

# The Berean Expositor

Acts xvii. 10, 11

“Study to show thyself approved unto God,  
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,  
rightly dividing the Word of truth”

II Tim. ii. 15

VOLUME XLVII.

1973 - 1974

The Berean Publishing Trust,  
52a, Wilson Street, London EC2A 2ER  
England

Dear Fellow-members,

Yet another milestone is passed and we take this opportunity of recording our grateful thanks to the Lord for enabling us to produce this volume of *The Berean Expositor*. The mounting problems both personal and national have been great, but enabling grace has been far greater and once again we commend this volume to all who love the Word of God, that they will, like the Bereans of old, “search and see” and thus enter into the spiritual wealth which is made known therein.

And having done this, may we all seek further outreach that others may share with us the unsearchable riches of Christ and that each one of us may have a part, however small, in making “all men see what is the dispensation of the Mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God Who created all things” (Eph. iii. 9 R.V.).

Once again we render our heart-felt thanks to all both here and abroad, who have contributed in any way to the production of this volume and may the Lord receive the praise and glory which is His due.

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## Antonyms, or Clarity by Contrasts

### No.1. Introducing the Principle of Contrast, as an aid to Interpretation.

pp. 17 - 20

To the average busy reader, eager as he may be for the truth, yet occupied for many hours of the day with the exacting demands of this life, such terms as homonym, synonym and antonym, may appear too much like a piece of pedantry, and we can imagine a few of our readers turning the page in search of something more practical. We ask such however, to stay a moment longer, for nothing can be more practical for the believer than true interpretation of Holy Writ, and anything that contributes to clarity and exactness, or preserves from error should be of supreme value.

When the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians that series of contrasts and asked what fellowship had 'righteousness with unrighteousness', 'light with darkness' or 'Christ with Belial', he was using antonyms, a means of instruction that is very powerful in that it forces the mind to perceive a truth by the strength of contrast. An *antonym* as the word implies, is a term which is the opposite of another, a counter-term. It is allied with a figure of speech called *antonomasia*, which is a change of name, like 'The Iron Duke' for 'The Duke of Wellington'. It is the opposite of *synonym*, which is the name given to two or more words in the same language, which possess the same general sense. The *antonym* is extremely useful in removing the ambiguity caused by *homonyms* in a language. A *homonym* is the name given to words, which though they have the same spelling, have entirely different meanings, such as LET, which means 'to permit, or to hinder, or to hire'. These words entered the language at different times, and the slight distinctions that might have been preserved in their spelling have been ignored. The reader may call to mind many other homonyms of everyday use: 'to lie' has two meanings, 'to baste' has three, and 'court' has four, while 'strike' has to our knowledge at least a dozen: it may mean a stoppage of work by employees, a half bushel basket, a discovery of oil, or the minting of coin; beside the more common use of the verb, to strike a match, or a clock striking the hour, of striking a circle, or of striking a sail; one can even strike an attitude. This English word 'strike' is used in the A.V. to translate no less than ten Hebrew words, and six Greek ones, and as this is a common feature with all versions that do not set out to be literal, the value of some simple means that will lead to the recognition of such homonyms, and the discovery of some means of testing them, will be conceded by all. The *antonym* is exceedingly useful for this purpose. Let us illustrate our meaning by an example. Will the reader answer the following questions? "What is the opposite of 'light' in II Cor. iv.?" Most probably the word 'darkness' comes to most of our minds, and if there were but one reference in II Cor. iv, and that the passage which reads: "God, Who commanded the light to shine", then "darkness" would be the antonym. But there are two references to "light" in II Cor. iv. One whose antonym is 'darkness':

"For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" (II Cor. iv. 6),

and another, whose antonym is ‘heavy’ or ‘weight’:

“Our light affliction . . . . weight of glory” (II Cor. iv. 17).

The ambiguity resident in the English word ‘light’ is resolved the moment we apply the antonym. This principle is of great use where the ambiguity of a word does not reside in the fact that it is an homonym, but that by usage it may have two or more shades of meaning. A most important illustration of this is found in connection with the Hebrew word which is translated ‘evil’ the word ‘*ra*’. This word can mean ‘evil’, in the sense of wickedness, a meaning that is found throughout the whole of the O.T. There are, however, too many passages where the meaning is ‘adversity’, ‘affliction’, ‘calamity’ and the like, for the reader to ignore; and to assume that every occurrence of ‘*ra*’ must of necessity mean moral evil or wickedness is both unwise and unscholarly. Take for example Psa. xxxiv. 19:

“Many are the *ra* of the righteous.”

Can we translate this “Many are the moral wickednesses of the righteous”? We realize that we cannot, and the LXX did not hesitate to use *thlipsis* ‘affliction’. Even when the translation ‘evil’ is a good one, we must be careful not to confuse moral evil with righteous judgment. For example, when the Lord said:

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil” (Deut. xxx. 15),

the context makes it plain that the evil that was before Israel was the very opposite of being ‘blessed in the land’ (Deut. xxx. 16), and when the Prophet would emphasize to Israel these alternatives, he says in place of ‘life and good, death and evil’:

“I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing” (Deut. xxx. 19);

which shows that the ‘evil’ of verse 16 was not the moral wickedness of the people, but the righteous judgment of God in sending ‘evil’ in the sense of punishment upon them.

If the reader turns to Ecclesiastes, he will observe that the writer is concerned with what ‘good thing’ a man should pursue in view of abounding vanity and vexation. So, in Eccles. i. 13 “This is *sore* travail” is *ra* ‘evil’, so is the word ‘grievous’ of ii. 17, ‘adversity’ of vii. 14, and ‘misery’ of viii. 6; quite apart from the passages which though they be translated ‘evil’ like “This also is vanity and a great evil” ii. 21 cannot possibly indicate moral evil and wickedness. Turning to the prophet Isaiah we read:

“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help . . . . they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord. Yet He also is wise, *and will bring evil*” (Isa. xxxi. 1, 2).

No one in his senses would believe that Isaiah intends us to understand that God in His wisdom brings moral wickedness upon any one. The remaining verses of chap. xxxi. are a good commentary, and the fact that “He will not call back His words” shows that the judgment threatened by law and prophets upon apostasy would surely fall. So, with regard to that classic passage, Isa. xlv. 7:

“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.”

“Evil: never rendered ‘sin’. God brings calamity about as the inevitable consequence of sin” (*The Companion Bible*).

Even had the phrase read ‘good and evil’, evil would not necessarily have meant moral wickedness, but when its antonym is ‘peace’ we know for a certainty that ‘calamity’ in the form of judgment is the only possible meaning that can be attached to Isa. xlv. 7. *The Companion bible* says, regarding the word ‘create’:

“Heb. the past participle of the verb *bara* (create) which, with ‘evil’, requires the rendering ‘bring about’. Not the same form as in verse 8, 12 or verse 18, in connection with the earth. In Jer. xviii. 11 the verb is *yazar*, to frame or mould. In Amos iii. 6 it is *asah*, to bring about, a word of wide meaning; its sense has to be determined by its context. Here *disturbance* in contrast with ‘peace’.”

It is not our intention to pursue this question of evil, or the correct translation of the Hebrew word *ra*, but this has provided a useful example of the value of the antonym ‘peace’ in deciding the meaning of ‘evil’ in Isa. xlv. 7. Neither is it our intention of dealing with synonym, antonym or homonym in any direct sense in subsequent articles, but to bring before the reader such evident contrasts as ‘Bondage and Liberty’, ‘Flesh and Spirit’, ‘Law and Grace’, with the belief and the hope that positive lessons of spiritual value will most certainly accrue.

## **No.2. A Study in Galatians. “Bondage versus Freedom.” pp. 56 - 60**

The Apostle Paul knew the value of contrast in presenting the truth, and his epistles contain a number of helpful examples that will be profitable to study. Upon reading his epistle to the Galatians we are struck with the forcefulness of his use of at least five pairs of opposites.

- (1) “Liberty versus Bondage” (Gal. ii. 4).
- (2) “Works versus Faith” (Gal. ii. 16).
- (3) “Spirit versus Flesh” (Gal. iii. 3).
- (4) “Servants versus Sons” (Gal. iv. 7).
- (5) “Law versus Grace” (Gal. v. 4).

There are lesser examples and some more diffuse than others, but the five selected above are obvious, and beyond doubt, intentional. Liberty, *eleutheria* is a blessed word, both in itself, and in its contrast with all the evils of bondage. The Apostle uses the word seven times in his epistles, as follows:

“The glorious *liberty* of the children of God” (Rom. viii. 21).

“Why is my *liberty* judged of another man’s conscience?” (I Cor. x. 29).  
 “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*” (II Cor. iii. 17).  
 “Our *liberty* which we have in Christ Jesus” (Gal. ii. 4).  
 “Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal. v. 1).  
 “Ye have been called unto *liberty*; only use not *liberty* for an occasion to the flesh”  
 (Gal. v. 13).

It will be seen that this quality of liberty is very comprehensive. It reaches forward to ‘the glory’, it is found ‘in Christ Jesus’, it constitutes an element in our ‘calling’, it rules in the realm of ‘conscience’, but it never leads to or countenances ‘license’ or ‘an occasion to the flesh’. Four out of these seven references are found in Galatians, where three of them deal with the positive liberty which we have received, and one with a warning concerning its abuse. *Eleutheria* is probably derived from *eleutho* ‘to come’ and Dr. Bullinger says in his *Lexicon* “*eleutheros*, one who can go where he will, hence, free, at liberty”. *Eleutheros* is found in Galatians six times, five of the occurrences dealing with the allegory of Sarah and Hagar. There is a wealth of teaching which we may not stay to investigate here, but some of our readers may appreciate the help given by the parallelism of these six occurrences.

### **“Free” in Galatians.**

- A | iii. 28, 29. Abraham’s seed and heirs. Cancels “bond and free”.
- B | iv. 22. Abraham’s two sons. One by bondwoman. One by freewoman.
- C | iv. 23. Son of freewoman was by promise.
- C | iv. 26. Jerusalem above is free, and our mother.
- B | iv. 30. Son of freewoman is heir.
- A | iv. 31. Not children of bondwoman but of the free.

*Eleutheroo* occurs seven times in the whole N.T. Twice in John’s Gospel:

“The truth shall make you free” (John viii. 32).  
 “The Son therefore shall make you free” (John viii. 36).

The Apostle preached Christ and stood for ‘the truth of the gospel’ in his fight for liberty, and was in full harmony with the dual statement of our Lord as recorded by John. Four occurrences are found in Romans:

“Being made free from sin” (Rom. vi. 18, 22).  
 “Made me free from the law” (Rom. viii. 2),

and a future *deliverance* of the creature from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. viii. 21). One occurrence only is found in Galatians:

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ *hath made us free*” (Gal. v. 1).

Turning to the contrastive word ‘bondage’ we note that in Gal. ii. 4 the Apostle uses the emphatic form, not *douloo* but *katadouloo* “to captivate thoroughly” or ‘to reduce to slavery’. It was this that caused him to put up such a valiant fight for ‘the truth of the gospel’, and for which we can never be too thankful. The following extract from

Dr. John Taylor's *Elements of Civil Law*, throw a lurid light on the condition of a slave in N.T. times.

"The common lot of slaves in general was, in many circumstances very deplorable. Of their situation take the following instances: they were held *pro nullis, pro mortuis, pro quadrupedibus, for no man, for dead men, for beasts*; nay, they were in a *much worse* state than any cattle whatsoever. They had no head in the state, no name, tribe or register. They were not *capable of being injured*; nor could they take by purchase or descent; had no heirs, and therefore could make no will, of course . . . . they could not plead, nor be pleaded, but were *excluded from all civil concerns whatsoever . . . .*"

In contrast with the idea of *eleutheros*, the right and liberty to come and go at will, *doulos*, indicated a person without rights, simply the property of another, and so bound that to come or go at will was hopelessly impossible and foreign to the estate. The bondage of Rom. vi. is the bondage of sin (Rom. vi. 6), whereas the bondage of Galatians is the bondage of 'elements' (Gal. iv. 3). These 'elements' were either the rudimentary principles of Mosaic law, or the elements of any 'religion' soever—ever that of idol worship.

"When we were children we were in bondage under the elements of the world" (Galatians iv. 3).

"How turn ye again to weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years" (Gal. iv. 9, 10).

This spirit which so grieved the Apostle we shall be able to deal with better when we are considering another set of contrasts namely 'Servant versus Son', for this governs the argument of the opening of chapter iv where we have in verse 3 the only occurrence of *douloo* in Galatians.

Bondage, *douleia* occurs twice:

"The two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to *bondage*, which is Agar" (Gal. iv. 24).

"Be not entangled again with the yoke of *bondage*" (Gal. v. 1).

Peter referred to the yoke of the law saying:

"Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts xv. 10),

and Paul uses this figure to indicate literal slavery, saying:

"Let as many servants (*douloi* slaves) as are under the yoke count their own masters (*despotes*) worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed" (I Tim. vi. 1).

Apart from this servitude to the law, Paul's other references deal with the 'bondage' of corruption, and the fear of death (Rom. viii. 21; Heb. ii. 15), a state consequent upon the enslavement of sinful men. While Paul so thoroughly repudiated the shackles of legalism, he rejoiced in the bonds that bound him in happy devoted service to the Lord. Consequently we find *doulos*, a slave, used in two ways in Galatians elsewhere.

In a bad sense:

“There is neither *bond* nor free” (Gal. iii. 28).  
“A child differeth nothing from a *servant*” (Gal. iv. 1).  
“Wherefore thou art no more a *servant*” (Gal. iv. 7).

In a good sense:

“If I yet pleased men, I should not be the *servant* of Christ” (Gal. i. 19).

When we remember the words quoted above from the writings of Dr. John Taylor, and remember also that Paul knew by actual living experience what the condition of a *doulos* was in his own day, the full, complete, unreserved character of both his and of all true Christian ‘service’ begins to become apparent.

In like manner *douleuo* ‘to serve as a slave’ is used in two ways in Galatians and elsewhere.

In a bad sense:

“Ye *did* service unto them which by nature are no gods” (Gal. iv. 8).  
“Ye desire again *to be in bondage*” (Gal. iv. 9).  
“Jerusalem which now is, and is *in bondage* with her children” (Gal. iv. 25).

In a good sense:

“For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love *serve* one another” (Gal. v. 13).

The way in which the Apostle leads the believer out from the ‘yoke of bondage’ through Christian liberty, on to the ‘yoke of love’ is wonderful. The same word for yoke is used in a good sense in the well known words of Matt. xi. 29, 30, “Take my yoke upon you”, as is used in the evil sense already quoted above. As the reader ponders these two contrasted states ‘Bondage and Freedom’ and meditates upon the passages which contain them, he cannot help but attain to a fuller and richer realization of both the abject nature of the slavery of sin, law and death, the absolutely devoted character of Christian ‘service’, the complete emancipation of the redeemed, and the true quality of this freedom, ‘liberty’ but not ‘license’.

Although our allotted space is about filled, we cannot refrain from one further note. On the two occasions where the Apostle speaks of redemption in Galatians, he uses the word *exagorazo*. The *agora* or as the Romans called it, the *Forum*, was both the place of justice and the market place of the people. As for example:

“Children sitting in the markets” (Matt. xi. 16).

*Agorazo*, thus signifies ‘to buy’ (Matt. xiii. 44), and is used of the setting free of slaves in I Cor. vi. 20 “Ye are bought with a price”. *Exagorazo*, means to go into the market place of this world and to pay the price that is necessary to purchase the freedom

of the slaves of sin, death and law. This Christ did, as Gal. iii. 13 and iv. 5 affirm, dying as the accursed One on the tree, to set free the slaves of the law, dying as One made of a woman and made under the law, that those under its bondage may be emancipated. No wonder with the true values of bondage and freedom which we but dimly perceive, and which the Apostle saw so clearly, no wonder we repeat, he cries with such impassioned appeal:

“To the freedom with which Christ made us free, stand fast, and be not again held fast in a yoke of slavery” (Gal. v. 1).

It is not surprising that, having caught a glimpse of this blessed freedom, our own hymn-book contains such verses as these:

“Separated for the Father,  
Saved to serve the Holy One,  
Man-made bonds and fetters vanish  
In His well-beloved Son”,

or,

“There is fullness of freedom, no fetters can bind  
The soul that the Spirit of truth has set free;  
When the light of God’s Word has illumined the mind,  
There is full, unalloyed and complete liberty”,

or again,

“He has redeemed us, our sins are forgiven;  
Now, as His members, One Body are we:  
Bondage is past, all our fetters are riven,  
None can enslave whom the Son has set free.”

