; for it proceeds, not from the deliberate allowance of anything unsuited to the truth professed, but from ignorance or inertness of soul Many a one in this state only needs to have the failure pointed out in order to act differently. There are some simple souls that are ignorant of the fact that the Holy Ghost has by the two great apostles, Paul and Peter, given very distinct directions as to the attire of women, while the whole Scripture abounds in general exhortations against conformity to the world. It is a solemn thing for such as know these truths, that profess too to have died to the world, to go up to meet the Lord and commemorate His death, and there, at such a time, to appear in His very presence in the trappings of that world, the silken chains of that slavery, to deliver from which the Lord of life and glory had gone to the cross and the grave. (Gal. 1:4)

Many can speak freely of a “blessed hope,” “a heavenly citizenship,” and “an object for the heart,” in a way that only makes others wonder at the incongruity between their words and their ways. Others again will boast of being on “the only right ground,” and of having “come out to

Christ," while all they have done has been to make Him the professed standard of their ecclesiastical separation, and of that alone. In everything else His claims are disallowed, and hence when the time of trial comes what is due to Him as the Head is also refused.

In whatever form unreality may be manifested, differing too as it does in various cases, both in its extent and immediate cause, yet it may all and always be traced back to this root-that it has not been the habit of soul to walk with God, to bring everything into the light of His presence, and to get His thoughts about the simplest of the every-day matters of life. No doubt he who does so will suffer in the flesh, which must be refused and disallowed if he would please the Lord; but, on the other hand, he will know the exceeding compensation of having the Lord's approval of his ways.

If God bring us near to Himself, it can only be to bless us, and this in a manner worthy of Himself, while those who acknowledge how richly He has blessed us for eternity, will surely not venture to say He is any less able or willing to bless us here in time. But the blessing must be in His own way, and that is ever perfect; while if any refuse it unless it comes to them in their way, not in His, yet will He seek and also find objects upon whom He can expend all the love of His heart, all the fullness of His blessing.

Reader, has He found such a one in you? and is it the settled purpose of your heart to walk with Him, and only and in all things to please Him? "Enoch walked with God, and he was not: for God took him," and "he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5)

F. S. M.

Girdle of Truth: Volume 2, Occupation of the Heart With Good, The

" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people' of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him cloth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."-Acts 4:8-12.

Our boldness for Christ before 'the world, and the calmness of our spirits in the presence of opposition will always hang on the measure in which our hearts are occupied with the good we have found in Christ. In truth the proper occupation of the heart of a Saint is with good, and nothing but good. " Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phil. 4:8.)

The mind habitually thinking on that which is good, will, in result, find "the God of peace" will be with it; as the heart that is careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making known its requests to God, will be kept by "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." This is beautifully exemplified in the apostle's walk, generally, and especially in the scene before us.

The rulers are against the preaching of Christ; but the mind of the apostles, dwelling on the blessedness of Christ, and possessed and filled with the things which they had seen and heard, have peace within, and power without, so that their enemies are obliged to ascribe the effect, not to a natural source, but to companionship with Christ. "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." (Verse 13.) This power resulted from their hearts being occupied with good. They did not occupy their minds in alleging the evil, much less with the wrong done to themselves; they simply said, " We know Jesus whom ye have crucified." Having known the value of Jesus, and being possessed with a deep sense of the power of the good, they discern at once what was the great sin of those before whom they are arraigned-" whom ye crucified." The apostle was occupied with the love of souls, and hence he did not for a moment trouble himself with the chief priest; but speaking of the good, he condemned the evil. If he says, " this is the stone which was set at naught of you builders," it is because his heart was possessed with the truth, " neither is there salvation in any other."

" Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." It is of the last importance, therefore, to attend to the injunction, "if there be any virtue, if there be any PRAISE, think on these things." We cannot feed our own souls nor the souls of the saints when speaking of evil. It is only when speaking of good that we get refreshed and God gets any praise. We are to be "simple concerning evil, and wise concerning good." When the soul delights in the good it is because it is regenerate and has tasted the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tell such an one that he was regenerated by baptism or any other figment, and he will know better. The soul having tasted the good becomes master of the evil. A deep sense of the knowledge of the good will keep even the weakest saint from the deception of the evil. It is the knowledge of the good that gives the power. But this is not obtained by elaborate teaching, but the teaching of the Holy Ghost in what is good. If a man tell me I must not talk of the salvation which is in Jesus-must not speak to souls-all he could say would never prevent me. My answer would be as the apostle's-"I cannot but speak that which I have seen and heard."

No praise can arise out of a soul dwelling on evil. The blessedness of being possessed with good is seen in Malachi 2:6, 7: " The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." The character of a soul filled with the spirit of Jesus is, that it must ever crave the good. All we want for every possible exigency is to be found in Jesus. If I want power, I look up to Christ risen and get it, in what he is there, " far above all principality and power." (Eph. 1:21.) If I want love and sympathy, I get it in Jesus down here. I see God (in Jesus) on earth; I find divine glory developed in the lowest place on earth; for when Jesus was brought lowest, then we see God most; and in some circumstances nothing but God in Jesus could do what Jesus did when on earth. If I want the comfort of love, I must carry my heart there, and get my spirit imbued with what Jesus was on earth.

For I get holy sympathy in Jesus down here-power in what Christ is at God's right hand.

Things New and Old: Volume 21, Jesus Only

On my way home one evening, I noticed that a building—called in this country a church—was brilliantly lighted up.

Before I came to it a gentleman touched my arm, and said, “Will you come in to our service at the church?”

“No, thank you,” I said.

“I can get you a seat close to the pulpit, if you will come in,” said the gentleman. “No, not tonight.”

“You had better come tonight,” said he: “ You may never have another opportunity.”

“No, thank you,” I said; and I looked up to the Lord to have a word to say to this zealous one.

By this time we had arrived opposite the doors of the church, and I noticed over the porch these words, “Jesus only.”

I looked at the gentleman and said, “I see you have “Jesus only” outside your church, but have you “Jesus only’ inside?”

“Oh, come in,” he repeated.

“But tell me, What is the way to be saved from the wrath to come?”

“You must believe in Jesus, enter the church, and lead an upright life,”

“Oh then,” I said, “it is not Jesus only.” I must enter the church and lead an upright life besides. You see it is not Jesus only.

“No, no! not exactly,” he replied; and we parted.

This passage came to my mind: “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12.) How sad it is, I thought, that they teach in that church that three things are necessary to salvation. We read nothing in the scripture about “entering the church,” or “leading an upright life,” as a means of salvation.

Every believer is a part of the true church, and should seek light from above, as to what Christians he should unite himself with; but this is not that he may be saved, but because he is saved; and surely too he should lead an upright life. But for salvation Jesus said, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”

How is it with you, my reader? are you trying to be saved by three things, and two of them your own doing—or will you let it be “Jesus only?”

Correspondence, Correspondence: 1 Tim. 5:8; 1 Tim. 6:19, 14; Philistines; Acts 4:27, 30

Ques. Please explain 1 Tim. 5:8. J, G M.

Ans. This verse occurs where the laborer in the Lord's work was intrusted in arranging matters of detail in the assembly. This verse teaches us that though our blessings are spiritual and heavenly, yet we must take care not to neglect the duties connected with our own household, in caring for and providing for them. To neglect our own, makes us worse than the unbeliever in our conduct, for he cares for his own. His may be a selfish motive; ours should be because the Lord has given us our household to care for for Him. (Eph. 5:22 to 6:9; Col. 3: 18 to 4:1.)

Ques. What is the import of the words, "Lay hold on eternal life?" 1 Tim, 6:19, and what does "this commandment" refer to in verse 14? H. M. F.

Ans. This passage can be read, "Lay hold on what is really life." It is in contrast with the mind being set on present things. From verses 17 to 19 those who are rich are addressed to not let their minds be set on, nor trust to their riches, but to the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy, and shows their privilege to use their money in view of eternity. By this means, they will lay hold of what is "really life" in the sense of "real enjoyment of life in communion with God."

Verse 14 refers to the good confession Timothy had confessed before many witnesses, and he is to keep it without spot, and unrebukable, so that in the day of Christ's appearing, the day of manifestation, it will have His approval.

Ques. What do the Philistines represent as our enemies? G.

Ans. The Canaanites represent Satan's power over which the people of God have gained the victory, counted and dealt with as enemies. The land was taken from them, and the Philistines migrated into the land, and were thorns and distress to Israel. So to us, they represent the allowed evil of Satan's power, which distresses us, and hinders us from enjoying our heavenly blessings.

Jonathan, in the energy of faith in God, fought the whole camp with success (1 Sam. 14), but he lacked prayer and separation to God, and so eventually fell a victim to them (1 Sam. 31:2).

Samuel, a man of prayer, was ever successful against them (1 Sam. 7:12, 13).

Also David, as type of Christ, conquered them.

The energy of faith, given by the Spirit in prayerful dependence on God, alone can keep these enemies subdued.

Ques. Why do the disciples pray to do signs and wonders in the name of the "Holy Child Jesus," instead of the name of the Lord Jesus? (Acts 4:27 and 30). C.

Ans. The word "Child" should read `Servant." Jesus was the Holy Servant, that was raised up as a servant to deliver Israel. (See Acts 3:22, 26; 10: 38; 13:33. Note the word "again" is to be left out. It is in these verses, raised up a servant in His lifetime. See N. T. and Revised Version). The disciples, in accordance with His place as Jehovah's servant (Isa. 49:6), pray now, as servants of like character, for boldness to witness for Him, and to do the greatest works of which He foretold (John 14:12).

Whither Bound?, Can You Tell Me the Way to Heaven?

Away out in the old Somme region, one morning, we were holding the trench and came in for the usual shelling. Presently there was a black cloud as a shell burst and pieces of shrapnel came whizzing past us, and poor Bert fell like a log. Jim and another chap jumped down and picked him up, but they saw at a glance that it was a hopeless case. There was not a dressing station nearby, so some fellows got some empty sandbags and an old coat, and laid Bert on them in the bottom of the trench to die.

Before long Jim was startled by a voice behind him, “Can you tell me the way to heaven?”

Jim jumped down again beside Bert and said, “The way to heaven? Sorry, chum, I don’t know. I’ll ask the other fellows.”

He returned to the firing step and walked along to the next man and asked him, but he did not know. So the question was passed along the Traverse Trench from man to man. “Bert is dying. He wants to know the way to heaven. Can you tell him?” The question had got right along the trench to No. 16, but out of those sixteen not one knew the way to heaven! Just think of it! Sixteen young fellows brought up in a so-called Christian land, but they could not help a dying comrade! When you see an old friend dying and you cannot help him, it goes hard. What you think and guess just won’t do. Oh, no! He wants the real thing. How many there are like those sixteen! How about it? Could you turn me to the Old Book and give me chapter and verse for God’s Way to heaven?

So No. 16 jumped off the firing step and went rushing on to the next post, where, all alone, stood another on the alert. He felt a thump on his back and heard a voice shouting, “There’s a chap in our company who has been hit; he is dying and he wants to know the way to heaven. Can you tell him?”

Turning around, and with a smile lighting up his face, he replied, “Yes.” He thrust his hand into his shirt pocket and pulled out a New Testament. Quickly turning over its pages he said, “Look here, that verse marked with pencil. I’ll fold the pages back. Put your thumb on that verse. Tell him that is the way.”

Quickly No. 16 rushed back, passed the message and Testament on from man to man and soon Jim had it in his hand. He dropped down beside Bert, who lay there so still. He touched his shoulder; slowly Bert opened his eyes. “I’ve got it, Bert, old chum. Here it is; the way to heaven: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Peace came over Bert’s face, as he kept gasping out “whosoever.” After a bit, he lay quiet and still again. All at once with one great effort raising himself, his hands stretched upwards; his face lit up, with one last gasp, “Whosoever,” he fell back dead. What a change — from the battlefield to be with Christ!

Dear friends, as an old soldier, who now himself has also found the way, let me assure you that this is the real thing. Jesus is the real Saviour. Jesus who said, “I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” (John 10:9). Jesus who died, the Just One, for us, the unjust, that He might bring us to God; Himself, now seated at God’s right hand crowned with glory and honor. He is the only Saviour and the only Way to heaven.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Simple Testimony: Volume 20, “Being Let Go.”

"And being let go, they went to their own company.”

Acts 4:23.

THIS simple statement presents a beautiful example of the instincts and tendencies of the divine nature. We always find that when a man is released from some special engagement—set free from some special demand upon him—in a word, when he is "let go," he will, most probably, seek the company of those most congenial to his tastes. When parade is over, the soldiers betake themselves to their various associates and pursuits. When a school breaks up, the pupils do the same. When the warehouse or counting-house is closed, the young men betake themselves, some to the religious assembly, some to the reading-room, some, alas! to the tavern, the theater, or the gambling-house. "Being let go," they are almost sure to go "to their own company." It is when a man is fully at leisure that you see what his bent and tendency really are. Two men may stand behind the same counter from eight in the morning till six in the evening; but mark them when the clock strikes six! Observe them when "let go"! One makes his way to the taproom, and the other to some place of worship or religious instruction. "Being let go," they soon find out "their own company.”

Reader, how do you act when "let go"? What company do you seek? Do you betake yourself to those who, like the assembly in Acts 4, occupy themselves in holy worship, prayer, and praise? Or do you own as your companions the giddy and the thoughtless, the profane and the immoral, the scoffer and the skeptic? Oh! search and see. Just ask yourself, when next you take your seat in the midst of your own company, "Would I, at this moment, like to hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God?" Are you washed from your sins in the blood of Jesus? Are you saved? Are you at peace with God? Let me beseech you to make close, personal work of it this very hour. Do not trifle with your soul

and with a boundless eternity. God is in earnest—Christ is in earnest, the Holy Spirit is in earnest—Satan is in earnest—and will you trifle? "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). May the Holy Spirit lead you now to believe in the love of God, and learn fully, and without a shadow of a doubt, upon the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Then you will seek the "company" of the redeemed on earth; and when "let go" from every weight and hindrance down here, you will join "your own company" in the mansions above. C. H. M.

Young Christian: Volume 26, 1936, "Being Let Go"

“And being let go, they went to their own company.” (Acts 4:23).

This simple statement presents a beautiful example of the instincts and tendencies of the divine nature. We always find that when a man is released from some special engagement—set free from some special demand upon him—in a word, when he is “let go,” he will, most probably, seek the company of those who are most congenial to his tastes. When parade is over, the soldiers betake themselves to their various associates and pursuits. When a school breaks up, the pupils do the same. When the warehouse or counting house is closed, the young men betake themselves, some to the religious assembly, some to the reading room, some alas! to the tavern, the theater, or the gambling house. “Being let go,” they are almost sure to go “to their own company.”

It is when a man is fully at leisure that you see what his bent and tendency really are. When he gets, free from present claims, you will be able to judge of the pursuits and companions of his heart’s selection.

Two men may be seen standing behind the same counter, from 9 in the morning, till 5, in the evening; but mark, when the clock strikes five, observe them when “being let go,” —and you will find one making his way to some pleasure, and the other to some place of worship or religious instruction. Thus it is always. “Being let go,” we soon find out “our own company.”

Reader, how do you act, when “let go?” What company do you seek? Do you betake yourself to those who, like the assembly in Acts 4, occupy themselves in holy worship, prayer and praise? Or do you own as your companions, the giddy and the thoughtless, the profane and the immoral, the scoffer and the skeptic, the infidel and the atheist? O! search and see.

Just ask yourself, when next you take your seat in the midst of your own company, “Would I, at this moment, like to hear, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God?” Are you washed from your sins in the blood of Jesus? Are you saved? Are you at peace with God?

Let me beseech you, dear friend, to make close, earnest, personal work of it, this very hour. Do not trifle with your immortal soul, and with a boundless eternity. God is in earnest—Christ is in earnest—the Holy Ghost is in earnest—Satan is in earnest—and will you trifle? Will you delay?

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2).

May God the Holy Ghost lead you, now, to believe in the love of God, and lean fully and, without a shadow of doubt, upon the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Then you will seek the “company” of the redeemed, on earth; and, when “let go” from every weight and hindrance, down here, you will join “your own company” in the mansions above.

Young Christian: Volume 6, 1916, We Must Be Saved: Acts 4:12

How startling must have been the words of Peter spoken to the Jewish Council. Probably there were more priests in that Council having direct authority from God Himself than in any meeting ever convened; and yet Peter, after preaching “Christ crucified,” whom God raised up from the dead, closed his address with these memorable words: “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” What! Do priests need to be saved? Peter, “full of the Holy Ghost,” says, “We must be saved.” Mark the urgency, the importunity of the Holy Spirit. “We must be saved.”

O, my reader, you must be saved, you must not perish. There is salvation in the crucified. O, in this Man raised up from the dead by God, there is deliverance from the wrath to come. O, sinner, eternal judgment is before you! The lake of fire must be your eternal abode – the devil and his angels your company in eternal misery – if you live and die without Christ – without salvation! God gave His Son – such His love. Now the Holy Spirit is beseeching, entreating, and pleading with the poor sinner. He cannot, will not be put off. “We must be saved;” it is the pleading of divine love. “We must be saved,” it is the importunity of divine affection which must have its object saved. It is not “we ought,” “we may,” “we should be saved.” No, it is more emphatically expressed. O, my reader, will you trifle with this matter when God is thus in earnest? All is earnestness around. Satan is in earnest in luring thee on to destruction, sure and eternal. God, His Son, the Holy Spirit, are in earnest about thee. Wilt thou be careless about thy never-dying soul – about thine eternal destiny? Heaven, hell, and salvation are terribly real.

My reader, you have been told in these pages of the necessity of being born again; of the necessity of the Son of Man being lifted up. Now you are entreated to ponder over the necessity of being saved.

Young Christian: Volume 3, 1913, Being Let Go

“And being let go, they went to their own company” (Acts 4:23). This simple statement presents a beautiful example of the instincts and tendencies of the divine nature. We always find that when a man is released from some special engagement — set free from some special demand upon him — in a word, when he is “let go,” he will, most probably, seek the company of those who are most congenial to his tastes. When parade is over, the soldiers betake themselves to their various associates and pursuits. When a school breaks up, the pupils do the

same. When the warehouse or office is closed, the young men go either to a religious assembly, or reading room or, alas, to the saloon, or theater or gambling house, etc. “Being let go,” they are almost sure to go “to their own company.” It is when a man is fully at leisure that you see what his bent and tendency really are. When he gets free from present claims you will be able to judge of the pursuits and companions of his heart’s selection. Two men may be seen standing behind the same counter, from eight in the morning till six in the evening; but mark them when the clock strikes six — observe them when they are “let go” — and you will find one making his way to the saloon, and the other to his home and then to a religious meeting. Thus it is always. “Being let go.” we soon find out “our own company.”

Reader, how do you act when “let go”? What company do you seek? Do you betake yourself to those who, like the assembly in Acts 4, occupy themselves in holy worship, prayer, and praise? Or do you own as your companions, the giddy and the thoughtless, the profane and the immoral, the scoffer and the skeptic, the infidel and the atheist? O search and see. Just ask yourself, when next you take your seat in the midst of your own company, “Would I, at this moment like to hear the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God”? Are you washed from your sins in the blood of Jesus? Are you saved? Are you at peace With God? Let me beseech you, dear friend, to make close, earnest, personal work of it this very hour. Do not trifle with your immortal soul, and with a boundless eternity. God is in earnest — Christ is in earnest — the Holy Ghost is in earnest — Satan is in earnest — and will you trifle? Will you delay? “Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). May God the Holy Ghost lead you, now, to believe in the love of God, and lean fully, and without the shadow of a doubt, upon the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Then you will seek the “company” of the redeemed on earth; and, when “let go” from every weight and hindrance down here, you will join “your own company” in the mansions above.

Words of Faith: Volume 1, Answers to Correspondents: Administrative and Governmental Forgiveness

Q.-What is the meaning of "administrative forgiveness," and is there any difference between it and "governmental forgiveness"? M. S.

A.-Administrative forgiveness we may find in John 20:23; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 2 Cor. 2:10: it is simply forgiveness administered by disciples according to the authority given them by the Lord, and therefore in His name. It is necessarily also “governmental”, that is, dependent upon conditions which the principles of divine government impose. As a sample of it, Matthew 18:23-35, which is a parable of the kingdom, may be referred to, and baptism for the remission of sins clearly is such a hypothetical conditional forgiveness, based upon the assumption that the supposed disciple shall turn out to be a "disciple indeed." Absolute remission is in God's hands alone.

Yet because “administrative” is always “governmental” forgiveness, it does not follow that the converse of this is true. The latter is, in fact, much wider in application than the former: see Matt. 6:14,15; Luke 6:37,38.

F. W. G.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Women Praying and Prophesying

Q.-1 Cor. 11:5. Does it imply that in apostolic days women prayed and prophesied in public? Compare Acts 1:14; 2:17, 18; and 21:9. V. L.

A.-It is in ver. 18, that we hear of “in public” or in assembly. The early verses of the chapter treat of decorum in females. Wherever they might pray or prophesy, they were bound to walk in the subordination of God's order. But 1 Cor. 14:34, 35, enjoins imperatively silence on the women in the assemblies. It is not permitted to them to speak. They are to be in subjection, as the law also says. If they wish to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the assembly. Compare too 1 Tim. 2:11-14. It is likely that among other disorders Corinthian women spoke in the assembly: if so, the apostle put an end to it. Yet women might prophesy, as Philip's daughters in their father's house, and even then with careful decorum of subjection even outwardly marked. It is certain that they were charged to keep silence in the assemblies of the saints.

Christian Truth: Volume 5, Spirit Filled the House, The

It is said, "It filled all the house where they were sitting." Now what filled it, the sound or the Spirit? The sound, of course. Are you sure of this? Read the verse, Acts 2:2, and you will be assured of it too. No reader of the English New Testament need have a doubt about it. The Spirit was there.

Three things are named in this important passage:

1.A sound came suddenly from heaven. This addressed their ears, and was like the bell of a signal that tells of the coming in of a fresh train. The promised Spirit was now come.

2."Cloven tongues like as of fire" appeared unto them, and sat upon each of them. This addressed their eyes as the sound had addressed their ears. Besides, they were seen in their distribution; "it sat upon each of them."

3. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak," etc.

This was something internal and invisible. The Holy Ghost had been symbolized in the sound like "a rushing mighty wind," as a power that would carry everything before it, while it was shown to be intelligent power in the light of the fiery tongues; and that it sat on each of them was indicative that these humble disciples were now endowed as personal witnesses with the power of the Holy Ghost, and made His instruments in giving testimony to a rejected, crucified, but now risen and exalted, Lord and Christ.

Aberdeen Conference: 2023, Acts 2:3-47

Reading

We pray our loving God and our Father, we are before Thee, Thy precious Word, to be opened and read in its blindly inspired pages. You know Thou hast given us from Thyself, through those inspired Penman, that which is needful for our souls in the formation of our lives here, for Thy glory and the glory of Thy beloved Son. And so we pray, as we 10 you in this portion of acts, to that thou art give us, at which would settle and establish our souls. Present truth and encourage us in the path of faith, that we might be here for the glory of our blessed Savior, Thy beloved Son. And we would ask it, our God and Father, for His glory, and in His alone, precious and worthy name the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen. Maybe pick up from verse three again and read the same portion. I know if this is the last reading we might have to go more of an outline form but. Acts chapter 2, verse three. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as a fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And they were dwelling at Jerusalem. Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language, and they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another. Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans, and house here we every man in his own tongue wherein we were born. Parthians and Medes, Elamites and the dwellings of Mesopotamia and Enthrigea in Cappadocia and Pontius and Asia, Fergia and Pamphylia in Egypt, in the parts of Libya roundabout, Cyreni and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Crates and Arabians. We do hear them speak in our own tongues and wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter standing up with the 11, lift up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words. For these are not drunken as ye suppose seen as, but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God. I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

And on my servants and on my can maidens, I will pour out of these days of my spirit, and they shall prophecy, and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapors of smoke. The sun shall be turned Into Darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs. Which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know Him, being delivered by the determinant, council, and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death. Because it was not possible that he should behold an oven. For David speaketh concerning him. I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad. Moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One, to seek corruption. Thou hast made known to me the way of life. Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried in his sepulchre is with us. And to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God hath sworn with an oath to him, that the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. He seen this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did seek corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnessed. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which he now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens, but he saith himself. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes for my foots whole. Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ. The Lord had told them they would testify of him, and so these tongues of fire are a sign of the Spirit of God indwelling them that appeared. On the disciples are in connection with the thought of testimony, but their divided tongues, because the testimony was not going to just go to the Jew, but it was going to go to the Gentile as well as the Lord had told them, starting in Judea, Jerusalem, but out to Samaria, and then on to the uttermost parts of the earth, so that testimony would extend far beyond the circle that they knew. And indeed it did in time, but in circumstances of persecution and Stevens martyrdom. The disciples later were scattered and went everywhere taking the word of God and preaching with him. Up to that point it was really chiefly the 12 That bore witness there in Jerusalem and Judea and had the the responsibility. And privilege of bearing that testimony. This is not the baptism of fire. That John spoke of Speaking of the Lord coming, whose shoe latch that he was not worthy to unloose, that he would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. This is not the baptism of fire. That is for a coming day, because he'll have his fan in his hand, as the Scripture says, and thoroughly purges floor, and he'll burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. That's a coming day of judgment. I know it's popularly said that this was the baptism of fire. As well as the Spirit of God, but that does not comport with scripture. So they would speak and they went out, and the Spirit of God manifested his power.

In that testimony and that they spoke in all different languages the wonderful works of God. I just suggest that that is similar to what you get in Acts 7 with Stephen. Where he, at the beginning of what he says, he rehearses God's ways with Israel and the wonderful things that God had done for Israel. And so they gave out and they gave a testimony of the wonderful works of God. But then when Peter finally speaks, he really brings it home in the gospel, and he brings it home to heart and conscience, the wonderful works of God in themselves. Didn't do that, but it was that which would resonate in the heart of every Jew that God had worked with them over many years and in different ways. So they speak in these various tongues. These are not, it's not gibberish. It's human languages. There are those from all parts. Of the earth if you follow these lands that are named around it's like the points of a compass it swings all the way from east all the way around to West down to the South it's like all points of the compass and. They are accused and mocked by the men of Judea. Who did not understand, having been born in Judea, did not understand those languages. But those who came from all these different parts, Jews who were born in Gentile lands, spoke to these Gentile tongues. They also spoke Aramaic. That's what the Jews spoke in Judea. And so it's a display of the power of the Spirit of God. He doesn't do away with Babel, but he rises above it and reaching these souls. Well, when that's mocked, then Peter comes out and he draws from Old Testament scriptures. What other scriptures did he have then? The Old Testament scriptures he draws from the book Prophet Joel to show that what they were seeing was indeed the power of the Spirit of God and nothing else. They had been accused of it being drunkenness, but it was not. And so they didn't understand those languages, but those who from were from these various countries did. But then he turns and he speaks. An Aramaic which all would understand, and he takes up this prophecy of Joel. And it's helpful to understand that when he says. In verse 16. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. He's not saying this is the fulfillment of what was spoken by the prophet Joel, but this is the same character, the same kind of thing, and it's a proof that it was indeed the Spirit of God come down and displaying his manifesting his power in this testimony for Christ. Then Steve, there's those who believe that he was speaking

Aramaic or Hebrew, but it was they heard it in their own language. Right. That that has and, and I'll have to be honest, I thought that at one time myself, but that would be a miracle in the ears of the unbelievers. That was not what was happening. It was a gift of the Holy Spirit. Indwelling these believers and they were speaking in languages that they could not have spoken in before and was an understandable language. Language is it was a miracle of the tongue and not of the ear. Verse 11 makes that plain. We do hear them speak in our tongues. The wonderful works of God. Scripture says. When it takes up an Old Testament, New Testament scripture says when it takes up an Old Testament scripture, if it's a fulfillment or not or even a partial fulfillment, it'll say then was fulfilled, then came to pass. And so the Spirit of God is very careful to distinguish as you go through that We might understand, he doesn't leave it for us to guess that we might understand when it's a fulfillment or when he is drawing on an Old Testament scripture to say it's like this.

It's the same character. Why does he? Why does he go into? He go beyond and bring out all the prophecy in that. Joel Was Joel's prophecy very much concerns? Jerusalem and Judea. And I don't want to take the time to go back through it, but it much concerns Jerusalem and Judea. So it was a very suitable prophet to draw from, because what does he start his address with? Ye men of Judea and ye that dwell at Jerusalem. And so it was very suitable. Why does he go on and speak of those things that are connected with judgment? Because they had rejected Messiah and the sword of judgment was hanging over that nation. And so I believe he goes on to speak of that aspect of things and and includes that in what he quotes from Joel. Though those judgments will yet be taken up and fulfilled in a coming day in the tribulation. That will be their actual fulfillment. But it will be for the same reason, because they rejected Christ. And so when the Lord quotes from Isaiah and he says this is the acceptable year of the Lord. He leaves off the part of that same verse that says and the day of vengeance of our God, because it wasn't. And so you say, why wouldn't Peter do the same thing with Joel? Well, no, it's because he's really bringing before them their responsibility. When the Spirit of God descended on Christ at the River Jordan, it was in the bodily form as a dove. And emblematic of his character and his ministry here, it's Tongues of Fire. Why? Because the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness of men. And the gospel not only brings the message of salvation, but it brings the message that the 1St man has been judged at the cross, and the wrath of God is revealed against sin and fully shown there. And so it's tongues of fire because it has a message not only of salvation, but of judgment too. And so it's appropriate, I think, that he includes that aspect. Of what he quotes from Joel. We had a little bit of that yesterday. I don't know whether you were here, Brother Vern, but we have to remember, of course, as we said yesterday, that God was giving Israel one final opportunity to accept Christ as the Messiah, this time as a risen Christ in glory. And so the Spirit of God here in the second chapter does not go all the way. Because. If they had been willing, they could have accepted the gospel. And avoided that judgment. And so the Spirit of God I suggest. Includes it here, but doesn't carry it right to its logical conclusion. You don't get that until Paul's ministry comes in after Israel had rejected this wonderful message from a risen Christ in glory. And as you brought out and others too. They stoned Stephen as it were saying we're sending a messenger after you, Lord. We don't want to be irreverent, but just saying in case you didn't get the point. We're making sure. And after that we see the nation of Israel gradually drifting more into the background. And then Pulse, or rather Saul of Tarsus, is saved and raised up to go forth in a totally different character with a the same message, but with new revelations that came in through him. Satan worked and the heart of man was revealed the the apostle brings their guilt before them. But Satan, you might say, I would don't know what was all in his line. How can I know that? But I think he thought he had a victory when the Lord Jesus was put on that cross and died buried.

He thought he had a victory. Oh, but three days later, the Lord raised from the dead. He was raised from the dead. He had gone down into death, defeated death, and was raised again. And then he went back to heaven and Satan said, well, good riddance, at least he's not here. He can stay in heaven. And that was a victory for him, too. The day of Pentecost comes. And Christ was here again. He's here again because as the Spirit of God came and united those believers to Christ in heaven, the body of Christ was formed on this earth, and Christ was here again. And though it was a number of years before the believers knew what had happened, Satan was not. So long before he was aware of exactly it, what taken place, and he set about to attack it. And so he thought he got rid of Christ. But here he is again, in this world, in his members. And we are united to Christ in heaven by that indwelling spirit of God. And when the head gives direction to the body, if you're one upon a nail and a piece of wood, your hat, your head says to your hand. Pick up the hammer, strike the nail, and guess what? If I watch you do that, I can tell what's in your head. You're saying I'm going to pound this nail in this piece of wood and as by the Spirit of God, our head in heaven gives direction through his body who is displayed in this world, the head Christ. Christ is displayed in this world and that Satan hates that and he has set about to attack it and so is the book of Acts unfolds. We'll find his attacks rise because that is what had taken place. The disciples didn't know that. Well, he's been pretty successful over the years and especially in the hands of man and the failure of this testimony and responsible man's hands. Nonetheless, the truth of that still abides in the scriptures. We're not going that direction are incumbent upon us to walk according to that truth of what took place on the day of Pentecost and all that flows from it. Can I ask, can I ask a question? I don't want to get on a I don't want to take the rest of the hour. I don't want to take the rest of the hour of answering this question, but I think it's a relevant question. I'm going to point this question to Steve because a lot of us have friends that believe that they're missing out because they're not speaking in tongues. So I have friends that are not gathered with us. They're not in this room, so don't look around. And they're wanting to know. They think they're missing out because they're not able to speak in tongues. I had one young man that works with me and he said, you know, my dad's church, they speak in tongues, but he says when I listen to the gibberish and then I. Listen to the man, the same man who just spoke in tongues a quote UN quote jibber. Then he translates himself what he just said and he says that's not what First Corinthians 14 says. My other friend says I think I'm missing out. I'm not able to speak because in First Corinthians 14 it says that that is. That Paul says he'd like to speak in tongues. I can speak in tongues more than y'all, so I know that's not what First Corinthians 14 means, but Christensen or Christensen? Christianity. Let me start over. The word of God, I do not believe, does not teach that. Where did that come from? Why is there this thing where they look at we're not able to speak in tongues, we're missing out on something and how can somebody take this chapter right here? Because every single time they're connecting the verse that was just read that you explained, Steve, with First Corinthians 14.

And saying, see, that is speaking in tongues. You're missing out. You're misinterpreting this scripture to me, Ted. Confusing question, I don't know. No, it's not a confusing question. I believe Peter says in his epistle, the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man for the common prophet. And one thing we see in the truth of the body of Christ that there is diversity. Long before people in the western world thought it was a cool thing to foist on everyone in their view of it. In companies today, there's a vice president of diversity and all of that stuff. God was way ahead and there is diversity of operations. So the Spirit of God operating in you will operate differently than in me because one member differs from another in the body of Christ. And so those that had the gift of tongues. Uh, where to, where to use it in a orderly, controlled way because God is not the offer of confusion, author of confusion. And so there are checks in the, when the assembly is gathered together, as we have in First Corinthians 12 and 14, that if any man speak in tongues, there is to be an interpreter. So we've had people drive up to our meeting room and places I've lived and pull over and walk up and not be in the parking lot and say, do you all speak, allow speaking in

tongues? And I, when I'm asked, I say, we certainly do. But I said, but there needs to be an interpreter. If there's no interpreter, then we're not to speak in tongues because the, the, the end result, the object is edification. And without an interpreter, a translator, there is no edification. And so to me it seems clear that that the gift of tongues was not universal. At the end of First Corinthians 12, the apostle asked a rhetorical question. He says in verse 29, are all apostles? Of course not. Are all prophets? No. Are all teachers? No. Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? It's a rhetorical question and the answer is no. Even in our chapter in Acts chapter 2, it says in verse four they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, but then it says began to speak with other tones. I don't assume that every single one of them was speaking in tongues. That's just my way of looking at the passage in my English Bible, because that would have been a lot of people speaking at once. But we know that there were a lot of languages being spoken and it's not gibberish. It is tongues. It is understandable languages that are were active amongst these people in that day. So I, I hope that addresses the question. Ted. But you're the judge of that. OK, so the only thing I 100% agree, they tell me that speaking in tongues is different than this is what they told me this speaking in tongues. But Ted is different than speaking in this language because in First Corinthians 14 that's talking in gibberish. Where are they getting that? We know that's not true, but where are they getting this? Let me suggest. Ted that speaking in tongues is well known. In different circles. And I'm not at all suggesting that this is the case with the people you're talking to. But it's well known that people can speak in tongues under demonic influence. That's number one. And there are occasions when that does occur under the guise of Christianity. But most of what you are hearing in, and I don't want to label any particular group, but in Christian circles where it's not demonic power, it is, to put it bluntly, and we know what it is medically, it's simply the excitement of the autonomic nervous system under certain influences. That gets people going into a state of ecstasy, much the same as hypnotism does. And of course there is a kind of hypnotism that is by demonic power, but a lot of it is not. It's used medically to try and get people to bring out things that perhaps they don't bring out in any other way. And there are those who are able by various Ways and Means to bring that out, and people get used to doing it.

And they can bring themselves into that kind of a state. The difficulty is #1. Most of the time they start to activate ridiculous now and then it's just gibberish, but then it gets to be carrying on in an unseemly way and sprawled all over the floor and all this kind of thing. And very, very, very, very loud. I don't want to be funny, but it was. When Bhutan banned the practice of any religion except Buddhism, many Christians went underground. And it was usually a certain group that got apprehended by the police every time because. Their meetings were so noisy and upsetting that everybody knew who they were and what they were doing. But it was not demonic in most cases. It was simply getting themselves worked up to the point where then this gibberish with a little came out and then somebody would even try and interpret. But then somebody tested them out and said, OK, no, I'm going to bring in another interpreter that didn't hear the first interpreter. And of course they couldn't agree. The 2nd interpreter interpreted in a totally different way. There was no correlation. And so the whole thing is really quite a fraud, but man likes it because it's all an excitement from within that causes all of that. And that's where most of it is coming from. And it can be very definitely shown. People can be induced to get into that kind of a trance, and sometimes they get so used to it that they can do it themselves. And then of course, they're persuaded somehow that this is the Spirit of God, but it very definitely is not. They will also use this one. They first verse of 13 burn not finished yet. Oh, I'm sorry, go easy. The point, the point is that we see this a lot and people think that it's the Spirit of God and they don't realize, in some cases really what is happening to them. They don't know what it is. But it's kind of a state of ecstasy they work themselves into and then. Man likes that, man likes that kind of thing, but it's man made. And the important thing to realize is that when these signed gifts were given. They were given by the Spirit of God. In order to confirm the word, because this was something new. And so I like what Bruce said. If someone comes to me and says you do you believe in speaking in tongues? I say I certainly do. But I expect you to follow the guidelines in the Word of God. And if you don't, then I don't think it's of God. And most of what you see out there today does not support the word of God and does not follow the guidelines. Which Paul gave later on to show how they were to be used and in the right way. OK, very good. I'm sorry I interrupted you. But they'll use the first verse of 13 and this is what it says. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, they say this is angels language, but in Scripture angels never spoke anything except language that men could understand. I'd like to make a few remarks on 1St Corinthians 14 because I to me it's where it explains. Is better than anywhere else the answer to the question, and so I'd like to make a few remarks about what Paul's saying in First Corinthians 14. I'll go right to the root of the matter, he says in verse 22. Tongues are for a sign. Not to them that believe. But to them that believe not. That is, this gift was given for the purpose. Of communicating. To those who did not know the language. Of Jerusalem. So that they would have the testimony given to them.

Anyone who? If you will, wants to be fulfilled and Speaking of in tongues and so on. The first question that can be asked to them is, is there someone you know in a language that you do not know and that they do not have the word of God in that language that needs that gift to be used so that they can hear it? There are very few languages in the world that don't have the word of God. And consequently, if it's a matter of communication in the day in which we live, we have what they didn't have on the day of Pentecost. And that is the word of God and the full explanation of it. And so today he says to such well, some at that point in Corinth had the gift, but they didn't have anywhere to use it. And so he answers the question for them about their use of the gift that they had in verse 28. If there be no interpreter for what you want to say, keep silent. You can't use it even if you have it because you're not fulfilling its purpose. It was assigned to those that did not have the word and the message that was already explained early in the meeting. Of those in the various places that were in Jerusalem, from other places, and it was a distinct gift that could be given. To meet their need and it was met that need. And so Paul says to those I have the gift. I have multiple languages that I have been given the gift of tongues to use. But he said I don't use it in the assembly because that's not the purpose of it. He says I use it and I'm going to give it to you at verse 14. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit, I will pray with understanding. I will sing with the Spirit. I will sing with the understanding also. And he goes on to say verse 19 in the church. I had rather speak 5 words with my understanding, then I might teach others than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue. In other words, the purpose of communication is understanding. And if the use of it doesn't promote fulfill that purpose, it's not to be used even if you had it. And consequently the person that says I need this, I want this in general, in fact almost every case, it's something they want for a display to themselves. For us, the purpose for which God gave it. And God doesn't give us things. That just are for ourselves if it's not a benefit to others. And all the gifts that are given in the church are given for the blessing and benefit of others, not ourselves only in personally. And so God gave that gift that it might be used for the blessing of others, but he doesn't. He's under no obligation to give the gift to someone that only wants it for their own use. So if you want to have that gift, I suggest you go somewhere in the world that doesn't have a Bible and speaks a tongue that's not known. And then you ask the Lord to give you that gift, to reach that people. And without prolonging the discussion, you'd agreed on that occasionally that still happens, doesn't it? That's why I said it the way I said it. I don't believe we can say God doesn't, can't have that gift in use today if the circumstances according to His purpose of the gift are fulfilled. He has the power of the Spirit of God to give that gift to a soul to reach those who are unreached by the gospel. And don't have the word of God that can be used for them. Often when someone speak. When people speak, there's a reason behind speaking. In the Christian world, among Christendom, often if you listen to the way they preach or speak. Whether it be in tongue or in other things, they want to glorify

the speaker. When the message is done, whereas we find that often when we speak, we glorify God or Lord Jesus Christ. So you can be the judge by listening to why they're doing it, who is to be glorified, and perhaps even to some extent they're going to be extra money to be raised because of whatever they're exhibiting.

Brother Don, could you explain verse two of chapter 14 in that life? Somebody will have to be my interpreter. I can't hear. Explain 14 two in that light. OK. I think you can probably do it. I'll be glad to listen to you. It starts the chapter that. Verse 14 verse one is the preface to verse two. It says follow after love and desire, spiritual gifts. But the 1St and most important is rather that you may prophecy. Prophecy in the broad sense isn't simply telling the future. Yes, that's a component of what we mean when we say prophecy we're talking about. Someone who can tell us what's in the future and the Old Testament prophets did that. But through the Old Testament prophets and in a New Testament prophet, the even broader and more important aspect of it was they were Moses was a prophet. They were a voice of God to the people. And that's what the burden of the of the. Gift of prophecy really is if the Lord gives it to someone is that they might be a God's voice to the people. And if a prophet really speaks and God is by the Spirit using that message, the receiving of the message is going to be very often God is speaking to me. That is, they can forget the person that's doing it and say God is speaking to me. And use that for God uses that for their blessing. And Paul begins the whole chapter with the thought that we should be motivated with God. To be a voice for God, whether it's by prophecy, whether it's by speaking in tongues or some other gift that he gives to us that would be used as his communication channel for the good and blessing of another person. So he says he that speaketh in an unknown tongue, that is to those who receive it or hear it, it's useless. Because it can't fulfill its purpose of being a help to them, you know? Bendito hermanos muy bien que estamos aqui and este tarde para blar le Las cosas de dios castanaki and este momento. OK, I said those words to to you. There's a certain subset of you in the room that immediately could relate to whatever I said, and probably the imperfect imperfection of it. As to its words, however, there is a certain, probably larger set of you in the room that I was speaking in an unknown tongue and it was of absolute no benefit to you. You got nothing out of it. And that's what he says. He that speaketh an untone tongue speaketh not to men. Yes, you can say I'm speaking to God. Are you going to teach Him something? You're going to use your ability to use an unknown tongue to explain some things so God can understand them. Does he need you to use that gift to talk to him so that he is as it were? Unto God, No, it's a mystery in that way. It doesn't fulfill its purpose. And so and again it's. That God gives these things for a purpose, but he doesn't give them, and he's not obligated to give them. If that purpose cannot be fulfilled through the instrument to whom he would give it. Those who teach these things will turn these verses on their head and make it a positive affirmation. They will say, and they do.

In verse 4 where it says he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself, they will turn and say we're supposed to build ourselves up in our most holy faith. They go back to verse two and they will save where he that speaketh an unknown tongue unknown to anyone listening speaketh not unto men but unto God, for no man understandeth him. How be it in the Spirit he speaketh mysteries. So their twist on this is that it's their prayer language, unique communication with God and they will connect it with the Spirit of God commuting, communicating with groaning's. And they will put that together and say this is a time for. Edifying oneself in a positive sense, and it's turning this on its head. But that's the claim and teaching that is there, especially amongst those like the Assemblies of God organization and so forth. There's a unique piece of their history. When the Assemblies of God denomination was first getting going and they began to send missionaries overseas, they fully believed that they wouldn't have to train them in the foreign languages. But very quickly they discovered as they went overseas, the Assemblies of God missionaries could not speak to these people. Had to return home and learn the languages like everyone else. That does not mean that God cannot do that, but in the face of this teaching that was being put forth, God did not and they had to turn back home and learn the languages. Such are not very often going to also read verse 28. Because it doesn't support the self edification. But in other words, God says, OK, if I give you the thing and you can't use it, you say you're edifying yourself, but you can't use it out loud with others because it's of no benefit. You're to be silent in the assembly. So God often. Gets to every aspect of man's arguments until man either accepts what God says or he ignores it because he doesn't want it. In First Corinthians 13. Eight, charity never faileth, but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues they shall cease. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. The force of those words. Fail, cease and vanish are different. Fail and vanish mean in the original come to an abrupt. Stop or excuse me? Yeah, fail and vanish. An abrupt stop. Prophecy and knowledge are going to be needed until the Lord comes and when He comes. That's the end. They're no longer needed tons. It says that they cease. And the force of that word is like the Brook sheriff where Elijah was. It dried up, it dwindled down, it finally petered out and dried up and that's the force of that tongues were going to dry up when? A company is going to put a new building up. And they start a construction site, they put a sign up front, future home of such and such corporation. That's a sign to those who are going by of what is taking place. When that building is built and they're doing business there, they don't need a sign that this is the future home of such and such corporation. They're there. And so they were signed gifts, proof that what was taking place that God was in it. And this was indeed of God. But once the church was established and it was clear that it was of God, those signed gifts were no longer needed. And so they petered out. They were no longer needed. I would say to the, as our brother Don read that verse, they're assigned to the unbeliever. That is the chief and the foremost aspect of the signed gifts. Not even the communication of the gospel is the foremost.

Point, but a sign because Peter goes on to preach the gospel in a language that everyone knew. Those tongues that they spoke in were not for the communication of the gospel in our chapter. They spoke the wonderful works of God. When I came to the communication of the gospel, he spoke in a language that everyone there knew. So they were given as a sign. They were a sign. But he goes on to preach the gospel in the language that they all knew, so they filled their place. And again, we don't forbid God can do whatever He wants. He's sovereign. But the need for them is pretty well gone in this world. I have enjoyed the fact that when Peter comes to preach here. As you say, Brother Steve, it's a distinctive message from the wonderful works of God. It's the gospel spoken in a way that all could understand. But in one sense, and I don't suppose many of those people had known the disciples well. But here was perhaps the greatest miracle to see the difference in Peter. Here were those disciples who accompanied with the Lord for 3 1/2 years. And yet how difficult the Lord found it to make them understand things that He was trying to teach them. And over and over again, for example, he told them that he had to go to the cross and suffer and die and be buried and rise again. They couldn't get it clear. And here was a man who had picked up his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane and gone after the high priest servant. Here was a man who later on denied the Lord with oaths and curses. And yet, what happens on the Day of Pentecost? Suddenly the Spirit of God gives him an intelligence. That would have been unheard of even a few days before. And in a coherent way, he gives the most clear explanation of what had happened, pulling Old Testament scriptures together and bringing them forward, making it clear as to the purposes of God. But the wickedness and responsibility of man involved in ties it all together in a beautiful way. For those that had ears to hear, whoever they might have been, this was really perhaps the greatest miracle to show. What the Spirit of God could do once he indwelt an individual. And of course, it had happened to some degree in the Old Testament. The Spirit had come on. Profits from time to time who were able to speak from the Lord and give a direct message as dawn was bringing out. But this was something even more

wonderful because it was a new message, a message of forgiveness for an entire nation that had rejected and crucified their Messiah and bringing together the sovereignty of God, the responsibility of man. Only the Spirit of God could do that. An example of that is in Matthew 16. After the beautiful confession Peter made, it says there that the Lord Jesus. Began to tell them that he was going to Jerusalem to be rejected by the priests and elders. He would be crucified, buried and raised the third day and Peter takes him aside to rebuke him. Think of it and the Lord has to rebuke Peter but here in Acts chapter two he weaves together these things that are beyond our full understanding to take in the counsel of God in his sovereignty. Verse 23 he was delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God that's. That's the understanding that Peter had through the Spirit of God. And then he goes on also by the Spirit of God, to point the arrow to their consciences ye have taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain. These two things are woven together throughout the Scriptures from beginning to end. God acting in sovereignty, but taking up and holding man accountable in responsibility. They're woven together all through as a thread through the ways of God with man.

Darren Matthew, 16, he said Upon this rock I will build my church. My assembly and the gates of hell really should be. Hades shall not prevail against it. So often that's taken that all the powers of Satan and demonic forces will not prevail against the assembly. That's not what that means. The gates of hell. It means the state of really, it means death. The state where the spirit and soul are separate from the body is Hades, whether it's a place of blessing or a place of torment. Context determines that, but it's very strictly speaking. The soul and the spirit separate from the body is Hades, the gates of Hades. Will not prevail against the assembly. Why? Because he went down into Jeff. His spirit and soul were separate from his body, and his body was laid in that new tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and he's defeated death. Rise triumphant over, and death will not prevail against his assembly, because even if every member went into death, they will all. Be raised again just like him and so when it says here and he quotes. From the 16th Psalm, because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell. Neither wilt thou suffer, thy Holy One, to see corruption. It's the same word, the teaching that the Lord somehow went down into hell. Place of torment, of judgment is not true, but that's very popular. We had a man come into the Vessel meeting room several weeks ago, sat down a Sunday school, thought he would like to take part, and it's one of the first things that came out of his mouth. No, the Lord did not go down into the lake of fire. As is commonly taught, he went into death, but he has defeated death. And it will not prevail against his assembly, because it's founded on Christ dead. And risen and glorified. We think of Hades as a state rather than a place. That makes everything clear, doesn't it? Now it mentions the gates of Hades. That's AI don't know what to call it. A poetic term. A term that refers to a state but at the same time recognizes the power of it by mentioning the gates. But it is not. Normally a place. The only thing I would just point out briefly is that when we come later on in the New Testament, yes, the Lord in one sense was in Hades because he was in the condition of a soul without a body when he was in the tomb. But when it talks about a believer who goes into death, I don't believe there is a single instance when it refers to the believer as being in Haiti's. Why not? For the very reason. That Steve mentioned and that is that death has been enough and so where does the believer go when he leaves this world Yes, his body is put into a grave but where does he go He goes to be with the Lord. He's not just in a state of a soul without a body. He goes to be with the Lord so the scripture emphasizes the the Hades part of it with the Lord because. It shows us that he went into death on our part when the Lord spoke to the thief on the cross. He didn't say to day shalt thou be with me in Hades. Strictly speaking it would have been true, but the Lord says to day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. In verse 23 says him being delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God. We have the gospel. It wouldn't be okay for God to just say, well, sin doesn't matter, we're just going to gloss over it. The world knows that that would be injustice. Sin has to be paid for. And here's this glorious one who leaves his place in the heavens and he comes down into this world and he becomes a man. And we read that often.

In Philippians 2 and we just read over it, just like, will this happen? Did this happen? I go to the outside door and I walk outside. He became a man. He took on human flesh. In order to come and remedy our need, he says, Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. We heard the sovereignty of God, the responsibility of man, Verse 24. Whom God hath raised up. Having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that he should be holding of it. And that's our hope. That's our hope. It's in him. It's not in a, it's not in a creed. It's not in a, in, in a prayer that we pray. It's in Jesus. And he's alive right now. He's a man forever on high in the glory and he's beyond death. He can't be touched by it. These ones, as our brother mentioned, they were fearless. You can't teach the gospel. You can't preach the gospel. He said we're going to preach the gospel. If you kill us, we're going to do it anyway. How can that be? Because they were delivered from the power of the fear of death? Because Jesus was beyond it. And the thing that comes to the conclusion here in verse 35. Let all the House of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus. Whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ. And dear beloved brothers and sisters. We have a responsibility. God is giving the gospel of the grace of God that we can be made free, that we can walk in light and love. And there is a response because of what he's done, we can't just sit here and fold our hands and say, yeah, whatever. He has stepped into this world to redeem us and there is a response that is required. It says God hath made him both Lord and Christ. One more comment on that responsibility that our brother just talked about. We know that when the Lord Jesus went to heaven, he was no longer in the world and the work that he was doing here among men ceased from his own work. And we've had in the last couple of days how as he went home to the glory and was glorified as a man there, He sends the Holy Spirit that we've had but. In connection with what's just been said, he's also said to us, I'm not here to be the light anymore. You are the light of the world. And so if the world is to see the light and testimony of God, he as it's brought out in Revelation 2 and three where he's evaluating how well we're doing our job. He tells us that you're the light of the world. And also if you're not going to fulfill that. Responsibility properly, I will replace you and that's going to be the end of the day of the church. It will have to be replaced because it hasn't fulfilled its responsibility as God had given it to it. So if we sit on our hands and say, well, God's going to do his work and everything's going to turn out all right, I don't need to do anything. That's in direct contradiction to what God said the church was in the world for. And that is we individually too are to be the light of the world. He puts that light in us when we receive the message of the gospel. He gives us the life of Christ, and then He makes us responsible to make it known to our fellow man for His blessing. The Spirit of God coming takes in so many different aspects of the believers life. In John's gospel, the Lord told the woman at the well that the water that he would give her would be a well of water springing up into eternal life. And he's Speaking of the gift of the Spirit there. And the Spirit of God indwelling you and I is the power for worship. The worship of God in the Spirit, according to the truth of God.

Then in Chapter 7 he says of those that would receive the Spirit, out of their belly shall flow rivers of living water. He is the power for testimony and communication to others of our enjoyment of Christ and divine things. We see Him coming here in the day of Pentecost and dwelling these believers the power of testimony to a risen Christ. And the gospel going out in this world, outside of that, there's no power for worship, there is no power for communication to others. There is no power in the testimony to a risen Christ here in this world. He formed the body of Christ. It's the display of Christ in this world, Paul said in Colossians, Christ in you, the hope of glory, the display of Christ in this world collectively in his members. Christ in you the hope of glory. And so he is here as the Comforter too. He comes not only in dwelling them, but as the divine administrator of all their affairs. And I'm I know I'm only touching the beginning of all the things that the Spirit of God is. But in

every aspect of our Christian life, it's vital. It's vital. Did we sing 231?

First Peter, chapter 5, verse 10. But the God of all grace. Who had called us onto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus. After that he had suffered a while. Make you perfect. Establish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. close in prayer. Our loving God and our Father, we again thank thee for thy beloved Son. We thank Thee, Lord Jesus, for coming here as a man and giving myself. For going to Calvary's cross so that we could be saved. You think of how that would rise from the dead on the third day. Then we've read in Acts One and Acts 2, the early part of the church period. We thank thee, Lord Jesus, that thou didst go back to heaven. Thou hast glorified there now aren't soon going to come. And receive us unto thyself, but in the meantime, our God and Father. We are alive in a world where we do have difficulty in trial and temptations too. And we just thank Thee for this time that we've had Thy word, our God, open before us to encourage us along the little time that's left and help us to be a testimony, each one of us, in the place that Thou has put us. And so we now would just pray for direction in our lives that we might obey Thy word. That we might go on for thy honor and glory. That we may be established in the truth of God, that we may Lord Jesus, be happy and fruitful and a blessing to others. Now we just pray that thou bless our time of fellowship together, that the times between the meetings may be for encouragement for each one of our souls as we minister Christ to one another. And so we give thanks to our God for thy beloved Son, and we pray in his most worthy, precious name, Amen. Amen.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Why Is It "All" the House of Israel in Acts 2:36 Instead of "Every"?

Question: Why should it be “all the house of Israel” in Acts 2:36, as there is no article in the Greek? Does not mean “every house”?

ENQUIRER.

Answer: Without “of Israel” connected it would be “every house”; but with it the case is altered. “House of Israel” is in thought a compound term and is sufficiently defined without the article, like “all Jerusalem” which dispenses with it. So it is with “building” in Eph. 2:21, a composite whole in sense, which makes “every” improper and false. The Revisers seem to have been quite astray in all this, though right of course in Eph. 3:15, as “family” has no such reason to plead. “Each several building” is gravely false, at issue with the context even, as with all scripture, which insists on unity.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Acts 2:30 - "Of the Fruit of His Loins," How?

Y. Z.

Answer: The reality of the Lord’s manhood lay in His being born of Mary who was “the Virgin” of David’s house. If He had not been Son of God really on the other side, the truth of His Godhead would have been overthrown. If He had not enjoyed the rights of the Solomon line through Joseph legally, though but reputedly, He was not the true Messiah according to Jehovah’s oath to David. In Luke 3, “as was supposed son of Joseph” is the right parenthesis; and “being of Eli, of Matthat,” etc. is the genealogical line, a distinct construction. Eli was father of Mary, as the Talmud admits; and to her accordingly the visit of Gabriel was made. In Matthew the visions were to Joseph, son of Jacob, the Messianic and Solomonic line; in Luke, it was to Mary.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Still Responsible to "Persevere in the Teaching and Fellowship. . ."?

Question: Acts 2:42. Are we still responsible to “persevere in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of the bread and the prayers”? How sadly loose the enclosed tract! LONDON.

Answer: Assuredly. The Lord’s name was the central object which by the Spirit gathered saints into unity, and became the standard to judge what was inconsistent in doctrine and ways. So the apostles taught; as the saints were called to walk in their fellowship. The breaking of the bread expressed it openly; and the prayers sought grace of the Lord in vigilance against everything that imperiled what was due to Him. Schisms wrought at Corinth from an early day; dissensions or disputes at Rome later. Alas! those internal workings of the flesh portended the “sects,” or outside factions, which the apostle told the Corinthians must also be where a contentious or an otherwise carnal will was unjudged (1 Cor. 11:18, 19, Gal. 5:20). To Titus (3:10) he gave authoritative instructions how to deal with the independency which refused to keep the unity of the Spirit: “after a first and second admonition have done with” such. There was no sense in putting out one who in self-sufficient in-subjection had gone out: “such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned.”

There were of old persons among us who, never having adequately felt the ruin-state of the church, endeavored (perhaps unwittingly) to imitate the apostles in setting up elders, and in restoring the church. But this was rejected strongly by those who upheld the unity of the Spirit, as incumbent on the “two or three” wherever gathered to the Lord’s name, in as thorough subjection to the word as when all stood in unbroken order and peace. It is false that any visible body was, or was sought to be, formed by learning better the duties of fellowship; or that acting together as “one” in a town, which scripture requires, led to manifest central authorities, which it rather helped to counteract, and is therefore distasteful to aspirants. Hence the effort of adversaries to brand the revealed truth or acting on it with the very evils which are their own.

Think too of the decency for one justly excluded from fellowship writing on “Fellowship”! and abusing persons, names, and their words to support the grievous laxity which they always abhorred Truly “the unjust knoweth no shame.” The tract is indeed deceitful claptrap, as opposed to truth as to holiness.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Pouring Out of the Spirit, The

Question: The Spirit is said to have been poured out on Cornelius and his house, i.e., the Gentiles, as well as on the believing Jews at Pentecost—why not now also?

Answer: Though the word be not used, we go farther and affirm the fact practically as to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. (Acts 2; 8, and 10.) The sense amounts to one common fact. Still, this is a confirmation of the truth, that the outpouring of the Holy Ghost is an original and primary gift to the saints; while each receives the Holy Ghost when he has believed, as regards his own particular portion in it. (Acts 19:2.) The three preceding passages show that, on each distinct part, out of which the Church had to be formed, God put the seal of His Spirit, giving it a divine and independent title to relationship with Himself and to the common unity. But this once formed, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in the one assembly, there was no such formative and sealing power to be looked for, because the Holy Ghost was there, and was to abide there forever. It is an effort at recommencing what has already a responsible position before God, in virtue of having the Holy Ghost; and to look for His coming on the Church is to deny that He is there, and that we are responsible in this way. God may pardon and reply to ignorant expressions; but, deliberately used, it is incredulity. Acts 19. shows that the individuals partaking of it is a distinct and very important point. To doubt that the Church of God has the Holy Ghost is unbelief as to this point. To doubt whether Samaritans or Gentiles could receive it so as to have a share in the new privileges, was an unfounded doubt and one well worthy of God to resolve in grace, yet in the way of a common unity of the assemblage on earth. The desire that the Spirit of God may act mightily, is good—that He should be poured out again, may be pardoned, and blessing given, but it is a phrase of unbelief.

A Few Thoughts on Baptism, Baptism, Few Thoughts on: No. 1

(“R. . K.," Hammersmith.) Your question as to " baptism bringing a person into the house or profession of Christianity," requires more than a page in " Correspondence.” What we understand by " the great house” of 2 Tim. 2:20, is baptized Christendom, in which are found vessels to honor, and some to dishonor. It will, no doubt, help us to trace the subject of baptism from the beginning.

Even the baptism of John should be examined, and it will be found helpful. i(He came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (See Luke 3:3; Matt, iii.) " Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan. And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Thus did God make straight the path, and prepare the way for the blessed Savior. The leaders of the people do not seem to have understood it. But it was really bringing the people to the very place where they entered the land fifteen hundred years before, and the most complete repentance and self-judgment that all was failure, confessing their sins and need of forgiveness. If Jordan was the figure of death in the days of Joshua, they had to be buried in death for the forgiveness of sins. All had to begin again, and somehow forgiveness had to be reached through death, of which the Jordan was the figure. John seems quite conscious that he cannot fully explain what he is doing (see his answer to the priests, John 1:19). He was not the promised Christ, he only prepared the way. All the baptized disciples of John were simply prepared for another. They had repented, confessing their sins, and were buried in the river of death. But how were those sins to be forgiven? That other One appeared, He came to this sin-confessed multitude, and, to meet their need, went Himself into this river of death, striking figure of the death of the cross. Now hear the words of John to this prepared multitude: “Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth away the sin of the world." Thus the baptism, even of John, should have brought them eventually to the Lamb of God.

Then John must decrease. His work was done. A baptism unto the Lamb of God for forgiveness of sins. We do not read their sins were forgiven by baptism. If that had been the case, there would have been no need for the Lamb of God. The work of John was to prepare the way, to prove man's need of Him. Thus John made disciples, and thus were disciples made unto Jesus as Messiah. (See John 4:1, 2.)

Discipleship was evidently outward profession, the vine on earth. We must not confound this with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, of the members of the body to the Head now on high. (1 Cor. 12:13.) As man, He was not then in heaven, but on earth, where many were made disciples by water baptism. (John 4:1.)

How far will all this help us as to Pentecost? What a change! We are now at Jerusalem, where fifty days before redemption had been accomplished. The Lamb of God had died, the propitiation for sin. God had raised Him from the dead. He had not only spoken perfect, everlasting peace to His disciples, but He had also commissioned them to begin at this very place, and announce repentance and remission of sins in His name, also among all nations. (See Luke 24:47.) Before doing this, however, they were to wait until they were endowed with power from on high. But now the promised Holy Ghost had descended from heaven. Every barrier being removed, now read the gospel announced by Peter. (Acts 2:22-47.)

The order is reversed now. John had first preached the baptism of repentance. This prepared the way to direct those who repented to the Lamb of God—most important in its place. In this way they were led to the Lamb as the One through whom alone sins can be forgiven. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, preaches, first, "Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." He begins where John ends-the purpose and counsel of God, fulfilled in the death and crucifixion of Jesus. They with wicked hands had put Him to death. God had raised Him up both Lord and Christ. This announcement, by the Holy Ghost working in the heart, produced that godly sorrow which leadeth to the needed repentance; and, believing the words they heard from Peter, they said, " What shall we do?" The answer now is in perfect harmony with what John had partially announced: " Then"—that is, after they had heard and believed the wonderful tidings of Jesus exalted on high—" then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” And mark, this declaration from God went far beyond merely themselves. “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call." Now did not that change of mind, produced by, or the result of, godly sorrow for what they had done as Jews, imply the full confession and judgment of themselves and their sins in what they had done? And, in like manner, though they might not as yet fully understand it, did not their baptism to the Lord Jesus imply the utter giving up of all on which they had formerly depended? They were thus, by repentance and baptism, directed to the name of Jesus Christ alone for the remission of sins.

We shall find, when we come to the explanation in the Epistles, it was separation, as by death, from all in which they had formerly stood. The effect of the exhortation which followed is summed up in these words, " Save yourselves from this untoward generation." By this act, then, as a figure, they were separated, and formed the first beginning of the community of believers. " They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added about three thousand souls." Outward profession then, by baptism, and the true assembly of God were identical in that day, for " the Lord added daily such as should be saved." Baptism, then, was plainly the giving up of Judaism, and looking only to Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins; thus involving separation as by death.

It is remarkable that this is just how the Jew understands baptism to this day. The Jew may make a lip profession of Christianity, but can you trust him if he refuses to be baptized? Not the least. Let him be baptized; from that day he is a dead man to the Jews—yes, even to his father and mother. In a so-called christian country like England, we almost lose the original meaning of baptism.

Now, if we inquire further in the Acts, we shall not find the order of John introduced in one single instance. It is Jesus, or the words of this life, the apostles first preached everywhere. (Chap, v. 20-42.) We have to pass on from Pentecost to chapter viii. before we find much more as to baptism. Here, again, we find the " preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ;" and it was when they believed Philip that they were baptized, both men and women.

There is much for reflection in this chapter, and we desire to forget all theories in looking at it. It is evident there was no sacramental grace, or new birth, in it, for we find Simon, the sorcerer, was baptized, though still in the bond of iniquity. But the most striking thing is this—that baptism in water is totally distinct from the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Samaria had received the word of God, and that in the full separative profession of baptism. But it was not until after the apostles had sent Peter and John that they received the Holy Ghost. Thus, by baptism they had been brought into the house, or profession of Christianity, being baptized unto the name of Jesus Christ; some time before they were baptized by the Holy Ghost into the body of Christ. (See 1 Cor. 12:13.) No two things could therefore be more distinct.

In the case of Philip and the eunuch, the same order is observed. He does not preach baptism to the eunuch, but, " Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus," that is, the Savior, as the One who bare our sins, &c, as foretold in Isa. 53 Acts 8:37 is no doubt an interpolation, still, the truth is clear: he heard the word, believed, and then took his place as a professed Christian in baptism. " They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

(To be continued.)

Correspondence, Correspondence: 1 Peter 4:18; Acts 2:5

Ques. 97. "If the righteous scarcely be saved," does this mean that the righteous may be lost? 1 Peter 4:18 J. W.

Ans. We have salvation presented in three aspects in Scripture. We need always to examine the context, to tell which way the Word applies it.

1st. We have salvation as a present possession, and this can never be altered. (See Eph. 2:8 7 2 Tim. 1:9.)

2nd. We are looking on to the Lord's coming, when our bodies will be changed; then full salvation is reached. It is called the day of redemption. (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30; Rom. 13:11; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Thess. 5:9, 10; 1 Peter 1:5.)

3rd. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12, 13.) It is to this class 1 Peter 4:18 belongs. It means saved through difficulties along the path, under the government of God. Our failures do not affect our eternal salvation, for it is secured by Christ. (John 14:19.) The Jews looked for temperal deliverances; we look for soul salvation in our trials. Not kept from them but kept during them. Receiving the end of our faith, soul salvation. (1 Peter 1:9, Luke 21:19.) We can count on the Lord to keep our souls in peace and victory for Him. (Phil. 1:19, 20.)

Nothing, can touch the life that is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3; also Phil. 1:6); but we need daily help and guidance, and carefulness not to hinder or grieve the Holy Spirit. This is the fear and trembling lest we should hinder God's work in us.

Ques. 98. In Acts 2:5, are the nations and Jews different? W. I.

Ans. Yes, Nations, Gentiles and Heathen are the same. Israel or the Jews are not reckoned with the Nations. (Num. 23:9; Deut. 32:8.)

But at this time (Acts 2) there were Jews scattered among the nations. Many of these pious Jews had come up to Jerusalem to worship and were present to hear the gospel preached for the first time.

We could not call the Eunuch of Ethiopia a Gentile, but a Jewish proselite, who also came to Jerusalem to worship. (Acts 8:27.) Those who received Christ, were henceforth Christians.

Correspondence, Correspondence: Acts 2:17; Filthiness of the flesh/spirit; Schools; Instruments

Ques. When does Acts 2:17 apply? A. S.

Ans. Joel 2:28-32 will be fulfilled in the millennial reign of Christ. In Acts 2 it is quoted to show that these men were not drunk, as was supposed, but, that the Holy Spirit was causing them to speak with tongues, that all the nations present might understand the gospel. It was of the same kind, but it was not the fulfillment of these Scriptures.

Ques. What is the difference between filthiness of the flesh, and filthiness of the spirit?

(2 Cor. 7:1.) J. D.

Ans. In Chapter 6:14-18, we have outward separation from association with the world in its religion and its ways. In Chap. 7:1, we are exhorted, having these promises of God's care over us, to cleanse ourselves, not only in our outward walk and associations, but also with regard to our relationship, with purity of thought. This is needed for communion with God, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (See also 2 Tim. 2:22.)

Ques. What does 1 Cor. 7:14 mean?

A. G. R.

Ans. God respects the children of believers, even where only one of the parents is converted, and expects that parent to own His name. and to claim God's promise for the children’s training and salvation. (Acts 16:31.)

The unbelieving parent is sanctified by the believing one. This is in contrast with the marriages in Ezra 10, and Neh. 13. In these, God did not own the marriages, or the children. In 1 Cor. 7:14, God owns the marriage, and desires that the children may be trained for Him. Sanctification means the act of setting apart. Here it does not mean salvation. God does not approve of believers and unbelievers yoking themselves. It is quite wrong for a believer to engage himself,, or herself to an unbeliever (Amos 3:3, 2 Cor. 6:14-18.)

Ques. Please explain Ruth 4:7.

Ans. The shoe plucked off, and given to Boaz, expressed the man's inability, and he gave up all claims on the estate to Boaz, which means "strength". This is a picture of Rom. 8:3,4. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh", has been more than met by Christ, and what He has done.

Ques. What about useful denominational schools for the children? Should we send our children into what we have separated from?

N, S. C.

Ans. If it was right, and in obedience to the Word of God, that we separated from sects, to be gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus, it would be building up what we destroyed, and so making ourselves transgressors. (2 Cor. 6:17, 18; Gal. 2:18.)

We may seem to lose some benefits for the present life, if we obey the Word, but in the end, we are benefitted by strict obedience. In 1 Sam. 15, Saul, the king, spared the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord. God rejected him as king for this; it was not obedience.

See also how God honored the Rechabites for their obedience to their father's command. (Jeremiah 35) We are never wrong in paying attention to the Word, and obeying it.

“Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psa. 119:11.

It was the path in which the Lord walked: "Obedient unto death, and that the death of the cross.”

Ques. Does the Sabbath day in Gen. 2:1-3 point on to the eternal state, or to the Millennial reign of Christ? (Isa. 66:23; Col. 2:16, 17.)

A. S.

Ans. In Gen. 1:26-28, we see in figure Christ and the Church, reigning over the earth, that is the time spoken of in Isa. 66, when the Sabbaths will again be observed, and in Col. 2:16, 17, still shadow things to come.

We, as the Church on earth now, have Christ, the body, or substance of all the shadows. He is our rest now (Matt. 11:28), yet in Heb. 4, we look on expecting the time when God's rest comes, that is, the eternal state, to have our part in it, when "All taint of sin shall be removed, All evil done away; And we shall dwell with God's Beloved Through God's eternal day.”

Ques. Does the Word of God forbid us to possess musical instruments? D. C.

Ans. No. Christians are left free to be led by the grace of God which has saved them, and to be constrained by the love of Christ to live, not to themselves, but to Him who died for them, and rose again. (Rom. 12:1, 2.) We may use our music for the Lord, though it is first seen in Cain's world (Gen. 4:21), and Satan uses it to blind many. (Job 21:6-14.)

In Christian worship as found in scripture, instrumental music has no place. "They that worship God must worship Him in spirit, and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." (John 4:24; Phil. 3:3.)

In Israel's worship to Jehovah as an earthly people, we find choirs and instruments, wind and stringed instruments, with timbrels and cymbals (Psa. 150), also in idolatry. (See Dan. 3.)

We find all kinds of instruments employed, but not in Christian worship "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Heb. 12:13.)

Correspondence, Correspondence: Sabbath Day Points to?; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor. 7:14; Musical Instrum.

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Correspondence, Correspondence: Acts 2:38; Acts 8:15-16

Ques. 169. Kindly explain Acts 2:38 and 8:15, 16. E. C. D.

Ans. In Acts 1:4, 5 the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to wait for the promise of the Father to send the Holy Spirit. (John 14:26.) About one hundred and twenty waited in prayer for about ten days. In chapter 2, the Holy Spirit comes, and those become the Church, or assembly on earth.1

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. The crowd came together and were amazed, for though they were out of every nation, each could hear in his own tongue, the wonderful works of God. In verse 5 we are told they were pious men; men who already were born again, they were godly Jews. There were also mockers present to oppose. God, through the preaching of Peter, convinced many of their guilt in crucifying the Lord, whom God had raised up and made both Lord and Christ, these ask, "What shall we do?" Peter answers, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Three thousand gladly received his word and were baptized. The apostles administer this blessing. (Compare John 20:23.)

In Acts 8 we see another special dealing of God. The Church is scattered from Jerusalem except the apostles, and they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. The blessing here widens out to "the streets and lanes of the city,'. (Luke 14:21,) but not yet to "the highways and hedges" or Gentiles (ver. 23.) Philip goes to Samaria, and many there received Christ whom he preached, "There was great joy in that city." They were also baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, that is, by His authority, yet none of them had so far received the Holy Spirit. When the apostle at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. It seemed the wisdom of God to withhold the Spirit till the Samaritans were identified with Jerusalem, so that they would know that they are all one Church. Before this the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. In this chapter the Eunuch (a Jewish proselyte) is brought in. In chapter 10, we have a godly company of Gentiles. God accepted their prayers and alms. (verses 2:22.) God prepares Peter, and prepares them, by a vision to receive what Peter is to tell them. Peter tells them of Christ's life, death and resurrection and that He is the appointed Judge and Savior; that all the prophets bear witness, that "through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. The disciples who came with Peter were astonished, that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit, for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Peter sees plainly that God has accepted them, and so answered, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" They could not refuse them their place in the Church or assembly; nay, more, "In the name of the Lord," he commanded them to be baptized. This authority was given to Peter. (Matt. 16:19.) Notice in the three cases of Speaking with tongues in the Acts, it is connected with intelligent ministry: preaching, magnifying God, and prophesying. Notice again, that baptism with water is not obedience on the part of the ones baptized, but the act of the professed servant of God, who by it, gives them the privilege that places them in the new position as the Church, the house of God. To this they gladly submit. The Holy Spirit is given to those who believe on Christ, and know his finished work has cleansed them from their sins. (John 7:39; Eph. 1:13.) He sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God. (Rom. 5:5.) He enables us to cry, "Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:15.) He bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (verse 16.) He helps our infirmities in prayer. (verse 26.)

We do not hear of any individual in Scripture being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Baptism of the Spirit is the forming of believers, both Jews and Gentiles, into one body. (1 Cor. 12:13.) This cannot be repeated. Individual believers are sealed with the Spirit. (Eph. 1:13.)

Correspondence, Correspondence: Rom. 13:14; Acts 2:16-18; 1 Tim. 5:8

Ques. 41. What does Rom. 13:14 mean? A. G. P.

Ans. Read Rom. 13:11-14. We are waiting for the Lord's coming, and our behavior is to correspond with our character as children of light. We are to walk honestly, as in the day. We are not to give way to the lusts of the flesh, but make the Lord Jesus our pattern, and thus put on in our practical life, the Lord Jesus Christ, making no provision to indulge in worldly desires and pleasures.

It is quite right to make provision for our households and bodily needs. The contrast in verse 13 will help to make plain what the apostle meant.

Ques. 42

What is the meaning of Acts 2:16,17,18: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel", in reference to "your sons and your DAUGHTERS shall prophesy?"-W. H. E.

Ans. It was so marvelous to hear men speak "the wonderful works of God" in tongues they had not learned, that in amazement they say, "What meaneth this?" Others said, "These men are all full of new wine." Peter answers, "These men are not drunken as ye suppose." "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Joel prophesied of the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh when the millennial reign of Christ begins, in the time of Israel's restoration; and extraordinary signs as in Acts 2:17, 18, will accompany it. But, notice, Acts 2:19, 20, show signs of a different kind, in heaven and earth, in sun and moon. These will precede the blessing, as said, "before the great and notable day of the Lord come."

What we see in Acts 2, is the same Spirit that now indwells believers only, and baptizes them into one body (1 Cor. 12:12,13), and forms the limited aspect of the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:22); but this is not yet the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy; it is a different people who now receive the Spirit.

In Acts 21:9, Philip's four daughters prophesy. (See also 1 Cor. 11:4,5.) We do not get women in Scripture praying in public or preaching to saints or sinners. So we need to think of them exercising this gift where and when it would be according to Scripture.

Ques. 43

Does 1 Tim. 5:8 include the thought of one laying by in store against death: as by life insurance and the purchase of a house for the benefit of those dependent upon him? If not, what scripture would show the Lord's mind in regard to those matters? F. F. S.

Ans.-1 Tim. 5:8 speaks of a believer's duty to provide for the present need of those dependent upon him, and this extends sometimes to caring for a mother, sister, etc. (1 Tim. 5:16), that they might not be a charge to the assembly. Unbelievers, with only natural affection to guide them, will care for their households. If a believer did not, it would be a reproach to the truth.

Matt. 6:19-34 tells us not to be anxious about the future. We can only provide for them according as God has prospered us; the rest we are to cast upon Him (Phil. 4:6).

Man is a steward of what is committed to him. The believer with a heavenly calling is also a steward of all the Lord gives him. If he allows his heart to be taken up with earthly things, his spiritual enjoyment is hindered; he does not enjoy "his own" portion, the "true riches". (Luke 16:11, 12.) He is responsible, and therefore should seek guidance from the Lord (Prow, 3:6), when to spend, when to keep, when to give, and how to trade with it. (Luke 19:13.)

It is against natural affection, and it would certainly be wrong, not to do our best to provide for our children (2 Cor. 12:14): at the same time we should seek to teach them dependence on God, and exercise our own hearts to walk in it, avoiding a covetous spirit that desires what we have not, lest to get it, we leave the path of dependence upon God, for some invention of man's, that appeals to our natural selfishness, by offering us something large for very little, and, what is worse- for it destroys dependence on God- promises immunity from need, thus depriving the soul of the exercise needed to walk with God.

The path of faith is to trade with what God has put into our hands; to go beyond this is getting into debt, to trade with other people's capital. We should avoid debt, and seek to be content with what God has given us. (Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:9-11.)

There is nothing to hinder us buying a house, or whatever we may need, if we pay for it honestly, thus doing all for the glory of God. (Col. 3:17.)

Christian Treasury: Volume 11, Fundamental Principles

On Which the Church Is Built

C. H. Brown

Acts 2:37-47ACT 2:37-47

In the Word of God we have God's mind with reference to the church of God. We read in Acts 20 that the church is very dear to the heart of God, because He paid for it with the blood of His only Son. He is jealous of that church that it might go on and abide in all its privileges that were guaranteed to it in the Word of God by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

The church of God was a new and distinct thing in that day. It had never been the subject of direct prophecy, though it was found hidden in types and shadows from the first major type of the Bible, right on down to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. But as to its actuality, the church of God never existed until that memorable day when the 120 were gathered in the upper room and the Spirit of God came down and baptized them into one body. The ascended Head from heaven assumed the responsibility of equipping His church with every needed gift. He still lives, He is still in the glory, He is still caring for His church, He is still giving out gifts, and He is still nurturing every individual in that body.

In the New Testament, primarily in the Acts and the epistles, every detail has been worked out for us, especially the fundamental principles on which the church was built, and by which and for which it was formed.

Look at verse 42 of chapter 2: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." It says, "They continued": Who were "they"? It is this new group, this company that have been baptized with the Spirit of God, and baptized with water to identify themselves with this new position here in this world.

So here is a baptized company; they had received the Word and they were baptized. On this particular day when Peter preached his sermon, there were three thousand souls added. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" Any Christian company which denies any of those four things is not going according to the plan that God has in mind. Remember, it is His church and He is the One who decides the path, and you and I are only in obedience if we follow what is the Word of God. One of the marks of a Christian is to "continue steadfastly."

Which of these four things comes first in verse 42? The apostles' doctrine. We are living in a day of shallow thinking. People say, "Doctrine doesn't make any difference," but it makes all the difference in the world. Doctrine is a solemn thing, it has preeminence, and you find it stressed in the Word of God.

Turn to 1 Timothy 1 and the end of verse 10: "And if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." Does God care what you believe? In the same epistle, chapter 4:13, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." Does it make any difference what you believe? Give attendance to doctrine. Then in verse 16, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Do you want to be used in blessing to others? Then continue in sound doctrine yourself, for it is a day when we have to be on the alert about sound doctrine.

Now look at 1 Timothy 6:3-4: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing." There is no use boasting of gift, there is no use parading our clever abilities, if our doctrine does not square with the Word of God. We know nothing apart from the revealed will of God, as we find it in the Word of God.

In 2 Timothy 1:13 we read, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou halt heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." You and I cannot afford to do any experimentation in the truth of God. In 2 John he warns us: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, bath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

Again in 2 Timothy 3:10, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience." Doctrine and manner of life are two things put together. Man will tell you that it doesn't make any difference what you believe—the main thing is how you live. That is false. Doctrine comes first. You cannot live right unless you believe right. Don't think you can divorce conduct from doctrine. The only right conduct that God can look upon with complacency is conduct that desires to obey the revealed Word of God. My doctrine and my conduct are my manner of life.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:2-4). We are there now; we have reached that place; they will not endure sound doctrine.

Go back to Acts 2:42, "The apostles'... fellowship." It is not only the apostles' doctrine, but it is also the apostles' fellowship. Now there are many fellowships in the world, but here is the apostles' fellowship. What is that? It is that fellowship that results from the association of those that keep the doctrine of the apostles. In other words, if you set out to observe the doctrine of the apostles, you do that and I do the same, we will find ourselves together. It is founded and it is based on the doctrine of the apostles. We see it functioning here in verse 44 of this chapter, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common." There is no such pathway marked out in Scripture as going it alone in God's things. No, and do not think you are pleasing the Lord when you are walking apart from your brethren. I know they are a failing lot. I'm one of them, and I know I try my brethren, but oh, my brethren have been so good to me, that I seek grace to go on with them.

There is now another point: fellowship and breaking of bread. Some Christians seem to feel that there are two kinds of Christians in the world: those that break bread and those that do not. I have never found that in my Bible. Apart from being under discipline, we break bread. Of course, we do not expect those under discipline to be breaking bread. But I do not find in Scripture that one class is breaking bread and another is not. No, the normal thing is that if you are a child of God, you will go on to break bread. It was one of the privileges in the new position that they had as Christians: that sacred privilege, the breaking of bread. The Lord asked them to do it and they gladly responded. I know we are living in days of utmost confusion, and it is difficult to find your way today. I am quite ready to admit that, but that is no excuse for going on not remembering the Lord. Are you a Christian? Do you know your sins are forgiven? Why, then, are you not remembering the Lord in the breaking of bread? It is a solemn thing. He asked us to do it. He did not say, "If you would like to do it," or, "If it is agreeable to you." He said "this do." Not "go and preach the gospel," not "go as a missionary to some foreign country," but "this do in remembrance of Me."

They continued in the breaking of bread; they did not give it up. Some of us have known believers that broke bread for a while and then they quit coming to remember the Lord. When asked why they ceased, they replied that they were offended. But I have never met one that took offense at the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet He was the One that said, "This do in remembrance of Me." Why can't we have more patience with one another? Do you think that you personally never try your brethren? Cannot you find grace to go on with them? Are you justified, just

because someone has hurt your feelings, to deny the Lord His request?

The last thing that is mentioned is "prayer." That occupies a great place in the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus set us an example; He was a man of prayer. When we come to the lives of the apostles, we find they were men of prayer too. When Peter was in prison and his head was to come off the next day, the saints of God were in the home of John Mark's mother, on their knees way into the wee hours of the night praying. They were not just saying prayers; they were praying earnestly. Those prayers penetrated; they went up to the throne of God, and God heard and answered in a mighty way. Peter was gloriously delivered. But the moment he was delivered and could decide what had happened, he made his way straight to the powerhouse of deliverance—that little prayer meeting in a home.

Suppose you had been living in that day and you knew Peter was being persecuted and going to be killed. Would you say, "I'm tired today; I think I'll stay home tonight. I don't think I will go to the prayer meeting"? Then the next day you heard of what happened. Surely, you would be disappointed; you would say, "I wish I had been there and prayed to God for Peter." Oh, yes, you would have wished that you had been at the prayer meeting. Don't despise the prayer meeting or discount it; an assembly without a prayer meeting is a sick assembly. Thank God today there is a prayer meeting!

We have had before us the simple path of the New Testament saints. Are we willing the tittle time that is left to walk in the simplicity of that path, jealously excluding anything that denies it, detracts from it, or adds to it? If we are willing, someday we may hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"; not "good and successful servant," but "good and faithful servant." May God grant that it will be so.

Self-denial is discipline for life—the work of awry hour.

Young Christian: Volume 34, 1944, Divided Tongues: Acts 2:1-12

It will greatly enhance the grace of this lovely passage of Scripture to bear in mind what it was that rendered the cloven tongues necessary. In the eleventh chapter of Genesis we have the inspired record of the first grand effort of the children of men to establish themselves in the earth, to form a great association, and make themselves a name. And all this, be it remembered, without God. His name is never mentioned. He was not to form any part of this proud and popular scheme. He was entirely shut out. It was not a dwelling-place for God that was to be erected on the plain of Shinar. It was a city for men, a center round which man were to gather.

Such was the object of the children of men, as they stood together on the plain of Shinar. It was not, as some have imagined, to escape another deluge. There is not a shadow of foundation in the passage for any such idea. Here are their words:

“And they said, Go to, let us build a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

There is no thought here of escaping another flood. It is sheer imagination, without any Scripture basis. The object is as plain as possible. It is precisely similar to all those great confederacies, associations, or masses of flesh, that have been formed on the earth from that day to this. The Shinar Association could vie with any association of modern times, both in its principle and object. But it proved to be a Babel, for divided tongues were sent as the expression of divine judgment upon this first great human association.

An association without God, is really nothing but a mass of flesh, based on pride, and ends in hopeless confusion.

“Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces” (Isa. 8:9).

So much for all human associations. May we learn to keep clear of them. May we adhere to that one divine association, namely, the Church of the living God, of which a risen Christ in glory is the living Head, the Holy Ghost, the living Guide; and the Word of God, the living Charter.

It was to gather this blessed assembly that the cloven tongues were sent in grace on the day of Pentecost. No sooner had the Lord Jesus Christ taken His seat at the right hand of power, amid the brightness of heaven’s majesty, than He sent down the Holy Ghost to publish the glad tidings of salvation in the ears of His very murderers. And, inasmuch as that message of pardon and peace was intended for men of various tongues, so the divine messenger came down prepared to address each “in his own tongue wherein he was born.” The God of all grace made it plain, so plain that it cannot be mistaken, that He desired to make His way to each heart with the sweet story of grace.

Man, on the plain of Shinar, did not want God; but God, on the day of Pentecost, proved that He wanted man. Blessed forever be His holy name! God had sent His Son, and man had just murdered Him; and now He sends the Holy Ghost to tell man that there is pardon through that very blood which he had shed, for his guilt in shedding it. Matchless, marvelous, overwhelming grace! O! that it may subdue our hearts, and bind us to Him who is at once its source, its channel, and the power of enjoyment! The grace of God has far out-topped all the enmity of man. It has proved itself victorious over all the opposition of the human heart, and all the rage of hell.

Thus, then, in Genesis 11 divided tongues were sent in judgment. In Acts 2 divided tongues were sent in grace. The blessed God of all grace would cause each one to hear of full salvation, and hear of it in those very accents in which his infant ears had hearkened to the earliest whisperings of a mother’s love! “His own tongue wherein he was born.” It mattered not whether the tongue were soft or harsh, refined or barbarous; the Holy Ghost would use it as the vehicle for conveying the precious message of salvation right home to the human heart. If divided tongues had once been given to scatter in judgment, they were again given to gather in grace; not now round an earthly tower, but round a heavenly Christ; not for the exaltation of man, but for the glory of God.

Now, it is well worthy of notice that when God was giving the law from Mount Sinai, He spoke only in one tongue and to one people. The law was carefully wrapped up in one language, and deposited in the midst of one nation. Not so the gospel. When that was the burden, God the Holy Ghost Himself descended from heaven, in cloven tongues, to waft the soul-stirring tidings far and wide over the whole world, and convey them “to every creature under heaven” in the very dialect wherein he was born.

This is a great moral fact. It comes down upon the heart with uncommon weight and power. When God was speaking in terms of requirement and prohibition, He confined Himself to one language; but when He was publishing the message of life and salvation, pardon and peace, through the blood of the Lamb, He spoke in every language.

Food for the Flock: Volume 5, Christian Power

A PEW THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS.

"At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me." Acts 26:13. “WELL, brother John, what did he give you at the lecture last night?" “Oh, just the same as he always does." “How do you mean? " " Why, he was soaring away somewhere in the clouds." “Above the clouds, perhaps you mean." " Just so, quite out of sight-above our heads altogether." “And what did you get, sister Mary, from the word last night?" “Oh, it was Christ Himself where He is! "

I have quoted the above dialog, the substance of which, I have often heard from the lips of saints, because I am becoming more and more convinced that the difference between John and Mary is not one of words only, but that they really represent two entirely different states of soul. At first I was unwilling to think that the difference was anything more than might be accounted for by some accidental circumstance, John being at the time perhaps occupied with some care or trouble, and therefore incapable of following the teacher who might be endeavoring to unfold to the dear saints some of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and would explore with them the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of that glorious scene to which every Christian who is walking with an ungrieved Spirit consciously belongs. And, let me ask in passing, is there anything so delightful and bracing to the soul, as treading the hills and valleys of eternal sunshine, the heavenly places, into which the Christian is now brought in Christ Jesus, and which he is permitted already to enjoy in the power of the Holy Ghost? But, as my own eyes were gradually opened to see the truth of God's word as set forth in Rom. 8 as to what a Christian really is, from God's point of view, I began to see that the difference in the spiritual condition of John and Mary is no accidental one, but that indeed it is so radically different that, when John comes to "see " what Mary sees, he will speak of it as passing into a new region altogether, a change so wonderful that he can only compare it to a second conversion. In fact the two states of soul are set forth plainly in Rom. 8:6. " The mind of the flesh (lit.) is death, but, the mind of the Spirit is He and peace."

Now do not misunderstand me or imagine that, in quoting this verse, I am saying that John is unconverted, and Mary converted. No, both are born again, and are children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, whom they love and desire to serve; I maintain this point most firmly. But the truth is, Mary has got something which John has not. Her eyes have been opened to see such perfection in the Man at the right hand of God, such a glorious light has shone into her soul, from heaven, far above the brightness of the sun of nature when at its best and brightest, that it is with her as with Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9): self in every shape and form is displaced, and everything under the sun is faded and has lost its deceitful glitter for her, and now the one thing she has before her is to know more of Him there.

She has seen Him risen a conqueror from the tomb, beyond the region of sin and death, and He has spoken peace to her conscience through the blood of His cross (John 20:19-20). But more than that, He has spoken a deeper peace to her heart (v. 21), His own peace. And further still, she possesses the " more abundant life " (John 10:10), which was first breathed by Him who is the life-communicating Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), into those disciples met in the upper room, (v. 22) thus bringing them into participation c f His own life on resurrection ground. And she knows Him now in the center of the heavenly glory at the right hand of God, seated there as the Purger of her sins (Heb. 1:3), and the Head of the body of which she is a member, by virtue of the Holy Ghost dwelling in her (Col. 1:18), and her desire is to know more of Christ Himself for power to rise above everything here, as He is above it all.

A. And what is the state of John then? You say that he is a Christian; what more does he want, except of course to be occupied more with Christ, as Mary is?

B. Stay, I did not say that he is a Christian.

I said that he is born again, and therefore a child of God, but to characterize him as a Christian might be to give him a title which I do not think Scripture does.

A. But I must come to a thorough understanding with you on this point; do you make a distinction between being a child of God, and being a Christian?

B

A. Why no, it would be an incorrect expression, though it certainly will fly some day if it come to full growth.

B. Now you have just brought out my point: "it certainly will fly some day, if it come to full growth." But suppose something occurs which stunts its growth, and stops the development of its wings, it will still be a bird.

A. Yes, certainly.

B. But will it be " an animal that flies?"

A. No, clearly not.

B. Now I will apply my allegory. What is a Christian in the Scriptural use of the word? A Christian, or "one of Christ's," is one who not only is quickened or has life by being born again " of water and of the Spirit " (John 3:5), that is to say, the Holy Ghost bringing home the word of God, or " water" (look at 1 Peter 1:22,23; Eph. 5:25,26), with life-giving power to the soul, but, far more than this, he has got the Holy Ghost dwelling in him (" living water." John 4:10,14, and vii. 38, 39), and he thus is enabled to walk through the world with an unseen power, which flows from union with Christ risen and glorified, to whom he is consciously united by the Holy Ghost sent down from that glory.

This is what Scripture calls "Life in the Spirit " (Gal. 5:25), "Life more abundantly " (John 10:10), and "Life in resurrection" (Col. 3:1). As being dead and risen with Christ he is conscious that he belongs not to earth at all, but to a glorious sphere, the new creation, in which sin and flesh have no place, and Christ fills the whole scene.

From this it follows that union with Christ in the glory, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, is that which makes a Christian, and from which his power flows. Look carefully at the following references: Gal. 5:16, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." And again, v. 24, "'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions (lit:) and lusts." And again: Rom. 8:9, " But ye are not in. the flesh, but in the Spirit, /:f so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his," that is, "none of Christ's," or " not a Christian," though he be born of God. Hence you will see that power to keep the " old man " in its place of death, and to rise above earth altogether (having " wings " as it were) and not merely having life (as the nestling bird has) is one of the most marked features of a Christian, and this power manifests itself in liberty-Rom. 8:2, 13, 15; Gal. 4:6,7; 2 Cor. 3:17; joy-Rom. 15:13; and divine intelligence of spiritual things Rom. 8:5,6,15-18, &c. 1 Cor. 2:9 to end; 1 John 2:20,27. (Please to read these references carefully). To go back again, then, to my original theme.

John is like a nestling bird, " a babe," and in a " carnal " condition, as it says in 1 Cor. 3:1: " And I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Whereas Mary is grown up into the full truth of Christ (note that the word "perfect " in sonic places is used to mean "full grown," in contrast with being only an infant in Christ, see 1 Cor. 2:6, and 14:20; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; Heb. 5:13,14, and 6:1), and she is therefore like a bird which can fly, though it may not be with a very strong wing yet. John is still " at the foot of the cross " knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as the crucified one, but Mary knows Him also as the risen and glorified one. John, as I happen to know, has been converted under a sensational and defective gospel, in which only the human side of the cross was presented-the love of Jesus in dying for sinners to put away their sins, and the work finished, and everlasting life for the one who only believes. But Mary knows something also of the divine side of the cross, where we see God coming into the scene in power as the raiser up of Jesus from the dead as our sin-bearer and substitute in token of His perfect satisfaction in that work. Hence God is now the justifier of him who believes on Him (Rom. 4:5,26). It also shows us God giving Him a place at His own right hand in glory in honor of His work at the cross, and sending down the Holy Ghost in the name (John 14:26) and for the glory of that blessed One. (John 16:14). This truth when laid hold of by the believer introduces him into a sphere in which:

(a) All things are in power ("weakness " we see at the cross). 2 Cor. 13:4; Rom. 1:4;

Acts 1:8; Eph. 6:10.

(b) All things are of God. 2 Cor. 5:18; 1 Peter 1:21.

(c) All things are for the believer. Rom. 8:28 to end; Eph. 1:19,23; Eph. 3:20; Col. 2:20.

The consequences of this are very marked in the state of soul in each. In John there is a great lack of spiritual power to rise above flesh and earthly things, whereas Mary manifests this power in every act and word when walking in communion with Christ (for there is no reserve or store of power in one's self).

A. You say that John is only a babe, and Mary full grown? Why John has been saved many years longer than Mary!

B. That alas, is quite true. But the fact is that John has been stunted in his growth, and his " wings" have never been developed. You remember we agreed that the bird would. fly some day if it came to full growth. John has been brought up in an organized system of religious training for young people, in which it was taught that if he as a lost sinner believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, he would be saved, and that then he would be a Christian. Well, as I said before, through God's grace he did believe, and obtained life by faith in the precious blood of Christ. Then he was told that as he was now a Christian, he must seek for grace to walk and behave as a Christian, and this he sought to do.

Now this teaching was right to a certain extent, only that one great cardinal truth of Christianity was entirely omitted, and was therefore quite unknown to him. His soul was not led onwards and upwards to Christ in the glory, so that he was never intelligently connected with the place where Christ is (the Head of the body), and from which the Holy Ghost has come.

In fact he is just in the same condition as those disciples at Ephesus of whom we read in Acts 19 Paul having come to Ephesus, and finding, perhaps, that these believers, (for they were believers), were still in the " infant " condition, asked them pointedly, " Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? and they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost is " (come). In fact they were almost entirely ignorant of the significance of the Holy Ghost's advent in Christianity, and so unhappily it is with very many believers to-day, but with far less excuse, than the disciples at the beginning.

Thus it was that John was arrested in his spiritual development, and therefore stunted in his growth. Can we wonder then that power is just what be lacks? He was "very nice " when first converted, I am told, and hard-working too, but he gradually dropped into the ways of the world. And though whenever a stirring gospel is preached he enjoys it very much, and starts into fresh energy and " work for the Lord," yet, when a teacher visits the assembly, he always shows the same inability to grasp the full truth which we saw at the beginning. I do not say that he has not received the Holy Ghost, he may have; but the point I wish to press is this, he seems to have no consciousness of his relationship to the Father, or of union with Christ " on the right hand of the power of God."

But suppose that dear John were aroused to see that he is still in what you call the " infant " condition, what ought he to do? Should he not pray for power?

No, I think not. But the fact is, it is a difficult case. If he were only recently converted, the full truth of Christ ministered to him in a loving and careful way might bring him into the truth, but, as it is, he is like a badly set fracture of a bone, grown strong in its crookedness, which first requires breaking afresh and then resetting. But, be that as it may, the great thing is to endeavor to lead him on into " the regions beyond," and to show him the fullness that there is in Christ there; to let him see that in Christ glorified, not only has he got " redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace " (Eph. 1:7), but, that he is also " complete in him who is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10). And he should then be shown that when he has once " received Christ Jesus the Lord" (Col. 2:6), he ought no more to ask for power than he would ask for forgiveness of sins, for he has both in Christ.

What would you say if you heard a believer asking God for the forgiveness of his sins? Of course I do not allude to the confession of any particular sin or sins committed, which is the duty of every child of God to do at once (1 John 1:9).

I should say that he does not know what he has got already in Christ risen (Col. 1:14). Quite so. And in the same way if I heard a believer praying to God for power, I should think that he does not know what he already possesses in Him, who " liveth by the power of God" (2 Cor. 13:4).

A. Then if one be conscious, as I generally

am, of want of power to rise above self, cares, troubles, and persecutions, what should one ask for?

B. Ask the " God of the Lord_ Jesus Christ the Father of glory," that He will so enlighten " the eyes of your heart " that you may know what is yours in Christ more fully, and also that you may have grace to detect and lay aside everything that may be hindering the working of the power of God within you (There was nothing in Christ to hinder God's working in Him). Look carefully at the following verses:

Eph. 1:18: " The eyes of your understanding (or heart) being enlightened; that ye may know.... what is the exceeding greatness of his (God' s) power to usward who believe, according t o the working of his (God's) mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

Eph. 3:20: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." And you may be sure that, just as you behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, so will you be " changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). For there is a transforming power in beholding Him as He is even now, by which we gradually, yet surely, possess for our own strength and enjoyment, all that there is in Him.

R. M. B.

CHRIST is not yet sitting on His own throne; God said to Him when He had accomplished the work on the cross, " Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." But the day is coming when He will put down His enemies and sit on His throne. The present state of things according to the Scriptures is this, that Christ is sitting at the right hand of God until He makes His enemies His footstool. When you see all the wars and tumults and misery, and wretchedness, and superstition that there is all round. us, do you think that Christ is sitting on His throne?

But He is doing a more blessed thing; if He were to come at once, He would have to execute judgment on all this; but He is gathering out now His joint heirs; this is what He is doing whilst He sits there. The Holy Ghost has come forth to gather those that are to be entirely associated with Christ in glory, and therefore God bears with the evil and wickedness of the world. That is the great condition of things now: the world has rejected Christ; God has received Him. Peter is constantly telling us this; this is the Holy Ghost's controversy with the world. Christ, God's blessed Son, that the world rejected, God has raised up, and declared Him to be the Son of God with power. The Holy Ghost from the day of Pentecost-from the day that Christ was rejected-comes to bear the blessed testimony that He who was thus refused here, God has received there.

(J. N. D.)

Girdle of Truth: Volume 5, God's Mercy Revealing and Meeting Man's Misery

"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."-Acts 26:15-18.

Many an estimate may be formed of the ruin which sin has brought upon man; but the only real gauge of his misery is presented in the mercy by which, on the part of God, that misery is remedied. In this picture of man's condition, presented in the words of Christ's commission to Paul, there are no hard words of condemnation, nor threats of hell and judgment, nor exaggerated descriptions of present corruption or of future sorrow, but only the calm, heaven-pronounced declaration of a sinner's moral distance from God. But in this how does feature after feature of his moral ruin start into view, as the words in succession fall from the lips of his deliverer, while He tells of the varied application of His blood-bought cure! " I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," was the gracious answer to His fallen persecutor, as, trembling and confounded, he asked the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the commission follows, by which Saul of Tarsus is empowered to tell, as wide as the world, of the mercy which grace has provided to meet a sinner's need. " But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes; to turn them from darkness to light; from-the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive the forgiveness of sins; and inheritance among them which are sanctified." Blindness—darkness -Satan's power-distance from God—sins unforgiven—portionless as to eternity—no meetness for heaven—no fitness to dwell in the holiness of God's eternal presence; these are the sad features of man's condition, as a sinner, discovered to us, not in the way of denunciation, but in the declaration of the mercy which it cost Christ His life, and sufferings, and blood in order to display.

Now, if our minds, familiarized as they are to a condition of sin in ourselves and others, have thought little of the state to which it has actually reduced us, let us seek the correction of these thoughts by looking at the picture now presented to us. For dark as it is, there is mercy in it, because it is the estimate of our condition by Him whose mercy presents the full and adequate and only remedy.

But it may be thought, perhaps, that this description hardly now applies, since civilization, and education, and christian institutions have so altered things. Consider, then, for a moment, whether it is so or not.

Civilization, and education, and what are called christian institutions, may change the outward condition of society, but can they reach the blindness of men's hearts, or rescue from the darkness of this world, or deliver from Satan's power, or give to the conscience the sense of the forgiveness of sins, or open the door of heaven to sinners in such a way as that their presence shall not tarnish the holiness of God's presence? If not, the whole condition of your moral being before God remains unchanged, and will remain unchanged, until you learn the force of that simple expression, "By faith that is in me."

Sin, then, as viewed by Christ, who is the " faithful witness," has the effect of blinding men's hearts to all true apprehensions of God's character, and to all sense of their own condition, and to all just perception of the eternal distinction between pollution and holiness. Hence the first thing named by Christ to be effected by Paul's testimony, is " To open their eyes; " because " the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not; " and Christ well knew that their eyes could not be opened to Satan's blinding power except, as He says, " By faith that is in me."

But do we seek for proofs of men's blindness of heart? What greater proof can be presented than their ignorance of the excellency of Christ, and their indifference to the proclaimed grace of God, without which they never can be saved? What greater proof of blindness than their fearlessness in traversing their pathway through this world, where every step is beset with danger, and every moment may plunge them in eternal ruin? What else but blindness can account for their intentness in pursuing the things of time, and their neglect of the things of eternity; and their fondly-cherished hopes of being right at the end, though wrong in every step of the way? What else but blindness can account for their vague hopes of reaching heaven at last, though refusing the work of Christ which alone can bring them there?

Natural blindness discovers itself by insensibility to all the objects of nature which make their appeal to our senses through the medium of sight. There may be present the beauty of spring or the glow of autumn-the birds of the air or the lilies of the field-the mountain ranges or the forest shade-the majestic sea or, the placid lake-the frightful precipice or the level plain-the lowering tempest or the bright sunshine; but he who is blind sees nothing of them all. He is alike unmoved by the danger and unattracted by the beauty of all in the midst of which he stands.

And are men attracted by the beauty of holiness-or do they tremble at the thought of dying in their sins? Are they won by the attractions of the cross -or do they live in dread of a judgment to come? Does not the apostle give this as a proof of men's blindness, that God's glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ, and men do not see it? He says, " If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." In other words, so clearly is God's glory presented in the person of Christ, and in the salvation accomplished by the cross, that if a man does not see it, it is as palpable a proof of his spiritual blindness as in natural things for a man not to see a single ray of light when the sun is shining direct before him. But Christ says, " I send thee to open their eyes!" Do not, beloved friends, say as the Pharisees did, when Christ had opened the eyes of the man who was born blind, " Are we blind also?" Rather may you exclaim, " One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see!"

But we must be " turned from darkness to light," as well as have our eyes opened; otherwise it would be but to make the darkness visible. It would avail but little for a man to open his eyes on a scene enveloped in pitchy darkness. For every practical purpose he might as well be blind, or have his eyes closed, as to be destitute of light to guide his steps, or to enable him to distinguish objects one from another. Hence it is said, (1 Peter 2:9,) " God has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." If Christ sends the power of His grace through the gospel "to open our eyes," in the same grace He causes the light of God, which shines in our hearts, to shine also on everything around us. " I," says Christ, " am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." But mark, Christ is the light that must be followed. Where He is not, light is not. Where His example and His grace are not discerned, all is darkness. Alas t it is too little considered that Christ's presence in this world proved it to be a definite sphere of darkness; as it is said, " The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

Hence the power of Satan, who is Balled " the ruler of the darkness of this world;" and hence the tricks and traverses which he plays with men, and they have no light to detect his wiles. " If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not; because he hath the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth; because there is no light in him." But, then, this testimony of Jesus in the glory brings in the light of God upon everything. It " turns them from darkness" where people can see nothing clearly; " to light" where everything is discerned in its true character. For all things are made manifest by the light.

From the power of Satan unto God." It is said of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica that the people were turned by it to God from idols, to serve the living and the true God. Because these idols which were worshipped as gods, were, as the Scripture shows, but the representatives of Satan. " I say," says the apostle, " the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God." In truth, the world is the place of Satan's power. It is his public house, where he presents his entertainment according to the tastes of the guests whom he receives. He has wine for the drunkard and oaths for the profane; wit for the witty and pleasures for the gay. He has gold for the miser, business for the thrifty, honors for the ambitious, admirers for the vain, science for the learned, religion for the serious-everything but a crucified and risen Jesus, one look at whom would spoil it all. For He said to Paul, " to whom I now send thee, to turn them from Satan UNTO GOD."

Sin has separated from God; and under its power men can do nothing else but wander farther and farther from God. But " Jesus suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." The sense of guilt drives away from the presence of God; as we see in Adam, who, before any sentence of condemnation was pronounced upon him, hid himself amongst the trees of the garden, from the presence of God. But grace restores, not to paradise, but to God. It brings back into His presence in all the acceptance which Christ, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, has there. Men in their sins can only be happy with such happiness as the world affords, at a distance from God. It only lasts as long as the thought of God's presence is shut out. Let that be introduced into the gavest company that ever met together, and at once their gaiety is spoiled, as by the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast.