**No.3. A Study in Galatians.**  
**“Works versus Faith.”**  
**pp. 61 - 64**

The great contrast between the works of the law and the faith of Jesus Christ occurs in Galatians in that historic contention which took place between the two apostles, Peter and Paul, when Peter’s attitude and dissembling jeopardized the whole fabric of Gospel salvation.

“I said unto Peter before them all, if thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? . . . . Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. ii. 14, 16).

On three other occasions Paul speaks of the works of the law in Galatians:

“Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. iii. 2).  
“He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?” (iii. 5).  
“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (iii. 10).

Once he speaks of the works of the flesh in contrast with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians v. 19), and his last reference speaks of those true works which manifest the possession of life:

“Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another” (Gal. vi. 4).

It is evident that Paul has chiefly in mind in Galatians the works of the law. Now why should he be so certain that:

“As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse?” (Gal. iii. 10).

Let Paul answer for himself. He gives four comprehensive and searching reasons, which leave unregenerate man without hope.

(1) “Cursed is EVERYONE.” There is no respect of persons with God, and this is a two-edged argument that cuts both ways. In Rom. ii. Paul uses it to show that, should a Gentile by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour or immortality, the fact that he was a Gentile and not one of the favoured nation would not tell against him, for in this matter:

“There is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. ii. 11).

There are no exemptions or favours therefore to any who endeavour by works of law to produce righteousness before God. “Everyone” is leveled, the Jew to the same plane as the Gentile.

(2) “Cursed is every one that CONTINUETH NOT.” A spasmodic obedience is of no use here. An obedience that functioned on Sabbath days, but failed in the busy days of the work-a-day week, would not pass. There must be ‘continuance’. This charge was laid against Israel by the Lord:

“They *continued* not in My covenant, and I regarded them not” (Heb. viii. 9).

Where Israel failed there was no respect of the poor Gentile succeeding.

(3) “Cursed is every one that continueth not in ALL THINGS.” That which is a strong temptation to one man leaves another unmoved, but in the matter of law, we are not at liberty to choose the commandment we find comparatively easy and ignore the rest. “All things that are written” sound the death-knell to all hope in the flesh, and James has given us as a principle the statement:

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James ii. 10).

This sweeping statement becomes luminous in the light of Paul’s utterance:

“All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal. v. 14).

(4) “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law TO DO THEM” (Gal. iii. 10). To do them! That is the one and only acknowledgment the law demands, and it is the one that no flesh can render. Many may approve the law. He may say with truth, that “the Mosaic law is the finest code ever introduced”. But God does not ask for patronage; He asks for obedience.

“The law is not of faith; but, the man that *doeth* them shall live in them” (Gal. iii. 12).

Scripture testimony forbids and personal experience disallows the possibility of any man passing this fourfold test. To be of the ‘works of law’ is to be indeed ‘under the curse’. In strong contrast with such deadly works, the Apostle places ‘faith’. “Faith” *pistis*, “to believe” *pisteuo*, and “faithful” *pistos* are derived from the passive form of *peitho* ‘to persuade’. Macknight has a comment on Rom. xiv. 23 which is helpful in view of this association of ‘faith’ and ‘being persuaded’.

“Here, as in verse 22, faith signifies, not the belief of the gospel, but the *persuasion* that what one doth is lawful. So understood, the Apostle’s declaration is perfectly just in every case; because if a man acts without that persuasion, he acts without any principle of virtue, being guided merely by his own inclinations.”

In Galatians “faith” *pistis* occurs many times, and under different categories.

- (1) The faith *of* Jesus Christ, *of* the Son of God (ii. 16, 20; iii. 22), where justification, life now in the flesh, and the receiving by the Gentiles of the promise of the Spirit are the associated themes.
- (2) The hearing *of faith*, they which be *of faith*, the household *of faith* (iii. 2, 5, 7, 9; iii. 12; vi. 10).
- (3) Faith as a medium “Through or by faith” *ek, dia*, (iii. 8 11, 14, 24, 26; v. 5).
- (4) Faith as a power and a fruit (v. 6, 22).
- (5) *The faith*, the substance of what is believed. “The faith which once he destroyed.” “Before faith came.” “Shut up to the faith.” “After that faith is come” (i. 23; iii. 23, 25).

As the reader weighs the statements that are made concerning the utter failure of man under law, the curse that must inevitably fall, the righteousness so unattainable and yet so necessary, and then contrasts this with the glorious triumph of faith; first the faith OF Christ, and then that faith which rests upon Him; finding blessing instead of cursing, justification instead of judgment, and then on new ground, to discover that “faith” ‘worketh’ by love; who could contemplate without deep feeling the attempt to lead these emancipated slaves back to the bondage of legalism? Not the Apostle Paul, and not any believer who has drunk of the same life-giving fountain. In this comparison, and Paul even wished that they were even cut off that troubled the church in this vital matter (Galatians ii. 6; v. 12). It is not our intention to pursue these contrasted features to their limits; to do so would demand a series of articles upon each of these antonyms. We hope to impress the reader with the value of this method, and to bring to light actual examples from the writings of Paul, which will provide a starting-place for those of our readers who may desire to carry these studies a stage further as a matter of private study and from personal interest. To all who are in any way engaged in teaching or preaching we would most earnestly commend this subject because it gives a clearer conception of the contrasted themes, and because such themes are most evident very near the basis of the faith. The fight is clearly a fight for ‘liberty’, and this liberty is one that concerns ‘faith’. This faith is no product of the flesh, but is of the ‘Spirit’ and is the expression of a ‘son’ not of a servant. The whole controversy is summed up by the fact that such are not under ‘law’ but under ‘grace’. To appreciate these distinctions therefore is to make for appreciation of the great epistles to the Galatians.

**No.4. A Study in Galatians.**  
**“Flesh versus Spirit.”**  
**pp. 121 - 124**

We have followed the Apostle in his battle for ‘liberty’ and have appreciated that liberty the better by the contrasted theme ‘bondage’. We have learned that ‘bondage’ and works of law go together, and that ‘liberty’ and faith go together. We now come to the third of these Galatian antonyms, and enter, as it were, into the atmosphere in which these contrasted movements are conducted.

**Flesh versus Spirit.**

There can be no question that these are antonyms, for the Apostle says:

“The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and *these are contrary* the one to the other: so that ye cannot do . . . . that ye would” (Gal. v. 17).

“Contrary” is *antikeimai* ‘to lie over against’, and in five passages is translated ‘adversary’. While there are eighteen occurrences of *sarx* ‘flesh’ and eighteen occurrences of *pneuma* ‘spirit’ in Galatians, there are six passages in which the Apostle places ‘flesh’ over against ‘spirit’ in his actual wording, while a number of other references are opposed by the very nature of their teaching. It is very difficult to decide whether ‘spirit’ should be rendered with a capital “S”, meaning the Holy Spirit, or with a small “s”, referring to the new nature which He gives to the believer. Possibly both meanings are included.

Let us see the actual antonyms first:

(1) *The first set of contrasts.*

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn from you, received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal. iii. 1-3).

(2) *The second set of contrasts.*

“But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now” (iv. 29).

(3) *The third set of contrasts.*

“This I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (v. 16).

(4, 5) *The fourth and fifth set of contrasts.*

“For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (v. 17).

(6) *The sixth set of contrasts.*

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (vi. 8).

To appreciate these steps through the epistle, we should remember that each has its own special aspect. The first emphasizes ‘beginning and ending’; the last emphasizes ‘sowing and reaping’. The second emphasizes the consequence of the opposition of flesh and spirit, namely ‘persecution’; the fourth and fifth emphasize the consequence of this antipathy, namely the inability to do the things that we would. The central set, the third, stresses the walk, and its effect upon the fulfilling of desire.

Set out graphically, the argument follows this course:

- A | iii. 1-3. Beginning in spirit and ending in flesh.
- B | iv. 29. Flesh persecuted those of the spirit even as now.
- C | v. 15. Walk influences desire.
- B | v. 17. The antipathy of flesh and spirit. Ye cannot do.
- A | vi. 8. Sowing and Reaping. Corruption or Everlasting Life.

We must await the actual exposition of the epistle to the Galatians before we can discuss just exactly what the Apostle meant by ‘spirit’ in each of these occurrences, for our present purpose the argument is evident and the purpose obvious. While it is suggestive that the two words ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ occur the same number of times in Galatians, there is one occurrence of *pneumatikos* ‘spiritual’ (Gal. vi. 1) which does not find its echo in *sarkikos* ‘carnal’ in Galatians. The great allegory of Gal. iv. 23-31 is introduced by the question:

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law” (Gal. iv. 21),

so it is evident that the conflict between ‘flesh and spirit’ is intimately related to the opposition of ‘law and grace’. This is demonstrated by the Apostle in his allegory, for he declares that the child of the flesh represents the Covenant of Sinai, while the child of promise (which is synonymous in some aspects with Paul’s use of ‘spirit’) represents the New Covenant, or with Jerusalem which is above. To be born of the ‘flesh’ and so under ‘law’ is to be born unto ‘bondage’; to be born of ‘promise’ or after the ‘Spirit’ is to be born ‘free’, and to sum up the tale, none but the ‘free’ can become the ‘heir’. Here in this allegory Paul intertwines four out of the five sets of contrast which we have tabulated.

- (1) “Liberty versus Bondage” (iv. 22, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31).
- (3) “Spirit versus Flesh” (iv. 23, 29).
- (4) “Servants versus Sons” (iv. 22, 30, 31).
- (5) “Law versus Grace” (iv. 21, 24).

No.2 in our list is not actually mentioned, but the whole teaching of the epistle necessitates that ‘faith versus works’ must have been in the Apostle’s mind all the time, and he reaches them in the sequel of chapter v.

“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. v. 5, 6).

Reverting to the references to ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ we just draw attention to the necessity to distinguish between the various usages of these words. For example: “The life I now live in the flesh” (Gal. ii. 20) cannot mean that Paul lived ‘after the flesh’ for he says he so lived ‘by the faith of the Son of God’. Again when he spoke of the ‘infirmity’ and the ‘temptation’ which was in his flesh when he first visited the Galatians (Gal. iv. 13, 14), we must not think of some dreadful moral lapse on the part of the Apostle, for the Galatians at that very time had received him as ‘an angel of God’ (iv. 14) and through this infirmity in his flesh, he had actually ‘preached the gospel’ at the first. Again, when he declares that he ‘conferred not with flesh and blood’, he does not mean ‘flesh’ in its moral sense, but he explains by amplifying his words ‘Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me’ (i. 16, 17). Similarly with the word ‘spirit’, after the question in chapter iii. 1-3 ‘received ye the spirit?’ we have in verse 5 the ministering of the spirit in connection with ‘working miracles’, which also may be partly in mind in Gal. iii. 14.

“That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

This miraculous element, however, is foreign to the references we have just considered, for the fruit of the Spirit, namely, ‘love, joy, peace’, has no connection with spiritual ‘gifts’ as such. We cannot pursue this matter here, but we felt just a hint was necessary for the guidance of those who use these articles as steps to the fuller and personal study of the epistles themselves.

## **No.5. A Study in Galatians.**

### **“Servants versus Sons.”**

**pp. 146 - 150**

We have now arrived at the fourth of Paul’s Galatian antonyms, namely “Servants versus Sons”. There are several words which are translated ‘servant’ in the N.T. and each has its own special significance. Let us begin our study with a tabulation of these different aspects of service.

- (1) *Doulos*. “A slave”, one ‘bound’ to serve, from *deo* ‘to bind’. “When used of ordinary service it indicates the lowest scale of servitude, but when transferred to Christian service, it expresses the highest devotion of one who is bound by love” (Dr. Bullinger).
- (2) *Pais*. This word first of all means a child, either boy or girl, then a servant, very much in the same way that the French word *garçon* which means a boy, is used for a waiter or a porter etc.

- (3) *Diakonos*. If this word be derived from *dioko* to pursue, it would emphasize the alacrity and diligence of the service rendered. It is of course the origin of our 'deacon'.
- (4) *Oiketes*. A domestic servant, *oikos* meaning 'house'.
- (5) *Huperetes*. An under-rower, with reference to the galley slaves who worked at the oars.
- (6) *Therapon*. Ministering care. In English, *therapy* means the medical treatment of disease.

There is only one word for 'servant' in Galatians, it is *doulos* 'a slave' (i. 10; iv. 1, 7). There is only one word for 'serve' in Galatians, it is *douleuo* 'to serve as a slave' (v. 13), and there is but one word for 'service' in this epistle namely *douleuo* 'do service' (iv. 8).

When the Apostle linked the words 'serve' and 'son' together in Phil. ii. 22, "As a son with a father, he hath served with me in the gospel", or in the epistles to Timothy (I Tim. i. 18; II Tim. ii. 1) where he exhorts his 'son' in the faith to service, Paul uses the affectionate term *teknon* or '*bairn*'. Here in Galatians, he places the 'slave' in strong contrast with the 'son', and as this word 'son' is of great importance to the understanding of the argument of Galatians, we must devote some time in becoming acquainted with its meaning and usage. The Greek word translated 'son' in the sentence "Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son" in Gal. iv. 7, is the Greek word *huios*. Four of the occurrences of *huios* in Galatians refer to Christ Himself.

"When it pleased God . . . . to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. i. 15, 16).

"I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me" (ii. 20).

"When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son" (iv. 4).

"God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (iv. 6).

The rest of the occurrences refer to men, either believers 'because ye are sons' (iv. 6), or to the sons of Sarah and Hagar (iv. 22-30). The English reader should note that two passages are wrongly translated 'children' in the A.V. which the Revisers were careful to alter. They are:

"They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." This should read "sons of Abraham" (iii. 7).

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." This should read "sons of God" (iii. 26).

When the Apostle wished to speak of the Galatians as 'little children' he had a suitable word at his command:

"My little children" *teknion*, the diminutive of *teknon* (Gal. iv. 19).

Or where he wished to speak simply of children, he used *teknon* (iv. 25, 27, 28, 31), and where he wanted to introduce the figure of a babe, he used *nepios*, which occurs in Gal. iv. 1 and 3. It is therefore a great pity that we slur over these distinctions, especially when the very argument of Galatians turns upon the meaning of *huios* a 'son', as distinct from *teknon* or *nepios* 'children'.

Bishop Westcott, writing in *Some Lessons of the Revised Version of the New Testament* says of these two great words *huios* and *teknon*:

“There is the position of ‘sonship’ (characteristic of the teaching of St. Paul), which suggests thoughts of privilege, of inheritance, of dignity; and there is also the position of ‘childship’ (characteristic of the teaching of St. John), which suggests the thoughts of community of nature, of dependence, of tender relationship. Sons may be adopted; children can only be born. The two conceptions are evidently complementary; but they must be realized separately before the full force of the whole idea which they combine to give, can be felt.”

The full value of the Greek word ‘son’ and the idea of privilege that it contains, cannot be estimated apart from a knowledge of what is intended by the word translated ‘adoption’ which is *huiiothesia* ‘the placing as a son’. Israel, God’s firstborn among the nations, had this ‘adoption’ as their distinctive privilege (Rom. ix. 1-5). The seed of Abraham, partakers of the heavenly calling, the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven, whose mother is Jerusalem that is above, this company have the right of the adoption as their special privilege (Gal. iv. 5) which is very parallel with the ‘birthright’ which Esau despised (Heb. xii. 16) and which these members of the heavenly calling were urged to avoid. Then the Church of the Mystery, the calling that pertains to the dispensation of the grace of God among the Gentiles of today, that also has, in its super-heavenly sphere, this privilege of ‘adoption’ (Eph. i. 3-5). If our contention is true, namely, that John’s Gospel ministers to the great outside world, while Paul’s prison ministry ministers to the smaller circle of the Mystery, it is but another evidence in its favour, that whereas Paul speaks of the believer as both ‘children of God’ and ‘sons of God’, for all the ‘sons’ are of course ‘children’ too, John *never* calls a believer a ‘son of God’, he always refers to them as ‘children’, and the reader is advised to follow the R.V. here where the necessary correction has been faithfully carried out.

The idea of both ‘son’ and ‘adoption’ is the appointing of the heir. Now we have already learned from the allegory of Isaac and Ishmael (Gal. iv. 22-30) that the child of the *bondwoman* cannot inherit with the child of the free. One of the characteristics of a ‘child’ as distinct from a ‘son’ says Gal. iv. 1-3 is that even though lord of all, yet is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. In this state and period, he ‘differeth nothing from a servant’ (Gal. iv. 1).

“But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem (*exagorazo*, ‘buy out of the market place’) them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. iv. 4-6).

Selden has shown that slaves were not permitted to use this word in addressing the master of the family, which enables us to see the aptness of the introduction of such a strange word here. *Ab*, is the Hebrew ‘father’, but *Abba* is the Chaldee equivalent. As the Aramaic or Chaldee does not possess the definite article, the lack is compensated by the addition of a syllable at the end, thereby rendering the word either emphatic, “The Father”, or putting it into the vocative “O Father”. Lightfoot says:

“As it is necessary to distinguish between the Hebrew and Chaldee idiom in the word *abi* and *abba*, so you *may*, I had almost said, you *must*, distinguish of their sense. For the word *abi*, signifies indeed a natural father, but withal a civil father, also an elder, a master, a doctor, a magistrate: but the word *abba*, denotes only a natural father: yea, it denotes, ‘My father’.”

Lightfoot gives a series of examples which are not intelligible unless the exact Hebrew and Chaldee is printed. His statement though giving practically the truth of the matter, is not to be taken to be the rule without an exception, for John Nicholson, translator of Ewald’s Hebrew Grammar, cites the Targum translation of Gen. xlv. 8 and of Job xxxviii. 28 as exceptions, and also says that according to Buxtorf’s Lexicon to the Talmud, the Talmudical writers did occasionally use *abba* to express *rabbi* and *master*, but these few exceptions do not alter the fact that the slave was not permitted to use this very personal name *abba*, O Father.

“Wherefore” continues the Apostle, “thou art no more a slave but a son; and if a son then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. iv. 7).  
“If a son then an heir.”

Here then is another set of contrasting names, servant versus son, and if we have hitherto underestimated the glory of being not only a ‘child’ but a ‘son’ of God, we trust Paul’s blessed antonym will have been the means of leading the reader into fuller light.

## **No.6. A Study in Galatians. “Law versus Grace.” pp. 175 - 180**

We have now reached the fifth and last of the great antonyms of the epistle to the Galatians, “Law versus Grace”, and although this set comes last, it really underlies all the rest. For:

if the change of state from bondage to liberty be a change only just short of a change from death to life, and

if the change of instrument, faith instead of works, be like the coming of peace after war, and

if the change from the flesh to the spirit be like the exchange from despair to triumph, and

if the change from the condition of servitude to that of sonship be a translation from what is most abject to what is truly glorious,

then the change of dispensation from that of law to that of grace must be one of the most important features of truth that the believer can know.

And yet, how many true believers have spoken slightly of ‘Dispensational Truth’, not realizing that until the dispensation of law gave place to that of grace, liberty though

longed for, was unattainable, for the law ‘gendereth to bondage’ and nothing but ‘the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ could make the sinner ‘free’ (Rom. viii. 2). Those who were ‘kept under the law’, were necessarily ‘shut up’ unto the faith that could only come with the advent of Christ (Gal. iii. 23). The priceless gift of liberty therefore is only possible to those who are no longer under law but under grace.

So also with regard to ‘faith’. Gal. iii. 12 declares that ‘The law is not of faith’; the law demands deeds, and where these works of the law are not produced, condemnation must fall. Yet ‘the works of the law’ have failed because of the weakness of the flesh, and as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse (Gal. iii. 10). The blessed exercise of faith therefore is only possible to those who are no longer under law but under grace.

Then what shall we say of the ‘Spirit’? “Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty”, and the Apostle calls the Old Covenant of the law ‘the letter that killeth’, but he calls the New Covenant grace ‘the Spirit that giveth life’, and the ministration of the New Covenant of grace as ‘the ministration of the Spirit’ (II Cor. iii.). The law itself was rendered ‘weak through the flesh’ (Rom. viii. 3), and we have learned that they which are ‘in the flesh’ cannot please God. However much we perceive the utter failure of the flesh, we can never know the living power of the Spirit while under the legal dispensation. So it is with the condition of servants which by grace has been exchanged for that of sons. All such have been redeemed from ‘under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons’ (Gal. iv. 5).

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. v. 4).

The Apostle has much to say about the law in this epistle and we are faced with a tremendous fullness of expression when we attempt to analyze his teaching on the subject. The thirty-two occurrences of the word *nomos*, demand 32 studies to do the most elementary justice to their variety and importance. This we can only acknowledge but not attempt.

Where we cannot attain to perfection however, we may assay something less ambitious, and though fully conscious of its inadequacy, to begin this great study, we present the following analysis of the Apostle Paul’s use of ‘law’.

### ***Nomos. Law in Galatians.***

#### ***(1) The law and righteousness.***

“A man is not justified by the works of the law” (ii. 16).

“By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (ii. 16).

“If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (ii. 21).

“That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident” (iii. 11).

“If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (iii. 21).

“It is evident” said the Apostle (and his survey of the law as a means of righteousness reveals the weakness of the law [*flesh*]) that the law means nothing apart from ‘works’. A law that is never obeyed is a law that virtually does not exist. Consequently therefore, while the Apostle sometimes says the law justified no one, he is explicit elsewhere and says it is the ‘works’ of the law attempted by ‘the flesh’ that make justification by the law impossible. There is nothing wrong in the law itself; it is the failure of all flesh to conform to its high demands that makes justification by law impossible to man. It will be no vain repetition to summarize the Apostle’s teaching under another heading, namely:

(2) *The Law and Works.*

“A man is not justified by *the works* of the law . . . . not by *the works* of the law: for by *the works* of the law shall no flesh be justified” (ii. 16).

“Received ye the Spirit by *the works* of the law?” (iii. 2).

“He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles . . . . doeth he it by *the works* of the law?” (iii. 5).

“For as many as are of *the works* of the law are under the curse” (iii. 10).

“I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor *to do* the whole law” (v. 3).

If the failure of the law to justify the sinner resides in the necessity to produce acceptable ‘works’ which the flesh is quite unable to produce, and if nevertheless man can be justified before God, then some other way must have been found and so we have already discovered (No.3 of this series) that ‘works of law’ give place to the ‘faith of Christ’. This brings us to the redeeming work of Christ.

(3) *The Law and the Cross.*

“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God, I am crucified with Christ” (ii. 19, 20).

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (iii. 13).

“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law” (iv. 4, 5).

One other argument concerning the law must be noticed and that is the purpose which it served, in view of the fact that it was a foregone conclusion that it would prove to be a ministry of condemnation and death.

(4) *The Law and the Promise.*

(a) Using the illustration of a “man’s covenant (or will)” and relying upon the knowledge that the Galatians had of the law obtaining in Asia Minor concerning the making of a “will”, the Apostle says:

“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto . . . . And this I say, that the covenant . . . . which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect” (iii. 15, 17).

(b) The question must inevitably come from every exercised heart ‘wherefore then serveth the law?’, and the answer is “It is added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come” (Gal. iii. 19).

(c) Another question comes to the surface.

“Is the law then against the promises of God?” (iii. 21).

The answer given in the subsequent verses shows that while the law could not mediate the promises, it could lead the seeking soul to the only One Who could, namely Christ.

“Before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. So that the law hath been our tutor *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor” (iii. 23-25 R.V.).

Neither ‘life’, ‘righteousness’, ‘inheritance’ or ‘promise’ came by the law (iii. 21; ii. 21; iii. 18)

What change therefore has been made by God in order that these blessed results might accrue? ‘Grace’ is the answer. The epistle to the Galatians states the fact that grace has taken the place of law, but it does not explain it or amplify its bearing upon the question of its effect upon the relationship of man and God, of sin and righteous judgment, of the justification of God Who justifies the ungodly. For this the reader must study the epistle to the Romans, where both the question of ‘law’ and ‘grace’ is given an exhaustive exposition. What is said however of grace in Galatians is blessed, and on page 180 we present the seven occurrences of *charis*. To him that hath ears to hear and eyes to see, the five great contrasts of Galatians and the structure following will show the earnest student his walk in life if he would follow the argument of the Apostle of liberty, faith, sonship, Spirit and grace.

### *Charis. Grace in Galatians.*

- A | i. 3. Opening Salutation.  
Prefaced by reference to “Not of men, neither by man”  
and the evidence of his apostleship (verse 1).
- B | i. 6. Removal from the grace of Christ.  
Reference to “Him that called you”.  
Also references to “another gospel which is not another”  
and to “some who had troubled them”.  
Strong denunciation even of an angel that preached any other gospel,  
“let him be accursed”. “If I yet please men.” “Do I now persuade men?”.
- C | i. 15. The grace manifested in the Apostle’s call  
was characterized by the revelation of “the Son of God” in him,  
and this grace was not frustrated either by disobedience  
or by conference with flesh and blood.
- D | ii. 9. “The grace that was given unto me.”  
In this epistle more stress is placed upon the messenger.  
In Romans where the question of Paul’s apostleship was settled,  
the stress is placed upon his message.
- C | ii. 21. The grace of God not frustrated by the gospel.  
So far as the life in the flesh is concerned Paul had died  
and now lived the faith of “the Son of God”.
- B | v. 4. Fallen from grace.  
Reference to “Him that calleth you”.  
Also reference to being “otherwise minded”  
and to him that “troubleth you”.  
Strong denunciation of any who troubled the church.  
“I would they were cut off”. “If I yet preach circumcision.” “This persuasion.”
- A | vi. 183. Closing benediction,  
preceded by reference to the “marks” of his adherence to Christ  
and to “no man”.

If the treatment of ‘grace’ is not so full as that which we find in Romans or Ephesians, yet this perfect distribution and the perfect number of occurrences (seven) cannot fail to impress the believing reader.

## Archaic and Obsolete Words of the Authorized Version.

No.1. pp. 77 - 80

The articles in this series are concerned with words in the Authorized Version of the Bible that have become obsolete and archaic or have changed in meaning or acquired new meanings so that they no longer convey to the reader the sense that the A.V. translators intended to express. Most of these words were accurate translations in 1611, but today they have become misleading. Language is always in a state of flux. New words come in, others change or become obsolete. Sometimes this happens only in districts of the English speaking world. The word 'gotten' is an example. It is still used in U.S.A., but has become obsolete in Great Britain.

Words nearly always degenerate in meaning. This is an evidence of the Fall of Man. Seldom does a word improve or take on higher meanings than it had originally. Our A.V. of the Bible is nearly 400 years old and though it was sixteenth-century English at its best, 'the noblest monument of English prose', the English language has so changed since then, that a revision has been necessary. Not that the A.V. can be set aside. In our estimation this will never be done; it has become part and parcel of our life and rightly so. But if we are to understand the God-breathed revelation of Himself and His purposes for humanity as they are expressed in the original inspired Hebrew of the O.T. and the Greek of the N.T., then we must have a version which expresses as accurately as possible in modern English what God the Holy Spirit caused to be written through the human instrumentality of the O.T. and N.T. authors. These articles are not intended to give a history of the English versions of the Bible. For this fascinating subject we would recommend Professor F. F. Bruce's *The English Bible* published by the Lutterworth Press.

We have to face the fact that something is always lost in translating from one language to another for the simple reason that there are often no exact equivalents. This is true in translating contemporary languages and even more so when there is a large time gap between them, as for instance the original texts of the Scriptures and the English A.V. some 1600 years later. As Professor F. F. Bruce says "no Bible translator who knows his business counts himself to have attained perfection" and the translators of the A.V. certainly made no such claim, nor those of scores of renderings made since this time. If we are not Hebrew and Greek scholars the best thing we can do is to obtain several of the modern versions and read them side by side with the A.V. The Parallel Bible which places the Authorized and the Revised Versions side by side is helpful. If we do not do this, then we are bound to come across passages of our English version which are unintelligible or even misleading. In Judges ix. 53 we read "and a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and *all to brake* his skull". What does 'all to break' mean in modern English? I Thess. iv. 15 reads ". . . . we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not *prevent* them that are asleep". 'Prevent' in

modern English means to hinder or stop. In what sense can living believers stop or hinder those believers who have died?

We read in Mark i. 30 “But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, and *anon* they tell Him of her”. We might be pardoned for deducting from this that the disciples waited a while before telling the Lord of this illness. But Mark wrote *eutheos, immediately*, just the opposite of this. A similar context is Matt. xiii. 20, 21 where the A.V. again uses ‘anon’ for *euthus* reading,

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and *anon* with joy receiveth it; yet he hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, *by and by* he is offended.”

The natural meaning of these words today is that when persecution arises because of the Word, *later on* some are offended, but this again is exactly opposite to what Matthew was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write, for again he uses *euthus, immediately*, teaching that such offence follows straight away *during and after persecution*. There is no interval between the two.

The A.V. renders *exautes* also as ‘by and by’ in Mark vi. 25 where the daughter of Herodias asks Herod for the head of John the Baptist. She said “I will that thou give me *by and by* in a charger the head of John the Baptist”. She was not asking to received this *some time later*, but *immediately* as *exautes* means.

Again in Deut. xxii. 18, 19 we read “and the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; and they shall *amerce* him in an hundred shekels of silver . . . .”. What does “amerce” mean in modern English? It is possible that not one in a hundred people would know.

It should be clear from these examples (and there are many more) that if we are to get anything like an exact rendering in English of what the Holy Spirit wrote in Hebrew and Greek through the instrumentality of men nearly 2000 years ago, we need some of these archaic and obsolete words expressed in contemporary language, or else we are going to lose truth and this would be tragic indeed, for as we have seen above, the old English of 1611 is sometimes opposite to the truth of the original inspired Scriptures through the change of language. In practically every case the difficulty has arisen through the change of meaning of words and nothing can prevent this happening, for it is constantly going on in all languages. Not only this, but the development of the study of the Holy Scriptures, the discovery of important ancient manuscripts since 1611, and the new knowledge of Bible lands and languages afforded by archaeology, have made up-to-date translations necessary as companions to the A.V., although by no means supplanting it. We should constantly praise the Lord for all the valuable evidence that, under His guidance we believe, has been dug up from the soil of the Middle East, confirming the truth of His Word and throwing a flood of light on the meaning of *koine* Greek in which the Holy Spirit chose to write the N.T. Much of this information was denied to the translators of our English Bible, for it was discovered since their day. That they would have used this further knowledge had it been possible, there is no doubt, for in their Introduction,

written to King James, they state that their translation was from “the *original sacred tongues*, together with comparing of the labours, both in our own and other foreign languages, *of many worthy men who went before us*, there should be one *more exact* translation of the holy Scriptures into the English tongue”.

It should be noted that they did not claim *infallibility*, but that their work should be *more exact*. Infallibility was kept for the original sacred Scriptures alone and in this they were undoubtedly correct. Their translation was itself a revision of English versions that went back to Wyclif in the late fourteenth century and to Tyndale and his successors from 1525 onwards. John Wyclif’s work was the first translation of the whole Bible into English and he was the most eminent theologian of his day. The later version of Tyndale greatly influenced the A.V. translators. Professor J. Isaacs writes “Tyndale’s honesty, sincerity, and scrupulous integrity, his simple directness, his magical simplicity of phrase, his modest music, have given an authority to his wording that has imposed itself on all later versions . . . . nine tenths of the Authorized New Testament is still Tyndale, and the best is still his”. How grateful we should be to the Lord for raising up such faithful men so that we can read the Word of God in our own language!

We now propose to note some of the archaic and obsolete English in the A.V. and seek to give the modern equivalent.

## No.2. pp. 99, 100

ADMIRE, ADMIRATION. These words in the seventeenth century simply meant wonder or astonishment without any thought of praise or approval that they have today. Thomas Fuller, the church historian, writing in 1639, said of Mohammedanism that it was ‘*admirable* how that senseless religion should gain so much ground on Christianity’, by which he meant that this fact was *amazing*. In no sense did he mean that this was a good thing. He also told of a Cardinal Pole delivering “a dry sermon . . . . many much *admiring* his discourse”, that is, they were *astonished* at its poverty. The Apostle John in Rev. xvii. 6, according to the A.V., states, after giving a graphic description of the antichristian harlot in verses 3-5, “and I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, *I wondered with great admiration*”. Now it cannot be that John admired or approved of this symbol of iniquity in the modern sense of the word, but rather that he was *astonished* at what he saw.