But how, it may be asked, if it be so, is a man to be delivered from Satan's power? I answer, who was it that said, " When a strong man armed keepeth his palace his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils?" Who was it that met the man amongst the tombs, who was so fierce that no man durst pass by that way, and, in a word, commanded the legion of devils, by whom he was possessed, to come out of him? So that His very enemies said of Him, " with authority he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they obey him." Satan can hold his own against any power but a, dead and risen Christ; who, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil."

" That they may receive the forgiveness of sins." Nothing gives the certain indication of faith in the soul and the working of God's Spirit but this. As Christ said to the Jews, " If ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins." There are many workings of the human mind, many attempts to satisfy the conscience, many efforts to meet the claims of the law, many hopes of heaven and fears of hell; but there is only one thing that can bring into the soul the knowledge of " the forgiveness of sins." But until this is known, there is no sure token that God is at work there, or that Christ has been received by faith. " Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Now, have none of you ever repeated, " I believe in the forgiveness of sins?" But, in doing so, whose sins did you believe in the forgiveness of? Peter's, Paul's, Mary Magdalene's, the thief's on the cross—and not your own? ' Then, they will be in heaven, and you will not if your belief goes no further than this. It is right to believe in the forgiveness of sins; but then it is necessary individually to receive the forgiveness of sins. Do you think God's Son suffered all He did to put away sin that you might go on in sin, and still reach heaven at last? Or do you think there is any means besides of getting rid of your sins? No; it is only " the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanseth us from all sin."

" That they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance amongst them that are sanctified."

Whatever the world and time may give to their votaries, it must be allowed on all hands that they leave a man portionless for eternity. " When he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory' shall not descend after him." But, most certainly, God is gathering to Himself out of this world those who are to be with Him through a long and blessed eternity, to be His heirs in glory. The apostle Peter speaks of this, when he says, " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

This living hope of this heavenly inheritance springs from faith in the resurrection of Christ. It is by this that God begets it in the soul. As Christ says, " by faith that is in me;" and He was then speaking from the heavenly glory. Now, God is sanctifying or setting apart the heirs of this inheritance. It is by the blood of Christ that this is accomplished; as the blood of the pass-over was the means of the redemption of Israel as the heirs of Canaan. " Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." It is this blood that sets apart from the world's judgment, because it meets the judgment due to sin. And if God saves sinners by the blood of Christ it is because that blood so puts away their sins that not a single stain remains to be brought into heaven, either to trouble their own consciences or to pollute the holiness of God's eternal presence.

But how am I to be assured of this inheritance? Christ says, "By faith that is in me." For however the apostle might amplify this ground of confidence, by showing the divine power and glory of Him who wrought this redemption, or the efficacy of the sacrifice by which it was accomplished, or the present position in glory of Him who humbled Himself to death for us; still, the title to eternal inheritance, as well as the reversal of all that marked our moral distance from God, is found in the single sentence, " By FAITH that is in me." For we must not fail here to mark that all this picture of man's misery comes to light through the remedy that was to be applied. It is not the detail (however we may have dwelt upon it) Of blindness and darkness and Satan's power, and sin's bondage and final hopelessness, that is prominent in this wondrous commission given by Christ to the apostle of the Gentiles; but it is the simple, energetic means by which this condition of ruin could alone be reversed. It is the sending a testimony through one who had gone as far as ever man's enmity could go in opposition to Christ, that all had been accomplished in order to put away sin-the certain efficacy of which the messenger in his own person was to be an example. Christ says in effect to Paul, I am going to send you to the Gentiles, who are blind, and in the dark, under the power of Satan, and dead in trespasses and sins, having no hope, and without God in the world, that they may know that I have labored and, suffered, and agonized and sweat blood, and met Satan's power and God's judgment in death, and I have conquered I And now bid them look to me for the fruit and power of that victory I have so hardly won!

Christ as the True Physician saw man's desperate condition, and provided the only remedy; though the victim Himself might be an utter stranger to His need.

Christ says, I send you to do this. But by what instruments or application was He to open their eyes? By what light was He to chase away their darkness?, By what power was He to deliver souls from Satan's grasp? How could they receive forgiveness of sins when God had declared that the wages of sin was death? How could they get their title and meetness for a place amongst those who were sanctified? How "read their title clear to mansions in the skies," when they were "by nature children of wrath?" The whole is summed up in this, "by faith that is in me."

Paul was to tell of the grace of that heart, to others, that had met, and melted, and, in sovereign mercy, had delivered his own. He was to tell of the love and power of One who had taken the sinner's place under death and judgment, that the- sinner through faith in Him might find a place before God in righteousness and heavenly glory. There was power enough in a risen Christ " to open their eyes," who so often, when here on earth, opened the eyes of the blind. There was power in Christ to bring in light amidst the darkest scenes of human depravity, for He is " the light of the world," and will soon appear as " the Sun of righteousness," to chase away all the darkness that broods over this world. But, now, the gospel is " God's power to salvation." When it is received by faith, it is God's instrument of deliverance. " God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

There was, and is, power enough in Christ to deliver from Satan's power, whom he conquered in death, "that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death." For even when on earth, the wondering multitudes exclaimed, "with authority he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." He could forgive sins on earth, because He came to bear sin; and now that " He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," the testimony, far and wide, is borne, " through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins." He can bring into heaven " who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising" the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." And let none of us forget that the objects of this redemption are viewed as " the fruit of the travail of His soul," who in death and sorrow, and in the infinitude of love, wrought this redemption.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Acts 26:22-23 - Contradicting Ephesians?

Question: Acts 26:22, 23. This text is urged to set aside the apostle's distinct assertion of a mystery hidden from the ages, and not in other generations made known to the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets (clearly and exclusively those of the N.T. so called, Eph. 2:20). Kindly explain: on the face of it such an allegation arrays one scripture against another, which must be of the enemy. What then did the apostle mean before Agrippa? Surely not to contradict what he wrote to Ephesian saints? X.

Answer: The context of each proves that both declarations are perfectly true, and therefore in divine harmony. For in the Acts he defends his public testimony in preaching the gospel and the kingdom of God, both of which rested on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection, and, as he said of the righteousness of God now manifested, "witnessed by the law and the prophets" (Rom. 3:21). But to the Ephesian and the Colossian saints the time was come to open out the mystery of Christ in His exaltation to the heavenlies, God summing up the created universe, all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth; and the saints, now called (Jewish and Gentile naturally), united to this heavenly Head as His one body. As he tells us in 1 Cor. 2:6-10, he did not preach this wondrous truth to the Jews any more than Gentiles, nor even to immature saints. God's hidden wisdom in a mystery he spoke only to the perfect or full-grown, which was then and is now far from being true of all believers. Hence, as the Jews arraigned him for his public appeals to themselves or others, the passage in the Acts in no way clashes with what he avowedly taught only to full-grown saints, of which they knew nothing and to which the apostle made no reference. The inference, confidently drawn to deny that he taught the new revelation characteristic of the N.T., is entirely at fault, and betrays fundamental ignorance of what every full-grown Christian ought humbly to learn.

Heavenly Vision: Have You Put Your Candle Out?, Heavenly Vision: Have You Put Your Candle Out? No. 1

The writer awoke one morning about 2.30 a.m., feeling the sentence of death upon him in a very remarkable way. With great difficulty he arose and lit his candle. He lay down again, and thought surely he was about to depart. After a time he became fully conscious that it was God speaking to him, and that the felt sentence of death on him was for some purpose. Suddenly the glory of the heavenly vision in Acts 26 burst upon him. As he lay, the brightness of that glory became so great, and the reality of that light surpassing all created light, that he looked at his candle, and said, I am ashamed of you. There is no need of you in such a scene of light: so he got up and put his candle out. There was no need of manufactured or created light.

He would now pen down a few of the thoughts given on that remarkable morning.

It was at midday a light was seen above the brightness of the sun. How bright that light. Yes, brighter than the brightest created light in midday splendor.

Who was the man that saw this light? Saul, the mad persecutor, the greatest Pharisee and the greatest hater of Christ on earth. There is no hatred against Him like religious hatred. Saul thought he was doing God service; but his heart was filled with enmity against the disciples of Jesus. He says, " I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me." Several things were common to them all. They all saw a light; they all fell to the ground; they heard a voice; they heard a voice and they did not hear. Compare this with Acts 9; 22 But only one could say," I heard a voice speaking unto me." Well might Saul exclaim, " Who art thou, Lord" And never was surprise greater than when he heard that reply, " I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." When the brethren of Joseph heard the words, " I am Joseph," their surprise could not have been greater. The glory of Joseph fades away when compared with the glory of that light and that voice speaking from heaven.

Peter speaks of the majesty and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, " For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." (2 Pet. 1:17, 18.) That was a voice to Him. But now this voice is from Him; He speaks in the brightness of that glory that blinds the eye to all of earth. He does not say, I am God, or Christ, or the Lord; He was truly all these; but He says, " I am Jesus."

Let us mark this. A man speaks from the excellent glory; a man from heaven. It is He who was once a babe laid in a manger of the inn; Jesus, Immanuel, God with us; He who, at the age of twelve, sat amongst the doctors at Jerusalem. It is the Jesus of Bethany; the Jesus of Sychar's well; the Jesus of Gethsemane; the Jesus who said to His loved disciples on the night of His betrayal to death, "Let not your hearts be troubled." It is that Jesus who was mocked, spit upon, smitten, scourged, rejected by men. Jesus, nailed to the tree, bearing our sins; made sin; forsaken of God whilst the dark billows of divine wrath due to us rolled over His soul. He who said, " Lo! I come to do thy will, God;" that Jesus who said, " It is finished." The work which God gave Him to do was finished never to be repeated. It was that Jesus who was raised from the dead for our justification; that Jesus who ascended above all heavens. Yes, that " I AM Jesus," now speaks to a poor deceived Pharisee, chief of sinners, at midday, in brightness above all created light.

Hearken to those amazing words from the Jesus who speaks from this excellent glory. Once He had said, "I will build my assembly." He did not say, I will build a church or an assembly, but " my assembly." That was a wonderful new revelation. He has now built, He now has that which He calls " my assembly." Do you know that there is on earth, that which Jesus can call " my assembly "?

On the morn of His resurrection He said something further, " Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God." This was very wonderful—what never could have been said before that morning. Disciples were now brought into the same relation to the Father, and to God, that He the Son was in!

But now what He speaks from heaven is still more wonderful. He asks, " Why persecutest thou me?" I must let you know, Saul, there is not a saint on earth that you persecute but that saint is part of myself. Not now " mine " only, but even still nearer—"me" This was the great truth afterward more fully revealed to Paul, and through him to us in the Epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians. So far as we know, there have been only two men, as we say, converted by this great fact revealed direct from the glory; and these two were perhaps the greatest Pharisees that ever lived. The one at the beginning, and the other in these: last of the last days—at the end. We will look at the latter by-and-by.

Who then was this Saul? He was a most religious young man. He was doing what he thought was pleasing to God. He says, " If any other man thinketh that be hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.... an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee [that is, of the most religious sect of the Jewish religion]; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless." (Phil. 3:4-6.) But when he heard the voice speaking unto him, he found he was the mad persecutor and the chief of sinners. What a change of mind! All that he had esteemed was now as dung, compared with the excellent glory of that One who spoke to Him.

Now mark that Saul's conversion was the effect of this, as he says," I heard a voice speaking unto me." Did that voice speak in wrath and terror to that stricken soul? No, He said, " am Jesus," I am the Savior. He spake to him as Savior, not now as judge. The brightness of that light, yea, the glory of that light, made all darkness here below. He was like the queen of Sheba—there remained no spirit in him. He had no appetite for this world's food. He must go three days without light and food. He must henceforth find his all in resurrection. No! Jesus did not appear in judgment; He will by-and-by. But He says, as it were, I will take you Saul, my greatest enemy, and make you my brightest witness on this earth.

Speaking here, Paul does not tell the earthly side of his remarkable conversion: how Ananias was sent to him, and how he was bid to arise and tarry not, but be baptized, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord. Here in chapter xxvi. it is the heavenly side, solely the heavenly vision. There is an earthly side of conversion, and there is a heavenly side. On this earth, and before men, by his baptism he entirely changed sides. In the sight of men he thus washed away his sins, like the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost, being baptized in the name of that Lord he had hated and persecuted; and thus took his place amongst those he had formerly persecuted.

But on the heavenly side, sins are not washed away by the water of baptism; but by the blood of God's dear Son. Believing God, who raised Jesus up from the dead, who was delivered for our iniquities, and was raised from among the dead for our justification; by faith we are justified, and have peace with God. It is important to keep distinct the difference between the heavenly and the earthly aspect of forgiveness of sins. Let us in this scripture keep before us the heavenly. Before, however, we go on to the commission to Paul to minister what he had and should afterward receive, let us pause, and ask ourselves a few questions.

Paul says," I heard a voice speaking unto me" You may have sat for years under the preaching of the gospel, and heard, like others, a voice from heaven; for the gospel is from heaven. But can you say at such a time in such a place, " I heard a voice speaking unto me "? Though the voice was heard by all, and all felt in a general way; yea, all fell to the ground; you may also have felt a power under the word, and even fallen unto the ground, and yet be a stranger to Christ. Have you ever really heard a voice, the voice of Jesus speaking unto you? " Verily, verily, I say unto YOU, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." What, Jesus in the bright glory of that light speaks these words me! Can I doubt them? Not if I can say, I heard Him speak to me—" a voice speaking unto me." Hearken to those words as from the excellent glory, spoken to you. Again He says, " Peace be unto you;" and shows you His hands and His side. Do you hear the voice speaking unto you from heaven? Oh, to have the ear open to hear every word of Jesus, as His voice speaking unto me. Well does the writer remember that voice speaking to him about fifty-three years ago; when having for months sought salvation by works and sought in vain, coming home as a boy one rainy night in a dark lane, his heart sank in despair, and he fell to the ground with his face in the mud, and cried, " Oh Lord, it is all over, I can do no more.' It was then he heard a voice speaking unto him, " It is finished." Yes, the work he tried to do, and could not, was all done. Jesus had done it all, long long ago. If you really can say, I heard His voice speaking to me, you will never doubt His word. No, you will say, I have heard the words of Jesus. I believe God that sent Him, and He says I have eternal life. He says I shall not come into judgment; He says I am passed from death unto life. I believe Him; He has made peace by His blood on the cross; that peace He gives to me; I believe Him. Oh, has He spoken to you? He spoke peace to me, but He did not speak to me as He did to Saul, of that wondrous mystery, " Why persecutest thou me?” But whether it be that wondrous mystery, or peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall never be able to really understand or enjoy either unless we can say, " I heard a voice from heaven speaking unto me." We will next look at the commission of the heavenly vision.

Heavenly Vision: Have You Put Your Candle Out?, Heavenly Vision: Have You Put Your Candle Out? No. 3

We will now in conclusion look at that truth which the apostle preached, and which produced this wondrous change of mind, in turning men to God, both from the religion of the Jews, and from all the abominations of the Gentiles—which opened their eyes, turned them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God; by which they received forgiveness of sins and inheritance among the sanctified, according to the words of Jesus "by faith that is in me." And by which great and small were shown that they must repent; they must abhor themselves, and the very things in which they had trusted, even as Paul himself did, and count them dung. Ah, Paul, if you were here now, you would have the same to do in this day to the great riders and chief priests of Christendom, and to all the small who follow them.

Well, the truth is the same; who will declare it as he did? And what is that truth? Briefly he explains it to the king Agrippa. " Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." If we turn to another scripture we shall see his exact manner of preaching, as recorded by the Holy Ghost. " Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is the Christ/' (Acts 17:3.) And the effect of this preaching for three weeks may be seen in the letters Paul wrote to these Thessalonians.

In another scripture the effect of this truth is equally striking. He shows that those who believe this truth are accounted righteous before God. 'If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 4; 5) Blessed as this is, it is far from being all. Indeed, everything is connected with the Person of Christ, dead and risen, and ascended to glory.

But it may be asked by some, Is not that the truth held by modern Christendom? Thank God, He has restored this truth again, and it is feebly preached by a few, little known except to be opposed. But if our eyes have been opened; if the light of the glory has shone into our hearts; if we have heard the voice speaking to us from heaven; if that light has so shone as to put our poor candle out—we shall then see in that light, that the truth preached by Paul, and the error preached now, are as wide apart as the poles.

The truth Paul preached was entirely from heaven. It was not of men, but of the Son of God from heaven—what He must do: that He must be engaged with the whole question of the salvation of lost sinners. And what must He needs do? Paul tells us He must needs suffer. He has suffered, bearing our iniquities—delivered for our offenses. According to the scriptures, bruised for sins. As our substitute, dead and buried; and there was the entire end of us judicially, so that we are reckoned dead and buried with Christ; no improvement expected in the old carnal man, but buried as dead—baptism being a figure-of this. (Rom. 6)

Before we go further, is this what a sinner is taught now? Is he told what has been done? or is he told to do? Is it what God is, and has done in the gift of His Son? And is he told what that Son has finished on the cross?

Paul preached forgiveness of sins through that once dead and now risen Christ; and assured all who, through grace, believed the message of God, that they were justified from all things. (Acts 13:38, 39.) And since God had raised Him from the dead who had died for their offenses; and having raised Him from the dead for the very purpose of their justification, they surely were justified by faith. There could be no possible mistake: therefore they had perfect peace with God. So that God was the justifier, and the work was finished by the Man who spoke to Saul from heaven. All is thus divine certainty, everlasting peace with God; and this was, and is, the effect of believing the truth as preached by Paul. We appeal in proof to every epistle he wrote.

If we now turn to the great or learned priesthood, take that large branch of what boastingly calls itself the Catholic Church, we are obliged to admit it curses the man that believes the above truth, preached by Paul. For proof of this,, we only need read the records of the Council of Trent.. If you doubt this, go to a priest and ask him what you are to do, so as to be quite sure, like the true believers in the church at Rome, that you are accounted righteous before God, and have peace with God.

Sad as this is, yet we cannot point in warning to the church of Rome alone, as utterly denying the truth which Paul preached. In thousands of scarcely Protestant places in this land, the truth as Paul preached it, is never heard; and if they possibly could, they would take care it never should be heard in their parishes. No, with them it is what you must do to improve your poor fallen nature. And you must go on improving it until you may hope to be fit for heaven! No, you must wait until the day of judgment! The Thessalonians heard the true gospel three weeks, and they had the full assurance faith gives, and were quite ready and waiting for the Son from heaven. But you may hear the false gospel all your lives, and die in uncertainty at last.

Is this true? You know it is. Are you, my reader, enjoying peace with God in unshaken confidence in the truth of God; or are you trying by baptism, or the incarnation, or the secret though idolatrous worship of, and supposed improvement of yourself by, sacraments, and holy days, and services—are you trying by these means, or any other means, to fit yourself for heaven, according to the errors, and commandments of men? If so, you know all is darkness and uncertainty. God will not allow you to even think you have peace with Him, or have eternal life, if you are looking to these delusions. Truly He was incarnate, but that was not to improve human nature, but, that He might in due time die to save them that believe. Oh, that the light may shine into your heart.

And we would also call attention to a most important fact. Not only must Christ needs suffer, but also rise from the dead. He died for our sins according to the scriptures. There was an end of our sins forever, never possibly to be remembered against us. God says it, " And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." That is, as to the conscience before God. This does not set aside His chastening us when we sin, or the advocacy of Christ. But God deals with us according to His estimate of the blood of Christ. Therefore, as they have been laid on Him, they can be charged to us no more.

But not only has Christ died for us, we are reckoned dead with Him; so that both our sins are reckoned gone, and we also are gone. Dead with Him, buried with Him.

Now if this was "all, we should simply perish, just as Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 15 "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also vain." " And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." All turns plainly on the resurrection of Christ. For again, He is not only raised for us, for our justification; but also we are raised up with Him. " If ye be risen with Christ." Clearly, we are neither justified nor risen with Christ, if He be not risen. " The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."

Can you then look back to the cross and see your Holy Substitute in pure love, taking your place, bearing your guilt, and sins; yea, made sin. for you? He finished there the work of atonement. Was He delivered for your offenses? It is not here a question of your accepting that substitute, but has God accepted Him? Can there be a possible doubt? Has not God raised Him from the dead, and received Him up above all heavens? What, your once bleeding substitute seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high!

But still far, far more—you are accepted just as He is accepted. See how God hath blessed you in Him in the heavenlies. Language fails to show how the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blest the whole church; every member of it " taken into favor in the beloved," " To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath taken us into favor in the beloved," &c. (Eph. 1:3-7.)

Do not, however, make that sad mistake, that this is your old nature improved, reconciled to God, or worse still, God reconciled to it. This error is the foundation cause of all errors. Ritualism is entirely based on it. No, the whole thing is entirely new, not a bit of the old mended. The doctrine that the incarnation was intended to be Christ permeating human nature, and then holy communion imparting still more of Christ, to improve humanity—all this is from the father of lies, utterly contrary to the word of God. Paul did not know Christ for that purpose, he says, "Wherefore henceforth, know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now, henceforth, know we him no more." To suppose that Christ in the flesh would save, or even benefit humanity, is utter folly. He must needs suffer, and rise again, or remain in His sinless purity forever alone. This is His own teaching. John 12:24: " Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God," &c. (2 Cor. 5:16, 17.)

The more we study in the light of the heavenly vision, the gospel committed to Paul, the more distinctly we see that there is the same need for men to change their minds now, and turn to God from the errors of Christendom, equally as it was in the days of Paul May the same Lord who thus called Saul the persecutor, call many more to declare this long lost truth to great and small.

Can you, reader, say in reading this paper,. I have heard that voice speaking to me? Soon our privilege of witnessing for Him will be closed: may we be able to say, " I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." C. S.

Heavenly Vision: Have You Put Your Candle Out?, Heavenly Vision: Have You Put Your Candle Out? No. 2

No, it was not to take vengeance on that persecutor that the glory of that light shone on Saul, and eclipsed the mid-day sun. It was not to plunge Saul into everlasting and deserved darkness, that he heard a voice speaking unto him. That voice spoke in tones like heaven's sweetest music. " But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Oh, precious Jesus, and is it thus Thy will that we should minister to others, and bear witness of the riches of Thy grace, in which Thou hast appeared to us? and also to tell out the grace upon grace, free favor upon free favor, mercy upon mercy, in which Thou wilt and hast appeared unto us? Yes, Lord Jesus; thus Thou takest up the chief of sinners, and thus Thou displayest the abounding of Thy grace!

Now was it not wonderful for the Lord of heaven to come down, as it were, to this earth again, in glory above the brightness of the sun, and thus reveal Himself to this chief enemy? Every true servant of Christ knows something of this direct commission from Christ. And in every true case of conversion it is Jesus speaking direct to the soul, in and by the Spirit. Others may hear a sound, but the word comes direct to the soul of the one saved, as though Jesus -actually was speaking from heaven. Only in this case, Saul was the chosen vessel through whom the Lord revealed the mystery, that every believer now was part of Himself—His body, the assembly—so that he was in great measure converted by this truth, that as a new creature he was what Christ was.

No doubt this was more fully made known to him afterward. He was chosen to be a witness: " Both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."

What had he seen? Jesus in glory above all creation. He had heard to his amazement that they whom he persecuted were one with the glorified Jesus. This very Lord was Jesus whom he persecuted. He had seen that the despised saints on earth were one with the Lord of heaven; and he was chosen to take that place, and be a witness of it. Amazing grace!

And now he who had been the chief agent of the people of Israel in persecuting the saints, would himself need delivering from them, and from the Gentiles, unto whom he should now be sent. And such was the deep sense of the grace shown to him, that he never questioned the grace and mercy shown to the Gentiles, whom up to that moment he had viewed as dogs. The chief of sinners becomes at once the chief witness of the riches of divine grace. He who had opened his eyes now sends him to Gentiles sunk in wickedness and sin: " To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It was from darkness to light, from Satan to God. As he says long afterward, Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." What a light the heavenly vision threw upon this world. Satan is its god, blinding the minds of them that believe not. The chief priests, his late employers, were led blinded by Satan. But he had seen One in glory above the brightness of the sun; He " who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God and our Father." (Gal. 1:4.) With all their privileges, he had found that the zeal of the chief priests, yea, his and their very religiousness, was the direct slavery of Satan. What a discovery!

Has that same Jesus opened your eyes to see these things? Do you know that this age, from the murder of Jesus to His coming in judgment, is distinctly the age of evil?—that the age in which this world boasts, with all its priests, and all its zeal, and all its religion, is in total blindness and darkness, yea, under the power of darkness; and that it has rejected Christ, and accepted Satan as its god and prince? If you know this, it will explain to you all the misery and wickedness In this world at this time, so near the end of this age of evil, and especially the unparalleled wickedness of what calls itself Christendom.

This is the scene into which the true disciple and servant of Christ is sent, as a lamb in the midst of wolves. If a true Christian in that world, he must suffer with · and be hated with Christ. When Judaism was set aside, its temple destroyed, and its priests slain, Satan did not die. He remained, and he soon had his ministers as angels of righteousness, and himself transformed into an angel of light, and as such he deceives Christendom to this day. He has still his high priest, chief priests, and priests by thousands, all led by him, and his works they do. Oh how soon it could be said, " Where Satan dwells.” (Rev. 2)

Not one in his kingdom has the least idea what that kingdom is, and who are its subjects. Vast numbers think they are doing God's service, as Jesus said it would be during His absence; and so it is. Oh fellow servant of the rejected Jesus, hast thou seen the heavenly vision? Hast thou heard that voice speaking to thee? What is in the heart of that despised and rejected Lord? What sends He thee to do? " To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." And God, who used Saul, can use whom He will; yes, if He please, even thee and me. Oh the riches of His grace! Yes, He who called Saul,, and revealed His Son in him, chief of Pharisees-as he was, can also reveal Christ His Son in us, chief of sinners. From that day Christ was seen in him, and it was Christ, not himself, he preached to the heathen.

" That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me." Such is the good pleasure of Him who speaks to us from the glory above the brightness of the sun. Saul believed, and he said, " Whereupon, king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." He received his commission direct from the risen and glorified Jesus. What could man add to this? What would human ordination be worth to him? What the value of apostolic succession to him? Not worth a straw, as he carefully shows in Gal. 1 and ii. How many thousands have, as they think, this, and are in Satan's darkness and Satan's service, ever, so far as they have power, and in all places doing the works of their father.

Oh what light the heavenly vision throws on present things. But who treads in the steps of Paul? Who? He said he " showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Of course they sought to kill him. There are many who think they are called of the same Christ; but only to preach to the unconverted. But Paul began with the religious world, and then the Gentiles. Who obeys the heavenly vision, as to the awful religious world of this day? Who has courage to declare (with eyes opened by the glory of the risen Christ) to the religious world that they must repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance? Do not the priests of this day need to change their minds, as much as the

Jews did then? Do they not need to turn to God, from their imitation Judaism—from trusting in their masses and sacraments, and worship and prayers to saints and angels and the blessed virgin, and their opposition and persecutions? Oh that a voice might proclaim, like a trumpet, to Romanist, and Greek, and Protestant, Repent and turn to God from all these vanities. No doubt they will seek to kill the faithful servant who obeys the heavenly vision. It was so then; it will be so now. Neither Satan nor his children are altered at all. It is most sad that he deceives the children of God even, so as to be yoked with his abominations. The Lord grant that those that are His may awake from sleep and obey the heavenly vision. Surely this vision was needed by the mad persecutor; and it characterized his preaching to the end of his service.

It is a very interesting inquiry, What did Paul preach in order to produce this repentance, both to the religious world (the Jews) and also to the Gentiles? This will throw great light on what the servant of Christ is to preach now, both to the professing world, and also to the unconverted.

Before we look at this, for lie distinctly tells us, we will remind the reader that we said there had been two men, perhaps the greatest Pharisees that ever lived, and both converted directly by the Lord speaking from heaven, revealing to each of them that every saint on earth, or believer during this present period of His rejection, is part of Himself, the risen and glorified Christ. We have seen the one, Saul the Pharisee, the blameless religionist. (Phil, iii.) He was at the beginning. He it was whom the Lord used to reveal the mystery of the joint body—the one body of Christ, the church, or assembly of God.

A little more than fifty years ago, when Pusey and Keble and others were talking about salvation by sacraments and ritual and fasting, &c. a young man might have been seen practicing what they talked and wrote. He was described to the writer by one who knew him well, as a walking skeleton on two crutches, covered with big old clothes, living in an old cabin, worn near to death with fastings and watchings and labors for salvation, on the mountains of Wicklow. He fasted four days a week, and on the others ate very little more than a few potatoes. He was sincere and blameless, kind and charitable to a degree; but as yet a stranger to the grace about to be revealed to him. He had never yet seen the heavenly vision: he had never yet heard " a voice speaking to me."

Well does the writer remember him saying, “I was walking in (I think it was) Stephens Green, Dublin, when suddenly the scriptures came to my mind: ' There is one body,' ' We are-members of his body,' &c." This was the voice from heaven to him. "What," he said, "am I then a member of His body? Then I must be what He, the Head, is." He was dead with Christ and risen with Him—what Christ was—part of Himself. Peace flowed from the glorified Christ in heaven into his soul—peace that never could be lost, that never varied or failed until the day of his departure a very few years ago. It was the restoration of the long-lost truth of what the church is as the body of Christ.

In the first case it was the beginning of 'the revelation of what the church is, and to Paul was given the blessed ministry of the revelation of the mystery. In the latter case, the Lord gave the blessed ministry of the restoration of that long lost truth. In both cases their peculiar conversion characterized the whole of their lives and ministry. Great are our privileges, and responsibilities, since the restoration of the truth of the church—the body of Christ.

(To he continued, if the Lord will.)

Heaven or Hell?, Heaven or Hell? No. 1

It is an appalling thought that every one of us must be either eternally saved or eternally lost. There is no middle place. It is impossible to be in a neutral position. The Judge is quickly coming to execute His awful work. None can escape His flaming eye, none can flee beyond His reach. Some will go into everlasting punishment, and others into eternal glory. How vastly momentous is the subject! How intensely solemn! Can anything be compared to its weighty importance? Is anything so worthy of consideration? What a difference between one lifting up his eyes being in torments, and another lifting up his eyes on the Savior's face in perpetual joy and glory! Well might the blessed Lord say, " What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The scriptures give the fullest warrant for our having now the assurance of eternal salvation; and most blessed it is to know that we have passed from death unto life, from condemnation to justification, from enmity and rebellion to reconciliation and peace. It seems strange that persons who read the Bible should have a moments rest till they can say with the patriarch " I know that my Redeemer liveth;" or, with the apostle, " We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens/' Many, however, with the Bible in their hands, appear to live as if the present time-state would last forever; as if there were no eternal torment to fear and flee from, no eternal glory to be enjoyed. So dull is the human mind as to a right contemplation of these everlasting realities, that, except the Spirit of God arrest and enlighten the conscience, men perseveringly pursue the broad road that leadeth to destruction, deaf to the gospel call, unmoved by the Savior's grace; and in vain work hard to find happiness without having salvation.

Our Lord, however, often raised in the clearest and most unmistakable way the warning voice. On one occasion He spoke of some going away into everlasting punishment, and of others into life eternal. Again, He declared that some would be cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. He spake of some who would be rejoicing at the marriage supper, while others are bound hand and foot and taken away. He referred to some who go into the marriage when the Bridegroom comes, while others are forever shut out. The apostle, too, plainly declares that some will be " forever with the Lord," and others " punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." Seeing then what eternal consequences are involved, doth it not behoove men to obtain a solid, scriptural assurance, that they are delivered from the wrath to come, and at peace with God?

But who are the lost? for scripture speaks of living men as lost; that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost In a word, they are without Christ. Whatever else they may have, they have not Christ as their Savior. This is the vital and decisive point. The sure mark of a lost soul is that he has not embraced Christ as his only Savior; he has not received Him whom God has sent. He is therefore in his sins, unforgiven, unsaved, lost.

There may be the greatest possible variety of natural character, educational attainment, or of surrounding circumstances; still men are lost, because they have not Christ. " He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." Some may be moral, others immoral; some chaste, others rude; some professors of religion, others scoffers; some nominal protestants, others professed infidels; some clever and argumentative on religious topics, others profoundly ignorant; still they have not life, they are dead in sins, lost, because they have not received the Lord Jesus

Christ as their Savior. Nothing can be clearer, or more plainly set forth in scripture; and the consideration of it is very solemn. Their hearts have not been melted by the Savior's love, they see no beauty in Him, they discern nothing charming in His gracious voice; they have been deaf to His groans and cries; His agony, and death, and blood-shedding for sinners are nothing to them. Their souls have not been affected by eternal realities; their comforts and expectations are limited to the narrow bounds of time and sense. They believe only what they see, or what they can prove. They believe not on Him whom having not seen we love. Benevolent and generous to their fellow-creatures they may be, but they know nothing of the sweetness of ministering to Christ's needy ones for His sake. Such are the lost round about us; and the gospel of the grace of God is preached that dead souls may live, and the lost be found. Blessed are those of whom it can be said, " He was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found."

Now let us look at the doom of the lost. Having lived in rejection of the Savior, they die unsaved. How solemn is the thought, that some, with whose faces we are so familiar, may possibly fall under God's everlasting punishment! Yea, we are certain that it must be so, if they continue to refuse to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. " If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.... whither I go ye cannot come;" thus they are excluded forever from the glorious presence of God and the Lamb, eternally separated from the fountain of love, life, light and joy, and forever in outer darkness. As body and soul have been engaged in sinning against God, so body and soul must be under the inflictions of divine wrath, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. When men die, they vainly imagine they have done with their bodies forever; but it is not so. They may be laid in the grave, and worms may feed upon them, or the corruptible frame molder into dust, but the body must rise again. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." " There shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust" The dead, small and great, must stand before God. Body and soul must be banished from His presence. Body and soul must be cast into outer darkness. They will be bound hand and foot and taken away, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. "Fear him," said Jesus, "who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." Independently of the mental anguish, the bodily suffering must be dreadful beyond conception. We experience pain now connected with what may be called natural sickness, and we realize the comfort of the tear of sympathy, and relieving remedies; but the pain then will be deserved infliction for transgressions and sins; it will be unmitigated wrath poured out by divine justice, without sympathizing friends to comfort, or possible means of affording one moment's relief; but ceaseless and everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. The interminable weeping, the constant shrieks of bitterest remorse, the thickest, blackest darkness, the intolerable anguish, the ceaseless frown of God, the pit filled with vilest companions, give us but a faint idea of what God has revealed concerning the eternal misery of the lost. No tongue can possibly describe their wretchedness. The power of mental reflection, the ability to bring past scenes to remembrance, the knowledge of having rejected the only Savior, the certain sense that some they once knew here are forever blessed in glory, while they feel tormented in the flame, with vain and ceaseless longings for one drop of water to cool their parched tongues, while they so bitterly experience that they are separated forever from all relief; the deepest remorse too connected with the thought that had they in their time-state bowed to the Savior's name, hearkened to His voice, wept at His wounded feet, believed in the efficacy of His blood, how unutterably different their state would be; all this and much more will combine to fill up the torments of those who die in their sins. the inconceivable blackness of eternal despair! What artist could delineate it? What words can describe it! What finite mind can grasp it! Surely it needed a gracious, mighty Savior to redeem from such destruction. The blood of Jesus, and nothing less, was necessary to be shed in order that divine justice could exclaim, " Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom., Yes, Jesus is mighty to save; and still He says of all who come to Him, " I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: death, I will be thy plagues! grave, I will be thy destruction;" so that the coming sinner can now triumphantly respond, " death, where is thy sting? grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

How awful, then, is the instruction conveyed by such words of scripture as " everlasting destruction," "eternal fire," "everlasting punishment"! Surely men do well to inquire like the prophet, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Should not every one who reads these lines honestly put the question to his own conscience, " Shall I be there?" Some may hesitate, but we earnestly entreat them to make this pointed and personal inquiry. Others may reply, that it is impossible to give a decided answer to such a question. No, dear reader, bear with us when we still press for a reply, for the scripture saith, "He that believeth on him [the 8 things new and old.

Lord Jesus Christ] is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God." (John 3:18.) Can any language, dear reader, be plainer, to show you, that at this moment, the Searcher of hearts beholds you either not condemned, or condemned already? Let your own conscience then respond.

There may be others who say, It is very harsh to speak so plainly of the dreadful horrors of the lost; but our answer to such is, Did not our Lord warn people against coming where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched? Did He not speak of the greater damnation? Did not He also say, " Preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned"? Did not the Apostle Paul say, " Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men "? and also, " How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?, Or dear reader, our desire is that you may flee from the wrath to come, and be saved, for God is still rich in mercy. The door of eternal salvation is still wide open. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The blood of the crucified Savior still cleanses from all sin. It is indeed a great salvation. The foulest sinner now has liberty to come to the Lord Jesus without money, and without price. He delivers from eternal condemnation, blots out all sin and transgression by His blood, freely gives everlasting life and righteousness, and introduces the far-off, self-destroying, guilty sinner, at once to perfect peace in the Father's bosom. Is not this a great salvation? If the reader has neglected it to the present moment, let him now inquire how he can escape the wrath to come. You may not have neglected chapel-going, church-going, alms-, or the outward ordinances of religion, and yet you have neglected this great salvation. unsaved soul! Plow can you be happy? How can you give sleep to your eyes again, without receiving this great salvation? Oh, that the Holy Spirit may so awaken you to a sense of your real danger, that you may flee to the Savior now, agonize to enter in at the strait gate, make the precious blood of Christ your only refuge, and find that it purges your conscience, and puts you on the ground of eternal salvation, and therefore of perfect peace with God. The Lord delights to save• Let us now consider who are the saved? That must be me (says the Pharisee), for I give alms, make long prayers, pay my dues, injure no one, and live a good life. But in this he is sadly deceived, for he knows not the only Savior,, refuses His gospel, and all his righteousness is only filthy rags before God. God has declared, " There is none righteous, no, not one.... none that doeth good, no, not one." And, notwithstanding all the boasted religiousness of many, it is further declared that " By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Who then can be saved? Is there any way by which a crimson sinner can be made whiter than snow? Yes, in Christ and through His blood—even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. believer, then, is cleansed from all sin by the blood of Christ, and made the righteousness of God in Christ who is risen and ascended;

and all on the principle of faith. And there never has been any other way of a sinner^ being accounted righteous before God but in the way of faith. Abel and Noah were accounted righteous by faith. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. David also spoke of the doctrine of righteousness without works. Paul often brings it before us in his epistles, and shows that it shall be imputed to them now who believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. To the sin-stricken soul then, who has taken refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, He still says, "Thy sins are forgiven.... thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." ({vi 25244;25246}Luke 7:48, 50.) He has eternal life, and God wishes him to know that he has it for his present comfort and blessing. The language of the beloved apostle John is "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 elsewhere he says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." ({vi 30638;30594}1 John 5:13; 3:14.) Such also have remission of sins, and are justified from all things; this also God wishes them to know for present assurance. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Christ] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him, all that believe are justified from all things;" and again, "To him. [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." ({vi 27401-27402;27303}Acts 13:38, 39; 10:43.) Moreover, to such as have remission of sins, the Holy Ghost is given as the seal and earnest of the inheritance; and because they are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, the Holy Ghost is given as the Spirit of adoption. " Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (See {vi 27303-27307}Acts 10:43-47; {vi 29129;29138}Gal. 3:26; 4:6.)

Can anything more clearly show the present and eternal salvation, those are brought into, by divine grace, who know the Son of God now in glory, who was crucified but is risen and ascended, as the Object of their faith? Well might the apostle say, that the preaching of the cross is, " unto us which are saved", the power of God.

Heaven or Hell?, Heaven or Hell? No. 2

While God has revealed in scripture some of the miseries of the lost, He has not left us in entire ignorance of the everlasting happiness of those who are now justified by the blood of Jesus. Being already partakers of the heavenly calling, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, we await the coming of our Lord from heaven, when we shall meet Him in the air, and be taken to the Father's house, until the heaven opens and we come out with Him in manifested glory. " When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

But who can describe the blessedness of being "forever with the Lord"! What tongue can utter the bliss of being joint-heirs with Him who is Heir of all things! What pen could depict the joy of the Father's house, the blessedness of sharing the honor and glory of the glorified Son of man I What mortal mind could comprehend such infinite heights and depths! What words could portray the beauty and brightness of these cloudless regions of peerless purity and perfection! At our very approach to the subject, we seem to hear a voice within us, saying, " Take thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

We are clearly taught that the " inheritance" will be " incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" that it is reserved in heaven for us, and that we are kept by the power of God for it through faith. All our blessing being founded on the blood of Christ, He will there be the absorbing object of delight, the untiring subject of praise, the source of uninterrupted joy and thanksgiving.

How widely all this contrasts with the present state! Now is the time for " evil things/' then to be forever comforted and blessed; now to sow in tears, then to reap in joy; now to endure suffering, then to enjoy pleasures for evermore; now to live in a Christ-rejecting world, then to dwell forever amid Christ-exulting crowds; now to know Christ only by faith, then to see Him with unclouded vision, and so be forever with the Lord. No Satan to tempt us then, no deceitful world to allure, no false friends to betray, no wicked to trouble, no vile body to clog, no infirmities to hinder, no sin to distress, no bereavement to cause weeping, no perplexities to harass, no separations to call for mourning, no failure to give sorrow. In the eternal state there will be no pining sickness, no aching brow, no breaking up of happy associations no heaviness of spirit, no disappointment, no un-kindness; but Satan bruised under our feet, heaven and earth passed away, the wicked cast into everlasting punishment, our present body of humiliation changed and fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Savior, and everlasting songs of joy in every heart. Distress will not be known, for " God shall be with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away." Well may one who joyfully anticipates the coming glory sing, " There shall I bathe my weary soul In seas of heavenly rest; And not a wave of sorrow roll Across my peaceful breast."

It is declared to be the purpose of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "that, in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:7.) In the millennial age, when nations are still occupying this earth, and the bride, the Lamb's wife, has descended from God out of heaven, and taken her appointed place over the earth, then God and the Lamb are everything. Then too the world, when it looks up and sees the glorified saints, will know that the Father loves us as He loved Jesus. (John 17:23.) What wondrous grace to us!

Heaven will be the region of unsullied holiness. We are told that the living creatures rest not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come/'

God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, therefore " There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

It will be the abode of unchanging light and glory, for God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all, hence we are twice told, " There shall be no night there.'' How can there be darkness in the presence of God and the Lamb? There will be no need even of created light, neither of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it; " for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof." "They need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever." How wonderful the thought that such as are now saved by the grace of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ will then have the glory of God, and be where the eternal and uncreated light of divine glory will be their light, and forever shine through the Lamb. So bright then will be the glory reflected by the bride the Lamb's wife, when she takes her place as having descended out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like

a jasper stone clear as crystal, that the nations on earth will walk in the light of it. (See Rev. 21:9-27.) Surely it is the precious blood of Christ that gives us title to this glory.

The Lord having come for us ere this, given us glorified bodies, taken us to our prepared abode in the Father's house; the marriage of the Lamb having taken place, and the bride presented to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, and, as we have seen, being then in manifested glory with Himself, we shall ever realize nearness to God. It was the Father's eternal purpose to have us before Him in love, without blemish, in the endearing relationship of children; therefore, as redeemed and a new creation in Christ Jesus, nearness, unspeakable nearness to God, must be known. Did not Christ once suffer for sins that He might bring us to God? And here we find its true fulfillment. We are told, " I saw no temple therein." A temple was ordered for God's chosen, loved, and redeemed Israel, and a mark also of distinguishing privilege, but it always implied distance. And it could not be otherwise; for why the magnificent building with its many sacrifices, successional priesthood, veil unrent, and the only house on earth where Jehovah had recorded His name? but to show that His people, though in covenant relationship with Himself, were still at a distance from Himself; shut out from His presence, and not yet brought in conscious nearness to God. It is well to observe, then, in this heavenly vision, that the reason assigned for there being no temple in it is, " for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it;" for the Lamb will be the everlasting Witness that all our blessings are founded on the claims of divine righteousness having been met for us in His accomplished work, and that the rending of the veil removed all thought of distance. For the same reason it is said, " There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." Grace too will be flowing like a river, pure, abundant, widening and deepening as it flows on; for what else than living blessing could flow from the throne of God and the Lamb? What refreshment, what satisfaction, what delight, this pure river of water of life tells us of, "which is clear as crystal, and proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." " The tree of life" also in the midst, not of the earthly paradise, but of the paradise of God, will be ever feeding and gladdening us with its varied and soul-satisfying fruits, while the healing virtues of the leaves of the tree are given to the nations on earth. But the best of all will be to see His face—to see the Lord Himself, the One who loved us and gave Himself for us; for nothing less could ever satisfy one who is born of God. " They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." What heavenly, what eternal, and perfect bliss! Yes, " There we shall see His face, And never, never sin. There from the rivers of His grace Drink endless pleasures in."

Besides all this, there will be willing and happy service—" His servants shall serve him;" and it need not be added that the deepest reverence and profoundest humility will also be manifested. If the sinless seraphims which are ever ascribing holiness to the Lord of hosts, were seen by the prophet with covered faces and covered feet, how much more will it become us in unfeigned lowliness and holy reverence, to rise from off our thrones of glory, and, while prostrating ourselves, cast our crowns before Him who sits on the throne, and say, " Thou art worthy"! Yes, so conscious shall we then be that we owe all our happiness, all our blessings, all our eternal salvation to the rich, unmerited grace of God, that our becoming utterance will be, " Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the praise, all the honor, all the glory Moreover, it will be the dwelling place of perfect love, for God is love. The eternal love of the Father, the self-sacrificing love of the Son, the love and fellowship of the Spirit will then be fully known, calling for ceaseless and grateful response from the innumerable hosts of the blood-washed dwellers in heaven. There the Father will be rejoicing over His returned and welcomed prodigals with exceeding joy, the Shepherd rejoicing over His lost sheep safely folded, the Spirit filling each vessel with fruit in season, and the praises of countless ransomed ones causing heaven to resound with joyful hallelujahs, and the untiring anthem of " Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood;" while myriads of bright angelic hosts add their ascriptions of "Worthy is the Lamb."

It need scarcely be said there will be rest there, even the rest which now remaineth, as it is written, " There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

What will it be to be " forever with the Lord"? To be forever gazing upon His face, to see His name written on every forehead; to behold Him in His rightful place as Lord of all; to hear Him honored and extolled by every creature; to find all there harmoniously employed in serving Him; every mind in heaven according to His thought; every heart responding to His desire; every soul delighting unceasingly in Him—His fullness, His perfection, His worth, His glory; all feeding on His joy, filled with His love, and waiting in His presence; every knee bowing to Him; every tongue praising Him. His name how fragrant, His love how perfect, His voice how sweet, His glory how unutterable, His word how blessed, His will how just; and, above all, His blood, how precious! He Himself our Life, our Peace, our Righteousness, and not ashamed to call us brethren, but still saying, "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." He Himself satisfied at seeing the travail of His soul, and we forever satisfied at being forever with the Lord. Well may we exclaim, " What must it be to be there!" But we must stop. Our thoughts are too poor, our conceptions too meager, to attempt further description of the unspeakable glories of that bright and hallowed region. It is most happy to know that the blood of Jesus has secured it for us, that Christ is made unto us righteousness, that He has accomplished eternal redemption for us, and that He ever lives to make intercession for us, so as to save us through all this checkereda path right on to the end. little while, and then the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and His saints, living or dead, shall be caught up to meet Him in the air; then this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, this mortal shall have put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. Then shall we see His face, and be with Him and like Him forever. " Forever on His face to gaze, And meet the full assembled rays, While all His beauty He displays To all the saints in glory!"

Reader! Will you be there?

Man has a living soul. No doubt other creatures have living souls, but it is bound up with their organization. " Man became a living soul" by the in-breathing of God, and the difference is immense, and of all-importance. (Compare Gen. 1:20, 30, margin, with Gen. 2:7.)

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Be Baptised and Wash Away Thy Sins

Q. Would you kindly explain, “be baptized, and wash away thy sins,” in Acts 22:16?

B. G.

A.-It is not all that a soul should by grace believe the gospel. The Lord enjoins the outward act of baptism, as the appointed and standing sign of burial to His death, in subjection to His name. He that would refuse it on principle despises Christ and His work. On the other hand, he that

has no more than submitted to the sign has only an external name before men, and no real intrinsic part in the privileges he claims, which is inseparable from faith, without which millions have been baptized in vain. See Mark 16:16. The apostles, he., were told to baptize, as they did: and even Paul was baptized by a simple disciple. But it is a grave fact for system-makers, that scripture is silent about the twelve themselves. There is no ground to believe that one of them was the subject of Christian baptism. Some or all may have been baptized by John; but his baptism was quite distinct, as we see in Acts 19.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Remission of Sins

Question: Acts 2:38; 22:16. Is “remission of sins,” or “wash away thy sins” in these texts a question of faith finding non-imputation before God, or of administrative forgiveness on earth?

Inquirer.

Answer: We must distinguish between the work in virtue of which sin is not at all imputed to those that believe (even as to those about whom there was no question of baptism as Abraham), and the actual administration of the blessing upon earth, both fully revealed and actually applied, the work on which it was grounded being accomplished. This revelation of remission is clearly pointed out. It is promised in the new covenant, and recognized by the New Testament in the institution of the Lord’s supper. “This is my blood of the new covenant shed for many for remission of sins.” John the Baptist was to bring the knowledge of salvation to God’s people by remission of their sins. (Luke 1) The disciples were to remit sins, and they would be remitted (John 20); and the commission in Luke, the one on which (not that in Matt. 28) all preaching in the Acts of the Apostles is founded, whether Peter’s or Paul’s, is that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in Christ’s name. In past times, righteousness not being revealed, there had been forbearance (Rom. 3); now that Christ has been offered, righteousness in the remission, or pretermission, of the sins that had taken place before (i.e. in Old Testament times) was proved. But this of course is not all. For God then not only announced to souls individually (for, however many heard, it was individually) but set up a system on earth in which the new blessings were found, based on two instituted signs, baptism and the Lord’s supper, one initiatory once for all, the other the continual memorial of the Lord’s death till He come and the expression of the unity of the body. Of this last it is not our business to speak now. But baptism was the entrance into that system1 within the precincts of which all Christian blessings were found as externally administered on the earth. The first of these was remission of sins, on the reception of which came also the blessing by the Holy Ghost; and even if this was extraordinarily given as to Cornelius and his house, still they were admitted in an orderly way to the common blessings of Christians here below. But the first grand blessing needed was remission of sins: through this was knowledge of salvation and actual reception of it where it was received. Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in Christ’s name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. Peter does this when the Jews on the day of Pentecost were pricked in their hearts, and says that these are the things looked for: If you repent and enter into this divinely administered door of blessing, you will receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. He does not say, Be baptized and you will receive remission of sins, but be baptized with the baptism to remission of sins, become Christians where this blessing is found. They were baptized to, or for, it: so to Moses, to Christ, to His death. It was the truth and fact to which they were brought: owning this, they would then receive the Holy Ghost. It was the profession they came into. If true faith and repentance were there, they got the present actual administered remission; if not there, they did not get it as we see in Simon Magus. It may be a hardening, but is no blessing to him who is a hypocrite.

Thus remission of sins is not the fact of non-imputation by the death of Christ (which last Old Testament believers had) but an actual status into which a person enters. I may have forgiven a person perfectly in my mind; but he has not forgiveness till it is pronounced upon him. Here there is no outward sign; where there is, it may be abused to self-deception, as we see in 1 Cor. 10. The simile is used to show the difference between non-imputation on God’s part and administered or declared forgiveness. See the case of Nathan with David. (2 Sam. 12:13.) Observe also the connection of forgiveness with discipline where non-imputation is not at all the question.

Hence, when Paul was converted, Ananias said to him, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.” He entered then into an actually administered forgiveness. “Wash away thy sins” is of course a figure. It is not putting away the filth of the flesh that does it. But I come thereby into that which is proclaimed as the first blessing of the Christianity into which I enter becoming a professed Christian. If faith is there, my conscience is perfect according to the Christian system, and the other blessings follow; if there is profession without real faith, I am in the case of Simon Magus or of 1 Cor. 10; but I have been baptized to that. In Acts 2 and 22 the call is addressed to persons publicly under the power of the revelation and word of Christ; and they are then told what to do in order to obtain the blessings of Christianity actually here on earth, the path to perfect ones above. This must not be forgotten; for then they did enter, and for the first time, into the blessings attached to Christianity on earth.

Therefore Peter can say, in his first epistle 3:21, “Which figure also now saveth us,” taking care (as the proposition is general) to show that it was not simply the outward sign that did it. Hence, when he addressed those pricked in heart by his word, he (on the inquiry what to do) put the whole matter according to the commission in the end of Luke. They inquired for a good conscience; for this is the true force of the expression in 1 Peter 3: not “the answer” as in the Authorized Version, but the inquiry () for a good conscience. In Acts 2 they inquired for and got it. They were baptized to this truth and administered fact—remission of sins, and received then the gift of the Holy Ghost.

On the other hand, if a person (being not a professed Christian, a Jew for example or a heathen) was convinced that Jesus was the Christ, or Son of God, and would not be baptized, one would not say that his sins were washed away or that he was saved. See Mark 16:16. But quickening seems never spoken of in connection with baptism. The question raised is not life but washing away or remission of sins. It is not a question of non-imputation, again, but the administration of forgiveness here on earth, as the privilege conferred freely on the conscience in Christianity, in which forgiveness is administered as a present actual thing. The baptized enter into this; though, being an outward or sacramental institution, it may be merely a form.

A Few Thoughts on Baptism, Baptism, Few Thoughts on: No. 2

The preaching of Peter at Caesarea to Cornelius and his company next comes before us. Again, it is not baptism, but " peace by Christ Jesus,' that is preached to them. Now, if baptism had been the channel, or medium, through or by which forgiveness of sins was obtained, or the medium by which the new birth was effected, then Peter must have at once preached it; or, if there was any sacramental grace connected with it, then also he could not possibly have omitted to preach it first of all. How differently from all this did he declare of Jesus: " To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Does not this explain what was meant at Pentecost, " in the name of Jesus for remission of sins?" It does not say; whosoever is baptized, but, " whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Baptism was the profession of faith in Him; but in this case, to show that remission of sins is through faith in Jesus, " whilst Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." This was before they were baptized. It would therefore be a great mistake to connect forgiveness of sins with baptism, instead of the name of the Lord Jesus. The believing Jews were greatly astonished at this, and especially as this was on the Gentiles, and it demands our closest attention. There were a company of believers baptized by the Holy Ghost, and thus members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12), before they had been baptized with water. Does not this, then, show again the distinction between the outward profession and the baptism by the Spirit into the body of Christ?

Surely, however, the way was clear for the former by the latter. " Can any man forbid water, that these should be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." It follows, then, that it is a fatal mistake to attach forgiveness and sacramental efficacy to baptism, instead of faith in the Lord Jesus.

Repentance, no doubt, was wrought in the heart and conscience, but the expression of it in baptism did not take place in this case until they had received the Holy Ghost. The great point established is this: baptism cannot be the channel whereby we get forgiveness of sins, for they had this and the Holy Ghost, and yet were commanded to be baptized. They could not be baptized to obtain what they already had.

We will now look at that remarkable passage in the conversion of Saul. Convicted and repentant, through the revelation of the risen and glorified Jesus, whom he had seen, and whose words he had heard; three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. Ananias is sent to him as a chosen vessel of Christ. Let us hear his words: " putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts 9:17.) Mark, all this is before baptism is named. Then Ananias said, "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Chap. 22:16.) This is sometimes read as if it said, or meant, " wash away thy sins by baptism." But does it say so? Head each clause. It is not, wash away thy sins, being baptized, but, wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. It does not say, wash away thy sins, and call on the name of the Lord. Is not wash away thy sins connected with calling on the name of the Lord? Let us inquire how Paul himself understood this.

The literal translation of those words of Ananias to Saul is given thus: " And now, why lingerest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and have thy sins washed away, calling on his name;" or, as in the common Greek text, " on the name of the Lord.” Are there not three thoughts: first, " Why lingerest thou?” second, " Arise, and be baptized;" third, " and have thy sins washed away, calling on his name." Now the question is this- Is the washing away of sins by baptism? It does not say so. Or, then, is it connected with calling on the name of the Lord? If we compare Acts 26, it is clear Saul had received his call and commission three days before his baptism: " To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which arc sanctified, by faith that is in me." Here forgiveness of sins, &c, is not by baptism, but by faith in Christ. It was through faith in Christ he preached repentance, and doubtless baptism resulted as the expression of both faith and repentance, as we shall soon see: " That they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

Saul was, doubtless, a forgiven man, and therefore, whilst it could not be said, Wash away thy sins by baptism, or, thus washing away thy sins, yet, as has been said, being baptized, and now calling on the name of the Lord whom he had persecuted, the assembly would now look upon him as a new and forgiven man: indeed, they could not have done so had he delayed or refused baptism. But this we must say boldly—never did Paul preach baptism as a means of obtaining forgiveness with God; but he did distinctly connect salvation with calling on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:8-13), ending with these words: " For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."…. " For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” No doubt the Holy Ghost used the words of Ananias in bringing Saul into the full enjoyment of sins forgiven.

Now read through the Acts, and examine each instance of the preaching of Paul. Did he once preach baptism as a means either of the new birth, or a means by which sins are forgiven? Redemption being accomplished, he first invariably preached the cross, the death, and then the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and then, " Be it known, therefore…. that through this man (not through baptism) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all [that are baptized? No.] that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:39.) Also at Thessalonica, his manner of preaching was this: " Three sabbath-days [he] reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead: and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.’ He fully explains the gospel he preached, and that by which the Corinthians were saved, if saved at all, in 1 Cor. 15:1-17. But in that gospel it was, " Christ died for our sins, according to the scrip-tares; and that he was buried, and that he rose again " &c. He also declares. " Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." (1 Cor. 1:17.) Now, if sins were washed away by baptism before God, or if the Spirit used baptism to effect the new birth, then baptism would be the very cream of the gospel, and Paul could not have written such a fact. He makes the gospel something absolutely distinct from baptism. Christ sent him not to baptize, as we have seen in the commission, but to preach the gospel.

Yet it is also clear that baptism was the result where Paul preached the word. Let us look at a few cases. We see Paul at Philippi. Lydia is listening to the word of life: " Whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things that wore spoken by Paul." And what was the result? "And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there." (Acts 16:14.) This believing woman—the first believer in Europe on record—took a most remarkable place of, shall we say, responsible authority? Her household eras baptized; yet she says, If ye have judged me: she does not say, If ye have judged my household faithful. This is worthy of reflection. She was a Jewess, or " proselyte."

The next is a poor heathen jailor. He says, u Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Did the apostle direct him to baptism as a means of grace or salvation? No: u Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." Had he said, Be baptized, and thy house, and thou shalt be forgiven, or saved, it would have been another thing; but it was, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He believed; and the result was, a He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their

stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.” &c.

So, again, at Corinth (chap, 28), Paul first testifies that Jesus is the Christ: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized."

Yes, in all these cases they heard, believed, and were baptized. All that heard, and believed, had eternal life, and were justified from all things before God. (John 5:24; Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 5:1, 2.) Baptism had nothing to do with imparting any of these. The above scriptures make that certain. Baptism marked their separation from Judaism, heathenism, and all with which they had been connected.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence, Correspondence: Election vs. Predestination; Eph. 2:21-22; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 9:22

Ques. What is the difference between Election and Predestination? C. W.

Ans. Election is choosing the persons (Eph. 1:4).

Predestination (Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph. 1:5, 11) is the position and relationship that we are to fill. We are marked out beforehand to be the companions of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

God might have saved us, and kept us at a distance from Himself, but He marked us out beforehand to be His children by Jesus Christ to Himself. It was His good pleasure to do so. It is what the chosen ones are predestinated to.

Ques. Eph. 2:21, 22?

Ans. Eph. 2:21 compares the church to the temple: it is not yet finished. It is divine workmanship fitly framed together and it grows. It grows without sound of hammer or tool of iron. It is heavenly.

Eph. 2:22, is compared to the tabernacle, God's dwelling place on earth. He journeys with His people. In all their affliction He is afflicted. No builder is mentioned, and it is always God's habitation through the Spirit. "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." John 14:17.

Ques. How could Saul wash away his sins? (Acts 22:16). T. N. W.

Ans. Saul of Tarsus was a Jew so zealous for his religion, that he was persecuting the Christians even unto death.

In Acts 2:37 to 40, Peter preached to the opposing Jews to "repent and be baptized every one in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."…. "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." We see in this how that baptism changes the person's position. The name of the Lord is put upon him (Gal. 3:27).

It was Saul taking his place in this symbol of the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3) that brought him into new associations, and thus cleared away all that he had been going on with. He knew that Christ, whom the Jews put to death, was risen and glorified, and already had owned Him as His Lord, when he replied:

“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

It is important to understand that the use of baptism transfers its subject from being a Jew or a Gentile into the professing Church on earth. It is believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth that brings peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9, 10).

The sins that baptism could wash away, are the person's old associations as Jews or Gentiles.

The first Gentiles brought into the Church of God on earth were Cornelius and his household. God gave them His Holy Spirit when they believed the gospel. And Peter, who had the keys (not of heaven) but of the Kingdom of God, was compelled to bring them in saying, "Who can forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we." And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus: that is by His authority. He could not leave them still on Gentile ground (See Acts 10). It is external only.

Ques. What do we learn from "I am made all things to all men?" (1 Cor. 9:22). V. R.

Ans. In this chapter we see Paul the apostle in ministry of the gospel. It was committed to him, and he was devoted to the Lord and to Him to please Him in His service. He made himself the servant of all, that he might gain the more.

When he spoke to Jews, he put himself into their place to make it plain to them that they were under the curse of law, and guilty of the death of Christ. He had been the same once but was now delivered.

To the Gentiles, he showed them their guilt as away from God, without hope. He suited himself to those he spoke to, and this our blessed Lord also did perfectly. His all-seeing eye knew what was in their hearts.

The woman at the well in John 4.

The Pharisee and the woman in Luke 7.

The woman and her accusers in John 8.

The Pharisees and lawyers in Luke 11,-all felt that God was speaking to them.

On the other hand, making ourselves all things to all men does not mean that we should go with them into the worldly parties and frivolities, games, etc. We need to walk in wisdom toward all, so to gain them for Christ.

Paul told his conversion in Acts 22 to the Jews to meet their condition, and then in Acts 26 to bring the gospel before the Gentile king and judge. He wanted that they also should share the blessing that he had received.

With hearts lifted up to the Lord for guidance, may we in our little measure walk in the same path.

Christian Treasury: Volume 8, Witnessing

“Thou shalt be His witness.”

Acts 22:15ACT 22:15

Paul, the former enemy, was proclaimed to be his Savior's chosen vessel to fulfill the purpose expressed in the Lord's words, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness." Acts 26:16. The ever-present consciousness of the high and holy favor that had constituted him a witness led to his continuous, faithful testifying, which he recounted years later in words that should even now stir our hearts: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great." Acts 26:22.

The believer may appropriate the Savior's parting words to those who followed Him to Olivet: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." Acts 1:8. And he may prove, as the Apostle John did, that the "testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1:9) leads to separation from the world and rejection, as his banishment to Patmos indicated in his day.

For our witnessing, the Holy Spirit presents to us the blessed Lord Himself who is the true and "faithful Witness." Rev. 1:5. The lowly One perfectly testifies of the Father who sent Him, and exhibits to us the manner of witnessing to which we are called.

Just as service is summed up in the words, "Follow Me," so all true testimony that we may bear conforms to the manner of testifying the following scriptures denote.

“If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true." John 5:31.

“The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do." John 5:19.

“I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true.... But I know Him; for I am from Him, and He hath sent Me." John 7:28, 29.

“As My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things." John 8:28.

“I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." John 12:49.

“The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1:18.

“I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it." John 17:26.

Such precious testimony the Spirit of God reveals as rendered by the One of whom it is written. "Christ pleased not Himself." Rom. 15:3.

“I do always those things that please Him." John 8:29.

“I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." John 5:30.

“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." John 4:34.

May the Holy Spirit open our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and cause our hearts' affections to be moved by the true and faithful witnessing of our blessed Lord. And may the testimony recorded of Him, "what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth”

(John 3:32), enable us to reproduce, in our measure, the witness of those humble and true followers whose record reads: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." 1 John 1:3.

“The things concerning Himself" still cause our hearts to burn within us. His talking with us tells of love that fulfilled divine and gracious purposes, even at the cost of Calvary, glorifying God and binding us to His heart forever. Before our eyes He is seen in lowliness, submission and devotion to His Father's will, yet all the while the brightness of "eternal glory.”

Surely, such knowledge of Himself must produce, in those who are His own, a witness unto Him which will faithfully reflect the glory of His Person. To our admiring, adoring hearts the Spirit has ministered Christ, the glory of His Person, the preciousness of His love, the faithfulness of His testimony and the dear desire of His heart that we should be His witnesses. E. J. Checkley

"Did not our heart burn within us,while He talked with us?”

Luke 24:32

“That which we have seen and hearddeclare we unto you.”

1 John 1:3

Edification: Volume 8, "Do Therefore This That we say to Thee."

(Acts 21:23).

LET us remember, if we have been cast for the Lord's name out from a place, where we have been under the authority of the governing power, not to re-enter it, so that we may not again be placed in the position from which we have been freed. The relationship has been broken by the authority itself, and if we have left it by the will of God, by returning we place ourselves anew under abandoned authority; and if this be contrary to that of the Lord Jesus, under which we came when liberated from human authority, we re-establish over us the authority which had been destroyed, and thus strife begins between the authority of Christ over us, and that which we have abandoned. It is impossible to go on well thus. We were free under the authority of Christ, free to do His will; and we have returned to the authority which prohibits obedience to Christ.

For example, suppose that a son or a daughter has been driven from home for the Lord's name; by this act the parents have renounced their authority. If this son returns to his father's house, he places himself under paternal authority, and what can he do when his parents oppose the faith of Christ? He is powerless; and moreover, has so lost his liberty, as to renew over himself the authority which opposes that of Christ, has given up the latter to return to that which is contrary to it. J. N. D.

(From "Meditations on Acts," chap. 21).

Young Christian: Volume 25, 1935, Trophimus

2 Timothy 4:20

"Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."

What a very suggestive clause. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, endowed with the gift of healing, and who had healed so many, leaves his friend behind him sick. When in the Island of Melita he healed the father-in-law of Publius, the chief man of the island; but here we find he has to leave Trophimus at Miletum sick. There was a needs be for this.

God in His governmental dealings sometimes lays His children by. The Father finds it needful, at times, to put forth His hand in wholesome discipline. It is often very good, very salutary, very necessary, to be left in the condition of Trophimus at Miletum. Nature does not like it; but we may be assured it is healthful.

Trophimus had a lesson to learn on a sick bed at Miletum which he could not learn anywhere else, not even as Paul's companion in travel. The solitude, the prostration, the helplessness of a sick bed are often, most profitable to the soul. The Spirit of God makes use of such things to teach us some of our most sanctifying lessons. Very often it happens that a time of bodily illness is made the season of much solemn review and self-judgment in the presence of God. How needful are these things, but yet how much neglected amid the bustle of constant travel and intercourse with others!

It is instructive to contrast the position of Trophimus, in Acts 21:29, with his position in 2 Timothy 4:20. In the former we see him in the streets of Jerusalem in company with Paul; in the latter we see him in the retirement of a sickroom at Miletum. Now it was his presence with Paul that roused all the bitter prejudices of the Jews who imagined that Paul had brought him into the temple. A Jew and Ephesian in company was quite in harmony with Paul's gospel, but not at all so with Jewish prejudice. At Ephesus, Paul and Trophimus might have walked in company without exciting any suspicion; not so in Jerusalem.

For a Jew and a Gentile to be seen together in Jerusalem was regarded as an open insult to Jewish dignity; it was a throwing down of the middle wall of partition, and boldly walking across the ruins. For this the Jews were not prepared. They gazed upon the two companions with an eye of dark suspicion, and the strange companionship fanned the flame which so speedily burst forth with terrible vehemence around the beloved Apostle of the Gentiles. Alas! one is disposed to say that the two friends should not be found in the streets of Jerusalem. Those streets were evidently not Paul's appointed sphere of labor.

"Far hence unto the Gentiles" was the Master's word. But Paul would go to Jerusalem, and when there he could never refuse to walk in company with an Ephesian. He was too honest for that. He could not, like poor Peter, stand aloof from his Gentile brother for fear of the Jews. But then, the ceremonies of the temple, and the company of Trophimus could never be harmonized. Here was the difficulty. If the institutions of the temple were to be honored and maintained, then why this companionship with an uncircumcised stranger? If Paul and Trophimus were both enrolled as fellow-citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, then why acknowledge, in any way, the old system of things?

These reflections throw a peculiar interest around the name of Trophimus. It is deeply interesting and instructive just to look at the three passages in which this name occurs.

First, we find Trophimus as one of a band of companions who accompanied Paul into Asia (Acts 20:4).

Then we find him in company with the Apostle in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 21:29).

And, lastly, we find him laid on a sick bed in Miletum. Here the curtain drops upon him. Here he might calmly review the past. Here, too, he might confidently look forward into the future. He could no longer travel through Asia, not tread the streets of Jerusalem in company with the most devoted and honored of men.

He was an invalid at Miletum, and Paul was a prisoner at Rome; but both could, with undimmed eye, look upward to that bright and blessed world above, to which they were both hastening onward, and where they are now safely housed, to go no more out forever.

Present Testimony: Volume 10, 1859, Church of God, The

"The Church of God," amazing, precious thought!

That sinners, vile and outcast, should be brought,

Renew'd in heart and cleansed by Jesus' blood,

To form the body of the "Church of God."

Angels around the throne that never fell, -

Seraphic spirits that in glory dwell,-

The holy patriarchs before the flood,-

Nor Israel since,-compose the "Church of God."

Distinct in glory from the Church they shine,

Though each unfolds a wonderful design;

The Holy Spirit makes His blest abode,

In those, alone, who form the " Church of God."

Renew'd and quicken'd by the Holy Ghost,

The Church began on earth at Pentecost,

When like a fire He came on each, and stood,

That little band commenced the " Church of God."

The Church is one, it has one glorious Head,

And by one Spirit through this waste is led;

And nourishment from Christ, on high, bestow'd,

Together binds in one, the " Church of God."

United to her risen Head above,

E'en now she knows the sweetness of His love;

His power is hers to help her on the road -

Bride of the Lamb,-Church of the living God!

Soon will he come and take His Church away-

And O sweet thought! fast hastens on the day,

When He will stand with all His saints avow'd

Head of the Church,-the purchased "Church of God."

A.M.

Christian Truth: Volume 21, Acts 20:28-31

Led of the Spirit of God to hold up his own example for their imitation, Paul proceeded to found thereon an appeal to themselves; and let everyone who holds any position of responsibility a m on g the saints of God ponder well and prayerfully its terms. "Take heed therefore"—to be diligent in your work? No, but "unto yourselves." As he afterward wrote to Timothy, it is, first of all, "Take heed unto thyself." This is the primary responsibility, the neglect of which has rendered so many servants powerless, and has caused so many shipwrecks (1 Tim. 1:19).

Having taken heed to themselves, they were then to care for all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost, not man, had made them overseers (bishops), and to feed the Church of God so dear to Him, in that He had purchased it with the blood of His own. The Apostle thus supplied these elders with the most powerful motives to diligence and fidelity in their service, motives which sprang from the origin of their office. from the fact that the Church belonged to God. and that He had acquired it at no less a cost than that of the precious blood of His own beloved Son. He helped them in this way to understand also that the magnitude of their responsibility was but t h e measure of their unspeakable privilege.

This solemn charge was evidently given in view of the following warning, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." vv. 29, 30.

Two sources of danger were thus indicated from without and from within. Wolves from without would seek to harass and scatter the sheep (see John 10:12); and professors within, departing from the truth an d teaching error, would form "schools of opinion," sects and parties, and thus divide the flock. Sad prospect! But how fully, alas! it has been realized, for the state of the professing church at the present moment entirely answers to this description. What then were these elders to do in view of the evil days? They were to copy Paul's example, and just as he had, during three years, "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears," so they were to labor with all earnestness to tread in his steps. Such a ministry might not indeed be acceptable; for the people of God, like Israel of old, prefer those who prophesy "smooth things"; but the path of the true servant must be governed alone by fidelity to his Lord, whose approbation must suffice for his encouragement.

Chicago Conference: 1977, Acts 20:29-

Reading

The mind of the Lord this morning that we do not give up the finishing this chapter because of the importance of these at last 8 verses. Perhaps the last 10 verse is so very very needed and seasonable for our present day Revelation chapter I mean. Acts chapter 20 and verse 29 to the end. 20 and verse 29 For I know this, that after my departings or gravest wolves enter in among you, not bearing the flock also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember. That by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now, brother, and I commend you to God into the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, nor gold, nor apparel. Yeah, ye yourselves know that these hands administered under my necessities, and of them that were with me. I have showed you all things. How the soul laboring. Ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus. How he said, it is more blessed to give them to receive. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he speak, that they should see his face no more than the accompanied him under the ship. I suppose the grievous wolves would be like those who come in with false doctrine. And scatter the flock. But there's also mentioned that of your own selves showing that these were real Christians. Speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Notice in verse 28. Take heed. Does he not want us to open our hearts, our ears? Take heed and in our verse 31, therefore watch. That doesn't mean that we should be slothfully indifferent, but rather awake and diligent in these last days in view of what the apostle predicts. How things are going to go. They're not going to go better. Mr. Darby in about 1826, we'll say, and seven long there, he looked back at Acts and especially chapter 431 to 34, where we see the paradise of the church where I leave we see a work of God that was perfect in the church. I'm inclined to believe that, brethren. That they were all of 1 accord 1 mindful of grace and power. And. Mr. Darby compared that with what he saw all around it, and he didn't see anything like that. Now remember how in back in the third of Ezra and the remnant that came back in the days as a rubber bowl, how there were some that saw that temple foundation renewed. They saw the work starting in the right direction. The old man then. They wept when they compared what they saw. With what they had seen of the temple that Solomon had built, they saw the difference. The younger men saw such a commendable work going on like they hadn't been going on. They just rejoiced and shouted, as it were. Well, that's all right in its place in in Haggai chapter 2. We see Haggai calling their attention to that occasion. But Haggy, I called their attention to the fact that we still have. The Lord with us, we have his word still with us. Aggie I chapter 2, verses four and five I believe. And also the Holy Spirit remaineth now in a day of ruin, ruin, confusion.

Like this even amongst ourselves. We still have the Lord unchanging His Word, liveth in the body forever. They cannot be ruined. Our souls have a resource in the person of the Lord, in His Word, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now if the Holy Spirit is using the Word. To speak to us. Well, that is what makes this three days worthwhile. Yesterday between the meeting, what is the application? How do we apply practical truth? Now, in keeping with what you've said, dear brother Brown, may I just read a verse in the Song of Solomon? Pardon me, I read it yesterday, but it's the second chapter. I quoted it yesterday. Part of it. And the eighth verse, the voice of my beloved, Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. Now what is this? Well, in the 1St place, it's not simply being occupied with doctrine. Now it's good to be instructed, but beloved, unless it's the voice of my beloved, it will not have any effect upon my heart. In practical truth, there has to be the enjoyment of first love, and if there's the enjoyment of first love, there will be brokenness with us. And there will be the exercise of soul. And. No matter who brings something to us. We will accept it from the Lord and at least weigh it. I remember as our telling our brother Smith just a few moments ago. That I value a little girl coming to me, a little girl. And she didn't know what she was hardly saying, she said, Mr. London, why do you always say that? And it just went like an arrow to my conscience. Now that little girl was a watchman. You know what I mean? A watchman like we have in the Song of Solomon. It took that little girl to bring home to me something that I needed, that perhaps no brother could bring to me. Now it's the voice of my beloved. Do I want to really please the Lord? Do I want to act upon the truth? Well, that must be in communion. And if we are out of communion, the Lord may use any means that He pleases to restore our souls. And it may be only in one thing, but still we need that. And now what is the next point? He cometh when you and I lose a sense of the Lord's coming, his return. We're we're like Samson, we have lost our sight. Spiritually we are a heavenly people, and that hope of His coming must be remained constantly before us, or we these practical exhortations will have no effect because our eyes are on something else and this idolatry really in the sense of the Word of God. 14th chapter of Ezekiel. Six times it speaks about, and the Lord is one that's speaking to his people of Judah. It speaks about these men have idols in their heart. It mentions that six times and one time. It mentions a multitude of idols in their heart. So if we have so much of Satans attractions of this world that we are so easily and naturally taken up with, it deprives us, it robs us. It usurps the place that Christ should have in her heart. As you said, it must be a work of the Lord of devotedness. God working in our hearts to will and to do according to His pleasure. And I want to say this, I want to learn to have no use for legal. Faithfulness now, I'm sure. That of the Spirit, where it is a devotedness, faithfulness, Christ, or an obedience. There'll be plenty that will label it legality. But all brethren, we must have open hearts and ears for God's mind, and disregard our own or even our brethren, if it differs from that which is for the glory of Christ.

Sacrifice, devotedness. If there's no salt in the sacrifice, it's a picture of a an operation, whether it be service for God or whatever it is, without the heart in it, without devotedness, there must be the saw. Thou shalt not allow the salt to be lacking in the sacrifice. I think it's worthwhile for it, just take a few moments to find out what salt refers to. Well, we have salt mentioned in Scripture, in Mark's Gospel. Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Everyone shall be salted with fire. That is, everyone must be tested by God's own character, because we're going to live there forever, and it's only what has been brought to us in Christ that that amounts to anything but in our service. Everything we do is going to be tested by devotedness now. If it's right, it will serve as that which preserves and also as that which. Would savor it should, and even our

speech should be seasoned with salt. Now this is something we should remember, because otherwise we'll be careless in our words and there won't be anything for God unless. Of the Holy Spirit, that's all. It's what He produces in our hearts. I don't mean to take so much time. I don't know if this will help my brethren, but I intend to. Others may have better thoughts I have thought. When I read Mr. Darby's translation of Matthew 513, he says if the salt have become insipid, now notice that word become. Now I believe that the salt has to do with. Souls having to do with God, the more we have to do with God on our knees in reading His Word and waiting upon Him to help us to enter into it and to apply it to our luck for our lives. We know how miserable a job we make of that. But I do believe, I'm kind of believe. It's helpful to me to believe that salt is a matter. Of really having to do with God. My ministry will be flat if I don't spend much time on my knees. I don't do it near enough. You know how difficult it is. But I do believe that the more we have to do with reality, with God, our ministry will carry with it that which God would have it. Gary. Destroys nature, doesn't it? And that's an element that's needed. In our pathway is it not brings everything into the presence of God. You can weigh that and consider it. There's number of ways that salt has been explained. But there's one thing to remember what Brother Lundeen was quoting. Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt. It doesn't say salt seasoned with grace. Perhaps we see in the woman at the well. In the fourth of John. She was evidently much impressed with the conversation with the blessed Lord there, but it would have produced no blessing in her soul if the Lord hadn't introduced the soul. And when the Lord said, go, call thy husband and come hit her, he introduced the salt it displayed. Made manifest what had been going on in her life since she'd been living in sin. Then the salt brings. Exercise. And the blessed result is that that poor soul owns Jesus as the Messiah. You have two, brethren. How little? Have we entered into that which we do frequently desire and have high respect when Lord Jesus says learn of me for I and me and lowly.

In spirit or heart, then we have that word. In Philippians one speaks about a supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. At the end of the book against Legalism, the six chapters of Galatians, the apostle says the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. At the end of Philippians in J&E translation, exactly the same words now there were two sisters vying each other. They needed that humbling truth as to the Lord Jesus humbling himself and. It ends with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be your spirit, you odious and Seneca. You can see anything good in them. Think of those things don't always look about something against them. In Philemon that one chapter love letter where that dear brother Philemon had the assembly in his home, but he had a Barnsley that got away from him. He landed. With Paul and God used it for salvation. Paul writes this love letter to Philemon to receive him as himself and so on. So loving and gracious is the apostle. He ends that epistle with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be with your spirit. Now the last thing when the apostle Paul lays down his pen, he's written 100 chapters. 14 Epistles. He's given us that heavenly truth. He does not word it exactly the same, but you read it rather than that last verse that he writes, and you'll find out that he includes the very same thought now for these last days, these perilous times when he says. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus in Christ Jesus mentioned seven times. Oh, I hate this business. They're showing off. You might say what I know. I hope there's something profitable, brethren, and worthwhile in Christ Jesus mentioned seven times in Paul's last epistles for these last days. It has a different. Character than it does in Ephesians and Colossians and Corinthians about being in Christ Jesus. If any man be in Christ, he is his new creature and so on. But in Second Timothy, it's rather we have in Christ Jesus everything as a supply, as a reservoir to draw from to meet our needs in these last days. So I love that truth. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit and all such as I just mentioned. Mind the entrance of false doctrine, entrance of false doctrine. That's very important, this now in verse 30. We need to go on with this verse and little brethren, because it embraces quite a problem also of your own self shall men arise. Speaking perverse thing to draw away disciples after them, It's remarkable how many letters one gets from brethren concerning problems in the assembly. What are we going to do where we have adopted a method among the Latin Saints? If it is a question of false doctrine or anything that is contrary to the essential Godhead of the Lord Jesus, then. A servant of the Lord so-called can. Pronounce upon that. But we have always told them that if there are problems, not to worry me about those problems, but to consult among themselves, the elders, these are the, these are the ones to be consulted. Are they? Is the Spirit of God not sufficient forgive to give the the elders among us wisdom to deal with any little thing that may come up? Concerning the onward March of the work of the work now may we be very careful, brethren, in our. Replying to questions answered us, the Saints tend to look up to old men to give them a solution, and we just humble ourselves and feel that we are not able just because we do not understand the conditions prevailing in their assembly. So we refer them back to the elders there to take up that matter in the presence of God.

And if they are unanimous about the decision, well, good. Why bother anybody else about it? Why should I put myself there to propose something different? I say the danger is that there's always looking to someone who's an older man to make a decision. And we thank God for the confidence that the Saints do manifest in poor old Jacobs as we are. But there are elders in the meeting who are capable of dealing with these problems. I asked a brother who was in they had problems in this particular meeting. I said, are you? 100% agreed on that. Well, I said I have nothing to say. Is it concerning the essential Godhead of the Lord Jesus, the authenticity of the Scriptures, or the denial of the Godhead of the Lord Jesus? Then I might pronounce something on that. But perverse things? Oh brethren, I wish we could take that up a little bit more. Perverse thing many of the divisions among God's dear people. Come about because of the introduction of others. The body is one we know. But why cannot the elders in one meeting decide before the Lord any problem? Why can't they? Sure they can. You know, brother, and agree with me that it is the action of the assembly, as gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, that we are not only to bow to. But we should not merely bow to it with reluctance that the inside of us is different than our outside mouth. And maybe walk. God likes truth in the inward hearts, consistent with His truth, consistent with the truth of the one body, and endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting. Bond of peace. Therefore divisional things held in the heart are like embers, liable to come out in a flame and cause more trouble. Yet I'm speaking on a very delicate subject amongst ourselves. But we ought not to be guilty. Of being double faced and walking with those gathered at the Lords name on the truth with one body without being in subjection, not merely submitting and submitting reluctantly like a brethren tradition. That we ought to bow to every assembly action, not marry. That it should be a work of faith and reality and other heart and conscience. If in the local assembly. There doesn't seem to be the power or the wisdom to act on a matter. It would only indicate our state of soul and the powers there. The Spirit of God is there and I believe if we get on our faces that God will come in. He's able to govern his house and I believe He will come in instead of looking to men. I think we do well. Just to bow to the Lord and say Lord, we have a problem. I recall once that in an assembly there was. Something that exercised the Saints. They felt that there was number liberty. The brothers went off into a little room and they got down before the Lord and they said, Lord, we can't go on this way. The next day something happened that opened up the whole matter and it was all cleared. Well, now I believe that's the right way. They got before the Lord about it instead of going outside for help. It might be necessary in an extreme case, but usually I believe that we can recognize that there's power in the assembly if the Spirit of God is there to solve these difficulties. On her knees in that kind of a circumstance. And not want our own will. If everyone of them were thus open to wanting nothing but the will of the Lord, that would solve the whole problem. That's not that sounds like theory to his president. Why? Because of our naughty, naughty tendency to want to have our own way. I wonder perhaps if the without turning to it, if the 5th chapter of Numbers might give us a little picture of it. I.

Suggest we turn to it. I think it's well enough known the priest is faced with a very, very real problem and he doesn't know what to do. There are false and contradictory statements made before him and he has no way of finding out what the truth is nor what his responsibility is. And he is told to take an earthen vessel and clean water. And dust from the floor of the Tabernacle. And God says when you do that, then and not till then, will I tell you what action to take. Well, we are at times faced with problems of a similar sort and we perhaps think we should become detectives or. Make strange arrangements of our own. But dear brother and I have seen this carried out when faced with a very, very distressing and trying problem. We recognize that we do have the earthen vessel, we recognize that we do have the water, but we must admit we do lack the dust of the floor. And who was it that got down in the dust? Did the priest point to the one suspected of guilt and say you get down in the dust and until you do, there be no solution? No, the priest had to get down in the dust. And I have seen the Lord's people in the dust, in tears. With a problem before them that seemed absolutely without solution, it seemed insurmountable. But I have seen those dear brethren on their faces in tears, in the dust, crying to the Lord. And I have seen the Lord come in as he promised to do in the 5th of numbers. I have seen him come in in the most remarkable way. I feel perhaps it's helpful for us brethren, because I know that problems arise and. We're inclined to act like lawyers or think we have that ability. But I do feel that what we need is the dust of the floor for ourselves, for ourselves. It is not right, and it's not just limited to. A few I believe that brothers and sisters alike can be found. On their faces before the Lord, crying to the Lord, that by His very wonderful grace in the day such as are described here, we might, may not only be preserved and kept. But be able, by the grace of God, to rejoice. As our dear brother pointed out from the second of Haggai, these resources were not only given to the children of Israel in order that they might be able to make the most of a difficult situation, but that they might be able to stand fast and rejoice. Because that same outline ends, I believe it's in the ninth verse. With this most wonderful promise, the latter glory of this house shall be greater than of the former. The cause of their discouragement was that they were looking back in memory to the glory of Solomon's temple, and comparing it with the pitiful smallness of the House of the Lord before their eyes. The Lord, I think, was saying you're looking in the wrong direction if you turn a look ahead. I promise you something that will outshine the glory that ever was known in Solomon's day. Now, brethren, here we are in a day of great weakness. I hope we're ready to admit it. The things that were warned of by dear Paul in these verses have certainly come upon us. And what do we do? Does sort of make the best of it, or can we recognize that God has been faithful to His promises? He has given us the very resources that have been brought to our attention. I am with you, saith the Lord, according to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. So my spirit remaineth among you. Fear ye not. These resources are still available to encourage and strengthen us, and so is the prospect of that which lies ahead. If we turn and look ahead. Oh, what a prospect lies there, I think of Dear John on the Isle of Patmos, and if you want to put yourself in his position you'll get something of the feeling that John must have felt as he stood there and looked across the water to the land from which he had been exiled. You kind of feel with Dear John as to what must have passed through his soul. But he heard behind him. That's rather unusual, isn't it? He heard.

Him a great voice as of a trumpet speaking, and the next words are these being turned I saw, being turned I saw and the whole panorama of the Book of Revelation was unfolded before his eyes because he turned around. And I sometimes think that we turn in the wrong direction and we make comparisons that cause us to feel downhearted, but I think the Lord would say. Today there are resources for days just such as these. Those resources, I believe, are ours to gladden and strengthen our hearts. But we do well to remember that the dust of the floor is that which I believe can bring us the answer to the continual problems that arise. Verse 32. It appears that the apostle couldn't commend anybody. Commend these dear souls standing with him to anybody. There were two wonderful statements made here. I commend you to God and the word of his grace. Brethren, this is our resources. It not God and the word of his grace, say Brother Smith. That's really prayer and the word of God. Two provisions that will never fail. He didn't even commend the Saints there at Ephesus to the elders. But he did commend them to God and for the word of his grace, and after warning them of the coming in. Wolves to scatter the flock, and the men are rising to speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. That there was that provision in spite of all the efforts of the enemy and the success of the enemy. God's Word and getting before the blessed Lord in prayer. I was thinking to brethren about what he says here. Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. Now the work of the Lord's servants isn't confined to gospel will work that's wonderful when there are opportunities and it should be taken advantage of. But there is definitely a work for any servant of Christ and any assembly. To help and to establish them and to encourage them. You find that when Paul that when Barnabas went and found Paul and brought him to the Antioch, that they continued their whole year instructing the disciples of the young believers. How was that wasted time? God has sent those men out to preach the gospel, but where they wasting their time to just be instructing? Those in the assembly there? Not at all. So there is the definite work in the assembly and brethren, let's not forget this. Let's not forget this. Do any of us desire to serve the Lord to any of us desire to help our brethren, Let's remember how Paul. Warned with tears. Oh, think of the heartaches that it possible had, he said to the Galatians, you know. Whom I have labored and travel. That Christ might be formed, and you think of the deep exercise of soul that that dear man went through for his. Has children in the faith and so for anyone who desires to serve the Lord they of need there is among the dearest Saints of God. And remember the attitude of soul. What a contrast there is here between. Men among yourselves are rising speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. They may have been the most gifted men that were laboring in those days. The fact a man has a gift doesn't indicate that he is the most use useful man in the assembly.

He may be the most dangerous man in the assembly if he uses a gift he has. To promote his own cause or to carry out his own self will gets willful and won't yield and won't submit to his brethren. A man of that character can do more harm than any humble brother that isn't taking much part in the meeting. But contrast that with the the dear apostle here. He says for three years. He was warning with tears. How these there are Saints of God, and rather than the enemy is busy. And do we not need that character of ministry among us with tears, not to think we're anything or give to ourselves any importance, but all to help our brethren to strengthen them in any way we possibly can? May the Lord exercise deeply in this matter. The word of the impossible, my little children, of whom I again travail in birth, until Christ be formed in you, my little children, of whom I gained travail in birth. We know what that really means. The order for fruit bearing is desire, submission. Travail, and as it is beloved in the natural, so it is in the spiritual. What a heart of love, my little children, of whom I gained travail in birth, until Christ be formed in you. That's a real heart of love for those little children who had gone so far astray. The Galatians had gone completely wrong. Old foolish Galatians who had bewitched you, Why, I've always enjoyed the reply of the apostle there. About his little children he travailed, Mr. Darby says it's a kind of a double travail there. Yeah. Therefore, watch. It seems to me that this is a very important expression. The Lord repeated this over and over again to his disciples before his departure, and I'm thinking for the moment of. The expression Watch unto prayer. And not simply pray, but watch unto pray prayer. We find that one of the kings of Israel went to battle with musical instruments. But it was at the watchtower that they received the blessing. When they came to the Watchtower. I'm I'm reminded also of Elijah that when he was told to go and tell Ahab that it was going to rain after 3 1/2 years of drought. That. He did, but Ahab went out to eat and drink. But the prophet got down on his knees and put his head between his knees and waited. And he sent his servant out, I believe seven times, wasn't it? And the 7th time we find that there was just a little cloud the size of a man's hand, and that's all that was needed. Didn't he know the blessing was

coming? Yes, he would've been told definitely to announce it. But he was going to watch until it came. Now, brethren, the blessings coming. We're sure of that. The blessings coming. You know, in our little assemblies when there are problems, remember, God wants to bless us, and I can give you a scripture for it. It's the third, third Psalm. We won't turn to it. Thy blessing is upon Thy people. But he wants us to watch. He wants us to be exercised, concerned Ahab may go off and eat and drink. That the prophet is going to get on his knees and he's going to stay there the complete period of time that 7 suggests until the blessing comes your prophet the next very next day. Why he flees from Jezebel chose what four things we are.

How mightily he was sustained by the Spirit of God at that time, and making known the true gods there, Israel, when things were so terribly. Yeah, we're so terribly sad. And yet how quickly he could lose his courage. So it shows that it's dependence that has to go on every day of our lives. We never can trust ourselves. And sometimes, you know, as we read in connection with putting on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day. But then it says, having done all to stand, one may be used to win a great victory and then be defeated right away. After that, our brothers talked to the young people about David, chose the danger, the very same man one time meeting Goliath and winning the victory. Another time he goes down and sad and humiliating defeat. To see Elijah after he had been so honored as to. Restore, as it were, the testimony, destroy the prophets of Baal, and so on, that after the rain came, instead of exalting himself, he becomes a footman to run before the king. Into the city he takes a low place now later on. He did fail, but it's lovely to see how the Lord enabled him to act in grace and take a low place, to run before the King and to own again the authority of the King, even though the King was acting badly. Truths that we've had before us this morning, our brother. Hey Hose speaking about the dust of the floor. Now I have another scripture with virtue, the same truth but in different. Away and it's an easy verse to remember. Its second Kings 316 isn't that easy to remember 316 at this time. Edom was a terror in the days of Elijah and the host had been traveling seven days. In this whole difficulty without water. There was number no water. Now look how the victory is run. And the host is refreshed. I should put it in reverse. The host is refreshed and the victory is one. In verse 16 we see a marvelous truth. And he said thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches. Now you know the valley is a low place, but when you have to get down, still lower and use a little energy diligence. To dig ditches, that's God's mind that's getting down pretty low. So of course the victory follows. I just want to add that to the dust of the floor. Now our brother Eric Smith was speaking about the travail of the Apostle in Galatians. Others have said the same. And with that, Colossians chapter 2, a couple of verses, verses one and two. The apostle says For I would that you knew what great conflict this is great to reveal. I have for you and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that's you and me that their hearts might be. Comforted being knit together in love. And unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. In which? Are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? I thought those are worthwhile now when I was first saved in connection with this. I command you to God, and the word of His grace the Evangelist. The first verse he recommended me to learn was Proverbs 1928.

He was a good warning for me to never forget. I wish I would never forget it. Cease. Now you know what cease means. Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge. Now that was a good verse for a young convert and we need to be on our guard, dear young Christian and older ones. Don't give any place to this new charismatic line of things connected with the. With this work of the Church of Rome, of trying to reunite all together in one church, that's a work of the devil because it's going to succeed in uniting to Babble in the great, the mother of harlots. That is what it is leading to. Now the other verse that I value very much with it I trust you do too, is. I consider all thy precepts concerning all things. Now it's God's word concerning all things to be right. And I hate every false way. God is not tolerant like many in Christendom. He's not So what they would call broad minded. If we're going to be broad minded, it's going to be the mind of God. Not this silly natural mind of man. Of the apostle Paul the very first verse and the result is he lived that amongst them and they were one to his heart, how they loved him and we should love God's word that the apostle Paul is given to us. And I want to say this, I knew of a brother. You all know you're very commendable brother. I had a lot to do with him. He held this principle. If Mr. Darby and Mr. Kelly are agreed, that's good enough for me. Now, that's good as far as it goes, but God's Word goes still further, and that is. Prove all things, that is, by the word of God. Hold fast to that which is good. Now Mr. Darby and Kelly, if they were here with it, say Amen. Wendy the old paths and the old landmarks, brethren, are not merely our finest old ministry. Our ministry is the most excellent there is, but there is not perfection, and they don't claim or pretend to it. But we must test and take home and have the word of God for faith, our strength. The reason for it is there must be the exercise of the conscience in connection with the truth, otherwise we become parrots. I was wondering about the just to go back here just for in this 30th verse perverted thing. I have wondered if this wouldn't be deception. Of a deceiving nature. For instance, we find today some thoughts of compromising certain things. We have human prudence that comes in wisdom of man. And then I was thinking too of love of numbers. Perhaps I wondered if some of these things couldn't be among the perverted things to draw away disciples after them. No concern for the flock of God, but a concern with their own wisdom and knowledge and get a following. Would that be in accord with this? Grant did just what Frederick Grant did. He would hold his private meetings in homes of a sympathizers. While the assembly was gathered on certain special meetings. What a shameful way to be so anxious to justify himself.

And to build in his doctrine in the minds of those that would give an ear to it. So he was. He was finally given two nights of a hearing of his teaching, and the brethren had to reject it. And they used Titus chapter 3, verses 9 and 10. That is a heretic is one. Mr. Wigram tells us that Herod. **** or heresy means choice. It's one and the same truth as to Will will working and where the will is working to build up a little school of opinion to follow and get sympathizers. That's the mischief as a heretical teacher now not only Grant but Fe Raven. And also BW Newton and one could keep on. Naming leaders that had gift and ability and the plenty of followers. But brethren, we want to take the low place if it has to be going on with a few, a very few. Like in England, while some of those gatherings have only several, at the most they only have about a dozen I believe. About that. And yet there's a sense in most of them of what a what a. Difference between now and what it was 150 years ago, when there were thousands gathered to the Lord's name in England. And they were rejoicing, and they they're, they're rejoicing rang out. So it reached afar. Well, brethren, we should be willing to go on with a few in humility. Another, brethren, we are becoming fewer and fewer. We have to confess that some are going back to the beggarly elements of the world. We've noticed that others are going back to. Systems they professedly lived, which is very sad indeed. And others are throwing up their hands and quitting, saying if there's no more use, there's no use. But all this is wrong, beloved, and we would encourage one another this morning by remembering that God will maintain a corporate testimony in this world until the Lord Jesus comes. No matter how low a state we may get into, God has He will promise. To maintain a corporate testament in this world, where do you find it? Follow righteousness, faith, love, peace with them. Those two words have encouraged my heart during many years, and especially at a time when I sat under the ministry of Scott and Mace and Sinjin and those other champions in those days. All how sad I was to find them. Thinking more of a great number why they wouldn't preach in a in a little gospel hall. I opened the meetings for them off times in theaters. They wanted me to help them and there would be none less than 1000 or 1500 and the last time I was with the Ascension and I was with him quite a bit. Took the town hall. Capital and filled it for eight nights with 2000 people and

he spoke on the Psalms. Nothing more than on the Psalm. Had that all taken down in short hand and put into simple English, but the band that's got away with it, it's something that we've lost. It's been a real loss. I lost all that ministry eight nights because the bandits got away with my bag that contained things that I treasured. But all beloved, let us never get down hearted about this. We ought to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call upon the Lord with them.

Doesn't that assure us that there will be a corporate testimony? With them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, may we be content to go on with them. We are weak, but He is mighty. And there was a time in Bolivia when my first wife and I sat for two years alone. There was another, another soul with us, but we were comforted. Even in that old Indian Hut with a flow of wet with the tears. We were comforted with the fact that we sat down with the whole Church of God, with the whole Church of God. Oh, beloved, let us not be discontented. We have found among the Saints in Bolivia that they will go on when they understand this truth that Christ is everything to the Father and that He is in the midst of His people. One day a missionary came to tell you who's in the service of the Lord for the odd years. And said, why don't you come with us? We are many, we are hundreds in Canada and the States and tell you he's looked at this young missionary of about 22 years of age. A novice and he's quoted Matthew 18 and 20 where two or three. Gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them. What happened to that missionary? He went off. Never saw any more of it. All that dear tell you had the truth that Lord Jesus in the midst, he's everything, beloved, is he not everything to the Father? Of course he is. Is he everything to us? Oh, may he be everything to our poor hearts. Beloved, there'll be no trouble among us if we have that blessed one before the heart that spoils the soul. But I just went a little further than I expected, but it's. Heart to speak about that. As for the subject that we were mentioning, man's will entering in May, we remark this that in our local assemblies we are responsible to present the scripture and the truth that we believe to be right should a matter come up. And it's very important. Curse it, be he that holdeth back. His sword from blood. But remember this, you're only one. And you're in the assembly and there are others there. You have the responsibility. To present the scriptures that may apply to the particular problem at hand. That you'll have to leave it with your brethren and their consciences, if you insist on it. You have already started on a course that may lead to heresy. What is the thought? I I want to get cleared on this. In Mr. Darby's rendering of this 30th verse, he says, And from among your own selves shall rise up. Man speaking perverted things. Draw away the disciples after them. What is the thought with this? It's it's changed a little bit from the King James. Do you believe that Hymenius and Alexander were unsaved in the book of Timothy? Whether I believe one way or the other or we have a plenty of warning and such characters like in chapter 2 of harmonious and so on. And then in in the last chapter four we get. Mentioned again how much, how much evil against the apostle, how he felt it in that same chapter. They practically all getting up the apostle. They must have forsaken me, having loved this present evil world. Demas means popular and the world and going on in its ways might make one more popular, but. To be an adversary of the apostle Paul like Alexander was does not look good. I don't know that that we can say whether he was real or not, but he doesn't look good, does he? No, no. But the point is this, that. A believer may be especially used of Satan if he's out of communion, and the apostle in that case delivers them to Satan, so that we find that whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn.

Not to blasphemy, I don't think that said of Alexander, is it? So you see there there is such a thing as one who who may have been gone to A to a great extent in opposing the truth and still be a Christian so that we we need to watch not only for others, but for ourselves. Take heed to yourselves. So that what we hold. And what we teach must be. From Communion, otherwise we cannot. Be sure that we have the mind of God. Nehemiah, if you remember that line of truth, Nehemiah could. Ask for the Lord to remember him, how he had fed so many at his table. And Nehemiah was a large hearted. Well, intending. Leader of that remnant at that time. But he did not lack the hospitality of providing for such as he had an opportunity to to feed. And we too ought to buy up our opportunities to be a little bit like the Apostle Paul. Whose life was a life of devotedness and hospitality, such as you get in Hebrews 310 of the love to All Saints that is necessary in a testimony for Christ. Be exemplified by men of like passions with ourselves when we think of Moses in the Old Testament and Paul in the New. Both of whom might well have had the opportunity to do something of what was suggested here by leading a way. The disciples after them. The Lord said in the hearing of Moses, Let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and I will make a thee a great nation. But how we thank God for the spirit of dear Moses, that would make nothing of himself in order that God. 'S beloved people might be nourished and fed and LED into the blessing that God had for them. And when at the end of his long journey of faithfulness and long-suffering, the Lord said, Moses, I'm going to have to take you away because of, as our brother Anderson reminded us, what he had done at the waters of Marybeth. Moses, instead of getting upset about it, he said, oh Lord, if you're going to take me away, one thing I ask. Please raise up a faithful servant who will lead these people into the land that you promised them. No matter what happens to me, take care of this flock and lead them in the very opposite, to drawing away the disciples after him and dear Paul. Same in the New Testament when there were those who would willingly have made Paul their champion. Who then is Paul? He was willing to be an absolutely broken down and hidden vessel so that anytime he had to refer to himself, it seems to be in lesser and lesser terms. The chief of sinners, one born out of due time, not meet to be called an apostle less than the least of All Saints. Was he trying to draw away the disciples after him? No, he was trying to support the weak. And I think this is a good thing to remember, because I have no doubt, dear brethren, that when that poor wounded man picked up by the side of the road and led to the door of the inn by the Samaritan, stood there at that door and the innkeeper. Look at him, he might well have said, no, we don't want people like that. In this end, look at his pitiable condition, see how weak he is to the point of helplessness. But the Samaritan had brought him there and said, take care of him. Oh beloved, I have seen this. I have seen brethren who have heard the Lord. Say that to them, take care of him and have faithfully fulfilled that challenge. And you see, those who would otherwise be turned out of the way, those who otherwise would have drifted far, have been by the grace of God supported and strengthened. And I believe this is a challenge to us. What a contrast to teach perverted things to lead a way. The disciples after after me think of what I would have to give an account of in the coming day, even though there might be.

Temporary honor here there would be. The review of all that in the coming day, but to devote ourselves to the Lords, beloved people, and to support and encourage the weak, What a privilege, what a responsibility. Well, when our brother Hajo has been inferring or referring to as we have in Hebrews 12 Concerning. Our own path and the path of others. Hebrews 12 and. Verse 12. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down on the feeble knees, and make streets pass through your feet. Less that which is lane be turned out of the way, let it rather be healed. I remember some years ago. There was a sister who was isolated because her husbands work would take him away and he was doing trucking of hay and he had to go down to the valley to get the hay and he was away for certain weekends for quite a while. But there was a sister who faithfully, after the breaking of bread, would call this sister long distance over the phone and give her the substance of what went on in the morning meeting. A little later, this sister said if that sister had not called me, I would no longer have been with a gathered Saints. It was that which I received there through that sister that sustained me and preserved me in the path of. The testimony that she related of what had gone on in those meetings and bringing before continued the person of Christ and remembrance. Of his death, she was sustained and kept

until she was able again to be at the meetings. Now, I thought that was just exactly what we have here, supporting and encouraging. And it isn't left to some brother who may be traveling around among the Saints. It's something that probably can be done more. By a sister in many ways than a brother at all. I was thinking, brethren of First Thessalonians 5 and verse 14. We exalt you, the apostle says, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. Now we found out that that word in the translation of the Scriptures into the Inca tongue, that word feeble minded, didn't mean that they were bereft. Of any understanding, but they were under. Deep sorrow. They were weakened because of real sorrow. Now a certain Indian sister came to my wife and I with that sorrow. And I said, honey, what are we going to do with this sister? And it was, we prayed about it. And I said, well, it's going to cost something. We'll pray, but we'll. Let this poor sister pour out her woes until she gets better. And we kept her there five days, and I gave her two hours in the morning and 2:00 in the afternoon. And she poured out her woes and suddenly she got better. This is another aspect of it. She got better. Her poor heart was burdened and she was weak in her soul and pouring out her walls. And it took a lot of patience and the strain, the mental strain too, because the poor woman was partly. She wasn't, she wasn't out of her mind, but she was so depressed but pouring out her mind, her heart and listening to it, saying nothing but let her tell it out. She got better and was never anymore had no more trouble with her. This is another aspect of it. Are we spiritual enough with our brethren and sisters who are down under a wave to.

Them to sit down and pour out their sorrows and listen to them until they get better. Try it. This is the I believe the meaning of this verse. Comfort the feeble minded then. The sentence of the Lord that He spoke on the earth. Now most of his magnitude was received from the heaven. When he hear, he quotes the words of the Lord Jesus, just as I mentioned before. And he spoke about the charge that who was fortressed with a lot of his own and was emphasizing and hear the word of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was no they were born he didn't you heard them from someone else didn't you didn't get them from the heaven. It's remarked about his trust and the only place we find them holy to find is on my heart connections. What our brothers what our brother Franklin asked and in that verse of. Five, I'll read it again. You wrote it, you read it now. We exhort you, brother, warn them that are unruly. Comfort the feeble minded, supports the weak. Be patient toward all men. Well, how are we going to do it? Enjoy the remarks of another many years ago. And they said communion with the Lord is the power. To do it and the Word of God is the guide. And I thought it might be helpful to it. So often we just don't seem to have the power to say the right word at the right time. And we need to be exercised as to why. Seems our time is about up the 37th and 38th verses. I enjoyed very much your remarks, Brother Brown, as to the beginning and the ending of this chapter, how he he embraced. At the beginning and then how the chapter ends and they all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him. But I I'd like to ask, don't we have here something too that. We should notice not only the fact that there was the love expressed in both occasions, and because of His ministry, because of His love for them, they valued the Apostle. But it says, souring most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. Wouldn't it have been well also if they had sorrowed because of the fact that declension was going to come in, and that the testimony would be broken down, so that if there had been exercise of soul with them which he intended when he stopped, no doubt? That there would never have been the record of the second chapter of Ephesians. Where the place was outwardly going on well, but inwardly there was number, heart. Because of the Revelation 2 Revelation 2 Ephesians Yes, I. In all my Bibles I mark at the end of this verse. Well, let me see. Notice at the end of verse 25. Shall see my face no more. I always print right after that. Here when you get also to verse 18. That they should see his face no more. I also print right above it HERE. Then I love to ask the Saints, Do you know what one sink cannot say to another? St. Some of you have heard me to see it right here. Well, they say this and that and so on. Or what? What we cannot say to another is this. I'll not see your face again.