ADVERTISE. This word appears twice in the A.V., namely Numb. xxiv. 14 and Ruth iv. 4. In the former Balaam tells Balak “I will *advertise* thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days”. This word in 1611 meant simply to inform without any idea of wide public notice. Balaam is saying, “I will let you know”. In Ruth iv. 4 the statement of Boaz to Ruth’s kinsman “I thought to *advertise* thee”, was not a threat to

make him a public exhibition. Rather he meant, “I thought I would tell you”. When we understand these facts the contexts become clear and intelligible.

**AFFINITY.** Today this word means to join with anything, whereas in the Authorized Version of the Bible it is only used in the primitive sense of the Latin *affinitas*, relationship by marriage. In I Kings iii. 1 “And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh King of Egypt”, means “Solomon made a *marriage alliance* with Pharaoh King of Egypt”. Likewise II Chron. xviii. 1 “Jehoshaphat . . . . *joined affinity* with Ahab”, means Jehoshaphat made a marriage alliance with Ahab. In the prayer of Ezra (ix. 14) “join in affinity with the people of these abominations” means more than making contact with them, rather it means *intermarrying* with them.

**AGAINST.** Today this means opposite or confronting. Generally this word is used understandably in the A.V., but there are one or two obsolete usages. In Gen. xliii. 25 we read “And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon”. This does not make sense in modern English, but in the A.V. ‘against’ means “for” and should read “for Joseph’s coming”. Exod. vii. 15 also sounds puzzling. The Lord said to Moses “Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning . . . . and thou shalt stand by the river’s brink *against he come*”. This latter phrase means “for him” and the sense is “stand and wait *for him* by the river’s brink”.

### **No.3. p. 120**

**ALL TO BREAK.** Judges ix. 53 records the fact of “a certain woman cast a piece of millstone upon Abimelech’s head and *all to break* his skull”. Does this phrase state the woman’s *purpose*, or the *result* of her action? Does it mean ‘almost broke’ or ‘quite broke’? The Hebrew means ‘crushed his skull’ and this is what the Middle English meant. The prefix ‘to’ expressed separation and ‘to-break’ meant break asunder or in pieces and with verbs of separation it simply emphasized or intensified their meaning. “All to” began to be regarded as an adverb meaning completely or entirely. In Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christina tells the interpreter about the efforts of Mrs. Timorous to persuade her not to make the journey, and she says ‘She all-to-be-fooled me’.

**AMAZE, AMAZAMENT.** These were all stronger words than they are now. To amaze was to stun or stupefy by a blow, or to terrify by fear. Thus warriors were said to fall to the ground ‘amazed’ i.e. stunned. The statement in the N.T. (Mark xiv. 33) that the Lord “began to be sore *amazed*, and to be very heavy” in the garden of Gethsemane is not nearly strong enough in modern English. “He began to be greatly distressed and troubled.” “Horror and dismay came over Him” (N.E.B.). Let us never forget that here He was confronting Satan and the powers of darkness (Luke xxii. 53). In I Pet. iii. 6,

counsel is given to Christian wives to be “not afraid with any *amazement*”, which means “let nothing terrify you”.

#### No.4. pp. 138 - 140

AMERCE. This is a good example of an obsolete word used in the A.V. Deuteronomy xxii. 18 reads: “And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; and they shall *amerce* him in an hundred shekels of silver . . . .”. This is an old Latin-French form which adds the idea of mulcting to that of a simple fine, having the victim at one’s mercy. The angry Prince in *Romeo and Juliet* (III, 1, 195) says:

“But I’ll *amerce* you with so strong a fine  
That you shall all repent the loss of mine.”

However, it is not a suitable word in the reference given. This is part of the code of the law of God given through Moses which is one of justice and the Hebrew word means to fine, “they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver”. There was no thought that he was being mulcted by this fine.

ANGLE. This is used in the A.V. in its original sense of a fish-hook. “. . . . They that cast *angle* into the brooks” (Isa. xix. 8) means casting fish-hooks into the Nile. “They take up all of them with the angle” (Hab. i. 15) would be rendered today “with the hook”. The word came to be used for the rod and line as well.

APPARENTLY and EVIDENTLY. These were originally strong words referring to sight. They meant, visibly, manifestly, clearly, but in usage their meaning has now weakened to seemingly, and ‘evidently’ is more often used in cases of inference than with respect to matters of sight. In Numb. xii. 8 God says “My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in Mine house. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, even *apparently* and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold”. The statement that God spoke ‘apparently’ to Moses sounds today as though He only *seemed* to do so but the context makes this impossible. Substitute ‘clearly’ for ‘apparently’ and there is no contradiction.

We are told of Cornelius in Acts x. 3 “He saw in a vision *evidently* about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming”. Here again the word ‘evidently’ gives a sense of uncertainty, whereas the meaning is “he saw *clearly* in a vision”. In Gal. iii. 1 “before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been *evidently* set forth, crucified among you”, means “before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified”.

ARK. The word is frequently used of the ark built by Noah, and the ark of the covenant in the Tabernacle. The word is a common one meaning a chest or box. The

name *Arkwright* means a manufacturer of boxes. *Wright* is middle English for a workman coming from the Anglo-Saxon *Wryhta*. We read too of the *ark* of bulrushes in which the baby Moses was placed for safety. This of course was a *basket* made of bulrushes and daubed with bitumen and pitch to make it waterproof.

ARMHOLE. This meant originally *armpit* not a hole in clothing. Jer. xxxviii. 12 reads “put now these old casts clouts and rotten rags under thine *armholes* under the cords”. The R.S.V. renders this “put the rags and clothes between your armpits and the ropes”. The Hebrew word for *armpit* means joints of the arms, elbows, or wrists. Instead of “Sew pillows to all armholes” (Ezek. xiii. 18) which is puzzling to say the least, the meaning in modern English is “sew magic bands upon all wrists” (as R.S.V.).

ARTILLERY. The word was used long before there were cannons or howitzers. Bows and arrows could be *artillery*. *The Oxford English Dictionary* cites a sixteenth century diarist as listing under artillery ‘drumes, flutes, trumpets . . .’. We read of Jonathan giving to a lad “his *artillery*”, i.e. his bows and arrows which the *Geneva Bible* so renders the words. *Tyndale’s* and *Coverdale’s Versions* had *weapons* to which the modern versions have returned (see R.S.V.).

ASTONIED, ASTONISHED, ASTONISHMENT. These words are derived from the obsolete word *astone* which appeared also as *astun* and *astony*. It meant like the word ‘amaze’, to stun, to overwhelm, being much stronger in meaning than the modern usage and we must be careful to give the words this sense when we meet them in the Bible. Instead of *astonied* in Ezra ix. 3 we should read *appalled*. Ezra says “I sat down appalled”, likewise in Jer. ii. 12; I. 13 and li. 37 where the fate of Babylon is dealt with and she will become not just an *astonishment* (A.V.) but a *horror*. Zech. xii. 4 God says “I will strike every horse with *astonishment*” (A.V.) meaning I will strike every horse with *panic*.

AWAY WITH. In Isa. i. 13 we read God’s lament concerning Israel “. . . . the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot *away with*; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting”. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this meant tolerate, put up with. The sinful state of Israel made all their rituals empty and unendurable by God. Tyndale rendered Matt. xix. 11 “all men cannot *away with* that sayinge” instead of received or tolerate.

BARBARIAN, BARBAROUS. Originally these words were applied to all non-Greek speaking peoples, who were regarded as *foreigners* not necessarily uneducated people. Later on they took on the meaning of rude or uncivilized but in the N.T. *barbaros* is used only in its original sense and the modern word *foreigner* should be substituted for it.

# The First Epistle to the Corinthians.

## No.25. pp. 9 - 14

In the context of I Cor. xv. which we are considering, the futility of life without resurrection is stressed. If there is no future life beyond the grave we might just as well 'eat and drink for tomorrow we die' (verse 32), and the Apostle Paul's constant exposure to danger and death in his faithful witness for Christ would likewise be useless. If death is the end, there is little left to do but to pluck the temporary pleasures of the moment. But such carelessness, however much it may appeal to unbelievers, is not for those who are redeemed and belong to Christ. Paul now interjects:

"Be not deceived: evil company doth corrupt good manners" (I Cor. xv. 33 R.V.),

or it could possibly mean 'good characters' and so would read 'bad company ruins good characters'. This quotation is not from the O.T., but from a lost comedy of Menander's called *Thais*, which had evidently become proverbial. The Apostle stresses that the witness of the Corinthian believers would be ruined if they identified themselves with the unbelieving around them who lived so carelessly. Not that he expected them to be isolated entirely from the world. To live in the world was one thing. To cultivate bad company was quite another.

We have a saying today that a 'person is known by the company he keeps' and it was evident that some of the Corinthians were associating themselves too closely with pagans, hence his exhortation:

"Awake up righteously, and sin not; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to move you to shame" (xv. 34 R.V.).

Professor Barrett's translation is to the point, "Wake up properly to a sober life and stop sinning. What some people have is ignorance of God. I say this to shame you".

A section now commences which amplifies the phrase of verse 23, 'every man in his own order', showing that a *general* resurrection is untrue.

"But some will say, how are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" (xv. 35 R.V.).

Some questions do not arise from faith nor are they edifying. God has nowhere revealed *how* the dead are raised and to speculate therefore is profitless. He has however revealed that resurrection will be a *fact* and so calls for our faith and hope. To the merely curious Paul writes:

"Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own" (xv. 36-38 R.V.).

The Apostle turns now to the analogy of the sown seed. Life can only come from seed if it dies. The Lord Jesus had already spoken the same truth “. . . . except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John xii. 24). One does not sow the mature crop, but just the bare grain at the beginning and from this God gives it a ‘body’ as He has chosen. So with the believer, death is not the end. At the time God wills an unending life with a resurrection body is provided by Him, but this does not mean that these bodies are identical.

Paul now changes his word from *body* to *flesh* in order to emphasize this:

“All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead” (xv. 39-42 R.V.).

In nature God has provided variety; in the future life enjoyed in resurrection this is also true. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, each having their particular ‘glory’. These do not refer to stars, but to the resurrection bodies of believers. It is God’s purpose that some shall occupy a position in the heavenlies, ‘far above all’, while others will be blessed on the new earth. These differing spheres of glory will demand bodies that are suited to the sphere.

Paul now does turn to astronomy and comments on the variation in brightness of each star. Like this, he declares, is the resurrection of the dead. The contrast is now made with the entry into this life where sin and death dominate, and the entry into the next where these great enemies are abolished for ever. The ‘sowing’ must not be made to refer to *burial*, but *birth*, for seed must be alive when it is sown, or nothing will come from it. The sowing is in *corruption*; the raising in *incorruption*. The sowing likewise takes place in *dishonour* and *weakness*; the raising up in *power* and *glory*.

The present body is ‘natural’; the future body is ‘spiritual’. The word ‘natural’ is *psuchikos*, allied to *psuche* ‘soul’. It is the ‘flesh and blood’ body that is dominated by the five senses and as such, cannot inherit the kingdom of God (see verse 50). It could not exist in the future spheres of glory, being totally inadequate and imperfect for such conditions. But the resurrection body, animated by the Spirit of God, will give complete equipment and be all-sufficient. Thus resurrection is not just the re-animation of corpses. It is however completely dependent on Christ’s resurrection but even so each retains its own individuality and receives a spiritual body suited to the sphere of glory that God has willed each to have in His redemptive purpose. This partly answers the query of verse 35.

The Apostle now goes back to the creation of man:

“So also it is written, the first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second Man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the

heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (xv. 45-49 R.V.).

It is hardly necessary for us to state that Gen. ii. 7 does not teach that man was given an immortal soul which was distinct from the animal world. Adam BECAME a soul; he was not given one together with other faculties in his make-up. Genesis clearly shows that the Creator gave *nephesh* ‘soul’ to the animal world as well, for Gen. i. 20, “the moving creature that hath *life*”, and in verses 21 and 24 the word ‘creature’, and verse 30 *life* (see margin) is *nephesh* also. It should be plain that Adam was not *spiritual* but *soulish*, quite apart from sin. It is the second Man, the last Adam, Who is truly spiritual, and it is to His image that the redeemed will ultimately be conformed (Rom. viii. 29), for nothing less than this is adequate for God’s great redemptive purpose.

“For we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself” (Phil. iii. 21 R.V.).

Adam and Christ are the heads of the old and new humanity respectively.

The Apostle now begins to sum up his arguments:

“Behold, I tell you a mystery (secret): we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (xv. 51-53 R.V.).

Paul now reveals, under the Spirit’s guidance, a secret which deals with the living believers at the Second Advent, as well as the dead ones and dates it ‘at the last trumpet’. The phrase ‘the last trumpet’ must refer to the last of a series and the only series of trumpets in the N.T. are those of the book of Revelation. It is pathetic to see the efforts of some expositors to try and dissociate ‘the last trumpet’ from the Revelation, for they can see that this would take these believers into the Great Tribulation. The problem is of their own making in that they insert the future church related to the Secret of Eph. iii. either at Pentecost or Acts xiii. and so bring it into the earlier position of the Pentecostal assembly being dealt with in I Corinthians.

Nor can we get out of the difficulty by saying that at this point we are at the end or the ‘last day’, so that this is the final trumpet of all time. The earthly kingdom has yet to run its course, and the whole creation be brought under the control of Christ as verses 24-28 testify. However, one thing is certain. In resurrection immortality and incorruption are *put on*. It may be that immortality refers to living believers at this time and incorruption those who are asleep in Christ.

If human beings possess immortality *now* then it cannot be ‘put on’ at the resurrection. Those who believe the pagan doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul, should carefully ponder Gen. iii. 22, 23:

“And the Lord God said . . . . and now, LEST he (Adam) put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and EAT AND LIVE FOR EVER: THEREFORE the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden . . . .”

One thing is abundantly clear from this, if there is one thing that God will not tolerate, it is an *immortal sinner*. God alone has immortality (I Tim. vi. 15, 16) and He gives it to His redeemed children when He awakes them from the dead and gives them a spiritual body fashioned like the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus.

At the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet in Rev. xi., “the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” and immediately follows reference to the ‘great power’, ‘the reign’ and the ‘*time of the dead*’ (Rev. xi. 15-18). This is all connected with the *parousia* of Christ. His visible coming back to the earth in power and great glory, which He Himself dates *after* the Great Tribulation (Matt. xxiv. 21, 29). Let us rightly apportion the Word of Truth and not confuse this with the hope of Col. iii. 1-4.

## **No.26. pp. 32 - 37**

We are coming to the conclusion of the setting forth of the great basic doctrine of resurrection in I Cor. xv. After looking forward to the resurrection of the believer as the culmination of his redemption (see also Rom. viii. 23), a time when immortality, previously absent, will be ‘put on’, Paul now designates it as *victory* over the last enemy:

“. . . . then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. xv. 54-56 R.V.).

The Apostle is alluding to Isa. xxv. 8, “He will swallow up death in victory”; and Hosea xiii. 14, “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction”. Death is the result of sin (Rom. v. 12), but for the believer the sting has been drawn, for the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary covers ‘all trespasses’ (Col. ii. 13), and because He has died for sinners death itself shall finally be destroyed. Wonderful though this vision is, Paul ends on a practical note:

“In consequence of this, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, abounding always in the Lord’s work, since you know that your labour is not vain in the Lord” (xv. 58, C. K. Barrett).

The subject now changes and Paul returns to further questions concerning which the Corinthian believers had asked his guidance (see vii. 1; viii. 1; xii. 1). It was most probable that they had heard of the collection of money the Apostle was organizing for the poor saints at Jerusalem and now Paul gives them instructions in this matter:

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come” (xvi. 1, 2 R.V.).

At Jerusalem the Apostle had undertaken to “remember the poor” (Gal. ii. 10). For his activities in this direction the reader should consult Acts xi. 29, 30; xxiv. 17; Romans xv. 25-28; II Cor. viii. & ix. He emphasizes the freedom of this voluntary action in making a money gift to the mother church. There was no compulsion about it, but Paul evidently felt that his Gentile converts would need no great persuasion to help the brethren in need at Jerusalem. He instructs them to do as he had advised the Galatian churches. We have no record of these instructions and they are not referred to in his epistle to the Galatians, but the following verses in I Corinthians make clear what these were. They had possibly been passed on orally during the journey described in Acts xviii. 23.