Chicago Conference: 1977, Acts 20:22-28

Reading

Thanks chapter 20 and verse 22. And I'll behold, I go bound in the spirit under Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. Say that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me, but none of these things move me, neither can I my life dear unto myself. So that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus. Testify the gospel of the grace of God, and I behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more, wherever I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers. To feed the Church of God, which you have purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. But now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I am coveted no man's children or gold, nor peril. Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered under my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how they're so laboring. He ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said it is more blessed to give them to receive. When he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with the mall, and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him. Sorrowing most of all for the words which he speak, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him under the ship passed over where he says, I have taught you publicly and from house to house. It shows that House to House ministry is just as important as public ministry. I remember years ago there was a very gifted brother. That was a very good speaker, good, gave wonderful addresses and yet he wasn't a man to visit in homes, seemed to be very quiet when he was visiting or the place where he could speak in homes. An elderly brother spoke to him about it. He said will you get me to get me an audience? And he says I'll preach to them. Yes, he's poor brother says anybody, any of us can do that. But it takes a lot more grace and a lot more energy and to go around from house to house than to just get up and preach to a a fair sized audience. I'm sure that there are times that those who go out with the gospel will find that visitation. Well, 'cause people to come to the meetings where they never would come otherwise. And would give people a different view of the things of the Lord when you show a personal interest with them. The Wright brother Pilkington, you approved it, haven't you? And that's not just, it's not only for those who are in the work of the Lord full time. This is for those that we were speaking about this morning. Who take responsibility in the assembly? I suppose the Lord expects shots to to do the same thing, not leave all the visiting to one brother. But. There are others that can do visiting as well. I knew a brother. Brother Anderson. I won't name him. You know him well. That before he was saved, he and his wife would go out every night to some social activity, dances or otherwise. But once he was saved? He went out not to these things, but just to visit the Saints, and he had such a way about him that he would cheer them as he went about and he enjoyed doing it. I'm using the past tense, but he's doing it today.

And he's, he's a real help in the assembly because of it. Now that's a real gift, I believe. But you know, gifts are developed too. And we don't need to be discouraged because we feel at first we, we can't visit the home because I think most everyone can at times visit in the home if they want it. Is there a difference between preaching the gospel of the grace of God and. Preaching the Kingdom of God that he speaks of here seems there are two things that especially mentioned as to his preaching when he was there at Ephesus. Would you say, brother Barry, that this is the perfect picture of the grace of God? Here Grace, fullness, the fullness, divine grace. Laid hold of the heart of the apostle. And it would be in bringing the Lord Jesus as the object of faith to them. I've often thought of this verse in that light. There is the other side of you, as you mentioned. Perhaps you would give us a little message on that. The preaching of the Kingdom of God. Well, I take it as pleased to these moral principles of the Kingdom. The Lord, when he was transfigured, according to Mark, He was disciples were told that they would in so many days see the Kingdom of God come with power. That's in the 4th of March. Well, that's future. When the Lord returns and sets up his Kingdom here on earth, He will set up that Kingdom in power. Subdue his enemies. There will be a righteous reign, but at the present time. There is still the Kingdom, but according to Matthew 13. After the sword goes forth the soul, then you get the mystery of the Kingdom of heaven, that is, the Kingdom is down here and the king is rejected, and yet there are those that own his authority, or he is absent. So that the principles that belong to the righteous Kingdom, which will be set up in a future day, are important for the Lord's people today, and we might just see. A bit of those moral principles in the 14th chapter of Romans. 14th chapter of Romans. The 22nd verse is that it? Verse 17. Thank you. For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness. Now notice that righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Now, as we go on as believers, all who are saved have accepted the gospel of the grace of God. That introduces certain moral principles. In connection with our walk and with our Assembly Light, and it's spoken of here as. Not meat and drinks, that is. It isn't just an awkward. Formal thing, Some ritualism. But it's a very practical walk and and. Carrying out what the world respects righteousness. And. Peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Well, we're called upon to carry out those principles as soon as we're saved. And here is something rather remarkable in the next verse. For he that in these things serve Christ. Is acceptable to God and approved of men. Now you might not think that walking in righteousness, joy and peace of the Holy Ghost was a work of of the Lord, but it does definitely say they who serve Christ, that is, those who are walking consistently in a righteous way before God and man.

And in the joy of the Holy Ghost, and seeking to go on in peace. Brethren, how needful that is. To not allow anything in our assembly life that disturbs them unnecessarily brings strife and sorrow among God's people. That's important too. Well, one that follows those principles serveth Christ. So we see that Paul in his laborers there in Ephesus, he carried the gospel, but he also carried the. The ministry of the Kingdom of God among them, he continued in his own fired house, preaching the Kingdom of God. It seems to me that this verse that we're considering. As to the gospel. In Acts 24 testify the gospel of the grace of God. Would you not think possibly the Apostle was looking back to the Damascus Rd. And then in the book of Corinthians, Two Corinthians, where he. He speaks of the God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that shine in our hearts to give the light the knowledge of the glory of Christ. Is it? It was the person of Christ, particularly before him, in connection with the gospel of the grace of God, was it not? And. No doubt this he was reminded of this and at this time and this is no doubt what was needed in this assembly, which was already beginning, possibly to need some exercise, because we know what happened to Ephesus in the Book of Revelation, and the seeds of discord perhaps had already begun in the assembly, so that there was a need for this. Of the preciousness of the gospel of the grace of God. To refresh the heart and mind, keep them in the enjoyment of their portion. The Lord in speaking the Nicodemus, told him how to enter the Kingdom of God. Well, the one who enters the Kingdom of God, of course, is born again, has a new life and a new nature. Well, as soon as he's in the Kingdom of God. He can be thankful that he has a life of nature that wants to do the will of God, that wants to please God, that submits to God. So you find that there is that moral aspect of the Kingdom of God, but God has made provisions so that we can. Follow these wonderful things that God expects, and that by which we can serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We have in James two, that God has chosen the poor of this world, heirs of the Kingdom which He hath prepared for them that love him. Well, that's more of the inner sphere of the Kingdom. And it's what you speak of, brother. Brother Anderson. Birth you have to look at the Kingdom in view of the place in which you consider it, where it's like a mustard field where or a mustard seed that grows into a large tree in the birds log. Well there it's the widest aspect of the Kingdom, but where the Lord was talking to Nicodemus, he's limiting it down to. To new birth and there Speaking of the poor of this world there. Looked at in a special way as ears of that Kingdom. So there's certainly in the inner circle of that Kingdom and the left in special way. So I think that is wise and considering any subject and the Kingdom is one of those subjects that we look at it in connection with the passage in which the subject is brought before us. And that's the principle and understanding many parts of the Word of God, what proceeds and what follows. Because if you just take a verse out of its connection, you can teach a lot that isn't the truth at all you mentioned.

That verse from the 13th chapter of Matthew. There in the six similitudes. As to the Kingdom of heaven. In mystery. You have 6 similacudes in the 13th chapter of Matthew. You have four more 18th, 19th and 22nd and 25th, making 10 similacues to the Kingdom of heaven. In Matthew's Gospel you do not get the term Kingdom of heaven anywhere else. But there in the Gospel of Matthew. Now the character of the Kingdom of Heaven in his mystery form has to do with the present opportunity of embracing. Christ as Lord, though He be absent, and in not not here in the world now, yet it is owning His Lordship in this world, and whether that owning His Lordship is reality or mere profession is allowed in some of those. Parables, for instance, you have the foolish virgins and you have the wise virgins. The real ones and those are not real. In other words, the foolish virgins are counterfeits. You also have the wheat and the tears. The wheat is the real, The tears are the imitation, mere profession. You also have good fish and bad fish, and of course the good are real. You also get a man. Not having on the wedding garment, poor empty profession will be exposed, so that the Kingdom of heaven in the mystery form in the Matthew's Gospel is looked at as ever and always the sphere of opportunity now. In this age on the earth, always on the earth, though what's called the Kingdom of heaven. But it's in, it's a mystery form now when you come to John chapter 3. You get an entirely different line of truth in the first 12 verse, the 36 verses in that chapter. In the first 12 verses, we get that subject of new birth. Now Nicodemus was one of these tallest, proud Cedars that humanity can produce. He was the teacher of Israel. No doubt had a prominent place in the Sanhedrin. He had more metals and plumes almost than any other person you think of, unless it be the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. Now the Lord meets this man who had had so many high privileges to see the miracles and to be. Of the tribe of Judah and of that privileged nation of Israel. And. Here he comes in the dark at night because of his position as there were of importance and yet wishing to imbibe or get a little more knowledge as a teacher, in that he recognized the Lord Jesus was an unusual person as a teacher, so he came not knowing that he had nothing. And so the Lord lays that sharp axe at the root of his brown tree. And he says. You must be born again. He also says except you be born again, you cannot enter and you cannot see the Kingdom of God. Now that has to do with vitality, reality, the Kingdom of God. They're used in that way. Another thought is this of importance and might should be instructive. New birth.

Was ever and always a nature that the household of faith had in every age. There was number such thing as a household of faith, no such thing as divine faith without there being a new nature. And the new nature is in contrast to the natural, the old nature. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That's its character and nature. That which is born of the spirit is spirit. He contrasts that in those first 12 verses and the Lord Jesus, as it were, rebukes. Nicodemus for his dullness. The teacher of Israel should read in the in the best translation. For his not realizing the truth found in Ezekiel 36 and 37. As for God giving them a new heart and a new spirit and things like that, He should have known better. So that the Lord says, now if I have spoken to you of earthly things. Truth that should be known in all dispensations on earth in the Millennium. Those that are really real in the Millennium are those that are born again. So it's a new nature that is reality that suits God, for it's the very nature of God imparted. Well, I said maybe, if plenty. You would agree with this, I'm sure, Brother Brown. That there are places in Luke where the same subjects of the 13th of Matthew were found, like the. The woman that took 11 and put it in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. But there it's bits of the Kingdom of God in Luke, and also the mustard seed going into a great tree, and the birds lodging in the branches. But in a general way in Matthew, you might say it's more territorial, that is certain speeder in this world where the authority of rejected Christ is owned, where generally speaking and the other Gospels. It's more moral, as brought out there in the third chapter of John, and even then there is still a thought of that sphere. Do that James brings it before us. Amen. Who we would say, brethren, and the Kingdom of God is reality, and the Kingdom of heaven is this sphere of profession. Would you say, will you get the real? And those that are not, as has already been mentioned, there are those who profess and possess nothing. But they're in the Kingdom of heaven. But you get this fear of profession. But the Kingdom of God is always realities, that's all. Well, I wondered about that. The expression that we have in the Kingdom in the Gospel of Matthews to the Kingdom we have in Luke's Gospel is the Kingdom of God. It's really supposed that even in the Kingdom of Heaven there would be reality, but there isn't. In some cases it's furious. And so we have the examples there of what is wrong, and I believe this is carried out in the other gospels too, in connection with the Kingdom of God on times that it grows as a great mustard tree. But the intent of God in showing us the Kingdom of God in this moral character as we have here. Is the real character, it's righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. But there there is in Mark's Gospel that which is very similar to Matthew, and it shows that which is also spurious, does it not? Correct, brother, to say that even in Matthew 13, in the 6th similitudes of the Kingdom of Heaven, we have both the failure under the responsibility of man in the first three.

And then we have the three parables uttered to the disciples only in the house, presenting that which is real even in the Kingdom of heaven. We have the treasure hid in the field, and we have the Pearl. In contrast to the tree and the treasure, they are contrast, and the Pearl and the leather. The Pearl is pure. The pure she is, the priceless, the more priceless she is. And then we have in the net and the the fish and the seed, the two kinds of seeds again the opposite. So we have the Kingdom of heaven looked at under the responsibility. All this of man all is failure. But from God's point of view, we have it presented differently in the last three. And isn't that also correct to say? That. The Kingdom of God is a general term, and it develops into the Kingdom of heaven and will be succeeded by the Kingdom of the Son of Man on earth, as we have it in the explanation as to the second parable, the first of the three of the first group, where the Son of Man will send his angels and get out of his Kingdom all empty pilots. That's the Kingdom of the Son of Man and the heavenly. At the same time, the Kingdom of the Father, where the righteous shall shine as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father, so that the Kingdom of Heaven bill also be succeeded, and will still be the Kingdom of God, but it will be the Kingdom of the Son of Man on earth, and are redeemed in the Kingdom of the Father in heaven. You know, whatever way, pardon me, whatever way we look at this. Subject but poor preach where at Ephesus we have this to. Exercises and it's this. It says I take you to record this day. For I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. All didn't trim the truth to suit a certain class that wanted looseness or wanted to cover up evil. He he gave out the full counsel of God so that when he left Ephesus, they couldn't kill him. Of any neglect or any hypocrisy in his laborers trying to just please man, he gave out the truth right from from the Lord and let the results with the Lord and that is very important, isn't it then even in our day and time that we should not just. Try to please man or Paul says, if I please man, I'm not the servant of Christ. Sometimes it hurts, but. It's the right to give out what is the truth, even if it does cause. Maybe sorrow to some. We're not. I don't mean that we should just go around trying to offend or cause any any distress among God's people, but we should not just trim the truth up to suit a certain class. Yeah, there's a danger of that. Be a loose element that gets in among the Saints, and they like what just pleases them. They don't want anything administered that would hurt their conscience. So that there are needs that faithfulness, I said, Amen. In verse twenty of our chapter, the apostle says I have held back. I've kept back nothing. I kept back nothing that was profitable, so in our verse I have not shunned. He has not lacked the courage to declare unto you all the council of God. Now there is an interpretation that I cannot allow myself to believe yet, that this council of God has only to do with His eternal counsels. I think the apostle has in mind the whole mind of God.

When he's the two speaks this way. We need it as all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is. Profitable. It's profitable for even reproof, even rebuke and instruction and correction. Whether we like it or not, the Holy Word is everything. Now I'll give you some verses that you suggested, brother, but what you said, I enjoyed what you said. Colossians, chapter 3. Verse 22 The middle of the verse. This is in keeping with what you said dear brother, not with I service as. Men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God, And whatsoever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men. Knowing that as the Lord, ye shall receive the reward. Of the inheritance for ye serve the Lord Christ. And he says also chapter 4 verse four, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak. If any man speak, let him speak as the mouthpiece of God, and not just simply ear tickling and smooth things. And try to build things just to make everybody happy. By the way, I heard one who had been a a preacher. I hope no one will guess who I'm talking about, but on one occasion he was given the platform and to me and my wife it looked like this was one of his old time favorite sermon when he was in the platform in, you know, in the camp. Everything he had he had studied no doubt for years. He drew out this the sweetest, happiest things that exist in the word of God. It was nothing in the world but just simply make everybody happy, no matter how world it is they may live. It nothing but to make a hit, a popular sermon as it were. Poor stuff that exercises our souls. We shouldn't evade it, should we? When we have a chapter, we should face the the word as it's given to us and act upon it. Is that right? Yes. I believe the burden of the the epistles of God gives that truth in love and loving truth. Great need of that in these days of the clinch and truth in love and loving truth. Well, someone asked the question, is the assembly the truth? Well, we'd say no, it's the pillar and ground of the truth. But the Word of God is the truth, beloved. The Word of God is the truth. So that in giving, teaching or teaching. Let us be careful humbly to give the truth in love and loving truth. That if we're gathered on divine ground by the Spirit, that we're in a place where we can carry out every instruction in the Word of God. If we were not in a place like that, if we were in a system of man, there are certain truths that you couldn't carry out. Take one man ministry and so on. But here that's not in gather to the Lord's name alone. Why that is something that isn't permitted doesn't belong to that. Well, that's a wonderful thing. We don't have to be dodging this scripture and that scripture because it doesn't fit in with the testimony that we're connected with. There's some things that characterize the place where the Lord has placed His name. And one of them is that the Lord has given his place and he's not pushed out by man. Man does not usurp that place. He may try to, but if we're truly gathered to the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ will not allow that.

Let the Lord be displaced by man. And another thing is will not allow that the Holy Spirit should be displaced. We wouldn't allow that the Spirit should be quenched, but he must be allowed to have his place in the assembly too. And then another thing. Allow the Word of God to have its place, the whole Word of God, in the assembly too. And if these three things do not characterize the place where we are, well, how could we claim to be gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Merely being gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is no insurance of our. Answering to the behavior that is becoming to the House of God. There is an article that was sent to me or many years ago by your brother Oscar Myers. There on is written by a man in system. And his name was William. Reed. And that man, that preacher was writing an article to rebuke the his fellow men in the pulpit who were running down the brethren gathered the Lord's name and. Misrepresenting them all together. They were doing it right and left. Now this was in 1874 that he wrote the article and 75 that's over a century ago. That article. Shows the character. Of the lives of those gathered to the Lord's Ninth over a century ago. And the ministry, ministry of power of the Holy Spirit, ministry that made everything of Christ. The gospel had its fragrance and and in their stewardship their lives were spending their time and their means to make Christ known. Now this article is so fine that my wife and I have wanted to see it. Reprinted, but on the front cover I write upon it. And print it on it. This article. Is the strongest condemnation of our slipping, I think, or sliding and or departing? Brethren, if we compare the lives of the power of their lives of that day with ours, it oughta do us good to make us hang our heads in shame, to make us like we talk about we ought to be in the dust, but to help us to be in the dust. In that article that Oscar Mayers sent me. Now I'm just touching on a thing for this idea of telling people that all you need to do is to be gathered to name the Lord Jesus Christ and everything else would be all right. True at all. There's a sister here that told me that she thought after she was saved through Harry Hayle that when she finally was gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ now everything was settled. But she soon found out that she had an old nature and that the state was not what she thought it would be. No guarantee, brethren, just because we're gathered it might be our condemnation. If we lack heart, I wish I could live up to my words. And you and I, I think mostly, if you know what I'm saying, if we are have all the highest privileges, the finest library, the finest hymn book, the finest translation, the finest magazine or magazine, the first opportunities like we're having in our in our conferences. And wherever you go, there seems to be a home open and a bed if you're gathered. These are high, unusual privileges and unequaled anywhere else. But brethren, these are only spell our responsibility because there's no privilege that God has ever given us without a corresponding responsibility as to our living and walking in it. The speaker doesn't do it.

I remember my father quite often saying that occupation with Christ will keep us both humble and happy. Humble because we are so little like Him, and happy because he loves us so much. I feel perhaps there is a little danger in our becoming occupied with that which will evaluate. How we're getting along and so on. I believe that the nearer we are to the Lord Jesus Christ, the more aware we will become. Of the wonderful perfections that are found in him and how little like him we are. And yet at the same time we will indeed be happy because we remember how much He loves us. I was interested recently in looking up the various ingredients of the incense compounded in the book of Exodus. How carefully they were measured. How carefully they were blended. And I looked up the various ingredients and I found that one of those ingredients was what might be termed. Well, it was said to be used as a sort of repellent for dangerous creatures such as snakes. It was certainly not an attractive ingredient by itself, but blended together with the other ingredients, it made this beautiful confection this delightful perfume. And I believe that in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ there was that perfect blending of all those ingredients. There was no over exaggeration of any one of them. And so I believe, brethren, that occupation with that wondrous person. In His love and in His faithfulness, in His discernment and correction of that which was in need of correction, we see that pattern that we well might covet. For I just dread the fact that if we get taken up with faithfulness as a goal, we will. We will. Unconsciously want the reputation of being a faithful servant. If we get taken up with humility as an object, we will fail because we will never want to do anything that will mar our reputation for humility or gentleness or whatever it may be. Any of these things, if we seek after them, would become a very great danger to us, but all beloved in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see that perfect and always displayed. Blend of everything that we trust by the grace of God may be seen in us. If we compare ourselves with others, we will become again either puffed up or discouraged, but all to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus to realize. That the sweet and incense of Himself contained all those elements that we have been Speaking of, including those which if taken by themselves, would be, shall I dare to use the word, offensive? Forgive me if I'm wrong in choosing that word, but all blended to form an incense that was delightful to the heart of God. And brethren, if we keep close to the Lord Jesus, if we're occupied with him. There will be that faithfulness in walk and ways and ministry. There will be that love, that gentleness, that kindness in walk and ways and ministry, blended together in a way that will bring no reputation to ourselves, that will bring a reflection of the sweet odor of the Lord Jesus before our brethren into the heart of God in revelation. Thou hast left thy first love. Now in first love. There are two things, and we get it exemplified in the book of the Song of Solomon. The first is all his loveliness, his precious name, as we've had before us in these meetings.

But the other is his thoughts toward us and of us. Thou art all fair, my love. Now those are his thoughts. Of His bride, and if we are occupied with Christ. He will make known to us his thoughts of us. As he sees us now. We were like the tents of Keeter Black. But now. Like the curtains of Solomon, that is. It's Christ's scene now. In his character in the believer, I believe is the curtains of Solomon. Now when the is that right, brother Brown? I enjoy what you're saying because. In first love, we first have the person of Christ. And his glories and his beauties. And the moment there is a response. Then he tells us his thoughts of us, what he thinks of us. Not what we were, but what we are in His sight now. Now this is what keeps us, brethren. It isn't what we think of ourselves because we have No title to think of ourselves. But if we want to be happy, we're going to find out what he thinks of us. And when you find the bride? When you find that verse in the second chapter where? We find him at that mountain of myrrh. I suppose that's the phrase. I suppose that's the spike in art. I suppose that's what the bride has brought, and he's come to receive it. Then he says, thou art all fair, my love, there's no spot in thee. That's first love. And the assembly got away from it. They left it. If grace would only cause us individually to return to it, to enjoy it, and then we would have not only thoughts of himself which would boy us up and keep our spirits high, but we'd also see what he thinks of us in that new light that's associated with him. Because of the work at Calvary that when the apostle Paul called for the elders of Ephesus, they responded. There doesn't seem to have been any holding back in any way. But they responded to his call. Well, we find that there had been no holding back on the part of the apostle Paul, as has already been brought before us. He had faithfully ministered all the counsel of God, and yet the truth learned in communion with God had produced in the Ephesians that. Love for the ministry of the Apostle Paul that would enable them to seek to walk in it. Well we find that in Second Timothy chapter one it tells us that approximately 8 years after this chapter was written in Acts that the apostle Paul has to write and say all they that be in Asia are turned away from me. They had turned away not so much from Christ but from the Apostle Paul. We find that in between those two events. The 20th of Acts, and the first chapter of second Timothy. The apostle wrote from a prison in Rome that most beautiful epistle to the Ephesians. It seems to my own soul, in meditating on that, that we see how that the apostle Paul ministered the truth. They received the truth, and the result of it was the ministry of more truth. The growing in grace, the entering in more and more to the sweet and precious councils of God. Has brought out in such a beautiful way in the Epistle to the Ephesians. But then when we go looking as our brother has just brought before us, and one has enjoyed his comments so very much. When we go looking for the reason what happened that

brought about Second Timothy chapter one, that all they that be in Asia turned away from me. What was the course that led to that?

Failure, that departure from the enjoyment of the ministry of the Apostles. Well, it seems that the answer is in the second chapter of Revelation. Thou hast left thy first love. Our dear brother Albert is brought before us. That sweet and precious enjoyment and occupation with Christ. That is vital, because once that departure begins, it leads eventually to Pergamos in Revelation, where the Church. Settle down into the world and the enjoyment of the ministry of the Apostle Paul is lost. Am I right, brethren, in saying that Pergamos is really in essence the departure from the ministry of the Apostle Paul? Not the abandonment of Christianity, but the loss of the enjoyment, the realization of the heavenly calling that we belong to heaven and not to this world at all? We find here in our chapter that the most beautiful appreciation seems to be extended. Without reserve to the Apostle Paul and his ministry. But it does change. But the change comes about from the loss of the enjoyment in the soul of the Person of Christ. Even in Revelation 2 They did not depart from all the outward observances of that which had been set up, but the inner life was gone. And so there was no power. The inner life was gone. Now may that be a lesson to us, dear brethren, that there may be all the outward as our brother Brown has been bringing before us in our local assemblies and these happy gatherings. But the question is, is the inner life there? That is, I mean the practice of it, the enjoyment of it? A sense of His love towards us. Because if we're going around unhappy, we certainly aren't in the good of a sense of his love toward us. And I often wonder. And I wonder in my own soul too, why, as one goes about. Why there's such long silences as we gather together to remember the Lord? Sometimes and. When there should be a free spirit, there should be an exercise soul as to why we're there, and there should be that during the week which would. Prepare us for the for the time when we gather together. There must be something working underneath that brings these conditions. Among us, where there is no response to the precious saviors, we come to remember him in his death. Don't you think, Brother Undine? Sometimes it's timidity among young brothers that haven't been accustomed to taking part, and they're almost afraid of their own voices. I'd rather see a meeting where there's long pauses than a meeting where. There's scarcely any pause at all between hymns and prayers and the parts that are taken in the meeting. So yeah, all those things remind us how. We are gathered to the Lord's name and dependence upon the head in glory, and I do think this is important to remember that gathered together. Surrounds the blessed Lord that we should remember that we are waiting on him, rather than waiting on the Spirit, the Lord by. The Lord directs by the Spirit, but holding the head is really being occupied with the glorified One, or the one who says, There am I in the midst of the He's the head of the body. And all nourishment comes from him, but he directs by the Spirit, and it has the remembrance of the Lord. There is an occupation with Christ. Our hearts are engaged with him, while then by the Spirit he directs to a certain hymn, or he gives a certain brother to feel that he should offer praise, or another that he should give thanks for the emblems.

Is that right? The Old Testament rather buried that I think it'd be profitable to read. It's just two or three verses. It's in second kings. Four and verse 42. Now this is in the ministry of Elijah and I believe we have various pictures in the ministry of Elijah that represent New Testament truths. Here we have worship. Now I stand to be corrected, but I believe that's something we can enjoy. Connection with worship. And there came a man. Chapter 42 Kings 4 and 42. And there came a man from Bail Silicia, Lord of the high places, or heavenly places, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, 20 loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. And his servator said, What should I set this before in 100 men? He said, again, Give the people that they may eat. For thus, saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he said it before them, And they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord. Now you mentioned timidity on the part of some. And I'm sure that's true. Here we have a picture. Of two kinds of sacrifices. That which would suggest. We might say a young person in the presence of the Lord at the time when we're gathered to remember him in his death. We have the 20 loaves of barley. It speaks of the poor man's bread. It speaks of Christ though. That we also have the corn in the husks thereof, the full ears. This speaks of maturity. Now they're both equally set before the people. They're first given to the man of God because the people eat of the very food that he eats up. And so they're set before him. First. He's Christ really in type, but at the very same food as the food is set before the people of God. And so we have the servator saying, what should I set this before 100 men? Should I do that? 100 Man, what little I have. Well, see, if the word of God says do so. You'd better do it. If the word, if there's a word of God on your heart, something to give to your brethren on such an occasion. I mean, after the breaking of bread. Well, the Lord has laid it on your heart. Give it it might, you might be giving it intimidating, but. Give it and notice what it says. Give the people that they may eat, for thus, saith the Lord, they shall eat, and shall leave thereof. Christ can never be ministered in the spirit that what it fills the hearts of those who hear. So he said it before them, and they did eat and left there of according to the word of the Lord. And so whether it be an offering of praise to the Lord or whether it be a little word of of. Encouragement to the Saints after the breaking of bread. If the Lord has laid it on the heart, why? Don't be afraid? If the Lord has laid it on the heart, give it, and you'll find that when they eat, they'll leave thereof. There'll be plenty, and it'll be leftover. We do not varnish our weakness with activity. We're waiting quietly in the presence of God, So what better could we do if we're weak than weak quietly in God's presence? So let's not. Varnish our weakness with activity. That's what we came out of. Sometimes the Lord does allow a long pause to remind us of our state of soul. A member of Brother Ruskin Gill killing about.

Meeting where he lived one time when there seemed no power to break the bread that Sunday morning, and he admonished the brethren at the close that there was something that they grieved the Spirit of God. And it came out during the week that there was a brother who's going on with evil, and they had to look into this matter and judge this matter. So there may be special reasons why. The Lord allows these pauses and we shouldn't get upset too much if they are long pauses and we don't want to form a clergy to always go ahead and break the bread or. Offer the praise sometimes it requires a long time of waiting to exercise younger brother that they have a responsibility as long as their older brother if certain ones always take part why it just limits the. I the work, I mean the the the work of the Holy Spirit. Well, we have here the only Apostolic succession that is found in Scripture. In Christendom there is a. Idea that the apostles ordained elders and they are ordained other elders and that succession has gone right down through Christendom so that we still have Apostolic succession. But the only Apostolic succession mentioned is as you read here. It says, if I know this 29th verse, that after my departure shall grievous rules enter in among you, not sparing the flock false of your own self, shall then arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Now that's the Apostolic succession, and that's what exactly, and that's exactly what happened, and that's the work of the enemy is still today then speaking perverse things. And they may be real Christians, gifted men, because Satan can make far more use of a gifted man than the man that hasn't any gift if a gifted brother. Presents something that is contrary to the word of God. Because of his gift he will soon get a following, whereas he was just a simple brother that took little part or wasn't known very far and wide why he wouldn't be listened to. That the more gift a brother possesses in connection with the things of God, the more responsibility he has. And sad to say, we've seen the history even of those gathered to the Lords names. That it wasn't some obscure individual who knew had little gift, but the most gifted men. Have scattered the flock men who had the real. Ministry And yet when they became leaders in a party and misused the Scripture to carry out their know what they had before them, what havoc could be wrought among God's people? We have today began in the early times, did they not? At the after the

apostles had left the scene and they may be covered up in different names today, but basically. The denial of the person of Christ is the Son of God, and the denial of the virgin birth and all of these things began no doubt quite early in the history of the church in the 28th verse. That administering the truth to others. There needs to be, first of all, an application of it to ourselves. It says, take heed, therefore unto yourselves. I think of how the apostle Paul could write to Timothy and say the same thing to him. Take heed to thyself. The Word of God is A2 edged sword, and the first application must be the self before there really can be any, any real power in ministry to others. It seems to me that there's a very, very real need. To search our own consciences and to have it applied to our own hearts. And to be before God, to have it applied to ourselves in verse 27.

About declaring to them the whole council of God. And that's why he says what he does in verse 28. Take heed therefore. I've given you all the counsel of God, and I'll take heed therefore. To yourselves. That means that you have to practice it yourself. Be in the good of it and to all the flock, take heed to the flock. Well, if you've been given the truth, you have a responsibility to pass it on. Over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers. Well, that's quite instructive, isn't it? It doesn't say which the apostle Paul made you overseer. She doesn't say that I made you overseers. No, this was the work of God. And so it's important for those who take responsibility in the assembly to be before the Lord. Did the does the Lord want me to do this? Is this what he what he wants me to do? Is this the place he wants me to take in the? Is there this responsibility? Now each one may not have the same gift or the same ability, but, and it may not mean that he's fulfilling the same responsibility as someone else, but it seems that each one should be before the Lord to find out from the Lord himself, what is the responsibility that the Lord wants me to take? So it's the Holy Ghost that was active here to make them overseers. And it wasn't just a matter of being overseers to dominate them or to Lord it over them, but to feed the assembly, to feed the assembly, to have a care for the assembly, not just to cut and dried seed, but it's like 1 member of the body having a care for the other member of the body. It's like our our two hands if a person has only one hand. One arm, he doesn't have the other one when it comes to washing that hand. It's very difficult for a person with one hand to wash his own hand. He needs the other hand so that both of them can wash each other. They have a care one for another. And so in the assembly, this is perhaps what is brought out here. The oversteers are responsible to have a care for the assembly and we need to have a care one for another. Last part of that 28th verse, the Church of God which he has purchased. It's with the blood of his own is that that is, it's the blood of Christ. And that is a precious thought. We should never lose sight of that. What it cost God the Father, what it cost his beloved Son to redeem a people and to form them into one body. It cost the blood of the blessed Son of God that He had purchased us. Christ that He has paid for that which is spoken of here. So in caring for it, it's what how dare that those that they're made overseers are to the heart of God the Father. He gave his Son, He shed his precious blood. That was the price that was paid. So the Spirit of God never allows us to get very far away from the cross. And the work of Calvary. That precious blood that was built there by the Romans, beer, you would bring us back to that and remind us that we are bought with a price. That's looked at individually. And I believe in the 6th chapter, first Corinthians, you're not your own. You're both with a price. It's true of each individual that we've been brought, but we have to think of the whole Church of God here and the whole church has been purchased. At the light blood of the Son of God. Now when I say life blood, I don't mean that it was taken from his body while he was alive, but it was the blood that flowed through his veins. When he was here and when the Roman soldier pierced his side, there was a miracle performed, Because the heart, when it stops, you know, the blood ceases to circulate.

And there would be no bloodshed by piercing a dead body. But it was a divine miracle that caused that blood to flow from the side of a Christ in death. I never saw before the connection between the charge to feed the flock, which he had purchased with his own blood. Doesn't it make that precious? It it would become perhaps. Wearisome if it were not for the continual remembrance that this challenge, this privilege, this opportunity. Is concerning that which was so dear to him that he purchased it with his own blood. Oh, what a what a wonderful privilege to be able in any little way to feed or to minister to or in any way to be a help to anyone of a flock so dear to him as that. How could we ever, ever. Neglect this. How could we ever shrink from it because of? Some little criticism or something like that. My brother Charles will forgive me for this comment, I know. But after what I said this morning in connection with my mother's illness and my father's efforts in the kitchen, I thought I'd better check with Charles to see that I got it right. I said, Charles, did I tell that right? And he said, yes, you did, but you missed out one part of it. What did I miss? He said. You missed the part that we found fault with Father's cooking. But he went on anyway. He said, don't you remember? We told him he burnt the gravy, but he didn't give up. He kept on because he loved her. I was kind of glad for that little addition because, brethren, we do see those who try to help, who try to feed, and their efforts perhaps are not appreciated. But oh, beloved, I, I, I'm glad to have got this to my soul today. That the challenge and privilege of it anyway. Helping, encouraging, nourishing any of the flock of God is associated with that which was so dear to Him that He purchased it with the blood of His own. What a privilege. Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it. Well, that was written to the same ones to whom the apostle Paul was speaking here. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. So I suppose what we have then verse 28 is a similar to it. Now he says you're thinking about Christ loving the church and giving himself for it. Now you give yourself for the church too. Of course, not in the same way to sacrificially that the Lord gave himself for the church, but still I believe we can also extend it beyond the sacrifice. The Lord is still caring for the church. He's still loving the church. And it goes on in that same chapter, Speaking of the washing of the water by the word. That's the present care of the Lord for the church too. And then there's the future is going to present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Well, this is the care of the Lord for the church all the way through. And evidently this is the picture that's being put before these elders at Ephesus to care for the church. Have a love for the church. Do we really love the assembly? Do we love the church that Christ died for? Well. It's brought out to us here in the fact that it speaks of that precious blood that was shed to to buy, to redeem us, how it touches our hearts. I received a letter from my dear father. Just before he went home, which greatly inspired me to keep going. I will only take a moment to explain, he said. Son, hold fast. He commented this portion we're on this afternoon. He said feed the flock son, hold fast, stand fast. He said I'm ready to depart. I want to write a little letters of my son, Eric. So he told his daughter, who's a nurse, to prop him up.

And he propped him up and he wrote a beautiful note to me, perfectly written. And these are the words he said, Son, hold fast, stand fast, the professing church. Is in ruins, but remember, the church in the mind of God is ever perfect, ever perfect. Now he says I'm ready to depart and my sister said he just drew 3 breaths and quoted I will never leave thee nor forsake thee and was gone, was gone. Well these are days. I was just thinking that with the time is gone. Faithfulness to God is a great need today and you'll find it in second crime in First Chronicles. Where you have the those who were the the enemies of David. Knowing that David was to be supreme in Israel, they came over to him and they said, now thine are we David? That's first Chronicles 12 And on thy side, thou son of Jesse, peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be unto thine helpers, and thy God, for thy God help of thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band. Now of these we speak of. Men who could keep rank. In that scene, verse 38, in that same verse, we have the words one heart, and we have also. In verse 33. Those who were not of a double heart. These are days when we need understanding of the times, beloved. To keep low down and our eyes fixed on that precious one. Well, hold fast below, stand fast. The Lord is coming.

Reading

Alright, Chapter 20, Verse 13. And we went before the ship and sailed under Azov there, intending to take in Paul for so heady appointed, minding himself to go afoot. And when he met us at Azos, we took him in and came to Middeline. And we sailed fence and came the next day over against chills. The next day we arrived at same office and tarried at Trojillium. And the next day we came to my leaders, for Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus because he would not spend the time in Asia. He tasted if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost, and from my leaders he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them. Do you know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in weight of the Jews? And how I kept back nothing that was profitable under you. But I showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing a thing that shall befall me there. Say that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither can't I my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I knowledge ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Where I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers to feed the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. I know this, that after my departings were grievous wolves enter in among you, not bearing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore once, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace. Which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, nor gold, nor apparel. Yet ye yourselves know that these hands administered under my necessity, under them that were with me. I have showed you all things. How they're so laboring. He ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said it is more blessed to give than to receive, and what he has thus spoken. He kneeled down and prayed with them all, and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, soaring most of all for the words which he speak, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him under the ship. Now this we all take up more Pauls address to the elders at Ephesus. But there's one point that might be of interest and have some importance too. And that Paul walked across the isthmus while the ship was going around the isthmus. And there must have been a reason why the Spirit of God would record that. You see, Paul had been talking all night, preaching or discoursing there in that third loft where the assembly was gathered at Choice, and I feel that he felt the need of being alone with the Lord, so he left the others who were with him on the. The traveling on the ship and took this journey. Alone, He could be there alone with the Lord for a little while and have communion with him. And he does teach a lesson that to those who give out must take in. So when the Lord had sent out his disciples to heal and to preach the gospel, and then he said, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.

Well, that's even the Lord and his disciples felt the need of that time alone with the Lord and we all. Need to remember that there are times we need to be alone with the Lord, and especially when there's some special work of the Lord that we have been engaged in. We need to have time of quiet meditation in the Lord's presence. Because we can easily form hasty and perhaps incorrect thoughts if we are not. Waiting on the Lord and in communion with Him. And there's something else, I suppose. The Apostle Paul had a burden on his heart. And he felt the need of being in the presence of the Lord, alone with the Lord, in view of what he was going to tell these elders. At Ephesus, no doubt, he had this burden on his heart, and he felt very much the need of help. Guidance of God by His Spirit. And so I suppose that would be another reason why. He felt the need of being alone so that takes us right on down. We don't need to go over the different places they stopped on their voyage. But when we come to the 17th verse it says and from from elitist. He sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. He was that was the port of the important city of Ephesus in those days. And he didn't want to meet the whole assembly, he felt he hadn't time. And so he just sends for the elders. Now it might be helpful to all here to know that elders and bishops and overseers are one and the same, perhaps in the original, the same word. And it chose to. There's no such thought of a Bishop, of a diocese or of a church. There must have been a fair sized group of elders that met the apostle there at Maleidom. Elderly, mature. Godly men who had the responsibility of the affairs of the large assembly at Ephesus. We are told, for those who know the Greek, that. This first word here of the elders is. Pronounced as Stephen Presbyterus is what I want to say. Now a Presbyterian. In the word of God. Is used merely. For those that are older now, you take the elder brother in the 15th of Luke for instance. It is Presbyterian. Another thing. They were not to rebuke an older brother sharply. First Timothy 51 and then in Titus two, we have also the women spoken of as the elder women, and the word is Stephanus. So if we stick to the word of God, we discover that the word Stephanus and elder is limited to older people. Now another thing, not all older people are older men are. Overseers like bishops because we have two different cattle, two different scriptures that describe the qualifications. For what we call bishops, you see, they are episcopists. Now we have a few brethren here that I'm talking to. I know that know a little bit of Greek and you know I'm telling you the truth. And Stephanus has to do with the older ones. Episcopus has to do with the functioning of oversight.

Now, must I add anything more to make it clearer? There are two different words one has to do with like the older ones. You know, these Mormon elders that come around your door, I remember an occasion when they wanted to give us some literature and they say we're elders of the Church of the latter Day States elders. You look pretty young to me and so on. You know, that's all folly for them to call themselves elders. They were just youngsters, if you please. So let's let Presbyterians We do have the Presbyterian Church. That has the principle that the older ones have the same. Now we have the Episcopal Church, which does have their lineup and functions and they specialize in that. The Episcopal Church for after that word Episcopus, so that the one has to do more with age, the other has to do with functioning and they're not all. The older ones are bishops. Our overseers, there is a difference. I want you. Why not go by the word of God, brethren? I'll read from Darby's translation. And I think it makes it clear as to what overseer or oversight is. First Timothy chapter three, he says the word is faithful. If anyone aspires to exercise oversight, he desires a good work. The work is connected with overseeing. And I suppose we may say that the word elder is connected with the place of the office, and it isn't necessarily. An old aged brother because they were to have families. They were to be married men, they were to have children, not just one child, but they were to have children because the children would teach the overseer. How to manage in connection with assembly affairs, because he's had problems in his family that, that nothing else would have

taught him how to, how to help different ones in the assembly. But I think we should remember this too, that. Speaking about a Bishop, married, has a family. As God's order. But yet you do have remember your leaders. And the leader may not necessarily be a married man. He might be a bachelor. And yet a leader like our brother Klaus years ago was a real leader among among the Saints, an unmarried man. Well, that's that's different. They are different definitely leaders who are raised up. And God uses them for guidance of of his children. We had a problem and the question came up concerning this very point where discussing, so we had to go into it as the Lord enabled. There were some there who were aged and it was difficult. To deal with them. Because they lacked the requisite for eldership. Now the word in the original is just overseer. Elder. Bishop, I don't think you can make too much distinction. Brethren, there is that distinction our brother Brown has made. But these were. Men who posed as elders. But they did not fill those requisites to be such. Thus, there was a conflict there in the testimony. There were men who were younger, between 40 / 40 years of age, who filled those requisites. So it was a question of getting with these older brothers, very much younger than I am, and I tried to explain to them that.

They did not fill those requisites that were required to make them overseers. Of that particular assembly, a Bishop or an Episcopal, he's not an, he's not an elder anywhere else. He's where that particular mayday, and these were in this particular mayday, the Church of England has taken up a different view of the point. They are bishops over a diocese, which of course is unscriptural. One, an elder is an elder in that meeting and nowhere else. That's a very important matter. Now these dear brethren did listen to the Word of God attentively. But after a while, they lost their. And they did not return to the meeting. Well, I spoke very quietly to them and meekly and asked them if they did attend all the meetings. They said once a month we appeared. On this occasion the assembly was on the taking up the Act of the Apostles. Immediately these two older brethren came in. Now I'm speaking very carefully about this. They came in and they immediately told these younger men to shut up, that they would listen to what they had to say as they needed to be taught. Well, naturally there was quite a trial, quite a trial for us all. So in drawing them aside, I said, brethren, what made you adopt these special themes that had nothing to do with the reading? Oh, they said, these young men. And by the way, they're well taught young men. They're not babes. They're they're over 40 years of age and being in fellowship years and well taught in the scriptures. I said, why didn't you allow them? Just why didn't you take part with them? Now this was a quite a crisis, but thank God it has been overcome and these men apparently have understood the meaning of what it means to be an elder. And are taking that part which the word of God requires. Well, now this is a very, very solemn matter, not to push young people into places. Of position yet. To encourage them. To take up the scriptures and. In. Concerning their brethren to be acceptable to their brethren. This was a problem for us. It was. Thank God it was solved. Now there was self will on the part of the elders there. Which is just pride, of course, and it was a sad case that they would lose their cool, as you say, because it was drawn. Their attention was drawn to the fact that they were not fulfilling their requisites that the Word of God required. Am I right in this? There are serious matters that arise. There may be very godly young men, but they should not ignore the older brothers. Meeting although the older brothers may not be as spiritual and may not have been as faithful, but for them to just take over and to act apart from the older men. Can be a very serious mistake. I remember years ago I was at a conference in Kansas City. Brother Brown at that time was quite a young man and there were some problems in the Des Moines meeting. That were coming up and feller Brown took with another brother, took brother Potter and the brother Fleck aside and talked to him about it and their advice was this you act through your elders, don't act independent of them.

If they're they're not right, seek to exercise them, but don't act independently. Of the elders, now they may not be elders in the sense that they're a Bishop, a responsible man, but still they're men of age and men that we should respect. I believe those things are are helpful to remember. And of course, I'm sure we all see this. That at the present time we do not have any who are official elders. At the beginning we find that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every assembly. They had authority, they were apostles and could do that. Now that the apostles are all gone, we no longer have. Official elders because we have no one that. He is qualified to appoint them. But we do have in all our weakness and seeking to contain the truth on the ground of the one body, we do have men that morally fill the qualifications of an elder. And I might just read a verse and and. First Thessalonians and the third chapter? No, the 5th chapter. Verse. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly, and love for their work's sake. Now, what is the result of? Steaming these mentions here, highly in love, then the next thing is and be at peace among yourselves. If there comes in an independent spirit of ignoring. Those that God raises up and gives a desire to care for the flock. If there's a ignoring of that, there is a lack of peace such as is mentioned here among the Saints. Now those that are mentioned in that verse that I just read the 12Th verse of First Thessalonians 5. We all have men of that quality among the Saints. As long as the church is here, they're not ordained. They're not official elders. And another thing we should see that understand is that an office is different from a gift. Now we find, if we take up the subject of elderhood or a Bishop, that he was apartment to teach. Doesn't say he was a teacher, but he was apartment to teach. That is, he could be helpful among his brethren giving instruction. He wasn't to be just a babe, just newly brought into the assembly. But he could be helpful among them. But he wasn't a gift. And now as to a Deacon, of course their responsibilities were looking after the temporal affairs, and we find that when anyone exercised the work of a Deacon faithfully, he was he could become a true gift, just like. Philip, who went down to Samaria and preached Christ and a great work of God began. He was hairless from that time on in the Lord's service. But he started out with just a humble job of looking after the financial affairs of caring for the widows in Jerusalem. He is the only one I believe in Scripture who is called an evangelist. And he was only called an evangelist after he had been in the Lord's work for 20 years. And he's called Philip the Evangelist. We don't put that title, that name behind any of the Lord's servants today and. One thing we see in connection with a man like Stephen or like Phillip. He was just as ready to go down into the desert and preach to one Ethiopian as he was to preach to a whole city in Samaria. That's the spirit of an evangelist. There's a moral reason also why we do not have official elders, as true as our brother pointed out that we have no apostles or Apostolic delegates like Titus to make official elders.

But morally, there is a reason that we cannot have official elders. And it is this one who takes the oversight, as it's been pointed out. Does a good work well, The brother does that out of conscience and exercise before God in an effort to be of help amongst those people, and he does the work well. We're admonished as to those who take the oversight well amongst the Saints, that they're worthy of double honor, having ministered unto us the word of God. But if a man is appointed to official position, he can then function in that position without consciousness. Well, we can't help but can we, brothers? We must have the work of God done in consciousness and the presence of God out of exercise of heart before Him to serve the people of God. So morally there must be the exercise of heart and conscience if one is to take the oversight well amongst the people of God for help. It seems to me, Brother Barry, that we have a little example. In the book of Philippians in this in the second chapter. That would help us to. See the principles that Paul would expect in the assembly after his departure, and there would be no more appointment of elders or deacons. And so we have referred to us there, Timothy. And Epaphroditus, now I don't say that that they were elders and deacons necessarily, but they give us the principles because in this book of Philippians. We have at the very start the elders and deacons mentioned, but then the apostle tells us or tells the assembly that they would have to work out their own salvation. He was going to

leave them. The apostle would leave. And if you'll turn to the second chapter, Philippians, I believe we have some principles there that might, might guide us. To look up as to who to look up to. As elders and as deacons in the 19th verse. Now again I say, I don't claim that Timothy was an elder, but the principal here for qualifications is what is in view. I believe Timothy was a leader as we have in Corinthians, but in the 19 first of the second chapter of Philippians. I trust in the Lord Jesus to send to Matthias shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state, for I have no man like minded. Who will not care for your state? For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ. But she know the proof of Him, that as a Son with a Father, He has served with me in the Gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. Now here we have one whose heart. Naturally cared for the Saints. Now this is necessary for one. Who would in any way seek to fill this office? But now we have a pathorditis. 25th verse. Yet I suppose it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother. And companion in labor and fellowship, but your messenger. And he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that she had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also. Lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him there for the more carefully that when you see him again, you may rejoice. That I may be the less sorrowful receive him, therefore, in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation, because for the work of Christ he was nine to death, not regarding his life to supply your lack of service toward me. Here we have a man who was who would even. Be dispensable. And caring for the practical needs of the Saints, and here particularly the Apostle Paul, it wasn't a question here of the spiritual blessing of the Saints so much, although I'm sure he had that in heart too, but he was thinking of their practical needs. And I believe that has more to do with the Deacon, does it not?

Whereas in the first case the apostle had no man like minded. Timothy was the one who took up the torch, as it were when the Apostle Paul left, and Timothy was the one whose heart was was taken up with the Saints. He he wanted them to be in the enjoyment of the truth of that highest truth that God had ever given to man. And then I think also in Colossians of one who was mentioned. In connection with that line of things in the last chapter. It says. In the 12Th verse, I believe this is one who had a care for the Saints in the assembly of Colossi. Epifras, the 4th chapter and 12Th verse. Epifrath, who's who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you. Bring fervently for you in prayers. That you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Now we don't hear much of this man, but in his local assembly he was one who cared for the state of the Saints, and he cared to the point that they might have all the truth. Now that is necessary. And is it not in Colossians that we get the full completed word of God? And so we have him interested that the Saints might stand in this. The enjoyment of it. Pardon and verse 13. For I bear him record that he hath great zeal of you for you, and then that are in Laodicea, and them in Hieropolis. May I call your attention? I know we are lingering long on this point, but there's an important scripture yet that belongs to our subject in Titus chapter one. Now the Apostle Paul did. Give the authority to one Titus to act. Innocent authority to select. Where it was needed, those that might care for the Saints there verse five of chapter one in Titus for this cause left four in Crete. That thou should have set in order the things. That are wanting and to choose that is to establish elders in every city as I had appointed that is ordered D Now here is a provision showing that they were limited not all elders, but they had to qualify to act as Episcopists as we get it in this next two verses. If any, be blameless. The husband of one wife having faithful children, not accused of rioting or unruly. For a Miss Bishop here, the word is episcopus, that is an overseer. This has to do with the functioning and they had to qualify to act. Even though they were not youngsters, they had to be of the older ones. Not. I'm soon angry and not given to wine, not or no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men. Sober, just holy, temperate holding. Fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able. By sound doctrine that is teaching both to exhort and to convince the game Sayers. These would be the qualifications present, wouldn't they? Not the gifts. These would be the qualifications for such.

Well, I think we've dwelt quite a little on this. We understand that it's not an official thing to be an elder like a Bishop of a of a church or a sect, but we do pray for one another that there might be those requisites fulfilled in US. To glorify the Lord and be a mutual help to God's dear people. As an old man in the service of the Lord for 56 years, I'm feeling this in my own soul more than ever, brethren. That little by little, gods, dear people, are being taken away. Many of God's dear servants whose ministry remains with us. They are taken of being taken away. And that occurred too in South America, some of those who've been at the table for 44 years no longer there. And we've been trying to to encourage those. Younger ones to take the responsibility, not in an official way, but humbly to serve their brethren. So we'd ask prayer. I would ask prayer for the meetings in South America. It's a great responsibility, although no one is is. I'm just a poor old Jacob. My days are over, but I am very concerned about those assemblies and there are many assemblies which for which you might pray, brother. The assemblies in fellowship all happy. Fellowship in Bolivia alone. And another 17 in the Dominican Republic. And now there are a number in Lima. These are questions that come up and those brethren want an answer and your prayers will help. No one is. Is. I'm not needed anymore there, I told them long ago. But they need the word of God and they need prayer, the prayers of God's dear people in this land. Think of all those meetings in Bolivia, beloved, 50 out of them. Outside the camp and the fire off from it. There's been a great deal of trial there because of the National Council of Churches making a kind of a covenant with all the sects, including the looser section of Brethren. With the one object. To make proselytes, and thus the need of prayer that they may hold fast. It was so important that 150 of our dear brethren got together for four days to consider this matter. And they wrote over the whole business separation, separation, which was a great comfort to my heart. Well, I mentioned this for your prayers, Brennan. There is a large group of Saints out there. All in happy fellowship with you. Who understand the truth of the one body who are gathered to the Lord's precious name and outside the camp, but this pressure being brought upon them. And so we pray that those who do assume the responsibility of overseers might be really kept low down. I remember reading what Mr. Darby said. In any service man goes forth from a place of strength realizing his own. And I never forget reading that before I went to Bolivia in 1920, realizing our own nothingness. But the Lord can use us. You can raise up men. And we mustn't forget the sisters too, whose prayers of such value that they may continue there in that country, in those countries, faithfully. To God. Well, you'd say then the very thought that you. Mentioned there about.

Feeling our own nothingness is really what you get in falls addressed to the elders of Ephesus. It's really the way Paul ministered that we get here in this chapter if we want to, if we want to go into Paul's ministry, we get that in many epistles like Romans and Corinthians and Galatians. And Ephesians, and Philippians, and so on. But in what manner? And what to wade it all minister as he went about and served the Lord well, we have a wonderful description of the way a true servant of Christ seeks to minister the truth as he goes on in his testimony. And so he says here, you know, from the first day. I came into Asia What manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mine, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in weight of the Jews. And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and that publicly, from and from house to house, testifying both to the Jew and to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, there is the character of a true servant of Christ, and all humility of mine. He never got to thinking that he had a great gift, although doubtless he had the greatest gift that was ever given to any of God's servants. Yet

he was never occupied with it, never tried to make a display of it. In fact, when he went to corn, he was among them in weakness and fear and trembling, lest he might just use his gift as an orator to win the Greeks, and then they wouldn't be ahead at all, because someone that was a better speaker might come in, and then he would carry them away. So what he was determined when he went to Corinth was this, that he would have him know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. So here we get all through this chapter the true spirit of a devoted servant of Christ, and there is a pattern for any who desire to serve. Our blessed Lord, young or old and whatever little capacity it may be. Whatever it may be in a local way, or whether the Lord calls one out, and that's very special. If one is called to give all his time to the Lord's work, in what spirit he should seek to serve the Lord as he goes about in seeking through the use of the Lord and guided by the Spirit. And in his last epistle to young Timothy, he gives us the same truth in chapter 3, verse 10. I like to read verses 1011 and 12. Now the Timothy says, But thou hast fully known my teaching, my doctrine been right along with it. Is the most important thing also the manner of life. Purpose. Faith. Long-suffering. Love and patience are endurance. Persecution. Afflictions which came upon me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Listerine, of what persecutions I endured. But out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yeah, and all that will live. Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. It's interesting, isn't it? The apostle could abide two whole years in one place and then another occasion like this. He would simply call the elders down to the seashore to speak to them. This is instructive, Is it not for us that it's important that we do not go by mere habits?

And serving the Lord that is making our own patterns. And plans the Lord no doubt had led the apostle to remain two whole years. For a special purpose. In forming the truth into the hearts and minds of the Saints. But on this occasion where he passes Ephesus, it's simply to call the elders, and to instruct them as to the dangers of the way when he leaves, and all that was necessary for them in connection. After his departure. To sustain and keep them in the midst of all the troubles that would come upon the Saints. There's one more thought and connection with this matter of oversight that's used to puzzle me quite a bit, and that's in First Timothy chapter 3, where we read. This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good work if a man. Desire the office of a Bishop. Translation, I believe as we find it in the new translation is if any man aspire to oversight. I think it reads well. This to me is a very very searching thing and I trust might be of help. If any man aspire to oversight, why would anyone? Aspire to such a challenge. God forbid that it would ever be with any thought of personal prominence. Reward. But I think of an experience that we passed through as children when the five of us were still all going to school. My mother took very, very ill. She was in bed for many weeks and father took over the duties in the kitchen. And I know that he aspired. To do as well as he could in the kitchen. Now, I assure you that his efforts were not up to my mother's ability, and we noticed that, particularly at the beginning. We missed Mother's abilities in the kitchen, but as the weeks went by, Father's ability improved and the meals that were brought to us were better than they had been at the beginning and I know he referred to this later. And it meant a great deal to us as a family, he said. I didn't want to see my children go to school hungry or I'll fed. I desired to be able to do the best I could for my family in nourishing them. I wasn't trying to earn a reputation as a cook. I wasn't trying to over shadow my wife. But I didn't want to see my children go to school. Hungry. Now, brethren, is there something of this in the thought? Of aspiring to oversight. If we love the Lord, we left something of His heart of love toward His people. And we won't contentedly sit back and see our beloved brethren. I'll fed or drifting without any heart or care for them. May we aspire. To that which would be of help, of encouragement of a shepherd and character. Our dear brethren, not with any thought, and Paul surely displayed it so beautifully. Not with any thought of any self aggrandizement. He says, who then is Paul? And yet what a servant, what a shepherd he was. And Peter would remind us too that. There awaits the faithful shepherd, a crown of glory. Is it not true in Scripture that the crown seems to be a recompense? For that which may be sacrificed along the way, the crown of life to the one who lays down his life in the service of the Lord. The crown of glory to the one who is faithful in shepherding as much as to suggest, it seems to me. Don't expect any glory in that service as you go along.

Wait for it, the Lord will take note of it if it's done for him and if it's done for his people and if it's done in faithfulness. In faithfulness. I say there may not and there will not be glory here, and we surely hope we wouldn't want it, but I trust that this thought of aspiring. To oversight may not be forgotten by us. That all of us, wherever the Lord may have placed us, they have a heart. That would yearn to see the people of God shepherded and nourished. That it's important to notice the place that repentance is given here. Pauls ministry in that. 21St verse testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repents toward God. And faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Seems that there's a danger of not stressing repentance even in the gospel. As though just to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And accept Him as your savior. Open your heart door receding without any word that would exercise the conscience, and make a Sinner feel his need and his guilt. Now that verse is so often quoted. John in Acts 16 to the jailer, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved in thy house. But who is that addressed to? It was addressed to the Philippian jailer. When he was face to face with eternity, he'd taken out his sword and would have killed himself. But just before he made the fatal move, I heard a voice within the prison wall too, that I felt no harm. We're all here. He brings them out, trembling. And. Says sinners, what must I do to be saved? Well, now there's a man that's face to face with eternity. A convicted Sinner and how blessed the message. Is given to him to leave on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved in thy house. But I think sometimes that verse is not used at the right time in the right way just so all you have to do is sometimes these youngsters say, Oh no, it's just so easy. All you have to do is to believe. But we have to remember what it costs to our blessed Savior to make it possible for us to be saved. That cross and what he suffered there tells about the the greatness of our our our guilt. Our sins and our needs like John. The name gets from me, it says in his form. How one look he gave with said I suffered all this for thee and then hide. Then he saw after looking at that cross and seeing what it cost the Savior. To put away all the terrible guilt and sins that he had committed, that that Blessed One would suffer all that for him. What a marvelous thing that was when he accepted that one as his personal Savior. Well, let's remember how the apostle went in and out among those at Ephesus. And I believe, too, that there could be a word for us after we're safe when there is failure. If there's going to be two restoration, there must be true repentance. If one just says, well, I'll wait a while and then I'll be received back and so often that. Failure comes in that all that's needed is to be received back into the assembly. Remember, the upper restoration in the assembly can take place. There must be a true self, judgment and repentance of one's failure. The man who I was put away in the 5th chapter of.

First Corinthians and restored in the second chapter of Second Corinthians, he was about to be overcome with much sorrow and Paul says receive him, don't hold him back but why was the sorrow? It wasn't just simply that he'd been put away, but the awful thing that he had committed and when that failure really lays hold of the one who has failed and brought himself under the discipline of his brother, when? Is really judged in the presence of the Lord. It should be a very happy thing. To restore one, no matter how great and how fat his failure may have been. Because what had happened was only an indication of the state of the assembly, and we find the Lord Jesus. In taking up the ministry after John had been put in prison, he begins his ministry by preaching repentance. And in the 13th chapter of Luke. The Lord himself could say, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. And so it's a very important part of the preaching of the gospel, and I think that there's no real sound work without it. One who who was used much of the Lord, said he was more interested in quality than quantity. And I

think that's important that there will be. Quality rather in in the salvation of souls. There will be the work of God there, rather than simply a superficial ascending to the gospel, if there is the preaching of the repentance. In Matthew Matthew 13, we have a shore going forth to show, and the seed falls in four different kinds of soil. Well, in the first three there's no fruit, but in the last one, the 4th one, we read that it fell on good ground. For what is good ground? Well, a farmer knows what good ground is. That is ground that's been plowed up and worked down and and it's gone through several processes perhaps to make it fit for the seed time. Well, this is what the Spirit of God does with soul. He plows them up. Stirs them up, works in their soul, gets them to the point. Were they ready to receive the simple word of the gospel? It may be by the preacher giving out the word and preaching about sin, the results of sin that may be used of the Lord by the Spirit of God to plow up the soul. But that is very important, the plowing up of the soul first. And then when the seed falls into that kind of a state. Into that kind of a heart in that state, it's going to produce fruit. And I believe we do have to be careful. And I appreciate what our brother Barry has been bringing before us because it's so needful. Now we can go to Africa. And as our brother Hadley intimated yesterday morning when he was speaking to the children, it's so easy to get a show of hands. And we learn from the early time of our stay in the Congo. That we didn't dare push anybody into a profession. We must wait on God to work in their hearts by the Spirit to produce a sense of sin. That they sinned against God. And you know, when they got to that point in their state of soul, in their exercises, they were not so ready to put up their hands, but all you could get all kinds of professions and show of hands and get them to come up and shake the hand of the preacher and whatnot. But it's the work of the Spirit of God that we should be looking for and working in our souls and getting them ready to really receive the word of the gospel. So it's so important here, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe it's repentance toward God because the soul must realize that he sinned against God. The offense of his life that he's lived has been against God. He has to do with God, a holy God. And when it's God, it's it's that person in his nature of holiness.

And this is the sense that must come into the soul. I've sinned against our holy God, and I deserve the punishment that's been pronounced upon me. According to the word of God. I deserve hell. Well, when a sword was gotten to that point, isn't he ready to put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? He sees Christ, yes. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for my sins. He bore my sins in his old own body on the tree, and he suffered all that for me. Just accept Christ as his Savior. But all there's no, there's no real salvation, I don't believe without repentance. Repentance in itself is not sufficient. You have to have the balance of these two things that we get mentioned here, don't we? Repentance is no savior, but there's no salvation without it. How true though it is. Some people think if they if they just harass their souls and cry and get down and moan and so on. That that's the way they get saved? Well, it may not be saved at all. That work proceeds, but in order that one who is troubled about his sins might get to know his sins are forgiven, he's got to accept the Savior and receive him by faith. And then, then he sees the burden was born by his substitute on the cross. I'd like to. Add more to this most important subject of the important. Of every soul. Being made to feel their guilt before God and, as it were, in His presence. Salvation is of the Lord. It is God Himself that when we were dead in trespasses and sins by the Spirit hath quickened us, that is, He has imparted life. And the first thing the person that has in life is a begin to feel the shame of their past history, their guilt. And before God has to do with eternity and the salvation of their soul, they're brought trembling. And what to do about it? But peace only comes through the gospel. That declares that great work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who took our place, who suffered the whole judgment, and who? Who died in our stead and forests, and who also whose blood was shed to cleanses, and to redeem us, and to make us His own, and purge worshippers? Now this is essential, without going into the details of the 88th Psalm. Mr. Kelly says that Mister Darby told him that he virtually lived in the 88th song for seven years. I have His literal words written here in my Bible, but in that Psalm, the writer himself must have had some experience. And again, there's an application that would apply to the Lord Jesus Christ, who in the Garden of Gethsemane he weighed all that lay before him that he was about to go through on the cross. And all that great burden of guilt of his people. Who were under the law, They too were to be brought to realize what a a an awful failure of keeping the law they had done. The godly remnant will go through that. Now. That's three applications. There's one more. Every soul that has to do with God on that same principle must be in God's presence. Feeling their guilt and their shame and trembling before God with a sense of their need of that which they do not deserve. That's mercy and it's great. I want to read I just mentioned now in the second Corinthians, chapter 12, verse seven, it speaks about God bringing those that are brought.

Low. God knows how to bring us low. The other is in. In Jeremiah 71, three verses I think that are right to the point of our subject. Verse 18 Jeremiah 31 Ephraim. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself. Oh, we can't have too much of that. Thus thou hast chastened me, chastised me, and I was chastised as a Bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn down knee. Oh, that's the important thing. God turned us to Himself. And I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God, surely. Now notice this strange statement. After that I was turned a quickened soul. He's converted. He's turned now to God, as it were, from self. After that has returned. After I was turned, I repented. And after. That I was instructed. I smoked upon my thigh. I was ashamed. Gay, even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth. I think we should understand and reading in the 22nd verse. And now behold, I go, bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem. Not knowing the things that shall before me there. It doesn't mean that Paul was being guided by the Holy Spirit, but he was bound in his own spirit. I was very when Paul had that vision. One night a man from Macedonia praying has come over into Macedonia and helping help us. Then they took their voice, being assured that the Lord had sent them to preach. In that city in Macedonia, well, in this case Paul had a great love for his Jewish brother. And he had treated them so badly. When you think of hailing men and women and delivering them to prison there in Jerusalem and beating them in every synagogue. And when some innocent believer was put to death, he was standing there just exotic and giving his voice against it, standing there and watching them throw the stones at Stephen. When he was looking up into heaven. All I failed, he says, so badly he just felt that he must go back once more. And testify to that people that he loved so much, but he didn't have the guidance of the Spirit or the spirit witnessed in every city that bombs and afflictions are weighted in there. And of he he allowed his own spirit being. So oppressed as he were feeling there that he should go back and what's more, try to save some of his breath. Well, we can say this about Paul. It was a noble motive, but perhaps a misguided. A misguidance there as to whether being led at that time. And of course he had to go through all that sorrow and imprisonment, and yet Dog was in that being made a prisoner and eventually taken to Rome. So God does, even in His grace, overrule our our mistakes. Our blessings that if there is a true heart and a desire to please the Lord, the Lord doesn't forget that. And he never forgot how Paul was willing to lay down his life. He didn't even esteem his life dear unto him and going on his way at that time. But still we just have to leave those things with the Lord. But we can see that in the end, God had His purpose in it all. For there's no doubt that Paul never reached the height of his ministry.

Until after he had been a prisoner at Rome and when he wrote the book of Ephesians, he had really reached the height of his ministry at that time, the one thing he did desire and every believer should desire, that he might finish his course with joy by the will of God. Peter puts it in different languages. Language when he speaks of having an abundant entrance. Into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Brethren, do we die? Desire that not only we might make a good start. But that we might make a good finish. Many, you know, make a

good start. Like Jonathan, who loved David so dearly. But he wouldn't. Sacrifice everything and shared David's rejection and live in The Cave of Adelaide and endanger his life. He went back to his father's home where he had every luxury and every ease and every protection. He chose that, and all artists had less than there is in connection with the fellows he saw make a good start. But to go on and on and continue. And that takes real purpose of heart, doesn't it? It needs the reading of the Word of God every morning, getting on our knees and asking the Lord to to guide and direct us, being subject to His Word, not exercising our own wills, but always willing to humble ourselves and to own and admit when we're wrong. All those things have to do with the course that ends like fall. That I might finish my course with joy. And he did finish his course with joy. Although he did. Use his own love for his brethren at this time. But in the end. We find him as a prisoner at Rome, when he could say, time of my departure is near. I fought a good fight, I finished my course, I've kept the pain, and henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness with the righteous good judge will give unto me in that day, but not on me only, but unto all them that love his appearing in the book of Philippians. Where the apostle is finally in prison. And he? Sees the Saints carrying on the work. That he was not able to do. He likens his position. To the drink offering that was put on the sacrifice because it was an offering which suggested exceeding joy. Boy. They were the ones who he suggested were doing were making the sacrifice, but he would was to be offered up. It wasn't long before the Apostle. Executed and he was he was to be offered up, as it were, as a a drink offering on the sacrifice of his brother. That is, he was giving him himself up and completing his course with joy, because even though he was not able to do the work himself, God is so provided that the work that was committed to him was to be finished by his brother.

Chicago Conference: 1977, Acts 20:7-12

Reading

If you were to read the 20th chapter of Acts, thinking particularly from the seventh verse on to the end of the chapter. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the Morrow and continue his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together, and they're sat in a window. A certain young man named Euticus being fallen into a deep sleep, and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep and fell down from a third loft. And was taken up death. Paul went down and fell upon him, and embracing him said, trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even until break of day, so he departed, and they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. And we went before to ship and sailed under Asos. They're intending to take in Paul for so Handy appointed, minding himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at Asos we took him in and came to Medellin. And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Geoff. The next day we arrived at Samos. And Terry de Trojan the next day came to Merlida's. Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus because he would not spend the time in Asia, for he hated it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. And from my leaders he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. Serving the Lord with all humility of mine, and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying in weight of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable under you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold, I go, bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem. Not knowing the things that shall befall me there, say that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither can't I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received with the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Then and behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God. Shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to a record this day. That I'm pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which is purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing, should grievous wolves enter in among you not bearing the flock. Also your own self shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch and remember that by the space of three years. I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them with their sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, nor gold, nor barrel. Yeah, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how the soul laboring ye ought to support the weak. And to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said it is more blessed to give than to receive. When he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. The all wept sore, and fell, and Paul's neck, and kissed him, soaring most of all for the words which he speak, that they should see his face no more than they accompanied him under the ship. It seems to my own soul that we get in this chapter.

A reminder of the condition of things in which we Live Today. A reminder to of the resource that we have that God has provided for us. And at the same time, before the apostle Paul goes into the dissertation to the elders of Ephesus, the most sweet and precious encouragement for us as to that which God will preserve. Until that wondrous day that we were singing about in our hymn, and also the character of ministry that will recover those who have fallen asleep. Someone was just remarking today that perhaps what has had more to do with holding the Saints gathered to the Lord's name together? Yes, the breaking of bread. The remembrance of the Lord in his death. Is being given up by many systems. Have that received and christened them? And some have so departed from the truth of Scripture that is. Having one man ministry and only one man that thought that authorized ordained that could. Perform the service. Been so misused and so abused that the blessedness and preciousness of it has lost its place. But I believe that is a true statement. That giving the remembrance of the Lord and his death is placed. Is the power and the way that God has. Folding us together and preserving the testimony. Have been gathered to his precious name. Now there is little doubt that at Choice this was a great event in the little gathering there to have the greatest of all the apostles to visit their assembly. But did they come together to hear Paul preach? They did not. It says on the first day of the week they came together when the disciples came together to break bread. If Paul hadn't been anywhere near to us, they would have come together just the same. That was their custom and Paul takes the opportunity when they have come together to break bread. Now to give a long address, I believe that instead of just preaching, it's more discoursing in not in just a continued talk, but an informal wait. He was talking until break of day, but let's just get the importance before us. Of the place at the beginning that the remembrance of the Lord had in those early days. There was an institution the Lord left when He was departing from this scene that last night in that upper room, perhaps to the Passover or the Passover was never to be kept according to the mind of God. Again, the Lord took the bread there and said, This is my body which is given for you. And then he took

the egg cup and said this is the New Testament in my blood and the New covenant. But he said it shed for many, for it's not limited to Israel. But to every poor believer that has accepted Christ and blood has availing and gracious power in saving and cleansing from all sin. Like Israel of old, when judgment was approaching, they were under the shelter of the blood of the land. So it does seem that this portion opening with the the breaking of bread as intended of the Spirit of God. That we might feel deeply in these closing days how important it is to go on with that testimony in remembering the Lord and his death.

We're told to do this in remembrance of the Lord. Remembrance Feast. To remember him. We're thinking of Him, meditating upon Him, and of course that leads to thinking about what He has done for us, His precious blood that has been shed on Calvary, His precious body given in death. This is what we think especially about at the breaking of bread. But I noticed here in the seventh verse, it says they came together. To break bread. There was number thought of breaking bread individually or in little groups, but they came together. They came together as members of one body. And this brings before us what we have in First Corinthians 10. There it speaks of being at the Lord's Table and partaking of the loaf as an expression of the fact that we're members of one body. So this is another thing we do. In Breaking Bread, we give expression to the fact that we're members of one body. Because the loaf is the symbol of the one body, and when we partake of that loaf, we're partaking of the portion in that loaf that belongs to us as a member of the body of Christ. So actually we do two things when we come together to break bread. We remember the Lord and we give expression to the fact that we're members of one body. Well, that excludes all other membership, and there can only be one membership expressed at the Lord's table, and that's the membership. Of the body of Christ there is always the danger, beloved. Hierarchy. That is to say. Those who would pose to occupy. All the teaching and preaching and everything, this pleases the flesh. I was talking to a minister of the gospel, and undoubtedly it was a saved man. And I brought this very portion of the word before him. Said that is right. That is right. But he says I prefer to go along with the hierarchy. Well, I said, dear brother, you stay there as long as you can. As long as you can, you stay there. I think he looks quite surprised, you know, because if you should come out and not understand the truth of separation and being gathered to the precious name of Christ and the truth of the one body, you'd be the most miserable man in the world because you'd be waiting for some big. Big display of the flesh and you'd be looking for a choir and some big organ and something that would please and Flint you stay there as long as you can. Well, we trust that he would see the truth. We don't know, but that is a danger the beloved you know to. To wait upon those who labor even for the Lord. And I've been noticing, and I know you'll excuse me mentioning this as an old missionary. Among the Latin believers in a prayer mating, perhaps 20 or 25 or more would take part. They wouldn't wait for any particular missionary to take part, but they would take part in a brief prayer. And this is very nice. You know, it's one longs to hear the dear Saints open their mouths in prayer and these prayer meetings and does your heart good. So we have to be very careful lest we drop into this question of being a hierarchy too. Don't you think we get the order of the remembrance of the Lord? That ministry follows the the breaking of bread, drinking of the cup? In fact, if you take First Corinthians in the 11Th chapter, you get the breaking of bread. As something that Paul received from the Lord and glory I have received of the Lord. That which also I delivered unto you. Then in the 12Th chapter of Paul, in the 11Th chapter we get the gifts, and then in the 14th chapter you get the exercise of getting in the assembly, and as often and said in the 12Th chapter, you get the machinery.

In the 14th chapter, you get the machinery and operation. In the 13th chapter, the chapter all about love. You get the oil, it makes the machinery run smoothly. A beautiful chapter of love. So it does seem that. That is called order and and one is LED of the Lord, and has a word from the Lord to minister at that occasion. After the raid has been broken and passed, there may be an opportunity for a word of exhortation. Mike well say something about the first day of the week, the importance of the first day of the week. The last day of the week, Saturday, was connected with the old economy under Judaism, but we have an entirely new thing brought before us now. And it's connected with the first day of the week. The Lord rose on the first day of the week, and then we find that the Holy Spirit came down on another first day of the week. And the church was formed on that first day of the week. And now we find that there's the breaking of bread, the remembrance of the Lord on the first day of the week. And it seems to connect with what we have in the first chapter of Revelation where the apostle John says I was in the Spirit on the Lords day. The Lord's Day, the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, and on the Lord's Day we sit at the Lords Table and eat the Lords Supper in remembrance of the Lord. It's all the Lord. The first day of the week is connected definitely with the Lord and His Lordship, because the word that's used there is definitely pointing to the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the dominical day. And we know what the word dominion means. It's the Lord Jesus Christ having dominion given the place of dominion over the church. He's the head of the Church, He is the Lord and we remember him at his table on the Lords day. What a day it is, what a blessing it is to have such a day. We're not under the old economy of the law connected with the Sabbath, but we're under the new, connected with the Lord Jesus Christ, His Lordship, and the first day of the week. I believe in Exodus 23, verse 16. Previous verse speaks of seven Sabbaths, and so does verse 16. Even unto the moral. The moral after the 7th Sabbath. Of course, the Sabbath was ever the 7th day, and their blessings would come in the day of the Millennium, when the Lord would reign with blessing over the entire earth. So ye shall #50 days and ye. Shall present a new, a new offering unto the Lord. 23rd Leviticus verse 16 in particular, showing that it was the moral after the. Seven weeks of Sabbath and that would make it the first day of the week. And again in First Corinthians 16 you'll allow. That verse one. And verse 2. Well, verse two, upon the first day of the week that everyone of you lay by in the store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no, no special offerings when I come, that would be their continual practice, so the Lord gives prominence.

In Christianity. To the first day of the week. Giving God to the 1St place, the Lord Jesus, the 1St place, the preeminence or the the 50th day which is Pentecost. You get mentioned of the day after the Sabbath and the waving of the wave sheath. Showing that the Spirit of God had the resurrection of Christ in view because. The waving of the the wave sheep was a type of Christ risen now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. So that wave sheath was waived tomorrow after the Sabbath. You get that in the. On the 23rd of Leviticus. And the 11Th verse. And accepted for you on the Morrow after the Sabbath, the priest shall waive it, showing how accurate and how perfect Scripture is in the Old Testament in connection with those days. And it's lovely too, that it was to be for their acceptance. And we are not said to be accepted in Christ on the cross, but we are accepted in the beloved, The one who is risen and glorified, that man at God's right hand is the one in whom the believer is accepted. I take it that when they came up after Eudicus was raised and ate bread. All continued until break of day that they are breaking bread. At that time was not the remembrance of the Lord, but they just partook of food and. As it was a late hour and had no definite connection with the the remembrance of his death, I think it rather spoils the thought of the importance. Of the remembrance of the Lord, because that was the purpose that the disciples came together for was not to hear Paul, but they came together to break bread. So we don't want to confuse that with the. Subject. Of the remembrance of the Lord and the breaking of bread. You agree with that, brother? Lundy. Possible that on account of so many of the Christians being slaves in that day and under persecution, that possibly the breaking of bread might be in the evening when they when they. Laborers of the day were over, and their duties were over. I have heard that remark, He continued till midnight. In his preaching, or at least his discourse. I do agree what you say that this eating was a separate thing

from the breaking bread, but I'm just wondering if the breaking of bread was always the first thing of the day whether well it seems that at the beginning the breaking of bread was in the evening. It was in the evening that the Lord appeared in the midst of the disciples on the first day of the week. That was the very best time of the day for those at that time and for those who are living in the day in which we're living. There's no question that the morning is the most. Proper or convenient time that we should come together? I don't think that. Fact that they came together as they did here in the evening, said any president that we're to follow and always to break bread in the evening, it might be a condition or even the day where it would be best. And I haven't attended meetings where they broke red in the afternoon. There's no scripture that would tell us definitely there's a certain hour and a certain time. We have become accustomed in our gatherings to remember the Lord in the morning. That's the best time of the day. On Lords Day. I believe it's very proper and consistent to continue going on remembering the Lord and to give the remembrance of the Lord.

Importance in connection with that day, I know of a system where they followed. Line of truth that we hold and breaking your bread and every every Sunday morning. I that's certain brothers I knew brought the emblems and they and they had the breaking of bread. But he told me one Sunday the preacher had taken the table and put it in the back of the room. He said to the man, what does this mean? The preacher? He said, oh, 11:00 is too good a time for a sermon. He said if you want to break bread while you can break bread in the evening. Wasn't long before he said. Oh, once. Months is often enough. Every Sunday is too often. Well, that's the way it's gone and Kristen doesn't. You can see the very fact that he didn't want it in the morning was because that was the very best time, as he said, the best time for a sermon. He wanted to preach the sermon and so. Eventually they're breaking a bread with just practically set aside. Well, we want to be careful that we don't in any way. Let it lose its importance by not giving it the very best time on the first day of the week. I think that is what we learned from this. As long as you mentioned that brother Barry the. The important thing that we're considering now is the breaking of bread itself and what it means and what it suggests to us now. It is not just a form. Christianity is not a set of forms. But he did make this request, this doing remembrance of me. And as we gather, it should be the result of what has been stored up during the week. In our occupation with Christ, because otherwise there won't be any praise. It's been sad, you know, that worship is the overflow of the heart. And it's on this occasion, as we remember him and his death, that the Spirit of God would produce that in our souls, the remembrance of his death. And what does this mean? Well, from 11 angle, it's his taking our place in substitution. He died for us. True that he introduced an entirely new sphere of blessing by doing so, and then that precious, precious theme that through his death, and that death alone, we've been brought into that relationship with the Father that man never knew before. Now all these things are precious subjects in themselves, and they do come to mind as we remember the Lord, because the Spirit of God opens to our hearts the true meaning of remembrance of His death. We know that myriads of souls are occupied with observing. A day, and possibly in Christendom generally there are two or three or four days that are observed and man thinks that he's done his duty. And what a low position to take in regard to the things of God, and especially after Christ has done what he has for us. We remember him in his death. We don't remember the circumstances of his death. That's not the thought. We may remember them, but that's not the thought. The thought is to remember him in his death. We find in the Song of Solomon at the very start of the book. That. The attraction is to his person and after that? As she sees herself as entirely black, the bride and then. We find the generous praise flowing out as the King sits at his table. But that's the result, is it not? First of being occupied with his person. And then realizing what we are in ourselves and what we would have been and where we would have been. Had he not died and taken our place in judgment and satisfied the claims of holy God? And so all this comes before us, I'm sure, either before the breaking of bread during the week or at the time I remember. Our dear brother Wallace is some you remember and used to be in Pasadena. He said it starts Saturday, not large day.

And I thought that was a real good remark. It starts Saturday. Because, you know, just to rush off to the breaking of bread, we're really not, or even to meetings like this, we're really not in tune, as it were, for the things of God. Is that right, Brother Brown? Yes, that was, however, a Jewish view, as the commencement of the day being the evening and the morning. Our point of view is the first day of the week. With a Christian point of view. Now I believe in. In Deuteronomy 26 will agree with the former remark you made a few minutes ago about how we lived during the week will affect how we come together on the first day of the week. And so when we speak of of Saturday night, in keeping with Brother Wallace's thoughts. If we dissipate it, and we care nothing for how sleepy we're going to be the next day, how slow it will be to rise in the morning and to have any kind of refreshment and be really ready to come before the Lord in a joyful spirit. Now I bring these thoughts before us because they ought to be practical. If our lives are geared with keeping the Lord always first before us. Why it will help us. But there is first needed a devotedness to Christ in order to have it that way. It I want to read the 1St 3 verses perhaps? Maybe another touch in Deuteronomy 26? Commencing verse one it shall be. When thou art come in unto thee land. Thank God to us, it is Christ in the glory. And the Lord, like thy God, giveth thee for an inheritance, and possesses it. And dwelleth therein, living and rejoicing in our new place. That thou shalt take of the fruit of all, the fruit of the earth or the land. Which thou shalt bring by thy hand, that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shall put it in a basket, and shall go unto thee place, which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there. Now another thought there in verse. 10 Now behold. I have brought. I wouldn't have anything to bring of the first fruits if I haven't been gathering. During the week. If my life has been out of accord, it's pretty hard to bring it in shape. All of them it all of a sudden Thursday morning to put off self judgment all through the week until the Lord's Day morning is not the Lord's mind. Well, the verse ends in verse 10 with worship. Before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, and also thy house. In this same verse. Well, another thought is over in verse 17. This day, to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, Christ. Are the ways that we should walk it isn't easy now for me to say this because. All of you know what poor, weak things we are, how little we live up to the ministry we might utter with our mouth. But we do know our hearts want, I trust, to live in the ways of Christ during the week, gathering fruit so that we come with something, a heart like a 23rd sum. My cup runneth over.

That verse you just read us. Andrew Harkin unto his voice. Yes. Now it isn't simply that we are taken up with the word. Is a deeper thought there than simply to be taken up with the word. It's to hearken to His voice. In other words, if it's his voice, he has something to say to me. I might be acquainted with a great deal of scripture and yet never hearken to his voice. I believe that's a thought that we should. Would. Give attention to. Because the Lord, you know, is he's not very far from us. We may not see him, but he's not very far from us and he has something to say to us. Continually, and when we read the word, we should be searching that there's a voice for us in it. Otherwise it will not affect our walk, right? Continuing and tied to what you say and looking at this verse again, to walk in his ways. Now in Haggai, He does not pat him on the back because they're gathered at the right place in Jerusalem. But he does say twice. Consider your ways now. If we really do that, it's profitable. It's something like taking inventory, but when you get to another verse in Jeremiah 7, first part of the chapter again, twice. Amend your ways. We can hear a lot of lovely things. Say a lot of lovely things by considering our ways, they ought to be the ways of Christ. We know that, but when it comes to amend your ways, are we not like the Ethiopian that can't change his skin nor the leopard is spots because the verse goes on to say because ye are accustomed our customary ways of life. We are slow to make any change. And all of our loveliest ministry has often a very, very little effect in any change in their lives. We say, oh, that was wonderful ministry, happy meetings and

all that, but how much do we really make application of the word to our own lives? Gives us a word there in this respect. It begins a new and emphatic principle. Beloved, Beloved. But it manifests the supreme authority of the Word of God. This is where we need to hold too fast too. Now truth is only understood as it's couched in the Word of God and we are talking about. This first day of the week. What are we going to say to those who inquire about it? Well, we on the authority of the word of God, we declare what we seek to by the grace of God, to practice. Now this has come up often among the latent Saints. Authority have you, Brother Smith, to teach us to break bread on the first day of the week. I said we have no authority apart from the word of God. Now that's the principle that really is is unfolded in in Deuteronomy 12, the authority of the word of God there the place is mentioned six times and it also gives a warning he a heed warning there in verse 13. Take heed to thyself that thou often not thy burnt offering in every place. That thou seest. Well, here's a great danger too. But the authority is the word of God, beloved, concerning this point. Concerning the. Baskets. That were mentioned gathering up the baskets of first proof I was thinking of connecting.

A thought there in the 23rd of Exodus, which we have sought to bring before some of the young and the verse is Exodus 23, verse 15. Thou shalt keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. I shall eat unleavened bread seven days. As I commanded thee at the time appointed in the month abith, for in it thou cameest out of Egypt, and none shall appear before me empty. I wondered if, Brother Brown, if there wasn't some connection between that principle. That we come, we gather up, we come with our little basketball, perhaps. The first fruits something of his praise, something that Christ is some way that Christ has filled our thoughts, our hearts. And then the warning is the exhortation is none shall appear before me empty. And as our brother London has already said. The praise really worship is the heart filled with Christ and a little thoughts of his love that flows out. Is that not so? And I believe it's a good exhortation, as we find here in Exodus. None shall appear before me empty. And I thought about this, meditated upon it. What a solemn thing to think that we are in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Solemn, isn't it? And having the thought of His death before us, shouldn't our hearts be filled with His thoughts? What a solemn thing to think that that Blessed One endured that suffering for us, and we come there empty. No praise, no thoughts of His love to us. It speaks to our hearts, does it not? Danger of of that incense or burnt offering, that is not really. Of the Spirit of God. That's condemned both the incense and the burnt offering. That is not really of God. So if we come and try to put on or try to make any kind of show of self. Oh how shameful. What awful awful natures we do have. But if we do or if we try to help make a program that is not waiting on and being led of the Holy Spirit when we come with self for out of the out of the way and waiting on the Lord mind, what wonderful. Grace, He still shows to us how undeserving we are. But God is able to just fill our hearts to overflowing and when he does it, I tell you we just it's a real rejoicing. So first fruits and we read they rejoice before the Lord and we read they greatly rejoiced. But this one little point, Brandon, what is the highest form of service Worship, I believe is the highest form of service. Now a preacher said to me, I'm I'd like to come among you people to preach the gospel. So I said, you know, worship is the highest form of service I've never seen him sent. Is in himself, it is true, brethren, that the highest form of service is worth. Is that right? Oh, I'm sorry that I didn't wait for you to finish right here in our chapter that you refer to. Notice please, in chapter 12 of Deuteronomy, we get the place in verse five, and by the way, we get this mentioned as to the place the Lord thy God shall choose. 21 Times in the book of Deuteronomy alone. 3 sevens. 21 Times to the place the Lord thy God shall choose. But what I want to do is call your attention to the very first thing is the next verse 6 and thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings. Now that's in keeping with your last utterance, dear brother, as to worship and the burnt offering is God's portion.

And that is Christ. And the work of Christ is a burnt offering, all of the excellencies, and that is real worship. Well, after that we get the rejoicing. In other words, let us come with our hearts. That's already been mentioned. Let us not leave our hearts at home. The rejoicing that's mentioned a number of times in the chapter, brethren, that as has been mentioned already, they came together to break bread. But there is no proper intelligent understanding of the significance of the coming together to break bread apart from the ministry of the Apostle Paul. He is the one who has given us by the Spirit of God the understanding as to the significance. The Lord Jesus instituted the beast. He established it for us on that night in which he was betrayed. But the apostle Paul. One who is given to us to explain it, to give us the order of it, to give us the significance of what we do. And we find that in this chapter, in this portion that we're reading, the Apostle Paul preached unto them, continued his speech to midnight, and then in the 11Th verse talked a long while, even till the break of day. It seems to my own soul that while I I I certainly wholeheartedly, wholeheartedly agree in the comment made concerning the breaking of bread in the 11Th verse. Yet there is a very precious encouragement reminder for us here and encouragement to see that God has given us in an outline that there will be that maintenance by God of the ministry of the apostle Paul and. The those who will receive, at least in some measure, that ministry until the break of day, until the Lords coming for us to take us home. And whether it's midnight, still there is the precious ministry of the Apostle Paul, that which would encourage us to recognize the fact that we don't belong to this scene at all and we belong to the glory. We find the comments made this morning about amending our way, and I place I trust in my own heart there's at least an acknowledgement of how necessary that is. But we find that in connection with the ministry of the apostle Paul, it says of him, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the moral. And it's that character of ministry, that which will lift our hearts toward the glory and give us that longing desire to depart, that we have nothing here in this world at all that will lead to the amending of our ways. We find in one John chapter 3 it speaks of every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure. That is that thought of that we are going to be conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. We find in First Thessalonians chapter 4, after the precious outline of the truth concerning the Lords coming for us, then in the 5th chapter he says to us, walk as children of light. That is the result that will follow, if the sense that we have in our hearts is. I'm ready to depart on the moral for today, the ministry of the Apostle Paul that will lift our hearts to heaven and ready to go there tomorrow. I wondered about that expression tomorrow. Brother John pondered about it for quite a while, because I didn't feel that that was quite the proper attitude for a Christian ready to depart on the Morrow. And reading this passage over, it seemed to me to present a very, very interesting little outline of the Christian testimony, shall I say? From its birth, its introduction, until the moment when we actually shall finally. Be called away. I see three things characterizing this original early testimony. They were in a place of complete separation up there in the third loft. That would be a dreadful place to be if it were not for the fact that the Lord was there and made it all worthwhile. Why be separate?

Oh, how privileged we are to know the joy of being. In the presence of the Lord Jesus, gladly we enjoy then a third law. Then the second thing was that they had an open ear, for, as you remarked, the ministry of the apostle Paul, and there was the breaking of bread. But then this statement, ready to depart on the moral, rather puzzles me. But it seems to me that when we go on with the story, we might see the purpose of it. That is, this happy picture was interrupted. It was interrupted by a fall at midnight. Back down to the level from which they had come forth and an interruption, I believe in the breaking of bread and an interruption, perhaps even in the ministry of the apostle Paul. You know, I picture this young man, Utica, sitting on the window. None of us are wide awake one moment. And sound asleep the next. If you've ever sat in a meeting and struggled like I have trying to stay awake, you'll hear the voice fade away. And then it'll come back and then it'll fade away again. First thing you know, you've missed quite a bit. You've fallen asleep. Well, there came this. Deaf ear to the ministry of the Apostle Paul

this fall back down to the level that had been left. And though what a sad picture this midnight really is. It says was taken out dead, and I suppose to natural observation. There came that time in the dark ages when the remembrance of the Lord, the ministry of Paul, the place of separation, seemed to have been lost completely. And I guess if you and I had looked at the whole thing, we would have said lifeless. Death. But Paul said trouble not yourselves. His life is yet in him. And I have no doubt that even through those darkest of dark ages, the eye of God could see real life there. But then, as you remark, the story is resumed. We find again when midnight is past the company in that third loft, that upper room. And I agree with Brother Barry's comment that undoubtedly this was just partaking of refreshment. Spirit of God does use the expression had broken bread. And it seems to me that it does present, perhaps to us a happy picture of a company characterized by the same three things, that same place of separation. And may we not say it carelessly or thoughtlessly? May we say it as though it were a personal challenge to every one of us. Are we valuing the separation that would find us delivered from this poor world and all that it boasts of? And the breaking of bread, shall I say, at least mentioned again the second time, and an open ear for the ministry of the apostle Paul. And this time, instead of saying ready to depart on the Morrow, it says until the break of day. Until the break of day, as though it were right now. Some years ago, someone asked, dear old brother beg. What if you here knew him well and knew how much he loved the Lord and loved the prospect of His coming Brother Beg, are you looking forward to the Lord's coming? No, perhaps you can just see the solemn, blunt way he said, Brother Beck, are you not looking forward to the Lords coming? No. Well, but I don't understand you. After you all you've told us about the Lords coming. You say you're not looking forward to it, Said why look forward to it? Why not expect it right now? I was at a wedding last week and if I'd gone to that bridegroom on a wedding day and said, well, you're looking forward to the wedding day. He would say, no, it's today. So, brethren, I just love this expression until the break of day. And again, perhaps there's a little hint here of the two days that the Spirit of God knew all about. Thought Brother Hale, that we might get a picture. Christian testimony starting out with Paul's ministry, which takes us to the third loft, which is ministry. It has to do with the 3rd heaven.

Very highest. Truth ever ministered connected with that scene of glory where Christ is now seated on high, and the Church, so to speak, fell into that stupidity. Of Utica's and went to sleep under Paul's ministry lost Paul's ministry and fellowed down from the high level where they were enjoying his ministry to the level of the world down to the street in fact, it's a known known and solemn fact that. The the truth of of being gathered on divine grounds to the Lord Jesus and the heavenly truth connected with it was lost for centuries. The toil goes down and reveals the young man and takes him up again to the third law. So could we see in that the recovery of the truth when? The Lords servant certain ones that got exercise as to what the church really was and began to search the word. They discovered that through Paul's ministry that just bought the church really is. And the very truth that had been abandoned and lost were were recovered, and much truth that the early Church possessed. Is recovered truth. And so that testimony goes on now until the break of day, in other words, until the Lord comes. Would you agree with that? Passage. I wondered about the many likes. They were on the third floor and there were many lights. I have thought of this as one thing that as well to consider, and that is that Christianity operates in the light, not in the darkness. It's the pure, undiluted light of God's Word, and whenever the light of God's Word is despised and neglected, you are, so to speak, putting out the light. For everything must be in keeping with the character of God's Holy Word. There's this point too, as to the many lights, and that is the moral elevation that accompanies the truth of being gathered the Lords name. Our ways have been brought before us, and we are not above becoming insensible like those who fell asleep here. All admonishes us in the Thistle to the Ephesians, where we get the highest truth of the Church brought out. A week from the Dallas sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine on thee. So there should be that moral elevation belonging to the gathered Saints that we see in the upper chamber here. Many lights, each one of us walking in the light of the truth that has been recovered, many lights morally elevated from that drudgery that's been the truth has been brought out of. I heard, Brother Hale, you bring out something on an address in Montreal one time about others that permitted that. Young men are sitting in the window to pull out of that window that there must have been carelessness on the part of some who are there. Maybe you could repeat something that you. I thought it was helpful. Well, I find it personally very, very challenging. That is, I have no doubt that when Utica sat in the window. There were those who saw him sit there and may well have nudged the person next to them and said that young man's going to have a fall if he's not careful. See where he sat down? That was a foolish place to sit. But there is no record of anyone moving over and saying Utica come and sit by me. Apparently he was just left alone to sit there on that window. And as I remarked, I'm sure he wasn't wide awake one moment and out the window the next. Again, I quite pictured. Maybe I shouldn't visualize so much, but I I picture Utica's. Nodding his head and somebody nudging again and saying, look at that young man, he's going to forward out the window. But no one makes a move to go over and put an arm around sleepy Utica and say, come and sit by me now, dear brethren, before going any farther with it, I believe.

But we just have to lay our hand upon our heart and say, Lord, help me never to see another Utica and pay no heed to the condition that that I see. And I'm sure that if Utica is finally falling out the window attracted quite a commotion. And I had been one of those who saw him sit there and felt that he was making a foolish choice if I had seen him get so drowsy and never made a move to help. I would have felt very responsible and very guilty. When I stood by that body down there on the level of the world. Oh dear brethren. Let us also be exercised, every one of us, that we may never resent a brother coming and putting his hand on our shoulder and Speaking of faithful words. Perhaps he's seen us headed toward the window. Perhaps he's seen us losing an ear for the ministry that would separate us from this world and attract our hearts to heaven. And let us, on the other hand, be faithful in putting that loving and restraining hand on the shoulder of another, that we may not be guilty of another's blood. Their father many years ago made this remark with regard to Utica, that it was Pauls ministry that put him to sleep, but it was also Pauls ministry that restored him. I believe that's what Brother Barry had in mind when he spoke of the those of an earlier age. Who have searched the Scripture and found the ministry of Paul, that which brings before us the blessed truth of being gathered to the Lord's name according to the truth we have of the one body. But I was thinking of what we have in First Corinthians 11. For Paul brings before us what he received from the Lord, as to the remembrance of the Lord in a collective way. But along with it there are also the warnings as to the consequences of falling asleep. But also in connection with that there is a blessing promise connected with it. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you to assure the Lord's death till He comes there is going to be. A clean place for those who seek to be in the dependence upon the Word of God and faithful to the Scriptures. There is a place where the Lord can be remembered according to His truth. A verse in Deuteronomy 25. In connection with Eudicus, I have often used this verse. Going in the meeting and maybe I was trying to be maybe too amusing perhaps. But I just call your attention to a principle here we find we'll see some young ones that. Choose to sit as far away from the front as possible. I'm making that pretty bald. And not that it applies to everybody that sits in the back seat, but here in the 25th of Deuteronomy, Amalek, I want to tell you Mr. Darby's. What he says Amalek signifies perhaps a little different than we generally look upon it. It's commonly thought that Amalek represents the flesh, but Mr. Darby says. Amalek. Signifies Satan's operations on the flesh. I have enjoyed that for many years, and here it is. Amalek. 25 Verse 18 How he met thee, by the way, and smote the hindermost. The Eudicus was as far away from the apostle as he could get. He wanted to get a little fresh air maybe, and take it easy. But his heart was not really going to be as close as possible and get all he could out of Pauls and ministry. You just the opposite. He smoked behind her, most of the even all that were

feeble behind the wind. Thou was fate and weary. I think we have a principle, brethren, to.

Want to be aroused? We mentioned about being awakened and we're living in a day when we need, I need, we all need awakening ministry, not smooth. That just simply makes out that we're living absolutely so wonderfully. Complacency that is Nets like Leticia, What's the matter with me? Well, I'm rich and increased with good. Have needed nothing like what's the object of what you say? That is a naughty spirit and it is an indication of how we are drifting this world as a snare. Now I believe this has its application to the subject at hand. If we fill our lives with. That which materialism produces. Around us to the extent that we have no time during the week for the things of Christ. Then we have already come under that snare, and we might go on with the forms. We might find our seat on Lord's Day morning, but there certainly will be an empty basket and. We we find that it's the little things of life, not the big things. That will deceive the heart, and that's why we're told in the Song of Solomon. To take the fox as the little foxes, it's the little things that build up. That causes the trouble and we allow ourselves to become so tied up with the little things that cares. We all have them, but there is a great many of them we make for ourselves we don't need at all. And it's those cares that tie us up to the point that we have no time for the things of Christ. I'm just going to make this statement when you and I get to heaven. How many of the things that surround us will we take with us? How many things that surround us? How many of the things that were occupied with today? Who we take with us, you know, this pride in the Song of Solomon could say, and that was at the very beginning of her exercises. My beloved is mine. Is there one thing in this world that you can say is mine? Oh, you have a new car? That's mine. Is it seven years, about the length of the life of it? Whatever you have, whatever you call yours today is not yours. It's only allowed you for a certain time and even the very breath you breathe. And now apply the principle of it. Who does it all belong to? Will it not be all handed back again and the Lord is going to give us what is really ours? As we have in Luke 16. Who shall give you that which is your own? What is that? It's just what we have of Christ and that's all. And when we when the bride says my beloved is mine, her whole heart was in it because she had been given at the early start of first love to realize. That there was nothing here that belonged to her. Everything. That was found in the bridegroom himself. Now we get away from this. We lose the sense of first love. And how do we lose it? By allowing ourselves to be taken up with the snares. The cares of this life, to the extent, the little things, the little foxes, the spoil, the vines, the fruit that should be found on those vines. And this is what hinders our spiritual growth. And that's why there's such long periods of silence as we come together. And I'm speaking to myself, dear brethren, as we come together to remember the Lord. I know it's a time when it isn't a time of a great deal of. Action necessary, but there should be some response from the heart to the Lord. Even as we sit quietly, there should be a response from the heart. As we come together to remember the Lord and if we really are engaged in what He has done for us and what He is to us at present. There will be a response, even though it may be quietly, not audibly, but still there will be a response to the Lord. Gospel in connection with Mary, we have that beautiful comment where she says, and the Lord says of her against the day of my burying hath she kept it? It seems to me there's a suggestion there to us that she had it laid by in store. She had it ready for the occasion when the occasion arose, to pour it out upon him. It's one of the most priceless things that you could find in the way of, of whiteness. There's not also a suggestion here, brethren, in that.

When it says about Eureka's being fallen into a deep sleep, at that point he hadn't had to fall from the third loft. He was still, can we say he was still positionally in the right place, He was still up in the third loft as far as simply occupying a position there, but he had fallen asleep. He was ready for a fall. And then it says, as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep. That is, the asleep started to have that effect of having him sink lower, and the result was then a fall, and it was fall of such a character that he was taken up dead. That is, to all outward appearances it would appear as if there was no life in him. It seems to my own soul that there is a lesson and a warning for us there, that Brother Brown has said we need the warnings of Scripture very so very much, and there is such a thing as being outwardly. Position that the Scripture, the Word of God authorizes or shows us to be the right one of outwardly being in that position and yet being so sound asleep that ministry by the Spirit has no effect. And the sleep begins to show itself in a sinking down. And finally a fall that can result in such a fall that those who know us would say there is no difference between him and one who's in the world. Church, the church's history until the truth of the one body was recovered in 1825. So we get the story of the churches history from the top loft way down in the world. Here we are in the same boat, the same position, but there's another thought that comes to me present the value of God's word. To call the last revelation of scripture, the scripture was made to the impossible. Second Timothy. Nothing was revealed after that. And here we have this question of the breaking of bread. In chapter 10 we get the table of the law, and in Chapter 11 we get the manner in which we remember the Lord. Where do we get this from? From the apostle Paul. From the apostle Paul, how we should thank God. Now there was life in this manuticus. God used the apostle Paul to bring through God's dear servants way back in 1825, this wonderful truth. It was for centuries absolutely unknown, unknown. But He used those men in those early days, our old brethren, to bring it out. The Spirit of God used them to bring out this wonderful truth. And it was Paul's ministry. Through the Apostle Paul's ministry. Well, now we come back to that very important matter that. We have this definite instruction concerning the breaking of bread, the order, and everything we get in false ministry. This is the value of the Word of God. Will be a miss to call your attention to how this chapter begins and ends. In the beginning verse one Paul called his ministry gathers and draws. His disciples. And he did it in love. He embraces them. And the chapter ends in the response on their part where they too embraced him, as it were, by their kissing him. And they just, their hearts had been won by him and his ministry, his life. Oh, there was something there that they knew they would miss. When he would be taken from them? Let us sow value the ministry, the heavenly ministry of the Apostle Paul. Who God? Who the Lord, the ascended Lord has given gifts unto men, but all how he's given a wonderful gift?

In that humble man that proud Cedars all of Tarsus, the axe was laid at the root of his of that tree, and he could say, though I be nothing 2nd Corinthians 12A great vast principle that. None of us have learned too well. Have we though? I be nothing. But in Colossians 311 Christ is everything. Now that literal Greek verify yes justifies that Christ is everything. Now it shows in this chapter. Then in verse four, there were those who accompanied him. Ought to be in Paul's company is worth much. And in Second Timothy chapter 2 or No no. Yes, chapter 2, it speaks there, the apostle says. Consider what I say now. Paul, the great apostle, who gives us 14 epistles. Heavenly truth, 100 chapters. He says they are considered what I say. Dear young Christians and all of us, we need. To really value all that, God has used the apostle Paul to give us his ministry, heavenly ministry, so that we are looked upon and our brethren partakers of the heavenly calling and we have the responsibility to walk worthy of this heavenly calling. Ephesians 4 verse one. Well, I just wanted to call your attention to it begins with love and it produces love. Like it says in the Old Testament, God loves Solomon. It also says that Solomon loved the Lord well. God's love produces the love that responds to it.

Vestal Conference: 2003, Acts 20:25-33

Reading

Please go to me last day. Or upstairs, turn off the standard. Come on. Give me a minute to talk to me afterwards and then I'm on the phone tomorrow. I've been using it. Nsnoise. Uh. Blessed God, our Father. We thank Thee for the lines of this little hymn we've been singing. We go to meet the Savior, His glorious face, to see what manner of behavior in all our ways with Thee. Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for that glorious truth, that one day soon we will look into Thy blessed face and see Thee and praise Thee in a manner that is be pleasing to Thee. For now, Lord, Thou knowest our prayers are checkered with self. Many times things brought in that are not according to Thy mind. We know these things, Lord, but we just look forward to that day when we see Thee. We see Thy blessed face and we hear Thy voice. We've heard it now in the Word, but what a day that will be when we hear Thy voice there in the glory and look into Thy blessed face. To see that one. And we know then that voice will be a voice of love and kindness and grace and mercy. We thank Thee, precious Savior, for that glorious thought that soon, soon we will be with Thee in glory. So we are to Thee now, while we're here, we think of these many, uh, things that we have in Thy word, some thoughts perhaps brought out even today. We just asked thy blessing, Lord, now upon a little time together, for we know it's a limited time. Time is short, but we know, Lord, that that day is soon, far near, soon near to come. The day when we will hear the shout, and be caught up to meet thee in the air.

So we thank you now as we look to Thee for the portion of Thy word that is before us, that we may be encouraged and built up and edified as we wait for thy return. Lord Jesus, all in thy precious and in thy worthy name, Amen. Amen. Acts Chapter 20. Verse 25. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God. Shall see my face no more. Therefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take he therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn. Everyone night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yeah, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things how that's so laboring. You ought to support the weak. And to remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said it is more blessed to give than to receive. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with the mall, and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him. Souring most of all for the words which you speak. That they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship. Can you imagine the chill that must have gone through their hearts as they heard these words? Paul was loved by them. And he loved them and they loved him. And to hear that this one who had gone about. I believe faithfully proclaiming the Kingdom. Now they were not going to see his face again. We were on the way up yesterday. We were driving up in my. My wife remarked to me about some dear and beloved faces that. We were used to seeing at these meetings. And. It brought tears to our eyes to think about it. Men who faithfully brought the word of God before us. I don't want to unduly praise anyone, but we were thinking of Gordon and Norman Berry. John Curry and there's probably others we didn't think of, but those we thought of. And. Yes. What is it that should concern us? I don't want to jump ahead too much, but down at the end of the chapter it says they were specially pained by those words. What Paul brought before them in the verses in between was. That some very tragic things were going to happen with regard to the testimony. Both from outside and from within. That's what should have consumed their art. I don't think it's wrong that they should feel the the pain of not seeing Paul again. But the more serious thing? Because God raises up others as we go along, and each one. In his generation serves the Lord. And they fall on sleep. Thank God fills in the ranks, so to speak.

I don't mean to say that there will ever be. Another exact. Gordon Hayhoe. There'll never be another. JND. They'll never be another Norman Berry, exactly like our brother, but the Lord raises each one up for his generation, doesn't he? But what is most painful in the verses that intervene? And that we need to pay attention to is that there's a flock. That needs caring for, that is precious to the Lord. Precious to the Lord. And. Paul, first of all says I'm clean of the of the blood. Makes one think of the verses in Ezekiel. In connection with the. Raising up of a watchman to. Announced that there was judgment coming. And it talks about the responsibility of sounding the trumpet and if it was not sounded. That of blood would be upon the person's. Hands that. That had that responsibility and didn't do it. Paul could say. I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. I think that's wonderful. And uh. We tend to be specialists sometimes. I know the Lord has given different gifts and different emphasis to different ministries. But each one who has a responsibility among the people of God has a responsibility to declare all the council of God. Not to hold anything back that is profitable. That's why Paul could say. A minister of your blood. It's a tremendous responsibility to take a place of leadership among God's people, and This is why it was such a important thing that Paul could declare himself innocent of their blood because he didn't lead the people of God astray. Was thinking that when you mentioned Brother **** that man who wrote those books left behind, that he feels badly that some drew the inference that you could be saved after the rapture, that you're glad that there's personal repentance there. But he bears a terrible responsibility for all of the people that believe those books. And he did not declare the counsel of God and misled the people of God into error. And so I believe that it's a very important thing that Paul here is one who took the lead among God's people. Could say that he had been faithful in communicating the truth of God. A teacher shouldn't be judged by what they meant to say, but by what they said. I think that's one of the blessings of the reading meeting in a day of weakness as one may say something and not be exactly right in what they say or balance and it's if the desire is to communicate the truth of God will be glad to be corrected. Because we don't want to leave a wrong impression as to the truth of God. But when books are published and things are broadcast and the people of God are brought into real error. It's not just the servant that is brought in to reproach, but is the Lord when people say the word of God says this. Then, and the people of God follow them, after a while they start to scratch their heads and say, well, the Bible, you can't make any sense of it. Because this person told me the Lord was going to come in 1984. And this person told me that that at the year 2000 there was going to be disaster. And this person told me this. And people are carried about by every wind of doctrine and the slate of men. And after a while they just get burned out. It's not to excuse the sheep. Because the sheep know the shepherd's voice. But there is a tremendous responsibility. That the apostle Paul felt in connection with taking a place of leadership among God's people.

And I believe that This is why he was charging the elders at Ephesus, that the elders too were responsible because we often take very great care and we ought to rebuke non elder sharply but entreat him as a father. But I think there needs to be great. Paul was greatly concerned not just about the these ones, but he was concerned about the sheep that were going to be affected by their actions. And we need, there needs to be care in the House of God and this is what he's bringing before them. Care in the House of God is to the effect upon the sheep of these things. Heresy is to choose. And that's what the word means. And so when I was young, somebody gave me a book. Decide what you believe. And so you're to work through it and see what your position was on a variety of subjects. But that's really training a person to be a

heretic. The truth of God stands together. The whole council of God stands together. And I may not understand it all, I may not know it all. I may not walk in all of it. I shouldn't say may I don't. But I am in a place, the Assembly of God, where the truth of God is maintained, and if I am faithful to the Lord, I'm going to learn the truth of God in that place. When a man specializes in a truth, he rarely gets the truth he specializes in, right? It's interesting. Have you ever met anybody that claimed to be meat on the ground of, uh, what happened at Pentecost? They don't understand what the baptism of the Spirit is. Ever claimed to meet somebody who meets on a particular mode of baptism? They don't understand what baptism is and what it does. You have to meet on somebody who meets on the ground of what church government is. They don't understand church government in the Scripture. God has seen to it that man rarely specialized, gets clear the doctrine that I met many believers and they're clear on a lot of things, but they're rarely clear on the doctrine they specialize in. So that's why Paul made it so clear that he would not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. And thus receipt re keep himself guiltless from their blood. Because if I mislead somebody. I'm really responsible for where I lead them. There's a little expression at the beginning of verse 28 that we don't want to overlook. I very much appreciate what you had to say, uh, Neil, about the, the responsibility of leadership, but there is something introduced before leadership. Take heed to what? Yourselves. Take heed to yourself. Pay attention to yourselves. One, uh. Might aspire to leadership, and I think it's important to notice here that it's the Holy Spirit that sent them as leaders, as overseers. In the to shepherd the Assembly of God. It isn't that I decided to do it. I know there's a sense in which, uh, and Timothy, it's talks about a man aspiring to exercise ownership, uh, over, uh, seership or oversight. I guess our normal translation says their desire is the office of a Bishop. Maintaining the ecclesiastical umm terms of the the time, but. It's the Holy Spirit that sets one in that position of responsibility. And what is it that is so important in doing in in considering one's responsibility in that? That would be sure and shepherd the flock of God that said right away after what I called attention to, but it first says take heed therefore to yourself, to yourself. How I walk, what I do, what I say, how I knit. There's no sense in talking about shepherding the people of God. If I don't pay attention to my own walk, my own responsibility.

Told Timothy the same thing, didn't he? First Timothy 4 and verse 16. Take heed unto thyself, and secondly unto the doctrine, continuing them. For in doing this thou shalt both saved thyself. And then that here they. Even Paul admitted, didn't he, the possibility that he himself should be a castaway. And so that's the thought of save yourself. Paul even admitted himself that having been the vessel to deliver this truth, that he might make disaster of his life. There's a little pamphlet there, Wrecks on the Burma Road, and there have been many. That's still in print now do you know I think it Mark had some copies of it here on the table. I don't know. I'm glad to hear that because I would like to recommend when I before. Where I was gathered, in fact, I remember coming across that little pamphlet and reading it and re reading it. And rereading it. Because it is a tremendous help and I wanna suggest if there's any young people here that have not read an older ones too, get a hold of that pamphlet. It's written by Brother Willis as a result of it. Trippy made over the the famous Burma Road and the wreck that he saw along the Burma Rd. in the spiritual lessons from those wrecks. I'm glad to hear it's available. Mark, how many do you have? Three or four, you get up there fast and get them before somebody else gets it. But I'm sure there's more available somewhere. And it's not like maybe it's something we can reprint, but what a lesson to my own soul. I hope I've paid attention to it. But when some of those things we need to remind ourselves again and again about. We have so much. A fact the one man ministry that I'd just like to draw attention to something in this first. To feed the floor, to feed the Church of God, which he had purchased with his own blood. That in Ephesians where it talks about the gifts given to the church. Pastors and teachers are joined together. There's some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors teachers. It's almost hyphenated because a lot of people want a pastor and now they call it counseling. But you can't pastor without teaching. How you can teach, perhaps without pastoring, but you can't pastor without sound teaching. And so if there's not clear teaching set before the Saint of God, we're going to lead a person. A person is gonna be LED, but they're gonna be LED in the wrong direction. The Lord values his flock and. Oh careful, we should be. It doesn't say here to rule over the flock, it says to feed them. And uh, that's the important thing, isn't it? Then they grow, then they get strong, and then they fall along the Lord with the with the Lord. We got the same thought in Peter, don't we? These are ******* gross. Watch the Commission to be there before He, before he went to the glory to feed the Lamb. I noticed that J&D translation says shepherd the flock, and I've thought about that a little bit, that it's a lot more than just feeding too, isn't it? There's a lot of care and we have a brother in our assembly who worked on his grandfather's farm with sheep and he can tell you some of the things that they had to do. We often enjoy remarks that Paul Thomas makes about, uh, different aspects of shepherding sheep. But, uh, it's a lot more than just here's something to eat. It's a really a care for all the needs, isn't it? Now, uh. Shepherd and pastor is the same word, isn't it? Alright, alright, say the same word, shepherding and pestering.

Well, doesn't this in itself, besides any other scriptures, show us that God did not have a pastor in the church in Ephesus? Sometimes some of the footnotes in Bibles will say Timothy was the pastor of the church in Ephesus. It aggravates me to read that footnote because first of all, it's not a scriptural footnote, and secondly, it goes against the teaching of right here. Here we're the pastors of the assembly in Ephesus, those who shepherded the assembly. In Ephesians, Paul didn't say, Come on over here, Timothy, I have a special thing to say to you. He called all the elders together, didn't he? And he pointed out that the Holy Spirit had made them, not the denomination or the board or the OR the elders or whatever. Man has set up systems that are so contrary to the Word of God. And if they'd only read, if we'd only read carefully. God has protection against those wrong ideas right here in his Word. Like to add this thought with regard to that. I believe, and it's a personal exercise that I'll state and be corrected by my brethren. For a long time now I felt that in reacting against. The. Notion of appointed formal elders. Which we have no authority for. Only an apostle or a delegate of an apostle had that authority. We have gone too far. And not recognizing that the Holy Spirit does raise up people as overseers, and in First Thessalonians 5 it tells us to recognize them, that is. To realize that the Lord has put someone in that position and is to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. It's not an easy thing. And, uh, the work the we've gotten so, umm. So enamored with the idea of. Of democracy in this country and in Canada probably too, that we have forgotten that the Church of God is not a democracy. There is leadership. There is responsible leadership and there is the the responsibility for us to submit not ruling, not who was it? Was it you ruled that said didn't say ruling over them. Somebody did it here anyway, it doesn't matter, but it was an important point. Doesn't talk about ruling. Ruling is not the thought. The thought is example and and admonition. But there is leadership. And let's be careful we do not re reject the idea of that. And have this idea of a democracy among the people of God that is totally foreign to Scripture. Yes, I've heard it said even in general meetings, where are you going to find men that are fit to do the work of overseers? And I thought I know all kinds of them. There are those that are fit to do the work. And Paul told to Titus, he gave Titus to ordained elders and it was increased. And we know what the natural characteristics of the tree creeks were. They were slow bellies, evil beasts and lazy gluttons. The word of God says. And yet there were those there that could be found that were fit the qualifications to do that work and its great mischief when those take up the work of God on themselves. It's the Holy Ghost. And so that that puts a person fits a person and qualifies a person to do that work to take oversight in the House of God. And we see the seriousness of it in connection with Paul that he counted himself not guilty of their blood because he had been faithful and when those. Take up that work and they're not. It causes mischief. Now, it's true that there's no authority to ordain elders or pastors or anything else. I remember when Brother Dan Anderson used to say before he was

gathered to the Lord's name, he was an ordained minister. He said they laid their empty hands on my empty head. And what he meant was that they had no authority to order. I have no authority to ordain anybody to anything, nor does anybody else in this room.

And one who may submit to such a thing really doesn't know the mind of God. But there are qualifications that would fit a man for this work. And just because there may be an, a, an assembly, none that are apparently qualified to do that work, then there can be a humble looking to the Lord as to what to do. We still have the word of God. But there were those that were fit for that work and a recognition of the foes against the assembly because there were two types of foes that were to come. Wolves that serve their own bellies. And then there were those that wanted to steal a sheep and they were really serving their, so to speak, their wallets. They wanted a following. And there are those that come in and they don't really care what happens to the sheep. And, uh, they, they pick on the weak and they devour them. And we've seen that. And there are those that really do care what happened to the sheep because they want the sheep intact. A sheep thief doesn't want the sheep alive and well so that he can keep them. And so there were the two. And so Romans said they served their own bellies. That there are ones that really are just like wolves. It's the character of a wolf. They're hungry and they want to feed themselves. And they really don't care about the sheep of God at all. There are those that do care about the sheep, but they want the sheep following them. But a true pastor will have the sheep follow the Lord. Peter had to say in his first epistle of Peter in the 5th chapter the elders verse one, the elders which are among you. I exhort Paul was exhorting the elders of Ephesus, wasn't he? And Peter here says who am also an elder? And a witness of the sufferings of Christ. And also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God. Feed them. Feed the flock of God. Which is among you taking the oversight thereof? Not by constraint, not because it's you have to something you have to do. I've got to do this, so I've got to do it, but not by constraint. But willingly. And for not for filthy lucre, not for pay, not because I'm going to get some a check out of it. But of a ready mind. And I'll tell you that that's good advice that Peter gives here. And though we Paul did the same similar thing to those at at Ephesus, when he could say, take heed, therefore in verse 28, take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost have made you overseers. To feed the Church of God, which he had purchased with the blood of his own beautiful. So those things are good, whether it be Peter, whether it be Paul. Paul, of course, was the one to the Church of God. I was thinking when Neil was talking about. Lack of qualification, that. I remember a time and I it's to my shame. Perhaps I should repeat this, but it might encourage someone. There was a time when some of us in our assembly in Chatham, in the days when Brother Alan Hadley was still alive and her brother's care meeting, suddenly realized that none of us. We're totally qualified for oversight. None. None of us. We got down on our knees and cried to the Lord about it. I'll never forget that. He said Lord, the work needs to be done. And we're not qualified. And I believe in that case where there's a humbling before the Lord that He gives grace. And. There was a a sense in all of our souls that the Lord would give grace and help in doing it. He isn't going to leave the flock without.

Care. After a wolf has been among the flock, you see the ravages of it. You see what a wolf does after he's been in among a flock of sheep, and I think 1 great thing that happens is that people often become hard on the shepherd in dealing with wolves. But it's too late after the damage is done. And it takes a certain courage to face a wolf. I mean, these are very vivid pictures that the Spirit of God brings before us. And we look afterwards and we say, wow, look what happened. Well, where was I with respect to the one who stood up to the wolf? Was I encouraging him, helping him, submitting him to him? Or was I nattering about how he was handling the wolf? And the the IT spoke, Brother Charles, when you read that verse about a ready mind, it speaks about men speaking perverse things. The children learn verses in Sunday school and to be perverse as to go against truth that I know. And you'll find that not everybody who is in error is going against known truth. But her brother once asked a minister who taught that she could be saved and lost. He said, Do you really believe that yourself? He said no, but it's the only way I can keep my flock in line. It's the only way I can keep my flock in line. He knew that people couldn't be saved and lost, but he taught that to keep his flock in line. And very often you'll find there's perversity connected with the truth. And again, I repeat what I said this morning in connection with geographies. Geographies was not somebody in the assembly who was careful in reception. He said he received a thought. Let's read it. And because this Scripture is often abused. To insinuate that somebody who is careful at a time of reception is being a geographies. But let's, uh, look at what it exactly says. The character of this man in John's third epistle in verse 9. I wrote on to the Church but geographies who loveth to have the preeminence among them. Receiveth them not. No, he says. He receiveth us not. That was the apostle. And that's perversity. A man will take up a doctrine and you see why is it some of the foolish doctrines people have caused divisions over? Among the people of God. On atonement or? For the blood of Christ, where the blood of Christ came. Came in or foolish things which people get attached to and stubbornly attached to, and they form a following around a particular little doctrine, not sparing the flock of God, but just coming in. They oppose themselves to the apostles doctrine. And what is the motive? It tells us because He loves the preeminence. Romans says they love, they serve their own bellies. And so naturally, uh, we shouldn't be suspicious of people's motives, but the word of God reveals what those motives are. And so that's why there had to be that ready mind. And if we stand for the truth of God, then we're going to protect the people of God. I was struck with Abishai wanted to take off shimmy eye's head when he railed against David, but David had told him how to deal with Saul. He, he said take away his spear and his crews of water. That was to take away Saul's means of fighting and his source of refreshment. David really fell into error and he had to apologize for it because he ripped a piece of Saul's garment off. And we want to do that. Sometimes you want to attack a person's testimony. But uh, he really gave good advice to him was to take away his fears, means of fighting and his means of refreshment. But this is what a perverse man does, is he opposes the apostles doctrine and he uses that to form a party around himself. And really almost any doctrine will do. For the perverse man. And you'll you'll meet people like that. They'll raise an argument, and then they'll discard that argument and pick up another one. And pick up another one, and another one and another one. And then you realize that the point is not that they are taking a moral stand or a stand as the principle, but they're just picking up truths and throwing them away to accomplish an end, a perverse end. That's what perversity is. Actually, Neil, I noticed it says in J&D's translation Perverted thing. Perverted things I don't mean to take away at all from the idea of perverseness about it, but it's just to give a little twist or something to turn it around, to serve the end of drawing the disciples away.

After themselves. That's key here, isn't it? After themselves, they want a following. It's happened so often. A man rises up. And he puts a little twist on something. Perverts it in order to draw away. The disciples. The disciple, not just the little following, but he wants all the disciples after himself, after himself. So. That ends up sometimes in some tragic. Visions. And afterwards the brethren who follow him. End up being known by his name. They've been drawn away after. Him not after the Lord, the real servant of Christ. Draws the sheep after Christ. And that's something that we need to be alert to as we listen to ministry and hear our brother speak. Who is he drawing away the disciples to Christ? Or himself. And I was thinking of Absalom. It says He stole the hearts of the people of his, of of the children of Israel. He stole their hearts. When that news came to David. It must have been an awful thing for him to realize that his son had done that. That absolute spirit is so quick to arise where one sees a need among the people of God. Absalom said. See, there's no one appointed by the king to hear your matters. Oh, I wish I was there. I'd take care of it. And in that manner he stole the hearts of the children of Israel. What wonder did David then

went up weeping as he went, and all the people weeping? I believe the heart of the Lord weeps over that. It's true to say that the, uh, grievous wolves some or the coming from inside of the Lord's people. Certainly God never caused one of his own a wolf. That I know of. They're entering in. Remember, they're not there, they enter in. CHM made a. Quite a statement, he said. That idolatry, he said, is not. He doesn't see idolatry as something flooding in among the Saints of God. He said it's just one little thing at a time that comes in and robs him of this point. At that point, it's just one little thing at a time. It's a little foxes that spoil the tender vines, and I believe that was so in those early days. And in our past 10 years too, some little things come in and they've taken hold of it and made a doctrine of it. And deceive the Saints of God. The question as to whether, and I appreciate what you would say, I never call one that I knew to be a brother a wolf. But the answer to that question in a certain sense is irrelevant because the effect he's really talking is really presenting a picture to us here. And it's like in Second Timothy, we're speaking about vessels to dishonor. The the quality of the vessel, whether it's a crystal vase or a rusty tin can is irrelevant. It is what is in that vessel. And he's really speaking about the effect of one that may come into the assembly and ravage. And some very obviously are just plain trouble makers. And they bear the character of a wolf, and brethren shouldn't be shy about dealing with that. There are others that are more subtle, and it's not apparent that they're trying to draw away disciples after themselves, but they manifest themselves by being perverse, and that is.

That they're going against known truth and you quickly reveal, say, how do you tell a pure heart? A pure heart isn't somebody who knows everything. What a pure heart is when you show them a scripture that their heart is inclined about of that scripture. What a perverts man is one who picks up and uses principles of scripture and discards them as tools for a particular cause. You may not be completely apparent as to what the cause is, but they pick them up and and discard them Willy nilly, if you may put it that way. And so I think it's really the picture here. And I think we sometimes trouble ourselves by trying to wonder whether these ones are real believers or not. And we say, well, no, he's not a wolf, he's a real believer. In a certain sense it's irrelevant because there are those that come in and cause untold damage to the people of God, just like the way a wolf does in a pack of sheep. And you have to leave that question with the Lord as to whether they're really the Lords or not. I'm sure there's, there's, uh, important aspect of that, uh, brother Neil, but I think basically what brother John said is true of that passing these people enter in and don't spare the flock, whoever they are. And I think in general the we understand that people who do that are not the Lord. The wolf cometh not but to kill and the steal. And to destroy, was that what kind of the thought you had, brother John? I was thinking of John 10 and also Jude verse 4 where it says certain men crept in unawares and ungodly men turning the grace of God of the service. We have to be watching out to those kind of things, don't we? In, uh, Jeremiah 15. I was reading a couple of verses there. Very important thing to see and I think Paul infers that here when he says to take heed to thyself and sober in Jeremiah 15. I'll just read verses 15 and 16. Oh, Lord, thou knowest. Remember Me and visit me. And revenge me of my persecutors, take me not away in thy long-suffering. Know that for thy sake. I have suffered rebuke, Jeremiah. Then notice 16 Thy words were found. And I didn't eat them. And they were unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart. For I am called by thy name, O Lord, God of hosts, and so on. And we find if we followed this out, we would find there's an answer here. He gets an answer for this too, but I just thought of it in connection with. This chapter that we have here, taking heed to thyself, how do we do that? Ingest the word of God, make it good to our souls first, then it can go out to others. If I don't know what God is telling me, how can I tell you? So it's interesting thing, isn't it, to see. Jeremiah could say, thy words were found, and I did eat them. Have you or I ate eaten of the word of God? Do we make it our own? Do we assimilate this? Do we we make it as we read it? Is it? Is it meant for me? Do I use it as that which is given to me? I should, and in that way I can be a help to others. In connection with this, umm. Next first, uh, 31 Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone of you night and day with tears. My brother was commenting on the difference between Paul's tears and the elders tears. They were crying because they wouldn't see Paul anymore. But Paul was crying because of these things that he saw coming in and he was warning them. And we often don't like to be warned about things. Look at the the book of Zechariah in the first chapter. And we don't like and I told you so attitude either. But just speaking from, well, we'll read it in Zechariah chapter one.

And from verse three, therefore say thou unto them. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye unto me. Saith the Lord of Hosts, And I will turn on to you, saith the Lord of Hosts. Be not as your Father's, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, turning now from your evil ways and from your evil doings. But they did not hear or hearken unto me, saith the Lord your Father's. Where are they? And the prophets? Do they live forever but my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants, the prophets? Did they not take hold of your Father's? And they returned and said, like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath He dealt with us. So there is a sense in which Paul warned them beforehand, but then the Spirit of God would turn them back and say, you know, it's just just exactly what Paul warned them happened. And so we need to heed and we need to think back when there's been a difficulty. Was I listening to the warnings? Were we listening in the assembly to the warnings that came of difficulties that were going to come? We have to look back and say, well, just as we were warned, it happened, and so we can take heed to those warnings. But that's really what Brother Little was reading in Jeremiah was that he commanded them to the word of. God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. So if we really feed on the word of God. There were going to be strengthened and our thoughts are going to be formed by the word of God and we're going to be protected from this sort of thing but. We often have to say I was told and I didn't listen. The person tells us something, they may be mistaken, but when the apostle Paul said this, that grievous wolves would enter in among you, not sparing the flock, he said that by inspiration, uh. He didn't conjure this out of his own mind any more than did Moses in the Old Testament. Remember that? Where he spoke of what would befall the people of God thereafter his departure in Deuteronomy. Chapter 31. And verse 29, Moses says these words for I know that after my death, very similar words to the apostle Paul uses. I know that after my death he will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because evil to evil in the sight of the Lord, to be broken to anger and so forth. How did Moses know that by any special insight that he had known God revealed to Moses. Exactly what would be the latter end of the people of Israel, just like the Apostle Paul? Have revealed to him the, the future of the assembly. I mean, they would tell you today that there's such a thing as Apostolic succession. Well, the only thing that the apostle Paul tells us here is going to succeed the apostles as grievous wolves. That's what he said would come in amongst the people of God. It's not a very good prospectus, is it, President? I mean, suppose you want to invest in the stock of a corporation. You would first, uh, obtain a prospectus of that corporation and see if it looks good. If this company has good prospects and if it does, why maybe you'd invest in it. Uh, but here's the prospects for the assembly. It doesn't look very good, does it? It would rather deteriorate instead of getting better after the apostles. Verse 31 Says that remember that by a space of three years have ceased, not blown into everyone's knife, and they were tears. If you can turn the Hebrew after 13. 277 Remember him, which has the rule over you. Wilson City, the Word of God. They followed subsidiaries against the third on September 16th. Notice that there's there's no commending of them to the councils or to the. Uh, Magisterium of the Church. To the. Synods. To even to decrease. But to God. And the word of His grace. Well, I think that's so important and.

We are not commended. As much as I appreciate and and value the ministry of our brethren of the 19th century, we're not commended to that. We're commended to the Word of God. Any ministry that we receive must be tested. Our brother Dave Imbo set out at the Des Moines meetings that the touchstone is this book, the Word of God. It's so important to keep that before us. I, uh, mentioned that there is a tendency. Sometimes to have a syndrome called. The CW 21 Syndrome. That everything is decided on what's in the collected writing. That isn't how we decide things. No, don't, don't go back and say Brother **** doesn't appreciate the this the collected writings. I do. I have them referred to them and I enjoy them. But that's not the touchstone. The touchstone is the word of his grace, isn't it? It's God's precious word and the moment we descend from that. To use the words of. One of the old writers who said were satisfied with the bucket instead of with a fountain. It is implied with the bucket instead of the fountain. I do believe, though, that the verse that Brother Davignon pointed out to us in Hebrews 13 and seven is very important and I'd like to call attention to it. I do want to say this about The CW 21 syndrome. I think we are more afflicted with The CW Volume 00 lethargy, and I want to encourage you young people to read the ministry. I do realize that ministry has been used in an abused way. But it's more of the volume 00, page 00 lethargy that we have then overuse made of ministry. But I I believe the verse that you read here is very important, brother, because in connection with this whole subject, because we were talking about oversight. And in Hebrews 13 and verse seven it says, Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God. It is the Word of God whose faith follow considering the end of their conversation or their way of life. So there are two things here. So there's the Word of God ministered, and there's the end of the pathway of the one who ministered that word. And we're to consider that we consider that an engineer builds a bridge and you look back over and you see what's his track record and you read ministry And the word of God instructs us to consider what was the end of those that wrote that ministry. We have divine instruction. This is the word of God. And it's not to make us critical, but if a man may minister the truth and make disaster himself at the end of his pathway doesn't say reject everything that he wrote. But you're to consider that fact. We're to get the truth from those that walked in it and not only walked in it when they were living in it, but as Paul who finished his course, as we were saying later, in a faithful way. There's too much taking up and natural things. Our brother was talking. Umm, about investing. I don't invest, but talking. People are very careful about their money and they're very careful about their health and so on, but they're not very careful about who they read and what the end of their conversation was. And it's a very important thing. We're to remember that and consider it. I think it's especially telling that this comes up in Hebrews, because in Hebrews we don't have. The Apostle Paul is the writer, but we have Jesus as the apostle in Hebrews. He's the author and finisher of faith. He's the captain of salvation. And so how does he resume at the end of the epistle? He says consider them that have the rule over you and were to consider the end of their conversation or their way of life. And if a man may have taught everything right, then you're you're you're perfectly right and entitled and instructed to consider how he ended his pathway with respect to how he worked out that doctrine in his own life. This portion of the 20th chapter that we're discussing right now is very similar to Haggai chapter 2, isn't it? Well known verses, but in Haggai chapter 2 you see how the remnant era is encouraged.

And, uh, and what are they to take urge Notice three things there in verse, the end of verse 4, Peggy I chapter 2, the end of verse four, I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts. The Lord's friends would be with them. We have that today, Brevin, just as the remnant did then. And then in the next verse five, according to the word that I covenanted with you, we have the word of God in our laps. Don't we breath in today? Same as the remnant then had the word of God that they could consult. And then lastly, the end of verse 5. So my spirit that should be capital S incidentally, so my spirit remains among you, a little different today and better than then the Spirit was made among them. But today the Spirit of God indwells us. We have these three things to encourage us through one faithfully. Who are the sanctified that are mentioned at the end of verse 32? Is this a special class as the UMM as the Wesleyan taught and teach? Or is it? A. Something else? The sanctified to give us an inheritance among the sanctified. Every believer, every blood bought child of God. The word sanctified means set apart, set apart. And in a very special way, every believer has been set apart. For God, when one becomes one of the sanctified by believing in the gospel, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as one Savior, he then is one of the sanctified. It's not a class among the people of God is. In the next verse, the next verse there. Verse 33 shows how the grace of God wrought in the apostles heart, because if there was one thing in which he he failed before, it was that he he was covetous. You see that in Romans 7, seven. I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet. He felt that that that slew him. You know it was just almost as natural as breathing to covet. What does Paul say here? By the grace of God? 'Cause now I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Uh, brethren, if we're not covetous, I don't think it's something that you've attained to it. It's the grace of God operative in your heart. And uh, Samuel said that too at the end of his life. Remember, he, he lays before the people, He says, who of you can accuse me of taking any man's ox or sheep or cattle? He, he was not a covetous man. He said a good example. Too bad his sons didn't follow in the examples that their father said. And isn't it true rube that the umm. Coveting of things has led to disaster in the ministry of so many good people. They they begin to. Want what the people of God have? There's a wonderful verse where Paul says I don't want yours, I want you. I don't want what you have, I want you. And that's the main motive of a true minister, isn't it? Who wants the not what the people have, but he wants them themselves to go on for Christ. And I. They've been distressed to see how easily covetousness arises in our hearts. But do we want the Saints? Is that what we want? We want them. We want to see them go on for God. 166 or. Lord Alhamdulillah.

Nsnoise. Nsnoise. Nsnoise. Our blessed God and our Father, we thank Thee that we have been. They will do gather together again this afternoon. To have thy word before us. And you have a nice spirit. Remind us of the dangers that are ahead of that which has indeed happened to thy people. The the the Church of God that has so loved. And given myself, Lord Jesus, for we thank thee, our God and Father, that I loved it and does not change. And that's already ever the same, Lord Jesus, as we've been reminded yesterday, today, and forever. So we just looked at thee, that we may indeed take heed to that which we have had before us this afternoon, that we may indeed walk before thee, Lord Jesus. In the truth of thy word, and seek to honor thee and to serve thee here. We thank Thee for the promise soon, Lord Jesus, as I return, when we will be with in the Father's house to go no more out than to be there for Thy praise and Thy glory forever.

So we thank you for this and the care and give these thanks for this privilege you've had of being together in this way. And may we, each one of us, take heed in our own hearts what we have heard, what we ask in thy name, our Godfather, thy name, O Jesus, Amen. Amen.

Vestal Conference: 2003, Acts 20:17-25

Reading

Loving Godfather behind me this morning. For the gas and thy beloved Son, our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, and we thank Thee this morning, that He is the keeper of the sheep, and He will not allow any. We thank you this morning at this time together, we thank you to have the peace and quietness of the plan and that allows us to do so in this manner. And we thank you again for bringing some money together after these two days of meetings. We pray now which we have ever and everything before us that give us something for myself. We need know the needs of my people are great and each one here this morning when we were youngest, the very oldest. Have names as we walk through this pathway. Until this morning, I just had my word before us. We press. There might be something for myself, so get directions. I'm sure it's guiding something that might help each one. If you pray our God your Father, don't you? Each one here might mean something by word this morning. Just pray for Heather Knights listing ears and that we won't receive and myself what thou hast for each one of us. So just in that time. Thank you and the worthy and precious name of the Lord Jesus name ma'am. The person are often remembered. Especially. They make a profound impression on one. I think you can think of different ones that you can remember their last word. Brother uh, Reuben's father, the last I ever heard from him was Ministry of the Word, that Brother Alan Hadley's home the night before the Lord took him. I'll never forget what he spoke on. And I was wondering if. We could think of and meditate on. Paul's last words to the elders in Ephesus, as we have been in Acts chapter 20. Would that be agreeable to the brethren? Very good. Read the whole chapter Brother ****. Acts Chapter 20. And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them. And departed to go into Macedonia. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece. There abode 3 months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. And they accompanied him into Asia. And of the Thessalonians Aristarchus and Secundus, and Gaius of Derby and Timotheus of Asia, and Tikakas. And Trophimus. He's going before Terry for us at Troez, and while we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened bread, and came unto them to throw, as in five days, where we abode 7 days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the Morrow, and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus being fallen into a deep sleep. And as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even until break of day, so he departed, and they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. And we went before to ship and sailed into ASOS. They're intending to take in Paul for. So he had he appointed mindful himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at Asos, we took him in and came to methylene, and we sailed fence, and came the next day over against chaos. And the next day we arrived at Samos and tarried at Trojillium. And the next day we came to myelitis. And Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia, for he hasted, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

And from my latest he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church, And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. But have showed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold I go, bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem. Not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I myself, I my life dear unto me, to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God. Shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers. To feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know that I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you. Not sparing the flock also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn. Everyone night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Yeah, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things how that's so laboring. You ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of our Lord Jesus. How, he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all, and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, souring most of all for the words which he spake. That they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship. I had particularly verses 17 onward on my heart, but I feel when the brother asks you to read the whole chapter, I think you get the the flavor of what the background for this that Paul is about to say. And so I would suggest we start with verse 17 unless the brother has an exercise to say something about the verses before that. I enjoyed what a brother said yesterday. When Ervin Claussen made a comment when he said only Luke is with me, that he said, imagine Luke having Paul all to himself. But Luke in writing the gospel of error, the acts, he had an understanding of Paul's life and it's written in a moral order so that we don't just get histories, but they're put in an order. So that and the development of things. And so we see, uh, how things are going to end up acts as written in that way and how things develop. I just wanted to read a verse in connection with Paul in first Timothy. Umm couple of verses in first Timothy chapter one in connection with Paul. Uh, giving his testimony, as you might say to Timothy, first Timothy chapter one. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious. I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. And this is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptation.

The Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. How be it for this, 'cause I obtain mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on Him to Everlast to life everlasting? But particularly arrested me in connection with Luke's gospel on the pattern that we get there is that Paul wanted Timothy to have an outline, or I believe it's the same word pattern of sound words, but his life was a pattern as well. And so we, uh, the chapter begins and not to go back as her brother suggested, but to start the 17th 1St but just to comment is that, uh, Paul's ministry has caused an uproar. And the reason is that, and particularly among the Jews, because the Jews were. On legal ground, and legal ground says what's right with this and what's wrong with that? And you do this and you get that. And man acting towards God based on what man is. But Paul's doctrine and Paul's gospel really brings the grace of God before us, which acts according to man, according to what is in the heart of God. And this is not understood by the natural man. And it's an offense to man. Man is constantly trying to improve the 1St man. And Paul's gospel sets the 1St man entirely aside and sees man in Christ. And so it is true today that Paul's doctrine causes an uproar. I asked a dear Christian. I said, would Paul be free to preach in your church? And he thought for a moment and answered, I think thoughtfully. He said, no, if Paul preached in my church, it would bust it up.

And so we find the charge of this brother to the elders as to what was really to be their care for the Church of God. As our brother was praying, I thought that to us belonged confusion of faces. And that is certainly the case in Christ. And I mean a certain sense he has put out a pathway, a clear pathway for us and revealed his will to us. And so he would desire that we walk in it. And he's made every provision that we should continue in that pathway with clarity and not to be confused. It's. Lovely to think. That the Apostle Paul had a certain manner. Some of us were reminded of that the other day as we were looking at Thessalonians. First Thessalonians. I'll just reverse. But from you sounded out the word of the Lord in Macedonia. And so on. Verse 9 For they themselves show us what manner of entering in we had unto you. And I noticed in our these verses that our brother has called us a tank called attention to it says in verse 19 serving the Lord with all humility of mind with and many tears which befell me lying in wait of the law. And so after he said he could say. Uh, in verse 18. And when they were come to him, he said to them, You know from the first day that I came unto you, what manner I have been with you at all seasons. Brethren, it's one thing to preach the gospel, another to talk to Saints, but what is our manner? What is our manner? What is our attitude? I believe that has a lot to do with the truth of God because someone could say to you or to me, I don't like your manner, I don't like the way you say that. And that's very important to see that you should have that attitude. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, not truth and grace, but grace and truth. And I think that's very important.

We also get the same thoughts, don't we, In, umm, Second Timothy 3? Verse 10. I was fully known my doctrine and manner of life. The two have to go together to say, and the doctrine has to square with a man of life, otherwise we do not have weight for what we say. I think it's true, isn't it, John, that in umm, in a practical sense? Speaking of ourselves. That the message always goes much further than the messenger. Shouldn't be that way, but that's the way it is. I don't think there's anyone who totally comes up to the message but umm, in the Lord, when they asked him who aren't I, He said altogether that which I said unto thee, that is, there was no difference, no conflict between what the Lord said. And what he was perfectly setting out what he said, is there anyone of us that can say that about our own ministry? Anyone that could say well, but I say that's what I am. It ought to be, and I think that's the point that's being made here. I have a friend who sometimes says we ought to be very busy giving out the word and if necessary, use word. What is his point? There are life workers set it out. Brother Jim Robertson says that about every two weeks to it. You have to set out in a practical way what you're saying. In Doctor Now Paul had a manner of life that went along with what he said, didn't he? Not perfectly. There was only one who did that perfectly and that was the Lord. But there was a consistency and notice in verse 19 it says it was all loneliness and with what? Tears, dears. We don't know enough about that, do we? Humility of mind How often do you. Get into a subject and somebody says, well, I think this and I think that and man is not afraid to express his opinions on all kinds of things, even in natural things. I, you know, I saw this bold headline that they completely mapped the human genome and then they said that we found 2000 chromosomes that didn't do anything. I think even in a natural sense, man is not very humble that he looks at something and doesn't understand what it is and he says it doesn't do anything. But when we take up the things of God, this is what He had to take up with the Corinthians. There was not humility of mind there. Is just to go by the wisdom and revelation of God, because what we find in this book is contrary. To the wisdom of man, and we begin to think ourselves wiser than God. There are two things in connection with this. I was thinking what Mr. Darby said. We can see farther than we can walk. And the doctrine came first, and it was his manner of life, as you pointed out, Brother John. But sometimes with the younger people, there's a manner of life and they don't understand the doctrine that is behind that. And we need to understand the basis on which we enjoy the peace and the love and the freedom that we enjoy in the assembly. There's a basis of teaching in it. And sometimes you see a tendency to want to hang on to things and discard the doctrine that's behind it. And as has been pointed out too, that there may be a tendency to have doctrine and not the manner of life that is associated with it. And we need both. You know, maybe many of the young people have grown up in the assembly and they've never questioned that they should be anywhere else. And they are in the right place. But you need to understand Paul's doctrines and understand what the foundation of it is. And we've seen many that really wanted to hang on to the thing, the manner of life, and discard the doctrine that was the foundation of it. And so there was the both with Paul. And that's why there were tears. He wrote to Timothy and he said, I know thy tears. He valued these things. It struck me in Des Moines when we were taking up geographies who loved the preeminence. He said he receiveth, not us. It wasn't he didn't say he didn't receive them. That is people coming to the assembly. It was the apostles. And why is that? Because man will take up with wrong doctrine and and and attack the US. That's the apostles, the apostles, John, the apostle Paul. Because as they say in marketing, you need something to differentiate yourself, your product from everybody else. So somebody will take up a doctrine.

And use it to differentiate themselves from everybody else. And they really don't have a, a value or a care for the doctor. And it's just something unique to themselves. And like a football player, they pick it up and they run with it. But there is no love. But Paul valued the truth. And he realized the departure from the truth was going to bring sorrow. And so there were tears associated with Paul. There was tears associated with Timothy. I know thy tears. And so he really cared about these Saints. And he desired that they would go on in the truth of God, because he knew there were going to be drastic consequences if they didn't. And we actually get a record of that in the book of Acts and a typical way in the busting up of the ship. But Paul desired that they would go on, and the truth of God as he had delivered, in all the purity of which he had delivered it to them. No, this assembly at Ephesus was certainly highly favored to having heard the last words of the Apostle Paul as a freeman. And also having received. The highest truth concerning the heavenly calling of the church and its character on earth. I suppose we have the the highest in the Epistle to the Ephesians. So therefore, it's little wonder that when you get to the second chapter of the Revelation and you read about this exemplary assembly there at Ephesus, that the Spirit of God has to say, I have against thee, because thou swift when I first loved. And God really felt that, didn't He? If you love someone very much, you feel it if they do the slightest. Infractions in the spirit of God self and John takes it up where Paul left off. And addresses that favorite assembly saying I have against you because you've left my first love, even though they're going on with everything else so very nicely. They weren't doing as the Lord did. The very first verse of this acts is concerning Jesus and all that He began to do and to teach. They perfectly coincided, didn't they? What the Lord did and what He said was always in perfect harmony. But here are these who had received such high truth, were not subsequently found walking in a way the Lord knew their hearts. Maybe externally it looked like they were going on wholeheartedly for the Lord, but the Lord knew that inwardly they had left the first love. And that's always the point of departure when you lose your first love for the Lord. But he turned together to Colossians chapter one and verse 10. Blossoms after a gun were scanned. Nakima walk Dorothy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good word, and increasing in the knowledge of God. The Jews lay, wait and wait for Paul because the Jewish religion is one that puts man in an ideal set of external circumstances. God gave to man. This was not a man made religion, although it had. Certainly departed from the Lord, but it took man and put him in an actual, absolutely ideal set of circumstances. Now you could go to any religion and open up the word of God and immediately find faults with it, but you could not do that with Judaism. Because it was all established. It was a scripture for everything that they did. But one could go and make all the right sacrifices and do all the right things and yet not have one speck of divine life. Now there were those in the midst of that that were real men of faith. But that was set aside as a system because it was a test of man, because the test of man was really over at the cross, because there was a perfect display, as her brother was pointing out, in the life of Christ of the perfect

servant. And they said away with this man. We will not have this man to reign over us. And so God says, I'm going to take if any man is in Christ, it is a new creation. And so it entirely sets aside man's wisdom and putting man under good circumstances. I fear that.

Your president has discovered we often heard from Harry Hagel, a man is basically good, and if you put him under good circumstances. Is you're gonna bring out the good in him and he's gonna discover to his sorrow that that's not true. Putting man under good circumstances. Well, that was the whole thing of Judaism. Man was put under the most favoured circumstances that man could be put under. And what did he do? He said away with this man. We will not have this man to reign over us. And they crucified him. So God, Paul's gospel brought in something entirely new. The setting and the entire setting aside of the first man instead of any man is in Christ. It is a new creation. And he brings us into a place where if you sat down and wrote the rules of how the assembly operated, you brought a newspaper reporter in here, he could jot down half a paragraph of how the assembly works and it wouldn't be too difficult to. Say what we do and we don't do, but it is a path. It is a pathway in which it is impossible for the flesh to walk. It has to be walked by faith and dependence upon the Lord, or else you have to find some substitute for the Lord to run things. And so we have a pathway which makes everything of Christ. We don't always, but we have a pathway which makes everything of Christ and is impossible for us to walk and if we don't stay close to the Lord. And so the Jews there was great antagonism because in Judaism I had something to boast in. Paul had certainly a great deal to boast in because he said concerning the law he was blameless. And nobody ever in an outward way saw Paul violating the law. And yet he had to call himself the chief of sinners. And now in Christianity. We have man who's brought a rebellious Sinner, brought into the presence of God and fit for heaven. And it entirely makes much of Christ and nothing of man. And the Jews hated that, and man will hate that. Simple pathway of submission and obedience to the word of God, setting aside man's wisdom. And so there's ever in a constant being lying in wait of Paul by the Jews in a typical sense. Sometimes there's a tendency in our hearts. To hold back on a line of ministry because we don't think the Saints will appreciate that line. And I think it's very instructive that Paul says I didn't hold back anything of what would be profitable for you. He enlarges that a little further than he says, He is not shunned to declare unto them the whole council of God. How thankful we can be that for brothers who are willing to declare all the counsel of God, not just the line that they like and or think the Saints will like everything profitable for them. And that's instructive here. Where did he do it? What for him did he do it in? Well, he did it publicly. But equally important, he did it from house to house. And I believe that's an important aspect of ministry that is sometimes overlooked is the ministry in the home. I can think of preferences made to brother Harry Hagel earlier by our brother Neil, and I recall times, the precious times when he had a dinner at our home for breakfast. And you never get up from the table. And lo, the sisters had to get up and make lunch. What was it? Small talk? No, it was the word. Word of God. We have such an abundance of truth that has been ministered to us and we can thank the Lord for it, and I particularly think emphasis should be put on. The fact that Paul not only gave this publicly in addresses, in informal meetings you might say, but in house to House ministers. It's such an important thing. We put a premium on brothers who have a gift for for public speaking, but I can recall brothers who are much more helpful in the home than they were on the platform.

And it's an important work involved in it both ways. That's very interesting because we think of this, again, going back to what you have said, there is the platform ministry, which is very important, but there's also the pastoral care of visiting in the home and going over the scriptures together. And I think, brother. Years ago in one of the writings. His brother said the greatest need among the gathered Saints at that time, this was back in the 1800s, was pastoral care. Well, if it was needed, then what is it today? It is a much needed thing today too, to be able to go into a home and with one desire just to visit a little bit and talk about the Lord and go over the scriptures together. Very, very important that is, and it's very helpful. For us, and that was the Apostle Paul, because he had said earlier here, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, whether it was on the platform, whether it was in the home, wherever it was, whether it was on the street corner, perhaps it was all the personal Christ that was before him. And I think that's very important thing to say. This kept back nothing. A brother said to me that his daughter said, well, I can't really enjoy much fellowship with you anymore. She left the Lord's Table. I said you should tell her there's a whole list of subjects that she doesn't want to discuss now. But I said there's no subject that I know of that I couldn't sit down and discuss with you and open up the Word of God with you. And there's no subject. I believe in the assembly that we can't sit down and open up the Word of God. Maybe not everyone publicly, but there's no subject which we should be afraid to open up God's Word and see what it has to say. But if you get into a pathway where you leave the Lord's Table, there's a whole host of subjects you can't discuss. They're off limits. And it's very we're we've really been brought into a place of liberty. And if there's a subject that I really wouldn't like a laboring brother to or a brother or a sister to come and raise with me, then perhaps I ought to get before the Lord about it and see why. Because we've been brought into a place of liberty where we can pick up the word of God and expose everything to the truth of God's word. And Paul didn't shun to do that. And when we find when we get into a situation as well, we better not let that. We hope that brother doesn't talk about this or that or the other thing. I mean, I'm not talking about grinding axes and attacking people's persons, but talking about the way that we dress and where we work and and the kind of things that we go on with. If we find that there's certain subjects we would rather not be raised than we need to get into the liberty of the Spirit so that we can feel absolutely free in the Lord's presence about those things and be going on in a way that is consistent with the Word of God. And you find that when that happens, when we get careless, that we're not really too happy when Paul comes with our house to house or to the assembly and would start to minister on a certain line of things. Very lovely to see here following that verse. Where it says. Verse 20, where he taught publicly and from house to house. The very next verse says testify in verse 21, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks. They repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the testimony. Repentance toward God. Why? Because we've sinned against God. And the testimony further goes. And faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who accomplished it all for us. That's a testimony that is needed as we go from house to house. Or whether the platform ministry, it's both. It's both things are needed there, aren't they? Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Somebody asked me that question one time. I said, why does it say repentance toward God? I said because it's against God that you have sinned.

So it's repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who came. And accomplished redemption's work for you on the cross. Confession is an act and repentance is a process. Confession is an act I say of sin that I open up the word of God and I said I didn't make a mistake. I confessed something. I confess what I am, but repentance is a process whereby we had we've often heard we had wrong thoughts about God and we had wrong thoughts about ourselves. And so as we open up the word of God, repentance, it is towards God. It's not well so often we hear well, don't do that. It's going to offend the brother. Well, I'm glad, if I may put it this way that I'm in a place where my children and I myself. Would be ashamed to do certain things were help to one another and I don't want to cast that aside. I'm glad I'm in a place where it's not easy to do the things that they do in the world. But repentance is not towards brethren. And if that's the only thing we put up before our children and keep to ourselves is the fear of the brethren, we get into a snare. Repentance is towards God. Don't worry. I do worry what the brethren think about a thing because God's maintain a testimony. But if that's the only thing that's before you, there's been no

repentance towards God. And it's repentance, as we know, is to rethink. And so we have wrong thoughts, we have wrong thoughts, but have we absolutely everything? And those of us who are older remember growing up in a world when things were more or less in many ways or some ways Christian in an outward way. But now every pretense of being Christian is being abandoned. And so it in a way it's easier because we realize that nothing, the world's view about nothing, marriage, dress, nothing is, is right. And so we come to the Lord. A brother said to me when he got saved, everything in my life had to change. Everything, the way I did business, my relationship to my wife, everything had to change. I believe it did too. That's repentance. It's a process. I was thinking when Brother Charles was speaking before about verse 21 That there are really 3 aspects of Paul's ministry. And they're clearly brought out in this chapter. The first one is summarized at the end of verse 24, but perhaps we get the details of it in verse 21 is. To testify the gospel of the grace of God. Is that all there is to ministry? The gospel of the grace of God? Well, I rejoice particularly in hearing brethren speak of that glad tidings of the grace of God and to see an activity in that ministry. But that's not all. Universe that I don't want to anticipate. But in verse 25. He went and preached. What? The Kingdom of God? That's God's moral rule. That's important, important part of ministry. And then? I believe we get the third aspect of it is in. In the umm 28th verse, it's transferred. That responsible is transferred to others, but it's really to feed the flock of God which is among you. So that all that has to do with the church is brought out in connection with that all the counsel of God. There was a three fold and complete ministry there. I remember years ago I gave I had a friend who eventually became a doctor. We were friends in high school and college. In fact, we took a course in Group instruction and piano so that we could have time to sit and talk together about the Scriptures. I don't know how good that was to do that, but we did that and we. Uh spent hours over the word and he seemed to be taking hold of things. And one day he said to me, you know, I've got a, a conviction that really we should. Stress the gospel and we're not stressing the gospel. All these other things seem to divide the Saints.

For the gospel unites the Saints. And he said, I really think that's enough. That should be our main track. And I picked up and took from him his Bible, which I had given him a copy of Mr. Darby's translation. He appreciated it very much. And I took it and I said, now the Gospel, right? I said Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. What do you think about the Acts? Well, that that's that's an extension of that. I said, well, what about Romans then? You know, Romans of yes, very much so. I took his Bible and I made as if I were going to tear off the rest of it. What are you doing? You said, what are you doing? You don't need that. Yes, I do, he said. I need it. I'm sorry to say that this brother never was gathered. And spend a career in ophthalmology. However, he was the means of Sterling hope being gathered. Sterling Howling and uh. Just about a year or so, maybe two years ago, he got back into reading the Ministry of the Brethren and the Old Time Brethren, and he's been rejoicing him. Whether he'll ever be gathered, I don't know, but. I've often thought about how many people have that attitude that the gospel is what we ought to concentrate on, and so some the professed to be gathered to the name of the Lord. Have deteriorated into what a brother used to call bread breaking missions. Bread breaking gospel mission. Is that what testimony we're called to? It was all the council of fraud. Every bit of the Council of God. The church was purchased with the blood of his own. Believe that's how that should be, The blood of his own, not God's own blood. That's a very touching expression in itself, but I believe more correctly, it's the blood of his own, his own beloved Son. He purchased the church with that. Is that going to mean nothing to us then? And we'll say, well, it's only the gospel. I trust not. I trust that each one of us would be exercised. And. I would emphasize again, there are those 3 aspects of ministry that for all. Was occupied in the gospel of the grace of God, praising the Kingdom, that is, the application of God's word to our daily lives and ordering our daily lives and the flock of God. The truth concerning the church. You know, we probably should make a correction. Uh, verse 22. Says, Behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem. Now look at the next chapter in verse 4. In finding disciples, we tarried there seven days, who said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not not go up to Jerusalem. Seems like a contradiction here. One place the Spirit of God says go up, next place it says do not go up to Jerusalem. We perhaps should correct our Bibles here as it is in the new translation verse 22. Behold, I go bound in my spirit. Unto Jerusalem. He wasn't LED of the Spirit of God to go there, but Paul purposed in his own spirit to go. It was a wrong step, but nonetheless God stood with him, you know, encouraged him when he was there, and let him further to take the gospel to Rome. Yes, when he got there, he had to preach, and he said, God hath not sent me to you, but to the Gentiles. And so that would be quite a message for somebody to come. I've come to Vestal and it would be quite a thing for me to have to stand up and say, well, God's told me that he didn't send me here. And that's really what Paul had to do because he was bound in his own spirit. You find an axe that the spirit forbath him to go into Asia. And there are times in which we would have to go against the Word of God in order to do something. In this Spirit of God forbids us to do something. We'd have to be disobedient. The Spirit of God will never lead us contrary to the Word of God.

And then it says also the Spirit, and it's not clear in the King James, but it's really the thought is the Spirit of Jesus suffered him not to go into Bathinia. And there were certain places where the Lord didn't go as a man. Jesus was his name as a man because he wasn't welcome. The Spirit suffered him not to go into Bathinia, but here his own spirit was desirous to do something. And really, as you pointed out in the next chapter, he was prophesied into the Spirit that he should not go. And he went, and he didn't know what was going to happen to him before him there. But he wound up in Rome, and I think really he was there in prison for two years on his way to Rome because the Jews were waiting for a bride. The king had forgotten the Jews wanted him there. The king was waiting for a bribe, and then he forgot about him for two years. And then you find a man who's at true liberty. He's standing before the king, and he says, I wish that thou art altogether as I am, yet without these chains. That was a man who was free. And if we're in the current of God's will, we may have chains in our hands, but we're going to be free. But Paul was not free here because he was not really on the current of God's will. What Reuben and Neil have just brought before us is very important from the standpoint of what often occurs today in our lives. We. We confuse being bound in our own spirit to do something with the leading of the Holy Spirit. I'm sure that Paul. Had an idea, or at least he thought he ought to be doing what he did. Of course, you got him into all sorts of trouble. We're not here to expose the apostles failures, are we? But we learn from those things. You and I can be so determined on something. That we missed the real direction of the Holy Spirit in regard to something. I use an illustration. Perhaps I'm bent on going to a certain place and living. And I'm so bent on it that I missed the Lord's direction in so doing. Now I'm glad it was pointed out that the Lord is forgiving in those things. He gives grace even in those circumstances, but we ought to recognize and not confuse the two things, being bound in my own spirit to do something with the leading of the Holy Spirit. It seems to me that Paul was so determined on it that when the brethren pleaded with him not to do it. He was going to do it anyway. And their answer to him is a gracious 1 The will of the Lord be done. They didn't say, well, go ahead, you know, and get into trouble. They say the will of the Lord be done. So I think that what has been brought out, we need to keep very carefully before us that. A determination in our part to do something, even to do something that is good in itself, is not the leading of the Holy Spirit to do it, or the direction of the Holy Spirit. David had good intentions, but it was not the mind of the Lord for him to go ahead with the construction of the temple. Nevertheless, it was good that it was in his heart. The 23rd and the 24th 1St we can say is the work of the Spirit of God though. And that's often why the Spirit, the Word of God is essential, because it divides what is between the soul and the spirit. And I may form a natural desire. He naturally loved his people, and a natural love may get hold of my spirit. And that's why He said He was bound in His spirit. But here we really find in this 23rd and the 24th verse that that really was a work of the Spirit. Say that the Holy Ghost witnessed it in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. That was really. Uh, and Paul really was a

tremendous, suffered tremendous suffering, uh, in his ministry for the Lord. And if you read in Corinthians, there is second Corinthians, you see all of the things that befell Paul.

And you come to the end of the chapter and he says, and he was let down in a basket over the wall. And I think that that's what the world would say was a straw that broke the camel's back. He was a proud man. And it was a very humbling thing for him to be let out of the city that the stripes and all of the rest of it he endured. But it was a very hard thing for Paul to to, uh, to experience this, to be whisked out of the city by been being let down over the wall in a basket. There, but you see what Paul suffered and their suffering. Connection with and connected. With the truth. And if you take a stand for the truth, or if I take a stand for the truth, there's gonna be suffering connected with it because it's worthwhile. The devil wants to steal it from us because it's worthwhile. A thief wants to break into your house because there's something there that's worthwhile. And so there's gonna be difficulty in the assembly and there's gonna be attacks because there's something very much worthwhile to the Lord there. Very interesting to see too, and a little encouragement for us as we read the apostle about the apostle Paul, his own spirit in which he went there. But at the same time, it's lovely to look. I was looking at Second Timothy chapter 4. Just read a few verses there. Where it speaks about those that turned away from the apostle. Dynasty. Second Timothy chapter 4 verse beginning verse 15. Of whom be thou? Where also for yet greatly withstood our words. That was Alexandra Alexander. My first answer. No man stood with me. But all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be had held to their charge, but notice this last verse 17 verse notwithstanding. The Lord stood with me. Oh, how precious that is to see we make many mistakes. We do things in our own spirit. We make, uh, many, many blobs, if you will put it. But it says here, notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me. Why? He was the Lord's servant. He made mistakes. It shows again 2 doesn't it, that he was only human. He made mistakes. Someone has said to her as human, but to forgive is divine. Precious, so he says it says here in verse 17. Strengthen me that by me the preaching. Might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. What a comforting verse that is to know God is always with his own. He said I will never leave thee, nor for safety. He did not forsake the apostle Paul either. No, Paul had made a mistake, and many times we make mistakes too, but God is always there for us. That's a very encouraging thought to me. I just pointed out too that. Another little. Perhaps correction? Sometimes I'm a little hesitant to say correction, as if we're casting doubt on on Scripture in any way, but in verse 24. In our common translation, it says that I may finish my course with joy. That's wonderful to finish your course with joy. Actually, the text says that I may finish my course one way or another. To finish our course. It's nice that it can be with joy, but. The. There is a course that the Lord has laid out for us. Administrative. And the important thing is to finish that ministry, whatever it is that the Lord has laid out. It isn't. The emphasis is not on with joy here. The emphasis is on finishing the court.

Often, umm. Amazes me to. Read about someone who starts out on a. Course and might say almost with flood lights and and all sorts of publicity. And then they don't finish the course. I suppose, Brother Paul, when you were running, you saw some of that, didn't you? The people would start out like a flash and didn't finish their course. And then somebody else who just ran along finished it, and that is what was before the apostle Paul here is finishing the course, and some of us are coming to that point. We're finishing our course. Let's not step out of the path. In the last little bit. The glories before us. Guan keep on the path. Isn't it true that it's the end of the path that proves? What we've been occupied with. We could be occupied with a lot of things and end our course. In failure, which some have done, but how lovely to know that God's desire is. That we might continue on, and perhaps sometimes not, with joy. Maybe we're sorrowful, maybe we're sick, maybe we're in a bad condition. But God is always there and of course will be completed with Him. Just point this out in the first chapter Philippians in connection with this. Converse that's often quoted. I'm gonna just read from the fifth verse for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Seem confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work, and you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, even as meet for me to think this of you all. And this should be more properly translated because you have me in your hearts. And that's borne out by the latter part of the verse. In as much as both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers of my grace. Paul was convinced that these Philippians were going to end well, that God was going to finish that which he'd begun in them because they had Paul in their hearts. They had Paul's doctrine and they in it, in the, in his defense and confirmation of the gospel, they stood with him. And I believe that that's important because we need Paul's doctrine. People say that we don't need it. We do need it. And if we're going to finish our courses that was being brought out that, uh, we're going to need Paul's doctrine. People are throwing things over. But it's making disaster of people's lives. And we see that in society, in Christian society all around us, is that the forsaking of the And again, he's speaking here not just of the gospel, but the last thing that the Lord spoke to the disciples about was the Kingdom of God. And the last thing that Paul spoke to them about it. And that in the book of Acts, the Lord speaking to them, the things concerning the Kingdom of God. And then again, the last thing that Paul is speaking to them is things concerning the Kingdom of God. And it was that teaching concerning what is morally suited to the character of God. We have an everlasting Kingdom and we're part of it, and there is that which is suitable to him in that. And so Paul ministered those things. Practically speaking, that's our manner of life. I was thinking also in regards to finishing the course, I like to relate it to a, uh, a marathon or uh, a race to where you run a certain car course. And then you give the torch or whatever it is you may be carrying to the next runner, uh. There should be the thought of finishing the course, the cards that we're calling about to do, but I'd like to also think of the fact that do we pass this charge, this life in Christ, Can we pass that on to someone else who is ready to take that torch and to continue on? I like to think of it in that way, that we finish the course, the portion that we're assigned to.

By the warranty is Christ, but also to carry the torch or give the word the crowd to someone else so they can continue the race. 276. Guide us all. Right. Thank you. Oh God bless her right now. Nsnoise. $120.00. If you want to try. To break down the end, it makes you know where you're going to make me follow up with him and the difference in the life of my life. Uh-huh. All the time for the New Year's Visa card, so I don't know I'm talking about. Our God, our Father, we thank Thee for this little time and Thy precious word. We think of these things that have been brought before us that our souls need to be established in, and we pray, and by the Spirit of God we might be established in the present truth, that we might have our hearts continually occupied with that Lamb burnt wholly to ashes for us. A fresh look at Christ and Calvary's cross and all that he did for us in the gospel, and that we might press into the Kingdom to his uh, with energy of the Spirit of God.

The determination to, to judge ourselves and all things we we desire that our spiritual feet, Lord Jesus would be in thy hands for the washing of the water of the world. For we know that we picked up the fileman in this scene, in our thoughts and our words and our associations of life in, uh, our habits and perhaps even our companions, May we, uh, lay hold of those truths that concern the Kingdom as to our manner of life. And to walk in it, and to that we might be established in those eternal councils to know that our beginning was from before the foundation of this world, and my purposes chosen in Christ, and that thou art called us in time. And justify us when we think of that coming day, when we'll be with our Lord Jesus Christ in the display of glory before this world that cast Him out and on into that eternal day when the Lord will. Himself administered to our souls all the fullness of my heart. Maybe we be established in those eternal councils that were sealed with His words. Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. And so we look to Thee that thou give us, Lord Jesus, as we continue through these two days. Should thou leave us

here, that which is suited for us, for myself, that we might be washed from, uh, the defilement that we picked up in this scene to have. Fellowship with the Lord Jesus and that our souls might be refreshed. We do as I continued blessing and we thank Thee for what we've had already from the Spirit of God, Thy name, Lord Jesus. Main menu.

Vestal Conference: 1988, Acts 20:17-38

Reading

7/20 for 17. From ideas he sent to me all the others in the church. When they were come to him, he said under them, you know, and after from the first day that I came in Asia, at what manner I have been with you for all seasons, serving the largest off humility of mine, with many tears and temptation, which befell me by the lying wait for Jews, and how I kept back. Nothing is profitable unto you, but it showed you, and it taught you probably from house to house, testifying both the Jews and also to the Greeks attempts toward God. Faith toward our own piece of pride. And now because I go bound in the spirit of Jerusalem, not knowing the things that they call me there, save as the Holy Ghost in every city, and seeing the bombs and quick surviving. But none of these things moved me, neither count I my life here and myself, so that I might finish my courses, joy and the ministry which I have received Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the great God. And now behold, I know that we are all in one whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God. He might take no more work, or I take you to record this day, because I am pure from the blood of all men. So I have not shown him to declare unto you all the counsel fraud for yourself, and to all the flocks over the which of the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, and be the search of God, which He has purchased on His own blood. So I know this was after my parties to agree with wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flocks also of your own self drive. Reverse things, draw away the cycle bathroom. Therefore, watch and remember that by the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone. 9 days here and now, brother and I commend you to God. The word is straight, which is able to build you up among all them to sanctify. I have covered no man's silver or gold or apparel. They yourself know that these hands administered by necessity. And then that were with me. I have showed you all things how that so labour and you ought to support the weak and remember the word the Lord Jesus is how he said it's more blessed to give or receive the money has not spoken to yield down and trade with them with them all and they all went sore and fell on Paul's neck and system saw why most of all the birds keep faith. They should be safe no more. They accompanied him. Something of the responsibility here of those those in a place of responsibility and the apostle here draws the elders together there, doesn't he? And he brings before them the great responsibility that is there and I believe it is a solid responsibility for those that are older to seek to guide the other. I think of that from the thing you mentioned that they. Leadership or really we should be guides of those that are younger guide them in the direction and I'm very, very I know we're not going to touch every verse in these verses that we've read, but just just kept as a verse 20. It's been a promising before me how that the apostle well versus 19 and he was here and he said serving the Lord with all humanity of mind with many tears. There was a reality with the apostle. It was a tearful thing. It was, it was there was things coming in that were going to disrupt the testimony and he sought it with tears, he said. And temptations which befell me by the lying in weight of the Jews. And then verse 20, how I kept back nothing that was profitable on you, but has showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house. And they tell us what he had taught them. But I, I think of this, uh, the, the, the need also of, uh, because the great media platform ministry, there's a need, need of house to house visiting. That's pastoral care and he brought this before them, didn't he? He said he he acted in both categories. He said I kept back nothing that was profitable to you. I think that's like is an emphasis put upon profitable statements. You only hear many things that are unprofitable. If you hear many things that are disrupt, you hear those things that you divide. That's the work of the enemy, the the work of one who was.

Had a real care and concern for the people of God who brought before them languages profitable or there might be times where there's a need of acclamation, but it's their to their profits that it might be solved at Microsoft. And I, I believe again, I, I, I guess that's just. No, uh, truth to me that he said I showed you and it taught you publicly. He showed them in his manner of life. He just didn't say, well, now you do this and you do that, but he, he acted it out. He lived what he taught. I have showed you and taught you publicly and from hospital. In other words, he wasn't, he wasn't different on the platform than he was when he came into their homes to visit. I think it's very vital truth, isn't it? I think it might be well enough. In a general way, what we have in these versions that we read and I believe it's this well what our provisions are for. Umm, a post Apostolic age, right on to the end, I believe. I believe this is an extremely important scripture for that reason. This uh, portion here would show us that much of what has come into Christmas is not what God has provided for us. We get a very clear, uh, expression here. I don't mean to anticipate, but just to notice it. So this is a vital point here to juncture because there's an apostle, uh, chief relay in many ways as much as possible, to whom the most wonderful revelations were given. But he sort of in his own, uh, statements sort of merges into that the, uh, post that Apostolic, umm, period, which, and so we, we have instruction here. We can, we can, umm, rest assured that God has shown us. What our resources are. And encourages us and in view of great evil now here it's just touched on it to amplify Timothy and Jude and second Peter. We get much that would show us indeed that they're going to be very difficult days on accounts. But here we have all the pavilions and I think it's encouraging. Many ways it reminds us of the 24th of Joshua where? Joshua is about to be part, and he calls the elders of Israel together with a similar burden on his heart, the provisions of. Umm the umm uh. The points brought out are not exactly the same, but the provision is the same. And, uh, we have all that we need in order to go on until the coming of the Lord. The emphasis that our brother little was putting on house to house aspect of things. I think sometimes brother we take it brother who God has specially gifted in that way. And uh, we spoil that effectiveness by forcing them under the platform. In order to earn his bread. And that isn't God's way. We ought to value a brother who can go into homes. And perhaps it doesn't have much to say in the meeting, but. That was brought home to me. Years ago with my wife's great uncle and some of you probably remember UMM. So it's crossed he wasn't really a platform man, but he could really go into a home and visit and do a work for God in a home. And I remember Clipper Brown saying to me, you know, the brethren, they just, they don't let the poor brother alone. If we'd only leave him alone, he'd do what God had given him to do. That's, I believe, uh, a danger that we have. We don't value that house to house visitation. There are other brothers that, that do that do it well. They go into the home and it's such a blessing when they come in and you can get things across to your brethren you could never get across in a public meeting. And you can touch on things that shouldn't be touched on in a public meeting, but are just suited to the need of that particular home.

No, I believe God has specially gifted the apostle Paul in both ways. And I think the point our brother Little brought out is very, very important. There was no dichotomy here between the two. There was. It was the same thing that he preached publicly, he thought from house to house,

and he lived it too. That's important to see. But I believe that we can ruin the effectiveness of a good pastor sometimes. By assuming that because he's giving his full time to the Lord's service and moving around among the Saints that he has that special meetings. And I think it's a mistake some. The Lord is called to that and somebody hasn't. And let's not, uh, despise the brother and sister because they open our team in that way. And, uh, there are brothers and sisters that we've had in our home that I've maybe had some doubts about the public ministry, but boy, I was less when they visited our home and I said, Lord, there's a place for that brother and I enjoy it. Take the real shepherd's heart to do that kind of a work, doesn't it? And I remember a brother who came through Smith Falls some time ago, and they asked the brother when he came if he would like to have some meetings while he was there. And he said, and this brother was very capable, too, as administering on the platform. And he said, he said my exercise in coming to this area this time was not so much to have special meetings, but to visit the Saints in their homes. And he did that. He spent several days there. And, you know, that's still talked about today. The Saints really value and appreciated that extra time that he took to come into their home. And, you know, sometimes we have things that we just like to pour out, uh, to, to our brethren. And he took that time to, to come into the home and, and to listen and to encourage. And it really encouraged the Saints far more. And he never did have a, a special meeting the whole week or so that he was there. And they really value that. And I, I was just thinking of a verse too, while we're speaking about. These things just to encourage my dear older brethren to bring, continue to bring before us, uh, the truth of God. I, I say this because I had a brother come up to me one time and he said, you know, he was an older brother. And he said, you know, sometimes I feel like I'm just repeating myself in the meeting, bringing before the same things that they already know. And he, he said, what, how do you feel about it? Well, I turned them to this verse in second Peter. I think this is a very good verse to keep in mind. Uh, any who do take a, a part either in public ministry or visiting from house to house, uh, any way we encourage the Saints says in first Peter one a second Peter one verse 12. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things and notice what he says, though ye know them and be established in the present truth. And so Peter said, if I have an exercise before the Lord to bring something before you, maybe I've repeated myself 1000 times, but I'm going to bring it before you again. And we need that, don't we? We need to have the truth brought before us and one of the other epistles that said exhorting one another daily. Well, we need that. And I just encourage my older brother bring before those of us who are younger. Those things, those principles, those fundamental truths. We need to hear them over and over and over again. And you know too, I, I can say this, the sword cut and dope sheep it when you use it, let it cut, let it cut. And so I, I just say that it an encouragement to my older brother bring before it. We need the truth of God before it's a fundamental principle of the Word of God. And what an encouragement it is when we when we hear those things like a time like this, we hear things drop before we've heard them over and over and over again. And yet, what a refreshment it is to exhort one another daily. I just like to turn the First Timothy floor to show that things can be fairly, that our work can be fairly simple. First Timothy 44 lines of Timothy in verse 12 Says Let no man despise by you. But be now an example of the believers. In Word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith and purity. Now, there's no platform here. Yeah. I just thought for a moment. I want to read a few more verses. Be now an example of a believers. Is there anyone here in this room that can't serve God in this way? Now, this is incredible. I think there's a great tendency to look for umm, well, the set apart was in the early days of the Nicolaitans. I see.

With those that rose up set up, we have a great tendency to look to others, a few brethren to carry away and do the job well. I think as we read here now, Timothy did have a special gift. What? The word here is very simple. Be thou an example. That's what you can do and don't despise it. It's powerful. I think I can prove that. In Word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit. In faith this is reality and purity. Till I come give a tennis to reading. This is part of it, to hesitation, to doctrine. Well, we don't all engage in education, neglecting off the gift that is in me, which was given thee by prophecy with laying on the hands of the presbytery, and that was particularly verses 15 and 16. Meditate upon these things. Give myself wholly to them, never mind if somebody said here could create here a bit off. Let's Scripture show you what's normal for a Christian. Meditate upon these things. Get myself holy to them. And that property may appear to wall. Take heed unto thyself. And on to the doctor, and particularly continue in, the Beloved continued. Come on faithfully. You can all do that for what I'm doing. You think this is ineffective? Let me check when I'm doing this, I can both save myself and then I hear it now isn't that blessed? You say you don't have a work for God. I say you do, I do. But umm, but in doing this also our salvation is complete below. We need daily salvation. That's what we get here. Then that they would surely say. We're all eternity. But day by day he needed salvation and by continuing to save himself. But I think it's wonderful I wasn't here that his relatives in the assembly. No, there is salvation for them to We help one another, we sustain one another. I just say this because we look so easy. Look for the prominent thing, you know. Serving the Lord. Really includes everything from picking up the hymn books after the gospel meeting and sweeping the floor at the tea meeting, the preaching the gospel and ministering the word of God. And I say that to echo what our brother has brought before us because it's an encouragement because all those even to the children, every I liken it to the natural body. Every member of that natural body has a particular function in connection with the with that with the body. Some of those functions aren't even seen or realized. Epipress labored in prayer and little did he realize that it would be written down in God's eternal record. To abide for eternity. And if you lose one hand in the natural body, well, the other hand can take over and you can get through life, but not as well as with two, not as well as with two. And I really believe that there's assembly that are suffering a lack because there are those in the assembly that are not carrying out the little function that God has given them to do. Have often used an illustration, A brother at home in Smith's fall. He's been with the Lord several years, but I remember him as a child. He never took a public part. Never said anything in the meeting, Uh, but every large day for years and years, all the years I grew up, that brother, uh, arrived half an hour early for the gospel. He got the books out, he handed them out. And when the meeting was over, he made sure that the books were collected and put away. And I think of the, of that brother, there was a brother who was carrying out the function that the Lord had given him in the assembly. Maybe he wasn't really appreciated, maybe he didn't get much thanks, but he was serving the Lord. And uh, I think of Paul when he wrote to the Saints of Colossi, he said, say to Archippeth, take heed to the ministry that thou hast received to the Lord that thou fulfill it. Apparently it's Archibald had been given some little work to do and he wasn't carrying it out. And so just as he stirred Timothy up not to neglect the gifts that was in in him, he could tell our kippers you carry out that function, whatever it may be. The Lord sometimes gives us great things to do, but sometimes they're little hidden services.

Uh, but we can carry out and we can do them for him. The Levi's who went around and picked up the pin, he didn't look at the one who carried the boards and say I wish I was doing that. No one could say I'm doing this for the Lord. This is the work He's given me to do and his well done in the coming day will make it all worthwhile. There was an example the the apostle himself set here. I was just going back a little bit here and just thinking about, he says. I have showed you showing someone as an example. Isn't it a living example and it's just noticing first, umm. Umm verse 19 you see this, the apostle was ministering not in a a very agreeable situation. He was haunted by the Jews, as it says, serving the Lord, verse 19, with all humility of mind, many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying weight of the Jews. But that didn't stop it. He went on. And not only so, but if you notice in verse 21, this is the first, those are the first ones. Those were, they were, they became his enemies. But what is he? What is his testimony? He says? Testifying both of the Jews and to the great repentance toward

God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That was his title and it was amidst adverse circumstances that we will never, never understand the apostle. I wouldn't read about his his humility of mind of many tears and temptations. They were real. They were real. They sought his life and yet he didn't say he didn't give up and say, well, I'll, I'll testify and I'm supposed to go to the general and I'll forget my brother. He didn't do that. I think this is a very a very a very blessed truth as to his showing them and then teaching them. He was thought he was, he was, he was it was not an ideal circumstance. I know I have to confess that many times that I want to speak to someone and and perhaps the circumstances aren't for a very, uh, agreeable and I find I, I refrain. I don't, I don't always go through with it, but I'm I'm looking at circumstances fault and wasn't looking at that. He was looking at the Lord testifying to the Jews and also the Greeks, repentance for God and faith. Lord our Lord Jesus Christ, and I think further down by I have further thoughts on that too. This is the order very instructive in that repentance toward God. I don't have any need for faith in our Lord Jesus Christ if I don't have repentance towards God. That is, Repentance is a turning around of my thoughts. I've got to have my thoughts reversed. I have very high thoughts of myself as a natural man. And if you and I are called to preach the gospel or to just to testify to those that we come into contact with from day-to-day, let's not forget the order of this because a soul doesn't see his need to put faith in the Lord Jesus Christ until he's seen his his condition before God is God sees it. And that's what repentance towards God is. It's it's to turn it out in such a way that I see that instead of thinking highly of myself, I realize I'm lost and ruined Sinner before God. And I believe part of the reason there's such a shallow working oh insoles today is that there's a lot of preaching faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ without preaching first in the practice towards God. The conscience isn't reached, there isn't the plowing of the ground that needs to be done. And, uh, it's, it's maybe not as pleasant a part of preaching the gospel, but it's important the two things go together. Repentance towards God, a change of thought and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance brings the conscience and reproach, doesn't it? I was thinking we sometimes, you know, I I get that done it myself. We use those verses in the in the concerning the jailer. You know when we say believe on somebody says well, how do I get sick believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that thou shalt be saved and we use that. But really there was repentance with the jailer first.

He said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? He was, he was, there was repentance with him and then the apostle said it believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved in thy house. So there was repentance with that man. Uh, and, and I believe that's the order here, isn't it, that the true, uh, the true order of true salvation is repentance for God. Some have said it's repentance, some say repentance toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is that? Why does he say that? Because. Man gets sinned against God. And God is a holy, righteous God, so it's repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ because he is the one who accomplished it all in his own blessed person, but he was God. I read that, so I don't mind. Example of that repentance might be in the. Sermon was 15. He says, Father, I sinned against heaven, and in thy sight to know nobody could call thy son. See another contrast for the trails in the 18th chapter. Luke with the two that went up to the temple to pray, the one that went just down to his house. Justified. He was the one that owned his true condition before God. He wouldn't so much as lift up his head, his eyes unto heaven, but slow himself upon his breath, saying, God, be merciful to me, a Sinner. What did the other man do? Well, he tried to justify his position, didn't he? He tried to tell God he was a pretty good fellow, uh, after all, and even pointed out this other one. As a an example. But the one that was justified was the one that I often said when I preach the gospel, probably every time I preach the gospel. I'd say there'll be. There'll be no blessing in your life until you get into the presence of God and realize your true condition as a Sinner. I used to wonder about that in the parables of sewer, you know, when the ones that fell on the, uh, Stony ground, it sprung up for a little while. And when the Lord was explaining the parable to the disciple, uh, he said those were ones that Anon received the word with joy. And I used to marvel at that because that sounded good in itself to receive the word with joy. But then I realized that the problem was there was no repentance. There was no root, no work in the soul. They because. There when there's repentance, there's no joy initially that comes after, but repent repenting itself. It isn't joy, it's get, it's realizing my true condition before a holy God. And so that helped to clear it up for me that there has to be that work of repentance, that deep rooted work in the souls before, before the joy comes. We've seen the reverses there from 17 and 21. That the hostel all services. Umm, I guess we could use the word the the perfect surgeon. Uh, except that, uh, only we can say that for the war of Jesus. But up until the verse 21, why we just this example, everything that we have today and the prayers ministry visiting was perfect, but even the apostle Paul. You must remember, but whether worthy of heart Apostle Paul, or the waste of the breadth of the bread, why we cannot go against the leading of the Holy Spirit. Verse 22 Now it's fine, but impossible to play with hope. I drove out in the spirit of the Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall be following me. Now remember 2120, first chapter in verse. 4. It was trifles on the tribals. We carried there seven days, except to fall through the spirit that he should not know to Jerusalem. I don't know at this point. Go on my uh. Go to the comments and I feel so unworthy to even mention. The Apostle Paul had a good reason for going to Jerusalem. He wanted to testify and grace to God. He wanted to be an example for the Jews and children what the grace of God had done in his heart and with his life. Thus, the main thing is that it was not according to the Spirit of God.

Levemir of the apostle Paul or the least percent. Uh, we should uh, be very careful not to go against we spirit of God, even the sounded so good to us serving the Lord and everything about it seems to be a real nice thing the apostles to do. But at this point here, I believe that the impossible to have a flight. Failure and that he was so determined and bound to go to Jerusalem and he failed take the leading spirit of God. The result will see the regarding the all kinds of difficulties that he was forced to make statements that was below his column and. The Lord sent him to Rome, and he was down. But we find that Romans were kept to 11 and. Where, umm, it was the apostles of the gentleman. At the moment where where he spoke that umm, uh, the Lord and the all right, verse 13. The last time I am the apostle of the Gentile, I magnifying my magnifying my office. Chapter one, verse 11, when you leave lies with where? Until I'm appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of a Gentile, and that was the position the Lord gave to him. The Spirit of God was not leading and no matter how right or how faithful, service is dead or they need to take heed. There we go. It's important, brother Mike, to see that scripture, uh, verse, uh, uh, 22 in the light of the verse you read in verse in chapter 21, because otherwise it might look as if he was bound in the Holy Spirit. Uh, but it, it, uh, Mr. Garvey's translation makes it very clear. He says, I'm found in my spirit to go. And uh, so as you point out, it was, uh, uh. Really his own spirit, But it had led him there. Now the motives are wonderful. And his willingness to say that I don't count my life here. I believe God valued that part of it. But a good man with good motives isn't even the whole story, is it? Uh, we've got to have God's direct word, or if we have God's direct word, we're not to go against it. And he had a direct word from the Lord. Umm, the Lord was in all of these circumstances and worked them out for our blessing and for the apostles. Good. But it took him quite a while and he had quite an experience. It took him quite a while. We recently went through this in our reading meetings in Chatham and, and we were, umm, somewhat amazed at how long it took him really to get back into. Into the total. Communion with the Lord on this. And uh, we need to be careful about that If we have a direct word from the Lord. I believe that's the lesson of the old prophet of Bethel, isn't it, that he had a, uh, uh, the young man that got out of Judah had a direct word from the Lord as to what he was doing. And here comes the prophet when he told me he had a word from the Lord's word, but it went against what he knew, complaining from the Lord. And so he, umm, he was, uh, uh, met by that lion because of his disobedience. So I'm sure the apostle, uh, was met by the lion too, in regard to that, uh, not slain, thank God too. But uh, at least he was, he was, uh, taught a very

difficult lesson. So we need to be careful with good motives, praiseworthy motives and, uh, a good man with a good ministry.

Still has to have God's direction for his path and. See the impossible receive it. You might say the two sides of the apostle here, don't we? We see his love for his brethren, that dangerously his heart was filled, and he says in Romans 10, My heart, desire and prayer to God for Israel is what they might be saying. We see his heart's desire, and so much so that in heart it took him, you know, in his own spirits, his own desire. But when I think about it, I think also on the other side of it, that which God gave him as through the truth of repentance toward the Greeks or to the Jews, repentance. This was what he was He wanted to bring before them. He loved them. And also repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And then verse 24, he says, I for none of these things move me either, count by my life here under myself. So that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that you are whom I gone preaching. Can you see my face somewhere? Apparently he had some premonition of this, that it was the end of the course. But his, his, the nature of Paul was such that he loved his presence, he loved them, and his desire was that there might be that true repentance amidst all their adverse adversities against him. And yet what he had, he received it of the Lord that I, I, I don't know what I'm making it clear, but what he received, what he brought, what he wanted to bring to them was a bank which he received of the Lord. So I think I, I really see two sides of the apostles. They see him as a man with a heart desire naturally for his presence. We see him also as a man who was directed by God. MMM And is there a, uh, sorry, no, I, I was just thinking too that in here in this 24th verse, umm, uh, one of the old writers said that it's one of the most comprehensive titles given here because he speaks about, he says, I have received of the Lord of Jesus, uh, and testify the gospel of the grace of God. What, what focus there is in that And that, you know, Paul really, he had his eye upon the, uh, that is upon the person of Christ as before him. And, uh. His his ear was open to the will of God, and I believe that's too, so I'm sorry. Mr. Along that same line, that uh, the 20, uh, fifth verse and the 26th verse, uh, our 24th and 25th verses really give us two aspects of the apostles ministry, He testified of the, uh, gospel of the grace of God. But they also went about preaching the Kingdom. And I, I, uh, recently was talking with a brother who was come under, uh, performed, uh, theology as, uh, under the influence and record theology. And he was, uh, pointing this out as an example that the apostle Paul had taken, also taken up, uh, what we would call reformed theology. But, uh, I don't believe it's so I believe that you have to remember who the author of this book is. The author is Luke. And the aspect of the Kingdom that we get in Luke is moral. Tomorrow and I believe what the Apostle Paul was saying here, he not only preached the gospel of the grace of God, but he went about and preached the rule of God in the believers life. Now that takes in an awful lot and I believe that there is that aspect of our preaching that is important that we're not only to preach the gospel of the grace of God. But we're going to remind the Saints that God has a Kingdom and that that Kingdom is moral and there are principles that govern our lives. And they they were insisted upon by the apostle. I believe we get that the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but what is it? Anybody know where that verse is?

Isn't that Romans? Romans. Yes, yes, Romans. Might be helpful to read that. Because I believe that's the sense in which we have it here. 1417 Would you read it, Brother Phil? Where the Kingdom of God is not need and drink, but righteousness and seed and joy in the Holy Ghost. That's it brethren. That's what the Kingdom of God is in the sense. I believe that we have it here. Now there's many aspects to the Kingdom. Harvey Vedder has translated a very nice article on the Kingdom of German, which umm, he has in a form in his computer. If you get a hold of him, he'll send it to you. I'm sure it's a very helpful article. There are a lot of aspects of the Kingdom. And I believe the Saints have perhaps have not had as much ministry as they need on the Kingdom. There are future aspects of it. There's the, the, uh, the, uh, Matthew aspect, the rule of the heavens with an absent king and. There's, uh, there are other, there's John's gospel, which is of course reality and, and, uh, uh, there's, there are many aspects of it, but here I believe would be possible is telling us is that it's righteousness. And. Peace and joy is the Holy Spirit and that really is takes in the whole pathway of the believer. So I believe our ministry needs to be. Balanced between simply presenting the gospel of the grace of God and also preaching the Kingdom now, we can preach the Kingdom in its future aspect that brings joy to our hearts too. But I believe the apostle also brought before them the present aspect of the Kingdom of God. As God's moral government in this state, which gospel is it that says the Lord Jesus says the Kingdom of God is among you? The Lord, I believe it's in one of the golf, I don't remember which one it is. And that's another little aspect of the person of Christ. They are wondering when they did not recognize it and said the Kingdom of God is among you, but they wouldn't accept it. They wouldn't accept it. I think, however, that would be good now if we could. Move along a little bit because there's very important to help for us in the first follow. I just make this remark. I I just only struck me that we've noticed that the apostles failed. Well, I hope we I think we all know that it's not with feeling that we would do any better and we I think we also noticed a little we can perhaps mention it now, isn't it even with with the apostles failing. God overruled him. Wonderful. And this is encouraging to us, isn't it? No, I don't that's no excuse for uh, letting our, our feelings, our stairs, uh, supersede the meeting of the Spirit of God. But as we go on here, we're going to see that we're, we're to be dependent at this time on the Spirit of God, not only apostles, he failed. We just noticed it, didn't we? And that surely is my observation is not that fail to see the school was outstanding. You could say follow me as I follow the Lord. There's no one. Other could say that no other nearer humans a wonderful service, but now I think it would be well if we would first, though noticing verse 27. I have not shown to declare onto you all the counsel of God. Now this is a good word, I think, because if we if we know our hearts at all, we're after shape our ministry a little bit. To please man. Well, it didn't have any behind me. And one of the reasons is what is is 1St 27 he did not shun to declare all the counsel of God. Some of the council of God. We we accept readily because it maybe doesn't Pinterest or it's not against our notions that we require and nurture whatever we all did not show him to be clear on to them. All accounts were gone. Strippers lump.

And we've got, uh, it's well for us not to have favorite lines of things, specialties, I call it, And I think, you know what I mean, become, uh, obsessed with one. One thing is very dangerous if one can't be broken. And so we know that there all the council is gone. That's blessed. But then I just diverse money. I do, he says for me. It's interesting that the apostles first admonition to the elders here is to take either themselves. It's no good to talk about helping others if we don't pay attention to ourselves. And that has the aspect of it is that was brought out in connection with being a model. For the believers or an example to the believers? If we're not watchful concerning ourselves, well, there's no function in connection with others. But there's nothing more obnoxious than someone who's very carefully watching over others and pays no attention to himself. And so for that reason, I believe it's brought up technique there for two years. Be careful inserting our own wall our own way. And then there's a flock of God, all the flock. Brethren, I feel we need to understand what it means when it says all apply. What is oil with blood? Who are the block of God? Every believer, every time, not just the guy who changed. Everybody. And he realizes, too, that there are special needs. We don't all have the same needs, do we? I've enjoyed that. Don't need to turn to a verse in Isaiah 40. It says, uh, he shall feed his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs in his arms, He carried them in his bosom and shall gently leave those that are with young. And so the writer here realized that in that flop there were different needs, there were different stages of growth. And so here this afternoon, there are those of us who are at different stages in our spiritual growth. We all have different circumstances, different needs. And I enjoyed what you said, uh, in mentioning Peter. In the address. Uh, brother did because when the Lord gave that special

Commission to Peter, he could have just said feed my flock and that would have included the sheep and the lamb. But he didn't. He said feed my lamb, feed my sheep. He knew that there were special needs, that there were lamb. And that there were sheep and that there are those that sometimes need to be carried and sometimes we need to be LED. And so he entered into all that. And if we're willing, then he can more than meet that need. And I was thinking too, in connection with this again, you don't need to turn to it. A progression. Paul said that I was fully known. My doctrine and manner of life. Those two things went so necessarily they were so vital together. And I think of Ezra, we've often mentioned, uh. Ezra in this connection, for Ezra had prepared his heart, first of all to seek the law of the Lord. Secondly, to do it, and then we find to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. So there seems to be that necessary progression there. Yeah, that's very important to see here that the he's speaking that he says those that which had which he had purchased by the blood of his own that is not. Thanks for word of God, but it's the blood of his own one, his own Son. And who are they? Every child of God on the face of the earth. They've been purchased by the death of Christ, by the blood of Christ. So this is what this is written to and the. Of course, not all filings are there, not all hearing to it, but this is what it's written to. And he's, he's, uh, he's declaring this to those that are responsible for his position and, umm. And then I think too, I know the time is going here, but I think in verse 29 he says I know this, that after my department shall grieve the world entering among her, not staring the flock also of your own self shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away not exactly just disciples, but the disciples from after them. That is, we find those leaders that will have team up, since he says, I know that that's a mighty party.

When the apostle was here. Uh, he had a special care and he, he was, he umm, uh, umm, by the leading the Spirit of God, he, he had a special care and I trust God, I care for the Saints of God. But now that he is going to leave them, who does he commend them to? He doesn't commend them to another great man, and she commended to God and the Word. But I, I think that this is important. Here is the 29th verse. Umm again, it's probably a repeat to me. No doubt everyone here knows it perhaps better than I do. But we see that there were grievous wounds that entered in, and then there were those that rose up and left. And I think we have the two. We have the Epistle of June for one. They they, that is, that there were those, there were those that crept in. And then John's epistle tells us that there are those that may help. So we find those two things now as after Paul has left the scene, you see, Jude, let me see John. And that's exactly what has happened. And they have drawn away the disciples, that is the Lord's followers after them. That this doesn't mean they're lost, as some people like to bring in the profit. They're not lost, but they have lost the sense of the Lord's presence. They have lost the sense of the leadership of the Holy Ghost. They're following a man, I hear. Just thinking about that downstairs a little bit, you find that in the days of the apostles. And I'm at the Corinthians, there were there was, there was the Lord's table and there was a table of demons. But I believe this, these scriptures here and I bear correction, but I believe these scriptures here show us that this was the beginning of man's table and. I just noticed this, that we have a kind of a queue here, I think how to regard a Sherman if he preaches himself. Yeah, it should be on our door because God-given uh, help in discerning conspiracy. A man draws a cycle after himself. I think we need to be on our guard. This is not a boss. Also, I think with bosses we preach not ourselves to Jesus Christ. This is the half of the truth. He will not magnify himself and uh, he will not go a disciples there for him and make a plan to follow him. This is a sign that we need to be careful about. It says, too, that there's not so much of they're going to speak perverse things. Perverse says bad things, but this is perverted things. It's taking the truth of God. And giving it a little twist, my unique twist to it. And I illustrated it this way. It seemed to help some down in Bolivia this way. Here comes a brother in the meeting and he, he gets a little twist on me. You know, what I've got is different. I've got a little something that's different. He gives it out in the meeting. And, you know, Saints are not too sure about it. And a couple of young brothers go up to him. After the meeting and in the back of the room and he says, yeah, let me show you how. And the and he spends 20 minutes with this little goof in the back. That's a bad sign, brethren. It's a bad sign. That it shows what Spirit is at work. God never uses the truth. To make parties among his people. And I think it was Mr. Wigram's helpful little paper on heresy, a word for the poor of the plot, that was printed, uh, some years, reprinted some years ago by Mr. Willis, and says that the very worst heresy is not founded untrue. Oh, let us be careful of that. If we've got something to bring out that the Lord has given us, bring it out in the assembly and let the Lord deal with it in the assembly. And if the brethren aren't quite ready to receive it, why don't you just go quietly and commend it to the Lord?

And if it's of God, it'll, it'll, uh, it'll be accepted. And if not, if the brethren don't accept it, we'll just be quiet and wait on the Lord about it. Don't go off and take a little group in the back of the meeting room and say, well, now here I, I'd like to explain to you just how I got to that point, you know, Oh, it's such a danger. It makes you feel good, You know, here comes a group of little studious young people that have been digging into the word and they come back and they stand around me and I open up the scriptures like this. So good about it because here's something I got. I want to show them that, that, uh, in Revelation 13 that the brethren haven't understood it quite right. And, and the reason I've got a little group and they've, I've got their confidence and they bring something else out and then I begin to be their gurus spiritually. And then they lost the eye on cranks, They lost the iron cranks. Those who went out and drawn I guess were never really part of the Christian testimony where they, that is, they were not in hard part of it. I would judge Brother Charles, or perhaps those who were real true children of God that have been used by Satan to draw away the disciples after themselves instead of after Christ. A good man can do that and I sobers my heart brother to look back over the history of the testimony and read about men like CE Stewart. I don't. They called him the saintly CE Stewart. He spoke at Mr. Darby's funeral. And there were others like that. There were studious men, but they threw away the brethren. They gave A twist of things, and threw away the brethren afterwards. Mr. Stewart was fundamental, but Mr. Grant well instructed the word of God. It's done a lot of helpful writing on Old Testament types, but he drew away the Saints after himself. What a sad history. That's so resist, doesn't it? Now, what can we do in doable at least and I think we should not miss that even if we go one minute over something because we've seen a situation here that we face. Well, it's all about them after his departure. Certainly that brings us where we are. Well, first of all, it says watch. You got to be alert. Happy and take it in with everybody wind of darker or anything fast darker that comes along or smooth or whatever and our real resources are given that and operator. I can measure it on. Now to stop there, we could be right one side and I've run into some people I I got into a meeting one time where they deprecated the scriptures and emphasized the Holy Ghost. They could say they were leaning upon God, but they didn't get scripture much place. Well, that doesn't occur with what we have here. I think it's very important to say there are two sides here. It says. Nonsense. Yes there is. There are people who can emphasize and I say I've not seen it. There are groups that go on and make much of and the first they can almost bring anything in and find itself the spirit. But it goes on, Paul says, under the word of his grace. And it has to be then. Then you can be a Korean. And go to the Scriptures and see if these things are so well, you say, if that's the case, maybe you could just lean on the word of God. No, you can go haywire here. There are people that say that they can take their bottles and go off by themselves and you can go right. You can go way off even with the word of God right in front of you. We need the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is in the assemblies in US individually. But the Holy Spirit has come to me and they dwell in the assembly, and a lot of these are important fundamentals. It's a pillar and face of the truth the Church doesn't teach. But it's still a pillar and base of the truth. And there the Holy Spirit takes up the things of the word of God, makes them known to us. Well, I mean, this is our remedy for this very serious and solemn thing, that this attack from without and from within Satan would go out either way.

Uh, repeating, uh, one of the old writers said here, he says, I commend you Brett, and I commend you to God in the word of his grace, one whose love is infinite and whose wisdom is unearthed and whose power is omnipotent and whose resources are exhaustible. The word of God, the grace of God the the the God and the word is grace and just going back to the earlier verse which Paul says over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers. Have you forgotten that that the Holy Ghost is the one who is amazing. Does the Holy Ghost bring anything other than the word of God If it is if it if if it's not a God, it's a man. So I believe these are very. As you say. Like to read the last two verses of June, uh. Because it's only the grace of God that defeats anyone of us. We leave these meetings, uh, today and go back to our home assembly. And then he says now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to prevent you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy to the only wise God, our Savior, the glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. Predator, I think we ought to notice one other thing too, and that is at the end of this thing. It says they sorrowed most of all, that they would see his face no more. And, brethren, there was something wrong there, and God calls attention to it. What was the sorrow of our heart? Departures will come in among Godspeed. And instead of that, they were occupied with the side of it that was very real to them, meant a lot to them. But they sorrowed most of all that they would see his face no more. What to have sorrowed their heart was the departure that was going to come in. May the Lord give us a proper. Understanding of that so that we could feel with the Lord. The sorrow that we ought to feel for what is the minimum, God's people. One more little word on the on the floor that we've had 2828. 9 and 49 John answered and said that's what we call on casting out devils and by name and with the basement because he follows not with us. Jesus said unto him, Forgive him none for the for he that is not against us is for us. Well then in John the last chapter Peter being spoken to by the war umm. Chapter 21 and then Peter 21 verse 21 Peter saved him. Lord, what shall this man do? Jesus said unto him, if I will, but he's Harry till I come. What is that to be? Follow thou name. And we do have different funds, roundabouts that are preaching when they're done at school and perhaps doing good work in the name of the war. And uh, for these particular ones in the loop, they were doing that, but they weren't falling. And Jesus and his cycle. Of the, the lightweights, you know, I'm calling the Lord Jesus and, uh, they weren't to disturb these lovers. And I feel that's what the word is for us not to, uh, speak to disturb others who are, uh, speaking to follow the war, but not to, uh, uh, join in with them either because we have the, the statement. What is that to be call us thou mean believe that where it was as we continue on and on our journey. And build this pathway to just fall over the water and leave everything something of him.

Vestal Conference: 1988, Acts 20:7-16

Reading

We feel it's profitable to take up some verses in the 20th chapter of Acts. Thinking of Versus 7 and on in the chapter, nothing could be time for more than just a little bit of it. But, uh. Nice, perhaps to publicly read that. The rest of the chapter that seems good to the present. Access 22 Seven. On the first day of the week. Disciples team together to break thread. All faced, some of them ready to depart tomorrow and continue to speak until midnight. With any light in the upper chamber where they're gathered together, and they sat in the window of certain young man named being fallen with each seat fall as long preaching. He sunk down the streets and fell down. He's very lost and taken off dead. Fall went down and fell on him and embraced him. Troubled not yourself for his life as in him. But he therefore was come up again, and broken bread and eaten and talked a long while. He was still breaking date, and they brought the young man alive, and we're not a little confident. We went before ship until they thought they're intending to take them all so. When men's leadership did not be cooking and it came to my lithium. And we failed. Then came the next day ever against heels, and the next day we arrived in OLS and carried it Providian. The next day we came to my list. Paul had determined to sail by emphasis because he would not spend time in Asia free Asians out and be at gruesome David Pentagon. And so my latest intent to call the elders of church and when they were coming to seven of them. You know from the first day that I came in Asia, after what manner I have been with you all season. With many peers temptations, which you could tell me by the lying wave foods. Now I kept back nothing. It's profitable to me and I showed you and I thought you publicly in the house testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greek defendants toward God, safe for our Lord Jesus Christ. Now before I go down the spirit of Jerusalem, I'm on the Finland, so they call me there. David Cole goes in every city and found me. So nothing's moving either how I my life here and myself so I might finish my course with joining the industry which I have received the Lord Jesus sacrifice, the gospel of the grace of God. And now behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching, the human of God shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to the records this day, that I am pure from the blood fall in. For I have not shown to declare you the gospel of God. Take either for themselves as a clock over the witch holy toast may be overseas to see the 55 which he had purchased in his Golden Globes. For I know this, that after my departments the greatest world. Both of your own self shall men arise speaking perverse things are all the way to type of acronym. Therefore watch and remember by the state of three years I see not to warn everyone. Nice day with tears now bright enough commend you to God and the word is great. Is able to build you up to give you an inheritance along all families to sanctify. I have coveted no man's silver or gold or peril yourselves. No, that he can't administer to my necessity. With me, I have showed you all things how to so laboring the office support the leaks. Remember the words that the Lord changed his tongue said it is more blessed to give and receive when he had not spoken to kneel down, prayed with them all, they all went sword from all to that consistency saw. And most of all for the words that you say, they should keep in Faith No More, and they accompany him in the ship. OK.

My exercise present is that we might like it versus 7 through 12 and then if the Lord. Reads in this time, perhaps to look on Converse. Umm. We're at verse UH-25 on that seems good. Thanks. A little incident that we read at the beginning is. First of all, in historical event it happened. It's not that so much that it occupies our thoughts, I believe as we read it together, rather that there are lessons in the incident that help us. And I believe also perhaps just a little prophetic glimpse of things that we're going to occur during the period of church's history. Not that the church is the subject of prophecy, I think we're all clear on that. But we know that God embraces giving us a. Uh, both Revelation two and three and another little incident such as we have here, something of a little prophetic picture of things. I would notice that when the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week at the opening of the incident. It was with the express purpose. Of breaking bread. Brethren, we have that blessed privilege of gathering together for the breaking of bread. We'll notice a little later in that. The uh. There there are events that come in that perhaps we can learn from, but I believe this first point here is so important when we gather together. The 1St and primary. Exercise of those whom the Lord has gathered through the name of the Lord Jesus is the breaking of threat. Nothing can replace that in importance. And I believe that all other things that we might do as Christians together, including. That wonderful privilege of preaching the gospel, everything takes second place to that first primary purpose. I know this was the meeting that they gathered together for the breaking of bread, and I believe it's important to remember that too. It wasn't the song service. It wasn't the, umm, a prayer meeting. It wasn't a

preaching meeting. I believe all those things occurred at that meeting, but with purpose for which the Saints were gathered together was to break bread. And I wonder, brethren, I don't press it, but I wondered when we come together on the Lord's Day morning, if it isn't so that we sometimes lose sight of that when we look up at the clock and it's almost 5 minutes to 12 or whatever customary time. Our meeting is is that no one has got enough to give thanks for the bread because we do not break thread, so we break Fred even though that's our purpose in being you've got her. I don't press that blood, but I just suggested God has put this year, I believe to exercise our hearts. Uh, we need not pretend to what we're not. That is, if our state of soul is such that it takes us until 5 minutes to 12, let's not pretend that it's anything else. But I believe we should be before the Lord as to that, are we really come together? Do we live all the week in anticipation of that blessing moment when we're going to sit down in His presence to honor Him in that way?

Hey brother, Armstead buried in his statement from time to time. I wanted to get into some private meeting or conference. It may have been conference. He said it's it's not possible to live in the world all week. And they get expressed, trained to remember the Lord and listen. What have we been gathering up through the week? What has our lifestyle been? As Christ in the absence of our hearts. Are we filled with the person and the working Christ and when we come together on birthday. There's that craze that goes out. We remember him. We break the bread in his membership that I I think that's a good point that we don't really we don't break the body of Christ, but in the world and woke. It speaks of his death. How to own it is broken. Didn't know that, but he speaks of his death. I was thinking too. Is it not so that this event that we're reading here in Acts chapter. 20 and verse seven was approximately I may be brought my standing corrected about 26 years after the church's birthday and the second of acts. And we see there that it said they in the second of Acts, they continued, did vastly on the apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking bread, and bread breaking bread. For that thought was breaking bread and prayers and then my chapters amidst, amidst the time of the church's birthday, the second class and the time that we're reading about here. Many things didn't come in to discourage it. Uh, there had been many things that had come in, but. They were still going on. They came together, as it says, upon the first day of the week, and the second came together. Great. I think that's very blessed and encouraged into us too, and all that. There are many things that come in to disrupt the truth of God is to set aside that which God has instituted and bring in many thoughts. Yes, I think Brother Jim had mentioned today and he felt that there will be a testimony. Of those gathering is precious leads are very dangerous here to stop and I believe to myself I'm firmly convinced of that about the question always arises, will I be there? Will I be there? So we might mention that speaking to those around the house, any of the churches things believe in Christ saying well, what's all this about the first day of the week in the Old Testament we read so much about the 7th day, the 7th day. Well, it makes us a little bit in the relations chapter 3. Verse of 24. Galatians 324 I've been signed here right for the law of Moses that is with our schoolmaster to bring it from the court that we might be justified all in faith and schoolmen and verse 25 and then after the faith has come, we are no longer. I'm doing the school. So the law houses has, uh, has no more direct, uh effect on this dot currently because there are ones that they. Have in our verse here on the first day of the week and the flight was came together. Great thread. It wasn't the 7th day and they were no longer under the schoolmaster law and now I'm great. Migraine war first day they they resurrection. That's very important business because the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, isn't the Christian Sabbath, is it? You sometimes hear it referred to in that way, and yet I enjoy what it says in Matthew chapter 28. And verse one, it says in the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week. Well, this was a new beginning, wasn't it? This was the resurrection morning. It was the end of the Sabbath that had been set aside, that will be taken up, we know, again in a future day. But. Now in Christianity, it's the first day of the week. It's that resurrection, uh, morning. And so I, I think that's important to see that it's a whole new beginning. And I think sometimes we refer, I hear those, I don't say we, but I hear those refer to the Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day as a Sabbath and feel it's a day of rest. Well, it's not, is it? Umm, we find, umm, that in Christianity, the first day of the week is the day when, as we have here, there was preaching, going on ministry, uh, activity. And so it's a day when we can, umm, set aside. I enjoy a little pamphlet, perhaps some of red, the most of red. Uh, the Lord says that we devote it to him. So I, I'd just like to echo what Matt said. It's the.

First day of the week is not a Christian Sabbath. It's a whole new beginning. And so they they come together on the first day of the week to break bread. It's very touching too, to notice. I, I don't know that I noticed this until last summer where it was down in, in uh, Bolivia at the conference in Montero and one of the brethren remarked it and I guess it was amazed. I hadn't seen this before that, uh, they, they spent seven days there. Why do you think they spent seven days there? Well, I'd like to the brother explained it this way. He said they arrived perhaps on a Monday morning and they had missed the privilege of remembering the Lord there. And so they waited monthly Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, seven days and tomorrow it says they departed. We read that right in this chapter. Tomorrow they departed, but they they stayed there just to break friends with the brethren, I believe. And I enjoyed that. I've indebted. I don't remember what brother it was, it's a conference in Monterrey. But I I took that away as a little treasure. Dear brother, digging in there and they, they, uh, I just got that from the Lord. Sometimes we talk about themes at the breaking of bread, and I recognize and have enjoyed that the Lord sometimes brings a particular aspect of things before us. All the hymns seem to to suggest a certain line of things. But you know, I believe we can become too occupied with a theme such as that and forget that God has given us the theme. My Father reminds us of that in Chattem every once in a while. That we have that thing. That is the thing. We're there to break bread. And the theme is given to us in Scripture, isn't it? It's to show forth his death. Now I, I, I with you with delight in how the Spirit of God does take and just so to speak, want him after another seems to bring before us a certain line of things, but perhaps it becomes too occupied. We gotta forget that we're there to break friends. That's what we're there for. I remember years ago that the notion came up, but the first time we'd get the theme of the meeting. Well, I'm a little hilarious. Because I think sometimes we see it the first time, it's hardly and according to the reason we're there, it may be a fine. Uh, humor? The gospel aspect to it or, or an encouraging one for the pilgrims. In his practice. But I don't think that's a good way to work it out, Stelara. No, there are. It's uh, we don't exhaust it with one meeting. We haven't gone through all. The beauty is like there are different beauties and the angles and all that. Processing, we don't want to take away from that, but the thing that, uh, just by chance, uh, a brother is giving out of him and he may not be at all one that's been occupied. It's hard to get a good rule of it. So we have a scripture insurance here. I don't know what is that for, because the big activity wasn't the breaking of bread, I'm sure. Struggling, at least to the point I got it. This is a long meeting, wasn't it? So much so that mom fell out about her story out of the office. It was pro practice. That didn't take away from the reason why they came together. Well, that wasn't the prime thought, wasn't breaking the bread, wasn't it? And then there was a discourse thing by Ivaso ready to depart on the Morrow. And I think as a marvelous lesson here in looking at the whole picture. I'm sure that's what you have in my brother did that. Are we? Are you a little more about this truth?