They were as follows. Each believer should set aside for himself and save up whatever profit he made so that time might not be spent in taking collections when Paul visited them. No specific sum was mentioned; it was all according to how they ‘prospered’. Doubtless they knew of God’s claim on the Jew of the tithe, a tenth part of their income and they would hardly give less than this. The total gift could then be taken to Jerusalem by any whom the Corinthian church approved. The Apostle is not sure of his future plans, but states ‘if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me’ (xvi. 4 R.V.). The reader should study II Cor. viii. and ix. for further details of this collection.

Paul now deals with a future visit to Corinth:

“I shall come to you when I pass through Macedonia; for my intention is to pass through Macedonia, but with you I will perhaps stay, or even winter, that you may send me on my way wherever I am traveling. For I do not wish to see you now in passing, because I hope to stay with you for some time if the Lord permit. But I shall stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a great and effective door is opened to me, and there are many who resist” (I Cor. xvi. 5-9, C. K. Barrett).

At the time of writing, the Apostle was at Ephesus (verse 8) and from there he would eventually travel northward by land and sea to Macedonia and then move west and south to Athens or Corinth where he would probably winter (6). He explains his plans so that there should be no misunderstanding at Corinth about a delayed visit to them. He did not intend moving from Ephesus at once. “But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost” (the feast that fell seven weeks after Passover), the reason being, ‘for a great and effectual door is opened to me and there are many adversaries’ (9). There was, therefore, at this moment, a great opportunity for presenting the Truth, but at the same time Satan was resisting, as he always does, stirring up opposition from possibly Jewish Christians who opposed him wherever he went.

Paul loved to describe the Lord’s leading as ‘doors’ which He opened or shut. In Rev. iii. 7 the Lord declares Himself as:

“He that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth.”

The Lord is sovereign in this and it is the most effective way of Divine guidance, much better than peculiar feelings and impressions that so many believers rely on to know the Lord's will. We can look to Him to open those doors which are definitely in His appointing and to close those which are not. Always our wills must be subordinate to His, lest we force open the door ourselves and thus make our own pathway which can so easily lead astray.

“Now if Timothy come, see that he be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do: let no man therefore despise him. But set him forward on his journey in peace, that he may come unto me: for I expect him with the brethren” (xvi. 10, 11 R.V.).

Before Paul's visit to Corinth, they could expect one from Timothy. According to iv. 17, Timothy had already been sent, but the reference here expresses doubt, “*if* Timothy comes”. This could be because of the perils which beset all travelers (see II Cor. xi. 23), or it could have been for a reason that has not been expressed, and which therefore we do not know. Nor can we be certain what the Apostle means by saying that Timothy's stay with them should be ‘without fear’, unless he was trying to shield his assistant from unpleasant and threatening attitudes that some in the Corinthian church could take. This opposition is made clear in the second epistle and constitutes one of the chief problems Paul had with this church. Evidently there was some reason, fancied or otherwise, that might have led the Corinthians to *despise* him, but Paul reminds them that Timothy was as much the Lord's servant as he was himself and therefore they must recognize this and finally send him on his way ‘in peace’. Christian assistance to traveling brethren was an important and practical manifestation of Christian love and at a time when there was much journeying to spread the Gospel far and wide, this was a real necessity without which the work would have been much hindered.

In verse 11 it is not clear whether ‘the brothers’ referred to were coming with Timothy, or waiting for him with Paul, in which case they could have been Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (verse 17). The Apostle now refers to Apollos and tells the Corinthians that although he had begged him earnestly to go to them, Apollos could not do so at the moment, but would take the opportunity when it occurred (12).

The last words and greetings in this epistle are now given:

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love” (xvi. 13, 14 R.V.).

The first four exhortations use military words. They are present imperatives expressing actions that are to be continuous. “To watch”, meant not only ordinary vigilance, but the attitude that looked for the early coming of the Lord, a possibility in the Acts period (iii. 19-26, and see Mark xiii. 35-37). They were to ‘stand fast’ and not yield (compare ‘unmoveable’ xv. 58), to ‘play the man’ and ‘be strong’. All must be done ‘in love’ which had been so vividly described in chapter xiii.:

“Now I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have set themselves to minister unto the saints), that ye also be in

subjection unto such, and to every one that helpeth in the work and laboureth” (xvi. 15, 16 R.V.).

The household of Stephanas (i. 16) were the first converts in Achaia, and now they had “set themselves” or “appointed themselves” for service to the saints. This was a self-imposed duty, which they evidently gladly assumed for other believers in the church. It is important to note that they had not been ordained or appointed by Paul or the assembly. Nor does Paul reprimand them for not getting such ordination. This opportunity for a practical expression of their beliefs had occurred and they took it gladly. We are not told of what this service consisted. Doubtless it included the proclamation of the Word as well as other practical matters and in this willingness to serve we have the beginnings of Christian ministry quite apart from any man-made ordinations.

The believers at Corinth are exhorted to recognize the leadership of Stephanas. It would seem that this was not easy for some who had the tendency to push themselves forward. Stephanas, together with Fortunatus and Achaicus were probably the bearers of the Corinthian letter to Paul (vii. 1). They had refreshed Paul’s spirit and supplied his need (18). Final greetings now come from the churches of Asia and Aquila and Priscilla, those outstanding believers who had risked their lives for the Apostle (Rom. xvi. 3). They had a ‘church in their house’. This is where the church began, not in special buildings which did not exist at this time. The believers’ home was the meeting place for the church, and we believe that this is how it will be at the end of the age when apostasy is rampant. Let no one therefore despise ‘house churches’. They are Scriptural and have the full blessing of the Lord. To what higher purpose could a home be dedicated?

Paul now takes the pen from his amanuensis and writes:

“The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema Maranatha. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen” (xvi. 21-24 R.V.).

“Anathema” means ‘under a curse’ which separates a person from God. This is strong language, but it is evident that there were those at Corinth who needed this warning. Practical love for the Lord Jesus Christ is the very centre of Christian response. “Maranatha” is the Greek transliteration of an Aramaic word and means: “Our Lord is come” or “Our Lord cometh” and in view of the context of the whole epistle with its expectation of the Second Advent the latter is evidently meant, being very much like Rev. xxii. 20 “Come, Lord Jesus”. The epistle ends with Paul’s characteristic reference to grace (peculiar to him and his epistles) and last of all he sends his love, reminding them, as it were, that his rebukes sprang from love and extended to all, for he always had at heart their spiritual well-being, progress in the Truth and the practical response in their lives.

# The Second Epistle to the Corinthians

## No.1. Introduction and i. 1 - 13.

pp. 41 - 47

In the introduction to the first epistle we pointed out that the Corinthian letters were the most personal of all Paul's writings. Especially is this true of the second epistle where we find a deeper revelation of Paul the man than anywhere else. W. R. Inge writes: "Of all the epistles, the second to the Corinthians is one which contains the most intimate self-revelations, and few can read it without loving as well as honouring the author". It has been called 'the most letter-like of all the letters of Paul', yet it is difficult to interpret, largely owing to the fact that we can only ascertain its background approximately. In order to bring this before the reader, we think it wise to quote from the study we gave in *The Berean Expositor*, Volume XLV, pp 4 and 5:

"Both external and internal evidences point strongly to the Pauline authorship of the letter. Clement of Rome wrote an epistle to the church at Corinth about 95A.D. and refers I Corinthians to 'the blessed Paul, the Apostle'. This is the earliest instance of the quotation of a N.T. writer identified by name. Other external evidence is provided by Ignatius and Polycarp. The characteristics of style, vocabulary and content harmonize with what is known of Paul and Corinth.

The Apostle wrote the letter from Ephesus and the date many conservative scholars give is 55A.D., though C. K. Barrett suggests early 54 or the end of 53. It will be helpful to reconstruct the background to the writing of the Corinthian epistles, derived from the Acts and from the epistles themselves. Some of these points may be debated and there is no unanimity among Bible scholars here, but we believe the following will not be far from the true facts.

We have already mentioned Paul's visit to Corinth described in the Acts and referred to in I Cor. ii. 1. After this visit he wrote them a letter which has not been preserved (v. 9). We need have no concern that any part of inspired Scripture has been lost. The Apostle must have written letters which do not form part of Holy Scripture and this is one of them. Disturbing news came from believers in contact with the Corinthian assembly and also a communication from them requesting information on certain problems. In order to meet these needs Paul wrote I Corinthians. Apparently this did not solve all the difficulties, and in consequence Paul was forced to pay them a hurried painful visit (II Cor. ii. 1; xii. 14; xiii. 1, 2). Following this the Apostle wrote them a third letter of very severe character (II Cor. ii. 4). His anxiety for the church there concerning their condition and also how they would receive this severe epistle was so great that he could not wait in Troas for Titus, the bearer of the severe letter, but hurried on to Macedonia where he met him and learned with great relief that the letter had produced the needed results and all was well. From Macedonia Paul then wrote the canonical II Corinthians (II Cor. ii. 13; vii. 5-16). After this he paid his last visit to the Corinthian church (Acts xx. 1-4).

Some modern scholars hold that the 'severe letter' is contained in II Corinthians and that this epistle is not a unified work. They claim that vi. 14 - vii. 1 is an interpolation, because it breaks the sequence of thought, that chapter ix. largely duplicates what is in

chapter viii., and that the last section (x. 1 - xiii. 14) is so different in character from the earlier sections that it must be part or whole of the stern letter Paul sent to Corinth. Against this there is absolutely no manuscript evidence for such a truncated epistle and a close study will reveal that, far from being disjointed, it shows a remarkable unity.

It will be good to look at the background of I Corinthians a little more closely. Apollos undoubtedly worked in Corinth (I Cor. iii. 6) and it is possible that Peter visited it too. Owing to their spiritual immaturity this tended to cause the Corinthians to break down into groups and to range themselves under the name of one of these leaders (i. 11, 12) thus producing disunity. There were problems and abuses at the Lord's Supper (xi. 18-22), public litigation among members (vi. 1-8), a notorious case of immorality (v. 1-5), arguments about eating food that had been sacrificed to idols (viii. 1-13; x. 14 - xi. 1), disagreements about the need for marriage (vii. 1-40) and of morality outside marriage (vi. 12-20). Resurrection was denied by some (xv. 12) and Paul's own apostleship questioned by those who were very likely Judaists (iv. 3; ix. 1). All this was quite enough to produce an unhealthy spiritual state in the assembly and to cause great concern to Paul. Some of this bad news had been brought to Paul by the household of Chloe (i. 11). Additionally a trio, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived from the Corinthian church, probably bringing the problems which Paul was asked to answer (xvi. 17). These may be seen in the recurring phrase "now concerning" (*peri de* vii. 1, 25; viii. 1; xii. 1; xvi. 1, 2). There were problems too about spiritual gifts. Some were placing too much emphasis upon the gift of tongues and upon these gifts in general, which appeared to be producing pride. Furthermore the gifts were not being used in an orderly or balanced manner. One can therefore readily see that guidance and warning through an epistle was absolutely necessary."

We now give the structure of the epistle as a whole and for this we are indebted to *The Apostle of the Reconciliation* by C. H. Welch:

## II Corinthians.

- A | i. 1, 2. Introduction. Salutation.
- B | a | i. 3-11. Thanksgiving for comfort in affliction.
  - b | i. 12. The Apostle's manner of life.
- C | i. 13 - ii. 13. Subject of writing. Visit. Vindication.
  - No rest in spirit. Macedonia.
- B | a | ii. 14-16. Thanksgiving for triumph in affliction.
  - b | ii. 17 - vii. 4. The Apostle's ministry.
- C | vii. 5 - xiii. 10. Subject of writing. Visit. Vindication.
  - No rest in flesh. Macedonia.
- A | xiii. 11-14. Conclusion. Benediction.

The structure makes clear the importance of Paul's ministry and his anxiety over the condition of the church at Corinth which is so prominently featured in this epistle. It would appear that the Apostle had more trouble with the Corinthian church than with any of the other assemblies he founded by his missionary work. Yet his patience and love for them never failed, even though he had to correct them sharply. Let us never forget that the most wondrous ode ever written concerning love in its highest sense was addressed by Paul to this church!

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in the whole of Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (II Cor. i. 1 R.V.).

In the opening verses of I Corinthians Sosthenes is associated with Paul, but here Timothy is mentioned instead. From I Cor. iv. 17 it appears that he had been sent to Corinth and when he rejoined Paul later on at Ephesus he had to report failure in rectifying the troubles there. Possibly he moved on with the Apostle to Troas into Macedonia and he sends his greetings with those of Paul in the first verse of the epistle. It is clear that both the canonical letters to Corinth were intended to be read in other places by the author. In the first epistle “all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place” is added and here, “the saints which are in all Achaia” are linked with the Corinthian church.

Achaia was the name of the Roman province which included the isthmus of Corinth and the land south of it, roughly corresponding to the southern half of the modern kingdom of Greece. It is probable that the local churches kept copies of Paul’s letters forwarded to them by their neighbours and thus came to possess collections of their own which would be read at their gatherings together with the Old Testament.

Paul continues:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction” (i. 3 and 4 R.V.).

The Apostle first of all directs our thoughts not merely to God, but God Who has revealed Himself through the Lord Jesus as the One Who is all-compassionate and the origin of all comfort and encouragement, and this conception is paramount right through the epistle. *Paraklesis*, ‘comfort’ (translated ‘consolation’ in A.V. in verses 5, 6 and 7) is a key-word in II Corinthians, occurring no less than eleven times and the verb *parakaleo*, eighteen times.

When Paul speaks of this, he does so as one who was constantly experiencing it himself, for the overwhelming tests and tribulation which this epistle reveals that he passed through would have been otherwise unendurable. Not only does he come through these triumphantly, but he even obtains blessing through them! There is another aspect too which is related to the mystery of pain and suffering in this life. Much we may not be able to understand, but having passed through a measure of this, at least we can understand and comfort others who go through similar dark experiences. We are then able ‘to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God’ (verse 4) and so the tests are not valueless and unfruitful. Furthermore, when the Corinthians saw the Apostle’s Christ-like conduct under suffering, they would be encouraged and inspired to make a similar stand themselves. This is what verses 6 and 7 mean:

“But whether we be afflicted, *it is for your comfort and salvation*; or whether we be comforted, *it is for your comfort*, which worketh in the patient enduring of the same

sufferings which we also suffer: and our hope for you is steadfast; knowing that, as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so also are ye of the comfort.”

Having made this clear, Paul straight away draws attention to a great test that he had recently passed through:

“For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despised even of life” (i. 8 R.V.).

Whatever this may mean, it must have been very serious, for ‘pressed out of measure’ A.V., or ‘weighed down exceedingly’ R.V., indicate that he was like a beast of burden crushed beneath a very heavy load, so that he regarded immediate death as a certainty. Some think this referred to the uproar at Ephesus described in Acts xix. 23-41, but there is no suggestion in this context that Paul was in any personal danger at this time. It is possible that he is recalling a severe illness which nearly proved fatal. In any case we should remember that the experience to which he refers was not unique, for in xi. 23 he states that he was ‘in death oft’, such was the cost that this man had to pay for faithful witness for the Lord.

As he looked back on this terrible experience, he could see one reason at least why the Lord permitted it, and that was for him to realize his own utter helplessness and to trust in the “God which raiseth the dead” (verse 9). This is one of the great lessons stressed in this epistle, and one that we must all learn and practice, that is to have ‘no confidence in the flesh’, but *every confidence in the risen and ascended One Who has conquered death*. The power that vanquishes death is a limitless power that can accomplish anything, and Paul not only looks back to a wonderful deliverance, but forward to future testings and says “He *will* deliver” (verse 10 R.V.), and upon this he sets his hope, assisted by the intercession of the Corinthian saints, ‘ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplication’ (11 R.V.).

We have on other occasions stressed the importance of the ministry of continual intercession for others. There is no doubt that this is a vital part of Christian witness and service behind the scenes. This is prayer in the highest sense, where self is forgotten and the needs of others become paramount. Furthermore it is a service that *all* can engage in and we commend this to every reader of *The Berean Expositor* who loves the Truth. Do not think it is wasted time, or that other forms of service are more practical. *Intercession along the lines of the Lord’s will accomplishes things for Him and for the Lord’s people.*

There is abundant testimony that Paul valued highly the prayerful remembrances of the churches. He could say “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation *through your prayer . . . .*” (Phil. i. 19); “. . . . For I trust that *through your prayers* I shall be given unto you” (Philemon 22), so let us labour in prayer for one another, and when such prayer is answered, it will result in praise and thanksgiving which will redound to the glory of God. This is the sense of verse 11 in the chapter we are studying. Many persons prayed for the gift bestowed upon the Apostle and many gave thanks for the answer.

In the section that follows, Paul, contrary to what his opponents were saying, defends his integrity and his behaviour towards the Corinthian believers:

“For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward” (i. 12 R.V.).

The reader will notice the better rendering of *kauchesis*, “glorying” rather than ‘rejoicing’ A.V. and “holiness” instead of ‘simplicity’. The Apostle had a clear conscience with regard to his treatment of the church at Corinth and it would seem that some were accusing him of insincerity in his letters, writing one thing and meaning something else. But Paul wrote nothing but what the Corinthians could read and understand. There were no double meanings:

“For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand; I hope you will understand fully (i. 13 R.V.).

The Apostle hopes this will be true ‘to the end’, this being the near approaching ‘day of our Lord Jesus’, when He would return and render to every man according to his work. The previous section now leads to another (verses 15-22), in which Paul explains why a plan he had made to visit them had to be postponed. This was certainly not due to fickleness or changeability on his part. He was not a vacillator who says ‘yes’ and ‘no’ almost in the same breath. Knowing the sterling character of the Apostle, it seems amazing that he should have to defend himself in this way, but misunderstanding plays into the enemy’s hands and so Paul takes the trouble to explain to the Corinthians why his proposed visit had to be deferred temporarily.

**No.2. i. 14 - ii. 13.  
pp. 64 - 68**

We have now reached a section in chapter i. where Paul feels it necessary to explain the reason for the postponement of his promised visit to Corinth. Doubtless his opponents there were making much of the fact that the Apostle had *not* visited them and that he was therefore changeable in nature and his word was unreliable. In I Cor. xvi. 5 he had told them that he proposed to pay them a visit *after* he had passed through Macedonia. In the second letter in the context we are considering, he refers to another plan made *after* writing I Corinthians and out of consideration for the Corinthian believers. He would now cross over and come straight to Corinth, and after visiting Macedonia, return to Corinth again, whence he trusted to be ‘brought on his way’, i.e. ‘given a good send-off’ toward Judaea. The result of this would be that the church at Corinth would have a ‘second benefit’, the joy and profit of seeing him twice:

“And in this confidence I was minded to come before unto you, that ye might have a second benefit; and by you to pass into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come unto you, and of you to be set forward on my journey unto Judaea” (i. 15, 16 R.V.).

In changing his plans, was he like a fickle man of the world, saying ‘yes’ one minute and ‘no’ the next?

“. . . . I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double pleasure (or favour). I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this?” (i. 15, 16, 17 R.S.V.).

The thought of fickleness in dealing with his converts was absolutely abhorrent to the Apostle, so much so that he now makes a solemn assertion, “As God is faithful (or true), our word toward you is *not yea and nay*” (18, 19 R.V.). In other words, Paul did not say ‘yes’ and ‘no’ almost in the same breath. He followed consistently One Who was the unchanging Truth. Never could the Son of God be a ‘yes and no’ kind of person for He always gave an unqualified ‘yes’ to all the Father’s will, whatever it cost:

“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yea and nay, but in Him is the yea: wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us” (i. 19, 20 R.V.).

So, for this reason, that of His unchangeability, all the promises of God are sure, for they are *in Him*, Who is the *Amen* or *the Truth*. “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness . . . .” (Rev. iii. 14). We remember the number of times recorded in John’s Gospel when He prefixed a solemn assertion by a double Amen, translated ‘verily, verily’ (literally, *amen, amen*). The Son of God, then, is the Amen to all the promises and will of the Father, and Paul could say that he followed Him closely and so, in spite of appearances, the Apostle was certainly not vacillating. He, with all other believers at this time, had been *established* in Christ, anointed and sealed and been given the earnest or foretaste of the Spirit (verses 21 and 22).

This ‘anointing’ included the Pentecostal gifts which were a foretaste of the coming earthly kingdom the soon returning Christ would set up. Among these was the supernatural gift of knowledge which John refers to in his first epistle, “But ye have an *unction* (‘anointing’ R.V.) from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (I John ii. 20). “But the *anointing* which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and *ye need not that* any man teach you, but as the same *anointing teacheth you all things . . .*” (I John ii. 27). This ‘anointing’ or ‘sealing’ should lead to stability. It certainly had done so in the case of the Apostle, so that he now states to the Corinthians in all solemnity, that it was not lightheartedness or selfishness that caused him to change his plans. He had acted solely for their benefit:

“But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth . . . . For I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not be pained by those who should have made me rejoice . . . . For I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you” (i. 23 - ii. 4 R.S.V.).

The situation lying behind Paul’s statements here is not easy to ascertain for we have not all the facts. It could either be that Paul had determined that his second visit, which

had not yet taken place, should not be a painful one; or that he would not pay the Corinthians a second painful visit, which would mean that he had already paid them two visits, the second of which, unrecorded in the Acts, had been of a painful character. The latter view seems the more probable. The Apostle's main wish was to promote their joy. If he had to use his apostolic power to discipline them because of the sinful failure of some in the church, it was with reluctance and sorrow that he took this step, for it caused him much anguish and tears owing to the great love he had for them. He would much rather have commended them, but a real friend is one that speaks the truth even though it hurts, always having the interests of the other person at heart. The wounds his words would inflict on them would be the faithful wounds of a loving friend who only wanted their spiritual progress, faithfulness in witness and response to the Lord.

The following verses (5-11) deal with the offender at Corinth. Who was he and what had he done? The person is not named. Some have assumed him to be the incestuous person mentioned in the first epistle, but this does not fit the passage we are now considering which seems to indicate an offence against the Apostle personally, either in his absence or when he last visited them.

“But if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to you all. For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough; so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs” (ii. 5-11 R.S.V.).

It seems evident that the believers at Corinth, influenced by the painful letter the Apostle had sent them, had taken the step of punishing the offender. They had not been unanimous, but *the majority* had acted in obedience to Paul's advice and he was satisfied that it had been adequate, so much so that he now advised them to change their attitude and seek to restore the sinner and assure him of their brotherly love lest he be overwhelmed with sorrow. They should now make clear to him their forgiveness and Paul states that he himself will also forgive, which would not have much point unless he has been personally wronged and involved in the matter. This forgiveness was important, because if it was not put into effect, some lasting damage might be done to the offender, a permanent breach caused and Satan would then get the advantage, for he waits tirelessly for the opportunity to get in and spoil the work of the Lord.

The Apostle now returns to the details of his personal movements subsequent to the terrible experience he describes in i. 8-10. He makes clear to the Corinthians that, having abandoned the original plan to go straight to Corinth, he went north to Troas with the intention of preaching the gospel there. This was a sea-port town from which he had previously sailed on his first crossing into Europe (Acts xvi. 8-11). Here he expected eventually to be joined by Titus on his return from Corinth and from him to have up-to-date news of the condition of things in the church there.

“Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, and when a door was opened unto me in the Lord, I had no relief for my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia” (ii. 12, 13 R.V.).

Though this promising opening of the Lord had occurred, for which doubtless the Apostle was grateful, he had no peace of mind as he pondered over the state of the Corinthian believers. He knew only too well how Satan and the flesh could work to overthrow and spoil the Christian witness he had founded, and like any true leader, he had a very close link with his converts and what affected them affected him. Because of this uncertainty of mind he felt he could endure it no longer and proceeded into Macedonia hoping to meet Titus on his return journey along the main highway which spanned the province. This is what evidently happened—not only did he meet his fellow-worker, but Titus was able to reassure him concerning the Corinthian church that all was well in spite of his fears, the danger there was passed and they longed to see the Apostle again.

No wonder we have the outburst of praise for this answered prayer in ii. 14 although Paul does not describe his meeting with Titus until chapter vii. This context in the second chapter and the seventh shows us how human the Apostle was. He was no super-man who was indifferent to adverse circumstances. He knew what fear and anxiety were for others whom he loved and who were in danger, and all his interests being bound up with such, he suffered with them and for them. Here is real love and unselfishness. When he said ‘for me to live is Christ’ (Phil. i. 21) this is what he really meant, spending himself without limit and with practical concern for the Lord and for His people.

### **No.3. ii. 14 - iii. 18. pp. 94 - 99**

We have seen in the context we are considering (II Cor. ii. 12-16), Paul’s anxiety and unrest as he pondered over the dangerous condition of things in the Corinthian church, and how he finally broke off his own work at Troas to meet Titus on his return journey from Corinth. His heart filled with a paean of praise when he learned that the danger was past and the Corinthian believers had responded to his warnings and not taken offence.

“But thanks be unto God, which always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place. *For we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish*” (ii. 14, 15 R.V.).

It is difficult to be sure of the exact meaning of *thriambeuo*. The R.V. and the R.S.V. give it its classical meaning ‘leads in triumph’ whereas the A.V. follows Augustine and the Latin tradition ‘causeth us to triumph’, for which there is no parallel. The figure is of a victorious general returning from victory in a triumphal procession in which the Apostle is sharing. The triumph of Christ was spreading all over the world as a sweet

savour unto God and possibly the figure is continued here like the incense bearers in the conqueror's train scattering the fragrance far and wide.

The Apostle now comments upon the *effect* of the Gospel on its hearers. To Those who reject it is a 'savour from death unto death' (verses 15 & 16 and note the present tenses of the verbs correctly rendered by the R.V.). These two opposite effects of the gospel upon the human mind are always present when it is faithfully preached. Like the sun which not only softens the wax, but hardens the clay, it sharply divides its hearers. As Paul considers the terrible seriousness of this he says 'who is sufficient for these things?' The answer is 'no-one unaided', for he was not like a shady merchant who adulterates his goods. "We are not as many, corrupting the word of God" (17). *Kapeleuo* means to 'peddle', 'adulterate' or water down anything. Anyone can preach a 'watered down' gospel where all unpleasantness concerning sin and perishing are left out and the offence of the Cross omitted. This was probably referring to the work of the enemies at Corinth, but the Apostle refused to engage in such preaching. His ministry was the very opposite—sincere in the sight of God and his sufficiency was from Him. Alas, how often we get a 'watered down', diluted gospel today which offends no-one and is powerless!

Having explained his reasons for the postponed visit to Corinth, Paul now observes that there really was no need to go into further detail and commend himself to them. Their relationship had been so close that this should be quite unnecessary:

"Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ . . ." (iii. 1-3 R.V.).

Some were making use of testimonial letters written by other believers. The church at Ephesus had written such a letter commending Apollos to the Corinthians (Acts.xviii.27). Paul is not saying this was wrong, but that he himself did not need them. As their founder and leader he was well known to them and surely they were not so forgetful of his ministry as to want further credentials. They were themselves truly *his epistle*, though not written with material substance as ink—"written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh" (verse 3 R.V.).

This illustration brings to the Apostle's mind another divine writing which played a momentous part in the history of Israel. Moses received from God two tables of stone written with the finger of God containing the divine law (Exod. xxxi. 18). This law of God was a covenant made between Himself and the people of Israel (Exodus xix. 5; xxiv. 7, 8). It was the "Old Covenant", but, in absolute contrast, Paul had been made a minister of "the New Covenant" made by God with the same people. Jeremiah graphically records this in chapter xxxi. 31-37. This contrast the Apostle now expounds in the wonderful passage that follows. We should note that the 'Old Covenant' of law and the 'New Covenant' of grace are used with precision in the Scriptures. A covenant is a binding arrangement between *two parties* and applies to them alone. Those two parties are made perfectly clear in the Scriptures. They are God on the one hand and the people of Israel on the other (Exod. xix. 1-6; xxxiv. 27; Deut. v. 2-4; Jer. xxxi. 31-37) and we

have no right to insert any other parties into these covenants. One has its basis in *works* and *law-keeping*, and the other in *divine grace*.

Because the New Covenant operates on the principle of grace, many assume that this covenant must be introduced whenever God deals in grace with sinners. But we should remember that God can have dealings of grace with such *without making any covenant with them* and such is the case with every member of the Body of Christ upon whom riches of grace are showered (Eph. i. 6-8). We therefore find no mention of the New Covenant in Ephesians or in any of the prison letters of Paul, for, by this time, Israel, the human party in the New Covenant, had passed into spiritual darkness and now was in unbelief (Acts xxviii. 25-28) and, in the *new man* now being formed (Eph. ii. 15), Israel as a *nation* does not exist. In it there is neither Jew nor Gentile as such. All such distinctions have vanished. Saving grace *administered by covenant* is only necessary to those who had already been dealt with by covenant, i.e. Israel (Jeremiah xxxi. 31-34; Romans ix. 4). Gentiles were ‘strangers from the covenants’ (Eph. ii. 12) and can be reached and saved by grace without the necessity for any covenant.

It is important to realize that both Old and New Covenants are *national*. Israel the *nation* is at the centre of both (Exod. xix. 5, 6; Jer. xxxi. 36). Saved Gentiles in the Acts period who were like wild olive grafts into the true (Rom. xi. 16-21) and therefore partook of Israel’s covenant privileges, shared in the New Covenant blessings, but we cannot perpetuate this condition of things while Israel is dead spiritually and unusable by God. The New Covenant touches the *heart* upon which God Himself writes His precepts (Jer. xxxi. 33) whereas all through this age, Israel’s heart has been ‘gross’ through their rejection of God’s offer of mercy (Acts iii. 19-26) and so they cannot ‘understand with their heart’ (Acts xxviii. 27). This is the absolute negation of the New Covenant and it cannot be operating under such conditions when the main party which it touches, Israel, has a blinded and hardened mind. In this dispensation of grace (Eph. iii. 2) God can deal *directly* with sinners, either Jew or Gentile, in grace on the basis of the Lord’s all-sufficient redemptive work on the cross and there is no need to bring any thought of a covenant in here. It is far better to keep accurately to the inspired Word and put both these covenants where God puts them, i.e. with Israel the nation at the centre of both.

It should hardly be necessary to say that the word ‘testament’ in II Cor. iii. should be rendered ‘covenant’ right through the chapter. Paul is not dealing with will-making but with the two covenants which have such a prominent part in Holy Writ and to emphasize the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old, he sets out a series of contrasts to make this clear. At this point it would be as well to point out that when he says ‘the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life’ (iii. 6) he is *not* dealing with the interpretation of Scripture, referring to a *literal* or *spiritualizing* method as many people think when they quote (or rather misquote) this verse to support the idea that the Bible must not be read *literally*. They should realize that ‘the letter’ refers to the *Old Covenant of law*, the breaking of which led to death and being under the curse (Rom. vii. 9, 10; Gal. iii. 10). It was indeed the ‘letter that *killeth*’ and the ‘ministration of death’, whereas the New Covenant, where human works and merit are disregarded and God alone works in grace bringing forgiveness and *life*, can truly be designated as *the spirit which giveth life*.

Not that there was no greatness or glory in the law. Of itself it was ‘holy, just and good’ (Rom. vii. 12). It reflected the character of the thrice holy God Who gave it, and at its inception there was glory and awe-inspiring majesty (Exodus xix. 16-20; Hebrews xii. 18-21), so much so that when Moses came down from the mount, his face reflected the glory so intensely that the people could not look at him and were afraid. He was then forced to put a veil over his face (Exod. xxxiv. 29-35). This not only moderated its brightness, but when it began to fade, hid this also from the Israelites. It will be helpful to set out the comparisons between the Old and the New Covenants in II Cor. iii.:

<b>The Old Covenant</b>	<b>The New Covenant</b>
The letter that killeth (6). The ministration of death (7, 8). The ministration of condemnation (9). That which is done away (11). Moses and Israel veiled (13-15). When Israel turn, the veil removed (16-18). The glory of God in the face of Moses “done away” (7).	The spirit that quickeneth (6). The ministration of the spirit (7, 8). The ministration of righteousness (9). That which remaineth (11). The veil done away in Christ (13-15). We all with unveiled face (16-18). The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (iv. 6).