OK, look at it, see what happens. You're dead, but he was taken up all he lives in and I believe that there's a lesson here in it. Are we willing all teaching as to the truth of God that has been revealed by the Spirit of God, a revelation of God. Are we weary of that? Are we like beautiful? Are we on a window? Are we asleep as to the truth of God? I believe the Lord has a real lesson in here in this course. I, I remember your brother Robert Kaiser, senior Kaiser, many, many years ago during Columbus, and he expounded on these versions and gave us some

lovely thoughts. And I, I wish I could remember, but I can't. But it was a very, very true picture of the church here. And I really see it. And it's, it's taking the tax those that linger. Or pulling back. Or say, well, that's what they say. This is what we'd rather teach. I don't know. It's what the Word of God teaches. Umm, I think so it's Utica's here, but I just think the worst Deuteronomy and we see umm. I think Deuteronomy 25. Interesting verse there. Concerning. Those that linger and you know, I think I'm hearing connection. You're around 25. Find it here and, uh, first one of the first, uh, well, I'll begin with verse 17. I request something interesting there, he says. Remember what Amalek did unto me, by the way, when you were coming forth out of Egypt. How we met thee, by the way, and smoked the foremost. No, no, no, that's not it. We spoke behind you. Most of these, those that were unsure, those had faltered. There's an interesting point there, I believe it says how he, he he smoked. Even in all that were the people behind me. Are we lingering? Are we on a window as to the truth of God. I can challenge you on that. I asked my own soul the same question or am I firmly established, but the fact that I can gather to the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ and we see the sad result. He says you and all that was people behind me when thou was sent angry. Any beard, I think there's a, there's a lesson here for us. Uh, and I, I think of it in relation to Eunicus in his sleepy condition, he was the Lord. He'd say, well, people say to us, well, aren't they below? Yes. Could you use the laws? Did he get into a very sweet condition? He was on a fence. He was on that. Well, we say on the fence, he was on the he was, he was on the window. He wasn't, he wasn't sure he was, he was, he fell asleep. And I think sometimes we fall asleep as to the teachings of the apostle Paul concerning the revelation that God had given. To jump ahead, but just in connection with you, if it's in the window having been exercised by a couple of very practical points that you said, brother gorgeous. There's some very practical things in this chapter as well. And for those of us who are young, I think first of all of Utica and his name means well off and surely he was in a well off position. And we think that we sit here this afternoon of how well off we are. How the grace of God has not only reached down to us in our need of sinners, opened our eyes to see beauty in Christ, brought us to the Savior, but now has gathered up to the precious name of the Lord Jesus. Not only put us on the beach, but as it were brought us to the end. And here we have in our hands this afternoon the Word of God. We have the Spirit of God to reveal it to us. What a position we have. We want to realize your value. What we have brethren, to be able to sit here in quietness and have the precious truth revealed it to us. Learn more of Christ and His view and see more of him. But apparently He was just didn't really value this position.

He wanted to look at the inside and outside at the same time. He wanted to see what was going on inside as well as enjoy what was going on in the street below. But, you know, I often think of those who find himself in this position. And what about you and I? Do we seek to go and draw them out of the window? You know, I think of sitting in a meeting like this, you know, we're never wide awake one minute and sound asleep the other. Are we? We sort of doze and our heads nod a couple of times and and then maybe after a while we we fall asleep for a few moments. And, you know, I wonder, was there not somebody there who saw you because sort of dozens off a couple of times. And I wonder why somebody didn't drive and say, you know, you're sitting in a dangerous position. Come, come over here and sit by me. Now I know better and I I speak to my own heart. It takes real grace and real wisdom before the Lord to to encourage and and draw back. And sometimes perhaps we feel our hands are a little bit tight, but I often wonder what they're not someone who could have gone over and drawn me if it's in warned them of the dangerous position that he was in. And so I said to my own heart, if I see my brother get away. If I see my sister get away, do I seek to encourage that one Do I seek to draw them back You never just all of a sudden leave the the assembly. It's it's a court S patriot discernment to real third being before the Lord to discern of course like that in our brethren. But do we seek to encourage them and draw them back How how different it would have been if someone had gone over here and stopped to encourage them and ask them to come and sit by his not to excuse you if it's his responsibility either because the girl replaces the responsibility on me as as an individual. So whether it's me getting away wanting the best of as they say of both worlds. Or whether it's increasing those that we see getting into that path. We have, I believe, but a privilege too, a blessed privilege of encouragement and all how we need encouragement in these days. There's so much to discourage, so much to divide. And how we need to encourage one another is along in the pathway to say. When I was in the Army in 1952, I can't pick it whether Charles will remember this because we were just two weeks apart facing training. They got us up real early in the morning. And for foolish things, sometimes, they used to say. And, uh, then they send us to class when we were good and tired in a hot building and somebody would give a lecture on field sanitation and the prevention of disease or something like that. And, uh, I'd say good. Half of us were dozing and nodding up, but there was danger in it. And, uh, they, uh, they said, I have a Sergeant standing around and taking names down of anybody, right? Charlotte would fall asleep. That didn't happen to him, but did to me and, uh, extra duty for those who did. Well, we developed the system very quickly. We saw our buddy dozing off. We say they come, they come. And I feel that was done out of a maybe a loyalty to one another. But this work that Brother Jim is speaking about is a spiritual exercise and it's important. We haven't noticed the fact that there were many lights in the upper chamber, but. Brethren, there's a lot of light that God has given in that upper room, and there's plenty of help. And there's good reason to keep our eyes inside the room and not out on the street below. We're called. To a separated position as away from the world. And if we're choosing the window, it's because our hearts are are not undivided. We have a divided heart and, uh, we need to be stirred in our souls. And I appreciate our brother's exhortation that somebody should have noticed Eunicus where he was. It's too late when you have to put somebody out of fellowship because they've fallen. I don't say that's what the fall here really brings out, but that fall can happen. It's too late then. That isn't discipline. I think it's JMD says that's a confession, that discipline is bail. And what we need to do is to be interested enough to care about this sleepiness that overpowers us so easily and to care about those that may be having a whip, a look and they're attracted by the world. Now the word gives a little indication of that for the discerning brother or sister, and it doesn't have to be a brother that notices it.

In fact, uh, uh, sisters have been a great help to me in my pathway. And I thank God for discerning sisters who have noticed things and spoken to me about things and in my life. And, uh, we need to be exercised to help one another, but there are lights in that upper chamber and it is a blessed place. There's a lot of light there. The street below is dark bread and it may look glittering when the neon lights that the world offers, but it's a dark place and we are in that lesson separated place where there are many lights in that upper chamber. Plus the fact that we have the ministry of the Apostle Paul that has gone on until the midnight hour. One of us too, uh, thinking of calling attention to that. I think that's a verse and very precious verse. Uh, as you've already called our attention through, there were many lights in the upper chamber, but notice the end of the verse where they were gathered together. Let me think of that Matthew 1820, where two or three are gathered together. Again, we see the gathering. It wasn't they they saw in the sense of which we're reading out of themselves. It was gathered together and they were both lengths. There were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together. It's supposed to gather again, the same thought as we have someone thought we have imagine 1820 and I believe that. And as you say, the the. Uh, many lightens in that. And is there not much light? Uh, you say you take all the years of the ministry of those that have gone before that, that we, as we read that ministry, they direct dark thoughts. The light of that ministry directs our thoughts to Christ. That's the whole thing, isn't it? And but again, doing this sort of looking out the window and it was looking in and he, he listened and he was, he was, he became weird. He came sleeping. Uh, and I think this is a very good, a marvelous lesson, of course, to realize that. Having fallen into a deep sleep and has fallen

long, preaching well has fallen, reaching along to us. Oh man, for 1900 years, over 1900 years. Are we listening? Do we hear what we have to say? Are we doing all the revelation of God through the apostles? Umm, that's the purpose of interview, Sir. An object before, Yeah. Uh, this is the first seven, my brother said. When we came together to make prayer, we came together, uh. Brother had mentioned about the birth of the Church back in the second Catholic. And can you confirm that, that? 3:40. 4546 Where is that brother? Chapter 246. Back. So they continue daily with one, of course. They were gathered together for one person and one thought in mind will not get to work. And that's remember. Lord, and we'll get her. Uh, the last part of that. Same verse. A little out here, Brother Bob, if you will, please. We're glad that the last part of that verse with gladness and single is the part. All right. I like to think of the singleness is the one object before us. Everybody gathers together for one purpose and that's and that's we remember going through the same.

There there is, uh. A desire, the object before we have instilled a desire in each one's heart. To do that which orders something. To also encourage. No. Who said maybe? Faxman or falling away? It seems to be the hardest job that we have. Today. Been trying to keep everyone in that. And that one field, so that, uh, and and one accord. Joseph said to his brethren, as he sent them back to tell his father that he was alive. He said to proceed if he pull not out by the way, or I think the new translation is don't quarrel by the way. Why did he say that? Well, he knew what was in the heart of his brethren. And I believe the Lord would say that to us not to fall out. By the way, that's one of the hardest things for us is not to fall out, but if we have our eye on the word Jesus and we're truly gathered by the Holy Spirit in Christ. Brother was disturbed not long ago, and I think rightly so because. He heard of her brother giving up a certain line of things and and that's not fundamental, but which is important in the word of God. And I remarked to him that perhaps the Lord allowed this to test our hearts as to whether we're gathered to that doctrine or to Christ. However important the doctrine is, is Christ is the center of our gathering. And, uh, I noticed that, uh. Uh, the fact here the word is used in both places, both of these, uh, seventh verse and in the eighth verse is the word assembled, assembled. And that's of course reminds us of the assembly as well. Why we use the word assembly instead of church? We could use the word church, but assembly gives us the idea of it and I think that's why we use it. But what brings us together is Christ. And his name as our center, the Holy Spirit being the power of it. But the principle act that unites us is the breaking of bread. And it's selling. For a person to talk about being in fellowship but not breaking bread, that is the act of celibate. We cannot be in fellowship and not break breath. We have this question recently in our own assembly whether someone could be in fellowship and not break bread with us. That's the act of breaking bread is the act of fellowship among us. There's no other fact that God has chosen. And in First Corinthians that's made very plain that the fellowship of the body of Christ is the breaking of bread. The bread which we bring, is it not the communion, the fellowship of the body of Christ? So that that that is what unites together those who are gathered on the ground that there's one body. So if a person is able to be there and chooses not to be there, that's not being your fellowship, is it? Enjoy this little expression in your 7th birth not to go back, but ready to depart on the moral. Paul's ministry always had that character about it didn't it always brought before us that everything was in view of the Lord's coming and I've really been impressed with that lately and I just challenge you to go through the New Testament and follow through a little part that says till I come. You find it several times through the New Testament and I've been struck in following it through to find how everything.

In our Christian life is to be in view of the Lord's coming, whether it's individual faithfulness, whether it's remembering the Lord Jesus in death or whether it's holding fast in revelation, whether it's reading God's word in Timothy, it's all till I come. It's all with that in view. And brethren, the privilege of remembering the Lord Jesus and his death is something we can only carry out while we're here in this scene only carry out. Isn't that striking to just to stop and think of that? That's a privilege. Of remembering the Lord Jesus in his death is something that we can only carry out in the scene of His rejection. And you know, sometimes we think of our joy on the worthy morning as we rise up from every member of the Lord and death. We think ourselves blessed being and how it brought joy to honor. But think of his heart. Think of the joy, His joy as far seeded out as finding a few of his own gathered in a simple manner to remember Him in death. And I know that in the coming day, all will be fullness of joy and there will be no regrets, no disappointment. But Reverend Lucia thinks that there will be just that special understanding between your heart and his, that while we were here in the scene of his rejection, you responded to his dying request. You remember him in death. You responded to that request. This too, in remembrance of me. I say again, it's something that he's given us to carry out in this team. When we're pulling, glory will be occupied with a lamb freshly exclaimed. There'll be no hindrances there. We'll have that work before us for all eternity. But here in the scene of his rejection. He desires that we would remember him in death and we've had before the coming of the Lord and how near it is. And, uh, it wouldn't be wonderful if he just responded well before he come to that request. Just do and remember. To me, I say it brings infinite joy and the light to the heart of the Lord Jesus. Mindy, what time does the meeting finish? 4:45. I wonder if we couldn't just, uh, notice in a few minutes that remain what the remedy was to this problem of Utica. I think we see the problem. What is it that? Uh is done for him. Go down and scold him for falling out of the window. Is that what we do? I mean, it might sound like we've been doing that this afternoon. I don't believe we have been. Have we been a drought? If we have, shame on it, but we haven't been. Uh, what was it that Paul descending fell upon him and unfolded him in his arms? That's a new translation. I like that. He embraced it more, folded them in his eyes, and uh, what is it that's going to restore such a one? It's a fresh appreciation and getting hold of where the truth of God will get a hold of them, particularly what the apostle Paul has brought out in his ministry. I see two aspects of it. I used to think of it as one, but the first thing is life is in it. Umm, I believe that was if we look at it typically. The whole church really fell out of the window, didn't it? In the in the dark ages, the whole church fell out of the window. They went to sleep to Paul's doctrine. You don't find it emphasized at all. And then there came a wonderful time when the word of God was printed in in Holland and in Germany and in England and the men like Luther and Erasmus and and umm and the lifetime and. We could name all of these great reformers, uh, resigned in the book of Romans and into Galatians and, uh, Luther's commentary on Galatians. All of that just, uh, was so refreshing to a church that had gone to sleep to the teaching of the Apostle Paul and then over 95 theses up on the church in Wittenberg. I just love to think of that and in that sense light. Life giving truth was ministered to the Church. The just shall learn. Thus shall lose by faith. Something else had to happen. They had to go upstairs and break bread. They had to go back up to that upper chamber. That did not happen at the time of the Reformation. We thank God for the Reformation. Where would we be without it? We thank God for those courageous men like Martin Luther and Zwingli and others who would stand up and say, here I stand, I can do no other. God help me, I'm going to stand for the truth of the gospel. And we praise God for that. But we're also glad for the dear men of God that led them up, back upstairs to the upper room where they were able to break bread.

And. 98. And. They continued on until when? The Daybreak. Oh, that's another script, Your brother Jim, that just gives me the assurance You didn't need to be at all apologetic about believing with all your heart there's going to be a place until the Lord comes. There was here until the Daybreak. They were together until the Daybreak. And I believe we can thank God that the Lord used men like our brother Mac Davis. A little word up at Worcester on the three men Mr. Hale used to call the three originals. JMD uh, Mr. Wigram and beloved Brother Valid and his ministry, really, I believe, and others like them. Let them back up to the upper room where they break bread in accordance with the mind of

God on the ground of the one body. And it isn't going to be long, brother. The Daybreak is coming. All this is in relation to the apostle Paul not to fear or not said of you know, John's ministry went on 3:00 AM. But that was the revelation that was given the impossible. And it's always been interesting to me that God didn't record this record this account in connection with John or Peter or James or. Whatever, he recorded it in commotion of the Apostle Paul, who received that marvelous revelation, who was caught up to the 3rd heaven and relayed this this message now to the sleepy church. And you get that in the 27th of the book of Acts, I believe it's a very, very profitable chapter to read the whole chapter, long chapter, but read it sometime in view of the of the picture of the of the decline and of the of the church and how they will be brought safely home to the shores, but on broken pieces of the of the ship. But quite a chapter, isn't it? And that was way interesting. Awesome. I want to mention what you say. What you say is a broken hole. Colossians chapter one. There's 25. Most of all, the last part of the birth, this sensation of God which is given to me to you to fulfill or complete the word of God and the Eucharist here in order to determine a little bit of Wi-Fi in him as there was, but it was necessary for wealth and the truth that combined grace and truth. God is love and God is life. But to call doc able to reserve whether or not there was light. I wondered about the fact that it says that Paul embraced him. I mean, we might think of it that the remedy is for him to embrace Paul. But it reminds me of something when when Roy Hibbert first came to chat and I remember he brought it back saying this to him. Right. He says what we need is for God's truth to get out the truth of the one body to get a hold of us. He said I have no doubt that the truth that you have the truth and he says what, what? And really reminded me of that several times afterwards how much it meant to him that Mister Beck said to God's truth of the one body has to get a hold of you. And I think that's the thought here that Paul's doctrine gets a hold of us. It's not so much that we get a hold of it. The truth gets a hold of us. And it's a wonderful thing when God's truth gets ahold of it.

A practical aspect and that connection too, uh, I think of the infinite corner where they had to act in discipline, uh, because of evil that was allowed. But when there was true attempt, then Paul said, confirm your love to us. You brought them back. You bring them back. There's been that work. And so the assembly had a responsibility. Didn't they So when we put someone out bread. It's not to just leave them there to get rid of them as it were. I I think plain but so that there will be a work in that in their heart and conscience. There will be a work in their soul and then when we see that work to to bring them back. I think of Miriam. You know, she had to be put outside the camp for seven days and then there was a responsibility. The Lord said Jehovah said to Moses that they were responsible now to bring her back in and so I just a little. Bit they didn't go anywhere while we were waiting for it. You know, we that's a gracious thing, but I believe it's important to remember. You know, I was visiting a dear couple a couple of weeks ago and told me that in all the years they had been in fellowship in their particular assembly, there had been many. Cases of discipline that they never remembered. A case of restoration. And I almost left as they told me that. Shameless. Rather shameless. We're saying him #61. 9050. 9/11 Stadium, 01494909044. 5. Nsnoise.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Remembrance Prominent, Followed by Praise?, The

Question: Acts 20:7-11. Does not this scripture indicate that the remembrance of Christ in His Supper should be kept prominent, and that speaking save in praise, &c., should rather follow? E. P.

Answer: Certainly the Holy Spirit records apostolic ruling and practice for our guidance, lest we should yield to the habits of Christendom. It was not “preaching” as in the A.V., but a discourse to the saints, prolonged unusually, because the apostle was about to depart on the morrow. Yet here as elsewhere no rigid law is laid down, and an exception might be due to urgent need of a special kind. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” But undoubtedly it is well to learn from those given by the grace of Christ to teach us His ways in every assembly. Common sense, excellent for the world, is out of court for the church. We are called to walk by faith, not by sight, and are sanctified to obedience.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Lord's Table, The

Question: Acts 20:7. Is every Christian whose faith is sound and walk godly admissible when known as such to the Lord’s Supper? J.O.S.

Answer: The principle is sound; but in the growing confusion care is due to the Lord that it be rightly applied so as not to cover ungodliness in either way by evil communications which corrupt good manners and defile even when personal appearance seems right. There are vast numbers, besides Papists, who now countenance idolatry in their so-called worship. There are very many, both Nationalists and Dissenters, who sanction or are indifferent to the skepticism of the Higher Critics. It would be wicked to make either of these free of the Lord’s Table. They are enemies of the truth, and to allow their fellowship is a sin. Their belonging to some ecclesiastical system where such things notoriously flourish, to which they are attached, is a necessary ground to refuse them as long as they persevere in an evil association. Otherwise it is to blow hot and cold, and to adopt in what represents the church of God the laxity of the world which knows not God. In the case of relatives, friends, or the like, peculiar caution is due, lest in amiable feeling we should compromise Christ. In early days we had neither the idolatrous evil nor the skeptical one as we have now. The shadows of the coming apostasy are around us. Let us increasingly watch unto prayer and in jealousy for Christ’s glory, and in true love to Christians.

Let me here warn those who would cleave to the Lord’s name to beware of the recent tracts of W. S. and W. L. P. as special pleading and compromise, the latter too in a tone not quite becoming the most mature and honored if such he were. It is diligently kept hidden, if known, that the two perhaps most intelligent of the Ten were thorough partisans of B. W. N., and seceded from Bethesda, not only because the Newtonian advocates were got rid of privately, but because of the seven meetings in which his evil doctrines were condemned (very much through pressure from without, as of R. Ch. and others), even G. M. joining pointedly. It is well-known too that another whose place was high among them strongly sympathized with N.’s errors. And the fact is that the seceding two tried to establish a Newtonian meeting in Bristol and had B.W.N. to aid them in it. When this failed, they sought readmission to Bethesda, and were received on their saying that they ought not to have seceded!! That this was all sought by Bethesda from themselves I know from letters written at the time in answer to strict inquiry, by Messrs. G. M. and J. Meredith severally on one side, and by the seceders or at least R. A. on the other.

Many years have elapsed; but I am sorry to say now as then that the Letter of the Ten made it a day for the faithful and true to renounce Bethesda and all that tolerate its abjuring the prime duty of God's assembly; that the seven meetings were fairer in word than in deed and truth; and that their proceedings both in getting rid of the Newtonians by a private door instead of a public judgment, and in receiving back the guilty pair who sought in vain to exploit a Newtonian meeting with its leader flaunted before all eyes, proved their indifference to a false Christ, their jealousy only for their own honor. I was one then of the not few who regretted that J.N.D. so hastily gave credit to the sincerity of Bethesda and its leaders. But God is faithful, and overruled. Yet who was not shocked at the rude and self-righteous repulse his too confiding spirit received? And what are we to think of G. M. and wife, years after all the denunciations and without any further self-judgment on B. W. N.'s part, daring without a blush to travel from Bristol to Tunbridge Wells to hear N.'s reading or sitting lecture, and to declare the value he set on N.'s writings?

Far from me to despise any one's little measure of knowledge; but how can one avoid indignation at such a tissue of unfaithfulness to Christ, without piling the agony? No, dear brethren, unless there be, on the part of the intelligent at least, a real clearance from such evils, our painful duty is to stand aloof and separate to Christ, however abused and disliked for His name we may still be. Those who never went through the deep grief and shame are hardly the persons to judge wisely or to speak with weight.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Acts 20:25 - "The Kingdom"?

Question: Acts 20:25. As many are not clear, and some confused by strange doctrine of late about "the kingdom," may I ask what it was exactly that Paul preached as he says? Was it the present dispensational aspect in mystery as in Matt. 13? or was it the moral power as in Rom. 14:17, &c.? W. T.

Answer: Neither, as I believe, but that coming intervention of God for changing the heavens and the earth, which the Lord coming in visible power and glory will inaugurate and establish to the joy of all the earth, of Israel and all the nations. How near to the hearts of the heavenly saints it is for Him Who is by grace and at all cost the effectuator of all this harmonious blessedness to the glory of God the Father! Neither gospel nor church obliterated the apostle's value for this grand truth, which has faded from the testimony of many once zealous. Such forgetfulness, or narrowness, or whatever else may be the cause, is surely to be deplored. "To everything there is a season;" and the apostle warrants it for this truth to be preached, as the Lord Himself did.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Those Who Labor in the Word

Question: 1 Cor. 9; 1 Tim. 5 What is the light of scripture as to those who labor in the word, whether in preaching or in teaching and pastoral care? How far does Acts 20:33-35 control the passages first referred to? X. Y. Z.

Answer: There ought to be no doubt as to the principle. Those who labor in the word, whether among those without or among those within, are entitled to the care of the church of God. The saints are bound to see that they should be supported without anxiety on their own part. The law itself lays it down, and this, the apostle's twofold citation of Deut. 23:4 shows, as regards not merely the wandering evangelists, but the stationary elders who labor in the word and teaching. It is mischievous to make it a question of poverty. Divine love has its privileges, especially in honoring those who are its chief witnesses and workers. This no doubt is an appeal to the loving compassion of the saints; but no circumstances should hinder the privilege of loving respect and grateful care for those who give themselves up to serve in the word. Hence says the apostle (Gal. 6:6), "let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." There is such a thing as the activity of love, not the need of poverty only; and it would be a loss indeed and shame to the saints, if, because the teacher was not actually poor, there was to be no room for love in the taught. Were such ideas to supplant or enfeeble plain scripture, the saints would be demoralized.

On the other hand it is a blessed testimony where a man possessed of the best gift and full of the most self-denying labors, like the apostle, is not above working with his hands in order to minister to the wants not of himself only—but of others. In Paul's case it was not laying aside the Lord's work to acquire a respectable and lucrative profession, but the use of a trade he already knew to provide things honest and to help others in want. But, precious as this is, and not less in this day of clericalism than of old, the church has no just claim to plead such a scripture to excuse her own selfishness and neglect. It is a good word from one so working to his fellow-laborers small or great; but it is quite out of place when pleaded by the saints in order to repress the faith of a spiritual laborer, or to forget their own duty to such as are given up to the Lord's work. Would they have Him and His work put in a subordinate place? or the devotedness of the saints quenched? It is most of all serious, where one who has in his hand to the plow is exhorted to take up an occupation for the support of himself and his family, as if the Lord hed said not a word to the contrary both for the exercise of his own faith and of love on the part of the saints.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Translation of Acts 20:28

Question: Sir, -I have read, with the interest it deserves, the reply of J. N. D. to the question put to him by A. B. C. in your July number.

On the former of the two points discussed in his remarks I have little to say. All who, through grace, believe and know the truth will readily admit that the divinity of Christ rests upon a far broader basis than the testimony of any single text. Most Christians, also, will agree in giving a deferential hearing to Athanasius on any point of Trinitarian doctrine; subject, however (as J. N. D. allows), to the final decision of the word. But, as he admits, 'reasoning is not criticism:' and it may be added (with reference to the second point in question), textual criticism is not syntax.

Accepting, as J. N. D. does, the now usually received reading, , in Acts 20:28, the question as to the words which follow is simply one of constructive usage and propriety. J. N. D. assures himself and his readers that, in rendering into the English phrase— “by the blood of his own” —he gives a translation incontrovertibly sound; and in support of this view he cites Michaelis, Dcederlein, and Meyer. In reply to this, I venture to say that such a rendering is so contrary to usage, as to require some positive authentication by other instances or examples to establish it. Such a construction as that of J. N. D. is not impossible, but it is (as far as I have searched) unknown.

Have either of the Germans above named, or has any other scholar, adduced a single passage from any quarter, classical or otherwise, in support of the proposed version?

The remarks of J. N. D. on the meaning assignable to are scarcely in point. Such a use of the neuter adjective is not very rare in ordinary Greek, especially when expressive of appropriate fondness; but the real question is, Does the Holy Spirit ever thus speak of Christ? I surely think not. J. N. D. makes an incidental reference to Rom. 8:32, in support of what no one can doubt, viz., the appropriative force of . I shall lay the same passage before your readers as a ready means of enabling them to estimate the measure of probability which attaches to the proposed version of J. N. D.

Let it be remembered that Paul, who speaks in Acts 20:28, writes in Rom. 8:32. His words in the latter passage are, , . . . Now, it may be safely affirmed, that, had the apostle omitted the word from this passage, there would not have been the slightest ambiguity in his language. But he adds it, not, as I imagine, to avoid ambiguity, but in order to give truth its fitting emphasis, by expressing that distinctive Name in which the brightness of the divine glory is ever manifested to the eye of faith (Heb. 1:1, 2). To suppose, therefore, that the apostle meant us to understand his words in Acts 20:28 in the sense preferred by J. N. D., is to ascribe to him a needless departure both from the ordinary use of the Greek language, and from his own accustomed mode of speech when speaking of the Son of God, and to represent him as gratuitously adopting an ambiguity of phrase at a time and in circumstances when explicit clearness and precision of speech were more than usually called for. That the apostle so acted is quite beyond my belief.

Considerations of sentiment, and even analogies of doctrine, though of much interest and importance in their place, can hardly be allowed to rule decisively a point of grammar. Until, therefore, some more convincing reasons to the contrary are alleged, I must continue to accept the ordinary translation, “by his own very blood,” as the natural and necessary translation of . .

I think it right to say also that the moral difficulty stated by J. N. D., toward the close of his remarks, does not by any means affect my own mind. He thinks it singularly inapposite to speak of the blood as that which was peculiarly God’s own in contrast to all other.’ Presently he adds, It does seem to me that such a contrasted use of God’s blood, as distinguished from all other, is irreverent and somewhat shocking.’

By the mercy of God I am, I believe, as far from Paterpassianism as truth is from error; but I must confess myself unable to sympathize with J. N. D. in the feeling he here expresses. Let us first consider what the real aim of the Spirit was in leading Paul to speak as he does in this remarkable passage. Was it not (in view of the mischievous effects of human willfulness such as he immediately afterward predicts) to recall to the minds of his brethren the solemn and ever-blessed truth of the divine mystery, that natural presumption and inconsiderate self-seeking might be warned of the sort of ground on which they sought to tread?

It is but rarely, and always on some special and impressive occasion, that the proper Godhead of the Redeemer is emphatically asserted. Much oftener, as J. N. D. justly remarks, it is assumed or implied in the language of the Spirit. Believing, then, as I do, that Paul’s charge to the Ephesian elders was one of these occasions, I see nothing either unnatural or objectionable’ in the supposition that he sought to impress upon his fellow-workers in the truth, that the Church which God had made His own He had redeemed by blood, and that the price of that rich purchase was ‘his very own.’

“God was in Christ.” The child of Jewish birth was also the everlasting God. It would be an assertion both gratuitous and at variance with Scripture to affirm that the blood of His mother was all that flowed in Immanuel’s veins. He was indeed made of a woman, but he had a Father also, whose divinity pervaded truly but ineffably the entire person of the child. (Col. 2:9.)

I am unwilling to extend this letter, and will close it by an unfeigned expression of sorrow at what appears to be the growing spirit of verbal controversy in the Church of God. That this spirit commonly waxes and wanes inversely to the true power of godliness is but too well known to all who have reflected on the history of man, whether in the present or preceding dispensation.

May our hearts, filled with Christ through faith, be ever the teacher of our lips!

Yours in the hope of His appearing, X. Y. Z.

Answer: As you have kindly communicated the above criticism, I send you at once the following brief reply.

It seems to me that my critic admits that the translation of Acts 20:28 is grammatical. “It is not,” he says, “impossible” —that is, it cannot be denied to be Greek. Only, he asks an instance of the Holy Ghost’s thus speaking of Christ, Allow me to turn the question. Can he give me an instance of the Scripture speaking of the blood of God? Is it not far more contrary to the mind and analogy of the word than the special recognition of Christ as God’s own? The use of in the plural for this appropriating way is incontrovertible. I need hardly cite instances. It is found, too, in the LXX. I have given an example of the singular in “the world would love its own.”

I do not follow my critic on the extremely dangerous ground he has thought proper to enter on as to Christ’s blessed person—far more dangerous, I humbly think, than verbal criticism. All the rest is argument, in which I do not see any force.

As the translation is not denied to be grammatical, we have made a distinct step in the matter. What is according to the mind of the Holy Ghost in the passage, I am quite content to leave to the judgment of spiritual persons. No doctrine is in any way in question.

Yours in the Lord, J. N. D.

Correspondence, Correspondence: Satan Cast Out; His Stripes; Rom. 8:14; Acts 20:16

Ques. When was Satan cast out of heaven? E. T.

Aug. The Lord in Luke 10:18 looks forward to the day when Satan's power will be over. In Rev. 12 it is still future. There we see when he will be cast down to earth. The Lord on the cross annulled Satan's power, so that all His people are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. God holds him as His servant for His people's good. Job, chapters 1, 2; Luke 22:31; 2 Cor. 12:7 are examples of how God can use him.

If the child of God is humble and dependent on the Lord, Satan can do nothing to him. Eph. 6:10-18 tells us how to stand against him, and 1 Peter 5:8, 9 says: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith."

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7.

Satan is not in the Holiest of all, where the Lord Jesus and His saints are. No sin can come in there. Satan and his angels, wicked spirits, are in heavenly places. (See Eph. 6:12 Margin.)

Qum What does With His stripes we are healed' mean? W. 1. C.

Ans. Isa. 53:5 is the blessing resulting to Israel from the atonement. Verse 4 is the sympathy of Christ seen in His lifetime amid the afflictions of Israel. It is quoted in Matt. 8:17, and was true before Christ died. Isa. 53 is the language of the remnant of Israel when they are restored. Christ bears the judgment for them in Verse 5.

Ques. Please explain ROM. 8:14. M. C.

us. Our failures are not noticed in Rom. 8. It is a statement of the believers' normal position and portion. So believers are possessors of the Holy Spirit, given to all who believe the gospel of their salvation (John 7:39; Eph. 1:13), and He is their teacher and leader. It does not mean that in everything one does, he is led by the Holy Ghost.

Ques. Why did Paul desire to be at Jerusalem at Pentecost? (Acts 20:16). W. I. C.

A us. Paul loved his nation, and that led him at the time many went there from the surrounding countries. While God overruled his going up, Acts 21:4 would lead us to think that he was not guided by the Lord in going.

MISSING INFORMATION

she was much touched and followed the words in the Hymn Book till they reached the stanza, "Just as I am-Thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve: Because Thy promise I believe, O, Lamb of God, I come."

Then she broke down and wept, and said to Him, "Lord, I come." She sang with the rest,

Several Christians felt the Lord was giving blessing, and after the singing was over, they turned to see, and saw the dear girl with her head on her mother's shoulder, weeping for joy.

Not only among that company of Christians was there great joy that night, but also in heaven in the presence of the angels of God was greater joy over the repentance of this one who had stood out so long against the Lord.

Dear reader, are you resisting the pleadings of a loving Savior? Mercy's gate will not always remain open. Christ offers to all a free and full salvation.

"He, every one that' thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isaiah 55:1.

"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2:21.

"Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43. The offer is without reserve. "Whosoever," includes you.

He invites you to come, empty-handed, without money-without goodness-for you have none. In God's sight, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isa. 64:6.

But we also have this solemn word,-"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. 2:3. Lured by the empty attractions of this world, we may wish to put off this all-important question of our soul's salvation, thinking there is plenty of time. But the One who shed His precious blood, that you and I might escape the judgment we deserve, says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6:2. As one of our hymns says, "There's danger and death in delay."

You may be in excellent health and filled with brightest hopes and ambitions, but a thousand unseen dangers lurk about you. Tomorrow is uncertain.

Accept Christ's offer while you may-Just as thou art, without one plea!

Correspondence, Correspondence: Acts 20:28; Heb. 12:14; Sure I'm Saved?

Ques. Please explain Acts 20:28 about the blood. W. I. C.

Ans. Acts 20:28 should read the last part thus: "Feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with the blood of His own." It brings before us God's love in giving His Son up to death.

Ques. Please explain Heb. 12:14. M. C.

Ans. In 1 Peter 1:23, the believers are born again of incorruptible seed, that is, a new kind of life in every believer, its nature is holiness. In 2 Peter 1:4, that nature is being developed by faith laying hold of the exceeding great and precious promises. The Epistle to the Hebrews does not give us these truths, but in it we look for the fruits of that life. In chapter 6 we see what accompanies salvation. Verses 9, 10 give us the outcome of the new life. In Heb. 12:10, chastening is used to make us partakers of God's own holiness. Verses 12-14 are exhortations of what to pursue, for if we had no new life, we could not see the Lord. We need diligence in divine things, or we miss much blessing.

Ques. Will you please tell me how I can be sure that I am a Christian? A.

Ans. A Christian is one that has, found out that he was a lost guilty sinner, and that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and has believed on Him as his own personal Savior. He has believed that Jesus in dying for sinners, has died for his sins, and He is now raised from the dead, thus God shows Himself satisfied, and has said, "All that believe on Him are justified from all things" ({vi 27401-27402}Acts 13:38, 39).

1. Have you realized that you were a guilty lost sinner and without strength (Rom. 5:6) to make yourself better?

2. Have you cast yourself before God and owned it? (Rom. 3:19.)

3. Have you believed on the Lord Jesus as your own Savior who died for your sins? (1 Cor. 15:3.)

4. Have you believed the word that says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life?" (John 3:36.)

If you have, then you are sure that you are saved, because God says so (Eph. 2:8).

You are sure that you are a child of God, because God says so (Gal. 3:26; Born. 8:17).

Now you can call God your Father because He says He is (1 John 3:1; Gal. 4:6).

The Holy Spirit dwells in you, witnessing that you are a child of God (Bora. 8:15, 16).

This gives you strength not to heed the flesh in you that has such evil thoughts, and teaches you not to look within, but look off unto Jesus and occupy yourself with things pleasing to Him (Rom. 8:2).

So you can be sure that you are saved forever (Heb. 10:14).

If Thou halt my discharge procured,

And freely in my room endured

The whole of wrath divine:

Payment God will not twice demand,

First at my bleeding Surety's hand,

And then again at mine.

Address to Young People: Acts 20:16-38, Address to Young People: Part 1

Acts 20:16-38

Part 1ACT 20:16-38

There is always something remarkably interesting about the last words of anyone who is taking his final farewell of us. We know from the account here that the apostle Paul would never look into the faces of these dear men again so long as he lived. We sense the solemnity of it; his heart is full-he has a burden on his heart. He is hastening on to Jerusalem, and longs for his people after the flesh. He is passing so near to Ephesus that he just can't resist that urge to once again see those dearly beloved men of God with whom he had spent not less than three years of intimate Christian ministry.

The bonds that we forge in Christ are like none other in the world. Men try to imitate these things. They have their religious groups, their fraternities and their unions, but these are poor, shallow imitations of what we Christians have in the bonds of Christ. Only those who have experienced this kind of thing can enter into it, but I know when I speak to my brethren in Christ this afternoon, that you all have tasted this; that lovely bond that grows stronger as the years go by.

It was so here. How the Apostle loved those men, and how those men loved the Apostle Paul. If we trace on down to the end, and see the closing, parting scene, how beautiful it is! Those embraces, those mutual tears, mutual love, mutual sorrow as they say their final farewell. They go as far as they can with him and see him on the ship and, I doubt not, as long as they could see him, they were waving in farewell. Many of us have experienced that waving of farewell to some beloved servant, knowing we will never see his face again here on earth.

Now when these elders from Ephesus are come to him, the first thing Paul calls to their attention is the character of his ministry and service among them (verses 18, 19). That is important. I know that there are those present here who are young, and I can't refrain from keeping them before my mind. We know that among you young people there is a real genuine desire to serve the Lord. I am glad of that. I am sure that the

Lord put that desire in your heart. I am glad that you are not waiting until you are old before you decide to do something for Christ. If you can learn at the outset that there is only one becoming attitude that is pleasing to Christ-and you have it so beautifully exemplified in the life of Paul- you have the secret of true service.

“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.”

O, if we could only emulate that! It is the only way to serve Him. The most outstanding example of it in Scripture, in a servant of Christ, is found in John the Baptist. There was a man greater than whom was none born of woman. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave him that special place. He was the immediate personal forerunner of the Son of God in His advent into this world. Yet see what his estimate was of himself, and of his service in the 3rd of John, vs. 27-30,

“John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.”

I call your attention again to the 30th verse-"He must increase but I must decrease." O, what a lovely expression! One repeats, I do not know anywhere in the Word of God, words more noble, more admirable in a servant of Christ, than those little words of John spoken here-"He must increase but I must decrease.”

What a calamity, and how sad that the service of Christ has become so profaned in professing Christendom around us, that man actually uses it deliberately as a stepping stone to his own advancement into a position of influence among his fellowmen. That is travesty! A travesty on the service of Christ.

The greatest servant the Lord Jesus Christ had, was the Apostle Paul. None ever excelled him. And he said to these Ephesian elders, "I take you to record this day." This group of men-I do not know how many there were, but they knew him, and he could say to them: "You know what manner of man I was among you." During those three years what did they see? They saw Christ. "Ye know after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." Day in and day out, as he went among them, they saw Christ in him. Does the world see Christ in us?

“With all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations" (vs. 19). That is what they witnessed in that beloved Apostle.

A sister once said, "All brethren are nice; at least at conferences." And there is a measure of truth, as well as a measure of wit in that remark, but, brethren, here is the Apostle Paul, speaking and calling attention to his ministry, and he says,

“Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations.”

(To be Continued)

Address to Young People: Acts 20:16-38, Address to Young People: Part 4

Acts 20:16-38

Part 4ACT 20:16-38

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." "Grievous wolves." Be on your guard, they are still going about, and they are still spoiling the flock. Grievous wolves are not really converted people at all. They have that profession; they have rallied under the banner of 'Christ, but they are strangers to the grace of God. There never was a day, I believe, in the history of the Church of God when that kind of thing was so rampant as, at the present time. And none of us are exempt. Let us not say,

“O, I am gathered to the Lord's Name, and there is no danger of my being taken in by these things.”

Everyone is in danger from these kind of men. I have heard of one just this week who has fallen. He was breaking bread with us a year ago, but he has been taken in, deceived and led astray. I suppose if someone had talked to him several years ago, he wouldn't have thought it possible. He is one of the flock who has been spoiled. These things are increasing in number, in intensity and cleverness. We cannot afford to tamper with this kind of thing for a moment.

The Lord told us something about these things in the 13th of Matthew, verses 24-30, in the parable of the tares and the wheat. There is no question in my mind but what the increasing multiplicity of these things-these corruptions of Christianity-is the binding into bundles for judgment at the end of this age. There was a time when we could name the groups of those who had thrown over all orthodoxy. We couldn't do that now. We are living in days when these things are permeating the whole of professing, Christendom. Don't tamper with anything that doesn't bear the imprint of the truth of God. Don't look into it. Don't give it five minutes of your time. If you have a doubt about anything that is put into your hand, or that you have heard, go to an older brother or sister and tell them, but don't tamper with these things. They are poison to your soul.

And if you are here this afternoon and unsaved, and have heard repeated pleas, and have consistently rejected the gospel, don't blame God if He allows you to receive and commit yourself to another gospel, which is not the true gospel. Don't trifle with the truth of God!

“Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (verse 30).

The Apostle is not telling them what might happen. He is telling them what would happen, and there is quite a difference. "Of your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." That is division, schism. These men with ambition, regardless of what character of ambition it is, arising and teaching that which will attract to themselves, and draw away disciples after themselves. It says they "draw away." If you are going to draw someone away, you have to have a point from which to draw them. There has to be a gathering

point, and I believe that gathering point is Matt. 18:20. Christ in the midst of the two or three gathered to His Name.

But here come these men. Now these are not wolves. They are sheep-willful sheep. It doesn't say they speak wicked things, but perverse things. Truth taken out of its proper connection. You can take truth to pry saints out of the path of obedience, if you pervert it. They teach things that tend to draw weak saints from the simplicity that is in Christ. And the result is, that they gather a following. Now when Paul got to that point in his address, that was a climax, and he immediately says:

“Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (verse 31).

There was a terrible burden on the Apostle's heart. He felt what a serious thing division was in the Church of God. He wept about it, and says, "O, brethren, I know it is coming, but, I beseech you to watch." Someone says, "It is coming, but we don't need to be told that now: it has come. What a witness Christendom is to the truth of those words! But instead of discouraging us, and causing us to doubt our Bibles, it should make us believe them.

Suppose we had all gone on together in that lovely outward unity that was found on the day of Pentecost? That would be lovely, wouldn't it? But if we had, our Bible wouldn't be true. "Also of your own-selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (verse 30.) And it has happened, and it has been happening all down through the ages of the Church's history.

Now a question arises, that if that is true, is it necessary that I personally be guilty of schism? Is there no avenue to escape being in a divided Church? Yes, there is a path, and there is a way, and it is marked out right here in verse 32,

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

“God and His Word!" The only two things to which the Apostle could commend them that he knew couldn't change. If he had commended them to the elders, that wouldn't do. If he had commended them to the Church, that certainly wouldn't do. But he commended them to God. Has God changed His thoughts about His Church? Has God ever altered the constitution of the Church? Is it any the less precious to His heart than it ever was? Then if not, He must have a path in which our feet can walk, that acknowledges all the truth that pertains to the Church of God. "I commend you to God and to the Word." O, brethren, we have the Word, and the Word of God hasn't changed. It is the very same Word the Apostle Paul gave to the Ephesian elders. It is as fresh, as precious, as operative as it ever was. It searches to the "dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts, and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

It is that precious Word that will guide us midst the confusion that is upon us. We cannot escape the fact that division has come, and that this process of drawing away disciples is going to continue, but we can cling to the Word of God. There is a path, and God wants us, to find it, and to walk in it. God would have been mocking us if He had warned us that all this was going to come, and had not given us a path to walk in.

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

Sanctified means set apart. Every believer here this afternoon has been set apart for God. And with Him we can find a path for our feet. With God and His Word. God never separates Himself from His Word. It is by the Word that He guides, that He leads, that He preserves. If we place ourselves under His guidance and His preserving power, the time will come when we, too, can finish our course with joy. Let us pray.

(Concluded)

Address to Young People: Acts 20:16-38, Address to Young People: Part 2

Acts 20:16-38

Part 2ACT 20:16-38

Is there ever a time or place to lay aside what is becoming to Christ? Are we to be one thing when we are out on the street corners preaching the gospel, a group of young men raising their voices in testimony to the salvation they now enjoy? Are we to be one thing there, and another as soon as the conference is over? When we find ourselves no longer under close surveillance, what kind of lives are we leading?

Paul says, "at all seasons." That does not mean just at conference time. Another thing one has observed, and we speak that we may be helpful, not to be critical, saints will make a great effort and sacrifice to go to a big meeting such as we have here, and I thank God for everyone that is here. They seem to enjoy it, but when they get back to the little meeting, we may see them once a week at the Breaking of Bread. The ministry of Christ at home often isn't worth coming a few blocks for, but at a general meeting it is worth driving many miles. Is that consistent? There is no such thing as "seasons" when it comes to personal faithfulness and godliness.

Verse 20. "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house.”

The Apostle was a faithful servant because he kept back nothing from the saints that was profitable. Do you think they always enjoyed hearing all he had to tell them? He says if he had pleased men he should not be the servant of Christ. A faithful servant is going to tell us what we do not like to hear, as well as the things we do like to hear. He kept back nothing from them. "I kept back nothing that was profitable." Is that the kind of servants we want to be? Is that the kind of hearers that we want to be? Do we want those who minister, to tell us all the truth; or do we want them to trim their ministry?

In Timothy we read that a time was coming when those who professed to be saints of God would not endure sound doctrine, but would heap unto themselves teachers, having itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3). I believe we are living in that time now. I believe we see it all around us, and that very spirit can creep into our little meetings, until we want the brother who ministers the Word to minister only that which will not cut too

deep, and will not plow the conscience. Do you wish him to betray his trust, and shade his ministry because it cuts into your life? It is a solemn thing to quench the Spirit. You sit in the meeting, and there is welling up in your soul resentment because some brother is ministering truth to you that makes you uncomfortable.

Ah, yes, we like to hear about salvation. That is good. And we like to see people saved. That is lovely. Perhaps we like to hear about the Lord's coming-that blessed hope. Yes, we like to hear these things, but when the Apostle Paul was ministering, he did not stop there, but talked about things that pertained to the every-day life and walk of his hearers. We know that, for he has left his record here. We know the character of his ministry. He talked about lying, stealing, about covetousness, drunkenness; about worldliness, fornication and other sins. About those sins that he found had crept in among those professing to be children of God.

He was faithful in proclaiming the whole counsel of God. Do we want to emulate him? Is that the ministry we want to hear? Or have we got to the stage where we have itching ears? Some say all that is necessary is the ministry of Christ. And in a certain sense that is true. But part of the ministry of Christ is the calling of your attention, the attention of the saints, to those things that are contrary to the life and calling of Christ. The Epistles abound in it. There is not one to which we can turn, but we find that the Apostle is calling their attention to gross inconsistencies in their lives and ways. That is part of the ministry of Christ.

We can recall the incident of Ahab's 400 prophets. It reminds one of a worldly saying which might be said thus,

“Surely 400 can't be wrong" (1 Kings 22:6-8, 9, 14, 23, 26-28; 2 Chron. 18:4-8, 16, 22, 25-27).

The 400 all prophesied alike. They prophesied what the king wanted to hear. But there was another prophet there- just one man. After the 400 had given their prophecies, Jehosaphat says there must still be another prophet, and Ahab confesses that there is, but that they do not like to hear him. He tells them the truth, and he suffers for it (2 Chron. 18:16, 22, 25, 26). Four hundred were wrong, and only one was right, because the one man got his message from above, and the 400 got their message from expediency.

We are living in days when we want to be flattered. We are in the last days. If we are to be faithful, we must hearken to the Word in order to know the mind of Christ. Do we want a sort of 50-50 life, or do we want the whole counsel of God? If we say "so far and no farther", the Spirit may take us at our word, but we may suffer for it the rest of our lives.

“Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

“None of these things move me." How far is that true of us? Dear young Christian, do you have a grasp of it down in your soul in such a way that you are not going to be moved? Have you sat down and counted the cost? Are you willing to pay the price, and go on for God, and walk the path of separation to Him? There will be rich compensation, if you do, but there is a price to pay. The Lord isn't going to be your debtor. He will more than compensate you. The happiest Christian here today is the one living in the closest communion with Christ; the one who is walking closest to Christ.

The Apostle says he wants to finish his course with joy. Let us examine that expression. "Finish the course." That meant that he was on a set course. He couldn't finish something he wasn't on. Evidently the course that he was on, was one that he felt could stand the test of that "All-seeing Eye." He wants to finish the course with joy. The course that I, as an individual believer, am on at the present time, if I go on in that course where will it land me? You are on a course, when will you finish it? No one knows. There is no age limit to this finishing process. How often we find young Christians taken out of this scene.

I know a young Christian woman who today is lying with death on her forehead.

For her, the course will soon be finished. You know not how soon you, too, may finish your course. If you finish the course that you are on at the present time, is it going to be a joyful finish, or one of sorrow? If you knew that you were going to finish up this month, if that could be revealed to you in some way, would it necessitate a radical change in your course? In your associations? In your pleasures? In your fellowships? In your personal secret life? In your spiritual life? If you knew that this month was the month the course finished for you, would it require a lot of sudden, hasty adjustments in your life?

(To be Continued)

Address to Young People: Acts 20:16-38, Address to Young People: Part 3

Acts 20:16-38

Part 3ACT 20:16-38

The Apostle Paul says, "I know nothing against myself." There was a man that could say before the eyes of God, "I know nothing against myself." What did that mean? It meant that he wasn't allowing anything in his life that wouldn't stand the test of the judgment seat of Christ. He wanted to finish his course with joy, and beloved saints of God, he did! He did finish with joy. There never was a more triumphant finish to a course than the Apostle Paul's. We would all like to finish that way, wouldn't we? We can, for there is a way to see to it, that we can finish our course that way.

There is a recipe for that kind of a finish. What is it? He had Christ before him always! Morning, noon and night it was Christ before him always. More and more of Christ before his soul, until that final moment when he was absent from the body and present with his Lord.

Dear fellow Christian, the Spirit of God longs this afternoon that you and I might finish our course with joy, too. We can't afford to take chances; there is no time to waste. Let us see to it that we are on the right course, and that Christ is the object of our life.

“Nothing but Christ, as on we tread.”

“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

“I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Paul says he is free from the blood of all men. Could we say the same? Paul started this address by reminding them "After what manner I have been with you." He pointed to his life among them. Preaching (declaring the counsel of God) was half, and living was the other half, and at the end he could say, "I am pure from the blood of all men.”

Are we pure from the blood of all men? Our lives speak loudly day after day, and everyone has his influence on the rest of us. There are no exceptions. That is absolutely, universally true. Every one of us influences in some way the rest of us. And what you allow in your life, what your brethren can see in your life- "After what manner I have been with you at all seasons"—that has its positive influence upon your brethren. Are we free from the blood of all men, if we are allowing in our lives a wrong attitude, a wrong spirit, wrong associations, indulging in wrong things that grieve and dishonor our blessed Lord? If we are, we can't say that we are free from the blood of all men.

Perhaps the deep sorrow that came into that Christian's life, was because he copied my example, and he wasn't able to stop where I did, so he came to that awful breakdown and sorrow. We are here in this world, and mingling with our fellowmen, saved and lost, all those that we meet day after day,- are our lives telling for Christ? Do they see Christ in us?

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with the blood of His own." (N. T.).

In the few minutes that remain to us, we want to speak of the Church of God. We want to speak of the body of Christ. We want to speak of the House of God. Not that these are synonomous terms. But when the Word of God speaks of the Church of God, what does it mean? It means that God has down here on earth a company of people that He calls His Church. They are comprised of all the saved of all the world. Everyone that belongs to Christ forms a part of that Church-the people of God. He has only one Church. There is only one that interests Him. Men have made many churches, but God had only one. And He speaks only of one, and is interested only in one. Beloved, you and I have no right to recognize any other than one. The moment we do, we are making allowances for what God disallows. He has only one Church, and it is very precious to Him. How do we know it is precious? Because of the price He paid for it. What does this verse say?

“The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." The blood of His own Son. It is as precious to God as He is precious to Him. It should be precious to us.

When you meet another Christian and have opportunity to speak to him, do you have to examine him and find out what his "tag" is before your heart can go out to him? What denomination he is in? If so, you are not in communion with the mind of the Spirit of God. For God isn't any respecter of persons. He loves every child of God, and he loves them because they are children of God. He is just as interested in that man, just as much as any other saint. Every saint of God should be of interest to us. Every one that calls upon that blessed Name out of a sincere heart, we should seek to minister to them because they belong to Christ. That was the commission that Paul gave to these men here in verse 28, "Feed the Church of God.”

What Christ desires is that the people of God shall be fed. Now this isn't preaching the gospel. That isn't the way the Lord feeds His people. Don't misunderstand me, one is not disparaging or belittling the preaching of the gospel, but feeding the people of God is a very different thing. It is nourishing and cherishing them. It is pasturing the sheep of Christ, and every sheep of Christ can stand a bit of pasture. When we meet a child of God, can't we speak to him about Christ, and minister to him of what we ourselves have received from Him?

In Mark's gospel, He speaks of giving just a cup of cold water, and the reason we do it, is because the recipient belongs to Christ. When you meet another member of the body of Christ, do you value him or discount him? "O," you say, "he doesn't walk with us" and perhaps you discount him. Do you think the Lord discounts him? Everyone that belongs to Christ is precious to Him.

Some of you may be getting a bit nervous for fear the speaker is widening out too broad a ground. I trust that before we get through we won't feel that way. But there is a great danger of becoming shriveled in our affections to those who are Christ's.

(To be Continued)

An Address to Young Christians: Acts 20:6-13, Address to Young Christians Acts 20:7-12, An: Part 3

Part 3CT 20:7-12{

There is a young man in this picture—Eutychus. Eutychus means fortunate. It is a strange thing for a young man to have the experience this one did; we would think he had better be called “unfortunate.” Sometimes things that seem like dire misfortune come to us in our lives, which may be the greatest contribution to our welfare.

Here was this young man, in the right place, but he went to sleep there. Just being in the right place isn’t going to keep you. Be sure it is the right place; don’t esteem it lightly, but never depend upon the right place to keep you. It takes watchfulness; you must give heed to these things. If you become indifferent and neglectful, you needn’t be surprised if you get a fall.

Here was Eutychus, “fortunate,” and he was a fortunate young man to be there; that was the most blessed place on the face of the earth, to be there gathered around the Lord Jesus, listening to such marvelous ministry, for it was in connection with the

Assembly that God was pleased to give this ministry, but dear Eutychus became heavy with sleep; he became indifferent to the ministry. What a fall he had!

Dear young folks, take heed! Take heed to this truth that you receive; receive it believingly in a good heart and exercised conscience, for we don't come to these meetings just to hear something; we come here that our hearts might be fed upon the truth of God, and that we might be aroused, and that we might have fresh purpose of heart to walk in the truth that is ministered to us.

This poor young man went to sleep, and down he fell, clear down from the third loft right down to the ground floor—to the street level! O, it is sad. It is sad when believers, young or old, fall from their high calling, fall from that place where the truth puts them, fall down, as it were to the street level of this wretched world. Young folks, watch—watch and pray. See to it that your heart be not overcharged with the cares of this life, etc. Heed the warning, dear young people; keep close to Christ; value the fellowship of the saints of God; value the opportunity to listen to the truth, and listen with your hearts, and not with your heads.

Well, this young man, down he went. Paul was long preaching, and he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up (for) dead.

Sometimes Christians, young and old, get into such a backslidden condition, that there is no evidence of life at all.

Look how far he has fallen—the depths to which he has gone! It took divine perception to see that there was life, but the Apostle Paul went down and fell on him, and embracing him, said, "Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him." There was life there. A child of God may, through neglect and carelessness fall away, but thank God! his life is in him—life is still there.

Perhaps the Apostle here, coming and falling on him, and bringing about that animation to his body, is figurative of the power of the Word of God to restore one who has gotten away from the Lord, and then the next thing is, he is back upstairs, back where he was before. I guarantee you, that that young man didn't go to sleep again that night! It was a humiliating experience, but he came back upstairs, and the next thing we hear about, is, the breaking of bread.

I have thought many times in reading this that there is a mystical allusion to how the Church fell down to the street level of this world, and how in the goodness and grace of God, the truth came along in the ministry of the apostle Paul, that line of things given in Ephesians, Colossians, etc., that precious, heavenly ministry that takes us up to the third heaven, and sets us in Christ—that Pauline ministry—that although seemingly dead—no life at all, under that gracious ministry, O, what a blessed reviving there was! We find the Church re-instated, back in the third heaven as it were. So the very next thing we hear about, when the Apostle goes back and this young man with him, is the breaking of bread.

They may have been a little negligent or careless, perhaps so taken up with the Apostle's ministry, that they postponed the breaking of bread; be that as it may, in the 11th verse we read, "When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted."

When is the "break of day" coming for us? How soon is it coming? Some of us feel it is near—the break of day. What is around us today? Darkness on every hand. Young folks, remember, this darkness around is going to increase. I know there is talk about a world-wide revival. I would be thankful to see one; indeed I would, but when I read the Word of God, and see the picture that that Word gives before the end of this world, I see nowhere anything of a world-wide revival, but of a world-wide apostasy. That is where we are drifting. It behooves every one of us to be warned; to be on our guard. Paul's ministry continued until the "break of day." That precious, heavenly ministry, the truth of Christ, and the Church is going to remain until the "break of day." Is it precious to us? or are we tempted to give it up—let it slip? Dear young Christian, it is worth holding on to.

One of these days we are going to hear that summons to see and be with the Lord who died for us, and I verily believe it is going to be a precious thing in His sight if you and I have by His grace, been enabled to "Hold that fast which we have." It is worth suffering for; it is worth being misunderstood, that we might maintain that truth. God has a place of blessing for us; may we have the grace to value it, and hold fast that which He has given. It is in the atmosphere to let the thing slide—to let go—but it doesn't come from above, from that blessed One in the glory. He says, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).

(Concluded)

An Address to Young Christians: Acts 20:6-13, Address to Young Christians Acts 20:6-13, An: Part 1

Part 1CT 20:6-13{

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

"The first day of the week"—that is a characteristic day. In Judaism it was the Sabbath—Saturday—but not so with us. How unsuited it would be to us to select Saturday—the Sabbath—as the day of our rejoicing, triumph, worship. During the whole of Saturday—during the whole of those twenty-four hours—the Lord Jesus lay in the power of death—in the grave. What mockery it would be to use that as the day that is characteristic of our blessed position as Christians—those who belong to new creation. No; with us all starts from that memorable morning when the blessed Lord broke the bands of death and came out on the first day of the week—came forth victorious and gave that blessed message, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God and your God" (John 20:17).

It is a new position, a new relationship, the blessed Lord Himself in a new position as Head of the new creation. How fitting that we find in Scripture the first day of the week is the one sanctified by the Spirit of God, the day on which believers assembled and worshiped, thinking upon the sufferings of their blessed Lord.

So, it is the first day of the week. Here, the disciples came together for a specific purpose—to break bread. It so happened that they came together in the evening. I judge that is merely owing to the fact that that was the most convenient time of the day for them. We are accustomed to thinking of Christendom where we have Sunday given by the government, but we must not think that that is all it indicates. It

isn’t so in heathen countries today. Many were in the position of servants, and would be occupied with various duties, and the evening gave the suitable time of freedom when they could come together.

They came together to break bread. If we can always think in the simplicity of Scripture, we will be saved from many an error. Dear young folks, I am supposed to be addressing those young in years and perhaps young in the faith, too; if we can keep before us the simplicity of Scripture, God will bless us accordingly, but if we become wise and turn aside to human inventions and our own thoughts of things, we can expect to become a prey of our own fancies, and none can tell how far we are going to go. Those that have risked departing from the simplicity of Scripture, have been led step by step, farther and farther away from the truth, until much of that which professes the name of Christ today, has become an abomination to Him.

How simple this is, “On the first day of the week...the disciples came together to break bread.” How many of us here are in the good of that? You are a child of God, aren’t you? Does this scripture have an attraction to your heart: “Upon the first day of the week...the disciples came together to break bread”?

As I go about among the different little gatherings, I find a certain class of professing Christians, and often among those who are younger, are those who say,

“Yes; I belong to the Lord; I am a Christian—I am saved.” And yet, I see them “sitting back” on Lord’s Day morning, week in and week out, month in and month out, and year in and year out, and yet they say they are Christians! Dear young Christian, how can you do that? Didn’t the Lord Jesus say, “This do in remembrance of Me?” Wasn’t it almost the last thing He said as it were to His own—at the very end of His life? It isn’t your brethren that ask you, but the blessed Lord Himself.

Dear young people, remember, all the service in the world that you can do for Christ, will not make up for that simple obedience of love, doing what He asks: “This do in remembrance of Me.” It would seem that we had accepted it among us, more or less as a matter of course, that there are two classes of Christians in Scripture—one class that is found breaking bread at the Lord’s Table, and those who are not breaking bread.

Dear young folks, we have been hearing this morning about testing everything by the Word of God. Have you ever tested that by the Word of God? Can you find anywhere in your New Testament, a class of believers, of those that confess the precious name of the Lord Jesus, that are not at the Lord’s Table—that are not breaking bread? I confess I know of no such class. If we are going to test things by Scripture, and we test that by the Word of God, and find out that it has no place in Scripture. Isn’t it a bold thing to do—for you to take the place of denying the Word, and saying you are a child of God, but when the first day of the week comes, and others can come together to break bread, and not you! Think of it! Look well to it! This is the precious Word of God.

We have been having brought before us the nearness of the Lord’s coming. Events around us in a special way remind us of the Lord’s coming. Our hearts should be made to tremble. He has asked us to remember Him; you are allowing time to slip by, and are not doing this. The Spirit of God would exercise us about these things.

They came together to break bread, and Paul discoursed to them. “Preaching” in Scripture is in connection with announcing the gospel, but here Paul is instructing believers. That is so needful. That is the reason we have come together in these meetings. I trust none have reached that point where they think they do not need instruction. Every one of us can learn from the rest of us. No one is ever going to reach the point where he knows it all, and all the rest can learn from him! Even the great apostle Paul, in writing to the Church at Rome, looked forward to the time when he would come there, and they could enjoy mutual profit together.

So he discourses to them, ready to depart on the morrow. I never read this that I don’t think of it as being characteristic of his ministry. It just leads us right on the verge of departing. If we are in the good of it, it keeps us always on tip-toe, expecting the coming of the Lord.

(To be continued)

An Address to Young Christians: Acts 20:6-13, Address to Young Christians, An: Part 2

Acts 20:7-12

Part 2CT 20:7-12{

“And continued his speech until midnight.” The Church of God has passed through the midnight. Those of us who have read a little Church history, know there was a period of about a thousand years in which the Church of God was with rare exception in great darkness—great darkness came over it.

Whenever we let slip any of the truth of Scripture, the least bit of it, if we surrender, if we disregard it, give up, who knows where it is going to lead us. How bright the Church was at the start; how blessedly simple and precious were those meetings; what edification, what blessing of soul resulted! But when it began to let slip, when it settled down where Satan’s seat was, how far, far, far it drifted. One can scarcely imagine greater darkness than that in which the professing church was during the dark or middle ages.

I recently read a little book on the catacombs of Rome, and of the time when the Church of God was forced by persecution to meet down underneath the city of Rome in those caverns, that is, the Church that was at Rome, and there for three hundred years believers met in those subterranean caverns. It gave a list of inscriptions found there, most of them in connection with the burial of their dead. It is refreshing to the soul to see the thoughts that filled their hearts; to see the simplicity of their faith; indeed it is. There was much that sprang up afterward that was a denial of the truth, but down there beneath the surface, hidden away from the world, the Church kept the faith, and in blessed simplicity.

The Catacombs underneath Rome included nine hundred miles. You can search all those mottoes, those epitaphs, those monuments, there were thousands of them down there, and you will never find a mention of purgatory, the crucifix, the priesthood, or the Virgin Mary—not once. They were blessedly simple; why? Because they were accepting their place of rejection in this world. They were following a rejected Saviour.

When they came out from the bowels of the earth, and took their place in the sunlight of this world's favor, what a different story! Great temples were turned over to them for places of assembling, and instead of being despised and rejected of the world, became supported by the world. The professing church became a political ruler of the world, and the greater it became in power in this world, the greater was the decay spiritually. But here, all is simplicity—they came together to break bread.

"And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together." It was an "upper chamber"—the "third loft." Way up in the third loft; that took place where the Church belongs. The Apostle Paul was caught up to the third heaven—the presence of God—to paradise. The Church belongs up there. The rallying place of the true Church is up there, not on earth. The vast majority are up there.

Here we find them meeting in the third loft. There were many lights where they were gathered together. Young folks, remember, God has established on this earth a sphere and place of blessing; a place where the truth is to be learned and learned in God's way, and if you neglect or despise that place, and that provision, you do it at the peril of your soul; I don't mean eternal peril, but I mean you are going to suffer for it—suffer in your soul—if you despise the rich provision God has made in grace in connection with His care of His own down here. There were many lights in that chamber.

I call your attention in passing, to the fact that the expression in that 8th verse "gathered together" is exactly the same in the original as Matthew 18:20 with this one exception, that in Matthew 18:20 it is the present tense and here it is in the past, but the compound verb used is exactly the same.

Here they were, gathered together on the ground of the Church of God, and there were many lights where they were gathered together—a blessed place to be! There is where the light is found—where you are going to get light for your soul, and thus are you going to be able to walk in the pathway of the truth as laid down in the Word of God.

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:8-10).

The only way we are going to prove what is acceptable to God, is as we walk in the light, and the ministration of the truth is connected in the Word of God, with those gifts that the ascended Lord has been pleased to give the Church, and He has placed those gifts in connection with the Assembly, and thus it is as in the Assembly, as gathered together, we find a place of safety where we are guarded and cared for; how we ought to value it!

In the parable in Luke about the man who fell among thieves, the Lord says, "A certain Samaritan" picked him up and brought him to an inn, and gave the inn-keeper two pence, and said, "Take care of him." To me, that inn represents the Assembly, and the Lord has made provision that you should be cared for in your spiritual life in connection with the Assembly. The Lord said to that inn-keeper, I will give you these two pence, and when I come again I will repay you anything else you may spend.

The Lord has gone back to glory, but dear young Christians, He has provided down here for our blessing, and it will never be a path of independency. You cannot live your Christian life alone in this world; there is no such path marked out in the Word of God. If you are going to walk in the truth of the Scripture, you are going to walk in companionship and fellowship with other believers. You have a corporate place to fill, and you can never escape that responsibility; we know it is true that many real Christians fail to see that.

We find believers becoming rebellious and saying, I will walk alone before God, and I care not what anyone else may think! I will go my way alone, and let my brethren go alone. It may sound pious, but it isn't the truth of God. No; we must go on together, and the Lord is faithful and He is going to provide a clean path for our feet until He comes again. He says that in the parable "When I come again" etc.

Dear young saint, there is going to be a place for you here to walk in the truth corporately until our Lord returns.

(To be continued)

Fellowship in the Gospel, Fellowship in the Gospel: Part 2

Part 2

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35.

Such, then, is the exhortation and teaching of Scripture upon our subject, and such the example of the Philippians.

And now as to ourselves, are we obedient to the Word in this, and are we giving glory to God? How is it among us, brethren? Have we not to confess much failure? Taking the evidence that comes in one way and another, there is positive need of definite and special confession and humiliation. There is too little giving by assemblies, and brethren going forth bearing precious seed are hindered in the work, at times, and no doubt filled with sorrow, whatever be the supporting grace of God to help in time of need. No doubt at such times He comes specially near, and gives rich experience of His love, and the living character of His Word to be forever trusted. But our failure remains,-it is well-known and commented on, and painfully humiliating.

"May we be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves." James 1:22.

There is also a lack of care bestowed, and a lack of interest shown in assemblies in the gathering and use of money. The gathering generally, as a rule, knows little or nothing of what is done with money gathered, at least at the time, and little or no pains is taken to stir up one another, and acquaint the brethren generally with the object of a particular collection, in a way that would draw out all hearts, and make it a

true service to the Lord, and a manifestation of fellowship in the gospel, and of love to the Lord's servant,-a love so deeply cheering to the servant's heart amid the trials of the way,-a service too, tending so to unite the hearts of those who join to render it.

Because our giving is not to be by law or of necessity, we have been a good deal ensnared into a sense of lack of obligation, but brethren, we know the obligation is surely upon us, only the cheerful response is called for,

“Not grudgingly or of necessity, for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. 9:7.

Let the obligation be considered, and let us pray that a better state may prevail among us than has hitherto, and we shall have the Lord's blessing.

It would be error surely, if individual giving, especially by any leader or leaders in a gathering, were to hinder the promoting of assembly giving or render any one indifferent about it.

Giving both by individuals and assemblies, simply to assist a brother when he is laboring among us, and not at other times, is a danger to be guarded against, and tends to the narrowness of paying for service to us, rather than fellowship with a servant of the Lord in his service to the whole Church and to the world, in whatever field he may be at work, though we may never have seen his face.

Let us beware in the matter of giving, or in any other way of unwittingly but selfishly seeking to draw aside the Lord's servant into a line of work that interests us, but may not be a field to which the Lord would send him.

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that built it." Psa. 127:1.

Let us study to be quiet, and to go on in patience, and in the joy of the Lord, not in haste for anything, surely, lest we have to be held in with bit and bridle, for we have no wisdom of our own; but on the other hand, not in slackness of spirit or coldness towards the gospel, or towards those who preach the gospel.

May that love be found in us all, that abounds in knowledge and discernment (Phil. 1:9). And let us remember that each one has an account to give of his stewardship at the Lord's return. Who knows how soon may end this time of our responsibility and opportunity? Therefore let us make haste to set our house in order as to all things.

May we be ready for every good work.

One more word as to method, or rather as to pains-taking. We take pains in worldly matters, why not in the things of God? Is it not offering the lame and the blind to lack diligence of spirit in what we do in these things? May nothing indeed be done by mere human system, however efficient in collecting money, but may we have diligence and wisdom as individuals and as assemblies, both in laying by in store, and in collecting what we have to offer.

May not a week pass without exercise and prayer as to this, and God will bless us, and we shall glorify Him.

Scripture Queries and Answers, Scripture Queries and Answers: Seven Heads and Seven Kings; Acts 20:7-11

Q. 1. -Rev. 17:9-11. How are we to understand "the seven heads" and "seven kings?" Is it legitimate to take " the seven heads " as 1, Egypt; 2, Assyria; 3, Babylon; 4, Medo-Persia; 5, Greece; 6, Rome; 7, Israel in its apostate state? And is it correct that " the seven kings" can be, 1, Pharaoh; 2, Sennacherib; 3, Belshazzar; 4, Antiochus Epiphanes; 5, Herod; 6, Nero; 7, Napoleon; 8, anti-Christ? F. R. G. S.

A.-One of the most important helps everywhere for right interpretation is a firm adhesion to the context. In the present case the object before us is the Beast or Roman Empire, which the Holy Seer beholds in its last form before it goes into perdition. The seven heads are doubly interpreted. They are seven mountains (or hills), whereon the woman sits (compare ver. 18). Rome is the seat geographically,, not Jerusalem, nor the plain of Shinar. But they are seven kings, or differing forms of ruling power. The Beast is thus distinguished. There had been, 1, kings; 2, consuls; 3, dictators; 4, decemvers; 5, military tribunes; who held successively and constitutionally the imperium. And these five were fallen. The sixth was actually then in power-emperors. The seventh had not yet come; and it was to be transient. " And the Beast that was and is not, himself also is an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition." Thus the context fixes the heads, not only in connection with a Roman seat, but to the peculiar and complete changes of its ruling powers, explaining that the last is an eighth, and yet one of the seven. It is the imperial form, which had been wounded to death (13:3), revived by the dragon as the resurrection-head of the empire rising up at the close against the risen Lord of glory. The introduction of other kingdoms or empires, south, north, and east, long before the Roman empire began, is out of the way imaginative; still more so the strangely unconnected episode, as that of the queried list of kings. Even in the heads, as here mistakenly separated from the kings, to make apostate Israel the seventh head of the Roman empire is a singularly wide if not wild conjecture. Hengstenberg followed by the late Dean Vaughan so took six of the heads, but the seventh to be the ten horns in a cluster! a not much happier guess than Israel, though somewhat more homogeneous. The context suffices to correct all such thoughts. The proposal was to explain the seven heads, which we have in vers. 9-11; then the ten horns, which follow in vers. 12-14.

Q.-Acts 20:7-11. Does not this scripture indicate that the remembrance of Christ in His Supper should be kept prominent, and that speaking save in praise, &c., should rather follow? E. P.

A.-Certainly the Holy Spirit records apostolic ruling and practice for our guidance, lest we should yield to the habits of Christendom. It was not " preaching " as in the A.V., but a discourse to the saints, prolonged unusually, because the apostle was about to depart on the morrow. Yet here as elsewhere no rigid law is laid down, and an exception might be due to urgent need of a special kind. " Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." But undoubtedly it is well to learn from those given by the grace of Christ to teach us His ways in every assembly. Common sense, excellent for the world, is out of court for the church. We are called to walk by faith, not by sight, and are sanctified to obedience.

Young Christian: Volume 2, 1912, Breaking of Bread, The: Acts 20:7

“This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come” (See Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-26)

Our first thought should be, We have come together to meet the Lord; He is in the midst (Matt. 18:20). We are in His presence.

“Gathered to My name” is the condition attached to the promise of His presence.

We can claim the promise, if we are gathered in holiness and truth, for He is “holy” and “true” (Rev. 3:7). To Him alone the Holy Spirit, who is also called the Spirit of truth, gathers us in separation from evil and in the unity of the Spirit.

Have we His presence in all our meetings? Yes, the promise applies to them all: breaking of bread, prayer, open meetings for ministry, study of the Word, or discipline, whenever we come together as an assembly.

Gospel meetings or those held on the responsibility of a servant of the Lord, are not assembly meetings, but may have the fellowship of those so gathered.

We should therefore keep before us the character of the meeting so that our hymns, scriptures read, worship or prayers, may be appropriate for the occasion.

When we come together to remember the Lord, and thus show His death till He come, which leads our hearts to worship Him, would not the Holy Spirit lead our thoughts towards the sufferings of the Lord, the lamb of God without blemish and without spot, and to the love that led Him down here to die for us? We remember Him in death.

The finished work and consequent glory of the Lord connects itself with this, as what has given us a standing before God. Thanksgiving fills our hearts for these blessings, but the occasion is higher than our blessings. We think of Himself and of His sufferings, and His perfection in them, and how He glorified God about sin.

We worship Him. “This do in remembrance of Me” expresses His desire that our hearts should follow Him in His path of suffering that led Him in love into death for us.

In keeping with this, we can see that if hymns are sung or scriptures are read before the breaking of bread, it should be such as would lead our thoughts into fellowship with the Saviour in His sufferings and death, of which the bread and the cup are symbols.

Ministry or prayer should be left till the Lord has had His portion in the adoration and praises from the hearts of His redeemed people.

We do not want nor need rules, for we have Himself in the midst. We have liberty, not for the flesh, but of the Spirit. We are guests at His table; deep reverence therefore becomes us in His presence.

Avoid a criticizing spirit, for that destroys worship in the soul, robs it of its happiness, and the Saviour is robbed of His praise from it. We must not be occupied with failure in each other. The Lord bears the iniquity of our holy things (Ex. 28:38). If anything comes in that tends to mar, let the heart cleave still closer to Christ, the eye more firmly fixed on Him, seeing no man but “Jesus only,” that praise to Him in our hearts may not be hindered.

It is a time for worship, where we present and He receives our “spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

If the Lord leads us to some ministry after the remembrance of Him, it is good; but do not let us cut short His praises, if there is liberty in worship to go on. It is not out of order before separating for a brother to commend us and all the church of God to His care, remembering tried ones and absent ones, and giving the assembly as such an interest in praying for the gospel towards the unsaved.

The prayer meeting, which is next in importance, has a different object. We come to tell the Lord our desires for His glory and His people’s good, and for the spread of the gospel. Someone has said, “The prayer meeting is the pulse of the assembly and shows its condition.” Those who neglect it, neglect a great privilege of fellowship with the Lord. He never neglects it.

In this and in other assembly meetings the subjects are more general, but we can count on the Lord’s presence and the guidance and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Words of Faith: Volume 3, Wait

WHAT I would desire to note here, is the attitude that is taken up by these men, and indeed by all the disciples, on the departure of the Lord to heaven. It was a complete change to them naturally. He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight-He was no longer an object of sight; and that is a matter of great importance to the soul to note. You see, they steadfastly look toward heaven; that is to say, they looked towards the place that Jesus had gone to, and, in spirit, that is the attitude abidingly; still, it was with their natural sight, and then they have an angelic communication. We may say that is the last communication they had as earthly people. Angelic communications are made to those who belong to the earth; angelic communications are not what we have now, but spiritual communications through the word. We do not look for angelic communications; we may have angelic communications, of course-God sent an angel to Peter, but the attitude of the church upon earth is not much under the principle of angelic communications, if at all. It is when the church is viewed as having failed we find angelic and prophetic communications, and this we see in other scriptures, as in the book of Revelation.

However, this angelic communication was to stop their gaze up to heaven with the natural eye, and the angel addresses them, too, as those outside Israel, those outside the natural order of Israel; he addresses them as Galileans: Galilee was a place of no esteem in Israel-a despised people. " Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" He who was gone would come as He went, and so they were to wait. That

put them into another position altogether, and we must bear in mind that the Holy Ghost had not yet been given. Still, it is a very important attitude, because they had been carried on to the end of the one thing, and had not yet been introduced into the other; and what could they do? It is the history of a soul at the present time, or should be, if God has been pleased to convert it, it waits on Him for the next step-yet how few do!

The soul must have a lodgment somewhere; they had that instinct, which is very blessed-we will wait till we see what is next to be done; and they had to wait till they had the power, so to speak, and that came at Pentecost. This angelic communication seals the past, the book is shut, they had no more of it, and then they did. the right thing-they returned to Jerusalem, abode apart, by themselves, and waited. That is a lesson to us from those who we suppose were not so wise as we are (because the Holy Ghost, remember, was not yet given). Till they had got notice of the next move, they were not going to move themselves. We are slow to learn this line of things; if we leave the next move to God always, we are sure to be right; if we move on our own account, we are sure to go wrong. There is a remarkable thing as to this, too: they abode together. They are all mentioned individually by name, they were all there but Judas, and the women also-a wonderful company. It is well for us to note it, and to meditate on it-there is not one left out

There is, in contrast with that, another company, in John 20 they were gathered together, but one of them is absent. They were in the same spirit and attitude, but the Lord had not ascended, He was on the earth, but not as before His death. To them He spoke those wonderful words, which abide, with all their weightiness, to this day: " Peace unto you;" and He skews them the ground of peace-the wounds that He will bear throughout eternity, the wounds wherewith He was wounded in the house of His friends-the wounds that mark the ground of that peace. But it is His own personal presence that arrests them: " Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." It does not say, Then were the disciples glad when they saw the wounds, but they were glad when they saw Himself-it was gladness from the effect of His presence!'

It is not so much the intelligence, as the affections, that are in exercise; not so much even the peace-blessed as that is-but it is the enjoyment of the actual presence of the One they knew and loved, and, what was more, who loved them. There He was, and that is what satisfied them. But even this gathering, blessed as it was, was marked by an absent one-Thomas was not there.

How very sad! Very sad indeed that there is such a thing in a gathering of disciples, and that it should be characterized by an absent one, or an absentee. Such is the failure, of the church; man has ruined it, and the sense that remains upon the soul, when there is a gathering of saints, is, there are absent ones. It was so at that very first gathering; there was the absent Thomas; and it is so, now; and Thomas had to realize afterward what that absence was. There had been disciples gathered together, but he was not there; and we get the unbelieving mind, with its consequences. Here, in Acts 1, there was no absent one, except Judas-he naturally could not be there. We have a gathering here, but not so much from the intelligence of the truth the Holy Ghost gives, as from the affections of their heart for Christ. Just the heart-it says, I cannot go into anything, because of the absence of the Lord. They could do nothing, they were not settled. If I am unsettled, is it because I have no expectations except the return of the Lord? That is what keeps us from settling down here. We are waiting our Lord's return; the sleeping saints are waiting-all the dead in Christ-I must take them in, in spirit; when the Lord comes, all will be present then-not only all those that are on the earth, but all that are in the graves-the dead in Christ; it will not be till then, therefore we must be satisfied to wait together.

In the next chapter this attitude is responded to so far, that the Holy Ghost comes down, and that starts them in a new thing; if it had not been for that, where would they have been eventually? Scattered here, there, and everywhere, no doubt. But we find them all gathered together with one accord, and in one place, on the day of Pentecost, and the Holy Ghost descends upon them all, upon each of them, besides filling the house.

At the end of the chapter (Acts 2) we get again what we have in the first chapter, but now in the power of the Holy Ghost. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, &c. (and there is no other doctrine, and no other fellowship), and in the breaking of bread, and in prayer. It did not spoil the sense of His coming; when God comes in, and there is another step forward, it does not alter the first attitude, but confirms it. They had the Holy Ghost, they continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. This is where we are at the present day. This abides, and nothing else-there is no other fellowship corporately. May the Lord, in His grace, press this upon our souls; that we may use our endeavors not to come short of it for our own comfort and blessing, for His name's sake. W. F. B.

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE. THE GOSPEL BY MATTHEW.

40. MATTHEW-gift of God, son of Alpheus (not the Alpheus of chapter 10. 3). The sovereign grace of God is conspicuous in the call of Matthew to the apostolic office, as also in being the Holy Spirit's chosen penman in the unfolding of the Messianic glories of Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, the Savior of Israel, Immanuel and Jehovah. Matthew, previous to and at the moment of his " call," was engaged in an occupation justly abhorred by every orthodox Jew. He was a collector of the duties imposed by the Romans on the fisheries and merchandise crossing the sea of Galilee. Every tax levied on the conquered people and their goods was grudgingly paid, and the officers appointed for the purpose were classed with sinners and harlots. Matthew was not one of the favored three privileged to be with the Lord in the scene of death (Luke 8:51), in witnessing His glory on the " holy mount " (Matt. 17:1), or in the profound scene of His agony (Matt. 26:37.) He is not once mentioned in the Acts and Epistles. No saying of his is recorded-no direct word to the Lord, and the only incident in which his name specially figures is in the "great feast " which he provided in. his own house for a numerous company. (Luke 5:29.)

The object of the Gospel is to present the Lord in formal Jewish relationship according to Old Testament. prophecy. Thus we have more citations from and references to the former oracles of God in this Gospel (about 80), than will be found in the other Gospels collectively. There is a dignity and majesty about the discourses and parables recorded here yet, withal, a tinge of sadness pervades these truly magnificent, complete, and orderly series, for they were uttered by Israel's rejected Savior and Messiah. It is characteristically the Gospel of the kingdom, hence the frequent use of the expression " kingdom of heaven "-about 33 times only found here. The legal and royal genealogy of the Lord through Joseph is here traced from David (royalty) and. Abraham (promise), not as in Luke, where the civil genealogy through Mary is traced up to Adam.

DIVISIONS.

Chapters 1. and 3. Jesus by birth, genealogy, and scripture proved to be the Jehovah of Israel and King of the Jews. Chapter 3 John Baptist bears testimony to Christ as Jehovah, and God owns Him as His beloved Son. Chapter 4 Authority of Christ in overcoming Satan and in calling

disciples. Chapters v.-vii. The Great Mountain Sermon, in which Christ fulfills and ex-. pounds the law and prophets, and reveals the Father's name and character. Chapters 8-7. Various dispensational displays of Christ from Jehovah to Son of man -rejected in these characters, He pronounces the judicial judgment of Israel. Chapter 13 Outer and inner history of the kingdom of heaven, consequent upon the rejection of Judah according to Isa. 6, which compare with Matt. 13:14. Chapter 14 Beautiful dispensational picture from the death of John Baptist till. the Lord's return in blessing to Israel. Chapter 15 The heart of man, and the heart and grace of God in contrast therewith. Chapter 16 The church and the kingdom; Christ builds the former, Peter administers the latter. Chapter 17 The Son of Man glorified and in suffering, instead of a reigning Messiah amongst the Jews. Chapters 18 -20. 16. Principles and truths of the kingdom. Chapters 20. 17-. 16. Christ's last journey to Jerusalem and final presentation to Israel. Chapters 21. 17- 22. 14. Israel judged according to her responsibility as the fig-tree and vineyard, as also by her rejection of the grace of God-the wedding of the King's Son. Chapters 22. 15-23. The chiefs of the nation and religious guides severally come up for judgment. Chapters 24-25. The Lord's great prophetic discourse. Chapters 26.-18. The closing hour of sorrow, death, and resurrection, but in keeping with the character of the Gospel throughout, no ascension to heaven: the Lord rejoins His disciples in Galilee, according to chapter 26. 32.

(Continued front page 236.)

Kentucky Conference: 2011, Acts 1:1-14

Reading

In my heart, I'd like to share, brethren, as a possibility of taking up in our reading, and that is. The Lord Jesus. As the man who send it up into heaven. And uh, from thence united us together as his people on earth, a heavenly man. I'm thinking about the 1St chapter of Acts, the first part of it, and then possibly going on to the 9th chapter where he revealed himself to Paul as the heavenly man. Stop. So you were thinking of the 1St 14 verses of. Harvard uh, just the 1St 14 verses. Would that be enough for the first meeting? Acts chapter one and verse one. The former critiques have I made Oceanophilus of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up. After that He, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them 40 days, and Speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which said he, He had heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but he shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the time for the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me. Both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? The same Jesus? Which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then return they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a silent day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where bold goes Peter and James, and John, and Andrew Phillips, and Thomas Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelodes. And Judas, the brother of James, These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. Luke, the writer of this. Look referred in the first verse of his former treatise which is the book of Luke which gives us the ministry of the Lord Jesus on earth. But Christianity begins after that. Christianity begins with the Lord Jesus going up into heaven. And there's a lot of confusion and mixing of these things, the things that apply to earth and the things that apply to heaven. And it's good for us to see that in Christianity. That is since the Lord has gone up into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit down. That we have a relationship with him as a man in heaven, no longer here on earth. His place here on earth has to do more with what he will establish in the future day. A Millennium, a blessing on earth. And we must keep those two things distinct in order to be able to rightly divide the word of God. And I, I think it would, it's nice to notice.

In these verses that we read how clear it becomes that the Lord Jesus went up into heaven and the these verses explain how there is something new going to take place. OK. It's difficult for us in 2011 to really put our minds back into what these people to whom we've just read about, what they thought and what they saw, what they knew. But these were those who had looked for the Messiah. Their whole history, their whole background was connected with. Being Jews and what we would call Judaism and a religion established of God for an earthly people, they knew all about Abraham and Moses and their forefathers both their what might be looked at as victories and what might be looked at as failures among them. And now one had come, and they had accepted him as the true Messiah, and throughout the whole of his life right up to his death. They looked for him to fulfill the promises of the Messiah to Israel. And they did not understand the over and over again told them he was going to have to die. In John's gospel we have a number of chapters in the last few hours really, of his life and days which he prepares them for the period of time when he's going to die and be separated from them and return to heaven. In Luke 24 you find the two on the way to Emmaus and they're saying we trust that it had been he which should have restored Israel and so at his death. There was a feeling of loss. Because they had believed in Him as the Messiah and all their hopes were connected with Israel and the earth. And it carries right on here into this chapter. He's not only died, He's risen again. He's with them in resurrection. And what do they say? What's on their mind? They pick right up. Oh, it's so wonderful. He's raised from the dead. But they say they asked him the question. Verse 6, Lord. Wilt thou at this time? Restore again the Kingdom to Israel. In other words, their minds, their thoughts, their aspirations, their hopes, we're still connected with what they've had all their life. In spite of the fact that he had died and that He had told them clearly and plainly that He was going to leave them and return to heaven, He had said on the resurrection morning to Mary, touch me not. And he begins again to tell them about a new relationship that they were going to have with himself. And here he is in the last of his 40 days on Earth, and he's leaving them, and they're still needing to learn that their relationship with him is going to be in a totally new and different way. They're no longer people of Earth, but he's going to disappear out of their sight into the cloud. He's going to go back to the glory. He's going to be glorified of the Father and that place. And then as Doug introduced the subject. They were going to be brought a few days later into a relationship with himself that had nothing anymore to do with the earth except as a witness for him here. But their hope, their aspiration, their life, their object and everything else in their lives is now connected with a man in heaven. I remember one time at a Bible conference just like this the question was raised what is Christianity and someone said well Christianity can be summed up in one word, Christ. But that needs explanation because

it's been already brought out. It's Christ in a relationship that was not known prior to Christianity. It's not Christ the way the disciples knew him on earth.

They knew the Lord Jesus when he was here, they saw with their eyes and their hands had handled of the word of life, but has been brought out. They were going to be brought into a relationship with himself that was not previously known. And so Christianity is really an association with Christ in glory. And it's important to understand that Christianity not only presents to us a risen Christ. That's true. Because if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain and ye are still in your sins. But it also presents to us an ascended Christ, a Christ who is not here on earth the way he was physically in the days of his public ministry and the work that he took up and the work of atonement. And he's not associated with his own in the way he was. And as you say with Mary, it's, it's shown very, very clearly. And so the resurrection and the ascension and glorification of Christ were God's Amen to the work of Calvary. And now the Spirit of God, as we're going to notice, has associated us with Christ in different ways. Henceforth know we know man after the flesh, though we knew Christ after the flesh, henceforth know we him no more. So it's not just Christ in resurrection, but it's Christ in ascension. And that's why our hopes and our goals in Christianity. Are not connected with this world in any way. We have been detached from this world in every way except the fact that we're still here physically. That's the only thing that connects us still to this planet Earth, is that we're here physically. But in every other way we are associated with the heavenly man. And that's why we refer to ourselves as a heavenly people with a heavenly calling. It's good to notice, too, that this book of Acts is a book of transition from Judaism to Christianity, and that the Spirit of God is very prominent throughout the whole book. And so in the second verse you have the Holy Ghost. He, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments. Under the apostles whom he had chosen, and so, in very real patience, the blessed Savior. Had with his people Israel. It wasn't until the very last chapter of this book that the apostle Paul could speak and he says in verse 28, chapter 28 and verse 28 of the book of the Acts. He said be it known therefore unto you. That the salvation of God is centered in the Gentiles and that they will hear it. And so when patience, the Spirit of God has been striving even to this day with those Jews. I would just mention that there's other one other thing that's very prominent that you'll find at the beginning, particularly the book of Acts, and that is the large upper room. And it is mentioned here, I believe in verse 13. When they were come in, they went up into the upper room. It should read where both Peter and John, James and John and so on. And so the Lord had arranged that they would be together. And when the church was formed in chapter 2, I believe perhaps this is in the upper room as well in chapter 2 and verse one. And you'll see this little phrase that fused throughout the beginning chapters of this book. They were all with one accord in one place, and so unity was one of the things that the Spirit of God had striven for, and is formed of God in connection with the Christian testimony. In verse two it says after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments under the apostles whom he had chosen. Well, that's. I was thinking of Luke chapter 24. Verse 48 He uh. For verse 46. And said unto them, Thus it is written, And thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you.

But Terry, in the city of Jerusalem until you be endowed with power among high. I think it's sweet to see there the promise of my father. And then in John chapter. 14 and verse 26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things. And bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not, as the world giveth, give I unto you. The. 16th chapter. There's 13, albeit when either spirit of truth is come. He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you all things that the Father hath our mind therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. I think it's sweet to see here that it's through the Holy Ghost that he gives those commandments. And it's. It's they're waiting, isn't it, those 10 more days? And then you get real Christianity. Yeah. That's probably why he doesn't answer all their questions in this chapter, because the Holy Spirit hadn't come down yet. That was needful for the believers to be able to lay hold of these things. The whole that's the what the when the Lord Jesus went up into heaven. Then it was needful for the Spirit of God to come down and to link us with the man in heaven and to bring us into that relationship. The Spirit of God is the power and the link between US and Christ. When we believe on, on the Lord, we receive the Spirit of God. We are indwelt by the Spirit of God. We are capacitated to enjoy that relationship. We have that unction, that power, the, the known relationship with him. And uh, then we can understand and enter into these things. So it, it separates us as a people unto him. Yes, I was thinking of that, because sometimes we read the Gospels and, or even this chapter and we shake our heads and say, well, they ought to have known better because there'd been no lack of instruction as to what was going to take place. You pointed out some things in the Upper Room ministry, Lemoyne, and we find there that the Lord Jesus very, very carefully went over many things in the Upper Room with them. Why did he do that? Because the hour was come that he should depart out of the world under the Father. He had come from God and He was going to return to God, and in preparation He brings many things before them. But the Lord Jesus knew Himself that while they were listening to His words, they did not have the capacity at that time to understand the true significance of what He was saying to them. He says it to them, but then, as you pointed out, He remarks Himself that when the Spirit of God would come, it would bring these things to their remembrance. What he had spoken and really confirm and give them understanding as to what he was saying. And so we shake our heads sometimes that the disciples and say, well, they should have known the things the Lord was Speaking of. They should have known that he wasn't going to establish the Kingdom and at this time and so on. But brethren, what about us? We have far, far greater capacity and responsibility than the disciples had before the day of Pentecost or. Even in the early days of the church, because not only do we have the Spirit of God with us and in US to make these things good to our souls, but we have the completed word of God. They couldn't go to the epistle. They couldn't see the the see Christianity explained and the fruition of what was really in the heart of God as a result of the work of Christ and the ascension and so on. They didn't have that.

That's why in the early Acts you often find that Peter and different ones, they drew on Old Testament portions and gave almost what seemed strange applications, but they had nothing else to go on. And so I simply say we're far more responsible. We have all things that pertain unto life and godliness and to to. I'm going to use the word to regress from what has been given to us as to the. Position and blessing of Christianity and the relationship it's brought us into, brethren, is a very serious thing. It was one thing for them. They were moving towards things as the light was being given, the Spirit of God was given and then further light. And as you say, Robert, it was a transitional period. They were moving toward the light and Christianity and full revelation. But brethren, as we see many Christians moving away. Regressing from what has been given and going to back and looking for the Kingdom and so on and not understanding true Christian position. We're we're going to be held very, very responsible. We need to tenaciously cling to and go over these precious truths that associate us with Christ in Christianity. Just like to briefly turn to Ephesians chapter one. It was specifically given the revelation of what we're talking about. We've not really given to Peter or some of the other apostles, but after. And chapter 8, if you will, anticipating what Doug said about chapter 8, we come to the apostle Paul. He is the one that is given of God to explain or to make known to us what was happening in Acts where we have the facts

of the transition. But in Ephesians chapter one. That he says to it and not to try to go over the whole chapter but just verse 5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, He and then verse six, accepted in the beloved, and then the work of redemption, and so on. And then He brings before us, umm, verse 13, In whom after he trusted, after that He heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and whom also after you believed you were sealed. This is the Holy Spirit with the Holy Spirit of promise. Umm, then he says, and he has a prayer for them, that they'll understand what he's saying to them. And so here in verse 18, it says the eyes of your understanding, being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints. Verse 20 which he rotting Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand. In the heavenly places, that's His glorification that we've referred to far above all principality and power and might and dominion, in every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of him that filleth All in all. Or to briefly summarize this. God purpose. From the past eternity, that His Son in becoming a man would honor him on the earth and glorify him here as a man on earth. But then God was going to after his work was done, which cost him his life, and he died, raised him from the dead as one who had so honored him on earth among men and glorified him in the matter of sin. He said, Now, son, if you will Christ, he takes him out of the state of death, and he puts him at his own right hand. In a place of honor and a place of glory. And at that point he can begin to act with people on earth and say, I have a calling for people on earth. I want them to be associated with my Son in this place in which he now is this place of glory and this place of honor. I want him to have a heavenly bride that is associated with him in his place of honor and glory.

And it's then in order to have such that He sends the Holy Spirit down on earth to form such people with a heavenly calling, to be associated with a glorified ascended Christ. And from that point on, God's work by the Spirit is to gather out of the nations of the earth people who will be associated forever. With His Son in that place of honor and glory. And to me, a wonderful just extra thought about it. When the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and John's gospel, it was to make the God of heaven known, the Father known to man on earth. But now that the Son who made the Father known as a man to us on earth and brought God, if you will, down in the person of the sun to manifest him among men, now, as it were, he turns it around and he says, but I'm going to open heaven up to you and I'm going to declare what's in heaven. And so I want you to know my Son as he now is in the place I have given him in heaven. And so the sun sits at the Father's right hand in heaven, and he sends the Spirit of God down on earth to work and us to make us know and enjoy and understand the what's going on in our home, in heaven, in the Father's house. And so a divine. Just as the Lord Jesus, God was on earth the Son of God. So God, the Spirit is on earth today for the, a purpose that connects us with heaven. It's wonderful, brethren, to see the provision of God for us to accomplish his purposes. Isn't that a beautiful answer to their question? Will thou restore again to Israel, the Kingdom? Uh, and the two of that are on the way to Emmaus and being sad and, and thinking all things were out of control and. And and God and God's Son have been crucified. It just looked like every purpose had been frustrated when man rejected the Lord Jesus on earth. God says I got one better for you. I want to raise man up into heaven and glorify him there. And what we're discussing is the development of this. These verses in Ephesians are the full development of it that was purposed in the past eternity. That God is now accomplishing in US and taking us, the people from earth to heaven. And so if man will not have Christ on earth as a king here and to set the world right, then God says then I will have him in glory. And moreover, I'm going to give him a people to be with him there. And that's what's taking place now. The Spirit of God is gathering together a people to gather them there. And when heaven is full, the Lord will take us all there. That is when the last one is saved. I mean, so when you see this, the development of it is just beautiful. The acts that we're reading are the beginning of how this is all working out. And I'd like to say, too, to apply it to ourselves today, brethren, we see them. We see the end of that age in which he was working with Israel for a time. We see. And they saw it as total disorder. Everything was out of kilter. The Messiah had been put as they believed him to be, had been put to death, and everything was in total disorder. And they were perplexed by what was going on. We're at the end of the next phase, if you will, of the ways of God with man. We're down at the end of it. We can look at it and be, oh, you know, the mess that's taking place in this world today. What's the financial situation going to do? And what's gonna, what's the end of the economy and how's the United States gonna be affected? And what about me and my job? And what it's going to be like with me tomorrow or next week or next year. And we see this country morally going down every generation and every year and so on. And we can be perplexed, we can have anxiety, we can be frustrated even by it all.

But what's God's side of it? He's finishing up a work. The end result. What's the end result of all that's taking place right now? A completed bribe for his son. There's not a single thing happening in the world today that God isn't over all working out His purposes, which will have a perfect end result that to us, we might be frustrated because if we're not occupied with Him and what He's doing, then we're concerned about. The way life is going, good or bad or elsewhere in our personal lives and so on. But if you were in heaven, if we could be in heaven this afternoon and we could say, oh, God is perfectly finishing this wonderful work that he is doing to create, uh, the, the, the bride in all that. And when all that work is done, then he'll bring to a close this period of time. And the end result will be perfect according to God. And then he will start on. There's a transition going on perhaps right at this moment on the earth. And transition, that's what's coming after we're gone. And so he's lining things and preparing things, just like Axe was a transition period. The dispensations of God overlap and they have transitions between them. We may be this afternoon in the transition. Period between the end of what we call the day of grace and the beginning of what's going to be known when it half starts is the tribulation, and we're in that overlap period between the two. Is everything going according to schedule and according to God's control? Yes, it is, and we ought to sit with thankful hearts and confidence spirits in that. Any moment it's going to come to its close and we might be just as surprised as the disciples were. If we are in the same. Lack of but we we shouldn't be, as Jim said, we have by the Spirit of God every reason to have an understanding that they could not and did not have on the when the acts one was taking place. And so we should be aware of what's going on around us in the world. As we said earlier in these meetings, we're not isolationists, but there's a difference between being aware and overwhelmed. And if we keep in mind what Brother Dawn has said. We can be aware without being overwhelmed. And you talk to Christians today, they love the Lord and they're going to, we're going to share eternity together, but through Miss Teaching and so on, they're looking for brighter days down here in the establishment of the Kingdom. And we're a moral force to change the world and all these kinds of things you hear, but talk to them a while. You'll find that they're often overwhelmed because brethren, if we're looking for better things down here. We've got to admit it's not getting any better things as far as outwardly, yes, God is in control, but outwardly things are not getting better in this world. They're getting more unstable all the time as far as the kingdoms of men and governments and social, political things and the morals and all that kind of thing. And if we're looking to build better days down here and prepare for the Kingdom now. It's going to, like the disciples, overwhelm and discourage us. And not only were the two on the way to Emmaus sad when they thought of the Lord, the Kingdom and the restoration of it, and then it didn't seem like it was going to happen and so on. But even in the upper room, the disciples hearts were troubled and afraid. The Lord said to them, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Why did he say that? Because he knew what their hearts were like. And he knew how they were feeling on that occasion. And they were thinking about the Lord he was preparing to leave them and they must have thought, well now what are we going to do? We

thought things were going to get better and we were going to be delivered and we'd be sit on his right hand and left hand in the Kingdom and we'd have a part in the administration and we'd be out from under Roman suppression and so on. And now it it's all falling apart. He's going back to heaven. But he gives them a number of things for their comfort there. In fact, if you just. I know we've noticed it before, but just take a moment because it goes right along with what brother Dawn was saying.

Right at the beginning of that 14th chapter, he gives them really three things for their comfort. He says, let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God. I'll stop there man. You know they had believed in God whom they'd never seen. Now he says, believe all, swing me. In other words, what he's saying is you believed in God whom you've never seen. Now from now on you're going to have to believe in me in the same way you're no longer going to see me with the physical eye. And so after he had remained on earth long enough to give confirmation to his own that he had bodily risen from the dead, the cloud received him out of their sight, and they saw him no more with the physical eye. And Peter says in his epistle, Whom not having seen ye love, though now you see him not yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He says, I'm associating you now with me. Not on earth in a physical way, but you're going to have to put your confidence and trust in me in the same way you have believed in God, whom you've never seen. And then he gives in the second verse, the Father's house. This isn't your abiding place. This isn't your home. And brethren, this sad world that's getting worse is not our home. And then the third thing is the promise that He's going to come himself and take them to that home. But you see, again, He sought to detach them in every way. From the hopes and aspirations that they had as Jewish men looking for the Kingdom at that time, yes, they didn't understand it. But we go back and we see it and we take it up and understand the significance of it. One other thing in connection with the the glorification of Christ in the 7th of John, it says that the Spirit was not yet given. Why? Because Jesus was not yet glorified. The Spirit of God could not be given in the way it was on the day of Pentecost till the Lord Jesus had accomplished the work of redemption, risen from the dead, and gone back as a glorified man to be seated by God at God's right hand. And that's why the Lord again said to the disciples, It's expedient that I go away. If I don't go away, you'll never be brought into the relationship that I have, that God has for you that I have in mind. Brethren, what we enjoy in as to relationship with the Father and the Son today. Is a far deeper and more intimate relationship that anyone previous to Christianity ever enjoyed. Abraham was the friend of God. Moses spoke with with God as a friend speaks face to face, but they never enjoyed the disciples who walked in intimacy with the Lord. They never enjoyed until the coming of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost and the dawn of Christianity. The relationship and the blessings that were he had in store for them and everything that we have today and enjoy is a result. Of the glorification of Christ, and then, and only then, the descent of the Spirit of God. First aid is a nutshell. In a nutshell, the very last words that the Lord Jesus spoke to his disciples here and he told them what he was going to do as brother Dawn is brought before us in a very orderly way throughout the entire book of the book of Acts. And so it says you shall receive power. That's really chapter 2, the first few verses after that, the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me. Both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And so we need to recognize that the there are a couple of divisions in this book. In the first approximately 11 Chapters. Really. Peter is very prominent in those chapters. And the Lord in very gracious way allows the gospel to go forth first in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then in Samaria and then in connection with Cornelia. Cornelius is safe and umm, the Gentiles begin to come into blessing. And then you have in Chapter 11, I'm just going to point this out in Chapter 11 and verse 19, it says now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as finesse and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none, but unto the Jews only, and some of them that were men of Cyprus and Cyrene.

Which when they were come to Antioch, spake under the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus, and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned under the Lord. Then tidings of these things came under the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch. And then in verse 25 then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul. That was approximately 5 years after Saul was saved. And he had been in the school of God now for five years, and the Lord was ready to use him, and he came down. And they were first called Christians in Antioch. But I think it's very nice, lovely to see in the book of Acts the order and the consistency of God with himself and in a holy character that he brings the gospel forth before those rebellious Jews. But in grace he does it in kindness. So I wondered if that's why he didn't answer the question. Verse seven of our chapter with the guest or no, He says it is not for you to know the times of the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. Luke mentions in his gospel the 13th chapter in verse six about the fig tree which usually we attach to the nation of Israel. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, came and sought fruit thereon and found none. Then said he, under the dresser of his vineyard, behold these three years that his ministry on earth I come seeking fruit on the fig tree, and find none. Cut it down like cumber hit the ground. Any answering said unto him, Lord, Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. So it seems to me anyway, that He is giving space there for a continued work in the gospel to Israel in the beginning of Acts, because. That's pretty much who the gospel was given to in the first, uh, 7 chapters. And then they stoned Stephen, who spoke to them with words that were spirit moved and they rejected that message. So in chapter eight of our book, we get the salvation of the Ethiopian unit, and that's from the family of Ham. Then in Chapter 9, we get the salvation of the Apostle Paul. And that's from the family of Shem. And then in chapter 10, we get the salvation of Cornelius the Roman centurion, and that is from the family of Japheth. So that when he says in the Gospel of John, if I and I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all men unto me, that's all without distinction. It's not all without exception. It's all without distinction. And so. We see this dispensationally worked out in these first ten chapters of the Book of Acts. In that connection, it's nice to notice the very end of Acts, the third, the 3rd to the last verse, just to, to finish the circle, uh, how the book of Acts, this transition time, umm, ends up is uh, Paul is a prisoner in Rome. The Roman Empire was ruling at that time and he says in verse 28. Uh, Vietnam, therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. So that was kind of the end of the outreach charge. The Jews and now the Gentiles are. Are the ones that got specifically sends his message out too to the whole world. The Jews were the chosen people to receive the Old Testament ordinances and everything, but when they rejected it, they had first chance. But when they rejected it, God was free to bless anybody and everybody indiscriminately according to His grace and still be. Just in doing it. And so in Christianity, all blessing comes to us because of Jesus Christ, the man who died and went into heaven.

Along these lines, to another thought of go to. Romans, not Romans. Where do they want to go? And 1St Thessalonians chapter one. Here's the preaching of the Gospel to the Thessalonians. They are accepting it. He summarizes to them what has happened. Verse nine of chapter one of First Thessalonians. They themselves show unto us what manner of entering in we had unto you, how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus. And I'm going to read the new translation, Our Deliverer from the coming raft and then over in Revelation chapter 6. For commenting on that verse. In Revelation chapter 6. And verse 15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the captains, and the mighty men, and every bondsman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and

hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath has come, and who shall be able to stand? We might think the world is in a mess today, and it is. But. It's nothing compared to what's coming very shortly. And what happened is that when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth 2000 years ago and he was rejected and cast out, we will not have this man said the world. And they cast him out of the world. God at that point in time at the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus and the Lord himself said it now is the judgment of this world. That is God at that point in time judged the world as a whole and said, you world stand responsible for having cast out my son. And there's going to be wrath, there's going to be judgment for it. And so God chose not to bring upon the world at that time the wrath. Of His judgment for having crucified His Son, but rather He has withheld the time and seasons of what He is going to do. Is He going to do it? Yes, He is. But in His great love toward mankind, He said, no, I'm not going to bring my wrath yet. I'm going to have a period of time that you didn't know about, that you couldn't find in the Old Testament that none of your prophet knew about. I'm gonna have a period of time which we today call the day of grace because it's a time when God's grace to mankind as a whole is going out to man in what we call the gospel of his grace. And it's to this we've had that transition. It's it's first to the Jew and now to the Gentile as well, and also to the man that has returned to the glory and sits at the right hand. And as the glorified man in the grace of God, he says, I have something better for those that will accept my grace. And I'm going to carry them up and give them that place with him as his bride and the one who will be with him in his days of glory in the coming future of what we call the Millennium. But. If I if I could put it this way, brethren, we live in a pretty good day. We live in a pretty good day compared to what's right around the corner. The days of that, of what's going on, we think of as difficult and bad. They're good days by comparison to what's ahead and maybe just around the corner ahead. Because as he said to the Thessalonians, you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven.