Though the Old Covenant of law-keeping had its glory, it was a temporary one and fading at that, owing to the fact that it was ‘weak on account of the flesh’ (Rom. viii. 3). It showed a standard of conduct far above that which failing and sinful human nature could reach. The New Covenant, on the other hand, being all of God’s doing in grace, replacing condemnation and death by imputed righteousness and life, had a glory which far outshone the Old Covenant, so much so that by comparison it scarcely appears to be glorious at all (iii. 10). The contrast therefore right through this long section is the condition of the Jew under the law in the Old Testament with its condemnation and blindness, and the emancipation and salvation of the Jew in the N.T. who believed in Christ and came under the gracious work of the New Covenant which was ratified by the Lord Jesus on the cross. The O.T. Israelite had his mind ‘veiled’ like the face of Moses (iii. 14) and the only way this blinding element could be removed was by coming into saving contact with Christ ‘which veil is done away in Christ’ (verse 14) which is expressed by ‘turning to the Lord’ (16). This turning was vital to the Jew of the N.T. for salvation and will be so for the whole nation when in the future it looks on the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent and is convicted of sin, ‘they shall look on Me Whom they have pierced’ (Zech. xii. 10). They will then whole-heartedly turn to Him and be saved and this is all part of God’s New Covenant dealing with Israel (Rom. xi. 25-29) so that at last they can be the Divine channel of blessing to the whole world that the Lord always intended they should be.

The New Covenant ministry therefore had a special relevance to the Acts period when Israel was being tested yet again by God and those who were saved, together with Gentiles, became a New Covenant ‘firstfruits’, a faithful ‘remnant’, looking forward to

the day when the whole nation shall be saved and the hope of the New Covenant fulfilled and the earthly kingdom of the Lord established.

The closing verses of the chapter deal with the transformation that is being daily effected in the lives of those who have no veil coming between them and the Lord:

“But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit” (iii. 18 R.V.).

The R.V. ‘unveiled face’ is more accurate than the ‘open face’ of the A.V. and shows the connection inspired Scripture is making with the ‘veil’ of the context. This ‘beholding of the glory of the Lord’ is expressed in iv. 6 as the ‘light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’. The Lord Jesus sums up and fully expresses the glory of God which has been fully expressed in His redemptive work at Calvary. The more we experience this by faith and practical outworking, the more we progress ‘from glory to glory’ and come into a deeper knowledge and response. The Holy Spirit, Who is one with the Lord (“the Lord the Spirit”, or “the Spirit which is the Lord”, R.V. margin) alone makes all this possible.

#### **No.4. iv. 1 - 18. pp. 109 - 114**

The Apostle Paul has made plain the superiority of the New Covenant of Jer. xxxi. over the old one of Exodus by a series of comparisons (II Cor. iii. 16-18). The nation of Israel was the centre of this New Covenant from a human standpoint and thus had first place in the Acts period during which II Corinthians was written. Paul and those with him were made ‘able ministers’ of this covenant (iii. 6) and they fully realized the responsibility that this divine appointment brought upon them. It may be in the opening of chapter iv. that he has in mind the evil work of his opponents at Corinth:

“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (iv. 1, 2 R.V.).

This great service in connection with the New Covenant had been committed to Paul by the *mercy* of God. This mercy had touched him at the very beginning of his Christian life (I Tim. i. 12, 13) and followed him all the way through together with God’s abundant grace. Because of this he does not faint, or shrink from the duties this ministry brought upon him; he rather discharges them with frankness and courage, as opposed to some whose disgraceful underhanded ways (R.S.V.), craftiness and deceitful handling of the Word of God, played into Satan’s hands. He knew, needless to say, that not all who hear the gospel respond to its claims. They hear with their ears, but that is as far as it goes. It does not touch their mind or conscience:

“But and if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them” (iv. 3, 4 R.V.).

Using a different type of language, the Lord in His earthly ministry taught the same thing, for out of four sowings of the Word of truth connected with the earthly kingdom only one was fruitful in the fullest sense. Here the Apostle Paul continues the figure of the veil which he has already used. One reason why the gospel is rejected is that Satan, the arch-deceiver, draws a veil over the minds of such so that they cannot ‘see’ properly or understand. The glory of Christ, which the gospel makes known, is hidden in this way and they continue to walk in spiritual darkness, however intellectually gifted they may be. The good news of man’s salvation wrought out by the crucified and risen Christ is not only a deliverance from relentless bondage and a cleansing from guilt, but a rescue from blindness and darkness as well, as Col. i. 13 plainly teaches, and also this context. Only in this way can this mental and spiritual darkness be removed. Sinners have not sufficient ability or power to rescue themselves from such a terrible condition. Only the power of the risen Saviour can do this, as He is personally received and trusted:

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, Who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (iv. 5, 6 R.V.).

The Apostle goes back in his mind to the Damascus road, on which the risen and glorified Christ met him, made him a new creation and completely changed his whole outlook and ways. The only adequate parallel reaches back to the beginning of creation when the same Lord Jesus, the Creator, commanded the light to shine out of darkness (Gen. i. 3). This therefore is repeated in the new creation, when He Who is the only Light of the world, the brightness of God’s glory, shines into a darkened sinner’s mind upon being savingly beheld by faith.

The knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is the most treasured of all possessions. It is like an exquisite jewel, unique in its beauty. Literal jewels of beauty are usually encased in an equally lovely setting, but the opposite is found with this jewel of God, for He sets it in frail *earthen vessels*, men and women who are failing creatures, subject to infirmity and weakness. One thing this striking paradox makes clear is that the gospel is no product of human cleverness or lofty intellect, but is a revelation of God in His power and sovereign grace. He condescends in His great love and mercy to place this treasure in frail earthenware vessels to demonstrate, among other things, that His strength is made perfect in weakness (II Cor. xii. 9).

Paul now contrasts the often humiliating experiences he passes through as a faithful servant of Christ and minister of the gospel with the exceeding divine power that he finds to be all-sufficient in all circumstances. In the verses that follow, there are four pairs of present participles in an ascending scale, as it were. We find the climax to these testings in chapter xi. 16-28. In chapter iv. the Apostle states:

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies” (iv. 8-10, R.S.V.).

It is difficult for any English translation to convey adequately the sense of the original Greek. *Stenochoreomai* literally means ‘to be hemmed in’. “Straightened” (R.V.) comes nearer to the meaning of the word than ‘distressed’ (A.V.). *The Twentieth Century New Testament* renders it ‘though hard-pressed on every side, we are never hemmed in’ or Knox’s paraphrase ‘for ourselves, we are being hampered everywhere, yet still have room to breathe’. In spite of all restrictions, Paul still has room to move in his witness for Christ.

In the next statement there is a play on the words *aporonmenoi* and *exaporonmenoi* which is practically impossible to bring over into English. Perhaps ‘hard put to it, but not put out’ gets near to it. Then follows ‘persecuted (or pursued or hunted) but not abandoned’. Paul is not abandoned to the enemy or left to his own frail resources. If he is persecuted in one place, he escapes safely to another, only to find fresh opportunities for witness as the record in the Acts makes quite clear.

Finally he states ‘though struck down, never killed’ (T.C.N.T.) or, as Charles William’s translation ‘always getting a knock down, but never a knock-out’. His experience at Lystra was a good example of this (Acts xiv. 19). Literally struck down by stones, it appeared as though he was finished, yet by the exceeding power of God he has mentioned, he stood up on his feet and continued his ministry, doubtless much to the surprise and dismay of his would-be murderers.

All this varied experience he sums up as follows:

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you” (iv. 10-12 R.V.).

Paul, in a sense, was always under the sentence of death. “In deaths oft”, he writes later on in the epistle (xi. 23). He could never be absolutely sure he would be alive on the morrow. In this he closely followed the Saviour in His earthly life, Who experienced the relentless hatred and persecution of His religious opponents right throughout His public ministry, who would have murdered Him before Calvary, if they could have done so. Note the fourfold use of the name ‘Jesus’ which is linked with the *earthly* life of the Son of God and is rarely used by the Apostle except in this connection, unlike Christians today who habitually refer to the Lord this way, unmindful apparently of the fact of His Deity and Lordship (John xiii. 13).

But if the Apostle experienced the ‘dying of Jesus’, he also experienced His risen life. In fact it was only this great power that enabled him to survive and triumph over all his difficulties. But even if he did give his life for Christ (and this was actually true later on when his work was completed and he had finished ‘the race’), then there would be the

certainly of resurrection to follow with a glorious presentation in the presence of God and eternal life to follow:

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also with Jesus, and shall present us with you” (iv. 14 R.V.).

The grand truth of resurrection is going to dominate the section which follows right into chapter v. If this is not perceived, then the clue will have been lost to this wonderful passage with its reference to being ‘clothed upon’ that mortality may be swallowed up of (resurrection) life. ‘All things’, cries the Apostle, ‘are for your sakes’ and ultimately for the Lord’s sake, because the more people who come to know the saving grace of God through the gospel Paul preached, the more there will be to render thanksgiving to Him and the greater the praise He will receive (verse 15).

In view of all this Paul does not faint or lose heart, even though his external self, his ‘mortal flesh’, is decaying, the ‘inward man’, the divine new nature, implanted in him at salvation by the Lord, ‘is renewed day by day’ (verse 16). This is a firstfruits of the glory yet to be and as he contemplates it, the Apostle’s present sufferings and trials seem to fade away and be not worthy of comparison, so great is the glory lying ahead in resurrection. Viewed from any other angle, his sufferings would appear overwhelming and far from temporary. As Hodge remarks, ‘it was only by bringing these sufferings into comparison with eternal glory that they dwindled into insignificance’.

“For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (iv. 17, 18 R.V.).

In view of the *heavy weight* of glory, the present afflictions seem not only *light*, but very *temporary*. “While we look”, are the important words. If our vision is in the wrong direction, then the present difficulties will doubtless appear overwhelming. If however we look to what God is keeping and reserving for us in the life to come, then they fade away to nothing. Paul uses tremendous language here. *Hyperbole*, ‘exceeding’ is used twice. He seems almost to exhaust language in this great crescendo of superlatives. We end with the translations of Goodspeed and Moffatt:

“For this slight, momentary trouble is piling up for me an eternal blessedness beyond comparison, because I keep my eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal” (iv. 17, 18, E. J. Goodspeed).

“The slight trouble of the passing hour results in a solid glory past all comparison, for those of us whose eyes are on the unseen, not on the seen; for the seen is transient, the unseen eternal” (iv. 17, 18, J. Moffatt).

**No.5. v. 1 - 15.**  
**pp. 124 - 129**

After giving the magnificent testimony of II Cor. iv. 14-18 as to his triumph over his sufferings and trials as he considers the ‘eternal weight of glory’ that awaits him, the Apostle Paul goes on to develop this theme and to consider what it will involve if he is called upon to give his life for Christ and thus not be among those who are ‘alive and remain to the coming of the Lord’ (I Thess. iv. 15). He realizes that his human body is only a temporary structure like a tent, but however adequate for this earthly pilgrimage, it is not suitable for the glory yet to be, but will be dissolved after death. What follows then will be God’s provision of a permanent ‘house from heaven’, the resurrection body, concerning which he had previously written to the Corinthian church in chapter xv. of the first canonical epistle.

“For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle (tent) be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life” (v. 1-4 R.V.).

In Rom. viii. 23 he refers again to our present ‘groaning with resurrection as deliverance’, “For we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *the redemption of our body*”. Nothing can be clearer than that Paul dreaded the idea of any disembodied state and his statement in Phil. i. 23 must be interpreted in the light of Phil. iii. 11 and the context we are studying in II Corinthians. He could not think of a future life apart from resurrection. To be there apart from a body was like being naked, a condition from which he instinctively shrank.

The following quotation from Professor F. W. Beare is to the point:

“. . . . our minds are dominated, or at least profoundly affected by our Greek (essentially Platonic) inheritance, so that we think of immortality as the ‘immortality of the soul’ . . . . we still feel that there is some essential part of our personality which alone is capable of immortality, and that part does not include the body . . . . Paul was constitutionally incapable of thinking of life eternal in terms of a ‘soul’ existing in some disembodied state . . . . A spiritual resurrection would to him be no resurrection at all; a disembodied existence would be no better than the shadowy and unsubstantial existence of a shade. He is therefore bound to express his hope of immortality in terms of attaining to the resurrection from the dead” (*The Epistle to the Philippians*, pp. 125, 126).

Also Professor F. F. Bruce:

“. . . . But if he (Paul) does (die), what will be the mode of his existence between death and resurrection? Must he endure some kind of disembodied state in the interval? To some people of a different tradition, disengagement from the shackles of the body was something infinitely desirable, but while Paul longed to be delivered from the present mortal body it was in order that he might exchange it for one that was immortal; to be

without a body of any kind would be a form of spiritual nakedness from which all his mind shrank" (*1 and 2 Corinthians*, p.200).

All this would be perfectly clear to Christians today if their minds were not clouded by tradition concerning the immortality of the soul and the idea that this part of each individual goes straight to heaven after death because it is immortal. It comes as something of a shock when the sincere Bible student finds this is not true. Specially as it is backed up by countless hymns which are sung in places of worship Sunday by Sunday. However we can say with certainty that *in the revelation of the Word of God there is no life after death apart from resurrection* and if we do not accept this then we can never understand the teaching of II Cor. v.

Redemption and Resurrection are the key to the final fulfillment of the purpose of God as it touches heaven and earth and this is central in the revelation of Christ as mediated through the ministry of the Apostle Paul. It is fundamental to the realization of hope whether in the Old Testament or the New. Paul contrasts the temporary dwelling in the body (likened to nothing more than a tent) with the *permanent building*, the resurrection body in the heavens. Its sole maker is God; no human hands have constructed it or played any part in its maintenance. It is indeed 'a building of God, a house not made with hands' (v. 1) and it is fashioned to suit the sphere of glory that God wills, and it lasts for ever. Even now while Paul 'sighed with anxiety' (groaned), owing to the burdens which he was continually bearing, this glorious future hope greatly strengthened and cheered him. It would then be true that 'mortality (death) would be swallowed up by life' (verse 4) thus bringing us to the same point as he makes in the great resurrection chapter of I Cor. xv. 53-55. Resurrection is the time when immortality is attained and not before. It is 'put on' *then*, and death at this point is annihilated for the believer. We may be sure that for such there is *no consciousness of any interval* between the dissolution of the 'tent' and the investiture of the permanent 'house from heaven' and as far as *experience* goes, this should be all that matters as far as the believer is concerned.

The Apostle goes on to assure us 'that He Who has prepared us for this very thing is God Himself' (v. 5), that is the endowment of immortal resurrection bodies. Further, He has given us the Spirit now as a *guarantee* ("Who gave us the *earnest* of the Spirit") that all this will one day be realized in glorious fact.

The result of all this is 'being always of good courage'. With such a wonderful goal in view despair could not enter, however great the present trials:

"and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight); we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (v. 6-8 R.V.).

It should be noted that the Apostle does not say (as is so often misquoted) 'to be absent from the body *is to be present with the Lord*', meaning in some disembodied state immediately at death. There are only two states envisaged by Paul here (1) being at home in the present body (2) being at home with the Lord in the resurrection body, and of the two it is the latter obviously that he 'considers good' (*eudokeo*, translated 'willing' A.V. and R.V.). To read traditional views into this passage, as is so often done, ruins

the Apostle's argument. It is fatal to its understanding and is merely wishful thinking to prop up an idea that is considered to be 'orthodox'.

Paul, in contemplating the resurrection state, now stresses that among the first experiences will be for him to stand before the Lord's tribunal when He will assess his earthly service of what sort it is. The fact of this assessment for all believers he has already dealt with in the first Corinthian epistle (I Cor. iii. 10-15). With this in view he states that it has a profound effect upon his present life and outlook:

"Wherefore also we make it our aim (literally 'we are ambitious') whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto Him" (v. 9).

The thought of Christ as the righteous Judge (II Tim. iv. 8) was a profound stimulant to the Apostle, constantly urging him on to make all his thoughts and actions here and now conform to the Lord's approval and pleasure, for His final verdict is going to have eternal consequences.

"For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (v. 10 R.V.).