What is the end, if you will, of this period of time? The sun from heaven, delivering all of His own that are still to have this wonderful place and glory with Himself, our deliverer from the coming wrath. And as soon as we who may this afternoon be delivered from the coming wrath, then the bad days are coming, and they're gonna be awful days. And we read just the beginning of the bad days found in Revelation 6. When they start to come, the people of the world, do you think they're just they're a bit worried about the economy and and a war here and a war there and the the weather and so on? Yes, they are. But what will their attention be then? Will it be on the economy? Will it be on the weather? Will it be on what's happening in this country or that? No, it won't. It'll say who can deliver us from the wrath of the Lamb? Who can deliver us from the wrath of God? And then? That's the worst days this world will ever know fall upon it. And so God wants us not to be worried or anxious, but to be thankful to have His promise that we have to deliver from what's just ahead. Well, thank you. We I think we covered what I had on my heart. Shall we sing 44 in the appendix? The second verse says, deep in unfathomable minds of never failing skill, he treasures up his bright designs, and works his sovereign will. 44 in the appendix. Wandering. In there all the same predator. Is taking. The plow against all my stress. Our Penguin. Burger King and shall pray. And glad to see you love your head. I'm breathing out.

Aberdeen Conference: 2023, Acts 1:1-8

Reading

Shall we break? God pray that the him that we just sung. Maybe the desires of our heart. And we do thank thee again this afternoon. That we can look up to that blessed resource all blessings come from. We thank Thee for the love that was in my heart, our dog and father. Send thy beloved son into this world to save the likes of us. We are so humbled when we think that we have been brought into such a place of blessing. We know it to be true, and we thank thee that we're not going to be here in this world. Very much longer. We're going to see the Lord Jesus face to face, to be with him like thee for the everlasting ages of eternity. Oh what love, what grace to think we who were sinners that spit in thy face. Can now enjoy thy presence for all eternity. We know that on earth. Our song begins, however, and we. Just pray, especially this afternoon. That thou was directest to the portion of Thy precious word that would be exactly needed for each one of us. We know that Thou art able to do that, and we are waiting upon Thee and trusting in Thee, our God. To make thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, more precious to our hearts. We know that without the Lord Jesus we can do nothing. Thus told us that and we. Know it to be true, and so we just pray that the flesh might be kept in check, and that there might be a waiting upon thee, that we may all be edified. That we just count upon thee for blessing to direct us to the right word. We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. I'd like to suggest Acts chapter 2. The Lord. It also may be as a preface to that. I think the 1St 15 verses of chapter one. I don't know how my brethren feel. I wasn't here for the prayer meeting. I don't want Mr. Tenor, the Lord's mind as to any direction. Might have been. Might have been leading us to so if another feels that another portion would be more suitable. And happy to defer. Pretty good to me, brother Steve. I was thinking of the 1St. 14 verses of chapter one and then maybe pick up at verse one and chapter 2. For this reading, probably just down to verse 13. Acts chapter one. The former treaties have I made, oh Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. Until the day in which he was taken up, after He, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen. To whom also He showed himself alive after His passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them 40 days, and Speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, and being assembled together with them, commended them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father. Which saith he, he have heard of me For John truly ******** with water. But ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days since, when they therefore were come together. They asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times for the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power after that. The Holy Ghost has come upon you, and ye shall be witness unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when He had spoken these things while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, You men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This ain't Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven. Shall so come in like manner, as you have seen him go into heaven. Then return they unto Jerusalem, unto the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. When they were come in, they went up into an upper room. Abode both Peter and James, and John, and Andrew, and Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotis and Judas the brother of James, these all continue with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. And then at chapter 2, and when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind. And it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And

there was dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language, and they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another. Behold, are not these which speak Galileans? And how here we every man in his own tongue, wherein that we were born Parthians and Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Jutea, and Cappadocia, and Pontius, and Asia? Fergie and Pamphylia in Egypt, in the parts of Libya, right around Cyreni, the Syrian, the strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, creeds and agrabions. We do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said. These men are full of new wine. I was thinking of this portion as it gives the wonderful truths of the beginning of the Church of God. The beginning of what Paul later on brings out is the mystery that was hidden God. And the verses in chapter one as a preface to that help us to understand the the condition. That the disciples were in before the Lord was received back up in glory, and there are a number of passages there that have been. Very difficult and misunderstood by many Christians as well as what we have in chapter 2 and I feel like as the day progresses on as we wait for the Lord to come and more and more. Error comes into professing Christianity and these things that it might be good to have our hearts better established and the truth that's presented in these two chapters. There isn't an event. That is of greater importance to us that has taken place other than the work of the Cross. Itself than the descent of the Holy Spirit. Personally into this world. To take up his abode in the House of God and in believers individually as well. And all that flows from that. Perhaps the 1St? Thing that.

Would point out. Is in verse 2. Two says, Until the day which he was taken up, after that, He through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen. The Lord Jesus went into death. But you know, at the river Jordan, when he was baptized, the Spirit of God descended from heaven in bodily form like a dove, and took its abode up in that spotless man. And he went on in his public ministry, and all that he did was in the power of the Spirit of God. Right to the cross, and there in the cross, by the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot to God. He laid his life down. But when he was raised from the dead. Resurrected man. He still was indwelt by the Spirit of God. And so as he speaks in these 40 days that he's with his own, it is still in the power of the Spirit of God. He is still the habitation of the Spirit of God personally, himself. And that's important as we go on into chapter 2, but I'll just note it there. They often slip by that in verse two and don't necessarily pick it up, but it's an assurance too to you and I. We're in dwelt by the Spirit of God, as we'll get in chapter 2. And there are many of his own who have gone into death. The part of this scene, spirit and soul with Christ. When the Lord comes and they're raised, they're going to be still indwelt by the Holy Spirit as well. Is will in US forever? In the same pattern as the Lord. In the Spirit of God here now, his energy is so much. Focused on. Our walk giving us the power to walk here, for the Lord to judge ourselves to be separate from what would dishonor Him to whether it's internally or externally. But when the Lord comes and the Saints are raised. And those who are alive and remain are changed to be with him will all be still and dwelt by the Spirit of God. But what will his energy all be poured into them? Praise, worship, enjoyment of divine things. What is going to be the measure of our capacity of the enjoyment of God the Father and God the Son and divine things and all that awaits us in the coming day of glory? The fullness of the power of the Spirit of God indwelling you and me. There's no limit. What a capacity to enjoy all that God has for us. Unhindered by the flesh in that coming day. We often look at a passage and think that here's something new and it is is a very wonderful event. But we knew we knew that God had foreordained a lot of these events. So that's why looking at the Old Testament scriptures for principles are important. I'm thinking more particularly in the Seven Fees of Jehovah, where it already told us as if it were what's to come. So if you recall, in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, it starts started off by the Passover. Death has to come in first, the blood has to be shed, and then you have the feast of the first fruit on the set on the 17th day of the month. That's the resurrection day. What's important about the fees of the first fruits is they are told to count. Seven weeks and the Morrow after seven weeks, 7 * 7 is 49 days plus the next day. That makes it 50 days. Very interesting, isn't it? To see that God had all this in mind even before the foundation of this world, death and resurrection. And then fifty days later, we the church, brought in the blessing. In fact, if you go back to the chapter, you'll find that a new meal offering is to be made. You read through the Old Testament that a meal offering is to be offered without leaven, and we'll find this one is different is with leaven, but baked. Oh, is there so much? We can look at it and see how God had us in mind. The Gentiles now will be brought into blessings. Of course, salvation is of the Jew first, but now we're going to be brought into blessing. The Holy Spirit's going to descend into this world.

More so than just descending into this world. He's going to in dwell in US. What blessedness we have as Christians today. Like to comment that we began the conference with two hymns. First one began in with Christ, our theme begins. The second one was in hope we lift up our wishful longing eyes. Both of the hymns have the character of a journey with a destination connected with it, and in scripture it's full of journeys. The first most very significant one was Abraham was called to take on a journey. He was called to leave his where he lived and go to a land he did not know that God would show him when he obeyed and went out. And the children of Israel ended up in Egypt because of the disobedience. But to get to the promised land, Moses LED them out in a journey. And we have. The books of Moses that greatly expand and explain the whole journey that they had to take. The Lord Jesus himself went through this life in a journey that had a beginning and it had an end and it had a purpose connected with it. And my own soul, it meant that we were going to have to have in the what we take up, some aspect of the character of journey. And we too. And what we have here that the Lord has put on Steve's heart is the beginning of another journey. It's the one we're on. It's the one we participate in, we're not part of. Abraham. We're not part of that which called the children of Israel to the Promised Land. But we are part of a different portion of God's plans and ways that we call Christianity. There are two things that particularly have to be before the journey we're on that begins in these two chapters, these two at the beginning of Acts and it's practical expression. The two things that were foundational to it are given in John's Gospel. One is Christ at the end of John's Gospel rises from the dead in resurrection life. Which character of that life is eternal? That's the first one. It had to be first before the journey that we're on could begin. For anybody. Nobody in the Old Testament could partake of what we have this afternoon. In our journey, because they did not know as we know it, had not been as we know it until the work of Christ at the cross. And he dies, and he rises again, and when he rises again he rises in that character of life. That elsewhere is called eternal life. And it's necessary for this journey that every participant in it have eternal life. And the 2nd is the journey could not begin. Christianity and its proper character could not begin until the Spirit of God indwelt came down to indwell the believer. And remain in that believer forever, because that's the other aspect of the eternal life which we have is the indwelling of the Spirit of God that works with the life that we have been given and will characterize that life forever. And so much of what we have in the New Testament is bringing out that truth to us, the particular relationship we have to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is not known until basically the Apostle Paul was taken to prison and then the mystery of the church is brought out and the truth of the high calling is brought out in Acts one and two. They didn't know that they're the beginning of the journey is the separation between the previous one that the children of Israel were to be part of. And sadly it's been interrupted and not finished in a full way until the tribulation comes. But for us, there is that calling. Of God. To a place with himself and the Lord Jesus. Recognizes and if you go through the last chapters of John's

Gospel, we find the Lord Jesus preparing his disciples for what we have in the Acts. And it's practice and on beyond through the epistles that I'm going to be separated from you for a time. But my desire for you is that you be with me in the Father's house and that's what's going to I'm going to be laboring for you. Until that is accomplished, this afternoon, the Lord Jesus is laboring by the Spirit in this room. To fulfill that purpose that we will be together brought. To the end of the journey, and that is where He is with himself in the Father's house, with the special privilege of for ourselves, having that unique, wonderful place of being, His body and His bride. Could we say that Christianity didn't start until the Lord was in the glory? It couldn't, because it's a heavenly thing. And so the Forerunner, the first fruits, had to be in glory before Christianity properly could have any character or start. And so he had to return to the Father's house. And it isn't until he does that the Holy Spirit could be sent to earth. To bring souls into that relationship with himself, That is what we know as the Church. To also introduce what Steve commented on a little bit every journey. Has in Scripture opposition. And there's a learning process connected with it. Abraham, when he started his journey, he didn't completely start it properly. And it wasn't long before he ran into difficulties because he hadn't yet a mature faith that we find of him and and Hebrews Chapter 11. The Lord Jesus. The perfect example of taking the journey is in chapter 12. That was already read and we are to have our eye on Him as the perfect example to learn and see no man save Jesus only. As the perfect example, and that's why it's not atonement. In chapter 12, it says who for the joy that was set before him, endured with patience. He was on that journey, and he himself having as a man that joy of the end of it set before him, endured in his own path of faith to the end. And he set before us to set aside the other witnesses that we might see him. In it and so we find in chapter 2 almost immediately. There begins to be that opposition. To what? Those who are on the journey experience. Abraham experienced it. The children of Israel experienced it in type. The conflict that we have is with Satan, with the flesh in US and with the world. And that starts through the acts. You start to see it. Opposing the journey and the truth of what is to be at the end of it and every one of us experiences that compass opposite or. Opposition to us in our daily lives.

In the Gospel of Luke and chapter. 12. Lord brings up the subject of at the end of the chapter of repentance. Urgency. Need of it and he was really Speaking of Israel as a nation having. Manifesting manifesting their rejection of him. There was an issue that had to be dealt with and they better deal with it. He goes on into chapter 13 and the subject of repentance having been brought up, they say, well, what about those on who the tower of Siloam fell? What about those who pilot mingled their blood with their sacrifices or they sinners that needed to repent? And he says, except you all like except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Repentance is the hinge upon which Israel's future blessing turns, and it's the hinge upon what your blessing and my blessing turn to it was necessary. The Lord goes on in chapter 13 of Luke, and he gives a parable. That we know well of the fig tree that did not bear fruit. And the command is cut it down. The appeal of the vine dresser is let me dig about and done it. Let it go for another year and we'll see if it bears fruit. They had rejected the Lord Jesus Christ coming lowly grace. But now he's going to ascend back to heaven and the Spirit of God is going to come down and there's going to be a year, you might say of, of digging and dugging that fig tree that was fruitless to see if they would receive the testimony of the Spirit of God sent down from Christ in heaven. And if not, then cut it down. The 1St 6 chapters of Acts up through Chapter 7. Is that year? It's not an additional year of testing of the first man. The 1St man's testing was done. At the cross. But it's an offer to Israel that if they would repent of their sin of rejecting Messiah, He would bring their promised blessings in. And so in chapter one, the Lord prepares the disciples. That offer that is going to be made to Israel through them. And he has 40 days with them. He speaks of things in those forty days concerning the Kingdom of God. I take it that is very similar to what we might find in Matthew and the Beatitudes, the moral things concerning the Kingdom, the similitudes of the Kingdom, Kingdom and mystery, and chapter 13. Of Matthew, and maybe even leading on into looking on to the coming establishment of the Kingdom and power and glory. He spent 40 days. But I think the majority of it is just like what we have with Paul in Acts 20, where he says he went among them teaching the Kingdom of God the moral aspect of things, things that the disciples were going to need in his absence. And so he then says, wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. They're going to be baptized. With the Holy Ghost. They are going to bear witness for him, but it's going to be in the power of the Holy Spirit when they make that offer. Of repentance and of blessing to Israel. Is that one of the things, brother Steve, that you were referring to when you said this first and 2nd chapter of Acts is off are often misunderstood? I believe so. I believe we'll we'll see verses as we go through this that. Are yes, often misunderstood. Well, I just say in a general way, because without wanting to be boastful or anything, many dear believers cannot understand how that, as you pointed out, Israel's and ultimately man in general, their testing was over at the cross when man crucified God's beloved Son. There was nothing more that God could do. What shall I do?

I will send my beloved son. It may be they will reverence him when they see him. And what happened? They cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. That was the end of man's testing. But how precious it is to see, as Steve has been bringing out, that God, we might say, gives Israel one more chance. Will you receive a testimony from a risen Christ in glory, in the power of the Spirit of God? And it was real power, the Lord had said to his disciples. Greater works than these shall you do, because I go to my Father's. And the disciples, the apostles, they did in fact perform in that sense greater miracles than even the Lord himself did. We don't need to go into it, but when did the Lord ever? Walk down the street and have people healed merely by His shadow. We don't read of that. When did they ever take clothes and handkerchiefs from the Lord? And people were healed by him? No. And so in that sense there was an abundant testimony to the power of a risen Christ in glory. And I fully believe, according to what we read in Acts, that had Israel as a nation repented, the Lord would have come back and set up the Kingdom. And people say, well, how can that be? He forms the church on the day of Pentecost. Offers Israel the chance to repent, as you point out. And had they repented as a nation, he would have come back. While at the same time. The Lord knew very well they would not repent, and So what happens when they don't repent? His brother Steve has pointed out in the seventh chapter of Acts. They. They murder the brightest light that God had in the early church. They murdered him, stoned Stephen to death. And what does the Lord do then? Mr. Wiggum has a good comment on it. He says the grace of God picked up the very worst offender, Saul of Tarsus. Pseudo. Pardon me, he said. All right, you come and take his place and I'll make a greater servant of you. Than even Stephen, but then what does he do? He brings out. The preciousness of the mysteries. The heavenly calling of the Church, no longer a Kingdom on earth. But heavenly calling and everything that goes with it. And people say, and I say it kindly, I can't understand that how God could offer Israel something And yet at the same time, if you could say it, and I say it with all reverence, God had behind His back something that had its place in a past eternity, that He was going to pick up you and me primarily as Gentiles and bring us into the most wonderful blessing. More than Israel ever had or ever will have. We just have to sit back and say that's the plan of God that is beyond our beyond our human understanding. The passage that very clearly. Describes this offer during this year of digging around the tree and dunking. It is in Acts chapter 3. In verse 19, this is the occasion when Peter having healed the man who had been lame from his birth. And it causes a great commotion and they all run. And Peter has the opportunity to communicate this wonderful message of the gospel of a risen Christ. But down in verse 19, Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. And here I'll defer to the Darby translation, so that times a refreshing shall come. From the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution. Of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets. Since the world began. That is a succinct expression of the offer to Israel. Had they responded as Joseph's brethren responded when he finally revealed himself? I am Joseph your brother, whom he sold into Egypt. It was a deep work in their hearts. As Stephen mentioned, the hinge. I like that expression. Repentance. And had they corporately repented and said like some of them did, We've made a terrible mistake, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Had they done that, he would have sent Jesus Christ of down from heaven again, and the times of restitution of all things would have begun as all the prophets have spoken. In the postponement now of their blessing has gone on. For almost 2000 years. Maybe more than 2000 years. And surely the Lord knew that when he came over Jerusalem and he looked over it and he wept over it. He knew the blessing that he had for them. He knew it was being rejected and he knew the terrible judgment which would come in its place. But this is a bonafide offer and it is quite something that just makes us shake our heads at how God's thoughts and His ways are so much higher than ours. As you say, the church has already begun in Acts chapter 2, but the truth of it not all yet understood or even communicated until that young man who held the clothes of those who stoned Stephen. Was apprehended his way to Damascus. If I need the Jewish nation as a whole, they lost their blessing. A God is a God of love. We know that a Jew as an individual, they can still be saved, can't they? They, when they accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior, says they neither become Jew nor Gentiles. Is this new body that's being formed. So they do have that blessing still as an individual, not just as a side comment. I was thinking of what Bill said earlier, as if God has something better for this new, new setup, the new body, the new church. You know, there is a phrase, two phrases we'll find in the book of Ephesians and Colossians, the history of God and the mystery of Christ. I don't want to digress too far from the chapter. And for those who are taking note, you should write this down and go look it up. Is very interesting thought and I'll just mention it briefly, that the mystery of God is that there is going to be a body on earth and a head in heaven. And the mystery of Christ is that we are going to be more than what Israel could receive. We will become heir and joint heir with Christ. That's a lot more blessing than they can have from this earth. In Isaiah chapter 5, when the Lord is beseeching Israel and saying to them, what more could I do for you that I've not already done to draw the people to Himself? They're looked at as a vine, but they're looked at as a vine of man in nature, and God is working at that time with man. Is there anything that can come out of man that's good? Can man produce fruit? And so he gave Israel a very special place before him. He separated them from the evil of the nations about them. He hedged them about to protect them from outside influences, and he worked with them. But there was nothing for God that came out of, and nothing does come out of man, sinful man, no matter how wonderfully God works with him. When the Lord Jesus came and was working with the people, He comes as the Messiah. To those people and he's rejected, but in that rejection. When he's talking to his disciples, he says to them, I am the vine.

The vine of Israel is to be replaced with himself as the vine. And the blessing comes through him alone. And what his work on the cross? Did in the one year that's been referred to, he is appealing to them still and if they would repent and accept him as the Messiah, they would be brought into blessing, but on a new foundation, the foundation of which he is the vine and they're brought into that. So and that is God never starts anything that he doesn't finish and he's going to finish that work. In the Tribulation period, he's going to work with them again. And he's going to appeal to them on the same grounds that he did when he was rejected. And they're going to say, what are these wounds? They're going to know and recognize him in their in a very painful process that they put to death their Messiah and they will repent and they will accept him as such and be brought into the millennial blessing and eternal for them, blessing having to do with the earth as the basis of the work of Christ as well. That brings them into that blessing, but he appeals to them as they are, as Jews. And in fact, after Chapter 7, the process of separating them from the believers, from Judaism and bringing them into Christian ground is a takes the whole book and then it works. Not finished when Axe is finished, but nonetheless the process goes on. And so it's a wonderful thing to recognize just to make a separate moral application. God has started to work in your life and mine, and he's going to work on you until it's finished. And the whole of your life and mine is a process of that work going on in US. To fit us for the full enjoyment of glory with himself. Some have objected to the thought of an offer. Of repentance to Israel. That it was disingenuous? That God never intended to. To bring it to pass. But that's not a right thought. If they had repented, he would have. Well, how is it then that he would have done that and then all the Old Testament prophecies that we find unfolding in the Tribulation have taken place. Everything was in place. There was an apostate king on the throne, Herod. There was the last holder of Gentile power at that time that they were subject to Rome. There was a faithful remnant around the Lord looking for His return as we find here ready going to be ready to preach. Repentance to Israel. There was an apostate mass of the nation that would oppose them and persecute them and they would suffer. Everything was in place. All of the prophetic scriptures could have unfolded in the next few years and the Lord would come. It's it was all in place. There was no hindrance. To the Lord working everything to the end of the fulfillment of prophetic scriptures. That offer was genuine. Is that why Brother Steve the Lord is in verse 7 doesn't really answer their question directly? There's a I, I think yes, he knows. As you pointed out, there's something else, man's failure. I love how Ballot takes things up and and he looks at when man fails in respect of his responsibility towards God. And things come to an end, he said God just opens the door to something better, you know, and so something better is going to open up. But for them, they're going to make this offer. And have they known the truth of the church and the mystery? It would have confused things for them. No, they were going to go out in the fullness of their hearts and make that that offer to Israel of repent and and be baptized. Wash away your sins.

Receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior. They were going to go out and that was absolutely not going to be hindered in any way by what was yet to be unfolded in a coming time. It's really interesting to notice when he's when they say will thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel. This time refers to what he said in verse 5. He speaks of the baptism of the Spirit. John had said he would baptize with the Spirit and with fire. He just speaks of the baptism of the Spirit. Baptism with fire is still to come in its judgment. He will with his fan and his hand thoroughly purge his floor and burn the chaff with fire unquenchable. That's not what was going to happen here. And so he mentions the baptism of the Spirit, and they say, well, now at this time, the time of the baptism of the Spirit. Restore the Kingdom to Israel says not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Fathers put in his own power. In Thessalonians, First Thessalonians 5, Paul says to the believers, you know the times and seasons. I don't need to tell you. The word know in chapter one of Acts is the thought of knowledge inwardly, experientially. In Thessalonians. Chapter First Thessalonians 5 It's objective knowledge, more the knowledge of the facts. That strengthens the force of what the Lord is saying here. It's not for you to know the times, the periods of time in which the Kingdom will be established with Israel as the head of the nations. It's not for you to know those periods of time. You're not going to know that now or the seasons, the things that characterize those periods of time. It's the thought of you're not only don't know the periods of time, you're not even going to experience it. It's not going to be experiential knowledge with you. And so he closes that. He says no, I've got work for you to do. And he directs them that way. And he uses one of the most difficult words in the English language. It's even a four letter word, He says. Wait. And for all the dear, beloved young people in this room and all the children, and even for me, sometimes the hardest thing in the whole world, we have a timeline and we things aren't, we think things ought to hurry up and happen. And he's talking about things happening as our brother mentioned, the vine, the Lord Jesus being the vine, things happen because he's using us in his work. We're not just making it happen. We're not just waking

up. And man, I'm going to go and make this happen. The Lord has a timing. He has a way. I remember once we were working on a project and there was a brother there named Walter Walt Porter, and we were doing sheetrock. And this guy, he, he takes the mud and I've never really worked with mud. I didn't know really what he's doing. He puts in this bucket and he has his mixer and he's mixing it. Mix it. I'm like, well, that's looks good enough to me. Let's put it on the wall and he mixes it and he mixes it and he mixes it. And I was like, Oh my goodness, is this a government job? And he mixes it and he mixes it and he stops. And he took that stuff out of there and it was perfect. And he went and he put it on the wall and there weren't any bubbles and there weren't any lumps. And he didn't even hardly have to sand the stuff because he did the work. He waited. And so often. We want to hurry up, Lord, can you do it by tomorrow, please? And he's not on the same timetable we are. He's got his own, you know, we talk about our brother mentioned the year that and and we look at that and we're just like, come on, can't you take care of this? He's got his own timetable and he will use us in his Kingdom if we let him, if we wait on him. Another example, we would be like, I'm going to hurry up and make these, you know, bring this thing to pass. I'm going to I'm going to, you know, I see somebody and I, I know what they need and I'm going to go tell him, you know what, if they're not open for that, all you're doing is pushing them away. Ask Him, make a suggestion. Are you open? Could I share something with you? If they say no, just let it go. It's not time. We can trust the Lord in his timing. He's got everything figured out.

This is one of the passages that is so misunderstood. Years ago my brother came to me and he read these verses. Verse six through. Seven verse six and seven, he said. If the Lord really intended. To set up a Kingdom on this earth. Millennial Kingdom. If he really intended this was the time to tell them that he was going to do it and he didn't, therefore he's not going to was the point. It's the opposite. If there was ever a time for the Lord to tell them that he had no intention of ever setting up a Kingdom, this was the time. And not only does he not say that, He affirms it. If my son comes to me and, you know, I told him we're going to buy a bicycle and he says, dad, when are you going to get the bicycle? And I'd say it's not for you to know. When would that be? Would he take that as I'm saying he's never going to get the bicycle? No, he'd go away happy because it's really an affirmation. He still doesn't know that this is an affirmation from the Lord that the Kingdom will be set up. It was not for them to know the time, but it has been twisted to make the Lord say there is no future Kingdom on this earth. It's not true. I know it's going ahead, but it doesn't hurt sometimes to do that. And that is. This answer that the apostles got, did they eventually get the whole thing? Yes, they did. Because when Paul comes along, as we said earlier, the Lord picks up Saul of Tarsus in one sense, the very worst one responsible. Others were carried away in the heat of passion, but Saul of Tarsus was calm and cool and collected, he said. Give me your, give me your clothes, your outer garment, so you can throw stones, all the better. And that was just fine with him. Get rid of that man, Steven, and you're going to hit this Christianity right in the middle. Take the perhaps the most powerful preacher they had at that time. And I don't mean to discount Peter and others, but it says particularly they could not resist the spirit with which he spake. But what does God do? Takes that man, and what gives him all the answers? So that now, later on, you and I know. How everything's going to pan out because if someone else has said. Paul gives us the truth of the assembly in which everything is displayed, and that's why in Colossians Paul could say it was given unto him to fulfill or complete the word of God. Just as an aside to that, I've had people try and tell me, well, there's been new revelations since then. I said, well then the Bible, I can't believe my Bible any more because yes, others like John and perhaps Peter filled in details, but there's no new revelation. Paul was given to complete the word of God. So then. Yes, Peter has to admit. Yes, our beloved brother Paul says some things that are hard to be understood. It was hard for a godly Jew to understand just how all this was going to pan out. But God gave Paul all of that. Again, we don't know exactly when. But God gave him the whole truth of the assembly, which includes the. Blessing of Israel in the coming day. And as a brother used to remind us that I grew up and I grew up under his ministry. He said I never met a man or a woman either that could understand the word of God correctly unless they saw that God had in his purposes the blessing of the church in heaven and the blessing of Israel on earth. And it will happen as Steve has been bringing out, and it's Paul's ministry that brings that out.

But as we've said already, we don't get that in the first two chapters of Acts. That has to wait until later. Like to comment also another aspect of the subject and that is bringing in the issue of faith. Abraham, to use him as an example, was a man that was told to go out not knowing where he was going. He did not have revealed to him the end of his calling at that point in time and he was tested multiple times afterwards, particularly when he was told to take Isaac and offer him. Up and he could say God had already said to him. And his son, all the nations of the world would be blessed. He knew that much then. But he could have said to himself, well, if that's true, and I do, I only have one son, Isaac. And if Ioffer him up, how could that purpose be fulfilled? The point is, God has so chosen that until we reach the end of the story, there will always be in our lives the needs be to have faith. If we saw everything and every detail and every step of the way, it would not produce in us that dependence upon the Lord. And upon God to provide so that the promises yet realized. And that applies in its principle even to the Lord Jesus today. As Son of God, He knows everything. Son of Man, he's a man. Does he know exactly as that in the character of the Son of Man, exactly when what's being we've been talking about is going to happen? He does not. He does not. If you say what day, what year, Lord, are you going to have the rapture and set up the Kingdom, He would say that's in my Father's hands to decide, not mine. And so he also as a man waits. It says the patience of the Christ. Why does he have to exercise patience? Because he's waiting. For the Father's time to fulfill all the desires of his own heart. To bless Israel and to have you and I in his presence for eternity. And so, as it says again of him in in chapter 12, who for the joy that was set before him endured. There's a hope that's connected with faith, and there's also the development of endurance in that path of faith or the journey of faith that we have to learn. Like Abraham, we don't learn it overnight. We have to go through trials in our lives, experiences that God puts us into. To test whether and to help us to learn to be. Joyful in tribulation? That doesn't come naturally. But God would develop in us knowing that even the tribulations through which we're passing there can be associated with it, a joy that he experienced that we should experience as well. There can be an endurance developed in us that was true of himself. And so because faith is another part of the whole picture, even as to these things that we talk of prophetically and God knowing ahead of time whether Israel would respond or not respond and when they would respond and so on. It's also important to have the element of faith realized in it that we recognize that. You and I don't know what's going to happen this afternoon or tomorrow, but our faith tells us it's in the hand of God and it's working toward the end purposes to which He has called us. And we are to accept that and accept what the Lord Jesus said to his Father when he was rejected. And Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight, that is he submitted. That the will of God was perfect, and the will of God is that which determines the exact time when some of these things will happen.

Main thing that the Lord is preparing them for immediately is that they would be His witnesses. And so he tells them they would be baptized with the Holy Ghost. For what purpose? Verse A Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and he shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, into the uttermost parts of the earth, and expanding. Sphere out and out and out to the ends of the earth. Brother said years ago, remember him standing up. I think all good intentions after remembrance, the Lord said why were the disciples hiding in the upper room for fear of the Jews? The Lord was risen. They should have been out preaching the gospel. They had no power to do that. They had no power. Not only that at that point their understanding wasn't even open, but later when the Lord

appears in the midst, He opens their understanding and so they have a. Understanding of the scriptures they had never had before, and that's demonstrated in the verses that we didn't read in chapter one and the way Peter handles. The replacement for Judas, so their understanding was opened. Intel, spiritual intelligence, but no power yet. Had to wait until they had power and the Lord had said of the comforter that when he came he would bear witness of the Lord. The witness of Christ, risen Christ glorified Christ in this world as safely in the hands of the Spirit of God. And he said to the disciples, and ye also shall bear witness. And so they had to wait until they were duped with power from on high, and then they would be his witnesses. I want to make one preemptive comment if I can. I don't want to step on any anyone's toes. Our brother Dave mentioned how the feasts of Jehovah, the Feast of Firstfruits, the Wave Sheaf pictures Christ risen from the dead. Perfectly acceptable to God in a wonderful way. And then the Feast of weeks, those fifty days later, the two wave loaves brought out, baked and presented way before the Lord as well. Picture of the Church. I'd like to say this. Why 2 loaves? Because they were going to bear witness to the risen chief and two is an adequate testimony. It's an adequate witness. It is not June Gentile in one body. Two loaves would be destructive as a type of one body. It's not Jew and Gentile in one body. It's adequate testimony and witness. To the risen sheaf. And that is what he is preparing them for, to bear witness of himself. And I believe it says in chapter four or five, then the apostles gave a mighty witness to the resurrection. They fulfilled what he had given them to do in the power of the Spirit of God. And so he prepares them for that moment when the spirit of they be baptized by the Spirit of God and have power to bear testimony to him. I'd like to make a few comments regarding power as well. The Spirit of God, the power of the Christian life, the power that works in us, the power that worked on the Day of Pentecost is introduced to us in that way in John 14. I would like to go back and comment on it a little bit. Where the promise of the Spirit. To come upon them is given. In chapter 14 as well as 1213141516, the Lord is preparing them. Separation from them, and they had had the Lord Jesus himself in their midst. To provide everything that was needed for them to serve him, to be with him, to fulfill his will. And so he now recognizes he's going to be separated from them for a time, and so he prepares them for it. And in Chapter 14, he says.

Verse 16 I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter. That He may abide with you forever, even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know Him. For He dwelleth with you and shall be in you. And then he goes on. To tell them about for a while. You're not going to see me. That comforter, that spirit of truth. Dwells in you and I this afternoon. As exactly the same amount of power working in US as it did on the day of Pentecost. Not one iota less power is in you and in me as was in the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. However, on the Day of Pentecost and the time following, the Spirit of God used that which is the power. Use that power through His servants to fulfill the purposes that have been talked about already. This afternoon in the message to Israel and showing them. Evidences of the power that would be seen in the Kingdom. And so he presents that to them and he uses them in that way. Now that power is working in us in a different way. It's the same power, but the power of God is not. And that's the only power there is. Brethren, there's no power in us. That's an important thing. We sometimes say, I wish I had power. They didn't have any power in themselves on the Day of Pentecost. It was the power of the spirit of working in them. We don't have any power in us. We never in that sense will. It's the power of the Spirit of God that indwells us, that does what he does for us, in US and through us. And we thank God, he's chosen to do that. And so there is because of failure at times that which withholds the use of that power even in the Christian profession. But I would make this comment about it. The comforter came as the spirit of truth. And if their submission, there will always be the working of the power of the Spirit of God in US. To recognize the truth and walk in it, and the Spirit of God will always enable. That we can walk according to the leading and direction of the Spirit of God, no matter how messed up the profession gets before the Lord comes. You sing #333. It's a just that we the Church, dear glory. Brought should win the Sun be blast. Oh God. The fun was thine, thine in all. Torture. Mind. For thou so boats of dream. Great. Or strength of ever find. Thy lonely ain't gonna be.

With great dear life. I. Won't respond, We see. A cold is thrown in. Boring. Right the. Right of Christ shall be. Sealed with. I won't trust God has made our most. Glory with Christ above. Our God and Father, we do thank Thee for the start that we've had this day, for the prayer meeting time to be in prayer, bearing up our every need and and calling upon Thee for help. We thank Thee. We know that thou alone art able. We thank Thee for this portion that we've had before our souls. We just do pray that that would help us to understand some of these things that are difficult for us. And this day that we're living in, coming very close now to to the end that it might be an encouragement for us to think and to know that our blessed Savior has not changed one bit. Our God has not changed. His plans one bit, so just to ask Thy help now. And as we leave this place, we pray for mercies and that Thou keep everyone safe on the road. And if there are others still traveling to be here, we pray Thy mercy still for them too. Giving thanks. Our God and Father, the precious name of the Lord Jesus our Savior, Amen. Amen. Amen.

Faithful Words for Old and Young: Volume 15, This Same Jesus.

Acts 1:11.

PERHAPS you have, dear reader, though unconfessed, a real desire to be able to say, “Jesus is mine.” Let us for a few moments compare our thoughts about the Lord with the word of God. We must begin with this most wonderful fact that the Babe born so lowlily, and cradled in the manger, was the Son of God. How this fact speaks to us of the love of God! “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” (John 3:16.) We marvel at such an expression of love, but let us not attempt to fathom or reason it out, for the love of God is infinite.

The sweet story of Jesus then begins with the fact that He, “The Word, was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and,” says the apostle, “we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14.) And of this One the angel instructed Joseph, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.” (Matt. 1:21) Thus we have the sequel to those words spoken four thousand years before: “And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field ... And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:14, 15.)

During all this long interval between the fall of man and the birth of Jesus, God had tried man in every possible way, but with the result of failure upon failure in every circumstance on man’s part; so that, instead of fallen man getting back to God, he only got further away. This being so, God in grace made a way to bring sinners to Himself by giving His own dear Son to die. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” (1 Peter 3:18.)

Yes, Jesus the Son of God has trod this weary scene, making Himself acquainted with grief, and becoming the Man of Sorrows. He went to the cross, and there met God concerning the terrible question of sin; and He not only settled it forever as regards those who believe, but He glorified God in the very thing that, from the fall of Adam, had caused nothing but dishonor to Him.

He did all this, but at what a cost When we see Him in the garden, facing the terrible responsibilities He was about to undertake, when “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”; and when we follow Him to His mock trial, and from thence to the cross, and see Him nailed in shame and ignominy between two thieves, we have need to uncover our feet while we wonder and worship!

He who knew no sin was made sin for us! Let us think what must have been the agony of His soul when He was forsaken of God. And why forsaken? Because as the sin-bearer He must needs pass through judgment in order to become a Saviour from sin. “He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isa. 53:12.)

A friend of the writer was speaking to a man about his soul, and briefly set before him the finished work of Christ, and then, in God’s name, offered him salvation through faith in His blood. The man turned round with scorn, and replied, “Nay, mister, that’s over cheap for me.” True, it is cheap for us — “without money and without price;” but what did it cost Him to make it so free? Oh, think of it for a few moments! Let your mind be still, and let your heart answer the question, “What am I thinking of this wondrous work?”

What does God tell us in His word respecting His Son now? “God hath highly exalted Him.” (Phil. 2:9.) Yes, “this same Jesus,” who was put into Joseph’s tomb, was raised again by the mighty power of God (Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14), and was taken up into heaven, where He now sits — the glorified Man — at the right hand of God.

“Raised again for our justification” — His presence in the glory above is God’s witness to the believer that God is satisfied with the price paid for our redemption. The whole weight of judgment has been borne by the Substitute, and the whole question having been forever settled, Jesus sits in the presence of God a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. (Acts 5:31.) Now is not that just what sinners want?

We read that when the Lord ascended to heaven, “As He went up, behold, two men stood by” His wondering disciples “in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:10, 11.) This word is not yet fulfilled, but the Lord may come at any moment.

Are you prepared for His appearing?

Let us also consider this same Jesus on the day of judgment. Thus we read: “And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev. 20:11-15.) Hang not back — think not that you are too bad, or too good. Oh, flee from the wrath to come!

He who said “I am the chief of sinners” is now with Jesus (1 Tim. 1:15), and there is room for you — room in the Saviour’s loving heart for all who will come. He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28.) “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37.) “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” (Heb. 13:8.)

The Springing Well: Volume 5 (1902), Our Bible Lesson Column

Golden Text: — “But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”—Acts 1:8. Read Acts 1:14.

Reading on the New Testament Lesson

1, 2. “All that Jesus began both to do and teach.” Thus Luke speaks of the things which he, by the Spirit, had written in his gospel. This book gives an account of the things which Jesus continued to do and teach by His Spirit through His disciples, and He is still doing and teaching by the same Spirit through His willing ones.

3. “Being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” At least ten or twelve times between His resurrection from the dead and His visible ascension He appeared to individuals or companies of His disciples, and it would seem that He was always speaking about the things of the kingdom of God.

4, 5. “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Although they had been with Him almost constantly for two or three years, the greatest and best teacher that ever lived—for “who teacheth like Him?” (Job 36:22)—they were not qualified to go forth as His witnesses till specially endued, as it is written in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.”

6-8. “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” The kingdom which the God of Heaven will set up (Dan. 2:44), God being the Author of it and heaven the character of it, and therefore called in the gospels both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, will be a kingdom under the whole heaven or on the whole earth (Dan. 7:27), with Israel as a righteous nation in their own land as the center, and the whole earth filled with the glory of the Lord (Isa. 60:21: 11:9; 27:6: Rom. 11:15).

9. “And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” In Luke 24:50, 51, it is written, “And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and it came to pass

while He blessed them He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven.”

10, 11. “This same Jesus shall so come in like manner.” It is just possible that the two men in white apparel were the same two who appeared with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and there spake of His decease which He was about to accomplish. The steadfast, heavenward look of the disciples makes us think of Stephen, and to desire that, like him, we might be able to “look up steadfastly into heaven and see the glory of God and Jesus” (Acts 7:55).

12-14. They returned to Jerusalem from Olivet with great joy, and were continually praising and blessing God (Luke 24:52, 53). What a contrast to their feelings after His death when they, not looking for His resurrection, were filled with sorrow, and He had to rebuke them for their unbelief

The Second Coming of the Lord, Second Coming of the Lord, The: No. 2 - Saints Left Through the Tribulation?

Will the Saints be Left to Pass Through the Tribulation, or Will they be Taken Away First?

It is evident the Lord did not refer to death, when He gave those assuring promises of His coming again to receive us to Himself in John 14:1, 2, for He marked a clear distinction between death and His coming again. He says, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die," &c. (John 21:19-23.) And further, the disciples saw Jesus ascend up into heaven: " And a cloud received him out of their sight." This was not death, neither His spirit, but Jesus risen from the dead. And "this same Jesus, winch is taken up from you into heaven., shall so come in like manner as. ye have seen him go into heaven." The coming of the Lord then cannot possibly mean death.

Now mark, there is not a word here about our being in the great tribulation, either in the precious promise of Jesus to come and receive us to Himself, or in the testimony of these two men. And in neither case can it mean death. That He will come to the Jewish nation is also certain, and that immediately after their tribulation (Matt, xxiv.), as we have seen. But is not that altogether different from His coming to receive us to Himself in the heavenly mansions? When speaking about us to the Father He says," Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." (John 17:24.) Yes, we are the objects of His delight, and He must have us. with Himself. And if we carefully examine every scripture addressed to us, in reference to the coming of the Lord for us, it is never connected with the tribulation. “Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:7.) So in chapter xv. The subject of the believers resurrection, and the mystery, " We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment,” &c. But not a word in the chapter about our passing through the tribulation.

So in Philippians. "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," &c. (Phil. 3:20.) Still all is bright hope, no terror of tribulation. If we had to pass through it we could not be looking for Jesus as Savior, but we must be looking first for the terrible day of wrath. But for us it is the very opposite, for "when Christ, who-is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4.) Now is not this most remarkable, that when He shall appear, and all tribes of men wail because of Him, then we shall appear with Him in glory? We cannot then, if we know the scriptures, be waiting for the day of wrath to come, though come it will to this rejecting world. The early Christians were “turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. 1:9, 10.) How then can we be looking for that day of wrath, when we are "waiting for Jesus, who has delivered us from the wrath to come? " For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming”(1 Thess. 2:19.) Oh yes, it is not the day of wrath that is our hope, but that day of unclouded brightness and joy in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming.

But we now come to scriptures that speak expressly on the subject. " To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (1 Thess. 3:13.) Now he certainly will not find us in the tribulation, if we come with Him when He comes, neither can He possibly come to judge us, since we come with Him. When He appears we shall appear with Him, when He comes we shall all come with Him. He comes with all His saints. In chapter iv. the Holy Ghost carefully enforces this. " For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." You may say, how can this be? Will not Jesus come to judge us as we have always been told? Indeed He will not, for when He comes in judgment His saints come with Him. " Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all." (Jude 14, 15.)

Does not this agree with His promise, that He will come and take us to Himself? (John 14:1, 2.) If we, all saints, come with Him when He comes—and this is as certain as that He died and rose again—then He must first have come to take us away to Himself. This is just the revelation or explanation given to Paul. " For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:15-17.) Yes, from that moment we are with Him, and therefore when He comes, we come with Him.

Now mark, up to this point, our being taken to be with the Lord, there is not one word about the day of the Lord, or the time of tribulation. Notice carefully there is nothing in this scripture to hinder the Lord from coining in the air at any moment to take us to be with Himself. But now see what immediately comes after: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief." (Chap. v. 1-4.) Now taking this scripture just as it is, arc there not two very distinct events here? the blessed hope of the church to be taken to meet the Lord, and to be with Him, and to come with Him; and then after that the day of wrath, to the great surprise of the world. To which does the reader belong? To the church of God about to be taken to meet the Lord? or do you belong to that deceived world about to be judged?

Now mark the earnest prayer of the apostle. Does he pray that the saints may be preserved through the tribulation, or unto the coming of Christ? " And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Chap. v. 23.) No; there is not a thought of the saints or the church passing through the tribulation. The Lord is coming to receive us unto Himself; and we need preserving until then. In the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians this question is still more distinctly shown to us. The assembly was evidently passing through much trouble and persecution; and some one tried to alarm them as though the very day of the Lord had come. (See chap. ii. 2.) " That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand [or come]."

Bear in mind, he has already told them that when the Lord comes, all His saints come with Him. Now he describes that coming, and shows them that they will then be in rest, not in trouble. The world will then be in trouble, not they. "And to you who are troubled rest with us. when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance.... when he shall come to be glorified in his saints," &c. (Read chap. 1. 7-11.) Yes, it is rest and glory to the saints in that day. It is flaming fire and everlasting destruction to those who have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had told them in his first epistle of the coming of the Lord to take them to Himself, and then he had told them of the day of Christ and the day of wrath after. He says here, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." These two things are brought before them to prove they need not be troubled as though the day of Christ had come. Only let us see these two things take place first. Then it is evident we cannot possibly be in the terrible tribulation which follows.

There is not one thing named which has to take place before Christ may come and gather us to Himself; but several things are named which must take place before the coming of Christ in judgment. The falling away, or apostasy—the man of sin must be revealed, &e. (See chap. ii. 2-13.) Thus to make the church go through the tribulation, would be to throw all scripture into confusion. No, He comes to receive His own redeemed ones. And afterward will follow that time of tribulation such as never was, and never shall be again. It may be asked then, Who will those saints be that do pass through the tribulation? We have seen unmistakably in Matt. 24, they are the people of Israel.

Jesus says to them who know Him now, as the Holy, and the True, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. 3:10.) This is not said to the remnant of Israel, it could not, for they will have to pass through the tribulation, as Jesus plainly tells us in Matt. 24; and all the prophets plainly bear testimony to the same fact. No; He will come first and take us to Himself. And oh, how soon! He says, "Surely I come quickly." C. S.

Correspondence, Correspondence: Explanatino of Ex. 33:11, 20; Acts 1:11

Ques. 44. Please explain Ex. 33:11: "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend"; also Ex. 33:20: "And He said, thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live". A. G. C.

Ans. Ex. 33:11, tells us the intimate way the Lord chose to speak to Moses. (See also Num. 12:8; Deut. 34:10.) To him alone did He speak face to face, mouth to mouth, and His similitude did he behold; that is, part of Jehovah's character was revealed to him; but 2 Chron. 6:1 tells us that He dwells in thick darkness.

Moses had been on the mount with Jehovah, and when he came down with the tables of stone in his hands, the people were worshiping a golden calf. Moses had pled for them and Jehovah repented (32:11-14), and through all this Moses learned what suited Jehovah. He saw the calf and the dancing, and cast the tables down and broke them, and this saved Israel from destruction. Moses further takes the sword and calls on all who were on Jehovah's side to take vengeance on the idolatry, and then he goes up to offer himself in atonement, but this act waited for a greater than Moses. Jesus, the Son of God, could alone accomplish this. Jehovah hears Moses' pleadings, and spares the people, but smote some of them. Jehovah says, I will send an angel. I will not go up with you, for this people are stiffnecked. Moses answers, Jehovah must go with him, because they are stiffnecked. Jehovah called them, "thy people". Moses says, "Consider that this nation is Thy people." What intimacy is seen in all this, yet when Moses says, "Show me Thy glory," He shows him but a part, putting him in the cleft of the rock, and covering him with His hand, so that in safety he could behold part of Jehovah's character, for He said, "Thou canst not see My face; for no man can see My face and live.”

Ex. 34:5-7, is the declaration: "God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty", etc.

God could not reveal Himself fully, till the Lord Jesus came, and atonement was wrought. "How am I straitened till it be accomplished." Luke 11:50, tells of love that was pent up till God's righteousness was declared. (Rom. 3:25-26.) Now God is revealed. "The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John 1:18.) "God is light" and "God is love." (1 John 1:5; 4:8.) And we are children of light, and our home is in His presence. No longer do we need to put our shoes from off our feet, but clothed and fitted for His presence we joy in God as His dear children.

The absolute deity of God, all that He is, no creature can see or know, to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite. We know God in those blessed ways revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Praise His most blessed name!

Ques. 45

What does "ALL ISRAEL shall be saved" mean? Rom. 11:26. N. C.

Ans. It means that Israel as a NATION will be saved. It does not mean that every Israelite will be saved. All of them, as well as all Gentiles, who have died without Christ, are lost for eternity, for they have died in their sins. Israel is to be gathered into Palestine again, and all the ungodly ones will be sifted out from them and the rest will have the national place and be twelve tribes again. (Ezek. 38; Rev. 7; Heb. 8:8.)

Ques. 46

Does Acts 1:11 refer to Christ's coming for us or to His appearing to Israel? H. G.

Ans. The disciples here are still the remnant of Israel, looking for the setting up of the kingdom.

When the Lord comes for us, who are His heavenly people, we will hear His shout, and will be caught up in a moment to meet Him in the air. (1 Thess. 4:16, 17.)

When He comes to Israel as King, we will come with Him, and every eye shall see Him. He shall so come in like manner as they saw Him go; this is His appearing.

But the precious truth expressed here is sweet to each saved one-that it is "this same Jesus", the Lord "Himself," whom we have known as our Savior, will come for us. He will not send an angel for us.

Ques. 47

Is Melchizedek the Lord?

Ans. No, I do not at all think he was the Lord. He was for a purpose made like unto the Son of God; and that he might be like Him, no record of his birth or death is given, and it is to this Heb. 7:3 refers. We know nothing of his pedigree, though Heb. 7:6 lets us know he had one; at least, so I have taken it.

In the passage in Genesis he is brought before us as "King of Salem," and "Priest of the most high God," but of his beginning and end, of his father and mother, we know nothing, though in Genesis we naturally look for this. This is in order, as just said that he might be the type of the Lord. I have never thought he was actually without father and mother, and beginning of days nor end of life. If he was the Lord, then it would be His typifying Himself in a future day.

Christian Treasury: Volume 10, Thyself Our Treasure

The first chapter of Acts presents the Lord 's departure from this earth. "He was taken up" into heaven. Undesirable as this seemed to His disciples, they were made quite equal to the occasion, for when the time came, it is said that they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52).

Since redemption's work is accomplished and Jesus glorified, the personal presence of the Holy Spirit on earth is the consequence. He is the strength and joy of our hearts during the absence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The disciples seem to have had a foretaste of this.joy on the occasion referred to above.

Nevertheless, the Lord's absence still leaves a blank in the hearts of His own which can never be filled till they see Him. Therefore, the disciples hail with joy the words of the two heavenly witnesses who assured these "men of Galilee" as they looked up into heaven that this same Jesus who had been taken up from them into heaven should so come in like manner as they had seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

And when the Treasure was taken to heaven, the hearts of them that were set upon it were taken there too, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, was greatly attached to David. His heart had been won by acts of kindness, and when the king became an exile, Mephibosheth became a mourner. He refused to make himself at home where the king was not only without a throne, but without honor and without a resting place. It is true that Mephibosheth must have been more an object of pity than of envy, if we judge by appearance from the description given of him on the king's return in 2 Samuel 19:24. But God looks on the heart, and here was one whose joys were so wrapped up in the person of David that he found no rest apart from him. He knew nothing but joy when the king returned to Jerusalem in peace. Christian Truth

'Let us run with patiencethe race that is set before us,looking unto Jesusthe author and finisher ofour faith.”

Hebrews 12:1.2

Words of Faith: Volume 2, Extracts From Letters of J.N.D.: "God Will Not Be a Mere Director"; Purpose to Do

He had been asked what was meant by the sentence in a tract of his own," God will not be a mere director."

As a general truth we may surely look for guidance, and to be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. What I said as to this, was not that God should not direct us, but that, as the general principle, it was not independent of spiritual understanding; that if I were directed right, even in every act as a Roman Catholic by his confessor, called their " director," I should lose by it; it would save me being in a spiritual state myself -though, surely, a more spiritual person might help me because he was so; that God did not mean our perception of His will to be independent of our spiritual state, though He can, of course, lead any at any given time. Psa. 32 speaks of this also. If our eye be single, our whole body shall be full of light. But this is always true: He makes everything work together for good to them that love Him. He overrules as well as rules.

I will suppose for a moment you were not led of Him in going to' England, which I do not the least say, as I know nothing of it or your motives, but suppose the case. He makes you know what the world's giving you up is; He overrules it. Supposing you had had a tide of blessing, you would not have felt this in the same way, you would have tided it over the shoals at flood. I remember saying to dear Captain -, that our giving up the world, and the world giving us up, were two very different things. It is the latter tries all the elements of self-importance, which lie much deeper rooted than we are aware. There may be some little sacrifice in giving it up, but we have a sufficient motive; but what motive for

being despised? It is really our glory, for Christ was, but then He must be all, and that is saying a good deal. We are poor feeble creatures without a stable center; what would be so has to be broken, and Christ takes its place. I do not speak of failure, but what we go through. He was the despised and rejected of men. Nor does He seek insensibility to it, but superiority over it, by His being all-and that is blessed, that only lasts. It is the production in us of what is eternal joy, and capacity for it. And now to your special inquiry more in detail. There are many points to consider.

He had been asked if we might not purpose (as Paul, in Acts 19:21), in the spirit (after prayer) to go here or there, and do this or that.

First, I believe this casting on-dependent seeking His will spiritually-a privilege, though connected with the ruined state of the church. He cannot cease to guide us, or where should we be? But He may not, and does not, manifest His action with a fallen as with a fresh and nascent church. He never does so. " We see not our signs there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." Yet Haggai says, " My Spirit remaineth among you." I believe faithfulness in such a time, special privilege. " Hast not denied my name" does not say much, but when this happens all around it is a great deal, and great grace to be kept. It cannot be expected, the " according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that by them thou mightest war a good warfare." You came out with a true heart to One who loved you, and seek souls for Him -all right, and great grace given to us; but there was no, "Separate me Barnabas and Paul," which, though present grace must, after all, sustain, still was a source of strength " by them." I do not believe it is any loss, but it is different, and he that has the secret of Christ, while he will not limit His power, yet will know the difference, and enter into it. " Thou hast a little strength," and such would be pillars when God built His temple. We find they were forbidden to go into Bithynia; sought to go into Mysia, but the Spirit suffered them not; they were forbidden to preach the word in Asia, and then, by a vision in a dream, were led into Macedonia. Now I would not the least deny that God can by His Holy Spirit suggest to us a special place of service. I do not doubt He may; but it is not an open manifestation as that which we here read of.

I repeat, I believe it is a privilege to be thus cast on the Lord's heart, if we only trust it; but it is a different thing we are cast on it; that there is imperfection in us, which affects this question, even an apostle had to learn this. A great door was opened at Troas, " but I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother," he leaves it.... In Macedonia " Our flesh had no rest, without were sightings, within were fears." He was sorry even he had written an inspired epistle, which really wrought as such with power in producing its effect, as in blessing to this day, but here there was trust. It is quite the contrary to the English translation, "causeth us to triumph;" the word means, "leads us in triumph," and the savor of Christ for life or death spread by him, whether at Troas or Macedonia. He trusted in Him who led him where He pleased, and that by his anxieties, as by His Spirit. He could not say he was right to leave Troas, and all was distress in Macedonia. It was love to the Corinthians, and God comforts them that are cast down; that is His way. And this is the picture I get of this great and noble heart, sent as he was openly by the Lord Himself and the Holy Ghost. He was a man, and must learn it, and that the power was of God; and so must dear -, perhaps as cast down, but any way as led about in triumph, for it is as true of you; God is as faithful as to you as He was to Paul.

But there is another point, we are such little ignorant things, that though we may have the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, not of bondage and fear, still, as I said, things have to be overruled as well as ourselves guided. In the case you suppose (I supposed I was led after prayer to purpose visiting a certain person or persons, and on the way came across an anxious soul, and was much perplexed whether to stay with that one, or go on with my purposed visit to the other. Again, that if I go, and find the person away. am I to think I was not guided?) You do not find the man at home. This may have been just the right thing that you should have shown the purpose and desire, and yet not have seen him, nor he received the visit, it was not the ripe moment for that. It was for seeking him. I admit were we perfect this would not be so. Again, He might have sent you on that road on purpose to meet the person on the way, and another day as good, or better, for the visit; perhaps he was not at home. I grant this shows imperfection, but not that there is no guidance. We should like to go always with a full, favorable wind, but this does not make a good sailor. It does tell us of weakness and imperfection, but that is something to learn, and dependence too. We cannot make a visit right without His hand.

But now take an example of where power was. Paul, apostle as he was, cannot succeed in persuading the church at Antioch to leave the Gentiles free. Where was his apostolic power? What a defeat! What a failure! He must go to Jerusalem. Now suppose he had succeeded: humanly speaking, two churches were started-one at Antioch, free; the other at Jerusalem, Jewish and circumcising Gentiles: but Jerusalem is forced by God to pronounce the Gentile free, and all goes right for the time. No doubt it was connected with imperfection and wretched ignorance of heart and prejudice, but it was divine grace and wisdom, God working in this imperfection and prejudice, and overruling it, and Paul must take his place under this, like others.

We are not aware what poor creatures we are, and the wonderful grace which watches over, deals with, and uses such; and we have the treasure in an earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Cor. 4:7.)

Thus the service we have to perform becomes also a process in ourselves, by which we have to learn ourselves and that all is of God, and our dependence on Him. This does not hinder our seeking to grow up into increased spiritual understanding, so as to be filled with the knowledge of His will; nor does it hinder the truth that the Spirit may guide us in details as to what we should do, and where we should go. Only, while God is Sovereign to do so in grace when He pleases, it does not separate this, as a general thing, from our spiritual state and singleness of eye, nor from a process in which we learn our own hearts; are weaned from self and the spirit of the world, and learn more complete dependence on God, and His gracious, tender faithfulness; only, that, after all, we are men, and feeble creatures, and He Sovereign, and the One who is to teach us. But surely, beloved brother, we may ever look to be guided by His eye, led by His Spirit suggesting the right thing to do, and place to go to, only that our state has a great deal to do with our ascertaining it. " The spiritual man discerneth all things."

And God is full of grace; Paul, if he could not succeed at Antioch, had a revelation to go up to Jerusalem. I know not that at this moment I have more to say to you, only that Paul (Acts 19) was not, I believe, bound in the Spirit, but in spirit, his own. It was the overruling hand of God upon him, not the actual guidance of the Spirit of God. God so ordered it for His own divine purposes. Moreover, Paul was not going for testimony, but with collections for the saints. J. N. D.

BELOVED BROTHER, I was very glad to get your letter, and though I have let a long time slip without answering it, it was not want of interest in its contents, nor failure in thinking of you, but I have had a train of work which makes some letters, letters of leisure, where it is not necessity of answering, but just, on the contrary, interest in the work and in the laborer.

We go on through the toil of service, whereas good in Christ has to make its way, and make itself effectual by divine strength in the midst of evil and alienation from God, and, as to testimony, adapt itself to it. That was what was so beautiful in Christ. In heaven all is good. God is there, and only goodness and holiness, and nothing inconsistent with it. We cannot be simple, or want simplicity, there, for God fills everything, and we and all are what He would have us. It is an infinite "I am" of good. But Christ was something else. He was divine good, and infinite, but good adapting itself, sheaving itself infinite in being always itself, and yet adapting itself to all the wants, sorrows, miseries, sins, that were in this poor world. We get to God, get to the Father by it, because He has got to us. What a wonderful thought it is, to see Godhead emptying itself, thereby to prove itself love, as no angel could have known it-coming down as man even unto death, and to be made sin, that I might learn what God is in death, where sin had brought me; and absolute obedience in man, in what disobedience had brought us into; death, the way of life; the extreme of man in weakness, where (as to this world) it ended, the place where God is revealed and triumphant, and the power of Satan destroyed.

But the Christian redeemed by this, and according to this, has to be this good, express, walking in holiness, divine love in this world, by manifesting the life of Christ, and seeking the deliverance of souls. What a calling! and what a privilege! But, oh, how we do shrink into self-judgment if we compare ourselves with Him!! We have to do it sometimes. God (as you speak in your letter) passes us through it when needed. We know there is no good thing in us, but to know the working of evil, which we always need at the beginning, and sometimes by the way, is another thing, overwhelming sometimes; I do not mean as to doubting His love, but as occupying us with self-vileness, instead of with His blessed love and Himself. But it is really put away in Christ, and hence, when we have, in a certain sense (that is, as to the need of real uprightness of heart) adequately judged ourselves, all the flood of His grace flows in again, and we can think of Him, and not of ourselves. There are no shallows then, but they are there, and there is still the danger (until long and deeply exercised) of having to go through it again. And it is a terrible thing to think of turning the eye off Christ, and on to what is vile, for self is vile. It is this that marks the "Fathers" in Christ. John has much additional to say to the "children" and " young men" when he repeats his warnings, but to the "fathers" he only says they have known Him that is from the beginning. That was their characteristic existence. How blessed it is! Oh, that we could walk so as to keep ourselves in the love of God! It is not knowing the Father, that was the children's place, the place of all, but Him that was from the beginning-Christ as manifested here.

I find the constant tendency even of work for the Lord, and an active mind, ever is to take us out of the presence of God, and nature is instantly up. I do not mean evil in the common sense, but what is not God, and the condition of my soul when God. is there. There is a will and a right the heart claims (not willfully), instead of adoring recipiency and lowliness, with confidence and trust of heart. For God present puts us in our place, and Himself in His place in our hearts; and what confidence that gives, and how self is gone in joy! Our great affair is to keep in His presence; and the diligent soul shall be made fat. He that seeks, finds.

May the Lord give you and myself to labor on undistractedly.

It is not, through grace, in vain in the Lord. He does not give me as (I am thankful to say) you, present encouragement-I have no doubt my fault, and His wisdom-but I am content to be anything in His hand, and thankful to be anything. A servant is to serve where he is set, and I have been a good deal (and content to be it, though my heart might desire more direct work sometimes) a "hewer of wood" and " drawer of water" to the saints, but thankful to be allowed to be anything. The Lord be abundantly with you.

Affectionately yours in Christ, &c.,

J. N. D.

Things New and Old: Volume 33, Correspondence

4. F. F. G, Liverpool.—1. It is scriptural to call any gathering together an assembly. (See Acts 19:32, 39, 41.) This heathen concourse of people could not have been called “the church,” and this shows that the modern use of the word church is not the correct one. Thus also, believers gathered together, whether in Egypt or elsewhere, can be called “assemblies;” but strictly, not any one of them could be called “the assembly which is the body of Christ.” If all believers in one place were gathered to Christ, as at the beginning, then they could be scripturally called the assembly of God in that place.

2. There is no necessary connection between the temple of Mal. 3:1 and 2 Thess. 2:4. The prophecy refers to the first coming of Christ to the temple then standing, and to John the Baptist. But owing to Israel’s rejection of Jehovah, which was evidently Christ, it goes on to His second coming in judgment. Jesus did come to His temple, but was rejected. The period of the church, or assembly, is passed over, as in other prophecies, and runs on to the judgment and millennial blessing. Without the light of the New Testament we could not separate the first and the second coming, yet all is in the most perfect harmony. John came in the power of Elias.

3. There is no veil of the temple set up again in the millennial temple, but there are doors which take its place. (Ezek. 12:3, 4, 23, 24.) Jehovah will again dwell with His people of Israel (Eze. 43:1-7), and great shall be the privileges of the prince of Israel. But the way into the most holy does not seem to be even open unto him. (Eze. 46:1-18.) The people or the land shall worship at the door. (Ver. 3.) Surely all this shows us the unspeakable privilege we have now, even to enter with boldness the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. (Heb. 10) Do we understand this?

4. There is no scripture instruction as to any particular time when we should break bread. It is as oft as ye do it, &c.

5. The difference between “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” may be stated thus. “Psalms” are the psalms of David and others, known as psalms; “ hymns “ are compositions of holy praise, suited for corporate worship; and songs of praise, or spiritual songs, are holy poetic compositions, more expressive of individual faith, and joy in the Lord, such as the song of Hannah at Shiloh. It is the will of God that believers should speak to themselves thus, “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (Eph. 5:19.) “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Col. 3:16.) May we never sing except it be to the Lord.

6. It is remarkable that there is little said as to the idolatry of Israel in Egypt. Exod. 32 would leave no doubt that they had been idolaters; but scripture is chiefly occupied with their idolatry, after they were a redeemed people from Egypt. What a lesson for us, who profess to have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

7. The helmet of salvation is the real certainty that we are saved eternally.

Your other questions do not seem to us to be for the profit of the readers of this magazine. And this is our object, not to be occupied with curious, or merely intellectual, questions. May the Lord graciously give food for the whole flock of God.

5. H.—“But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Cor. 2:16.) No doubt these words apply in a special way to the apostles. And it is a matter for great thankfulness that we have the very inspired words of those who had the mind of Christ. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things.” Thus, though we have the very inspired words of God, yet the natural man is still in darkness, yea, is darkness. But it is evidently the privilege of every spiritual man to discern them.

Divisions, however, proved that these Corinthians were not spiritual, but natural, or carnal; which is the sad condition of Christendom at this day. These divisions prove that Christendom is not spiritual, and cannot say, with the apostle, we have the mind of Christ. There were no such divisions to rebuke at Philippi, hence the tender admonition: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Surely we are responsible earnestly to seek this.

1 Cor. 6:4, 5, is a rebuke.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Purposing in the Spirit

Question: Might we not purpose (as Paul, in Acts 19:21), in his spirit (after prayer) to go here or there, and do this or that?

Answer: First, I believe this casting on, or dependent seeking, His will spiritually, to be a privilege, though connected with the ruined state of the church. He cannot cease to guide us, or where should we be? But He may not, and does not, manifest His action with a fallen as with a fresh and nascent church, He never does so. “We see not our signs, we have no prophets any more.” “There is none to say, How long.” Yet Haggai says, “My Spirit remaineth among you, as when ye came out of Egypt.” I believe faithfulness in such a time special privilege. “Hast not denied my name” does not say much; but when this happens all around, it is a great deal, and great grace to be kept.

You cannot be expected, “according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that by them thou mightest war a good warfare.” You came out with a true heart to One who loved you, and seek souls for Him: all right; and great grace given to us; but there was no “separate me Barnabas and Paul,” which, though present grace, must after all sustain, still was a source of strength “by them.” I do not believe it is any loss, but it is different; and he that has the secret of Christ, while he will not limit His power, yet will know the difference, and enter into it. “Thou hast a little strength,” and these were pillars when God built His temple. We find they were forbidden to go into Bithynia, they sought to go into Mysia, but the Spirit suffered them not; they were forbidden to preach the word in Asia, and then by a vision or a dream were led into Macedonia, Now I would not the least deny that God can by His Holy Spirit suggest to us a special place of service. I do not doubt He may; but it is not an open manifestation as that which we here read of.

I repeat, I believe it a privilege to be thus cast on the Lord’s heart, if we only trust it; but it is a different thing, if we are cast on it, that there is imperfection in us, which affects this question: even an apostle had to learn this. A great door was opened at Troas, “but I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother.” He leaves it. “In Macedonia my flesh had no rest; without were fightings, within were fears.” He was sorry he had written even an inspired epistle which really wrought as such with power in producing its effect, as in blessing to this day; but here there was trust. It is quite the contrary to the English translation, “causeth us to triumph;” the word means, “leads us in triumph,” and the savor of Christ, for life or for death, spread by him, whether at Troas or Macedonia. He trusted in Him who led him where He pleased, and that by his anxieties, as by his spirit. He could not say he was right to leave Troas, and all was distress in Macedonia. It was love to the Corinthians; and God comforts them that are cast down: that is His way. And such is the picture I get of this great and noble heart, sent as he was openly by the Lord Himself and the Holy Ghost. He was a man, and must learn it, and that the power was of God; and so must dear—, perhaps as cast down, but, any way, as led about in triumph, for it is as true of you. God is as faithful about you as He was about Paul.

But there is another point; we are such little ignorant things that, though we may have the Spirit of power and love and a sound mind, not of bondage and fear, still, as I said, things have to be overruled as well as ourselves guided. In the case you suppose, I was led, after prayer, to purpose visiting a certain person or persons, and on the way came across an anxious soul, and was much perplexed whether to stay with that one, or go on with my purposed visit to the other. Again, if on going I find the person away, am I to think I was not guided? You do not find the man at home. This may have been just the right thing that you should have shown the purpose and desire, and yet not have seen him, nor he received the visit. It was not the ripe moment for that; it was for seeking him. I admit, were we perfect, this would not be so. Again, He might have sent you on that road on purpose to meet the person on the way, and another day, as good or better for the visit, perhaps he was not at home. I grant this shows imperfection, but not that there is no guidance. We should like to go always with a full favorable wind; but this does not make a good sailor. It does tell us of weakness and imperfection, but this is something to learn, and dependence too. We cannot make a visit right without His hand.

But now take an example of where power was. Paul, apostle as he was, cannot succeed in persuading the church at Antioch to leave the Gentiles free. Where was his apostolic power? What a defeat I what a failure! He must go to Jerusalem. Now suppose he had succeeded: humanly speaking, two churches were started—one at Antioch, free; the other at Jerusalem, Jewish, and circumcising Gentiles; but Jerusalem is forced by God to pronounce the Gentile free, and all goes right for the time. No doubt it was connected with imperfection and wretched ignorance of heart, and prejudice; but it was divine grace and wisdom, God working in this imperfection and prejudice, and overruling it, and Paul must take his place under this like others. We are not aware what poor creatures we are, and the wonderful grace which watches over, deals with, and uses such; and we have the treasure in an earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Cor. 4:7.)

Thus the service we have to perform becomes also a process in ourselves, by which we have to learn ourselves, and that all is of God, and our dependence on Him. This does not hinder our seeking to grow up into increased spiritual understanding, so as to be filled with the knowledge of His will; nor does it hinder the truth that the Spirit may guide us in details as to what we should do, and where we should go, only (while God is Sovereign) to do so in grace when He pleases. It does not separate this, as a general thing, from our spiritual state and singleness of eye, nor from a process in which we learn our own hearts, are weaned from self and the spirit of the world, and learn more complete dependence on God, and His gracious tender faithfulness; only, that after all we are men and feeble creatures, and He Sovereign, and the One who is to teach us. But surely, beloved brother, we may ever look to be guided by His eye, led by His spirit, suggesting the right thing to do and place to go to. Only our state has a great deal to do with our ascertaining it. “The spiritual man discerneth all things.” And God is full of grace, Paul, if he could not succeed at Antioch, had a revelation to go up to Jerusalem. I know not that at this moment I have more to say to you, only that Paul (Acts 19) was not, I believe, bound in the Spirit, but in spirit—his own. It was the overruling hand of God upon him, not the actual guidance of the Spirit of God. God so ordered it for His own divine purposes. Morally Paul was not going for testimony, but with collections for the saints.

J. N. D.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Acts 19:15

Question: Acts 19:15. Dr. J. B. Lightfoot in his Fresh Revision of the N.T. 4 §3 (p. 60) speaks of “the distinction which is effected by the insertion of the article before the one name and the omission before the other,” &c. But this is not the fact, though he cites the Greek expressly, and wrongly, just before. He was eminently learned, and usually most accurate. How can we account for the statement? R.

Answer: It is a striking proof that good Homer sometimes nods. Not only no known MS. bears him out, but the supposed omission would be in this case impossible Greek. The repeated article is even more requisite than the separate verbs, . I know or acknowledge, . I am acquainted with. It is to be presumed that in a later edition so glaring and of course unwitting a mistake must have been corrected; I have only the first before me.

Young Christian: Volume 5, 1915, Burning of the Books

(Acts 19:17 to 20.)

The people of Ephesus were almost all of them “worshipers” of a goddess, whom they called Diana, or Artemis; and they used to say “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” But God sent Paul to that dark city, given up to idolatry; and through his preaching, and the “special miracles” God wrought by his hands, many were brought to know that there was One who was greater than Diana, even “the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.” When His holy name was taken in vain by wicked Jews, who had no faith in Him, God used even the power of an unclean spirit, to punish them, and to bring glory to Christ (ver. 13, 17). So it was felt to be such a real thing to have the power of the risen Jesus, put forth in their midst by His servant Paul, that it says, “fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.” He was now seen to be the “great” One, and Diana was but a “dumb idol.” Many of those who thus believed in Jesus came and confessed what sinners they had been; they “showed their deeds.” Having learned now in their consciences what was displeasing to God, they no longer covered up their sins, but confessed and declared what they had been doing (ver. 18). Others again did even more. They had been magicians, or sorcerers, and had used “books” of darkness, telling them how to “bewitch” the people, and get their money from them, by doing strange things that they could not understand. Now they were brought to God, who is “light,” and in whom is “no darkness at all”; so they could not go on with these “hidden things of shame.” And the “books” they had used they would keep no longer. They could not have any more to do with them themselves, and they would not sell them to others; so they made a great fire of them, “before all men.” It was not that they were books which had cost them nothing. They were worth more than $7,500 of our money! They “counted the price” of them, but they counted them only worthy of the flames. They had spent much to get them, but they could not now keep them and have a good conscience before God; so they reckoned it would be not loss but gain to get rid of them, and they burned them in some open part of the city.

But what a proof it was that they had found in the Lord Jesus what was “far better,” was it not? We do not read that Paul told them they must make this great sacrifice. Perhaps he did not even know they had these books: but God knew, and they knew; and they counted them all worthless for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. Dear reader, has the world ever seen any proof that the Lord Jesus is a treasure to us that He was not once? He does not want us to say that we are Christians, and believe in Him, if our hearts are still at home in the world that would not have Him. But it is very sweet to Him to find that without our saying much, we give proof by our ways of how dear He is to us. We do not read of anything Mary said in John 12; but “the house was filled with the odor of the ointment” she spent upon Jesus, and He took her part when she was found fault with! He was pleased with that love to Him of which the “precious ointment” was so fragrant a proof. If we say we are His and He is ours, what proof do we give that it is so? What do your companions see in your ways, that convinces them that you are not now what you once were, and that now you belong to One you used to care very little about? He was nailed to the cross, and bore the judgment of a sin-hating God for such as you. There was no sorrow “like unto” His sorrow, which He passed through in the garden and on the cross. Is it nothing to you? Will you say, How can I “give up” my pleasures, and my company, and my parties to be a “Christian indeed”? “I should not like to be lost forever; but while I am in this world I must enjoy myself all I can.” Did He enjoy Himself when He came to seek your poor soul? Did He “give up” nothing, when He “gave Himself” for you, to make you “His own,” and that He might give you eternal life and glory? Was it no denial to Him, when He came not to reign as a king, but to give His “back to the smiters”? What have you to give up, compared with what he did give up? Do you say, “He only gave it up for a very little while, and soon went back to it all again?” Dear young reader, you who are not yet quite sure that Jesus, and the enjoyment of His love, are better than all beside, let me ask you, for how long do you think we can “give up” anything for the Lord who loves us? Where will all those be in a very “little while” who have followed Jesus below? Is it not in glory, in that “place” with Himself, which He is “gone to prepare, for all who are washed and forgiven?” Is it not worthwhile to be “a pilgrim and a stranger” for a few days, committing our full joy “unto Him, against that day,” that time of full, and unmixed, and eternal happiness (2 Tim. 1:12)? We may not have “books” in our possession, worth “fifty thousand pieces of silver,” to burn

before all men, and show that we have “turned to God,” but there are many little things every day in which we may “give up” our will, or our pleasure, or our gain, for the sake of Him who has so loved us. Let us be neither slow nor unwilling to do it!

And if you know of anyone who “cares for none of these things,” who values his “books,” or his sins, or pleasures, more than all that is to be found in that blessed Lord Jesus, then remind him that there will be a greater fire one day than those converted men made at Ephesus. “The earth also and the works that are therein,” shall be burned up (2 Peter 3:10). Better burn the books ourselves, than for God to have to do it, and to cast into a “lake of fire” those who would have their sins rather than the Saviour!

The True Church: The Body of Christ, Letters of Commendation

"God has provided that strangers coming from a distance should bring letters of commendation from the gathered saints where they are located, and we find the early Christians did so. (Acts 18:27. Rom. 16:1; 2 Cor. 3:1; Col. 4:10; 3 John 9.) (J. N. D.) 'They tend to promote confidence at once on both sides, and fellowship, and they become valuable as a safe way of distinguishing the true from the false; and especially are they useful in these days for we are not all discerners of spirits; and remember we are told to 'try the spirits'." (G. P.)

"It is plain that there was then, as now, the practice of giving and receiving letters in commending stranger brethren to the assemblies. And a valuable means of introduction as well as guard it is, provided we hold it in spirit and not in letter; otherwise we might fail doubly, in refusing those who ought to be received, where circumstances have hindered the requisite voucher, and in receiving those who, being deceivers, can supply themselves with any letter which may the more effectually mislead. The aim of all such provisions is to afford adequate testimony to the assembly of God, which is in no way bound to a form however excellent." (W. K.)

The Evangelist: Volume 7 (1873), "Repent."

“God now commandeth all men every where to repent.” Acts 17:30.

No statement could possibly be clearer. There is not the least ambiguity about it. Nothing could be more plainly set forth. It is impossible to be mistaken by any honest mind. All are addressed. Not one can escape its application. Every human being is included. There is no exception—not one. In whatever part of the world they are found, or to whatever nation they belong, the voice of God loudly calls—commands them to REPENT. Not some men, but “all men;” not English people, or French, or German only, but “all men every where.” Thus all are included, and none are exempt from this universal command of God to REPENT. And no marvel that it is so; for if all are His offspring, if all are partakers of that immortal principle which came from God when He breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life, then each member of the human family has a precious, immortal soul, a never-dying soul, a soul that must be either in everlasting glory, or everlasting misery. Who, then, can wonder that God calls so earnestly, pointedly, and imperatively to all? Did not Jesus, who knew all things, and could most truly estimate the priceless value of an immortal soul, say, “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Did He not also most faithfully declare to those who same to ask Him a question about others, “Except ye REPENT, ye shall all likewise perish”? (Luke 13:3.)

But if God now calls upon all men everywhere to repent, is it not clear that “all have sinned,” and that all are guilty before Him? And so it is; for we are not only all sinners by nature, but by practice too “all under sin.” Oh, my reader! it is easy to talk about religion, and it may scarcely be considered respectable not to be active in religiousness of some sort, but “repentance toward God” is a very different thing. To be taken up with Bible questions, to be versed in creeds and opinions, to be members of denominational institutions, or clever in theological discussions, are all far short of repentance toward God. Persons may be highly intellectual, their heads crammed with high-flown theories and doctrines, have a burning zeal for sectarian distinction, be diligent to a degree in outward observances, and yet have never bowed to God’s call on “all men everywhere to REPENT.” The Jews attended to their ceremonial observances, kept periodically the feasts of Passover and tabernacles, attended strictly to synagogue engagements; but alas! alas! instead of hearkening to the call first of John, then of the Lord Himself, and lastly of the twelve apostles, to repent, they crucified the Lord of glory, that they might keep their own dead and formal religion. But they must repent—for in such a state alone could they be true before God—ere they are brought into their promised blessing; for Jesus said, “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Our Lord commanded, after He rose from the dead, that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations;” and Paul informs us that He preached “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;” and again, in the Scripture before us, he declares that “God now commandeth all men every where to REPENT.”

No doubt in repentance there is change of mind. The natural mind at enmity against God, the heart without God, refusing His sweet words, and despising His matchless love manifested in the gift and death of His beloved Son, the repentant one sees the evil of this course, and his mind is changed toward God. To define repentance as sorrow for sin, would be far from the truth; for many a thief has been sorry for having so acted, because he feared it would be discovered, and he would be punished; yet, on the other hand, we cannot suppose that any sinner, taught of God’s Spirit, can think of how his sin appears in God’s sight without peculiar soul-distress. But is it not the characteristic of true repentance, that the soul is before God as a sinner in self-judgment? Surely nothing less can be “repentance toward God;” for then he takes his only true and becoming place of a guilty, hell-deserving sinner in His sight. His heartfelt utterance is, “I have sinned against heaven and before thee.” And can this be without distress and brokenness of heart? How is it possible that a sinner can thus think of himself in God’s sight, without a terrible sense of being justly exposed to God’s wrath? He knows, too, that his sinning has been against Him who sent His Son into the world to save sinners. And the thought of God’s abundant mercy in Christ Jesus, and through His precious blood, gives hope, and the more the stoning work of the Son of God is pondered, the more the future is lighted up before his soul; for God becomes known, not only as a just God, but a Saviour—the present and eternal Saviour of all that believe on His only-begotten Son. This surely is “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 20:21.)

For more than eighteen hundred years God has been sending forth the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ, and commanding “all men everywhere to REPENT;” and so attractive in heaven is it to see one soul on earth thus taking his true place as a guilty, hell-deserving sinner before God, that our Lord assured us that there is “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.” What blindness and folly it is, then, for men to talk of “making their peace with God,” “trying to get better,” “turning over a new leaf,” and the like, when “God commandeth all men everywhere to REPENT!” Have you, my dear reader, thus repented toward God? for not only are you a sinner, guilty and helpless, but judgment is coming, and will soon overtake every unsaved person. “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from among the dead.” (Acts 17:30,31.) What say you then, dear reader, to God’s command? for “God NOW commandeth all men everywhere to REPENT.”

Echoes of Mercy: Volume 13 (1903), Appointed Day., An

God “now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30, 31).

Bible Herald: 1877, In the Current of the Spirit

Acts 17:16 to End.

MR. BURTON: I read this to bring before us, by a first-class example, how we, “made partakers of His grace,” ought to be occupied, and if so occupied, what the effect will be—without effort, but naturally. There is nothing like the effects of true Christianity and true Christian bearing that is without effort. The activity of nature is quite another thing. The first thing we have before us, leading up to these results, is that Paul and Silas had been commended to their work by the prayers of the Church. It is not that they asked for them, or even sought for them in their minds, but it was entirely the thought of the assembly itself Why? Because Paul and Silas were in the current of the Spirit, and so was the assembly. There had been a contention between Paul and Barnabas. The contention had been so sharp between them that they parted company, and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God; and he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches. Then they find they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia; afterward they essayed to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.

How blessedly they were in the hands of the Spirit. They arrive in result at Philippi; and being there not doing any great things; we find Paul, what some people would consider wasting his time, outwardly doing nothing, to human eyes looking about him: in truth, however, waiting on the Lord. If the servant of the Lord is going to do great things, he must be found in a quiet place. Whenever anything great is going to occur, there is always the calling aside beforehand.

First he met Lydia; that was no great thing apparently. They went on the Sabbath out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made, —the right course to take, —and spake unto the women that resorted thither. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. A very small beginning. Do you think the apostle knew the work had begun? Well, if he did not, one did. The Lord knew; the spirit of Python knew; satan knew the work had begun, and satan wanted to be in it. It was a wonderful thing, and a great thing for men of like passions with us. They became the detectives of satan at once. Not merely the detectives of satan as satan, but in respect of the work of God the Holy Ghost at the time. If satan had not been met by the Apostle when he was, there is not the smallest doubt that all the work would have been broken up. Where would Lydia have been? Where would the jailor have been? What a remarkable and blessed thing the ability by the Spirit to detect the working of the enemy in its infancy. Paul was very little occupied with evil: he did not give the evil time to get ahead. What a blessed thing it is for the servant of the Lord when he meets it at once and has done with it. It came in at once. “These are the servants of the Most High God who show unto us the way of salvation.” What is the consequence of faithfulness in respect of satan? Before they had time to look about them they are cast into prison.

Do you think the apostle did not have an inkling of what might happen on exposing the enemy? There was Paul and Silas bound, their backs scored, their feet fast in the stocks in the innermost prison. That is the result of meeting satan. Where is all that to end now? The spokesman for the gospel—his feet fast in the stocks, and kept fast by a man who was determined to keep him fast—it was his duty, having received such a charge. Well in the middle of the night, when they might have been bewailing their predicament, Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Praying and praising! what each temple of the Holy Ghost ought to be doing, no matter what the circumstances. We have much to pray for always. We shall never be without occasion for praise. What a blessed occupation for the individual soul, and for the Church at large. Praying and praising is the gospel in itself to those that hear it. What has such effect on the unconverted soul is to see a soul or a company entirely independent of circumstances, and everything else, recognizing God in the circumstances, and praising Him notwithstanding the circumstances.

The confidence expressed in praying and praising has its effect upon others. All the prisoners were wide awake hearing them. It is a blessed thing to go forth with the gospel of God. And what an effect that, if you are simply doing as you ought to be doing—viz., praying and praising—the prisoners’ ears are opened! Every unconverted man is a prisoner. We were all in that state. But the praying and praising has not the slightest effect on the jailor. We all have to do with souls, and something more than praying and praising it must be for some souls, who seem to be free, and many even the custodians of others. This soul had to be met in its peculiar need and hardness. God met it. He shook the foundation of the prison—took the ground from under his feet.

The Coming of the Lord: As Made Known to the Assembly at Thessalonica, Coming of the Lord, The: No. 1

AS MADE KNOWN TO THE ASSEMBLY AT THESSALONICA.

In the midst of all the confusion of human opinions of the last days, what a privilege it is to turn to the inspired letters before us, written at the very beginning. It is most probable that these are the very first epistles written. And also in these letters we see how much on this subject, the coming of the Lord—and on other subjects, also—had been taught these babes in Christ, when they had been converted but a short time.

The light of the true gospel had broken in upon their midnight darkness. They had heard an entirely new truth, as new to Jew as to Gentile. For 1500 years the Jews had been taught by law what they ought to do, and they had never clone it. The poor heathen had worshipped demons, as though they had been gods; and with all their philosophy, culture, and poetry, they were sunk in the lowest depths of sin.

But now the gospel had thrown a new light on mans condition. He was so lost, so guilty before God, that another, a substitute, must needs suffer for him, and must rise again; and that Jesus, the Savior, whom Paul preached to them, was the Christ. (Acts 17:1-10.) Now mark, this was the entire setting aside of the former principle of man's responsibility, and testing by law; and the proclamation of the second Man, the Lord from heaven taking man's place. Man was too bad to save or improve himself. Everything of the first man was put out, or has gone out, and everything of Christ is now brought in. That light was Jesus, what He was, and what He had done. Forgiveness preached to every sinner through Him, and all that believed were justified in Him—forgiven and brought into complete justification in Christ: the old man being set aside forever; and every believer a new creation in Christ—the new man.

No doubt then, as now, it was hard for the religious Jew to accept this entirely new truth. How hard it is for a religious man to give up all in which he trusts, and believe the gospel of God! But " some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." Yes, this was the true gospel, and how marvelous its effects! Has this gospel come to you with the power of the Holy Ghost? Has this been your start on the journey? Has this stripped you of all your religiousness, or of all your wickedness? What a fact that Jesus must needs suffer for us! You must see this, that if you are wrong at the start you will be wrong all the way, and, awful to think, forever wrong at the end. Is it not real love to your soul to tell you the plain truth? You cannot be saved by any efforts to improve yourself: that is only what scripture calls self-righteousness.

By the preaching of the gospel to these Thessalonians, self and all of self was forever set aside. Jesus must suffer—He has suffered; He must rise again—God has raised Him from the dead: He is the Christ. And what of all who believed this gospel, which is so much denounced in our day as so dangerous? Yes, constantly we meet people who tell us that to tell people the work is done—was done, all done, on the cross—and that God has raised Jesus from the dead to give everlasting certainty of salvation to all who believe, is most dangerous doctrine.

A letter was written from Athens to all these young converts, after at most a few months, by the inspired apostle, he having to flee from them for his life, Let us read that letter, and learn the effect of what men call this dangerous doctrine. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church [or assembly] of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, all the believers who had heard and believed this gospel, formed the one assembly in God the Father—an expression nowhere else found in scripture—and in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not the nation of the Thessalonians, or the city; but the assembly taken out of the nation, or city. These young babes, just born again, were all in this wondrous relationship to God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. True, there were no national churches, no sects or denominations; all was of God, and therefore there were none of these which be of men.

Everything of the first man was set aside; the assembly was in Christ—an entirely new creation wholly of God the Father. Such was the church of God in the beginning. Has man improved on this? Can any of the churches of men say they are in God the Father, and In the Lord Jesus Christ? Oh, reader, do you understand these first words to these babes in Christ? How much of man you might have to give up to return to this divine simplicity!

Verse 2. These babes were in such a state that Paul says, " We give thanks to God always for you ALL, making mention of you in our prayers." Think of that—a multitude of believers, all babes in Christ, in such freshness of soul and holiness of walk that he could give thanks always for them all. And all this was the effect of that gospel so despised in this day of mere form. Three things he could remember without ceasing: their " work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God our Father." Concerning such there could be no question as to their election of God. The gospel had come in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. Of all this multitude not one but knew with much assurance his salvation. They became ensamples. The gospel sounded out from them for sixty or seventy miles around in a few months. Yes, a few months before they were sunk in demon worship, or vainly seeking righteousness by the law. Now they are "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Now contrast this with any nation, city, or town, at this day; where would you find a town in which every believer formed one assembly in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ—× all of one mind and one heart, serving the living and true God: and all waiting for His Son from heaven? Oh what a contrast! Take the millions of the baptized in London. Where will you find the same gospel that Paul preached, and where the effects? There was but the one assembly in Thessalonica, how many sects are there in London? Do we take these things to heart? Mark, these babes were all delivered from the wrath to come: Jesus for whom they waited had delivered them. To doubt this would be to doubt the efficacy of His death, and the proof of His resurrection. They believed God, and were justified in Christ risen from the dead. All question of sins was settled forever, never to be raised again against them. Happy babes in Christ! They were free and bold to sound forth the gospel all around.

Has there ever been anything equal to this? A few poor strangers came into a city of idolatry. Paul preached this gospel for a short time, and see the result! They were not turned to God from idolatry to look for wrath, or the day of tribulation, or the man of sin; but to wait for the Son of God from heaven. They were converted from Jewish religiousness or heathenism; but not to look for death and going to heaven. No, it was for God's Son from heaven.

We shall find very instructive order in this letter, as to the coming of the Lord. At the end of chapter 1 it is the Person of the Son: He is the Object of hope, the one Person to wait for. They went out of Judaism and heathenism, like the virgins, to meet Jesus the Bridegroom. Paul shows in chapter ii. 19 that he had no other hope—no hope of the conversion of the world, neither was death his hope. " For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"

A missionary may go to distant lands and increase his church or sect, on earth. This is often the impression on the native mind, if not the object of the missionary. The Copts said lately, These people tell us that unless we leave our Coptic church, and become Presbyterians, we shall be lost. There is no doubt this is a great hindrance to the real work of God. With Paul it was the very reverse of this. No hope had he but to see all who were turned to God, truly converted, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. Which will more stir the whole soul to gospel effort, having our hope fixed on the awful state of Christendom, or on the presentation of the saints at the coming of Christ? Surely there can he but one answer to such a question.

Not only is this blessed hope a powerful motive for preaching the gospel, it has also an equal place in affecting our love one to another, and leading to a walk of holiness. "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (Chap. iii. 12, 13.) Yes, they had left all to go out, like Rebecca, to meet the heavenly Isaac. They were like companions hasting across the wilderness, suffering at the hands of their enemies, but ever waiting, ever looking for the returning Jesus from heaven. There was but one object before them: the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This very hope had a sanctifying effect on them all as they waited only for their Lord.

Another truth is stated, a very remarkable truth: " At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." We shall see how this is explained to them in the further details of the next chapter. It might at first sight seem like a contradiction, that all the saints will come with our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, however, the plain statement of scripture. " At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." " Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (Chap. iv. 14.) " The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all," &c. (Jude 14, 15.) And, in perfect keeping with these scriptures and others, we read: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4.) And not only so, " But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2.) This is very wonderful. 011 what grace, what blessedness, and we know it to be true.

But perhaps you say, This would upset everything I ever heard or believed. I thought when Christ came it would be the last judgment, and we should all be raised together to judgment, but how can that be, if when the Lord Jesus appears we are with Him, and like Him, and that we all come with Him? Nothing could be more contrary to what I have been taught. It seems far too good to be true.

But, my friend, I am just simply bringing the precious word of God before you. As we go on in this epistle, we shall find a full, clear explanation of all this, just the explanation the Lord Jesus gave to His servant for these dear young babes in Christ. Let us go on to chapter iv.

Lydia: The Beginning of the Work of God in Europe, Lydia: the Beginning of the Work of God in Europe: No. 2

In this deeply interesting chapter, which describes the beginning of the work of the Lord in Europe, we have not a full statement of the word of the Lord which Paul spoke to the first convert Lydia, or to the awakened jailor. At Thessalonica, the next place however, to which the Spirit guides these servants of the Lord, we have a sample of the manner of Paul's preaching. "And Paul as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." (Acts 17:2, 3.)

These are few words; but do they not speak a very different gospel from that which is now generally preached? We will inquire what this difference is, in what it consists. You will observe the effect of this gospel was also altogether different from the preaching of this day. It was then immediate salvation, known and enjoyed, as we shall find by the first inspired letters written to the church in Europe. Or, even in this chapter, was not Lydia fully blest the first day, and the jailor in one night? Now weary years of uncertainty. (Acts 16)

One point of contrast is this. Paul preached then what Christ must needs do; while the preacher now, mostly preaches what man must need do. Just as if when God commanded Moses to lift up the brazen serpent, and it came to pass that whosoever looked at it lived: and, if instead of this, someone had declared the very opposite, and directed the bitten Israelite to look at his wound, and try to heal it. In one case there would have been immediate relief, in the other all the physicians in Israel could not save the bitten one from death. Jesus said "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Or, as we were saying the other night, to a number of colliers: Do you not see a difference between these two plans, or methods of escape, when you are deep down in the dark mine, and a death spreading explosion takes place. Let one man stand at the pit's mouth, and cry down a lecture of directions, what efforts you are to make to escape, you are to do your utmost to try to escape; a man might weary himself in the dark workings, or vainly try to climb the shaft. But, hark! the engineer, who well understands the nature of the mine, and its awful depth of darkness, what does he say? "The cage must needs go down to the very bottom: and it must needs rise again to the very top, and bring the men out, or they are lost." The cage goes down, down, the men are brought up out. Yes, out of darkness and death, into life and light. Is there a collier but knows the engineer is right, and the other talking man at the pit's mouth is wrong? Now which of these methods of escape did Paul first preach in Europe? Did he stand at the pit's mouth and tell the sinner down in darkness, what he must do? Did he tell him to fast down there, and observe days, and penance, and rites, and ceremonies, and prayers; and get intercession of saints, and struggle in the darkness of sin and death, never, never to know, he was out, but only hope, the hope of despair, of weary years of darkness to be helped, if help can come of sacraments dispensed by men in deep darkness, like, and with themselves.

Does Paul open the scriptures and declare that thus must the sinner do, to get saved from the pit? No, Paul by the Spirit of God says, "Christ must needs have suffered." Yes, for this He came down to this world of sin and darkness. All scripture declares that He must needs suffer. All types of scripture point to the atoning death. The Lamb of God must be killed, His blood must be shed. No other victim could meet the just judgment of God on our sins. As no deliverance was possible to the men in the pit, but the cage descending to take them out, so no salvation was possible to sinners guilty before God, but the death of the eternal Son. He must be lifted up. Propitiation must be made, or mercy cannot be shown. Ah, did ever any being descend so low as the Holy One of God? As man forsaken of God? See Him on that cross, bow His head and give up the ghost. See Him the Lord of all, yet laid in death; delivered for our offenses. But this was not all. As the cage that was let down was also drawn up, or none that were in it could have been saved out of the pit; so Paul not only preached that Christ must needs have suffered,

but also "and risen again from the dead." Yes, He who was delivered for our offenses was also raised again from the dead for our justification.

The anxious reader, however, may be ready to say, But how am I to know that He suffered for me? that He bare my sins, was delivered for my offenses? How can I be certain that I am justified—that God accounts, or reckons me, justified, righteous before Him?

As this was the manner of Paul's preaching—-that is the showing from scripture the need of the suffering and death of Christ, and His resurrection from the dead; and more, that all this had been done; yes, all that must be done had been done, "and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." Look up to the right hand of the Majesty on high, who is He in all that glory? The very Jesus who has done all that was written in the scripture; all that need be done, that must be done for your salvation. All is done, " It is finished." He said it. There can be no doubt as to this, for God hath raised Him from the dead, and received Him up into glory. Could there possibly be a greater proof that all that must be done, both to glorify God and expiate our sins, has been done than God has given in raising our Sin-bearer from the dead? So that the apostle in another place said, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:38, 39.) Now we may be quite sure, when God says by His servant, "Be it known é that what He says is true. God says, "Be it known." Yes, it, the very thing the anxious soul desires to know, forgiveness of sins. All that must be done, has been done by Jesus, and now God proclaims to you through Him forgiveness of sins. Do you believe Satan, or God? If you believe God, well, God says all that believe -are justified from all things. Do you believe that Jesus must needs suffer; that nothing short of this could have purged your sins? Without shedding of blood there could be no remission. Do you believe that all this has been done; done once for all, for God has raised from the dead that once bleeding Jesus forsaken on the cross? There God was glorified, and therefore now in righteousness He proclaims forgiveness of sins. Yes, blessed be God, He says, "be it known." Did you not say, how can I know? God says, all that believe are justified; that is, are accounted righteous before Him, therefore it is rather how can you not know? for what He says must be true. You believe God, and lie says you are justified. How can you doubt?

We heard of the death of an eminent person, who had been a preacher many years. He said something like this: " I have sought to serve the Lord for many years, and yet I have not the comfort or assurance I desired in this my dying hour." One with him said, " You forget that Jesus Christ is the Savior, and that He says, ' Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' "He said, u I have read that a thousand times, and never before saw its meaning." He believed on the Lord Jesus, and Jesus said, he had everlasting life. The mistake was a very common one, trying to serve God in order to get life, instead of believing God, and thus knowing that he had eternal life. We think we hear you say, " I am a poor unworthy sinner, but I do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But I wonder how I may get everlasting life and know it." Jesus says you have it. Well may you say, I never saw that before.

Equally certain are those other words of Jesus, words which have been blest to so many souls; we cannot dwell on them too much. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.) Do you hear His word? do you believe God that sent Him? Then Jesus assures you, that you have everlasting life, shall not come into condemnation, but that you have passed from death unto life. Now why should you doubt Him? Can anything be more certain than that which Jesus saith? If you believe God that He sent Jesus to suffer the death of the cross for your sins; that God hath raised Him from the dead for your justification; you have everlasting life, you are justified from all things, and, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We do not hope to be justified, but being justified we have peace with God. Yes, and God says, "Be it known unto you," yes, to every believer God says, " Be it known." Be it known that your sins are forgiven: be it known that you are justified from all things: be it known that you have peace with God. Be it known that Jesus hath made peace by the blood of the cross—His own precious blood. Be it known to you, He says it, "peace unto you." "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Such was the gospel preached at first by the apostles. However pleasing to man's unbelieving heart, to tell a lost sinner he must serve the Lord all his life, and so hope to attain to eternal life at last; yet it is not the gospel Paul preached in Europe. It was the glad tidings that what must be done to vindicate the holy, righteous, Majesty of God, had been done by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And for our further comfort be it noticed, that this gospel, the word of the Lord that Paul was wont to preach, is shown in his Epistle to the Romans, to be on the ground that we are not capable of serving the Lord, and keeping His law, in order to be saved; but that sinners in this world, Jews or Gentiles, have been tried, and found utterly guilty and lost before God.

Since all are guilty, if God deals with us on the righteous principle of law, it is plain He must and can only condemn all. But now His righteousness is revealed on another entirely different principle: justifying freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. What is this principle, so entirely apart from law which only can condemn? It is no less than the death of Jesus, the holy One of God made sin for us. The Sin-bearer bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. The Just One dying for the unjust, to bring us to God. That blessed Substitute delivered for our offenses, and raised again from the dead for our justification. And thus all for whom He died as Substitute are justified by Him, through Him, and in Him.

Fellow believers, is there any uncertainty about this? Has not God glorified Him, who was our Sin-bearer on the cross? "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Is there one sin, one of yours or ours, still left on Him, to be judged, or expiated? How could He be in the glory with one of our sins left upon Him? Impossible! Then equally impossible that one should be left on us, for they were laid on Him.

No, the gospel that Paul first preached in Europe gave certainty, immediate certainty, whether to a worshipping Lydia, or a poor heathen jailor; and to all that believed in each of the cities where he first preached in Europe. How blessed for us in these last days to be able to go back to these divine certainties as first preached in Europe. The certainty based on the word of God of sins all forgiven, of our being justified from all things, of our having peace with God. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

In our next we hope to look at the effects of this gospel of certainty as seen in the first assemblies of God in Europe.

Plain Papers on the Second Coming of Christ, Second Coming of Christ, Plain Papers on the: Part 9, Judgment

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:30, 31.)

Repentance and forgiveness now, or judgment hereafter, such is the unalterable sentence of the word of God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Yes, God must be faithful to the claims of the atoning value of the death of the Lord Jesus. It is not He may, but in righteousness He will—yea, to be righteous He must forgive us our sins. Is Jesus your Savior, or will He be your Judge? "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The word of God is most distinct on the question of judgment, as the lot of man, as such. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

There is only one ground of exemption, and when we think of the everlasting issues, is it not of the utmost moment to ascertain what that ground of exemption from judgment is? Is it not on the sole ground that the Lord Jesus hath once "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself? And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." (Heb. 9:26-28.) This is in perfect harmony with the blessed statement of the Lord Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you? he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [or judgment], but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.)

Thus those who hear the word of the Lord Jesus, and believe God that sent Him, shall not come into judgment. He was offered to bear their sins; God sent Him for this very purpose. The offerings of the law could never put sins away. "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." (Heb. 10) But when the blood of bulls and of goats could not possibly take away sins, then the Lord Jesus came, for the very purpose of putting away sin, by the offering of Himself once. And "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." "For by one offering he hath perfected forever [that is, in perpetuity] them that are sanctified." The Holy Ghost is a witness of all this. Now mark, this ground of exemption from judgment for sins is wholly of God; the will of God is the very source of it. "Lo, I come to do thy will, God." The One that has accomplished this will is the Eternal Son. The One that bears witness is the Holy Ghost. What a ground this is for the soul to rest upon! Instead of judgment, God says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Yes, thus as death and judgment are the common lot of man, so "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Instead of judgment, then, "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Have you heard the word of Jesus? Do you believe God who sent Him? That it was the will of God that the Son should come into this world for the purpose of bearing the sins of many—that is, of all who believe Him- and therefore of putting away your sins, if you do believe God, by the one sacrifice of Himself? Does your soul rest on the fact that He has offered Himself thus once? and that what the blood of bulls and goats could not do, He has done once forever? What! your sins put away forever? so put away to the glory of God, that He has sat down on the right hand of God? Oh, to think that God cannot in righteousness remember one of our sins and iniquities against us! Justified from all things, so that He says, "and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Can He, then, who died for our sins, and was raised for our justification, after all come again to judge us for those very sins? No, He comes without sin, that is, without a question of sin as against us; it is "unto salvation."

The righteousness of God makes this impossible. He who died for our sins, who finished the work that the Father gave Him to do, claims not only our everlasting justification, but He says, " Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." He who thus speaks could say, " righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me"

Who shall judge the believer for his sins? God is their Justifier. His righteousness is revealed in justifying them, by the redemption they have freely through Christ Jesus, even through His blood. Shall Jesus judge them, who is coming to judge the world in righteousness? Why, He came the first time for the very purpose of glorifying God in taking our sins away; and He has done it. He is set down forever. We are perfected forever; our sins and iniquities to be remembered no more.

Judicially there is nothing to judge now—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1.) All has been judged, sins, and sin, in and by that one sacrifice for sin. Now, even amongst men, if a man's liabilities have been met by another, discharged, and the receipt given, no righteous judge could bring such a person into court again. Can God, then, be unrighteous, and bring the justified believer in Christ into judgment? Impossible. So that if we look at that terrible day of wrath and fiery indignation, when the Lord Jesus shall come to judge the world, that is, the living nations of this earth; when all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; we know that, before this awful day of wrath and everlasting punishment on the despisers of the mercy of God, all believers will have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. They will appear with Him when He comes to judge, and, as His joint-heirs, they will be seated with Him to judge the world. (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:14; Jude 14.) Nothing is more clearly taught in holy scripture than this, that instead of the saints being raised to stand in a general judgment at the coming of Christ, they will come with Him to judge the world. (Rev. 19:14; 20:4.) Not only will the Lord be on His throne, but John says, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." a Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

And the redeemed church, the Lamb's wife, having reigned with Christ in the glory of God a thousand years; then takes place the judgment of the wicked dead. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened," &c. (Rev. 20:11) Yes, it is appointed unto men (not all men) once to die, and after death the judgment. These are they, the rest of the dead, that lived not again until the thousand years were finished. (Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:5.) Oh, how terrible to be raised to stand before the great white throne! There is no deliverance then; no more sacrifice for sins; no escape. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Whilst most assuredly believers, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and for a millennium reigning in glory with Christ, can never stand, after all this, before that terrible throne; yet "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Oh, reader, how do you stand with God? Do not dream of deliverance then, if you reject the salvation of God now. Salvation is perfect, it is a great salvation now. Judgment on the rejecters will be great and terrible then.

Have you, then, believed God in sending His beloved Son? and that that Holy One has been made a sacrifice for your sins? Have you repented, that is, have you, and do you, judge yourself your sins, and sin in the presence of such righteousness and divine love? Do you believe the righteousness of God in justifying you from all sins by the atoning death of Jesus? Do you believe God raised Him from the dead for your justification, and to be your everlasting righteousness? Then rest in the absolute certainty of those precious words of Jesus. You hear His word; you believe God that sent Him; then believe what He says, "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment." Oh, how sweet to say from the heart," Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:5.)

No, instead of the believer looking for judgment, he looks for the Lord Jesus the second time, without sin unto salvation. Thus even now, can we sing with joyful hearts, " Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness: and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:12.) Some of our readers may ask. If all believers who have passed from death to life are thus accepted in Christ, all their sins forgiven, and justified from all things; now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus: shall not be brought into judgment for sins put away by the blood of Jesus; then what is the meaning of that scripture, " For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ?" And again, "So everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14, read 10-13.) And also again, "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear [or be manifested] before the judgment-seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad " (2 Cor. 5:9-11.) Now clearly this cannot mean that we shall be judged for our sins, and dealt with according to our sins done in the body, as, in that case, not one could be saved. And besides, this would contradict the scriptures we have been considering, which is impossible. God cannot contradict Himself.

If we carefully read the context of these scriptures, we find it is not a question of our sins, or of our being accepted in Christ; that is all settled for the believer for eternity. His redemption is eternal. In Rom. 14:12 it is a question of not judging our brethren in matters of eating, observing days, &c. The blessed Lord will make no mistake when we all stand before His Beemah seat of reward. In the latter case, in 2 Cor. 5, it is we should earnestly labor, not to be accepted in Him—that we are now through grace—but to be acceptable to Him. We shall receive, or be rewarded, according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad. As in another scripture, " For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.....If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Bead the whole of 1 Cor. 3 Thus our bodies being the temples of the Holy Ghost, we may assuredly both know and do the things that are good and acceptable to Christ, and according to His judgment receive the reward. But if we build badly, do the things that are bad in His sight, however highly these things may be spoken of amongst men, we shall suffer loss as to reward, yet be saved so as by fire. The contrast between Abraham and Lot may illustrate this; the one walking with God a pilgrim and stranger, the other dwelling in Sodom—saved from judgment so as by fire.

What a deeply important subject this is! How many believers, like Lot, are earnestly laboring to reform Sodom! Let us sit down in solemn meditation with the word of God before us, not questioning our acceptance in Christ, if believers. Surely this would be unbelief. But let us ask, what are we doing that is pleasing to Him who bought us with His precious blood—what will meet with His approval and reward when we meet Him as Savior in the air? Oh, that we may test everything by this, Is it pleasing to our Lord? To labor for this as the apostle labored. We are persuaded this would have the effect of leading us to abandon very much that is done in the body, as the mere religious fashion of the day; because we know it will not pass for good in that day so near at hand. Neither will that which is pleasing in His sight lose its reward. But let us not commit the fatal mistake of confounding this with judgment of our sins, but "wait for his Son from heaven.... which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Christian Truth: Volume 36, Paul and Silas in Prison

What could have been more dismal than the plight of Paul and Silas at Philippi? They had been thrust into the inner prison, with their feet shackled in the stocks, and what were they doing? They "prayed, and sang praises unto God." Acts 16:25. They were exercising their holy and their royal priesthood in that prison. When they sang praises they were holy priests; when they said to the terrified jailer, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here," they were royal priests. It is a charming picture! They were full of joy, and that jailer was converted. That was the wonderful result of their imprisonment and bleeding and wounded backs; this soul was saved. Tribulation will come in various ways, but you must accept the need of it while here-"Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Rom. 5:3-5.

Christian Truth: Volume 12, Praises at Midnight

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God." Acts 16:25.

It is one thing to know Jesus as a Savior, and another thing to enjoy Him whom God has glorified as the satisfying Object of our hearts. The difference in the two states of soul is immense. For a sin burdened conscience to have to do with Him whom God gave to bear our sins in His own body on the tree, gives unutterable relief; but to have to do with Him, after this, at the right hand of God, as our satisfying portion, is most blessed. Not only does it lift our hearts to where He is, but it delights us with what He is. We know Him as the One who has attracted us to Himself, won our hearts, and brought us to God. He is to us the Object which outweighs every other; and we find that God in Christ is our resource as well as relief. Precious discovery indeed! He becomes known as our brightness in the darkest path, our strength in weakness, our joy in adversity, our consolation in affliction.

So long as believers think that Christ is revealed only to give relief, they will not be likely to know God in Christ as a resource; they will be tossed about by circumstances, instead of rising above them all and being occupied with Him as He is, who can temper all our joys, sweeten every bitter cup, and reveal Himself to us as the fountain of eternal and unchanging joy. Such will sing praises at midnight, and find springs of

richest consolation when circumstances are affecting them with pain and sorrow.

It was so with Paul and Silas. They were in the path of obedience. Having been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word of God in Asia, after being exercised before the Lord as to the way He would have them go, they assuredly gathered that it was His will they should visit Europe. Being at Philippi, they were called to suffer for the gospel's sake. After having been beaten with many stripes, they were sent by the magistrates to the common prison, with the express command to the jailer that he should keep them safely. He consequently thrust them into the inner prison—no doubt the most loathsome compartment—and made their feet fast in the stocks. But they were men of faith. They were servants and followers of the Lord Jesus. They knew that it was given to them, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for His sake. Though their backs were deeply lacerated with the scourging they had received, and their way-worn feet keenly felt the pressure of the rude stocks, to say nothing of the dark and unwholesome character of the dungeon, yet they were fully assured that all was well. They had not a doubt that God was leading them by the right way, that, however inscrutable to man the path might appear, He could make no mistake. They could confidently pray that all might be turned to account for His glory and for the furtherance of the gospel. They could consider Him who had endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, and had perfectly trodden the path of rejection and suffering for righteousness' sake, but is now crowned with glory and honor. Their surroundings in the house of malefactors were gloomy indeed, and personally they were suffering affliction, but they looked up and saw by faith the glory of God in the face of their glorified Savior. an object that could more than fill their hearts.

Thus captivated and cheered by being occupied with Him in the glory, they rose superior to their circumstances, and prayed and sang praises to God at midnight. To joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation, is the climax of delight. Happy indeed are those who thus know God. While abounding with thanksgivings for blessings by the way, such have done with creatures and circumstances as springs. They know that God in Christ is the alone fountain of living waters, and that permanent and satisfying blessings flow only from Him.

Things New and Old: Volume 22, Singing Praises at Midnight

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.”—Acts 16:25.

It is one thing to know Jesus as a Savior, and another thing to enjoy Him whom God has glorified as the satisfying Object of our hearts. The difference in the two states of soul is immense. For a sin-burdened conscience to have to do with Him whom God gave to bear our sins in His own body on the tree, gives unutterable relief; but to have to do with Him, after this, at the right hand of God, as our satisfying portion, is most blessed Not only does it lift our hearts to where He is, but delights us with what He is. We know Him as the One who has attracted us to Himself, won our hearts, and brought us to God. He is to us the Object which outweighs every other; and we find that God in Christ is our resource as well as relief. Precious discovery indeed! He becomes known as our Brightness in the darkest path, our Strength in weakness, our Joy in adversity, our Consolation in affliction. So long as believers think that Christ is revealed only to give relief they will not be likely to know God in Christ as a resource; they will be tossed about by circumstances, instead of rising above them all, and being occupied with Him as He is, who can temper all our joys, sweeten every bitter cup, and reveal Himself to us as the Fountain of eternal and unchanging joy. Such will sing praises at midnight, and find springs of richest consolation when circumstances are affecting them with pain and sorrow.

It was so with Paul and Silas. They were in the path of obedience. Having been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word of God in Asia, after being exercised before the Lord as to the way He would have them go, they assuredly gathered that it was His will they should visit Europe. Being at Philippi, they were called to suffer for the gospel’s sake. After having been beaten with many stripes, they were sent by the magistrates to the common prison, with the express command that the jailor should keep them safely. He consequently thrust them into the inner prison—no doubt the most loathsome compartment—and made their feet fast in the stocks. But they were men of faith. They were servants and followers of the Lord Jesus. They knew that it was given unto them, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for His sake. Though their backs were deeply lacerated with the scourging they had received, and their way-worn feet keenly felt the pressure of the rude stocks, to say nothing of the dark and unwholesome character of the dungeon, yet they were fully assured that all was well. They had not a doubt that God was leading them by the right way, that, however inscrutable to man the path might appear, He could make no mistake. They could confidently pray that all might be turned to account for His own glory, and for the furtherance of the gospel. They could consider Him who had endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, and had perfectly trodden the path of rejection and suffering for righteousness sake, but is now crowned with glory and honor. Their surroundings in the house of malefactors were gloomy indeed, and personally they were suffering affliction, but they looked up, and saw by faith the glory of God in the face of their glorified Savior, an Object that could more than fill their hearts.

Like the bright rising of the sun after a dark and stormy night, they contemplated, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, the glory and perfections of that Man on the throne of God in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; who is the Head of all principality and power, and in whom they were accepted and forever blessed. His moral excellencies and infinitely accomplished work, His various offices, passed before their souls; what He is to God, what He is in Himself—His past humiliation, His righteous exaltation, the rightful place He now has where angels, authorities, and powers are made subject to Him, and much more—filled their hearts with such joy, that they sang praises to God at midnight. Thus captivated and cheered by being occupied with Him in the glory, they rose superior to their circumstances, and prayed and sang praises to God at midnight. To joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation, is the climax of delight. Happy indeed are those who thus know God. While abounding with thanksgivings for blessings by the way, such have done with creatures and circumstances as springs. They know that God in Christ is the alone Fountain of living waters, and that permanent and satisfying blessings flow only from Him, and they can sing with melody of heart—

Things New and Old: Volume 21, Without God in the World

What a wonderful moment it is for a sinner when he finds himself in the presence of God!—when he is conscious that God has spoken to him. Have you, reader, ever thought to inquire what it was that brought the Philippian jailor, a pagan sinner, without God in the world, to the feet of Paul and Silas, and constrained him to cry out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” “Why,” you will perhaps say, “there was enough to alarm him; for at midnight there was a great earthquake, and the foundations of the prison were shaken, and every one’s bands were loosed.” It certainly must have been a tremendous shaking, when such buildings as the ancients used to erect, the massive ruins of which still testify, in many places, to their ponderous strength, rocked to the very foundations, those foundations being commonly of stones of such immense size and weight, that modern architects are often puzzled to know how they were lifted, carried, and put into their destined situations without injury.

The shaking must have been something terrible, when stocks too, and other means of confining and torturing the poor prisoners, were all so knocked about, that every man was set free, while the massive doors (made often of one enormous stone, folding in grooves, without hinges, and fitting like a leaf), barred, chained, and bolted, were burst open by the mere concussion produced by the earthquake. “Enough,” you will say, “to make the jailor tremble.”

No doubt of it; but if the earthquake made him tremble (though I do not read that it did), the supposed results made him seek to kill himself. Now self-murder is a widely different thing from wanting to be saved; and clearly the very first thing the jailor did, when awakened out of his sleep by the tremendous and really awful shaking produced by the earthquake, was, that “he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself.” Terror-stricken, no doubt, he was, but not so much from the earthquake itself, as from what he supposed it had affected, namely, the escape of all the prisoners.

Under Roman government and laws, the jailor or sentinel who allowed prisoners to escape was dishonored, and forfeited his life. Herod had the sentinels or keepers of Peter’s prison first examined by torture, and then put to death. It was for this reason also that the soldiers who had charge of Paul and other prisoners, on their way to Rome, wanted to kill them all, lest they should escape.

Now, the jailor appears to have set little store by his life, for he was going to take that with his own hand. It was not so much the fear of death as of dishonor that terrified him. His proud heart could not brook that shame and obloquy should rest on his name. But what has that to do with wanting to be saved? “Nothing at all,” you will say; “the two conditions are totally different, in fact diametrically opposed to each other.” Of course they are. The pride of heart that would rather commit self-murder than brook dishonor, is assuredly quite opposed to the brokenness of spirit that cries out for salvation.

But we read of a far more terrible earthquake in Rev. 6, and whether we understand it figuratively or literally, it makes no difference as to this point, namely, that neither judgments, nor what are called natural phenomena, work “repentance toward God.” Their effect is rather to drive the sinner to desire to be saved from God, not to Him. “Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

Grace alone brings to God—never judgment. The men of Jericho (Josh, ii.) sought to destroy Jehovah’s servants, they saw only judgment: the harlot Rahab saw that too, but she saw something beyond, and that was grace, or at the least “kindness.” “Show kindness unto my father’s house;” yes, not to me alone, but “to my father’s house;” she saw kindness enough for that! A poor harlot too. How beautiful!

Saul does not repent towards God, even when told he would be in hades the very next day. It is judgment, deserved judgment, and nothing else. And he “fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel.” And that is all; no repentance toward God, no crying out, “What must I do to be saved?”

The rich man in hades itself, suffering the just judgment of God, has no thought of Him. His own torment, his father’s house, his past life and present awful circumstances, fill his cup of misery to overflowing; but his heart, harder than the nether millstone, grows harder in the flame, and he would fain have the once poor beggar Lazarus wait at his bidding, even in hell itself!

No; judgment does not lead the sinner to God. It is here that the “universalists” and “non-eternity” teachers show their utter ignorance both of God and man, and the entire sphere of truth. But it is not with them we are now concerned, but with the jailor of Philippi. Attempted self-murder, the effort to plunge away from God and man into utter night, was the direct result of what he may have looked upon as a judgment coming down on him and his charge, for his cruelty to God’s servants; such phenomena were commonly regarded by pagans as “judgments” or proofs of “the wrath of the gods,” and are so still.

But the jailor’s proud spirit will not bow. Official punishment and degradation, open shame, and death at the hands of the public executioners, he will not stoop to bear. Alone in the darkness and secrecy of his own chamber, he seeks to hide his shame from man—himself from God, in death! Can any condition be more antagonistic to that in which we find him immediately afterward?

Well, what wrought a change, as sudden as it was complete? What broke down that proud spirit, and brought him a suppliant to the very feet of his own prisoners—a suppliant for salvation—he, the would-be self-murderer? I answer, the voice of God, and nothing else. The earthquake had nothing to do with this result. With or without it the voice of God would have produced it. The effects and consequences of the one stand in dark and solemn contrast to the other, and are doubtless meant to do so, if only to rebuke the “universalists.” But it does far more than this. It tells that direct personal contact with God Himself alone can save the sinner. It is not in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, that the Lord is found, but in the “still small voice.” 1 Kings 19

And it was thus the jailor found him. Read the narrative, and see. He is alone, as I have said, alone in the dark, where no eye but God’s can see him, and he knows it. His murderous weapon is at his heart, and the thoughts of that heart can only be known to himself and to God. Suddenly he hears from out of the deep recesses of “the inner prison,” the lowest, deepest dungeon there, a voice, which goes at once to the inmost depths of his dark, heathen soul: “Do thyself no harm, for we are all here!” It tells that his secret deeds, his inmost thoughts, are known; it bespeaks compassion; divine, super abounding compassion breathes in every word, beseeching him to do himself “no harm,” and dispelling in a moment all the fears that were driving him to suicide!

Who but God could, or would, do this? He had done harm enough to God’s dear servants—thrusting them into the inner prison, and making their feet fast in the stocks; not such stocks as once stood in our villages, but such as kept the poor prisoners in a constrained and painful position all through the weary night. No wonder God burst them asunder, when His servants could sing His praises thus! And can He meet

their tormentor so graciously? He does; it is His voice, and no other's, though the words are the words of a man who could not know the secret deed, much less the thoughts, of the jailor.

But how startling to be thus suddenly arrested in the very act of self-murder, in darkness, in despair! How terrible to such a sinner to find himself all at once, and all alone, in the presence of God! "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," his whole course is changed! He is a convicted sinner, a quickened soul, the voice of the Son of God has spoken him from death unto life.

"Then he called for a light," for his deeds of darkness are now forever at an end. He can face his fellow-man, he has nothing to hide, for he has had to do with God. And then we read, he "sprang in, and came trembling," for what will make a sinner tremble so much as to find himself face to face with God? Till he heard the voice of God in the inspired words of His servant, he may have trembled for his reputation, but now he trembles for his soul—that which he would have cast away as nothing in his pride of heart! And how utterly that pride is broken, for he prostrates himself at their very feet!

Repentance, too, is declared in his very first act, as is always the case where the sinner is brought to have to do consciously with God. "He brought them out," out of that inner prison into which he had so maliciously cast them but a few hours before; yes, "he brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" There is repentance toward God;" and then "faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ" follows, when, in answer to the cry of his convicted soul, they answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house;" and further set before him "the word of the Lord," the gospel of his salvation!

Dear reader, have you ever had to do with God Himself? Have you ever heard His voice? "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Have you ever heard His voice speaking to you personally in and by His word, as the jailor heard it, bringing you under conviction as a sinner confessed before God, and then leading you to the only refuge, the only "name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved?" If not, if you cannot even understand what it means, what it is to have to do with God, to hear his voice, to know Himself, I beseech you to rest not until you do; for until then you are in nature's darkness, "having no hope," no well-founded hope, and "without God in the world."

J. L. K.

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Things New and Old: Volume 12, Work of an Evangelist, The: Part 4

It has been already remarked that the devil made a great mistake when he cast Paul into prison at Philippi. To nature's view it might have seemed otherwise; but, in the judgment of faith, the servant of Christ was much more in his right place, in prison for the truth's sake, than outside at his Master's expense. True, Paul might have saved himself. He might have been an honored man, owned and acknowledged as "a servant of the most high God," if he had only accepted the false profession of the damsel, and suffered the devil to help him in his work. But he could not do this, and hence he had to suffer." And the multitude [ever fickle and easily swayed] rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they, cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely. Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." Acts 16:22-24.

Here, then, some might have said, was an end to the work of the evangelist, in the city of Philippi. Here was an effectual stopper to the preaching. Not so; the prison was the very place, at that moment, for the evangelist. His work was there. He was to find a congregation within the prison wails which he could not have found outside. But this leads us in the third and last place, to the case of the hardened sinner.

It was very unlikely that the jailor would ever have found his way to the prayer meeting by the river side. He had little care for such things. He was neither an earnest seeker, nor a false professor. He was a hardened sinner, pursuing a very hardening occupation. Jailors, from the nature of their office, are, generally speaking, hard and stern men. No doubt, there are exceptions. There are some tender-hearted men to be found in such situations; but, as a rule, jailors are not tender. It would hardly suit them to be so. They have to do with the very worst class of society. Much of the crime of the whole country comes under their notice; and many of the criminals come under their charge. Accustomed to the rough and the coarse, they are apt to become rough and coarse themselves.

Now, judging from the inspired narrative before us, we may well question if the Philippian jailor was an exception to the general rule with respect to men of his class. Certainly he does not seem to have shown much tenderness to Paul and Silas. "He thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." He seems to have gone to the utmost extreme in making them uncomfortable.

But God had rich mercy in store for that poor, hardened, cruel jailor: and, as it was not at all likely that he would go to hear the gospel, the Lord sent the gospel to him; and, moreover, He made the devil the instrument of sending it. Little did the jailor know whom he was thrusting into the inner prison—little did he anticipate what was to happen ere another sun should rise. And we may add, little did the devil think of what he was doing when he sent the preachers of the gospel into jail, there to be the means of the jailor's conversion. But the Lord Jesus Christ knew what He was about to do, in the case of a poor hardened sinner. He can make the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrain the remainder.

It was His purpose to save the jailor; and so far from Satan's being able to frustrate that purpose, he was actually made the instrument of accomplishing it. "God's purpose shall stand; and he will do all his pleasure." And where He sets His love upon a poor, wretched, guilty sinner, He will have Him in heaven, spite of all the malice and rage of hell.

As to Paul and Silas, it is very evident that they were in their right place in the prison. They were there for the truth's sake, and the Lord was with them. Hence they were perfectly happy. What, though they were confined within the gloomy walls of a prison, with their feet made fast in the stocks, prison walls could not confine their spirits. Nothing can hinder the joy of one who has the Lord with him. Shadrach, Meshach,

and Abednego were happy in the fiery furnace. Daniel was happy in the lions' den; and Paul, and Silas were happy in the dungeon of Philippi. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God: and the prisoners heard them."

What sounds to issue from the inner prison! We may safely say that no such sounds had ever issued thence before. Curses and execrations and blasphemous words might have been heard; sighs, cries, and groans had often come forth from those walls. But to hear the accents of prayer and praise, ascending at the midnight hour, must have seemed strange indeed. Faith can sing as sweetly in a dungeon as at a prayer meeting. It matters not where we are, provided always that we have God with us. His presence lights up the darkest cell, and turns a dungeon into the very gate of heaven. He can make His servants happy anywhere, and give them victory over the most adverse circumstances, and cause them to shout for joy in scenes where nature would be overwhelmed with sorrow.

But the Lord had His eye upon the jailor. He had written his name in the Lamb's book of life, before the foundation of the world, and He was now about to lead him into the full joy of His salvation. "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." Verse 26.

Now, if Paul had not been in full communion with the mind and heart of Christ, he would assuredly have turned to Silas and said, "Now is the moment for us to make our escape. God has most manifestly appeared for us, and set before us an open door. If ever there was an opening of divine providence surely this is one." But no; Paul knew better. He was in the full current of His blessed Master's thoughts, and in full sympathy with his Master's heart. Hence, he made no attempt to escape. The claims of truth had brought him into prison; the activities of grace kept him there. Providence opened the door; but faith refused to walk out. People talk of being guided by providence; but if Paul had been so guided, the jailor would never have been a jewel in his crown.

"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled." (Ver. 27.) This proves, very plainly, that the earthquake, with all its attendant circumstances, had not touched the hard heart of the jailor. He naturally supposed, when he saw the doors open, that the prisoners were all gone. He could not imagine a number of prisoners sitting quietly in jail when the doors lay open and their chains were loosed. And then what was to become of him, if the prisoners were gone? How could he face the authorities? Impossible. Anything but that. Death, ever by his own hand, was preferable to that.

Thus the devil had conducted this hardened sinner to the very brink of the prepuce, and he was about to give him the final and fatal push over the edge, and down to the eternal flames of hell; when a voice of love fell upon his ear. It was the voice of Jesus through the lips of His servant—a voice of tender and deep compassion—"Do thyself no harm."

This was irresistible. A hardened sinner could meet an earthquake; he could meet death itself; but he could not withstand the mighty, melting power of love. The hardest heart must yield to the moral influence of love. "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Love can break the hardest heart. And surely there was love in those words, "Do thyself no harm," coming from the lips of one to whom he had done so much harm, a few hours before.

And be it noted, there was not a single syllable of reproach, or even of reflection, uttered by Paul to the jailor. This was Christ-like. It was the way of divine grace. If we look through the gospels, we never find the Lord casting reproach upon the sinner. He has tears of sorrow; He has touching words of grace and tenderness; but no reproaches—no reflections—no reproof to the poor distressed sinner. We cannot attempt to furnish the many illustrations and proofs of this assertion; but the reader has only to turn to the gospel story to see its truth. Look at the prodigal—look at the thief. Not one reproving word to either.

Thus it is in every case; and thus it was with the Spirit in Paul. Not a word about the harsh treatment—the thrusting into the inner prison—not a word about the stocks. "Do thyself no harm." And then, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Such is the rich and precious grace of God. It shines, in this scene, with uncommon luster. It delights in taking up hardened sinners, melting and subduing their hard hearts, and leading them into the sunlight of a full salvation; and all this in a style peculiar to itself. Yes, God has His style of doing things, blessed be His name; and when He saves a wretched sinner, He does it after such a fashion as fully proves that His whole heart is in the work. It is His joy to save a sinner—even the very chief; and He does it in a way worthy of Himself.

And now, let us look at the fruit of all this. The jailor's conversion was most unmistakable. Saved from the very brink of hell, he was brought into the very atmosphere of heaven. Preserved from self-destruction, he was brought into the circle of God's salvation; and the evidences of this were as clear as could be desired. "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." This clearly defines the extent of the term " house" in this passage. They spake, of course, to those who could understand and believe what was said. "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

What a marvelous change! The ruthless jailor has become the generous host! "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." How clearly we can now see that Paul was right in not availing himself of the opening of providence! How much better and higher to wait for an opening of grace! What an eternal loss it would have proved to him had he walked out at the open door! How much better to be conducted out by the very hand that had thrust him in—a hand once the instrument of cruelty and sin, now the instrument of righteousness and love! What a magnificent triumph! What a scene altogether! How little had the devil anticipated such a result from the imprisonment of the Lord's servants! He was thoroughly outwitted. The tables were completely turned upon him. He thought to hinder the gospel, and behold, he was made to help it on. He had hoped to get rid of two of Christ's servants, and 10, he lost one of his own. Christ is stronger than Satan; and all who put their trust in Him and move in the current of His thoughts shall, most assuredly, share in the triumphs of His grace now, and shine in the brightness of His glory forever.

Thus much, then, as to "the work of an evangelist." Such are the scenes through which he may have to pass—such the cases with which he may have to come in contact. We have seen the earnest seeker satisfied; the false professor silenced; the hardened sinner saved. May all who go forth with the gospel of the grace of God know how to deal with the various types of character that may cross their path May many be raised up to do the work of an evangelist!

It is a serious reflection for the evangelist, that wherever God's Spirit is at work, there Satan is sure to be busy. We must remember and ever be prepared for this. The enemy of Christ and the enemy of souls is always on the watch, always hovering about to see what he can do, either to hinder or corrupt the work of the gospel. This need not terrify or even discourage the workman; but it is well to bear it in mind and be watchful. Satan will leave no stone unturned to mar or hinder the blessed work of God's Spirit. He has proved himself the ceaseless, vigilant enemy of that work from the days of Eden down to the present moment.

Now, in tracing the history of Satan, we find him acting in two characters, namely, as a serpent or as a lion—using craft or violence. He will try to deceive; and, if he cannot succeed, then he will use violence. Thus it is in this sixteenth chapter of the Acts. The apostle's heart had been cheered and refreshed by what we moderns should pronounce, "a beautiful case of conversion." Lydia's was a very real and decided case, in every respect. It was direct, positive, and unmistakable. She received Christ into her heart, and, forthwith, took christian ground by submitting to the deeply significant ordinance of baptism. Nor was this all. She immediately opened her house to the Lord's messengers. Hers was no mere lip profession. It was not merely saying she believed. She proved her faith in Christ, not only by going down under the water of baptism, but also by identifying herself and her household with the name and cause of that blessed One whom she had received into her heart by faith.

All this was clear and satisfactory. But we must now look at something quite different. The serpent appears upon the scene in the person of

The False Professor.

"It came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." Verses 10-18.

Here, then, was a case eminently calculated to test the spirituality and integrity of the evangelist. Most men would have hailed such words from the lips of this damsel as an encouraging testimony to the work. Why then was Paul grieved? Why did he not allow her to continue to bear witness to the object of his mission? Was she not saying the truth? Were they not the servants of the most high God? And were they not showing the way of salvation? Why be grieved with—why silence such a witness? Because it was of Satan; and, most assuredly, the apostle was not going to receive testimony from him. He could not allow Satan to help him in hiss work. True, he might have walked about the streets of Philippi owned and honored as a servant of God, if only he had consented to let the devil aid him in the work. But Paul could never consent to this. He could never suffer the enemy to mix himself up with the work of the Lord. Had he done so, it would have given the deathblow to the testimony at Philippi. To have permitted Satan to put his hand to the work, would have involved the total shipwreck of the mission to Macedonia.

It is deeply important for the Lord's workman to weigh this matter. We may rest assured that this narrative of the damsel has been written for our instruction. It is not only a statement of what has occurred, but a sample of what may occur, and indeed what does occur every day. Christendom is full of false profession. There are millions of false professors at this moment, throughout the wide domain of baptized profession. It is very sad to be obliged to say it; but so it is; and we must press the fact upon, the attention of the reader. We are surrounded, on all sides, by those who give a merely nominal assent to the truths of the christian religion. They go on, from week to week, and from year to year, professing to believe certain things which they do not in reality believe at all. There are thousands who. every Lord's day, profess to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and yet, were such persons to be examined, it would be found that they either do not think about the matter at all, or, if they do think, they deem it the very height of presumption for anyone to be sure that his sins are forgiven.

This is very serious. Only think of a person standing up in the presence of God and saying, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," and, all the while he does not believe any such thing! Can anything be more hardening to the heart, or more deadening to the conscience than this? It is our firm persuasion that the forms and the formularies of professing Christianity are doing more to ruin precious souls than all the forms of moral pravity put together. It is perfectly appalling to contemplate the countless multitudes that are, at this moment, rushing along the well-trodden highway of religious profession, down to the eternal flames of hell. We feel bound to raise a warning note. We want the reader most solemnly to take heed as to this matter.

We have only instanced one special formulary, because it refers to a subject of very general interest and importance. How few, comparatively, are clear and settled as to the question of forgiveness of sins! How few are able, calmly, decidedly, and intelligently, to say, "I know that my sins are forgiven!" How few are in the real enjoyment of full forgiveness of sins, through faith in that precious blood that cleanseth from all sin! How solemn, therefore, to hear people giving utterance to such words as these, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," when, in point of fact, they do not believe their own very utterance! Is the reader in the habit of using such a form of words? Does he believe it? Say, dear friend, are thy sins forgiven? Art thou washed in the precious, atoning blood of Christ? If not, why not? The way is open. There is no hindrance. Thou art perfectly welcome, this moment, to the free benefits of the atoning work of Christ. Though thy sins be as scarlet, though they be black as midnight, black as hell, though they rise like a dreadful mountain before the vision of thy troubled soul, and threaten to sink thee into eternal perdition; yet do these words shine with divine and heavenly luster, on the page of inspiration, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

But mark, friend, do not go on, week after week, mocking God, hardening thine own heart, and carrying out the schemes of the great enemy of Christ, by a false profession. This is precisely what we see in the damsel possessed by a spirit of divination. This is the point in her history which links itself with the present awful condition of Christendom. What was the burden of her song, during those "many-days" in the which the apostle narrowly considered her case? "These men are the servants of the most high God which show unto us the way of salvation." But she was not saved—she was not delivered—she was, all the while, under Satan's power. And not only so, but Satan was seeking to use her for the purpose of marring and hindering the work of the gospel.

Thus it is with Christendom—thus it is with each false professor throughout the length and breadth of the professing church. Everyone who professes to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and yet does not believe in it, does not know that his sins are forgiven, does not think that anyone can know it until the day of judgment—every such person is, in principle, on the ground of the damsel possessed with the spirit of

divination. What she said was true enough; but she was not true in saying it. This was the grievous point in the case. It is one thing to say or assent to what is true, and another thing to be true in saying it. Of what possible use was it to go on, from day to day, giving utterance to the formulary, “They show unto us the way of salvation,” while she remained in the same unsaved, unblessed condition? None whatever; and we know of nothing, even in the deepest depths of moral evil, or in the darkest shades of heathenism, more truly awful than the state of careless, hardened, self-satisfied, fallow-ground professors, who, on each successive Lord’s day, give utterance, either in their prayers or their singing, to words which, so far as they are concerned, are wholly false.

The thought of this is, at times, almost overwhelming. We cannot dwell upon it. It is realty too sorrowful. We shall therefore pass on, having once more solemnly warned the reader against every shade and degree of false profession. Let him not say or sing aught that he does not heartily believe. The devil is at the bottom of all false profession, and by means thereof he seeks to bring discredit on the work of the Lord.

But how truly refreshing to contemplate the actings of the faithful apostle in the case of the damsel. Had he been seeking his own ends, or had he been merely a minister of religion, he might have welcomed her words as a tributary stream to swell the tide of his popularity, or promote the interest of his cause. But Paul was not a mere minister of religion; he was a minister of Christ—a totally different thing. And we may notice that the damsel does not say a word about Christ. She breathes not the precious, peerless name of Jesus. There is total silence as to Him. This stamps the whole thing as of Satan. “No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” People may speak of God, and of religion; but Christ has no place in their hearts. The Pharisees, in the ninth of John, could say to the poor man, “Give God the praise;” but in speaking of Jesus, they could say, “This man is a shiner.”

Thus it is ever in the case of corrupt religion, or false profession. Thus it was with the damsel in Acts 16. There was not a syllable about Christ. There was no truth, no life, no reality. It was hollow and false. It was of Satan; and hence Paul would not and could not own it; he was grieved with it and utterly rejected it.

Would that all were like him! Would that there were the singleness of eye to detect, and the integrity of heart to reject the work of Satan in much that is going on around us! We are thoroughly convinced that the Holy Ghost has written the narrative of this damsel for our instruction. It may be said, perhaps, that we have no such cases now. We reply, “For what end did the Holy Ghost pen the record?” Alas! there are thousands of cases, this moment, answering to this type of the damsel. We cannot but view it as a sample case—an illustration of Christendom’s false profession, which exhibits far more of the craft and subtle wiles of the enemy than is to be found in the ten thousand forms in which moral pravity clothes itself. Everybody can judge of drunkenness, theft, and such like; but it demands an eye anointed with heavenly eye-salve to detect the wily workings of the serpent behind the fair profession of a baptized world.

Such an eye Paul, through grace, possessed. He was not to be deceived. He saw that the whole affair was an effort of Satan to mix himself up with the work, that thus he might spoil it altogether. “But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit. I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.”

This was true spiritual action. Paul was not in any haste to come into collision with the evil one, or even to pronounce upon the case at all; he waited for many days; but the very moment that the enemy was detected, he is resisted and repulsed with uncompromising decision. A less spiritual workman might have allowed the thing to pass, under the idea that it might turn to account and help forward the work. Paul thought differently; and he was right. He would take no help from Satan. He was not going to work by such an agency; and hence, in the name of Jesus Christ—that name which the enemy so sedulously excluded—he puts Satan to flight.

But no sooner was Satan repulsed as the serpent, than he assumed the character of the lion. Craft having failed, he tries violence. “And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely.” Verses 19-23.

Thus the enemy seemed to triumph; but be it remembered that Christ’s warriors gain their most splendid victories by apparent defeat. The devil made a great mistake when he cast the apostle into prison. Indeed it is consolatory to reflect that he has never done anything else but make mistakes, from the moment that he left his first estate down to the present moment. His entire history, from beginning to end, is one tissue of errors. But more of this in our next.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Things New and Old: Volume 12, Work of an Evangelist, The: Part 2

It is ever a moment of deepest interest when a prepared soul is brought in contact with the full Gospel of the grace of God. It may be that that soul has been under deep and painful exercise for many a long day. seeking rest but finding none. The Lord has been working by His Spirit, and preparing the ground for the good seed. He has been making deep the furrows so that the precious seed of His word may take permanent root, and bring forth fruit to His praise. The Holy Ghost is never in haste. His work is deep, sure, and solid. His plants are not like Jonah’s gourd, springing up in a night and perishing in a night. All that He does will stand, blessed be His name. “I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever.” When He convicts, converts, and liberates a soul, the stamp of His own eternal hand is upon the work, in all its stages.

Now, it must have been a moment of intense interest when one in Lydia’s state of soul was brought in contact with that most glorious gospel which Paul carried. (Acts 16:14.) She was thoroughly prepared for his message; and surely his message was thoroughly prepared for her. He carried with him truth which she had never heard and never thought of. As we have already remarked, she had been living up to her light; she was a worshipper of God; but we are bold to assert that she had no idea of the glorious truth which was lodged in the heart of that stranger who sat beside her at the prayer meeting. She had come thither—devout and earnest woman as she was—to pray and to worship, to get some little refreshment for her spirit, after the toils of the week. How little did she imagine that at that meeting she should hear the greatest preacher that ever lived, save One; and that she should hear the very highest order of truth that had ever fallen upon mortal ears.

Yet thus it was. And, oh, how important it was for Lydia to have been at that memorable prayer meeting! How well it was she had not acted as so many, now-a-days, act who after a week of toil in the shop, the warehouse, the factory, or the field, take the opportunity of lying in bed on Sunday. How many there are whom you will see at their post from Monday morning till Saturday night, working away with all diligence at their calling, but for whom you may look in vain at the meeting on the Lord's day. How is this? They will tell you, perhaps, that they are so worn out on Saturday night, that they have no energy to rise on Sunday, and therefore they spend this latter day in sloth, lounging, and self-indulgence. They have no care for their souls, no care for eternity, no care for Christ. They care for themselves, for their families, for the world, for money-making; and hence you will find them up with the dawn of Monday and off to their work.

Lydia did not belong to this class at all. No doubt, she attended to her business, as every right-minded person will. We dare say—indeed, we are sure—she kept very excellent purple, and was a fair, honest trader, in every sense of the word. But she did not spend her Sabbath in bed, or lounging about her house, or nursing herself up, and making a great fuss about all she had to do during the week. Neither do we believe that Lydia was one of those self-occupied folk whom a shower of rain is sufficient to keep away from a meeting. No; Lydia was of a different stamp altogether. She was an earnest woman, who felt she had a soul to save, and an eternity before her, and a living God to serve and worship.

Would to God we had more Lydias in this our day! It would give a charm, and an interest, and a freshness to the work of an evangelist, for which many of the Lord's workmen have to sigh in vain. We seem to live in a day of terrible unreality as to divine and eternal things. Men, women, and children are real enough at their money-making, their pursuits, and their pleasures; but oh! when the things of God, the things of the soul, the things of eternity, are in question, the aspect of people is that of a yawning indifference. But the moment is rapidly approaching—every beat of the pulse, every tick of the watch, brings us nearer to it—when the yawning indifference shall be exchanged for " weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth." If this were more deeply felt, we should have many more Lydias, many more of those prepared to lend an attentive ear to Paul's gospel.

What force and beauty in those words, "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul." Lydia was not one of those who go to meetings to think of anything and everything but the things that are spoken by the Lord's messengers. She was not thinking of her purple, or of the prices, or the probable gains or losses. How many of those who fill our preaching rooms and lecture halls follow the example of Lydia? Alas! we fear but very few indeed. The business, the state of the markets, the state of the funds, money, pleasure, dress, folly—a thousand and one things are thought of, and dwelt upon, and attended to, so that the poor vagrant, volatile heart is at the ends of the earth instead of "attending" to the things that are spoken.

All this is very solemn, and very awful. It really ought to be looked into and thought of. People seem to forget the responsibility involved in hearing the gospel preached. They do not seem to be in the smallest degree impressed with the weighty fact that the Gospel never leaves any unconverted person where it finds him. He is either saved by receiving, or rendered more guilty by rejecting it. Hence it becomes a serious matter to hear the Gospel. People may attend gospel meetings as a matter of custom, as a religious service, or because they have nothing else to do, and the tune would hang heavy upon their hands; or they may go because they think that the mere act of going has a sort of merit attached to it. Thus thousands attend preachings at which Christ's servants, though not Paul's in gift, power, or intelligence, unfold the precious grace of God in sending His only begotten Son into the world to save us from everlasting torment and misery. The virtue and efficacy of the atoning death of the divine Savior—the Lamb of God—the dread realities of eternity—the awful horrors of hell, and the unspeakable joys of heaven—all these weighty matters are handled, according to the measure of grace bestowed upon the Lord's messengers, and yet how little impression is produced! They "reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and yet how few are made even to "tremble!"

And why? Will anyone presume to excuse himself for rejecting the gospel message on the ground of his inability to believe it? Will he appeal to the very case before us, and say, "The Lord opened her heart; and if He would only do the same for me, I, too, should attend; but until He does, I can do nothing." We reply, and that with deep seriousness, Such an argument will not avail thee in the day of judgment. Indeed we are most thoroughly convinced that thou wilt not dare to use it then. Thou art making a false use of Lydia's charming history. True it is, blessedly true, the Lord opened her heart; and He is ready to open thine also, if there were in thee but the hundredth part of Lydia's earnestness.

And dost thou not know full well, reader, that there are two sides to this great question, as there are to every question? It is all very well, and sounds very forcibly, for thee to say, "I can do nothing." But who told thee this? Where hast thou learned it? We solemnly challenge thee, in the presence of God, Canst thou look up to Him and say, "I can do nothing—I am not responsible?" Say, is the salvation of thy never-dying soul just the one thing in which thou canst do nothing? Thou canst do a lot of things in the service of the world, of self, and of Satan; but when it becomes a question of God, the soul, and eternity, you coolly say, "I can do nothing—I am not responsible."

Ah! it will never do. All this style of argument is the fruit of a one-sided theology. It is the result of the most pernicious reasoning of the human mind upon certain truths in scripture which are turned the wrong way and sadly misapplied. But it will not stand. This is what we urge upon the reader. It is of no possible use arguing in this way. The sinner is responsible; and all the theology, and all the reasoning, and all the fallacious though plausible objections that can be scraped together, can never do away with this weighty and most serious fact.

Hence, therefore, we call upon the reader to be, like Lydia, in earnest about his soul's salvation—to let every other question, every other point, every other subject, sink into utter insignificance in comparison with this one momentous question—the salvation of his precious soul. Then, he may depend upon it, the One who sent Philip to the eunuch, and sent Peter to the centurion, and sent Paul to Lydia, will send some messenger and some message to him, and will also open his heart to attend. Of this there cannot possibly be a doubt, inasmuch as scripture declares that "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." All who perish, after having heard the message of salvation—the sweet story of God's free love, of a Savior's death and resurrection—shall perish without a shadow of an excuse, shall descend into hell with their blood upon their own guilty heads. Their eyes shall then be open to see through all the flimsy arguments by which they have sought to prop themselves up in a false position, and lull themselves to sleep in sin and worldliness.

But let us dwell for a moment on "the things that were spoken of Paul." The Spirit of God hath not thought proper to give us even a brief outline of Paul address at the prayer meeting. We are therefore left to other passages of holy scripture to form an idea of what Lydia heard from his lips on that interesting occasion. Let us take, for example, that famous passage in which he reminds the Corinthians of the gospel which he had preached to them. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received,

and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

Now, we may safely conclude that the foregoing passage of scripture contains a compendium of the things that were spoken of Paul, at the prayer meeting at Philippi. The grand theme of Paul's preaching was Christ—Christ for the sinner—Christ for the saint—Christ for the conscience—Christ for the heart—Christ all, and in all. He never allowed himself to wander from this great center, but made all his preachings and all his teachings circulate round it with admirable consistency. If he called on men, both Jews and Gentiles, to repent, the lever with which he worked was Christ. If he urged them to believe, the object which he held up for faith was Christ, on the authority of holy scripture. If he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, the One that gave cogency and moral power to his reasoning was Christ. In short, Christ was the very gist and marrow, the sum and substance, the foundation and top stone, of Paul's preaching and teaching.

But, for our present purpose, there are three grand subjects, found m Paul's preaching, to which we desire to call the reader's attention. These are, first, the grace of God; secondly, the Person and work of Christ; and thirdly, the testimony of the Holy Ghost as given in the holy scriptures.

We do not attempt to go into these vast subjects here; we merely name them, and entreat the reader to ponder them, to muse over them, and seek to make them his own.

(1.) The grace of God—His free sovereign favor, is the source from whence salvation flows—salvation in all the length, breadth, height, and depth of that most precious word—salvation which stretches, like a golden chain, from the bosom of God, down to the very deepest depths of the sinner's guilty and ruined condition, and back again to the throne of God—meets all the sinner's necessities, overlaps the whole of the saint's history, and glorifies God in the highest possible manner.

(2.) Then, in the second place, the Person of Christ and His finished work are the only channel through which salvation can possibly flow to the lost and guilty sinner. It is not the church and her sacraments, religion and its rites and ceremonies, man or his doings in any shape or form. It is the death and resurrection of Christ. "He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day." This was the gospel which Paul preached, by which the Corinthians were saved, and the apostle declares, with solemn emphasis, "If any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." Tremendous words for this our day!

(3.) But, thirdly, the authority on which we receive the salvation is the testimony of the Holy Ghost in scripture. It is "according to the scriptures." This is a most solid and comforting truth. It is not a question of feelings or experiences or evidences; it is a simple question of faith in God's word wrought in the heart by God's Spirit.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Things New and Old: Volume 12, Work of an Evangelist, The: Part 1

(Acts 16:13-34.)

In our January issue, we ventured to offer a word to the evangelist, which we now follow up with a paper on the evangelist's work; and we cannot do better than select, as the basis of our remarks, a page from the missionary record of one of the greatest evangelists that ever lived. The passage of scripture which stands at the head of this article furnishes specimens of three distinct classes of hearers, and also the method in which they were met by the great apostle of the Gentiles, guided, most surely, by the Holy Ghost. We have, first, the earnest seeker; secondly, the false professor; and, thirdly, the hardened sinner. These three classes are to be met everywhere, and at all times, by the Lord's workmen; and hence we may be thankful for an inspired account of the right mode of dealing with such. It is most desirable that those who go forth with the gospel should have skill in dealing with the various conditions of soul that come before them, from day to day; and there can be no more effectual way of attaining this skill than the careful study of the models given us by God the Holy Ghost.

Let us then, in the first place, look at the narrative of

The Earnest Seeker.

The laborious apostle, in the course of his missionary journeyings, came to Troas, and there a vision appeared to him in the night, "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us." Acts 16:9—15.

Here, then, we have a touching picture—something well worth gazing at and pondering. It is a picture of one who, having through grace gotten a measure of light, was living up to it, and was earnestly seeking for more. Lydia, the seller of purple, belonged to the same interesting generation as the eunuch of Ethiopia, and the centurion of Caesarea. All three appear on the page of inspiration as quickened souls not emancipated—not at rest—not satisfied. The eunuch had gone from Ethiopia to Jerusalem in search of something on which to rest his anxious soul. He had left that city still unsatisfied, and was devoutly and earnestly hanging over the precious page of inspiration. The eye of God was upon him, and He sent His servant Philip with the very message that was needed to solve his difficulties, answer his questions, and set his soul at rest. God knows how to bring the Philips and the eunuchs together. He knows how to prepare the heart for the message and the message for the heart. The eunuch was a worshipper of God; but Philip is sent to teach him how to see God in the face of Jesus Christ. This

was precisely what he wanted. It was a flood of fresh light breaking in upon his earnest spirit, setting his heart and conscience at rest, and sending him on his way rejoicing. He had honestly followed the light as it broke in upon his soul, and God sent him more.

Thus it is ever. “To him that hath shall more be given.” There never was a soul who sincerely acted up to his light that did not get more light. This is most consolatory and encouraging to all anxious enquirers. If the reader belongs to this class, let him take courage. If he is one of those with whom God has begun to work, then let him rest assured of this, that He who hath begun a good work will perform the same until the day of Jesus Christ. He will, most surety, perfect that which concerneth His people.

But let no one fold his arms, settle upon his oars, and coolly say, “I must wait God’s time for more light. I can do nothing—my efforts are useless. When God’s time comes I shall be all right; till then, I must remain as I am.” These were not the thoughts or the feelings of the Ethiopian eunuch. He was one of the earnest seekers; and all earnest seekers are sure to become happy finders. It must be so, for “God is a re warder of them that diligently seek him.” Heb. 11:6.

So also with the centurion of Caesarea. He was a man of the same stamp. He lived up to his light. He fasted, he prayed, and gave alms. We are not told whether he had read the sermon on the mount; but it is remarkable that he exercised himself in the three grand branches of practical righteousness set forth by our Lord in the sixth chapter of Matthew.1 He was molding his conduct and shaping his way according to the standard which God had set before him. His righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and therefore he entered the kingdom. He was, through grace, a real man, earnestly following the light as it streamed in upon his soul, and he was led into the full blaze of the gospel of the grace of God. God sent a Peter to Cornelius, as He had sent a Philip to the eunuch. The prayers and alms had gone up as a memorial before God, and Peter was sent with a message of full salvation through a crucified and risen Savior.

Now it is quite possible that there are, at this moment, thousands of persons throughout Christendom, who, having been rocked in the cradle of easy-going evangelical profession, and trained up in the flippant formalism of a self-indulgent, heaven-made-easy religion, are ready to condemn the pious conduct of Cornelius, and to pronounce it the fruit of ignorance and legality. Such persons have never known what it was to deny themselves a single meal, or to spend an hour in real, earnest prayer, or to open their hand, in true benevolence, to meet the wants of the poor. They have heard and learned, perchance, that salvation is not to be gained by such means—that we are justified by faith without works—that it is to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly.

All this is most true; but what right have we to imagine that Cornelius was praying, fasting, and giving alms in order to earn salvation? None whatever—at least if we are to be governed by the inspired narrative, and we have no other means of knowing aught about this truly excellent and interesting character. He was informed by the angel that his prayers and his alms had gone up as a memorial before God. Is not this a clear proof that these prayers and alms were not the trappings of self-righteousness, but the fruits of a righteousness based on the knowledge which he had of God? Surely the fruits of self-righteousness and legality could never have ascended as a memorial to the throne of God; nor could Peter ever have said concerning a mere legalist that he was one who feared God and worked righteousness.

Ah! no, reader; Cornelius was a man thoroughly in earnest. He lived up to what he knew, and he would have been quite wrong to go further. To him the salvation of his immortal soul, the service of God, and eternity, were grand and all-absorbing realities. He was none of your easy-going professors, full of flippant, vapid, worthless talk, but doing nothing. He belonged to another generation altogether. He belonged to the working, not the talking class. He was one on whom the eye of God rested with complacency, and in whom the mind of heaven was profoundly interested.

And so was our friend of Thyatira, Lydia, the seller of purple. She belonged to the same school—she occupied the same platform as the centurion and the eunuch. It is truly delightful to contemplate these three precious souls—to think of one in Ethiopia; another at Caesarea; and a third at Thyatira or Philippi. It is particularly refreshing to contrast such downright, thorough-going, earnest souls with many, in this our day of boasted light and knowledge, who have got the plan of salvation, as it is termed, in their heads, the doctrine of grace on the tongue; but the world in the heart; whose one absorbing object, from morning till night, is self, self, self, —miserable object!

We shall have occasion to refer more fully to these latter under our second head; but, for the present, we shall think of the earnest Lydia; and we must confess it is a far more grateful exercise. It is very plain that Lydia, like Cornelius and the eunuch, was a quickened soul; she was a worshipper of God; she was one who was right glad to lay aside her purple-selling, and betake herself to a prayer meeting, or to any suchlike place where spiritual profit was to be had, and where there were good things going.

“Birds of a feather flock together,” and so Lydia soon found out where a few pious souls, a few kindred spirits, were in the habit of meeting to wait on God in prayer.

All this is lovely. It does the heart good to be brought in contact with this deep-toned earnestness. Surely the Holy Ghost has penned this narrative, like all holy scripture, for our learning. It is a specimen case, and we do well to ponder it. Lydia was found diligently availing herself of any and every opportunity; indeed she exhibited the real fruits of divine life, the genuine instincts of the new nature. She found out where saints met for prayer, and took her place among them. She did not fold her arms, and settle down on her knees, to wait, in antinomian indolence and culpable idleness, for some extraordinary undefinable thing to come upon her, or some mysterious change to come over her. No; she went to a prayer meeting—the place of expressed need—the place of expected blessing: and there God met her, as He is sure to meet all who frequent such scenes in Lydia’s spirit. God never fails an expectant heart. He has said, “They shall not be ashamed that wait for me;” and, like a bright and blessed sunbeam, on the page of inspiration, shines that pregnant, weighty, soul-stirring sentence, “God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” He sent a Philip to the eunuch in the desert of Gaza. He sent a Peter to the Centurion, in the town of Caesarea. He sent a Paul to the seller of purple, in the suburbs of Philippi; and He will send a message to the reader of these hues, if he be a really earnest seeker after Gods salvation.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Lydia: The Beginning of the Work of God in Europe, Lydia: the Beginning of the Work of God in Europe: No. 1

To the traveler there is something peculiarly interesting in tracing a river, hundreds of miles from the ocean, to its source. There arrived, he would sit down, and examine all the surroundings of the little stream that gushes out of the mountain side. Still more interesting must it be to the Christian to trace the vast stream of Christianity in Europe for so many hundreds of years; and at last arrive at this little stream of blessing, that first burst forth so silently by the river-side at Philippi.

Before, however, we look at Lydia, the woman at the river-side, we will look briefly at three other women in other scenes. If we trace the great rolling river of this world's history of sin, sorrow, and death, where shall we find the fountain-bead of that deep, black stream? Again, there is a woman by the river. But look at Eve in the midst of the garden of Paradise; how different from the seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, as she sat at the river of Philippi!

Surely that river, that flowed in its four streams from the garden of Eden, was a type in contrast, for, as it flowed from the hand of God, all was good. But the serpent entered that fair scene; the woman believed his lie, and disbelieved God.

She listened, and believed the insinuation that God was so unkind as to withhold the fruit of one tree, that He refused to allow them what would be for their good. There was the first bubbling up of that dreadful stream of iniquity which has overflowed the world. And no man has found, or can find any other spring-head of evil. What a change took place in that garden of innocent delight! She was first in the transgression, and soon she led Adam to disobey God. Very sad is the history. Now in righteousness they must be driven out from the garden, and from the tree of life. Yet grace shall reign through righteousness, and, from the woman's Seed, the Deliverer come who shall bruise the serpent's head.

We pass on to other days. Four thousand years has that river of sin and death rolled on, and the woman's Seed has come. The Eternal Son, the Word, is now made flesh; and truly Man, being weary with His journey, Jesus sat at Jacob's well. God manifest. A woman comes to the well—a daughter of Eve, whose nature and practice is sin. What a study! Will Jehovah-Jesus drive her from His presence? No, He came to seek and to save the lost. Does He say, God is so unkind as to keep back what would do you good? Hearken to His words: " If thou knowest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (John iv. 10.) Do you believe this, that God is ready to meet you just as you are, and to give you the water of life? How interesting is the revelation of God to the woman at the well! What a new fountain, a well of water, springing up into everlasting life! And what a fact, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." This she could not understand until her conscience was reached. He who was going up to the cross to bear her sins could say, "Go, call thy husband." He did not impute her sin to her, and drive her from His presence. No; soon He would reach the dreadful hour when her sins would be imputed, yea, laid upon Him. Thus He could reveal the Father, seeking such to worship Him in spirit and in truth. The felt need is now created in her soul that nothing can satisfy but Himself. In the fullness of divine grace, He now says unto her, "I that speak unto thee am he." Ah, when Christ is revealed to the soul of a poor sinner, earthly things are readily left behind. She left her water é pot: and as a woman was first in the transgression, so now a woman is the first messenger of the Messiah to the men of Samaria.. Has our reader ever been thus face to face with the Son of God?

We must now pass on to another woman, in another garden. There is Mary weeping by an empty sepulcher. (John 20) He who sat at Jacob's well has now been nailed to the cross, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. And, far more than this, God has been glorified by that death on the cross. Neither men, enemies, nor disciples, understood that vast work accomplished on that cross. God understood it; God had raised Him as man from among the dead. The empty sepulcher, though a sorrow to Mary, was the triumph of God over Satan. Satan had represented God as too unkind to give an apple for man's good. God had so loved as to give His beloved Son to bear our sins in His own body on the, tree. There was the woman in the garden, "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?" As yet she had no idea of the risen Lord. She only thought of taking His dead body away. "Jesus said unto her, Mary." What a moment! She turned, and saw her Rabboni—Master. And now the woman out of whom He had cast seven devils (oh, the riches of His grace!) is to be the first messenger of the new creation. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Yes, if woman was first in the transgression, woman is first to announce the glad tidings of the new creation—that the disciples were now the brethren of the risen Christ. As Firstborn from the dead, He was not ashamed to call them brethren. God was now and forever their Father and their God, even as He was the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That very evening of the first day of the week did Jesus Himself stand in their midst, and say unto them, "Peace unto you." Do you know this same Jesus alive from the dead? Have you heard and believed these three words, "Peace unto you,? Look into the one garden—there stood the woman and Satan. Look into this garden—there stands the woman and Jesus. What a contrast! We now pass on to Lydia, the woman by the river at Philippi.

As this is the beginning of the church of God in Europe: the conversion of the first Christian, the first member of the one body of Christ, in Europe: and also the first bubble of that stream which has flowed for eighteen hundred years through all the changes of Europe; surely every circumstance connected with this first day's work demands our careful attention. Indeed the whole chapter (Acts 16) seems to throw light on the history of the church of God in Europe, from that day to this. We would notice that the chapter opens with the introduction of Timothy, who henceforth takes the place of Barnabas. And who can tell the vast importance of the Epistles to Timothy? The first epistle, as to the middle ages so called, or the latter times (1 Tim. 4:1); and the second epistle as divine guidance for these last days. (2 Tim. 2:19-22; 3:1.)

The next thing is the entire dependence of even the apostle Paul on the guidance of the Holy Ghost, as to where and when he was to preach or teach the word. So far was even Paul, the apostle, from being able to ordain where any man should be a preacher of the word. Elders he could ordain, to rule or take charge of the assembly where they were located; or deacons, for the temporal needs of the saints: or, as an apostle, he could delegate another to do so. But we notice here, and everywhere, he did not know where to preach Christ himself, except as guided by, and in entire dependence on, the Holy Ghost. What a lesson is this for the ministers of Christ in Europe! Paul is in Galatia. "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas." Now does not the Lord guide His servants, from Galatia to Philippi, some three hundred miles? What a journey in those days. What beautiful dependence on the Holy Ghost; city after city is passed for three hundred miles. He sails from Troas, passes what we call the Bosphorus, enters Europe, arrives at last at Philippi. If the apostle was thus dependent on the Spirit as to where and when to preach, ought not we? We talk of apostolic succession; but where is it? Where, we ask, are the servants of Christ in this day who would not only not dare to appoint where others are to preach the word, but, as to themselves, tread in the steps of an apostle who traveled some three hundred miles, in lowly dependence on the Spirit of God, as to where he should preach? Mark, he did not do his own will, he " assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered him not."

What an introduction this is to the first day's work in Europe! Let us be honest. Is it not a lesson we have well-nigh forgotten? What have we lost by forgetting, and displacing the Holy Ghost? Fellow-servants of Christ, let us test our own practice with this deeply important lesson. And this is not all, when we have guidance as to the town or city where the Lord would have us preach the word: how much of the human element comes in—what haste, or excitement, or effort! How different the apostle! He says, "We were in that city abiding certain days." What real dependence! What calm faith in God! Oh, that we did but know more of this.

Now, as this is the first time the word is preached in Europe, look at that scene. The Jews' sabbath-day comes round. They are wont to meet for prayer by the river-side. "And we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." Now we will look at the first convert in Europe. "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." Thus there was first the sovereign guidance of the Spirit as to the city, and the place, the river-side. And then the work in the heart was the Lord's. The result is, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul. She and her household immediately are baptized, and thus take the place of professed Christians. Not only so, but fruit appears. She does not say, If ye have judged me to be true to you, but faithful to the Lord. We could tell of many such instances of sovereign grace in our day. But, reader, is this a picture of your case? Has the Lord opened your heart to attend to the things spoken or written by Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Have you taken the profession of being a Christian? Can those who know you judge by your ways that you are faithful to the Lord? Is it the language of your heart, Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?

What a picture is that woman by the river, of the beginning of God's stream of blessing to poor, dark Europe! It is worthy of our closest study. It seems to mark what is of God from the beginning of His work to the end.

When we saw the first woman by the river in Eden, the serpent immediately entered the scene, and by sin poisoned the stream of humanity at its very source. Is it not so again? No sooner had the work of God begun in Europe, but Satan sought to corrupt it. And what did the crafty enemy think was the best way to poison the stream of Christianity in Europe? His long experience told him the best way to corrupt it was to join himself as the serpent to it. There was a celebrated agent of the serpent, a certain damsel, possessed of a spirit of divination, or Python (the serpent). Amongst the heathen, however educated, these persons possessed of the devil were oracles, and had immense influence. Vast sums, and costly gifts, were sometimes given to them by those who came to consult them. The serpent is thus again seeking to corrupt the stream at its head. " The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days."

But the god of this world was baffled in this case. In the name of the Lord Jesus, the apostle commanded the demon to come out of her. What a mercy Paul knew him; but this cost him something. If Satan cannot join the work, he will immediately try to stop it by persecution. Paul and Silas are beaten, at the command of those magistrates who ought to have defended them from the mob. They are thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks. Does this stop the stream of blessing? Nay, the ill-treated servants of the Lord sing praises at midnight, and the very jailer is converted. What tight this chapter throws on the history of the river, the stream of blessing of the church of God, and His work in Europe! Satan's plan has ever been, first to join himself to that work, through or by persons of influence in this world; and where he cannot do this, to persecute it with fury.

How marvelous the effect where God is working, whether in the case of a worshipping Lydia, or a desperate heathen jailer! At once and forever they are brought to the Lord. In the case of the jailer during one night, and in Lydia's case in one day. Would it not be most interesting to inquire what really was the word of the Lord the apostle preached, which produced such immediate effects? This we propose to do, if the Lord will, in our next paper on "Lydia; or, the Beginning of the Work of God in Europe."

Bible Treasury: Volume N1, Parting of Paul and Barnabas

Acts 15:35-39

EVERY Christian reader of the Acts of the Apostles has been arrested at this pathetic incident. What did it not cost the great heart of Paul? Had it been Apollos or Philip the evangelist, had it been one of the twelve, or even Cephas, it would have been sore trial to his spirit. But the rupture of cooperation with Barnabas, for it did not exceed that limit, must have been anguish to him.

Was it not the Son of Consolation, who, when all the faithful in Jerusalem were afraid of Paul (not believing him to be a disciple), took him and brought him to the apostles and related to them his seeing the Lord and His speaking to him, and his bold testimony to the name of Jesus in Damascus? Was it not the same (for he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith), who, when sent to Antioch to investigate the work of the Lord first informally carried on among the Greeks, went off to Tarsus to seek him who was still called Saul, to its mighty furtherance at Antioch? Were not they also singled out and associated in the help sent to the brethren in Judaea when famine was predicted by Agabus? Were not they two separated by and to the Spirit for the first or express missionary work to which they were called? And after that most fruitful errand among the Gentiles, was it not arranged that Paul and Barnabas, though not alone, should go up to Jerusalem from Antioch to have the question of circumcision settled according to God where and whence fleshly influence sought to press it to the danger of the gospel and the damage of the church? And no wonder; for it was the virtual denial of Christ, the dead and risen Savior, the glorified Head on high. Were they not, in the letter which emanated from that notable assembly with the apostles and elders, characterized as “our beloved Barnabas and Paul,” men having given up (or staked) their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ?

And now, not long after, must there be an open breach as far as concerned joint service between souls so closely and long united? It was even so. At Antioch before they had been separated by the Spirit for the work; there now they parted never to be so joined again. “And Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and evangelizing with many others also the word of the Lord, But after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brethren where we have evangelized the word of the Lord, how they fare. And Barnabas wished to take with them also John that was called Mark; but Paul thought proper as to him that withdrew from them from Pamphylia and went not with them to the work, not to take him with them. And a provocation arose, so that they parted from one another, and Barnabas took with him Mark and sailed for Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, commended to the grace of the Lord by the brethren” &c. (vers, 35-39).

There ought not to be a question that Barnabas was wrong, and that Paul was right, in this painful difference. Yea, a principle was at stake, which the Holy Spirit saw fit to record for permanent admonition, even though it laid bare the failure of an eminently blessed witness of Christ. This very fact attests how momentous it must be that other servants of God far below either of those concerned should take heed. Yet if it had not been here presented with the adequate notice of inspired authority, what on the one hand could have seemed more gracious than that Barnabas should desire a fresh opportunity to efface the past discredit of his cousin? And how many at all times would on the other hand be ready to implite rigor to him whose delight was in grace beyond all other men? But the grace he delighted in was according to truth; both made him all the more jealous for the Lord's glory. From this Barnabas had swerved into amiable feeling where it had no place but was the power of the Spirit devotedly and without compromise.

The case before us is all the more emphatic because it is the mildest form of failure one can conceive. No dark spot was on the name of John Mark. Never was he accused of loving this present age or of seeking to stand well with the religious world. He was no fawner on the rich and great. He was no despiser of the poor, nor covetous of social distinction. Still less could it be said that he shirked the reproach and the sufferings of the Christian life; or that he declined the constant burdens and trials of that holy fellowship. Nobody taxed him with half-heartedness to the “within” which grace has formed, or could lay the charge of coquetting with such as ought to be avoided scripturally. He that was in due time honored of God to write the inspired narrative of our Lord's service incurred no suspicion of laxity or indifference. Who could accuse him of barely keeping within the form of communion or of cultivating the friendship of its adversaries?

No; John Mark had grown weary of the labor, scorn, and opposition of the first apostolic journey from Antioch; and Paul refused association with him again in that work till his consecration of spirit was proved beyond dispute. Paul would have no honey any more than leaven in the oblation; he looked for unction from the Holy One, and that seasoning of salt which should never be lacking. Barnabas alas! in this question thought more of his relative than of the Master, confounded graciousness with grace, slighted the wise and holy warning of Paul, and henceforth lost notice for himself and his work in the divine records of the chronicle which tells the tale. Nor this only; for when Paul chose Silas and set out, he was recommended to the grace of the Lord by the brethren (compare Acts 13:1-4; 14:26). Nothing of the kind is said of Barnabas now, but an ominous silence prevails.

It was in vain for Barnabas to talk about his “right” any more than “love” or “largeness of heart,” pleas often urged in excuse without the least real ground. No one trenched on John Mark's title to fellowship with any or all of its privileges.

No one forbade John Mark to preach where he pleased over “the field;” nor did anyone desire to close his mouth in the assembly, be it in dangerous and evil; whereas the service demanded Antioch or Jerusalem or anywhere else. But it was quite another thing after his failure, to put him forward again till his recovery was proved, in a service conspicuous and weighty and as honorable as full of difficulty. What consistent part could he take in a testimony of hardness and danger, who was known to have so soon withdrawn himself, even before persecution grew hot, or shameful usage set in, or resisting unto blood? How could a runaway not yet restored exhort the disciples to continue in the faith? With what face could such a one preach that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom?

Alas! in our day far more glaring is the incongruity which a fleshly or worldly-minded policy dictates. And the low scattered state of Christendom is often argued as its excuse or extenuation. But that low state is never rightly used save to overcome it by faith, certainly not to yield to it by those who profess to feel its evil, which is but to sink lower still. What could expose the testimony of God's truth to greater ignominy and juster censure for hollowness than to put forward men whose ways are glaringly out of harmony with their theme, and even a source of continual pain and shame to those that love them best?

Besides, when a self-willed act like this takes place, which violates the spiritual sense of true-hearted souls as not of the Lord, whatever the motives, it naturally (not to say inevitably) breeds party and division. For the faithful and wise cannot but blame it, especially if initiated without seeking counsel or yet worse if pursued against it. There is in our day and perhaps always a radical spirit, ready to oppose those whom God has given to lead or guide, and as ready to support such as are disposed to independency and self-assertion. For the same person who plays the despot in his own sphere often incites to insubordination elsewhere. What can the unhallowed issue be but confusion and every evil work?

It is a comfort to think that eventually grace blessed, not the weak temporizing of Barnabas, but the fidelity of Paul. For, years after, he was led by the Spirit to write cordially in favor of Mark (Col. 4:10, 11, Philem. 1:24 Tim. 4:11): a joy at the end greater than the sorrow of earlier days, when he refused to sanction the wish of his dearest friend, even at the cost of parting from him as a colleague.

Christian Truth: Volume 30, Conference at Jerusalem, The

It is often questioned whether the prohibitions against eating blood, in Gen. 9:4, Lev. 17:10-14; and Acts 15, are binding on Christians. The conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15) settles for us the question of abstaining from blood. It does not take up Lev. 17, but the command to Noah as to this. The question to be settled was, Could the Gentiles become Christians without first becoming Jews? Amos 9 is cited for the sake of the words, "And all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called." It is not that the prophecy was fulfilled, but that the name of the Lord could be called on them as Gentiles.

Jerusalem herself gives up the title to impose the law on the nations, and the Apostle of the circumcision uses the remarkable expression, "We shall be saved, even as they" (v. 11); that is, through grace—the manner in which a Gentile is dealt with, mercy being God's way, through grace, with the Jew (compare Eph. 2:4-8, etc.). When the "apostles and elders and brethren" write their decision, in verses 23 to 29, they embody in it those "necessary things" which were opportune and right for Christians to observe. First, the unity of the Godhead was to be maintained, in contrast to the "idols" of the heathen. Second, that life belonged to Him—they were to abstain from "blood, and from things strangled." Third, the marriage tie was sacred and to be kept pure. In fact, they go back to what was right and ordered of God in creation, coupling it with those things I name; not as enacting new laws, but giving what was right to be observed in the midst of an evil world.

Thus, what was enacted in Gen. 9:4 is held good in Christianity. I do not think therefore we are exempt, but, bound, as in all things, to do the will of the Lord.

Reading

Well, I have been wondering, we have been considering. Individual responsibility for the Lord and what we've had before us. And whether it might not be profitable to take up something as to collective responsibility. Like we would have perhaps say in the 15th of the Acts. I have wondered something about that. Perhaps also connecting that with the Apostle Pauls comments on it in Galatians 2 first part of the chapter. How much of the chapter Brother Airsman or what portion of the chapter did you have in mind reading? Well, I would read in that 15th chapter. Well, I'd read down through the 35th verse. And then in Galatians. Two to read the. The 1St 10 verses. Acts 15, verse 1 to 35. And certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except to be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved. When therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem under the apostles and elders about this question, and being brought on their way by the church, as they passed through Finis and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles. And they caused great joy unto all the weather, and when they were come to Jerusalem. They were received of the church and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there are rules of certain of the section of the Pharisees which believe, saying that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing. Peter rose up and said unto them. Men and brethren, do you know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe? And God, which knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us and them? Purifying their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why tempt thee, God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they. Then all the multitude kept silence and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying. Men and brethren, hearken unto me, Simeon hath declared how God at the 1St and visit the Gentiles. Gentiles. To take out of them a people for his name, and for this agree the words of the prophets as it is written. After this I will return and will build again the Tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up. That the residue of men might seek act of the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called. Set the Lord and doeth all these things. None of the God are all His works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God. Or as much as we have heard is that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words subverting your soul, saying He must be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment. It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.

Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas, who science, who shall also tell you the same things by Mom. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things, that she abstained from meats offered to idol, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. From which, if you keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch, and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the Epistle, which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words. And confirmed them and after they had carried their space. They were let go in peace from them, from the brethren unto the apostles. Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide their stealth. Paul also, and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also. Now the second chapter of Galatians. On verse one through 10. Yes please. Galatians 2 verse one. Then 14 years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated under them that cost over among the Gentiles. But privately the families were of reputation, lest by any means I should fund, or had run in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised, and that because of false brethren unawares brought in. Who came in privately to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus. That they might bring us into ******* to whom we gave place by subjection, No, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you, But of these who seem to be somewhat whatsoever they wear, it maketh no matter, no matter to me. God accepted no man's person, but they, who seem to be somewhat in conference, added nothing to me but contrary wise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed under me, as the gospel of a circumcision was Peter, or he that was effectually impetered to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles. And when James, Cephas and John. Who seem to be pillars. Perceive the grace that was given unto me. They gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go under the heathen, and they under the circumcision. Only they would. That we should remember the poor. The same which I also was forward to do. Now I know that. This chapter in the 15th of the Acts. Has a very definite place in the early beginning. Of the church. That is, here was a question coming up of this circumcision and the teaching of the law. Well, it's centered in Jerusalem was the headquarters for it. And I believe our brother Potter used to remark that he. Wondered whether the church in Jerusalem ever were really and got on real Christian ground, that is, they were so associated with the temple. They started out evidently at first there's definite need visiting the temple to bring the gospel to the remnant there. But it would seem from other places in the history and the Acts that perhaps they continued that beyond what they should because it was when the Apostle Paul went there later on.

That some of them enticed him to go to the temple. Well, the Spirit of God. Saw fit that this question should not be settled in Antioch, but in Jerusalem. That is, if it was settled in Antioch. There might have resonated a division in the church, a Gentile church and a Jewish church, and so that was guarded against. By having this matter settled at Jerusalem. Well, it was not my thought to. Go into the details of that, I had thought, as to whether we do not have principles here in this chapter to guide us in difficulties that arise at any time in the Church's history. Would you, would you judge then that things should be settled in someone place or not in the local gathering? Well. Here, evidently. The Lord desired that. There should be. Consultation, at least with their brethren in Jerusalem. In looking at it in a human way, here was an apostle located in Antioch. He could say to the Corinthians, am I not an apostle? And he could exercise his authority as such. But. We see from his account there in the Galatians that he says he went up at this time by revelation, that the Lord told him not to exercise his Apostolic authority, but he should go up to Jerusalem. And if you look at the assembly at Antioch, it was certainly a very. An assembly. Very. Completely. Gifted having prophets and teachers there, as we learned in the 13th chapter. That, humanly speaking, you would think that they were thoroughly competent to handle this matter. Well, here was a question coming up that the Lord didn't want the assembly at Antioch to handle that. He

wanted it settled in Jerusalem. Well, I believe this would guard us from independency of action. When we know there are exercises elsewhere, I believe that it shows that they should be considered. What would you think of that, Brother Brown? Yes, I. Well. Your remarks I thoroughly agree with. As to. Consideration. Of their brethren. Rather than to put anything over on others. Without that Christian attitude of fellowship and concern in in others. I do believe that Acts 15 is a most unusual thing in the word of God, because a very unusual. Difficulty had arisen. And God made a special provision for that, because the apostle himself. Was set for the gospel. He was the chosen vessel. He even can call it my gospel. But God, as it were, was supporting Him and making a provision so that it was not to be settled by Himself.

But by the most unlikely place at Jerusalem, where Judaism held had held their headquarters at Jerusalem. I see divine wisdom in setting the this whole program. For maintaining the truth of the grace of God against the enemies intrusion of the legal system again. Now that's as far as I feel. Certain of speaking. We wouldn't say that there is any Jerusalem now would be no, we wouldn't, no. But there was the the situation there in the early church, and this was a crucial question. This thing was desperately important. And it had to be resolved in a way that would maintain the integrity and the unity of the testimony to Christianity, and if, if the whole church at Jerusalem apostatized, went back to the principle of Judaism and the law. Having synagogues all over the world, it would work havoc. But isn't it marvelous the way the Spirit of God took over both at Jerusalem and at Antioch, that this thing could be solved in a godly way and everybody be happy about it, Yes. It's very remarkable how he uses the very ones in Jerusalem who were perhaps more the proponents of these very questions. He uses them to settle the question and they settle, it might say, contrary to their own thoughts and feelings. It's the over ruling hand of the Spirit of God. Well, now there is you say there's no truth them now that we would look to for the settlement of affairs, but there might arise a question where the consciences of our brethren elsewhere and something to as to whether perhaps another assembly might be involved. Why there should be consideration? I remember a case in another country where I was one time and. There was a assembly there and there was a a brother who was causing considerable difficulties among the gathered Saints in that land. And this one particular assembly, he had harassed them and irritated them very much in accusations. Well it. Happened that I think is the second evening that I was in that place. Why I was down to railway station where they were seeing off a brother and here was a brother from this assembly been so tormented in this way by a diatrophies and they were. Very much irritated about it and they were considering taking action against this man. Well, he was not a local man, but still he was causing a great deal of trouble. And they this brother was discussing it with some of the other brothers there and he says well haven't we the right to do it? Well, they didn't question the right to do it. But they didn't think it was the time or the way in which it should be done. They asked them to wait upon the Lord. Well, they did wait upon the Lord, and the Lord did settle a matter without their having to take the action. Well, to take the action with a precipitated something which might have been disastrous, Well, one is thought here, the Apostle Paul, now he was used to write letters. The bulk of our epistles are the Apostle Paul's letters. Well, he might have written a letter to the assembly in Jerusalem. And told him what he thought about these people. Well. By revelation, he was told not to do it. And here was the assembly of Antioch. It tells us here that there had been no small dissension and disputation with them.

Why they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain of them should go up to Jerusalem on the apostles and elders with this question? So we have the Apostle Paul. Guided by distinct revelation, and we have the assembly. Coming to a conclusion that certain ones should go up there. Well, I believe it was remarked in one of the. Meetings here the other day. About writing letters. Well, I believe it's long been a a policy among us from some of our brethren of a past generation, not to write letters individually, at least where you can speak with one face to face. I suppose there's nothing that can be written that somebody else can't take something else out of it. And there's no opportunity to explain a misunderstanding. It's nice to see when they came to Jerusalem. They were received of the church and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. That is, Jerusalem was opened to hear the 'cause they didn't just shut the door on their face and say, well, now we know what you've come here for and we, we just don't care to listen. But instead of that, they received them and listened to them and they declared, and isn't it nice the way that's put? They declared what God had done with them. Not what they'd done, but what God had done with them. And then we see the. The way the Spirit of God works. There's a thorough discussion of the matter with the Pharisees. So they get the older ones together, the apostles and the elders. Talk it over. And they do. They do a lot of talking, much disputing. And now Peter, LED of the Spirit of God, gets up and gives a summary. And it must have been given in the power of the Spirit of God. And when he comes to the point? It's beautiful to see it in that ninth verse that he put no difference, no difference between us and them. Purifying their hearts by faith. That's the Gentiles. 10th verse Now therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? And then the marvelous grace in that 11 verse, but we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they now ordinarily he would have stated that the other way around. He would have said we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ they shall be saved even as we but he didn't he put it in reverse. Oh, brethren, that's real. That's great. Yes. Isn't there something important too in that sixth verse? You've commented on the discussion in the 4th and 5th verses. And then here in the sixth verse, it tells us the apostles and elders came together. Consider this matter. Is there not a principle there here? This thing had been aired publicly. Well, now the apostles and elders come together to consider it. Well, do we not get there something as to the government in the Assembly? Our brother Potter used to say. An assembly is not a democracy where everyone has a equal right and voice. Well, here he speaks about the apostles and elders come together. Consider the matter. Well, now, apparently. They didn't exclude others from being present. There are others there, but was the apostles and elders that considered the question? And evidently he said there was much disputing there. Well, then Peter gets up and and makes his remark, which you've alluded to. Well, I believe that is important.

I remember Brother Airsman at the time that the amalgamation movement was on precipitated upon us over here by. Some over in Europe, especially in England. And it came right at the time we were having a general meeting in Des Moines that came to a head. Well, there were, there were brothers there. It was a large conference and there were leading brothers there from many gatherings. So there was an opportunity given between the meetings for those who were taking the lead locally in the various gatherings to get together and and weigh this matter that was being put before us in such a a sudden and precipitate way. And I believe that that general talking over that we had together. And did a lot to clarify the atmosphere so that that movement made little or no progress on this side of the ocean. Yes, I believe that was right. And I remember too on occasion in England, I was over there afterwards, years afterwards. And the brother. I believe you referred him to me, that I was in England at the time he corresponded with you. He and he said he wanted to see an American brother. So. I called on him. He was not in fellowship at the time. He'd gone with the movement. And. What he wanted to know is why didn't you go into that reunion? Well, I says, we made a protest against it. I says I know it, I was present at that meeting. Well, he says we didn't know anything about that. And then he told me. He says we hadn't been in that five years before. We realized we'd made a mistake but took another ten though to get out of it. But then in the 13th verse. This man James, who evidently held a very predominant position there. This is not the. This is not Peter, James and John, is it? This is James, the son of Alphaeus. He he gives the the summary the the decision. And he gives it in a magnificent way. Coming down to the 19th verse, my sentence is that we trouble, not them. He speaks in a definite, determined way. My sentence is he's the

spokesman for the Spirit of God in that assemblage. That we trouble not them from among the Gentiles that are turned to God, but. We write under them these, these orders for Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him being read in the synagogue every Sabbath day. They can get that anytime they want it. Then it pleased the apostles and elders. Now let's not miss this next expression. With the whole church, the whole assembly, it wasn't just the apostles and elders. With a whole assembly to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas and Silas, chief men among the brethren. Well, that's godly order, isn't it? Yes, man. I think that is very important, what is mentioned there, as you commented with the whole church. That is, the brothers as such, the apostles and elders or the brothers could not settle this question. It had to be brought before the whole assembly, and we cannot speak of a assembly letter going out unless it is brought before the whole assembly. Might say, well, sisters don't have any voice in the matter. But you can't have the whole church unless they're present. Now here is another thing to notice. In that verse you read Brother 19. James, the spokesman, says wherefore.

I judge it is in the other translation, wherefore I judge not to to trouble of those who from the Gentiles are turned to God. Now the real thought, I think, is that. They had cleared the atmosphere from this yoke that. These troublers would foist upon. The gentiles that were saved. That is to put the law upon them, and the conclusion is not a new law. He's not introducing any new Oregon added thing. He's simply judging that The thing is not good that they have proposed and it's very important to see that we have something to go by. We simply abide in the truth. There's no advance here. It is simply a safe conclusion according to God's mind. And I mentioned that because. We're living in the last days and we should give no place to man introducing any new law. Or tradition. There is no importance in any of us. It matters not who he is, it is a matter of abiding by what the Lords word teaches us. And that's in keeping with this whole context, is it not? I would say Amen to that very strongly, Brother Brown. Isn't it important here to notice too? Has been commented as to James comments and then in that. 19th verse. Here he is. Summing up what is gone before and, he says. Wherefore my sentence is. And he gives it. Now he doesn't call for a vote. He doesn't call for different ones to stand up all in favor of this. He says My sentence is he sums it up. There's the power of the Spirit of God there. And so then we read, then it pleased the apostles and elders with the whole church. There was that arrived at without resorting to human means. They didn't go back like they were doing in the first chapter. The acts and cast lots about the matter. The Spirit of God guided them. Well, I believe that there is a power of the Spirit of God when gathered together in the assembly. The Lord is in the meds. And. There is a restraining power. I think we see it here. All these people that were contending, I doubt very much if they change their minds about it. Because we know that it crept up afterwards, but the Spirit of God at that time overruled. And here James gives a sentence. The whole assembly accepted. It was a deliverance that God had provided for them. We can just see God's hand in this whole program, how nicely it was settled. 60 years ago at this time. A grave. A grave controversy. Arose. It might be near 70 years ago. A very grave controversy arose touching the. Touching the person of Christ is work among us. And it was sponsored by some such accredited brethren. Then it gave deep exercise to the Saints. All over. And some of the leading brothers in Canada and the United States. We're in a position of uncertainty. They hardly knew they were. They wondered if these brothers to whom they had been looking could be wrong.

They didn't have a settled judgment. Well, there was a conference at Toronto. This is before the day that I was with brethren. There was a conference at Toronto. And at this conference, a brother delivered an address, a brother well known to many of us. Many of us older brothers. He got up and and delivered an address. And it was so powerful in taking up the basic issues that were at stake in the doctrine that this man over in England was trying to. Force on his brethren. That address was so clear. And powerful and of the Spirit. That the atmosphere was clarified and when that movement had spent itself in Canada and United States. There were very few that had been carried away with Raven ISM, very few. And it was that brother's powerful address in the in the power of the Spirit of God that defeated gravenism on this side of the ocean. No, I'm Speaking of the over ruling. Power, the Spirit of God and assembly. Sometimes where there has been a matter in an assembly than up and it's been decided, you may afterwards hear a certain one say well. I I thought of this. Should have been spoken out. But the Spirit of God didn't allow to be brought up. I believe there is that, Brother Harrison. I don't think you made very clear some perhaps regarding that sixth verse. I've heard you speak of it, so I think I can speak for you. And experience that it is like what we call in our local meetings of brothers meeting. That they have to look into certain things and. Bring out the facts that are to be presented to the assembly. Is that right? Well, I believe that responsible brothers should consider a matter before it is brought before the assembly. And again, I don't like to refer by names, but our brother Potter used to say that it took at least 2 trumpets. To bring collect the assembly together, bring a matter before them. One trumpet wasn't enough, one brother couldn't get up and bring a matter before the assembly took two. Well now. I I wouldn't call this sixth verse a brother's meeting. It's the apostles and elders, the responsible brothers. The others, perhaps, were present, but the responsible brothers were the one who carried the burden of it. Verse 22, as our brother has already read it, indicates that the church was present. Discussion of the apostles and elders seems to have preceded their gathering together in the church when the matter was brought before the whole church. At least that's been my understanding. Yes, well, it's often been remarked the Assembly is not a deliberative body. That is, it's the responsible brethren who discussed the case and decide as to really what they feel is the crux of the matter. But they don't decide it though. They bring it before the Assembly. And if the Assembly makes the decision? But it isn't brought before the assembly and all its details first. It's the responsible brethren who do that. I think sometimes that is. Largely overlooked as to the question of the responsible ones. That it isn't everyone that really has an equal voice in the matter. And one of our brothers of a past generation, he used to the several letters, I believe of his where he comments on it that it's better not to have all of them present, but more responsible wants to consider these matters.

Is that what you? They came to the same. Conclusion in their message that had been suggested by James, didn't they? It seemed good in the 28th verse. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost. Now isn't that nice? The way that's put it seemed good to the Holy Ghost that is. They definitely felt they had the leading of the Holy Spirit and to us. To lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things. And then he gives them a list. Well, what a. What a lovely picture it presents of unity preserved in a godly way, and the consciences. Carried. The consciences are carried. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch. And they gathered the multitude together and delivered the epistle. And all that happiness there was there, what joy there was. Another crisis was averted, and the Saints could go on now. In happy liberty, both at Jerusalem and down at Antioch. And in connection with those things that they mentioned in that 29th course. It's really not taken from the law but goes back to time of Noah, does it not beyond the law, Yes. Something that is always true, yes. There are some things there in connection with that second chapter of Galatians. Might look at unless there are some further questions, unless I just. Felt as though our brother Brown's remarks. Could stand a little more emphasis. The conclusion of the whole matter, the end of this program arrived at produced a happy state of fellowship amongst all the Saints. And if our hearts are upright, that will ever be our object. And if we wait on the Lord, He'll help us to attain it. Well, I believe we see in this, it seems to me, the principle. How that we're not to pride ourselves on our rights or our spiritual perception and ignore our brethren as a whole in a matter of this kind. That there should be the consideration of others in these matters. And I. I thought that was. That is noticeable in that chapter in Galatians as the Apostle Paul personally. In the 15th of Acts you don't read of any prayer. But I think that's a gross assumption. I believe there was much prayer there. You don't come together in a serious matter like that

without waiting on the Lord. Well, the Apostle Paul was a man of prayer. He writes a great deal about it. Will never accomplish these things by pure human learning or logic. And another. Thought too is that. We're so short sighted, all we see is a little object right before us. God sees it in its perspective, the whole thing. We don't know what one action today may make tomorrow. The Lord's will and the Lord's glory that sought. There must have been tremendous conviction both with what James spoke and what Peter spoke, because you don't find any rebuttal. It's accepted. It was felt as the mouthpiece of the Spirit of God. Well, I remember reading somewhere where one of our brethren of the past generation remarked that they were thought Peter and James were very wise, and they allowed the others blow off their steam first. And I believe there is something in that, in allowing certain ones to give vent to their feelings, the Spirit of God can come in and make a machine of it. Our brother Eric Smith in Bolivia has told me that when the Indian veteran get excited about something come to him, he just sits there quietly for an hour or two and until they've blown off all their steam. And then he says, well brother, let's open up the scriptures and see what the Lord says about it before we.

Leave this particular subject. I think it might be well to clarify. For the sake of many that are here from small assemblies. And emphasize what was brought out that the 15th of Acts was a very exceptional and unusual circumstance, and furthermore, it was in the very early days of the Church. And Apostolic power was there. But. In a practical and realistic application today as to responsibility. We would find, wouldn't we, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, for instance, that responsibility rests with the local gathering as to its own discipline. And if that gathering feels its own weakness and inability to deal with the matter, then it may call for help from outside from an adjoining assembly. But I just didn't want to leave any impression here that it's the the purpose of Scripture to have assemblies. Conferring back and forth in respect to arriving at a decision about a local matter that wouldn't be correct, But no, not as to a local matter, but. What I was seeking to emphasize is where perhaps another assembly might be involved. Why one shouldn't go ahead of the other without consultation? Where there is exercise among others about this very same thing, and a great deal of apprehension, then be wrong to say, well, haven't I got the right to do it, and go ahead, irrespective of the conscience of the brethren. As far as a purely local matter, why, yes, the local assembly does need to bring in others, unless they feel their weakness, and unless they. May feel they have the power to act. Where is that? It's perfectly proper, is it not, brother Arsenal, where an assembly feels the need of help, that they appeal to another gathering for help. That's perfectly proper, isn't it? Yes, it is. But I, I think we have to distinguish between, I think you've already spoken of this. Certain matters are purely local. And the local meeting takes care of it. But there are some things that come up in in assemblies and of course it has to come up somewhere locally. Everybody has a local identity. If he if he hasn't, he should have. There are some things that come up where that decision is not going to be confined, just the significant significance of it is not going to be confined to that local assembly. It's a decision of such magnitude that other assemblies are going to be tremendously affected by it. So I think we should take in these these matters into consideration in our local discussions. Well, now how's this going to involve other gatherings? I think there's a difference there. Your story about the Des Moines situation some years ago. There's a case in point. When the amalgamation was being put, Oh yes, yes, it wasn't the situation that only involved Des Moines. Indeed it was not. Well, all of us, and would down to this day, vital principles were at stake. And we need to recognize and discern that. Lest we regret that we had not done so. We have a different We have a little situation in Southern California that most places do not have. Having five gatherings with them, radius of 20, radius of 25 miles. Let's say they're bound to be overlappings and people in one assembly and then in another. And we have to be considered. We cannot arbitrarily arbitrarily go up on a tangent. And disregard the others.

Here in Southern California, which look like one large family, although there are five different meetings, different local meetings like a large family. Years ago they used to have a brothers meeting of all the gatherings in London. Weekly. But I don't advocate such a thing in Southern California. But there is there's a different situation. That was because London was one incorporated city and we never. We never read in scripture of the churches in a city. It's always the church in the city. We read of churches of Christ, but then we're talking about the churches of Christ in Galatia, which was a province, not a city. But you never hear of churches in a city in Scripture. It's just one church in one city. And the brethren in London felt that. And I think there were 12 local gatherings in London, but. When it came to questions of discipline, questions of any magnitude or discipline. They acted in concert and sent out the decision of the assembly in London. But the London brothers meeting had no authority, did it? No, it had no authority. But if they did come together? To Council now here we do have this situation. That there is scarcely one of the meetings here that doesn't have people living in that city. They go to another meeting by reason of the ease with which they can go to the other. So that the thing isn't as simple as it might be here. How we need to be on our guard about. Think so, brother AC Brown. Maybe say just a word that time is getting on about this second chapter. Paul had to deal with with the situation here. Where there was some duplicity involved on the part of those that were opposed to him. Probably the motive being jealousy. The fourth verse because of false brethren unawares brought in, that came in privily to spy out our liberty. Which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into *******. They were, so to speak, teaming up on the apostle going to bring him into disrepute. And. Paul is there in the definite conviction that he has the mind of God and he doesn't submit for a moment. Because the very truth of the Gospel was at stake. Well, when anything comes up where they the basic truth of the gospel is involved, why, we can't expect any yielding us on a point like that, can we? No, Paul stood like adamant on it. And. He was able to. To put them to silence. Is it not possible though, Brother Brown for. One is an individual to get. Warp you of something and get it out of proportion and justice. Think that everything depends on that. Yes, but we're speaking here the apostle and the and the stand that he took. This was the very gospel is at stake. There's no yielding there. If he had given way, the gospel was gone for all of us. What you were saying? Is really building up a party spirit, was it not? And again, one of our departed brothers said that as to party spirits, says the party that assumes to be the godly party is the one to be feared. While in connection with this, I have often thought of that second verse. I went up by revelation and communicated unto them the gospel which I preached among the Gentiles, but privately to them that were of repetition, lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain. I think that's important. We should check with one another that. We are not missing the path, bringing in something perhaps that shouldn't be brought in there.

He said he. Communicated privately unto them which reputation lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain. The Lord has provided checks for us. You know there's with Israel why I was established in all the shekel of the sanctuary. Well, evidently that was different from what they've been used to in the ordinary life. But here is a standard within the sanctuary which was. Well, he said he did this well. Sometimes people say, you know, well, if I have the Lord before me, why everything is going to be all right. And if I have the Lord and you have the Lord may be of one mind, but the scripture gives us checks to to. So that we might judge ourselves of those things which are not of the Spirit of God. Because none of us can say, like the Lord said altogether, that which I say unto you that I am. None of us can say that. There's another important thing too, Brother Harrison, and. I first saw it in print. I think it's an attract by. GV Wigram. You can help me out on this, but he says a very significant thing there. It sounds startling when you first state it, but the more you think about it, the more you see the truth of it. There are situations that arise among Saints where truth. Is on one side and the Holy Spirit is on the other side. Well, yes, and I believe Jan letters to one controversy is controversy between the intelligence and the spirit. You get a situation where. My brother gets hold of

some truth. And it is the truth. But he takes it to an immature company of believers. And he he lays it out before them, and they don't see it. They haven't arrived at that point yet, and he just is going to thrust it down their throats. They've got to see it. And he presses it beyond their capacity to take it in and he divides the Saints. Did he have the mind of God in that? The thing he was pressing was true, but he was pressing it beyond the capacity of those Saints to accept it. He, he was unwilling to wait for the Spirit of God to work and bring them to see that truth. I remember an incident I proposed what you say, Brother Brown, of the servant of the Lord, who brought something to his brethren that they had never heard before, and they wouldn't receive it. So he quietly retired, and when he came over to the United States, he rode out and gave the Scriptures what he had been presenting to them orally. He didn't sign his well known initials, he put BM Boston, MA. That's why I wrote it. It found its way across the ocean and back into their hands. They quietly opened their Bibles and considered the content of the paper. And the Lord opened their eyes and their understanding to receive it, so that when he came home, they threw their arms around him and told him that now they understood what he had been trying to teach them. Wasn't that wisdom? Indeed, it was wisdom. I believe it's what you say is very important, Brother Brown, and I think we have to take in consideration you were speaking about these people. Immature and that's being pressed upon them. We have to take in consideration that especially in dealing with different nationalities that all don't approach the problems alike. I've noticed that say in England, why they don't approach the problem the same way that we would and then when you get into a different language. Why? There is entirely a different way of expressing things, and we have to be very careful as to what is pressed. How about that, Brother Ramon? I believe that. Mr. Darby and speaking about the image that. In Daniel, you know that.

The fate and all their clothes, the toes were composed of iron and clay and didn't mix well. He made a remark, he says, that perhaps may be the difference between the Latins and the Tutans. They don't think alike. Well, there is a different way of approaching things and we have to be very careful as to what we press and what we the teach. The time may not be right for it. I asked a question. A reference has been made to a party spirit. Now, might be helpful to enlarge a little bit on just what is meant by a party spirit. No, you certainly get it in First Corinthians, don't you? First Corinthians, the 1St chapter. Party spirit. And Paul's estimate of it. 1St chapter First Corinthians and the 11Th verse. Well the 10th verse. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the House of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this. I say that everyone of you, Seth, I'm appalled. I have a palace, I have Cephas, I have Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? Now in the. In the fourth chapter. And the third verse. But with me it's a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment or man's day. Yeah, judge not mine own self. I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified. But he the judges me as the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsel of the heart, and then shall every man have praise of God. And these things, brethren, are having a figure transferred to myself into a policy for your sake. That you might learn in us not to think above that which is written. That no one of you might be puffed up for one against another. Well, the farming of a party. For the Saints to form a party is a sinful thing to do, and for the individual to allow himself to be the head of that party is a sinful thing to do. Now, I've sometimes questioned, I'm glad for a little help on this, but I've sometimes questioned if those names that Paul uses in that 12Th chapter were the real names that were at stake. But he he used them so as not to expose those local brothers that were guilty. So he uses those names because he says I haven't a figure transferred to myself in a policy. But that's only just a suggestion. Well, I think what you referred to in that 4th chapter. Seems to bear that out. And the parties here in Corinth had not actually gotten to the point where they were divided, That is physically they were. It was clicks among them all rally around the certain brother for a certain truth and say, well, I like this brother's ministry. I want to follow him. And I like another person. I like that brother's way of putting things and we follow him. Well, that, I believe, is the spirit of what we have here in Corinth. And that connection there was a difficulty came up in our local gathering back home over 20 years ago. Later ended in fact that there was a small division affected a number of gatherings. And it was quite an exercise to one individually at the time. I remember. Reading and the writings of a brother who's already been quoted, one that's much valued in years gone by among us. If I remember the words correctly, he said this.

Of no party spirit will I have anything to do save to reject it. So we do should seek to avoid being drawn into taking sides, shouldn't we? Or or into a in any way of becoming part of a party or a spirit of division. Amongst the Saints, do we have our do we have our proper conduct set before us in Romans 1617 as to. Our behavior regarding party spirit or divisions. Romans 1617 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. The next verse two brother, for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly. And by good works and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. Isn't that all? Short of assembly discipline, yes. It's individual responsibility if you see a brother going on forming a party. Spreading error, whatever it may be, to avoid you. That might be a later development from what we've been considering in in the pistols for the Corinthians. Speaking of them not dividing yet in quarantine, there's one verse that clears that up. When you come together in one place. They all came together in one place to remember the Lord. They were just the spirit that prevailed when they were there. That's there was the clicks there the rich were to themselves and the poor were to themselves. Seems to be quite natural. To have little factions develop amongst the Saints. Factions and also. To have, as it were, champions. The Saints very readily have their favorites. And they line up, as it were. Relative to their champion, their favorites, and it makes the faction and the apostle says in First Corinthians 3 verse 3. For ye are yet carnal. For whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions. Are ye not carnal and walk as men? It's the state. Of not being really spiritual and having a heart for all. The instructions that Timothy was to do nothing by prejudice or partiality, I believe is the way it's rendered in the translation First Timothy 521. Very important first, yes, And it's a very difficult thing to steer through between the two. And our verse six, I think it is our chapter in Galatians, or maybe it isn't six. Let us look at it. Yes, verse 6. But of those who seemed to be somewhat. Whatever they were, it maketh no matter to me. Now notice this. God accepteth no man's person. Now I think that is repeated in the Word of God quite a few times, that God is no respecter of persons. There is a tendency to be influenced by influential person and. I believe if the soul is going along with the Lord. That they will be freed from any undue influence by influential persons. Now, I do not want to try to disparage those that may be properly influential. But we ought not to drop down to that low level of being swayed by merely influential persons. With his true brother Brown, the opposite is true of refusing. Out of sheer prejudice, refusing anything from someone that we don't like. Now that's serious. I know Brother McMillan was telling me about a case that he knew of over in Ireland, I think it was when we had some meetings over there.

This a local matter, was coming up, It was very critical and the Saints were divided over and they asked that brother what side he was going to take. And he says I'm going to wait and see which side Brother Song so takes, and I'm going to take the opposite. Now that is an awful spirit, and yet that that's what the man said. Carnality, Carnality. Another said on another occasion. I'm not taking any sides, but I'm simply waiting on the Lord to see what he's going to do. But what does the apostle say about those? It's like one brother or one type of ministry of more than another. Why? He says they're all yours. They're all yours. Whether Paul or Cephas, whatever, they're all yours. Then why settle for

any less than all?

The Springing Well: Volume 5 (1902), Our Bible Lesson Column

Golden Text.— “Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren.”—Acts15:22. Read Acts 15:22-32.

The Jerusalem Council

PAUL and Barnabas having returned to Antioch after their first missionary tour, continued there a long time with the disciples, teaching the Word (14:28). While there teachers came from Judaea, who said that the Gentiles could not be saved by faith in Christ unless they were also circumcised. There was so much dissension and disputation about it that the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas and others to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders to lay the matter before them. The council, having heard the whole story and discussed it, came to a decision which they now send to Antioch with these brethren.

23, 24. “Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls.” Behold the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit in this greeting from the believing Jews at Jerusalem, the apostles, the rulers in the church, to the Gentile believers, the uncircumcised at Antioch. Notice that the Jewish brethren send greeting unto the Gentile brethren. They are all brethren in Christ and acknowledge it.

25, 26. “Men that leave hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thus honorably do they mention “our beloved Barnabas and Paul” because of their sufferings for Christ sake. And yet hear Paul say, “None of these things move me,” and “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,” and “our light affliction which is but for a moment,” etc. (Acts 20:24: Rom. 8:18: 2 Cor. 4:17), because he believed God.

27, 28. “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us,” Every one who receives Jesus Christ receives also the Holy Spirit, and the body becomes His temple, every whit of which He jealously desireth for the glory of God (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Jas. 4:5, R,V., margin).

29. “Abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood wed from things strangled and from fornication, front which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well. Fare ye well.” These the council considered necessary things, but did not say necessary for salvation, rather necessary as an evidence of salvation. There is no salvation by works revealed in the Word of God, but only salvation by the great and finished work of the Lord Jesus, which the sinner must receive as God’s free gift, purchased for him by the precious blood of Christ (Acts 4:12),

30, 31. “They delivered the epistle, which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.” These were words of comfort instead of the words which had troubled them (verse 24). The Holy Spirit is a Comforter, and when He speaks He brings comfort to the people of God.

32. “Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words and confirmed them.” A true prophet is one who is a spokesman for God. Compare Exod. 7:1, and 4:16. God is the Father of Mercies and the God of all comfort, and He comforts us in all our tribulation that we may comfort others in their troubles by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God (2 Cor. 1:3, 4).

33. “And after they had tarried there a space they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.” It is our privilege to live in peace, the peace of God: to come and go in peace: to have peace always by all means, even perfect peace (Phil, 4:6, 7; 2 Thess. 3:16; Isa. 26:3)

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Strangled, Blood, Pollution of Idols, and Fornication in Acts 15:20, 29

Question: Acts 15:20, 29. Are not “strangled” and “blood” separate prohibitions? and both distinct from “pollutions of idols”? But why is “fornication” joined with things so different? W.

Answer: Meyer’s view that the phrase, “the pollutions,” refers to the four particulars which follow seems to me untenable. The reason on which he argues (the absence of before . . has no force); for is unnecessary any where after , and is a doubtful insertion where some ancient MSS. give it. But there ought to be no question that “blood” means what is drawn out expressly from the animal for culinary use, and thus manifestly distinct from “strangled” where the purpose is to keep in the blood from flowing. Both are forbidden; for God demands that man shall by abstaining own that life belongs to Him. If any be so self-willed as to plead that they do not see or understand, let them own their ignorance and obey. It is not a Jewish or Mosaic statute only, but for man since Noah and the deluge (Gen. 9:4). “Things offered to idols,” though classed here like “fornication,” with the other two, as things which the heathen counted indifferent, are forbidden as evils unworthy of Christians (one might add, of men) apart from the law, which the Pharisaic party in the church strove in vain to impose on Gentile believers. But the decrees in no way meant to weaken the immorality of fornication, any more than the insult or indifference to the one true God in eating knowingly of pollutions of idols. The apostles were content here to determine, that none of these things is an open question to Gentile converts, but that, if they abstain from all these necessary things, they will do well.

Correspondence, Correspondence: Acts 15:20, 28, 29; Elias/John the Baptist?

Ques. Please give a few thoughts on Acts 15; especially explain verses 20, 28 and 29, why these things are called “necessary things"?

C. W. B.

Ans. We see the wisdom of God in telling Paul to go to Jerusalem to settle the question, which he had already fully settled in his own mind, as we see in Galatians. At Jerusalem, he conferred with those of reputation, so that they were of one mind. The Judaizing teachers had their say. Then Peter gave distinct witness, how the Gentiles were saved and sealed without law, and it was a yoke too heavy to be borne by their fathers or themselves. The Jew and Gentile are alike saved by grace.

James confirmed this, and quoted Amos 9:11, 12, to show God's intention to save Gentiles, then he gives the sentence, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God; but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." Idols were a denial of the living God, the Creator of all things. Fornication was a breach of the institution of marriage, given in the garden of Eden. (Compare Matt. 19:4-6.) "Things strangled, and from blood," refers to Gen. 9:3, 4. where God added flesh to man's food (Compare Gen. 1:29), but reserved the blood for Himself-a mark of acknowledgment of the Creator. All these things are God's provision and instructions to man, but the Gentiles had fallen lower than when created, and now Christianity lifts them up to recognize God as the Creator, and to respect His claims.

The apostles and elders wrote letters to that effect, and sent well-known men with Barnabas and Saul to carry the news, called "the decrees" in Acts 16:4. to all the assemblies. When the multitude of believers at Antioch heard the letters and the news, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Paul, guided by the Spirit of God, wrote the Epistle to the Galatian assemblies, to free them from the legality they had sunk into. It is good to read it, till you understand it.

Ques. Does Elias refer to John the Baptist in Matt. 17:10-13? M. J. J.

Ans. It was rightly understood by the scribes of that day, that before the Messiah came, the prophetical testimony from God spoken of in Mal. 4:5, 6. must be fulfilled, but they did not count that when the Son of Man came, His rejection was first, and then His glory after, and that all this Church period was between them.

The disciples also had to learn this. They had just seen Jesus transfigured on the Mount. They were eye-witnesses of His Majesty (2 Peter 1:16-18.) But they were to "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen from (among) the dead. This they did not understand. (Mark 9:10.) They did not yet receive this into their hearts, so they asked Him the question, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" Jesus answered, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." (This will fulfill Mal. 4:5,6.) "But I say unto you. that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them." The forerunner was rejected, and the Messiah also was to suffer.

John came in the spirit and power of Elias (Luke 1:17). Isa. 40:3 was true of him, and to those who received him; Elias was come already. (See Matt. 11:14.) John the Baptist did the work of Elias to those who received Jesus as the true Messiah.

Simple Testimony: Volume 20, Answers to Correspondents.: Women Preaching; Christ as Man and God; Acts 15:29,1 Cor. 10:25; Matt. 13:44; The Shout and the Trumpet Call

A. B. C.—No one can deny that the preaching of Christian women has been the means of the conversion of very many. But that is no valid reason for regarding it as a divine institution. If women preach in public, and God blesses their labors, we are not obliged to conclude that it is a part of His original design, when the whole trend of Scripture leads to an opposite conclusion. Can He not allow a breach of His order to provoke to becoming zeal the spirit of sluggish men? We believe that to be a solution of the whole matter. Speaking for ourselves alone, we would not dare hinder the preaching of any lady used of God in saving blessing to souls, though, as a man, we might feel it a very humiliating thing. We are sure that if Christian men were more faithful and devoted, they would be His instruments for public testimony and not women. These, indeed, might labor with equal devotedness in spheres for which they are admirably fitted both by nature and grace. They might, like the daughters of Philip the Evangelist, possess a very high order of gift which assuredly is not to be buried in the earth. They might labor in the gospel as Euodias and Syntyche did with Paul. And much more they might do without leaving the place they are designed to fill. But Scripture, as we read it, does not allow us to go further, though we gladly concede that in the wisdom of God women might be stirred up to preach in order to shame the slothfulness of men and to provoke them—if they have any conscience at all—to a work that is legitimately their own.

J. B.—We must guard with jealous care the glory of the Person of the Savior, and tremble lest on so high a subject we utter a word not in accordance with the truth. That He who died for our sins upon the cross was man is most certain, or how could He die at all? That He was infinitely more, even the Maker and Upholder of all things, is equally true, or what would be the value of His death? But we should, hardly be satisfied to say that He died as man, still less that He died as God, for neither statement would, in our judgment, be the whole truth. He who did die to make atonement for our sins was in Himself both. In incarnation "the Word became flesh," as John 1:14 tells us, and "God was manifest in the flesh," as it says in 1 Tim. 3:16. Thus in one divine and holy Person there is the union of the two. But this is a profound mystery—a mystery we do not pretend to unravel, and in the presence of which the soul taught of God can only adore.

HELPED.—Acts 15:29; 1 Cor. 10:25.—We see no difficulty in reconciling these, passages. The former simply enjoins abstinence from meats offered to idols, and the latter bids us eat, asking no questions. If it was known that they had been so offered, the believer was not to partake of them, for the sake of others' consciences, though knowing for himself that the idol was nothing. But if he did not know, he was not to ask questions; let him eat and be thankful. As to Matt. 25, we might not be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish virgins at a glance. God alone can look beneath the surface. But "by their fruits ye shall know them"; and if a man be indwelt by the Spirit of God, we may surely expect to see some evidence of it in his life. Coming now to John 12:25, it means that to love life here, to live only in the present, to have no eye fixed on unseen an eternal things, to make getting on in the world our one object, that is, in reality, to lose one's life. It is misspent and has failed altogether in the purpose for which it was given. To pursue an opposite course is to keep one's life though the world may think it lost. Luke 10:16 had special reference to the Lord's sent ones of that day, though in principle applying now. Certainly ale Lord's servants may depend on their Master to meet their few earthly wants. Finally, we believe Mark 16:16 holds good still. We have answered your queries with more than our usual brevity owing to their number. In future, kindly let us have one or two at a time, so that, if needs be, we may deal with them more fully.

INQUIRER. —Scripture is much more exact than many suppose. It never confounds purchase with redemption—a thing theologians of differing schools constantly do. The field was bought for the sake of the treasure that was in it (Matt. 13:44). Wicked men deny the Sovereign Lord that bought them (2 Peter 2:1). Redemption is another thing, and so far as men are concerned, the term can only be applied to the believer. He alone is redeemed. And redemption is viewed in various aspects. There is redemption by blood, as Israel on the night of the Passover. There is redemption by power, as Israel when they had crossed the Red Sea and the mighty waters had swallowed up their ancient foes; and there is moral redemption, as in Titus 2:14, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." Who, with any reverence for Scripture, ever dreams of applying all this to everybody in the wide world? Purchase is world-wide, redemption embraces only the saved. So with the great truths of propitiation and substitution. "Jesus Christ the righteous" is not only the propitiation for our sins, but also for the whole world (1 John 2:2). In virtue of this propitiatory sacrifice the door of blessing is thrown open for all to enter in. It is the' widest aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus. But in substitution the thought is narrower, and only embraces those who have faith in Him. Let us not blot out these distinctions by the use of vague and general terms, but rather use diligence to hold them inviolate. By so doing our own soul and those of others will be established and blessed.

T. J. M.—We have no reason to believe that when the Lord returns with assembling shout, with arch, angel's voice and with trump of God, to raise the sleeping saints, to change the living ones, and to take both to be forever with Him, the world at large will be cognizant of it. The shout and voice and trumpet-call will be for those who are Christ's and for no other. And all shall take place "in a moment, in the -twinkling of an eye." The onus of proof rests with those, who affirm that the world will hear. We know of no scripture that says anything of the sort.

Young Christian: Volume 19, 1929, Encouragement and Warning

The children of God, so far as their acceptance is concerned, are as fit for heaven on the day they are saved as ever they will be; and why God does not take them there at once, when they believe, is doubtless because He requires them here for a time, associated with His purposes concerning the glory of His Son in this period of His Son’s rejection.

God fits His own as vessels to the accomplishing of these purposes, and would have us day by day individually walking, in communion with Himself, and using every circumstance arising in our pathway as means whereby to glorify Him; for if we are wrong in our individual path, how can we be right corporately? If we go on with the Lord in the first, we shall be found proportionately in unison with Him in the second.

Furthermore, the Lord would have us make room for Him, so to speak, in our hearts, for we know there was no room for Him in this world, as is shown by the “manger,” the “cross,” and the “not where to lay His head,” and the world today is unchanged.

It is of vast importance, too, to know God’s mind which He has so clearly revealed in His Word to true hearts and simple minds.

Not less important is it to know how we are to be kept suited vessels for Him, and in concert with His mind, in this day of increasing evil in which our lot is cast. God said to His earthly people Israel, in former dispensation, in connection with what He was then doing, “take heed to thyself.” And surely it is a word equally needful now for His heavenly people. Two things are essentially necessary, namely, obedience and dependence.

Mere knowledge of God’s Word, human intelligence in the truth, long years of much-honored service, experience, and the like, good as they may be in themselves, are utterly powerless to sustain and preserve God’s people for Himself in a day like this. Nothing short of obedience to God’s Word and dependence upon Himself will suffice.

Our blessed Lord was the only perfect exemplification of this, and it is very remarkable to see how successfully He met every temptation of Satan with quotations from the book of Deuteronomy, which, as we know, contains special instructions for the saint’s walk; and He left us an example that we should walk in His steps.

Moreover we have many examples in God’s Word written for our learning, showing how blessed it is to be characterized by obedience and dependence, and how solemnly disastrous it is to be found in an opposite path.

One should tread very softly indeed, when referring to the failures of such an honored servant of God, for instance, as Barnabas, who labored so intimately with the apostle Paul. Of course we could not say Paul was perfect, but we must admit that while he went on with God, Barnabas broke down under testing.

Satan is ever on the alert to hinder souls and mar God’s work, and whenever God is having a special testimony carried on, the enemy is on the extra watch to subvert it. When such a servant as Barnabas could be drawn aside in such a simple way, how it behooves us to take heed of ourselves.

The foe knows our tendencies and is well acquainted with our weakest points, directing his attacks accordingly. What would answer his purpose with one saint would probably have no power with another.

We read of Barnabas, in the Acts of the Apostles, that:

1. He introduced Paul to the other apostles at Jerusalem (Chapter 9:27).

2. He was sent by the church to Antioch to exhort the saints to cleave unto the Lord (Chapter 11:22, 23).

3. He was a man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith (Chapter 11:24).

4. He went to seek Paul who had fled to Tarsus, and brought him to Antioch where he and Paul stayed a year together, with the church, when the disciples were first called Christians (Chapter 11:25, 26).

5. He and Paul were sent by the elders with relief to the brethren in Judea (Chapter 11:30).

6. He and Paul were separated of the Holy Ghost to go to Cyprus, where God’s power in the Apostle Paul proved stronger than Satan’s power in Elymas the sorcerer (Chapter 13:2-11).

7. He went with Paul, after Paul had been stoned and supposed to be dead, to Derbe (Chapter 14:19, 20).

8. He and Paul together went up to Jerusalem respecting Judaism being taught, and were received of the church, the apostles and elders; and all the multitude gave audience to them (Chapter 15:2, 4, 12).

9. He and Paul, who had hazarded their lives, were then chosen with one accord by the apostles and elders with the whole church, to return to Antioch about the same matter, with others (Chapter 15:22, 25, 26).

10. And when Paul simply proposed to Barnabas that they should visit their brethren in the cities where they had preached the Word of the Lord, Barnabas wanted to take with them Mark, his relative; but because Paul thought it not good to do so on account of Mark having left the work in Pamphylia, Barnabas separated, and sailed with Mark to Cyprus their native place; while it is said of Paul that he chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God, and that they went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches (chap. 15:36, 41).

It is solemn thus to note that there is but little mention made again of Barnabas. Mark did afterward become profitable for the ministry, and Paul sent for him. In substance Paul remained in the current of God’s mind, and Barnabas left it.

Barnabas and Mark might have said of what had happened, that it was merely a personal quarrel between two servants of God, and so forth; but clearly it was that Barnabas at an unguarded moment sacrificed God’s work for natural relationship, preferring to honor his nephew, rather than uphold, the honor of the one whose name he bore, and whose interests and testimony were in measure entrusted to him.

We do not learn from Scripture that he was ever restored to anything approaching the same position of service and privilege, but we do know that another took his place.

God, so to speak, must have our obedience, but He can get others to do our work. Barnabas thereby deprived himself of the privilege of witnessing soon afterward with Paul in the prison at Philippi, and of being in the blessing at Thessalonica and other places. In these two cases, can we not hear a voice from God to us, of encouragement on the one hand, and of warning on the other?

May God in His grace grant that we may! and may all our hearts be directed into closer occupation with that blessed one who always did those things that pleased His Father in the perfection of dependence and obedience, and so be kept in communion with Himself, and in the current of His mind, and suited vessels to maintain that which is so dear to Himself, during the little while of His absence for His name’s sake.

The Remembrancer: 1909, David Serving His Generation

" For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." (Acts 13:36.)

It is truly wonderful to mark the controlling power of God over agents the most unconscious and unwilling, so as to render them subservient to the effectuating His own counsel: " howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so." (Isa. 10:7.) But it is equally important to see, when God has, from time to time, raised up special instruments for the work He has to be done, such instruments have ever manifested that both the wisdom and power they have is derived from God. So long as they have acted in their proper sphere they have succeeded: because they have acted in faith. " The Lord of hosts is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Such considerations give great present calmness to the believer: God has given to us " the spirit of a sound mind." We know that God has a counsel, and it shall stand, although He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to naught; we need not feel ourselves as though God could not carry out His own counsel without our plans or assistance. " Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him,.... and taught him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?" In the rich grace wherein God has abounded toward us in redemption, He has " abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." He has left no contingency to be provided for by the wisdom and prudence of His saints: their power of serving Him is faith. Hence, says the apostle, whom his adversaries would charge with acting from policy, " Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." But it is one of the results of the fall that man affects creative power and rejoices in the works of his hands; but that which he makes is like himself, even without continuance. He may strive to perpetuate that which he vainly conceives he has originated: but, " the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity." That can only stand which God both originates and perpetuates. On this point as well as others touching the pretensions of man, God will come to an issue with man. To those who know redemption, the issue has been already joined, and the result is, that no flesh can glory in His presence; but he that glorieth can only glory in the Lord: " Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." He alone can " bear the glory," who is able to say, " I am the first and the last," " the Alpha and the Omega," "the Beginning and the End." The essential glory of His Person is the security for effectuating His work. All real subordinate ministry flows directly from Him. " Hs ascended up on high... and He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," and He still gives them, according to His own sovereign will. He has not left the ministry for the building up of His body to depend upon succession, as the Aaronic priesthood; or on the schools of philosophy, as in ancient times; or on universities or academies, as in our day; or on popular choice; but directly on Himself. In giving such gifts of ministry He has not given to them the responsibility of devising means to perpetuate His work: He works in them, and " with them; " and they only work healthfully as they hang upon Him, and fill up that place in the body which He has assigned to them for its present service. Hence in their ministerial capacity, as well as their capacity as Christians, they alone " stand by faith."

The analogy afforded by the history of Israel is very striking. After the death of Joshua, God was pleased to act by the extraordinary ministry of Judges, for four hundred years. " Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them; and yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other Gods, and bowed themselves unto them; they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord, but they did not so. And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for it

repented the Lord because of their groanings, by reason of them that oppressed them, and vexed them. And it came to pass when the judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way." When the men of Israel would have perpetuated their blessing after their own thoughts, in the case of Gideon one of their judges, Gideon refused their offer. " Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you." Gideon had fulfilled his mission, and served his generation. God had wrought by Gideon to bring Israel to depend on Himself, and Gideon sought to answer the same end. On the other hand, the prominent failure of Samuel, otherwise so remarkably blameless, was the attempt to perpetuate his own mission in his sons: " And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." This led to the people's desire for a king:

" Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." Samuel may have seen more distinctly than Gideon that such a request was the rejection of Jehovah Himself as their King; yet he had vainly thought to perpetuate good government through his sons, whom God had not called to that ministry.

Among many instructions afforded us in God answering the desire of the people for a king, in giving them Saul, and then removing him, according to the word of the prophet Hosea: " I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath— "the important truth, that perpetuation of blessing rests alone with God, is sufficiently apparent. So that even when God Himself " raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfill all my will," the highest honor which God put upon David was to be a type of His own Seed, in Whom alone blessing can possibly be perpetuated—" Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." It is in this order that the Holy Ghost Him, self leads our thoughts by the apostle (Acts 13), abruptly turning from David to David's Seed: " Of this man's seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Savior, JESUS." But David served his own generation, and in doing so did that which he sought to do in another way, even serve posterity. This is an important principle, that in serving our generation, doing our appointed service in God's way, and in His time, we do really secure the very thing which we attempt to secure by providing for the future by means of our own devising. In trying to act for posterity we retrograde, and oppose a barrier to others carrying on the work which God may have assigned to us to commence.

Most blessedly did David serve his generation, when the Lord took him as He said, "From the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel: and I was with thee withersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth." It was the time of David's " trouble," but it was also the time of his real greatness, and of his most important service to his generation: David then magnified the Lord, and the Lord magnified David in the sight of all Israel. Walking before the Lord, David could afford to appear vile in the eyes of Michal, and of all who despised him. No two things are morally more opposite, than the Lord making an individual great, and the same person whom the Lord has magnified acting the great man himself. Here truly is found the need of " hinds' feet " to tread upon our " high places." The Lord magnified Moses by His promise, " Certainly I will be with thee." " And the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, and in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people." The Lord would not allow any insult to be put on His chosen servant, but promptly resented it: see Num. 12 Only once did this chosen servant magnify himself, and it is " written for our admonition. "And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice..... And the Lord snake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

David had most blessedly served his generation, " when the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies." At this time, " when the king sat in his house," the thought came into his heart that it was not suitable for the ark of the Lord to dwell in curtains, whilst he was dwelling in a house of cedar. David knew well the value of the presence of the Lord, and he sought to secure it in a way which seemed right in his own eyes, and which commended itself also to the judgment of Nathan the prophet. But " who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? " The man after God's own heart, and an inspired prophet, are alike destitute of true counsel when not walking by faith under the immediate guidance of the Spirit of truth. The thought of David was a pious thought, it was the expression of that desire of the renewed heart for rest, without conflict, in the immediate presence of God.

Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for My name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart: notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house." Zeal without knowledge, and piety apart from actual dependence on God, have proved alike dangerous to the truth of God: it has pleased God to show that He of His own grace delights to " provide some better thing for us," than we should choose for ourselves. Had David been allowed to act under the impulse of his own heart, and to build the house which his son built, what a loser had David been: every quickened soul is almost unconsciously drawn to David, and as unconsciously little interested in Solomon. David " in his troubles " finds truer sympathy in our hearts than Solomon in " all his glory." Had David, according to his desire, acted for another generation, instead of serving God in his own, we are all able to see what he would have lost. Nathan now instructed in the mind of the Lord, is sent to David with the message of the Lord. The first great truth announced is, that the will, even of the saint, is not to take the lead in the things of God; if permitted, the result would be " will-worship," one of the most fearful evils in the Church of God. It is our part to " prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God." So long as God is pleased to " walk in a tent and in a tabernacle," it is not for any one to build Him a house. Solomon, according to the promise of God to David, his father, did build a house for the Lord; the house was filled with the glory of the Lord, and called by His name; but in due course it became the subject of prophetic denunciation (Jer. 7:11-14): its history, with brief gleams of relief, is the history of Israel's abomination, till at last the Lord Himself suddenly comes to His temple and finds it a den of thieves, and utterly repudiates it; it is no longer a house which He could own as His, " Behold your house is left unto you desolate. (Matt. 23:38.)

The next thing announced by Nathan was the determinate counsel of the Lord, in His own time and way, to give settled rest to His people Israel, according to and far beyond their heart's desire: " Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more." This is the happy theme of many a prophecy, the cheering close to many a heavy burden, " Jehovah-shammah (Ezek. 48:35; Jer. 3:16-18; Obad. 1:21; Luke 1:32, 33).

But the most blessed part of the announcement still remains to be noticed: " Also the Lord telleth thee that Re will make thee an house." David would have been content to have built a house for the Lord, but the Lord's thoughts were higher, even for the Lord to build a house for David. This was the word of recovery to David's soul. It brought him before the Lord. He reviews all the gracious dealings of the Lord with him,

and becomes suitably impressed with a sense of his own insignificance, " Who am I, O Lord God? " Such was not the thought in David's mind when he sat in his own house; he then looked from himself, but now from the Lord to himself. It is this which ever checks the thought of the consequence of our own service, as well as the attempt of doing that which the Lord has not called us to do: " By the grace of God I am what I am; I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." It is equally a sin to run without being sent, and not to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty when He calls. The Lord can do without us, but we cannot do without Him: if He be pleased to use us, sufficient is the honor of being the servants of such a Master, but we only really serve Him as we do the work of our own generation. The moment we cease to serve by faith, we regard the sphere of service as our own, forgetting that the husbandry and building on which we are occupied is not ours, but belongs to Him whom we serve. Needful is it also in contemplating any service, to retrace the way the Lord has led us " hitherto." But all is " small " now in David's estimation compared with the promise of the Lord making him a house: David's work of making a house for the Lord is now superseded by the happier thought of God making him a house. If we would happily and healthfully serve our generation, it must be by giving to the Lord His due pre-eminence in service as well as in everything else: I am among you as He that serveth ' (Luke 22:27); and He still serves at the right hand of God, making intercession for us.

" And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God, but Thou halt spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" The manner of man is to rejoice in the work of his hands: he seeks to achieve something great to make himself a name. His work often survives him; but in process of time it falls to decay, to add to the monuments of the vanity of man by the very means he seeks to secure his greatness. But " whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him " (Eccl. 3:14). David served his generation and fell asleep, but the promise of God to David, when He was disappointing his desire to build a house for the Lord, became the sustainment of faith throughout Israel's dreary history, and will be again, when faith shall be revived in Israel. The multitude looked to the temple; faith in the godly remnant regarded the promise to David. God brought judgment on Israel for their confidence in the house, but He showed mercy for David's sake. David's disappointment has, in the result, proved to be his service to his posterity. Is the house of David threatened with extermination by the confederacy of Israel and Syria in the days of king Ahaz? " It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." God had made David a house, and this confederacy shall only tend to prove its stability: " Hear ye now, O house of David, Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel," David's Son and David's Lord. (Isa. 7:7, 13, 14.) Is Hezekiah sorely beset by the armies of the king of Assyria; the cry of Hezekiah to the Lord is answered in mercy, " For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake, and for My servant David's sake." It had not been said in vain, " Also the Lord saith, I will make thee a house!" Do the people go into captivity and emerge from it only to be " servants ' in their own land unto the kings whom the Lord had set over them because of their sins; how cheering must have been the angelic announcement, " He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David." What a meaning in the words, " I will make thee an house!" " Is not this the Son of David? " and, " O Son of David have mercy on us!" were the expressions of faith during our Lord's own personal ministry. And if either ourselves or Israel look for security of blessing, we are led back to David's disappointment in his service to God (Acts 13:32-34). And David still lives in our memories in Him who, in His closing words of " The Scripture of truth," announces the fulfillment of all the ancient promises to Israel in announcing Himself, " I am the Root and the Offspring of David." (Rev. 22:16.)

But how entirely did David's disappointment in his contemplated service turn to the stability of his own soul in the sure grace and faithfulness of God. " Solomon built Him an house," and after accomplishing the " magnifical' " work, he leaves, as it were, his last words for our instruction: " All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

"What hath a man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart wherein he hath labored under the sun " But how different " the last words of David," the lesson he teaches is not only happier but deeper: " Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.” These are last words indeed, and such will ever be the train of thought of those who serve their generation. Instead of rejoicing in any result of their own service, there will be rather the looking for the only satisfying result, that which the Lord Himself will introduce: our expectations may be disappointed, but there is no disappointment to him whose expectation is from the Lord.

If a present palpable result be the object we propose to ourselves, we are likely to be disappointed; but if it be the honor of Christ, and there be no present result answering the desire of our heart, whilst deeply humbled under the sense of our own imperfection, we may take comfort from the language of the only perfect Servant, " I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God " (Isa. 49:4).

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High ... . For Thou, Lord, halt made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands. O Lord, how great are Thy works, and Thy thoughts are very deep 1
(Psa. 92:1, 4, 5.)

Bible Treasury: Volume 13, Saul Who Also Is Called Paul

The statement that he had not learned the gospel from man leads the apostle to relate the history of his life—a history which the Galatians had already heard; but he repeats it afresh, because in that history was found the source of the authority which he possessed from Christ for announcing the gospel, as it had been committed to him by Christ Himself, whose heavenly glory he had seen, and who had sent him to preach it. And he had even been a persecutor, zealous of the law, and had sought to get rid of the name of Christ from the earth! He had been a Pharisee, living according to the straitest sect of his religion, persecuting the church of God with all his strength, and wasting it. Moreover he had excelled many, his equals in his own nation, in the knowledge and observance of Judaism, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers. He was ruled by the law and traditions.

We see in Saul a zealous and religious man; one, too, who was unblameable in his conduct. And now God, who had in fact separated him from his mother's womb, came in and called him by His grace, revealing His Son in him, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. The ways of God as to this call for our utmost attention. He first prepares a vessel—a man full of energy, courageous, bold, ready to undertake all things, full of zeal for the cause which he espoused, and having, moreover, nothing as to his life with which to reproach himself touching the law, with

a powerful mind, that could enter into the highest subjects, and yet know how to come down to occupy itself with the smallest details, and to think of individual circumstances, with a heart full of affection. Taught of God he could, through grace, understand the greatest and most glorious truths, and at the same time he could fully enter into the relations of a poor fugitive slave with the master from whom he had fled. Naturally independent, he had enough greatness of heart to submit himself to all who hold a position entitling them to exercise authority, and honoring also each one in his place. It is the mark of greatness of mind to despise none, if not wicked men, assuming to exercise authority against that which is good; but even in such to recognize the authority of God, in the position in which God has set them.

But all these fine qualities were marred and hidden by the activity of a will which sought only to please itself, and to increase its own glory in upholding the honor of the sect, and the traditions of the fathers, making use of the name of God for this end, and carrying on persecution, even to strange cities: so that the energy that characterized him was but the means of satisfying the malice and passions which sought to destroy the name of Christ.

But God had used Saul's energy and ardent will to separate him from Jerusalem, where the apostles were, who had been already called by the Lord and sealed by the Holy Ghost. At Jerusalem it would have been difficult for him to be entirely independent of the other apostles; he would have come into the Christian assembly under their authority and directions: it must necessarily have been so. But his energy, under the hand of God, had led him away from a position which was not in accordance with God’s thoughts. He had asked for letters from the high priest, to bind and bring prisoners to Jerusalem all who in strange cities called upon the name of the Lord.

And thus he found himself on the road to Damascus, accompanied by his traveling companions. But the Lord had His eye upon him; and suddenly, as he drew near to the city, there shined round about him a light from heaven, They all fell to the earth; they all saw the sudden light; Saul alone saw the Lord. All heard a sound, but not the voice of Him who spake to Saul. They were to be witnesses that the heavenly vision had appeared to Saul, but it was for him alone to receive the revelation from the Lord. He was to be an eyewitness of the glory of the Lord, and a testifier of the words which He had personally spoken to him. For him it was a revelation of the Lord and of His will, a direct and personal revelation; be must be able to say, “Have I not seen the Lord?” (1 Cor. 9:1.) But it was the glorified Lord. He had not known the Lord in His humiliation, he was to begin with the glory.

The other apostles had known the Lord in humiliation, as the earthly Messiah, in His life of grace and patience. They had followed Him to Bethany, had seen Him go up into heaven: they knew that He was set down on the right hand of God, but they saw Him no more after His ascension. Saul appears for the first time as taking part in the death of Stephen—that moment when the Jews showed themselves to be enemies of the glorified Christ, as they had already shown themselves to be enemies of the humbled Christ; for the testimony that Stephen gave was that he saw the Son of man in glory at the right hand of God. It was the end of all God's relations with the children of the first Adam. They had already rejected Christ humbled upon the earth: sin was complete. But Christ had interceded for the Jews upon the cross; God had heard His prayer, and the Holy Spirit answered by the mouth of Peter (Acts 3), announcing to them the glad tidings that God had set Christ at His right hand, according to Psa. 110, and that when they repented of their sin He would return. They took Peter and shut his mouth. And finally, when Stephen had plainly declared His heavenly glory, they rose up with fury and stoned him. The Christ in glory was rejected, even as Christ in grace had already been crucified upon the earth.

And here we find Saul, helping on Stephen's death by word and deed. Spurred on by these events, and still breathing out threatenings and slaughter, he asked and received from the high priest, who was prompt to help him in his zeal against Christ, letters for the prosecution of warfare against Him. Thus engaged, the Lord took him up, the apostle of the hatred of the human heart and of God's chosen people against Him and against His Christ, in order to make him the apostle of His sovereign grace, which in his own person he had experienced, as also of the glory of Christ which he had witnessed.

What grace in God! what a change in the man! It is the same grace towards all who are saved, but Saul was a marvelous testimony to it: a testimony which would make it plain and manifest to all, as says the apostle himself, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” (1 Tim. 1:15, 16.)

The way in which the Lord prepared the two chief laborers among the Gentiles and the Jews is remarkable. Peter, cursing and swearing, declared that he knew not Christ. Paul sought to destroy His name from the earth. Neither the one nor the other could have opened his mouth, except to declare the sin of man and the sovereign grace of God.

But we shall do well to examine what the revelation made to Saul was. First, as has been said, it was the revelation of the heavenly glory of Christ, the Son of God, who still was man. The twelve had followed the Savior till the cloud received Him; beyond that they could not be eye-witnesses. Saul had not seen the Lord, except beyond the cloud: his knowledge of Him began when Christ was in the glory. He was to declare the gospel as be had received it. A Messiah living down here was for the Jews. A Christ who had died and been glorified after having been rejected by man became the Savior of the world. He had died for all men, and thus His work was complete. God had owned Him, taking Him up to His right hand, into the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. And yet He was the same Jesus, the Nazarene (Acts 22:8), marvelous truth! who had before walked upon the earth among men.

Moreover He said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” But how? If He were in heaven, Paul could not persecute Him. But He esteemed His own as Himself: they were united to Him, so united by the Holy Ghost, that they were members of His body. He loved them as a man loves and cherishes his own flesh. The Head and the members were but as one person before God. These are the two great principles of Christianity as Paul taught it: a Christ glorified after all had been accomplished, and Christians united to a glorified Christ, were the germs of all Paul's teaching—Christ, a man beyond death, beyond the sin which He had borne, beyond the power of Satan and the judgment of God against sin, redemption being complete.

Saul, having left Jerusalem, bold and full of confidence, is arrested in the way, when on the point of carrying out his purpose. He falls terror-stricken to the earth at the sight of the Lord. He heard a voice calling him, and discovering that it was the Lord, all is at an end as to his own will; he surrenders himself to the will of the Lord, and is sent by Him into the city, that he may there humbly learn what is that will. In other words, he at that moment submitted himself to Christianity in the ways of Christ's will. But he was blind; that so the inward work might be perfectly accomplished, and the immense change in his soul might be experienced before God, in its true power, without any hindrance or interruption from man. Also he neither ate nor drank for three days. But although he was to go into the city in order to learn what he was to

do, yet many and great things depended upon the revelation that had been made to him.

First, the glory of the Lord had appeared to him, the Lord Jesus of Nazareth, rejected of men, but declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead. Immense truth! A man was in heaven, a man, the Son of God; but He was there because the sacrifice for sin had been accomplished and accepted by God—a sacrifice so perfect, that He who had presented it was set down in His own person at the right hand of God in His glory, and that according to the righteousness of God.

Man, at the same time, was shown to be wholly evil and corrupt, for he had rejected God when He was present in perfect goodness in the midst of men. Israel had forfeited all their privileges and their right to the promises, by rejecting Him in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen: and not only the dispensation of the law had come to its end by the coming of Messiah, the Head of the dispensation that was to follow that of the law, but the title to the promises was lost by His rejection; and thus, He being rejected, all God's relations with the people to whom He had given the law were at an end. The Gentiles had never had it; they had never been in relationship with God; they were outside the promises made to Israel, and they had fallen into the most complete darkness. (See Rom. 1) There no longer existed any relationship of men with God, if not that of sinners and rebels with their Creator.

But on the other hand, the sovereign grace of God had been manifested to the greatest sinner in the world; to the apostle of rebellion and rejection of the Christ of God, apostle of the enmity of man against God manifest in grace, against Christ exalted in glory. Important moment in the history of man when redemption being accomplished, and love being free according to righteousness and divine glory, God rose above all the sin and enmity of man to work in sovereignty according to His grace; not only to manifest love—this He had already done at the coming of Christ down here—but to cause grace to reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Him:—righteousness which had placed Christ as man at the right hand of God, because, as Man, He had perfectly glorified God. (John 13:31, 32; 17:4, 5.)

But there was yet more in this revelation of the Lord. We have spoken of the dispensation of grace which was founded upon this revelation. It was needful that the soul of Saul should be in a state suited to the service of God in the dispensation that began by the revelation. And this is what took place. First, all the things in which he had trusted were utterly condemned: judged by God Himself, they no longer had any value. His own heart was all upset: all that he thought to be of God, and which was so until the cross, was set aside. His conscience—for he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus—had deceived him. His confidence in the law as given of God, and by which he had hoped to obtain a righteousness before God—the authority of the heads of the Jewish religion, their fathers—in a word, all these things had but led him to find himself in open enmity against the Lord; there was nothing left upon which his soul could rest. He was the enemy of the Lord Himself, boldly seeking to destroy those whom He loved. Saul was all this in the presence of the Lord!

What a revolution! Saul himself, instead of having an externally pure conscience, found himself to be the chief of sinners, the enemy of the Lord, the apostle of that hatred against God which had rejected from the world the Lord of glory, the Son of God, and which was still rejecting the testimony rendered by the Spirit after He had been glorified. The old dispensation, the law, the promises made to Israel, had disappeared; and instead of these, the Lord of glory, alive in heaven, is revealed by sovereign grace to him who sought to abolish the memory of His name. Eternal life is communicated to him, eternal salvation through the work of Christ is presented to his heart in the glorified Man who had borne his sins, and was now making the work effectual by the operation of the Spirit of God. The Son of God is revealed in him.

This is true conversion, true faith. Sovereign grace reveals the Son of God in us, a glorified Man, and—if we have already understood the truth—a Savior who has borne all our sins. But it is the revelation of Christ in us. In Saul's case this revelation was also in order that he might preach Him among the Gentiles.

Thus, he who had been exceedingly mad against Christ and against the Christians, persecuting them even to strange cities, is sent forth with these remarkable words from the Lord Himself: “For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.” (Acts 26:16-18.)

Thus Saul was taken from among the Jews (it is the real force of the words), separated from his nation, to belong to Christ; but he did not therefore become a Gentile. The starting-point of his new life was a glorified Christ for the announcing of that which he had seen, and by the power of grace had revealed in his heart, besides other revelations which were afterward made to him—always, however, of a Christ rejected by the world and glorified by God. Knowing by the experience of Christ revealed to him and in him that the mind of the flesh was enmity against God, as was also his religion and his past life, Christ glorified was thenceforth his all: a Christ who had wrought redemption for him, and who had cleansed him from his sins; a Man in heaven for whom he waited, as the fulfiller of the glorious hope of His own who were already united to Him, and were esteemed by Him as Himself.

Called by such a revelation of the person of the Lord, and by the words of His mouth, it was not the moment to go and consult others, whoever they might be; he does not go. His mission was from the Lord Himself, from a Lord who had not been thus revealed to others. He was the Lord, it was the same salvation; but it was a special revelation which stamped its character upon the whole ministry of a servant who knew Christ Himself no more after the flesh, that is, no more as the Messiah of the Jews upon the earth.

But it was needful that all should be wrought as experience in his soul; he was therefore made blind, in order that he might be separated from every external thing which would distract him, and that he might be entirely occupied with the change that had taken place in him, and that this revelation of the Lord, this total revolution in the state and relations of his own soul, blight without interruption be felt, and might work within. It was needful that the condemnation of the law, the sin of having persecuted the Lord of glory in the persons of His people, the glory of His person, the perfect grace which had called him, should be realities for his soul; that the new man should be formed by this means.

Thus he is left to himself. He does not think of seeking the rest of the apostles at Jerusalem; the Lord Himself had called him to Damascus, and Saul had received his mission from Him. He had not to consult the apostles, for the Lord had taken him for Himself. He was the servant of Christ, immediately dependent upon Himself. He goes into Arabia, and returns again to Damascus. After three years he goes up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and stays with him fifteen days. He did not see the other apostles. He also visited James, the Lord's brother. He is careful to recount all these details, that the Galatians might understand that his apostolic relation was directly with the Lord Himself, that he owed nothing to the other apostles.

Thus he who, but a little time before, had been a persecutor, advanced in Judaism before many his equals in his own nation, is now laid hold of by sovereign grace, in the midst of his greatest activity against the name of the Lord—an apostle sent directly by the Lord to the Gentiles, sent by a glorified Jesus.

But though chosen and called, he must await the positive direction of the Holy Ghost for entering upon the field of his apostolic labors; this was afterward given at Antioch. It is a most important principle: we need, in order to work according to the Lord, not only the call of the Lord, but also the positive direction of the Holy Ghost.

Saul, as a Christian, immediately confessed the Lord; he did not delay, he waited for nothing; his faithfulness in publicly confessing Him is at once manifested.

This done, be all but disappears until the time when the Holy Spirit sends him as a witness for Christ into the heathen world. Only those things which show his perfect independence of the apostles and of men are here recalled. He gloried, as in an honor, in that with which his enemies and the enemies of the truth reproached him. He did not hold his mission or his authority from any man, nor by means of man, neither of Peter nor of the other apostles, but from Jesus Christ Himself. We shall see that Peter had no share in the mission to the Gentiles.

Paul was not known by face to the churches of Judea, when he afterward visited Syria and Cilicia; they had heard only that he who persecuted them in times past now preached the faith which once he destroyed, and they glorified God in him. This was the truth, as in the presence of the Lord. Later, he was sent to the Gentiles, not from Jerusalem, but from Antioch, by the Holy Spirit, as we read in Acts 13 Neither Peter, nor the apostles, nor the church at Jerusalem, had anything to do with it; it was a wholly independent mission: they knew not even what was being done. He carried on the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles (always however evangelizing the Jews where. he found any), taking with him various brothers, whom grace had prepared for the work, as we find it stated in Acts. But this is not the place to speak of such details.

Bible Treasury: Volume 13, Acts 13:9

The secret of power and joy in service is to be in the line of the present work of God by the Spirit. We need to judge the energy by which we are walking or serving. Sometimes people judge themselves about the act, the object, and the motive, but do not judge the energy by which they are acting; but if it is only natural energy, it soon falls down into the world or the flesh, and all the peace and joy and power will be gone. The basis may be right, object all right, but the energy that of nature instead of the Holy Ghost. The way of the Spirit is through death and resurrection.

Things New and Old: Volume 33, Forgiveness

There is much confusion with many Christians as to what is meant by forgiveness, and as to what it embraces. How many thousands repeat every week that they believe in “the forgiveness of sins,” but could give but very vague answers as to what they understand by it. For instance, if an undoubted Christian were asked whether he believed in the forgiveness of sins, he would doubtless answer, “Certainly;” and if he were asked whether he was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, he would again say, “Certainly.” Then ask him if his sins are all forgiven, when he will, perhaps, at once draw back from the “certainly” to the “hope it may be so.” From this we see that many a Christian believes in the forgiveness of sins only abstractly: that God forgives some people’s sins, and he has a hope that his sins may be forgiven. Again, ask him when he hopes to be forgiven, and he will perhaps answer on his deathbed, or it may be at the day of judgment. All, alas, is vague.

Now in the scripture there are various aspects of forgiveness. Let us then first notice that God forgives the sinner, the natural man. The gospel preached to the unconverted includes forgiveness. “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 13:38.)

Then to those who had received the gospel the apostle does not hesitate to say that in Christ Jesus “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Eph. 1:7.) Why, then, should any Christian hesitate to say that God has forgiven his sins? It is the common heritage of all believers. “I write unto you, little children,” says the apostle, “because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.” (1 John 2:12.)

It might have been God’s plan to have forgiven us our sins, and to have given us eternal life, but to have hidden it from us, if He had seen that such would have been safer for us. But He has done the very reverse; He not only gives forgiveness and eternal life, but would have its recipients know it and enjoy it. “These things have I written unto you.... that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:18, as it should read.)

So that no one is a Christian unless his sins are forgiven, and he has eternal life, though, alas! as we know, many do not fully credit such grace as this and thus do not live in the full enjoyment of it. But let all remember that forgiveness is a present thing, as also is condemnation: “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18), though the day of grace still runs on, and such an one may yet believe, and be saved.

Some, however, will give a sigh, and say, What of the future: must we not all be judged in a future day? God has taken pains to meet all such fears of his weak ones. Listen to the words of our Lord: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]: but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24.)

Therefore the Christian will not come into judgment. Indeed, how can he be judged for sins that have all been forgiven? The One on the throne will be the same blessed One that died on the cross to put those sins away. As each Christian dies he goes at once to be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8), and certainly has no sin upon him for which he will have to be judged, though he will be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ.

Still with many a question arises, What if I sin after I have been forgiven? This introduces our second point, that God forgives His children. Let this not be confounded with being forgiven when unconverted. When Christ died on the cross for our sins, all our sins were future; but He foresaw them and died for them all. Still there is a vast difference in the sins before conversion and after conversion; the latter are worse, because contrary to the new nature, and against increased light and known love, and surely need as much expiation as the former. But they are not on the conscience in the same way that sins were before conversion. Christ has done a work, that the worshipper once purged should have no more conscience of sins. (Heb. 10:2.) If anyone sins after conversion, he would surely have a consciousness of his sin, and God has made provision for its being forgiven, and for communion being restored. “If we [Christians] say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,.... My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 1:8-2:1.)

Here we find that we have to confess our sins, and God assures us that they shall be forgiven. Notice that it does not here say that God is merciful: surely He is ever that, but here it is the Father, and He is “faithful and just”—faithful and just to give us the forgiveness already purchased for us by the death of Christ. Notice, too, that we have an Advocate with the Father to restore the communion of the Christian when he fails. This is not for the unbeliever: for such Christ is the Mediator between God and man, There is still a third aspect of forgiveness, namely the church forgives when a Christian is repentant after having failed so far as to bring upon him the discipline of the assembly, and it may be, has been “put away.” The authority to bind and loose on earth was first given to Peter (Matt. 16:19); then to the disciples generally. (Chap. 18:1, 18.) The same is differently expressed in John 20:23: “Whose so ever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose so ever sins ye retain they are retained.” The word here translated “remit” () is translated “forgive” in the Authorized Version nearly forty times, so that we have the question of forgiveness fairly before us. Now at Corinth we have exactly a case in point. A “wicked person” was excommunicated, but on his repentance the apostle urged the assembly at Corinth to forgive the man (2 Cor. 2:7-10), and to which the apostle would add his forgiveness. It is “ye forgive”—ye the assembly and not an individual, except in the case of the apostle. Now, doubtless, this forgiveness may be declared by one person, but clearly it should be the carrying out of the judgment of the assembly.

This must not be confounded with eternal forgiveness of sins: it is administrative forgiveness on earth. It would be sad, indeed, if the church of God had no power to expel a wicked person; and equally sad if it had no power to restore such a one on his repentance. But the assembly has this power, and is bound to exercise it, and has the assurance that if rightly exercised it is ratified in heaven. In heaven the person is held to be cast out of the assembly on earth, not that he may be finally lost, but that he may repent and be restored, “that the Spirit may he saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor. 5:5.)

It is well known how this forgiveness, under the name of “absolution” has been misapplied. It is clear from scripture that unless what the church does is ratified in heaven it is worthless—is nothing but a solemn mockery leading souls to perdition. It is not eternal forgiveness, and it is not forgiving unbelievers: it is discipline in the assembly, and that alone. Notwithstanding the abuse of it by some, it is a scriptural doctrine, and should not be given up. The parable of the wheat and the tares is often quoted by others as proving that both good and bad should be tolerated in the church until the end. But in Matt. 13:24 this is said to be like the kingdom of heaven, which by careful comparison will be seen to be not the same as the church. In the same chapter indeed we are told that “the field is the world” (ver. 38). In an assembly the injunction is very plain, “Put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” (1 Cor. 5:13.)

It is true, alas! that real discipline is very difficult in the professing church, because of its being so much divided. A person put out at one church or chapel can easily get admittance into another. There are so many so-called churches that are independent of each other, that a person’s antecedents would seldom be known. Indeed, being aware of this, a guilty one, as soon as he knows his sin has been found out, quietly leaves, wanders about for a time, and then finds shelter elsewhere. Many a Christian sees this as a serious evil. How is it that it does not open his eyes to see the sin of schism, and the making of churches so called. Were the church one as formed by Christ, discipline could have been carried out, and a wicked person be put outside. It is man’s arrangements that frustrate order in the church.

To complete the range of forgiveness there is still a fourth point—forgiving one another. The prayer our Lord taught his disciples shows that we are to forgive those who trespass against us if we hope to be forgiven; other passages forbid our enforcing our rights where we ought to forgive, and if we cherish an unforgiving spirit we need not expect the forgiveness of our heavenly Father. (Matt. 6:14, 15.) This is altogether distinct from eternal forgiveness, and God knows how to discipline us if we are hard and unforgiving with those who have offended or are indebted to us. There is the government of God with His children as well as His grace.

But some think the gospel has altered the character of governing and punishing the world. Take, for instance, capital punishment. How often it has been urged that this should give place to imprisonment. But God’s law is inflexible—a command enacted long before the law was given to Moses: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” (Gen. 9:6.) This is God’s demand, as due to Himself for the destruction of one made in His image. And there is nothing in the New Testament to set this aside. Indeed, it is confirmed by the magistrate bearing the sword. (Rom. 13:4.)

In conclusion, we have seen that the Christian has been forgiven his sins, or he is not a Christian at all: he is being forgiven, as a child of God, if he sins, and confesses his sin. He is subject to the discipline of the church if he does wrong; but on repentance it has power administratively to forgive him. And if he is a recipient of all this, he must cherish a forgiving spirit to others, even as he is being forgiven by his merciful Father in heaven. May we that have God’s own thoughts about forgiveness, both in His boundless mercy, and in His ordering and governing His church and His saints individually, ever remember to forgive others as we have been forgiven by God, with eternal forgiveness.

Bible Herald: 1878, God of Grace Revealed by His Own Acts, The

As Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue at Antioch, they were invited, after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, to give the people a Word of exhortation (Acts 13).

Paul had readiness to address them in his heart, for he carried and represented the gospel of God, that system of divine active love that is ever waiting on sinners. But when out of the abundance of such a heart his mouth speaks, it is in such a way as the synagogue could not have

expected. He does not make the people his subject, giving them exhortations as out of the law or the prophets, but he makes God and His acts his subjects, out of the historical books. He details a series of divine acts from the day of the Exodus to the resurrection of Jesus (acts of grace, every one of them), in which God had been rising up in the supremacy of His own love and power over all the various sad and evil condition of Israel, whether such had been brought on them by themselves, or by their enemies, through their own folly and wickedness, or by the hand of them that hated them.

He deals with facts, such facts as displayed God in grace, and humbled man. He brings God into the synagogue, and makes Him the great object of notice to the soul. And this, let me say, is God's own way in the Gospel. He makes room for Himself, as I may express it, in both our hearts and our consciences. He breaks us to pieces, leaving us without a word to say for ourselves, exposed, convicted, and condemned, that He may introduce His own salvation to the conscience and to the heart; that the one may find peace made by Himself for it, and the other be forever drinking of a love that flows to everlasting, as it has been flowing from everlasting.

This story of grace, which Paul reads in the synagogue at Antioch, brings out various actings of God's hand in behalf of His people. After choosing the fathers, He had of old delivered Israel out of Egypt in spite of Egypt's strength and enmity. He had then carried them through the wilderness for the space of forty years, well supplying all their need, in spite of their "manners" and their "murmurings." Then, He had beaten down the nations of Canaan before their face, and divided their lands among them. He had, after that, raised up a long line of judges or deliverers for them, to deliver them out of the hand of those oppressors, whom their own folly and faithlessness had armed against them. And still further, He had given them David, a man of His own choice, to be their shepherd, after they had proved the bitterness of the days of Saul, who had been the man of their choice.

Thus, in so many ways, and for so long a time, had He magnified His grace, and continued in it, unwearied by their need, changeful as it was, and unhindered by their faithlessness, persevering and rebellious as it was.

With this tale of grace Paul fills the synagogue at Antioch. But there was still another chapter in that story. Jesus the Messiah had been given to the nation, refused and crucified by the nation, but by God raised up and given again to them and in the name of this crucified and risen Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is now preached, and Israel called on to accept it.

Now, this was a tale of the constancy and variousness of the grace of God. Israel is seen to have enjoyed a series of accomplished blessings at the hand of God.

Redemption, support, victory, deliverance, and a kingdom, all had been theirs, in spite of the strength of enemies, and of their own unfaithfulness: and now, added to these, there was provision for the forgiveness of all their sins.

And, blessed to tell it, this crowning mercy, the forgiveness of sins, which Paul now preached, was a blessing as sure as any, established by as sure an arm, and made theirs by as clear a title. It was set upon the resurrection of Jesus. Redemption, and inheritance, and deliverance, and the like, had been, each and all in their day, infallible, and each and all in their turn and time enjoyed by Israel. And all had stood on solid ground, and in good warranty. The rod of Moses, adapted by the God of all power and might, was equal to work redemption, and Israel enjoyed redemption. The presence of God had supplied the camp, and the sword of the Lord in the hand of Joshua had conquered and divided the land. Judges could deliver from all oppressors, since the Lord of heaven and earth had raised them up; and the man after God's own heart had guided the flock of God with integrity and skillfulness: And now "the forgiveness of sins" takes its place among these blessings, for Jesus in resurrection in like infallibility can secure and dispense it. The manna from heaven had no more virtue to feed the camp morning by morning—and who could question that? than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus has to publish the forgiveness of sins to all that believe. Death is the wages of sin, and cannot be put away, but by sin being put away. To get rid of death we must get rid of sin. But Jesus had risen. He was alive from the dead, and on the ground of such a fact as that, of such accomplished victory, as His resurrection bespeaks, the forgiveness of sins is as infallibly secured, as surely and boldly published, as redemption was wrought by the rod of Moses, or victory and the division of the land by the sword of the Lord, and of Joshua.

Forgiveness of sins thus takes its place among the sure and accomplished blessings of grace. We can account for it, as simply as for any of those wrought out of old for Israel by Jehovah. We can see why sins may now be forgiven, as once we saw why Pharaoh's host lay dead on the seashore. Jehovah looked from the cloud then, and that was enough; Jesus is risen from the dead now, having been made sin for us, and that is enough. The danger is in despising—as the apostle closes his preaching, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish, for I work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." This was the apostle's exhortation.

The law and the prophets had been read in the synagogue, as we noticed, and the apostle had been invited to give the people a word of exhortation. But Paul read to the synagogue from the history of Israel. He stated facts, God's facts, such as told what He had done for His people, and thus what He was to them. And his exhortation is, not to despise those acts of grace. The resurrection is one of those acts. Jesus had died to sin. Sin and Jesus were in collision on the cross; or rather, Jesus owned the claim and fruit of sin there, and answered it, and bore it. Sin was never, we may say, in so intense a sense, the sting of death as then; nor was death ever, in so solemn a judgment, paid as the wages of sin. But armed as it was in that hour of its power, it was slain. The enmity was slain. Sin was put away. The veil of the Temple was rent, and the graves of the saints were opened.

"Made sin, He sin o'erthrew." The claims of God in judgment upon sin were all vindicated, and he that had the power of death was destroyed. So that we may well say, with our apostle, looking at the death and resurrection of Jesus, "By this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

This preaching at Antioch, thus, gives us a sweet witness how grace has been abounding in the ways of God from the beginning hitherto. But for further confirmation of our souls in God, let me observe, that both holiness and grace have had their several witnesses from the beginning; for God cannot but be just, while He is a Justifier; and the stability and rest of our consciences before Him come from this, that "truth" and "mercy," "righteousness" and "peace," together dispense salvation to us. God is never more holy than when forgiving sins, as has been long since said.

The ordinance of clean and unclean told of God's holiness from the beginning, separating Him from the fallen and defiled creation. This ordinance, we know, is recognized so early as Genesis 8; His promise had already witnessed His grace, and that we get in Genesis 3. And so

all through, that He is a Just God and a Saviour, has been His memorial here. He has ever had his two witnesses in this world of corruption and of misery, a witness to His holiness, and a witness to His grace and goodness. And the cross has redeemed all these pledges; for clean and unclean were distinguished there, and separated forever, and yet the forgiveness of sins was secured: and the soul ruined of old by the serpent is delivered forever.

Thus Paul brings God into the synagogue. The rulers would have had the people exhorted, but the Spirit in the apostle will have God revealed—revealed too, as is His way, by His own acts—that simplest, surest, most blessed way of revealing Him—the way in which “the wayfaring man” may not err, in which a child need not mistake the lesson. It is not by treatises or discourses, but by acts, that God makes Himself known to us. We might miss our lesson, had the former been His method—but His method is such that the simpler we are, the surer we shall reach Him and find Him, and know Him. And Paul thus deals with the synagogue at Antioch. He brings God in, Christ in, and that too in the divine way, in the light and revelation of His doings in the midst of us and for us. The law and the prophets have already been in the synagogue, as Moses and Elias were on the holy hill. But the voice from the exalted glory would draw Peter away from Moses and Elias, and fix him on Jesus, saying, “This is my beloved Son, hear Him.,” when Peter would have made equal tabernacles for Moses and Elias; and so here, Paul will leave the law and the prophets, and fix the assembly on God and His Christ.

And what was thus done in the synagogue at Antioch, is not only, thus, like what had been already done on the holy hill, but it is after the manner of the divine wisdom in all dispensations from the beginning, that the Christ of God should be the great object of faith, and the one great issue and result of all the education and learning of our souls—that we should be brought to Him, and then left with Him.

Gospel Gleanings: Volume 11 (1911), Man Christ Jesus, The

“THROUGH this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins and by him all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38, 39).

What a plain statement! This should surely command our serious attention. In such a statement, it is evident, dear reader, that through what the Son of God has done, you and I may both obtain from God the forgiveness of all our sins, not only as we know them, but as God knows them. If it were not so the forgiveness of sins never would be proclaimed. But there is forgiveness; and having tasted its sweetness, I do so long that you may know the blessedness of those to whom the Lord will not impute sin. And why are we blessed? The reason is plain. It is because we in faith have received the sent One of God whom God sets forth as the Saviour of sinners. Were it possible for Satan to accuse us of one act that God did not know, or for which the precious blood of Jesus had not power to atone, all would be forever hopeless. For there is no other offering for sin that God can accept. But, thank God, the truth is that Jesus has made propitiation for sins and satisfied all the requirements of God’s holiness, for every one that believes; and this too, according to the will and desire of God for us. Peace is now proclaimed through Jesus.

Before going further, I would ask you, my reader, Do you know anything of this peace with God through the work of Another? Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Be assured of this, that receiving Christ now is the only safety from the coming judgment, and the only security for an eternity of bliss with Christ in glory forever.

This proclamation of forgiveness is sent to you in love, that you may, through faith in Jesus, not only know your sins forgiven, but may also find your joy in God as the Justifier of him who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. The question, How can God clear the guilty and at the same time be just? has but one answer. It must be through the interposition of Another; and that other, One that is divine, who has met all the claims of justice for those who rest on what Christ has done. Thus it is that mercy is held out to the sinner. The gospel, the glad tidings, now sounds forth from God, “I have found a ransom,” and Jesus Himself declares the Son of man came “to give His life a ransom for many.” This He has done, and the Holy Spirit tells us also that Christ gave Himself a ransom for all—to be told out in this our day, the fit time. Herein is shown that such was the power of Satan over us through sin, that nothing but the mighty power of Divine love in Christ could redeem the sinner—and this again only through the sacrifice of His own life for our redemption. This then is the love that God commends—even His own love manifested in the death of Christ.

And now, dear reader, if this blessed one is received by you, the purpose of God in giving Him is in your case made good, and you are saved for time and for eternity. On the other hand, to slight such love, to neglect such a Saviour, is to remain in darkness, with the everlasting loss of all the benefits available for him that believes, and offered now to you through Jesus, whose precious blood cleanseth from every sin. Through this Man then is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins—without Christ your position is one of danger and darkness now, and the issue—eternal judgment.

E. T.

Correspondence, Correspondence: PHI 3:10-11; ACT 13:48; Unicorns; World's End; Man's Words; More.

Ques. What is the thought in {vi 29432-29433}Phil. 3:10, 11, "power of His resurrection," "attain unto the resurrection of the dead"? C. M.

Ans. The thought expressed is an earnest pressing on to reach that which alone can make the salvation we have complete the resurrection from the dead. To this of course Paul had not yet attained and therefore could think of nothing here (except indeed fellowship in Christ's sufferings). All that his soul longed for was there.

Ques. Please explain "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”

Ans. Certainly some were appointed to eternal life. (See 2 Thess. 2:13, and 2 Tim. 1:9.) But none are appointed to be damned. Notice that, while {vi 28178-28179}Rom. 9:22, 23 does say the vessels of mercy were afore prepared of God, it does not say that God prepared the vessels fitted to destruction.

Ques. What is the meaning of "from the horns of the unicorns"? (Psa. 22:21.)

Ans. Great strength and untamableness Thus the Lord's implacable enemies were compared to these animals. "The horns of the unicorns" is a figure of speech of impalement and intense suffering.

Ques. In what sense is the time when the Son of man came into the world to put away sins, "the end of the world"?

Ans. God calls it the "end of the world," because man's moral history is entirely ended-grace is not ended. Man's history was closed at the cross. First, lawlessness, then law-breaking, and then enmity to God; then comes that blessed perfect work of the last Adam, who met the need in His own person, and brought in the full accomplishment of the purposes of God. He has brought man into an entirely new sphere by death and resurrection, and eventually glory, and has settled the whole question of responsibility.

Ques. How far can we rely on the words of the natural man?

Ans. Man is competent to give a fact, but not the truth on any subject, and still less on that vast scene of glory which God has formed, and which He has revealed, too, for the glory of the Lord.

Ques. Is it known or can it be conjectured why Paul went into Arabia (Gal. 1:17)?

Ans. Probably to be alone with God, as Moses in Sinai, or Elijah in Horeb.

Ques. Is no one saved who does not confess Christ with his mouth? What is the meaning of "unto righteousness," "unto salvation"? ({vi 28198-28199}Rom. 10:9, 10).

Ans. We would not say that any one who refused to confess Christ was saved.

“Unto righteousness" refers to position before God.

“Unto salvation" refers to outward position as among the saved (or Christians). The former is in the heart; the latter by the mouth.

Women of Scripture, Women of Scripture: Rhoda

Acts 12:1-9

Rhoda, though young, was linked up with the little band of Christians at Jerusalem in the early days of the Church's history, and in the testing time of persecution.

Stephen, who so boldly and devotedly stood for the testimony connected with "the God of glory," had been stoned by a mob infuriated by his truthful utterances.

James, the Apostle, had been killed with the sword by Herod's orders, and now Peter was lying in prison chained to a guard, awaiting his execution the next day. Was he also to be taken from them? These were sad, anxious, apprehensive days for the Jerusalem saints, and, feeling the situation, they did the best thing, and the only thing they could do-they prayed "without ceasing to God for him." Day after day passed, and Peter was not released, and now it was, as far as they could tell, his last night on earth, the next morning being fixed by the authorities for his execution. How was it spent?

By Peter the night was spent in quiet, restful sleep; by the little company to whom this honored servant of the Lord was so dear it was spent in earnest prayer and supplication to God for him, and Rhoda, though young, was present at this midnight prayer meeting in Mary's house.

Here was a true, brave heart-true to the Lord and His interests on earth, and brave, to be so definitely associated with a tried and persecuted people.

The Lord takes account of her and, although we are not told her parentage, and what position, if any, she held in the household, her connection with His saints is noticed, and her name is handed down to us.

Suddenly the prayer meeting was interrupted by a continual knocking on the street door, and brave little Rhoda went to ask who was there. She knew it might be a band of soldiers to apprehend them for the truth's sake, but instead she recognized a well-known, dearly loved voice asking for admittance. In her childlike delight and excitement she neglected to admit this welcome midnight visitor, but instead ran back to the friends to tell the good news.

They were incredulous in spite of Rhoda's confidence, although they had been so constantly praying for Peter, and doubtless for his release.

The answer to their prayers had come and they could not believe it, but told Rhoda, the bearer of the good tidings, that she was mad.

Do we not see our own unbelieving hearts reflected here? Well might the Lord say, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt. 21:22. How wondrous the grace that oftentimes grants a definite, loving answer to our petitions, although not accompanied with belief!

If Rhoda was not mad in her persistency that Peter was without, then reason, which is always opposed to faith, must ask another solution.

They therefore suggested that it must be his angel or spiritual representative-anything but belief in God's power exerted on behalf of His servant in answer to the desires of His people who had been crying mightily to Him.

The knocking, however, continued; so at last the door was opened, and when they saw that it really was Peter, they were indeed astonished.

Once within, and the ejaculations of surprise silenced, how much there was to tell, and Rhoda, with the others, was an attentive listener to the tale of God's wonderful deliverance of His imprisoned servant.

Roman guards, chains, bolts, bars, and heavy iron gates presented no difficulty to "the angel of the Lord," who got Peter clear of the prison and down the length of one street in the city, before leaving him. His heavenly guide did not dictate where he should go then; that was left to Peter's own choice.

He did not need to consider long; he knew where he was likely to find "his own company"-those who had a heart for the Lord's interests, and there he went and was received as we have already noticed.

What a great thing in these closing days of the Church's history on earth to find ourselves, like Rhoda, connected with a similar company, which, though weak, is yet dependent, and one to which the Lord and His interests are dear!

Bible Treasury: Volume N2, Christian, The

A Word on Acts 11:26

We need not enter into curious questions, nor even dwell over much on the word “Christian.” It was a name given by outsiders in Antioch of Syria, a city notorious for affixing nicknames. This word, we see from 1 Peter 4:16, was adopted by the Holy Spirit in writing to Jewish converts, as by men generally. On the one hand, if one be not in the new relationship, what is he but a child of disobedience! On the other hand scripture appears not to call any one a child or son of the devil, till there is a willful rejection of the Lord. Still all are alike by nature children of wrath. The most correct and amiable are included no less than the repulsive and immoral. Let us glance briefly at the bearing of the scriptures that occur at the moment. We are encouraged to confide in the gracious guidance of the Spirit, while far from the delusion of claiming exemption from mistake. What then is meant by a Christian? A professed believer since Christ's death and resurrection. This indicates his proper place and relation. He is a saint, and much more.

Now the word of God is explicit in dealing with a man in himself as a guilty sinner. Such is every child of Adam by nature. But God reveals in Christ a new blessing which the Old Testament prophets were awaiting. Israel's hope was the Messiah: “My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed” (Isa. 56:1). But the Messiah having been rejected brought in an unexpected state of things, which required a fresh body of scripture, based not on promise, but on accomplishment and heavenly blessing. The Christian has life eternal by faith as a present and known possession. When Christ comes, his body will be changed accordingly; but he is already quickened together with Christ. And as God made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, it is that we should become God's righteousness in Him. Thus in the gospel is God's righteousness revealed by faith unto faith. Hence, in the Epistle to the Galatians (v. 5), we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Being already justified by faith we look for the glory which is its due result. Christ's work of redemption has such value and efficacy before God that if we believe on Him our sins are remitted, and we are justified. God is not gracious only but righteous in thus dealing. He is glorified in the Son of man as a sacrifice for sin, and will bring us into glory with Him.

But what of sin? It has been borne to God's glory in the cross of Christ. Hence is there a new and justifying righteousness (not man's works which could but condemn him; but) God's, in virtue of Christ's redemption. Again, when He rose from the dead, He rose not alone, but as the seed-corn which fell into the ground and died, bringing forth much fruit. He is the Second man and the Last Adam, the head of a new family, which derives its name from Himself. He is the Christ; we are Christians. Adam became not a father till he was a sinner. The Lord Jesus, fully proved the Righteous Servant, died for our unrighteousness and rose the Head of God's family who are to be with Christ where He is. It is therefore God's righteousness, not only to set Him at His own right-hand, but to justify now and to glorify at His coming all that believe on Him. As we are naturally in Adam, so are we spiritually in Christ; and if it was right of God to condemn the fallen Adam and his guilty children, is it not at least equally right to justify all that believe on Christ the last Adam? It was not death that made Him cry, “My God, my God, why didst Thou forsake me?” it was the far deeper fact that there and then God made Him sin for us. For He suffered once for sins, just for unjust. He bore sins' judgment for the believer. God would have men bow in faith before His ineffable mercy and grace, and also His righteousness which can and does clear the lost who believe. We are entitled by Christ's death and resurrection to have the fullest confidence in God; as it is written, “Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.” Thus the gospel is not only extrication from sin, but a new standing altogether; and this by grace produces powerful moral effects. There is now a new walk according to Christ's, which follows the communication of His life to the Christian: “not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

But scripture never mingles the responsible walk with the standing which grace gives us in Christ. How could God condemn either the work or the life of Christ? In the cross He has already executed sentence on our nature, and we are in Christ Jesus where condemnation can be no more. Compare Rom. 8:1-4.

The Christian is in Christ and thus blessedly perfect in his standing. Not only is righteousness imputed to him, so that the Lord imputes no sin, but we live of His life even now. Christ has given us life eternal, His own life to be ours.

The disciples were never said to be in Christ until He here breathed it in risen power on the day He rose, life abundantly. Again, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” 1 Cor. 6:17. This is the union of the Christian with Christ. The Holy Spirit in the day that is now, having come down, imparted to the believer the blessed consciousness of it. John 14:19, 20. Jesus was as truly man as any one; but He alone absolutely without sin. He was born “that holy thing.” Luke 1:35. If the words were “one flesh,” it might be argued that the whole world, or all mankind, is united to Christ; but it is “one spirit.” The end is worthy; we shall be like Him. In 1 Cor. 1:30 “redemption” is said last, signifying the full future deliverance of the body. Compare Rom. 8:23, which points to that conforming us to Christ. Do you oppose to this the views of some erudite men? The Bible was written, not for literary strife, but for souls who honor God in faith. Human learning is a sorry master, but may be no bad servant; and so it is with every earthly boon.

The believer is already a temple of God. Do you believe your body to be the temple of the Holy Spirit? If you doubt it, you give up a distinctive privilege of the Christian and of Christianity. Not only are we bought with a price but the Holy Spirit designs to dwell in us. No doubt we are poor and weak; but the Holy Spirit is neither. Does not the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanse us from all sin? Does not Christ wash our

feet, when defiled, with the water of the word? “This is he that came by water and blood.” 1 John 5:6. The Holy Spirit takes up His abode in us consequent on our resting on God's testimony to Christ and His blood.

In 2 Cor. 1:21 God, it is said, “Stablisheth us with you in Christ.” This contrasts His certainty with man's uncertainty. There is nothing so plain and sure as the testimony of God to His child; but there is this accompaniment to heed that he must be nothing. It is but a human, sort of lowliness, to be ever occupied with thinking and speaking of my own badness. When we do wrong things, we should surely confess them. But we are privileged, forgetting ourselves, to behold Christ in God's presence, and to know our blessedness in Him.

2 Cor. 3 contrasts the Christian with the Israelite. What was engraven on stone, the law, told what the Israelite should present; but the Christian, having Christ written on his heart by the Spirit of the living God, is called to reflect Him as His epistle.

The believer is not set like the mystics and pietists striving to die. He has by faith to recognize the truth of his own death by the power of the death of Christ. “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live.” It is the abiding consequence of the past act of Christ on the cross. Fallen Adam shows us our natural life; but the life we as Christians now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God; and each can say “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Hence in Gal. 5:24 it is not said, “They that are Christ's” ought to crucify, but “crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Ought I, a Christian, a child of God, to be occupied with the objects of men? Has not Christ His objects? and should not His objects be ours? There are daily duties to be performed by us as serving Him; but this is quite another thing. We are sanctified to obey as He did. He was called the carpenter's son, and no doubt did the work as part of His Father's business. But duties are one thing; objects are quite another.

Having the indwelling Holy Spirit, we should not complain of lack of power; any more than of direction, as having the written word. Has not God blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? Does not God see us as He sees Christ—all Christians? Every right step for a Christian is founded on his being in Christ. “Old things are passed away” to faith: it is not a question of feeling. Christ is the model, and He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

We are called on condition of liberty; but it is as walking in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian, because he is washed from his sins in the blood of Christ.

Hence it is written in Col. 1:12, that we are to thank the Father Who made us meet to share the portion of the saints in light. Many think that the believer goes on growing gradually till he becomes fit for glory. One ought better to have learned the truth from the repentant robber on the cross. Neither walk nor service could qualify us for heaven, nothing short of what grace gives us in Christ. This is what the Christian has, and what the work of redemption has done for him. Observe too that ver. 10 just before speaks of increase by the right knowledge of God. There and thus the Christian ought to grow. But there is no growth in meetness for sharing the lot of the saints in the light. Christ's work for us is perfect, and perfects the Christian in the sight of God. “By one offering He hath perfected forever—without a break—them that are sanctified.” It is true of all real Christians. How blessed then to be a Christian! how blessed then to be a Christian! how awful to despise the Name, which by faith makes the poorest of sinners to be one! how inexcusable thus to heap up wrath against the day of wrath, in the face of the goodness of God leading to repentance!

Bible Treasury: Volume 13, Service of a Good Man Full of the Holy Ghost and of Faith, The

The Spirit of God has seen good to give us for our profit this notice of one whom He could use fully, in service to the saints, for the glory of Christ; one, a pattern, doubtless, and worthy of imitation by all. It is here unreserved devotedness which is so essential to blessing in service, whatever may be the line in which the servant may move, or the place filled by such a member of the body of Christ.

Let us notice, first, the start of this “good man.” It is “Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation) a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” (Acts 4:36, 37.)

Here is one disentangling himself from the things of this life, and ready to enter on the service of Him who had called him to be a soldier, with a heart for the needy too; but we see him getting rid, for Christ's sake, of the things which might burden and fetter him in the race. (Heb. 12)

Thus is he ready (a convert on the day of Pentecost) early for the Lord's work; nor do we find him long unemployed. If the apostles were tardy in carrying out the Lord's instructions (given after His resurrection, and consequent on their being endued with power from on high on the day of Pentecost, for which they were told to wait), “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” (Mark 16:15), He is not at a loss for instruments for the work. If the children do not cry “Hosannah” in praise of Messiah, Son of God, the “stones will;” for God's decree is that His beloved Son must be owned and honored when here; neither is He going to be hindered in having the name of that blessed One told out to the ends of the earth, as a Savior for man lost in trespasses and sins. If some had settled down, He can fit instruments for His purpose out of materials more unlikely than “the stones.”

There is the chief of sinners standing by the clothes of those who had laid them down at his feet to take care of, until they stoned the Lord's faithful servant, Stephen—mad with rage against Christ and all that owned Him. This man is to be made a willing instrument to carry the name of Christ, “the Son of God,” to all the nations.

The Lord speaks from heaven, and in a moment he is turned and ready. “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” is what expresses it. He must, however, tarry awhile, and then he shall know, not only what the Lord would have him to do, but what “he should suffer for his name's sake.”

And now has the Lord a service ready for the “good man,” whose eye was so single at first, and as a clean vessel, to be honored and used by the Master.

Saul, escaping from Damascus, would “join himself to the disciples at Jerusalem: but they were afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.” They did not know of his conversion; but Barnabas knew; and the Lord uses him to bring in Saul to the assembly at Jerusalem. “But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.” We are not told how Barnabas knew all this, but it is remarkable

that he should know so much better about Saul's conversion than the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem. His heart was in it all, and the Lord, doubtless, had put him in the way of knowing all this, in order to form a link between these two for future work together.

The persecution which arose about Stephen opened out this. Saul had been the means of scattering abroad the church at Jerusalem, also Judea and Samaria. These simple disciples, driven away from their homes for their faith in the Lord Jesus, yet carrying Him in their hearts, must needs speak of Him wherever they go, even at last “to the Greeks;” and “the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.” This spontaneous work is specially owned of God, carrying out His purpose by the gospel, to the glory of Christ, among the Gentiles.

The apostles had not done this work. Saul was the instrument used. “The Lord makes the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder He restrains,” by stopping the wrathful man on his way to Damascus, and fitting him to labor, side by side, with those whom his wrath had driven among the nations, to tell of God's love in Christ.

Here there is more work also for the “good man,” “son of consolation,” fit instrument to be used and honored in service.

“Then tidings of these things came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, who, when he came and saw the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord.”

The church at Jerusalem had perfect confidence in this “good man,” as having spiritual discernment as to the work of which they had heard. Their confidence is not misplaced. He discerns at once the Lord's hand, and the reality of that which was wrought thus far, apart from any official channel. His whole heart is in it. “He was glad when he saw the grace of God,” and in service follows up by “attending to exhortation,” All was right thus far; they must have “full purpose of heart, and cleave unto the Lord.” It is but the echo of his own state of soul; he was but leading them, and encouraging them to walk in the path he had trodden hitherto himself. There had been “full purpose of heart” in “Joses, surnamed Barnabas,” from the day that the grace of God had met him, and delivered him so completely. He did not lead them beyond himself—this was not possible. Blessed state of soul, and blessed the servant, or saint, who was, or is, in it, and increasingly blessed its results: “and much people were added to the Lord;” “for he was a good man,” &c. The Spirit of God gives as a reason for the large blessing, “full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,” the state of this man's soul. What could hinder large blessing when such was the state? May we lay this to heart.

Next we see what is most beautiful. The work is enlarging, and help is needed in this field. Barnabas knows of the one whom he introduced to the church in Jerusalem, and he knows what he is. “Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul.” The disciples do not send for Saul. This “good man” judges Saul to be fitted to help in this work. Was Saul unemployed at Tarsus, waiting for the Lord's call? If so, he has it by Barnabas, and immediately responds to it; for “he found him, and brought him to Antioch,” and there these two labor, and “teach much people for a whole year,” after which the church sends them to Jerusalem, with relief to the brethren there in their distress; and they return to Antioch, bringing with them John Mark,

This work, then, at Antioch goes on not independent, indeed, of Jerusalem, Barnabas being the link of connection in service; yet was it the free and spontaneous action of the Holy Ghost for Christ, if I may so say; and He (the Holy Ghost) is in Antioch, as in Jerusalem at the first, not only in the salvation of the souls of much people, but in giving gifts; so we find “at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon, that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen—and Saul;” five in all, harmoniously ministering in Antioch, the mention of the names beginning with Barnabas, and ending with Saul. These two distinguished ones must yet go together in service.

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” Thus the Holy Ghost still keeps this “good man” in his preeminent place in service. I do not follow them in this their first tour, taking John Mark with them to help, who lowers himself by turning back to Jerusalem, at Perga in Pamphylia (lacking the faith and full purpose of heart needed in a true servant), just remarking in passing that Paul increases in energy, and is the “chief speaker,” changing his name to Paul, it would seem, at Paphos.

This service being completed, they return to Antioch, “and declare all that God had wrought by them.”

Up to this point, with the exception of John Mark's defection, all had gone on harmoniously in this new work, at and from Antioch; the freshness of first love was there, until certain men come from Judea, and introduce, or try to introduce, circumcision. I pass by this to notice the place that Barnabas still held in service; but now it is “Paul and Barnabas, who had no small dissension and disputation with them;” and this not settling the question, it is “determined that Paul and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem about it.”

Their mission there is successful, and they return to Antioch, with “letters from the apostles, elders, and brethren,” settling the question in dispute, which, when read at Antioch, caused them to “rejoice for the consolation;” “Paul and Barnabas continuing in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with, many other also.”

Here we would gladly stop in following the path of this “good man,” if the Holy Ghost stopped here. But no. Up to this all had been bright; and how sad that such a light should be dimmed How it grieves one's heart that these two beloved ones, laboring so long and faithfully together, should quarrel and part Mark, indeed, whose default was the occasion of it, is afterward deemed “profitable unto Paul,” as he writes. Had the Lord called away His beloved Barnabas then?

Yet so it was. Had he forgotten his own beautiful exhortation, “with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord?”

His relation, John Mark, and his native island of Cyprus, doubtless weigh too much with him as a man naturally, and not Christ's interests; and the Holy Ghost drops him out of the record further given in the

Acts. Up to this last all was worthy of imitation, and full of encouragement; this last is but as a beacon light, to warn our souls of danger, when and where it may be least expected. In all there is instruction and profit.

The Evangelist: Volume 2 (1868), "The Disciples Were First Called Christians at Antioch."

Acts 11:26.

IT is instructive to observe the moment at which this new name was given to the saved ones after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Up to the time of Christ the Jews alone had been owned as the people of God upon the earth. “He hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself above all people.... because the Lord loved you.”

But His pleasant plant, a noble vine, wholly a right seed, yielded no fruit, and until Christ came, —His elect, in whom His soul delighted, —there was nothing to meet His requirements. Not until then was there one upon the earth in whom He could find joy. Of this He testified by a voice from heaven: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

But the Jew in his blindness, and the Gentile in his deadness, could see no beauty in Him; and they crucified Him. God raised Him from the dead to His own right hand.

Henceforth there is no earthly center. We are gathered to Him who is raised from the dead. There only can rest and satisfaction as well as salvation be found. God no longer deals with an earthly people to find a return for His love, or an answer to His demands. He has found it all in Christ, and He rests there. Henceforth He will look nowhere else. To meet the desire of God’s heart we must be found IN CHRIST, or headed up under Him.

From Pentecost souls were gathered to Christ as raised from the dead. First, from among the Jews, — the disciples, even AFTER the persecution that arose about Stephen, went “preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.” (Acts 11:19.)

Still they had no peculiar name. It was after the door had been opened to the Gentiles (Acts 10) that they got a NEW NAME. They were called CHRISTIANS. Both Jew and Gentile gathered in faith by one Spirit to the risen Christ, forming of twain one new man, in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12), —part of Himself, —members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. No longer Jews nor Gentiles, but the Church of God, having no center upon the earth, but having living union with Christ above, and looking for Him to come and take them up to Himself.

The Jew would naturally think of himself as belonging to a favored race; but we, as not in the flesh, have no room for boasting. Self is buried in the grave of Christ. We are named after Him, and in Him alone do we glory, in whom we have obtained an inheritance, and in whom we are complete.

There is a promise to those who overcome in Rev. 2:17 peculiarly precious to the soul: I will give him “a new name.” In human relationships, we know the power of a name; how tenderly it strikes upon the ear! But if it be a name bestowed in token of intimate friendship, or relationship of peculiar love, how deeply it stirs the emotions of the heart This new name corresponds to His new name; there is an echo from one to the other. “I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” And again, “I will write upon him my new name.”

May we now glory in His name, —a name which is above every name, —and worship at His feet, until that happy day when we “shall see His face,” and His name shall be in our foreheads.

The Springing Well: Volume 5 (1902), Our Bible Lesson Column

Golden Text.— “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.” —Acts 11:19. Read Acts 11:19-30.

19. “Preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.”

Thus did those who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, and in chapter 8:1 we are told that all were scattered abroad except the apostles. The Twelve were originally commanded to go neither to the Samaritans nor to the Gentiles, but rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and on one occasion our Lord said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24).

20, 21. “The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.” Thus in these new places the called-out ones were being gathered unto Him to whom all must come, whether Jews or Greeks, for there is salvation in no other (4:12). The Jews ask for a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but to those who accept Him, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:22-24).

22, 23. “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” This is written of Barnabas, whom the church at Jerusalem sent to Antioch when they heard the tidings of the Grecians turning to the Lord. They could not have sent a better man than this one, who had already proved himself a true son of consolation (4:35; 9:26, 27). He gladly recognized the grace of God wherever he saw it, whether in a persecuting Saul or in the Grecians, and he now encourages these saved people to cleave to the Lord alone and not to any of their teachers.

24. “For he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord.” Our Lord Jesus said, “There is none good but one; that is God” (Mark 10:18). His goodness was therefore through the righteousness of God in Christ. Many are thus righteous who are not filled with the Spirit, but Barnabas was Spirit filled (Eph. 5:18), as every believer should be.

25, 26. “Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul.” He found him and brought him to Antioch, and for a whole year they abode there and taught much people. It is refreshing to see Barnabas and Saul together again, and to find them teaching the people at Antioch for a whole

year. Very much is often accomplished in a week or even a few days of Bible study, but how great things must have been accomplished in that year of teaching by these two Spirit-filled men at Antioch! The church today sorely needs simple Bible teaching, that the people may learn to eat the word of God.

27, 28. “And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.” Their message was not a cheerful one, for tidings of a coming famine are anything but cheerful, yet it is well to be forewarned. If you have learned some helpful lessons from the famine stories in connection with Abram, Isaac, Joseph, Elimelech and the others, you will not lack for profitable meditation upon these verses.

29, 30. “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea, which also they did and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” Paul afterward taught thus: “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” (1 Cor. 9:11). See also his plain and helpful teaching on the privilege of giving as in 2 Cor. 8 and 9 concerning a willing mind, and a cheerful giver because of the grace of God to us in Christ, and His making all grace abound towards us. Doubtless some teaching on the same lines had been given during this year at Antioch, and now the fruit is manifest. On this occasion they give for the body, but in chapter 13 we shall see them giving missionaries to go forth with the living bread for the soul.

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WE are obliged this month through want of space to omit the article on “The Roman Empire,” and also “Some Stories of God’s Servants,” “Short Scripture Studies,” and also other papers so kindly contributed by various writers. We hope, God willing, to use all these in due course.

Scripture Study, Scripture Study: Acts 11:19-30

ACT 11:19-30We were told in chapter 8 of how the Holy Spirit led the believers, who were scattered abroad by persecution, to announce the gospel wherever they went. For the most part, this was confined to the Jews, but some of these were bold enough to preach the glad tidings to the Grecians. The Lord blessed the Word and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. News of this work of God reached the ears of the assembly in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas, to go to Antioch, and see what was doing; who, when he came, and had seen so many trophies of the grace of God, rejoiced, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. It was good advice, and surely needed, not only for that day, but for us also.

Cleaving to the Lord, is abiding with Him. This good man, being full of the Holy Ghost, knew what was needed to keep the heart right How important it is, in these days of much head knowledge, to maintain ourselves in the fresh enjoyment of the love of Christ, and to cleave to Him earnestly, diligently, with spiritual energy; as this word would here put before our souls.

At this time a great crowd was added unto he Lord. It was not through the apostles, but by means of those already saved, though not marked out here as being specially gifted. "The hand of the Lord was with them," and that was the secret of their success. The love of Christ in their hearts, and desire for His glory, claimed others for Him.

Barnabas, good and kind and earnest and full of the Holy Ghost, seems to feel that the work is beyond him, and he goes away to Tarsus to bring Saul to help in this wonderful work of grace. They spent a whole year in Antioch teaching in that assembly. Barnabas had introduced Saul to the assembly at Jerusalem for their fellowship; now he gets his assistance as a teacher of the truth. It was here in Antioch that the disciples were first called distinctively "Christians," a term which is adopted by the Spirit of God, and used to denote those who know redemption, and are thus the true followers of Christ. (1 Peter 4:16). The word "disciple," does not seem to be used in the Epistles.

Interest in Jerusalem is stirred by prophets coming down, and one of them, Agabus, told of a great famine coming on the world, and this came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar and this led the disciples to do what they could to send relief to the brethren in Judea, which also they did, sending it to the elder brethren by Barnabas and Saul. This was some of the fruits of love, and a sweet acknowledgment of their debt of love to those by whom the gospel came to them. (Rom. 15:27.)

A Word on Cleaving to the Lord: Addressed to Young Converts, Word on Cleaving to the Lord, A: Addressed to Young Converts, Part 2

He exhorted them that they should cleave to the Lord. Depend on Him. Some are allowed to have a long season of joy on first believing, but God knows our hearts, and how soon we should be depending on our joy, and not on Christ. He is our object: joy is not our object. Do not let your joy lead you to forget the source of it, and then it need never, wane. This joy is right and beautiful in its place; I am not saying a word against it-God forbid. But I warn you against resting in it. Do not lean on it for strength. There is danger of joy, however genuine, making you forget how dependent you are every moment. Depend upon Him: cleave to Him with purpose of heart. Do not be content with being happy (may you continue so!), but with Paul; forgetting the things which are behind press on, &c. (Phil. 3.) I have seen many Christians so full of joy that they thought there was no such thing as sin left. It is true, sin no longer remains on you; but the flesh is in you to the end. The old stock is there, and you will find that, if you are not watchful, if divine life is not cherished and cultivated in your hearts by looking at Christ and feeding on Him, it will be putting forth its buds; if it does, they must be nipped off as they appear. No good fruit comes off the old stock. It is the new that bears fruit unto God. But though the flesh is in you, do not be thinking of this, but think of Christ-cleave to Him; and may your souls be maintained its this truth, that Christ is your life-aye, that Christ is so your life that Christ must die (the thought of which is blasphemy) before you can perish. And as He is your life, so is He the object of that life. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) As you grow in this knowledge of Him, a joy grows deeper than that of first conversion. I have known Christ, more or less, between thirty and forty years, and I can say that I have ten thousand times more joy now than I had at first. It is a deeper, calmer joy. The water rushing down from a hill is beautiful to look at, and makes most noise; but you will find the water that runs in the plain is deeper, calmer, more fruitful.
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Observe, they are exhorted with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. A distracted heart is the bane of a Christian. When my heart is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of the world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be the question, What harm is there in this, or that? rather, Am I doing this for Christ? Can Christ go along with me in this? If you are in communion with Him, you will readily detect what is not of Him. Do not let the world come in, and distract your thoughts. I speak especially to you young ones; we, who are older, have had more experience of what the world is, we know more what it is worth, but it all lies shining before you, endeavoring to attract you. What else does it fill its shop windows for? Its smiles are all deceitful, still it is smiling upon you. It makes many promises it cannot fulfill: still it promises. The fact is, your hearts are too big for the world, it cannot fill them; they are too little for Christ, for He fills heaven; yet will He fill you to overflowing.

Observe again, it is to the Lord they were to cleave; not to duty, or law, or ordinances (though these are good in their places), but to the Lord. He knew how treacherous the heart was, and how soon it would put anything in His place. You will have to learn what is in your heart. Abide with God, and you will learn your heart With Him, and under His grace; else you will have to learn it with the devil through His successful temptations. But God is faithful, and if you have been getting away from Him; and other things have been coming in and forming a crust round your heart, and you want to get back again, God says, What is this crust? I must have you deal with it, and get rid of it. Remember, Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, and not the world's. The denial of this fact is an artifice of the devil. Do not let the devil come in between you and God's grace. However careless you may have been, however far you may have got away from Him, return to Him; doubt not His joy in having you back; count upon His love; look at the sin which led you away with horror, but do not wrong Him by distrusting His love, any more than you would an affectionate husband or wife, by throwing a doubt on their love if you had been for a moment ungracious. Hate yourself, but remember how He has loved you, and will love you until the end. Mistrust not His work: mistrust not His love. God had also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life (Acts 11:18.) All is of God.

I would have you carry away in your minds three things which by grace are given you. 1st, cleaving to the Lord; 2nd, perfect forgiveness; 3rd, a purged conscience. To illustrate this last, take the case of Peter. He denied His Lord-denied Him to a servant-maid; but the Lord had turned and looked on him, and he had gone out and wept bitterly. A few weeks after this (Acts 3.), he could say that they were a lost and ruined people, because "they denied the Holy One and the Just;" the very thing he had done himself; in a worse way, too, for he had been with Him as His friend for three years. But his conscience was purged; he knew he was forgiven; and now he could turn round, and fearlessly charge others with the very thing he had done himself.

One word more. Talk with Him. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of near intercourse with Him who has loved you with such manner of love!

(Continued)

A Word on Cleaving to the Lord: Addressed to Young Converts, Word on Cleaving to the Lord, A: Addressed to Young Converts, Part 1

CT 11{It is worthy of remark, that in this chapter we have the first account of Gentile converts: of the receiving, in sovereign goodness and grace, poor sinners who had not even the promises to boast of which God had given to the Jews. To such it is, too, that Barnabas comes with the earnest exhortation contained in Acts 11:23: "That with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord," What Peter was taught here as to the Gentiles we all have to learn as to ourselves. When the blessed news of grace and pardon first reaches a sinner's ears and heart, he rejoices in the thought of pardon and forgiveness. He does right. Jesus, the blessed Son of God, has met him in mercy with His precious blood. But with this the light enters into his soul. When there have been deep discoveries of sin before the soul has become happy, the peace of the soul is more settled. The sin to which grace is applied is in a measure already known. But when, through the proclamation of divine pardon, without previous convictions, the soul has suddenly received joy, though there is always the discovery that we are sinners, the knowledge of the depth of sin in the heart, and what has to be forgiven and cleansed, is very small. The consequence is, that, after. God has called us, and the divine light has broken into our souls, we feel disturbed and uncertain, and even begin sometimes to doubt the fact of our being cleansed. This is wrong. The deeper discovery of sin and the knowledge of our own heart is useful. If we walk humbly and near to God, this knowledge will be made, comparatively speaking, peacefully; if not, in humiliation and failure. But you may not call unclean, what God has cleansed. God has brought cleansing and pardon to us down here. We have not to wait for it until we go up there. God has cleansed you. You are clean now. But I desire to lead you to some further exercise of heart upon it, and clearer apprehension of God's ways: a fuller exercise of conscience, that your peace may be as solid as your joy was genuine when you first heard of grace and forgiveness.

In Luke 15, the great principle set for this that it is God's happiness when we are brought back to Him. Of course the joy of the restored one comes in, but is not the primary thing. The object of all three parables is not to show our joy, but the joy of God in our restoration. The three parables all teach the same grace, but we get, I believe, the joy of the Son, of the Spirit, and of the Father. But remark, that in the two first we find a grace which finds and brings back what was lost, without any further question of the state of the soul. In the third we have man's departure even into the lowest degradation of sin, and what passes in his soul on his return, till he is clothed in divine righteousness, with Christ in His Father's house. God has foreseen and provided for the whole case of the sinner. The younger son was as really a sinner when he left his Father's house as when he was eating husks with the swine. He had abandoned God to do his own will. But the Lord pursues the case to the full degradation of sin, for sin degrades man. The young man comes to himself, turns back towards God, is converted; but he has not yet met God, nor has he the best robe on him. He did not know in his conscience, divine righteousness. When he really meets his father, not only is he in tender love-only the more shown because he has been lost-received when in his rags into his father's arms, but he is made righteously fit for the house, clothed with Christ. His father was on his neck when he was in his rags, but he was not received into the house in that state; he could not have been. But God has provided for the sinner what Adam in his innocence had not. He has provided Christ. Grace reigns through righteousness. The best robe, no part of the son's portion before he left, is now put on him, and he is fit for the house to which that robe belonged. All the extent of the soul's departure from God has been weighed. The soul may be exercised about it, and will till self is wholly given up as a ground on which we can stand with God: no going in legally as a hired servant. Before God it is rags and exclusion, or the best robe and joyful admission. All true experiences lead to that emptying of self, and Christ all, and we in Him before God. Then, as I have said, our peace is as solid as the joy of the thought of forgiveness was blessed, and the joy itself deeper, if not more genuine.

Another truth is connected with this. God having perfectly cleansed us by the blood of Christ, the Spirit dwells in the cleansed heart. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Spirit gives us the consciousness of our relationship as dear children. "Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." What manner of persons ought we to be, who are the temples of the Holy Ghost, we may well continually ask ourselves. But do not let failures make us doubt that we have it. Low and wretched as was the state the Galatians had fallen' into, they never doubted they had the Spirit of God; but they were getting wrong as to the ground of their standing, as to how they received it; so that the apostle had to ask them, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:2.) We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance. We have life as truly as Christ is alive; but we are not yet in heaven. The thief, indeed, was privileged to be taken directly home, believing only today, but today the first companion Christ had in paradise. We do not look for such immediate departure, but our ground is the same; we are as truly saved, but not so soon to be in heaven. Rather have we to go through this evil world: to go through it as crucified with Christ, dead indeed, but risen-to go through it with His Spirit dwelling in us. Be careful lest you grieve that Spirit. You have to go through the world, bearing the name of Christ upon you. See that you bring no reproach upon that blessed name by being inconsistent. The world will be sharp to exclaim, There are your Christians. You will have to go through the world with God dwelling in you; to carry this treasure in an earthen vessel: entrusted with this treasure, an habitation of God through the Spirit. Of course it is only through His grace that you can carry such a treasure through an evil world; but there is power in Christ, there is sufficiency in Christ for all He would have you to do or be.

(To be continued.)

Young Christian: Volume 13, 1923, Cleaving Unto the Lord: Acts 11:13

A distracted heart is the bane of a Christian. When my heart is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of the world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be the question, What harm is there in this, or that? rather, Am I doing this for Christ? Can Christ go along with me in this? If you are in communion with Him, you will readily detect what is not of Him.

Do not let the world come in, and distract your thoughts. I speak specially to you who are young; we, who are older, have had more experience of what the world is, we know more what it is worth, but it all lies shining before you, endeavoring to attract you. What does it fill its shop windows for else? Its smiles are all deceitful, still it is smiling upon you. It makes many promises it cannot fulfill; still it promises. The fact is, your hearts are too big for the world, it cannot fill them; they are too little for Christ, for He fills heaven; yet will He fill you to overflowing.

Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of near intercourse with Him who has loved you with such manner of love.

Things New and Old: Volume 3, Faith and Forgiveness

Notes of a short address to the anxious ones at a prayer-meeting.

Let me direct your attention, dear friends, to a verse of scripture, which, the Lord grant, may prove a blessing to many souls. You will find it in the 10th chapter of Acts, at the 43rd verse: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

About a fortnight or three weeks ago, at the close of one of our prayer-meetings in London, I observed two young women, seated by themselves in a corner of the room, apparently not inclined to move, although the others were all going away. I had seen them before. They were troubled about their souls. They had not peace. I was glad to see them remain, and, desiring to have a quiet word about their state of mind with myself, I asked them if they were still in trouble. They said they were. I then said to them, “How long have you been in trouble about your souls?”

“Five or six weeks,” they replied.

“Now tell me, are you really in earnest about your soul’s salvation?”

“O, yes!”

There was no question about that. It was the one thing their hearts were seeking after. “Well, tell, me do you really, as lost sinners, believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for you as such?”

“O, yes.” They at once acknowledged, that they believed that Jesus Christ died for them.

Bringing them to the passage which I have read, I asked them if they believed that Christ finished the work He came to do on behalf of lost sinners, and for the glory of God. They had no doubt on that point. Christ, raised up from the dead, proves the completeness of His work. “Now, put your finger on that verse,” I said. “Have you got your finger on it?” Their eyes were gazing on the text. “What does it say? “Whosoever believeth on him shall receive—receive what? the promise of forgiveness at some future time? No, but whosoever believeth shall receive remission of sins.’ Does God speak the truth or not? What then does He say? You confess that you believe that Jesus died and rose again. Well, then, what does Peter say in this verse? ‘Whosoever believeth’—but believeth what? — ‘that Jesus died and rose again,’ having finished the work needed for me, a sinner, God raised Him up. If I believe that, what do I receive? Not merely heaven at last, but present forgiveness. I receive a present forgiveness. I may not know it—I may not believe it—I may not enjoy it. Nevertheless, God is true: whosoever believeth shall receive —God says it—mark the word receive.”

Now, observe, let me speak to souls who may be in a condition similar to that of those two young persons. Can you say it is true, or is it false? You say it is true. Well, but what is true? That we have received remission of sins. Glory be to God, that is faith in the word of the living God Now, tell me, are you looking to your own feelings, or to the word of God? The eyes of these young women were turned away from themselves, and fixed on the sure word of God. One of them said to me, “I can see it clearly now.” The other said, “If I could hear God saying it, I would believe.” “O, come now,” I said; “is not the written word more certain, if possible, than the spoken word? You might say, at some future day, I thought I heard it, but perhaps I was mistaken. O, would you not prefer the written word? You can go back to it again and again.” “I think I would,” she said.

There is the victory, dear friends, to receive the truth without hesitation. But, again, let me ask, what is the truth, dear friends, on this important point? That, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we receive—what? The remission of all our sins. When? The same moment we believe. O, beloved friends, if God be true, follow their simple example. For six weeks these girls were going from one meeting to another, running hither and thither, trying to find peace, and could not; hut the moment their eye was directed to Christ, and His finished work—the moment their souls received God’s word as true, they knew that they had received remission of sins. Receiving the testimony of God about Jesus, and receiving the remission of our sins, are inseparably connected together in Scripture, and why should we seek to separate them, to our own trouble and distress of mind?

And now, beloved friends, those of you, who this night have your eye and your heart turned to Christ, tell me, is it true that Christ died for us sinners? If I be a sinner, has He died for me? Yes! blessed be His name! Oh, I would not give up this descriptive name, sinner, for ten thousand worlds. I am a sinner, God says it; but what does that entitle me to? To the full benefit of the finished work of Christ. Oh, the boundless grace which flows from the heart of God through that channel into my soul—into every soul that believes. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” As a sinner, then, I believe this. It is true, is it not? Who questions its reality? Did not Jesus die on the cross for sinners? The word of God plainly states it; but it also states, that He who died for sinners rose again for their justification; and also, that whosoever believeth on him, shall receive remission of sins.” Oh, then, as lost, ruined, hell-deserving sinners, believe God’s testimony about Jesus, His finished work, and His precious grace to you, in the full remission of all your sins, and be happy in His great salvation.

I now said to those two young sisters, “Have you not, think you, some weeks ago received the very thing that you were seeking after?” They now saw that then they had received forgiveness, but from not knowing it, and believing it, they had no peace nor rest to their souls. Now they had peace through the knowledge of forgiveness. Do you now see, and can you now say, beloved friends, that Jesus died for you? Do you believe that He died and rose again, that you might be pardoned and justified before God? May the Lord lead you now in your heart to look to Him, believing this precious truth. The first look of faith brings you the full, perfect, and everlasting forgiveness of all your sins. What God hath thus joined together, as to faith and forgiveness, let no man put asunder. May God enable you to believe—to believe this night in Him who died and rose again. His precious blood alone cleanseth from all sin, and eternal life can only be received from the risen, living Christ in glory. May you now receive the truth about Him without doubting, and give to God all the glory.

Echoes of Mercy: Volume 13 (1903), Acts Ten, Forty Three.

AT the close of a gospel service recently, where the power of God had been felt in no small degree, I entered into conversation with a young man of a very refined and gentlemanly appearance.

Quite a number had been visibly affected, and not a few had apparently decided to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in their hearts, and to confess Him with their lips.

Noticing that this young man lingered as if loath to leave a spot where the Spirit of God was producing such blessed results, I inquired how matters stood with him. He was not saved—he owned it frankly. Did he not realize his danger? Oh, yes. He owned that it was all true: that he needed a Saviour, that he might have that Saviour on the spot: that he need not leave the hall without Him—all this he readily admitted.

“Then will you not trust Him tonight, before you leave this place? “I asked.

“No, thank you, not tonight,” he replied, and that in the most polite and courteous manner.

“But why not? There is no reason on God’s side why you should not be saved. The atoning work has been finished on the cross„ and the Lord Jesus Christ is a Saviour both able and willing to save you now, straight away. Besides, there is danger in delay; you don’t know what a day may bring forth; you may not have another chance; “and so I kept urging him to decision, there and then.

“No, thank you, not tonight. Please do not ask me to decide this tonight. I don’t want to be unkind or offensive; I quite appreciate your kindness; I hope you understand me, it is from no motive of resentment, but please do not ask me to decide tonight;” and so he went on.

It was a strange case, and not knowing what next to say, I ventured, “Isn’t your mother saved?”

With this, the dear lad fairly broke down, and commenced sobbing like a child. “No,” he gasped out, “mother’s not saved—father is. Oh, do pray for mother; pray for me too.”

Back of all this there lay a history which I did not feel justified in reviving, but there was a touch of genuine human feeling which could not fail to strike a chord of sympathy.

“Well,” I said, “the Lord knows all about that, and if you were only saved yourself you would be a help to your mother. But tell me, why do you not want to decide tonight?”

By this time the hour was advancing, and having left the hall, we were walking down the street together. “I once made a profession,” he said, “about two years ago. It lasted for a little while, but I went back completely, and I don’t want to repeat this again.”

“I understand that,” said I, “and I give you credit for a perfectly right and just feeling. You do not want to bring dishonor upon the Lord, and discredit upon the gospel—isn’t that so?”

“Yes,” said he, “if I were to say I was saved, nobody would believe me.”

“What made you think you were saved two years ago?” I asked.

“I had been attending some revival meetings, and felt very happy.”

“Was that all? Supposing I had met you two years ago, and asked you upon what your hope of heaven rested, what would you have replied?”

“Oh, I felt very happy. I was sure I was all right.”

“But, my dear fellow, what scripture had you to base your faith on?”

“Oh, I hadn’t any scripture particular,” said he.

“Then I understand it all now,” said I; “you were trusting in your feelings; these were merely passing emotions. In order to satisfy the demands of your own conscience in view of judgment to come, and in order to silence the attacks of Satan, the great adversary of your soul, you must have the Word of God to rest on. One line of that blessed, living Word of God will silence Satan, and produce a peace and rest of soul which all the happy feelings in the world could never give, and, thank God, which all the dismal feelings could never rob you of. I can tell you one verse—there are multitudes, but this one will suffice for the moment—which can give you assurance if you just simply believe it as God’s own announcement to yourself.”

The hour was late, and my young friend, hurriedly taking his watch from his pocket, said, “I can’t wait, I have only just time to catch the last train. Where is the verse?”

As he was running down the street I called after him,

From the distance he replied, “Acts ten, forty-three—thank you so much.”

We have never met again, and in all probability shall never do so until we meet around the Lamb. There was such a hearty ring about “Acts ten, forty-three—thank you so much,” that I cannot doubt if I had been able to look in upon that young man before he turned in for the night, I should have found him reading attentively:—

And now, reader, will you not do the same? Perhaps you may have been committing the same mistake as our young friend. You, too, may have been trusting to your feelings instead of in the Word of the living God. Sometimes you have felt bright, and then you thought that all was well; more often you have felt down, and then you feared that you were deceiving yourself. You, like this young man, have been hitherto on the wrong line. Give it up and turn to God’s Word. See what He says: “To Him give all the prophets witness.” Who is this “Him”? Is it not the Lord Jesus Christ, “whom they slew and hanged on a tree,” but whom “God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly”? (Acts 10:34-48). Read the whole passage attentively. All the prophets of the Old Testament bore witness of Him, and the whole Word of God is pledged to the truth of what follows, that “through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.”

Can anything be plainer? Christ has died and has risen again from the dead; God Himself has raised Him—there is no doubt of this, “witnesses chosen before of God” have borne their testimony to this greatest and most certain fact in history. None but those who willfully and foolishly close their eyes to the plainest and most convincing evidence can doubt that Christ is risen from the dead.

So fully and perfectly had God been glorified by that stupendous work of atonement wrought out at Calvary, that He Himself has raised Christ from the dead; and He now declares that “through His name

shall receive remission of sins.”

Reader, do you believe in Him? In your head of course you do, for in that sense there is not a demon in hell that does not believe (James 2:19). But do you honestly in your heart believe in Him? Do you believe that Jesus at the cross was charged with your guilt, that He there was wounded for your transgressions, and that He there suffered for your sins? If you do, then the whole testimony of Scripture, the united witness of God’s own Word, combines to establish the fact that your sins are forgiven.

Is not this better than mere happy feelings? Is not faith in the plain statement of God Himself a firmer foundation to rest on? is it not a rock that cannot be moved?

The believer in Christ can look up into heaven and say, “As long as God’s word is settled in heaven (Psa. 119:89), as long as God’s Son is seated on God’s throne (Acts 10:43), as long as it remains impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18), just so long is it absolutely certain that my sins are forgiven.”

Will not this assurance of forgiveness produce happy feelings? Certainly it will. The one who, with humble faith and calm serenity, can add his “Amen” to those blessed words put into his lips by the Spirit of God: —

“In whom we have redemption through His (Christ’s) blood, the forgiveness of sins,”

can open his mouth in praise “giving thanks unto the Father” (Col. 1:12-14).

Then no longer trust in your feelings, but trust in God’s World. Reverse the order—instead of feel and believe, let it be

Many other scriptures might be referred to in proof of what we have here sought to lay before our readers, but we leave to the earnest inquirer the happy task of searching them out for themselves.

Search the Scriptures.

A. H. B.

Questions and Answers on Scripture: From the Bible Treasury, Indwelling of the Holy Ghost, The

Question: Acts 2; 8:10; 19 Rom. 8, &c.—It being allowed that Acts 2 is the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost to form and indwell the Church, but only taking effect on Jewish believers, would Acts 10:44 be explained of a similar descent upon the Gentiles in such a way as to supplement Acts 2? or should we avoid the word “descent” and call it a manifestation of power to them as from one already present on earth, but not having before formally operated on the Gentiles? I conclude that Acts 8:14-17 and Acts 19:1-7 are somewhat different, as in both these instances there was the intervention of the hands of the apostles.

Granting that we have at present no manifestation of the Holy Ghost to expect, such as was exhibited in any of the passages adduced above, ought, nevertheless, a believer to be conscious of the time when the Holy Ghost indwelt him, distinct from and after his regeneration? or is it a matter for his faith, deduced from such passages as Rom. 8? W. H. G. W.

I confess I feel a difficulty in seeing anything more than faith as a condition before receiving the Holy Ghost. Is not Acts 10 the normal mode of that gift to us of the Gentiles? May not the language of Eph. 1:13 be owing to the peculiarity of the circumstances of the disciples in Acts 19?

G.M.

Answer: It is evident, I think, that the great truth of the presence of the Spirit baptizing the believers was made good at Pentecost, of which Acts 10 records the extension or application to the Gentiles, as in fact none but Jews received Him at the beginning. Acts 8 and 14 appear to me supplementary and special, the one verifying the place of the apostles of the circumcision, as the other maintained Paul, and hence in both these subordinate instances there was imposition of hands. It was the outpouring on fresh souls of the Holy Ghost already sent down from heaven; and whatever difference is to be observed in the manner is due to the variety of the circumstances. But in every instance this gift of the Spirit is distinct from faith and consequent on it. It always supposes the soul born again, whether the interval be as short as the limits of the same discourse, or have days, weeks, months, or years between. That is, the Holy Ghost is given, not in, but after, quickening or the impartation of life. For a soul may have this new nature and no peace, no simple submission as yet to the righteousness of God. There may be a struggle under law, a trying to die to sin, fresh efforts under law to improve self. This often goes on in souls really quickened, as we read in Rom. 7, and may have seen frequently if we did not taste of this experience. The Holy Ghost is given when one rests by faith on the work of Christ. He regenerates the unbeliever, but He seals none till they believe the gospel. There must be life for sealing, and more too—a soul resting on the ground of accomplished redemption. Now souls are often quickened but tried and miserable as yet for some time afterward. So the Jews at Pentecost had repented and were even baptized before they received the Spirit; so the Samaritans believed and were baptized first, not to speak of the disciples of John at Ephesus. Nay, Cornelius himself had been for some time a godly and prayerful man, as his household may have been too. But that many were really first awakened under Peter’s preaching, i.e. at Pentecost, I do not contest: only in all cases there is, as I judge, necessarily an interval, let it be ever so brief, between life (or quickening), and the gift of the Spirit which seals the living believer. The possession of peace to them that believe goes along with this reception of the Spirit, as outward power also marked it of old for a sign to unbelievers.

Correspondence, Correspondence: Acts 2:38, 10:44,19:6 in Connection with the Holy Spirit

Ques. Please explain Acts 2:38; 10:44; 19:6, in connection with sealing, or receiving the Holy

Spirit? A. S.

Ans. In Acts 2:38 we find Peter's answer to the question of the Jews who were pricked in their hearts, and anxious to know what to do. They had to separate from that untoward generation that crucified the Lord. They show their repentance by doing so, and owning the Name of the crucified One. They are baptized unto Him, then God, through the apostles, gives them the Holy Spirit, and the forgiveness of their sins. This is administrative, as in John 20:23.

In Acts 8:14-17, we see that the Samaritans were not sealed, though they were truly saved believers, till Peter and John came down from Jerusalem, and with prayer, laid their hands on them. This was evidently God's way of securing the unity of the Spirit, and thus healing the schism between the Jew and the Samaritan, and manifesting that the Church is one in Jerusalem and Samaria. Laying on of hands expresses this unity.

In Acts 10:43, 44, it is Gentiles, and God, in this way. compelled Peter and the Jews to receive them. He teaches Peter to say, "Whosoever," and the Gentiles heard and believed, and God sealed them. Then Peter demanded, who could forbid their reception into the House of God on earth, seeing God had made them members of the body of Christ? (1 Cor. 12:13.) So Peter, in the name of the Lord, commanded their baptism.

The Lord gave this authority to Peter. (Matt. 16:19.)

In Acts 19:6, we have believers, who did not know the Holy Spirit had come. They were disciples according to John's baptism. Paul instructs them in the truth of Christ glorified, and that the Holy Spirit had come. (John 7:39.) John's baptism did not put them under the name of the Lord Jesus; this had to be done, and Paul, as an apostle, identified them thus with the Church by laying his hands upon them. It was a complete change in their position from Jew to Church of God. Then the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Now, Jew and Gentile are concluded in unbelief. (Rom. 11:32.) We treat them both alike; we would baptize either Jew or Gentile, on seeing them happy in the Lord. We could not now baptize them to get the forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Ghost.

At the close of a gospel service where the power of God had been felt in no small degree, I entered into conversation with a young man of a very refined and gentlemanly appearance.

Quite a number had been visibly affected, and not a few had apparently decided to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in their hearts, and to confess Him with their lips.

Noticing that this young man lingered as if loath to leave a spot where the Spirit of God was producing such blessed results, I inquired how matters stood with him. He was not saved—he owned it frankly. Did he not realize his danger? O, yes. He owned that it was all true: that he needed a Savior, that he might have that Savior on the spot: that he need not leave the hall without Him—all this he readily admitted.

"Then will you not trust Him tonight, before you leave this place?" I asked.

"No, thank you, not tonight," he replied, and that in the most polite and courteous manner.

"But why not? There is no reason on God's side why you should not be saved. The atoning work has been finished on the cross, and the Lord Jesus Christ is a Savior both able and willing to save you now, straight away. Besides, there is danger in delay; you don't know what a day may bring forth; you may not have another chance;" and so I kept urging him to decision, there and then.

"No, thank you, not tonight. Please do not ask me to decide this tonight. I don't want to be unkind or offensive; I quite appreciate your kindness; I hope you understand me, it is from no motive of resentment, but please do not ask me to decide tonight;" and so he went on.

It was a strange case, and not knowing what next to say, I ventured, "Isn't your mother saved?”

With this, the dear man fairly broke down, and commenced sobbing like a child.

"No," he gasped out, "mother's not saved—father is. O, do pray for mother; pray for me too.”

Back of all this there lay a history which I did not feel justified in reviving, but there was a touch of genuine human feeling which could not fail to strike a chord of sympathy.

"Well," I said, "the Lord knows all about that, and if you were only saved yourself, you would be a help to your mother. But tell me, why do you not want to decide tonight?”

By this time the hour was advancing, and having left the hall, we were walking down the street together.

"I once made a profession," he said, "about two years ago. It lasted for a little while, but I went back completely, and I don't want to repeat this again.”

"I understand that," said I, "and I give you credit for a perfectly right and just feeling. You do not want to bring dishonor upon the Lord, and discredit upon the gospel—isn't that so?”

"Yes," said he, "if I were to say I was saved, nobody would believe me.”

"What made you think you were saved two years ago?" I asked.

"I had been attending some revival meetings, and felt very happy.”

"Was that all? Supposing I had met you two years ago, and asked you upon what your hope of heaven rested, what would you have replied?”

"O, I felt very happy. I was sure I was all right.”

"But, my dear fellow, what scripture had you to base your faith on?”

"O, I hadn't any scripture particularly," said he.

"Then I understand it all now," said I; "you were trusting in your feelings; these were merely passing emotions. In order to satisfy the demands of your own conscience in view of judgment to come, and in order to silence the attacks of Satan, the great adversary of your soul, you must have the Word of God to rest on. One line of that blessed, living Word of God will silence Satan, and produce a peace and rest of soul which all the happy feelings in the world could never give, and, thank God, which all the dismal feelings could never rob you of. I can tell you one verse—there are multitudes, but this one will suffice for the moment—which can give you assurance, if you just simply believe it as God's own announcement to yourself.”

The hour was late, and my young friend, hurriedly taking his watch from his pocket, said, "I can't wait, I have only just time to catch the last train. Where is the verse?”

As he was running down the street, I called after him, "Acts ten, forty-three.”

From the distance he replied,

"Acts ten, forty-three—thank you so much.”

We have never met again, and in all probability, shall never do so until we meet around the Lamb. There was such a hearty ring about "Acts ten, forty-three—thank you so much," that I cannot doubt, if I had been able to look in upon that young man before he turned in for the night, I should have found him reading attentively, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall

receive remission of sins.”

And now, reader, will you not do the same?

The believer in Christ can look up into heaven, and say, "As long as God's Word is settled in heaven (Ps. 119:89); as long as God's Son is seated on God's throne (Acts 2:34); as long as it remains impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18), just so long is it absolutely certain that my sins are forgiven.”

Will not this assurance of forgiveness produce happy feelings? Certainly it will. The one who, with humble faith, and calm serenity, can add his "Amen" to those blessed words put into his lips by the Spirit of God, "In whom we have redemption through His (Christ's) blood, the forgiveness of sins," can open his mouth in praise "giving thanks unto the Father" (Col. 1:12-14).

Then no longer trust in your feelings, but trust in God's Word.

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