Rom. xiv. 10 R.V. teaches similarly except that the phrase is the 'judgment-seat of God', which is a strong testimony to the Deity of Christ. All judgment has been committed to the Son (John v. 22-27) the One Who has added humanity to His Deity and so can judge men with absolute impartiality, whether it is unbelievers for their sins or believers for their service. The thought of this engenders awe and reverence in the Apostle. He therefore discharges his ministry with the fear or reverence of the Lord in view ('terror' in the A.V. is too strong. Believers have no need of being 'terrified' by the Lord). The Apostle's work is to preach the gospel faithfully and seek to persuade men, and in this he is transparently open to the Lord as he will be at His judgment seat in the future. He trusts the purity of his conduct is likewise recognized by his converts at Corinth (verse 11). At the same time he was not idly boasting, but with his critics in view, men who evidently did their best to belittle and undermine his witness, he gives the Corinthians material for a reply (verse 12).

Evidently these opposers did not hesitate to accuse Paul of being mad:

"For whether we are beside ourselves, it is unto God; or whether we are of sober mind, it is unto you" (v. 13 R.V.).

The phrase 'we are beside ourselves' or 'are mad' could be a reference to the ecstatic revelations he refers to in chapter xii. which were being described as 'madness' by his enemies. This is for God to assess, declares the Apostle, not men—"it is unto God". In his ministry to them he had passed on the message soberly and quietly which his opponents could not deny, and the great motive power behind it all was *the love of Christ*:

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that One die for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him Who for their sakes died and rose again” (v. 14, 15 R.V.).

The Greek *sunecho* constrain, is used in Luke xii. 50 of the compulsion the Lord Jesus felt as He looked forward to the completion of His earthly work on the cross:

“I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I *straitened* (R.S.V. constrained) till it be accomplished.”

Weymouth beautifully renders it ‘overmasters us’. The overwhelming love of Christ Who gave His all for His people was so powerful an influence on the Apostle that he gladly gave himself in service for others, the only adequate way of expressing his love in return. We believe this is the only acceptable motive for Christian service. Do we do this because it appeals to us, or because we have been asked to do it, or perhaps because we want to please others? Not one of these motives is adequate. We should be able to say truthfully that we serve Him *because we love Him*. It is the only practical thing that we can do in response to His love for us which passeth knowledge’ (Eph. iii. 19).

**No.6. v. 14 - vi. 18.  
pp. 141 - 146**

Having stressed the love of Christ as the great motive for Christian service, the Apostle Paul continues:

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him Who for their sakes died and rose again” (v. 14, 15 R.V.).

The Lord Jesus has died as the representative of all His people and therefore by identification, all of them are reckoned to have died in the Person of their Representative. The second *all* has the article (*hoi pantes*) which shows that the reference is to the *all* for whom One has died. Just as the disobedience of Adam brought death and ruin to the old creation, so the life-giving death of the ‘last Adam’ brings a new existence, a new creation, so that those who live, (having died and risen with Christ) now belong to this new order and for them the old creation with its worldly standards has for ever passed away. The estimation concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the estimation concerning other men has completely changed:

“Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation (R.V. margin): the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new” (v. 16, 17 R.V.).

Paul is contrasting the standards and estimation of the old creation of unregeneracy with the entire new mental outlook of one who is truly saved and therefore can be

designated by God as being in an entirely new sphere, namely *in Christ*. That is his standing by grace. For such a person the old life and its thinking and standards are finished. New things have come into being, namely those things pertaining to the new creation which is eternal and has God as its source. Paul's reckoning of Christ before conversion was distorted and wrong. He now no longer knows Him in this way 'after the flesh'. Nor for that matter does he estimate men after this fashion. He has God's view point and this alters and corrects his whole thinking and estimation.

"All this is from God, Who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation . . . ." (v. 18 R.S.V.).

All things is *ta panta*, literally 'the all things', not all things without exception, and the R.S.V. translation rightly shows its defining power here. In the past some have used this phrase to teach that everything including sin comes from God, making Him the author of sin, but this is a gross abuse of what the Apostle has written. The *Revised Standard Version* is correct in its rendering "All this", namely the truth dealt with in the context, 'is from God', and He, says the Apostle, has given us the ministry of reconciliation. The Greek words translated 'reconcile' basically mean a change of outlook and condition. Reconciliation is only necessary where two parties are divided or at enmity. As far as God is concerned the enmity has been taken away by the death of Christ as the Representative and Head of the race. Adam's one offence involving all has been cancelled and from God's side there is now no barrier. Grace now *reigns*:

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. v. 21),

and as this is so, Divine judgment for sin is held back. God is not now reckoning men's trespasses as a barrier between Himself and man. The Cross has broken this down and the enmity now is entirely on man's side. Before the effect of this great reconciling work can be the individual sinner's possession, this reconciliation must be *personally received*. Just as God's righteousness is 'unto all' without exception, it is only '*upon all them that believe*' (Rom. iii. 22), so men are exhorted 'Be ye reconciled to God' (II Cor. v. 20) and true believers are those who have '*received the reconciliation*' (Rom. v. 11 'Atonement' in the A.V. is literally in the old English of the A.V. 'at-one-ment' or in other words reconciliation).

Those who have not 'received the reconciliation' for themselves cannot claim redemption, salvation and all the glorious aspects of truth that are wrapped up in the redeeming work of the Son of God on the Cross and confirmed by His present risen life. They are still at enmity with God and remain so until their faith is placed in the risen Christ Who is able to save to the uttermost. Then the forgiveness, peace and power which flows from God's reconciling work becomes their own possession and experience. Never must we present the reconciliation provided through Christ as though it cancels the need for preaching the gospel of God's saving grace to lost sinners. The greatness and wonder of such a gospel is difficult to sum up but the Apostle has done it in a wonderful way in verse 21 R.S.V.:

“For our sake He made Him (Christ) to be sin (or a sin-offering) for us, Who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

The doctrine of the sinlessness of Christ from the cradle to the tomb is utterly essential to God’s redemption. If the Lord Jesus had only sinned once, He would have *needed a Saviour*. He could not have been the Saviour of others. But in a way we can never fully appreciate, the Lord ‘laid on Him the iniquity of us all’ (Isa. liii. 6) and this is true, not only of Israel, but of all the Lord’s people. There is a wonderful exchange here. Christ takes the believer’s sins and receives the judgment of them in Himself, whereas the believer is given a righteous status before God, for it is nothing less than God’s righteousness which is reckoned his as a free gift (Phil. iii. 9; Rom. iii. 22). Paul concludes this section relating to the ministry of reconciliation by saying:

“And working together with Him we intreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (for He saith, at an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee, and in a day of salvation did I succour thee; behold now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation)” (vi. 1, 2 R.V.).

In using the plural ‘we’ here, the Apostle doubtless included other fellow-workers besides himself. In this glorious service men co-operate with God in making known the ‘good news’ and Paul underlines its urgency by quoting from Isa. xlix. 8. Men must avail themselves of the grace of God while the opportunity lasts, for the *accepted time* will not always be with us and we do well to bring this to the fore when we proclaim the gospel. The Apostle could do this with a good conscience, bearing in mind his opposers at Corinth who evidently had done their best to disparage his ministry and misunderstand his motives. There are always those who are glad of an excuse not to listen to the gospel and try to find one in the conduct of its ministers. But they could not truthfully do this with regard to the Apostle Paul. He could commend his service to them without boasting:

“. . . . but in everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; in pureness, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in the Holy Ghost, in love unfeigned, in the Word of truth, in the power of God; by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (vi. 4-10 R.V.).

What a defence! and what an eloquent list of the characteristics of a faithful servant of God! There are nine kinds of trials which divide into groups of three. In the first group there is general suffering, pressure physical and mental, hardships which could not be relieved, and frustrations on every hand. The second group deals with sufferings he endured at the hands of men (stripes, imprisonment, tumults). The third section gives us the qualities he sought to display in his Christian witness day by day, resulting in a series of antitheses which illustrate the way he was being maligned by his enemies. Sometimes he was praised, sometimes he was misrepresented. Sometimes he was flattered, sometimes he was harshly criticized, but whatever men’s estimate of him was, he

continues with his faithful service and witness for the truth committed to him. What an example to us all!

The Apostle's feelings must have been deeply stirred in writing this section—yet he has nothing but love for these Corinthians, even though some of them were doing their best to upset and grieve him:

“O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged” (vi. 11).

Paul had written freely to them without constraint and his love and concern for them had grown. In return he asks that their regard for him should grow too (verses 12 & 13) and not be restricted (straitened). It would seem that this lack of response to him was largely because some of them had not separated themselves from pagan practices that existed all around them. Hence the Apostle goes on to warn them:

“Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (vi. 14-18 R.V.).

Do not become diversely yoked with unbelievers, says the Apostle. “Mismatched” is the translated of the R.S.V. Any such tie is bound to pull the believer down. This of course applies to marriage, but it can go further and cover any *close* tie with the unsaved world. The amount of unhappiness and misery that has resulted from disobedience to this Divine command only the Lord knows. The wrecked homes, the unfruitful Christian life are a startling testimony to the truth and wisdom of this prohibition of the Lord, and yet many, alas, do not heed but choose to go their own way, deceiving themselves that somehow all will come right in the end.

Paul here gives five rhetorical questions introduced by the interrogative pronoun *tis* (what?) demanding a negative answer. He uses five synonyms, ‘partnership’ (*metoche*), ‘fellowship’ (*koinonia*), ‘accord’ (or harmony *symphonesis*), ‘agreement’ (*sunkatathesis*) and ‘portion’ (*meris*) and makes the contrast between righteousness and iniquity, light with darkness, Christ with Belial, the believer and the unbeliever, the temple of God with idols. Belial means ‘worthless’ or ‘perdition’ and is a title of Satan. The questions are followed by a series of quotations from the O.T. Such references as Lev. xi. 44; xxvi. 11, 12; Exod. xxv. 8; Ezek. xi. 20; xxxvi. 28; xxxvii. 27 should be consulted. The Corinthian believers are reminded that they are a sanctuary (temple) of a holy God and since He dwells among them, they must separate themselves from everything that is incompatible with His holiness. Only then can they experience God *as a Father* and know the intimacy, warmth and strength of such a close relationship.

**No.7. vii. 1 - viii. 9.**  
**pp. 161 - 165**

Chapter vii. of this epistle is obviously carrying on the theme developed in the sixth chapter. The Apostle Paul had urged the Corinthians to separate themselves from all the pagan ways that surrounded them. This was *practical sanctification* and the gracious promise was made that if they did this God would be a *Father* to them with all the wonderful teaching that this close relationship implies.

“Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (vii. 1 R.V.).

“Perfecting holiness” on the surface seems impossible. How can holiness ever be improved? *Epiteleo*, perfecting, does not mean this, but ‘to take to completion’, to ‘reach its goal’ and this is achieved in the believer when the sanctification he has already in Christ (I Cor. i. 30) is made *actual in practice*. The present participle is used, teaching us that this must be a *continual* experience day by day.

The Apostle now goes back to his theme in vi. 11-13 and he urges them to ‘open their hearts to him’ (vii. 2). He has wronged no man or taken advantage of them and is prepared to die or live together with the believers at Corinth, so closely does he feel the tie to be between them. He expresses his confidence and pride in them and is overjoyed (verse 4), especially by reason of the good news Titus had brought of their renewed regard for him. Paul goes back to the memorable meeting with Titus in Macedonia, recorded in ii. 13. He recalls the restlessness which he felt before this meeting, his anxiety as to what was happening at Corinth, whether his enemies there were getting the upper hand, and then the wonderful relief that he felt when Titus was able to tell him that the Corinthians were repentant and keen to see him again and restore the happy fellowship they had previously enjoyed. Not only this but they mourned for their past behaviour (verses 5-7). In this way God comforted the Apostle and Titus too was comforted when he saw the complete change of heart at Corinth.

As Paul thought over this, he could now see that the painful letter he sent them (see introductory studies) had achieved its object, though he wondered at the time of writing whether it would produce this result or harden them still further against him. This painful letter, as we have shown, cannot be I Corinthians but must be an epistle that does not form part of inspired Scripture.

“For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it), for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death” (vii. 8-10 R.S.V.).

As it turned out, the severe letter which Paul felt forced to write them because of their conduct, had its desired effect. It produced repentance and a change in their attitude to himself, so the temporary pain was worth while. They were now anxious to clear themselves of the guilt in which they were involved and were ashamed at what had happened and were ready to mete out discipline to the offender. They had done the right thing at every point and were now guiltless in the matter. Not only had he been greatly encouraged by all this, but it had given Titus joy too and refreshed his spirit (verse 13). The Apostle had spoken highly of the Corinthians to Titus and their change of attitude had increased the affection of Titus for them. R. Knox translates 'he bears a most affectionate memory of you' (verses 14 & 15) for they had not received him disdainfully, but in fear and trembling had responded to his message. Consequently Paul had renewed confidence in them (16).

The subject of the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem is now brought up. Something like a year had passed by since Paul last referred to it in I Cor. xvi. 1-4, and doubtless during this period of tension between him and the church, their interest in this offering had waned. The time was now propitious to remind them of this and the Apostle does so with care and tact, for he wanted this to be *voluntary* and not the result of any apostolic pressure. A long section of the epistle is devoted to this subject of Christian giving which serves as a guide to believers of all time.

Paul first of all refers to the example of the Macedonian churches in this respect:

“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia, how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord . . . . but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God” (viii. 1-5 R.V.).

These churches were at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. We note that before making any money gift to the Lord's work, they first *gave themselves to Him*. Redemption by grace means we are not our own, 'we are bought with a price', but how easy it is to cheat the Buyer of His property and not continually yield ourselves to Him! He first wants *us*, before our money, and then He is pleased to use what we possess and joyously give Him as an expression of our love and obedience. Let us remember it is easier to give a sum of money to the Lord than to give ourselves!

Secondly, they gave *joyfully and willingly*, not by compulsion, but because they evidently loved the Lord Who had given His all for them. Thirdly, they didn't wait till times were easy before they gave, rather the opposite. Paul reminded the Corinthians that these churches were going through affliction and much difficulty. I Thess. i. 6 & ii. 14 record the suffering of the Thessalonians and Paul had himself received persecution at Philippi (Acts xvi. 20) and at Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 5). Fourthly, none of these were *wealthy* churches. The Apostle talks of their deep poverty (II Cor. viii. 2).

Taking all things into consideration, one might have excused these assemblies from making a money gift or only perhaps giving a small one. Not so, for Paul refers to the

*riches of their liberality*, for they had given *beyond their power*. The greater their poverty, the greater their liberality seemed to be and furthermore they begged earnestly for the favour (grace) of taking part (fellowship) in this service for the Lord and His people. Professor R. V. G. Tasker points out that the Macedonian's poverty was partly due to the harsh treatment they had received from their Roman conquerors, who had exploited the rich natural resources of their land, and partly to the succession of civil wars which had been fought on their soil before Augustus became sole emperor.

But none of this was made as an excuse for not contributing to the gift for the impoverished Jerusalem saints. It was a case of the poor giving to the poor! and what an example this must have been to the Corinthian church and should be to us today also. Plummer's comment is apt here, 'the crowning point of their generosity was their complete self-surrender'.

Paul trusts that this will act as a stimulus to the Corinthians to complete their gift and accordingly he plans to send Titus to help them with the final stages of their donation (verse 6). He had asked them in I Cor. xvi. 2 to set aside their money gift systematically once a week, its size being decided by the way the Lord had prospered each one. It is significant that no actual sum is mentioned here or anywhere else in the N.T. In the O.T. dispensation the Lord had commanded that one tenth (the tithe) should be given to Him. In this present age of the abounding grace of God and the riches He has showered on us in Christ, we might ask ourselves, can *we* give less? This is for each child of God to decide, but the context we are studying assures us that 'God loves a cheerful giver' and he that gives to the Lord bountifully *reaps a bountiful harvest of blessing*, whereas the mean Christian can only receive back 'sparingly'. In any case, a mean believer is a contradiction in terms (II Cor. ix. 6-10).

The Apostle Paul assumes that the weekly giving of the Corinthians had been kept up and all that needed to be done was a final liberal gift to complete the sum. He reminds them that they abounded in spiritual gifts. Let them show themselves to be possessed also of the gift of liberality (viii. 7). Let them also remind themselves of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (viii. 9 R.V.).

Can we ever assess what it meant to the Lord Jesus to leave all the supreme riches connected with His Godhead and to stoop down to this poverty-stricken human life, so much so that He hadn't enough money to pay His tax! (Matt. xvii. 25-27) nor even anywhere to lay His head (Luke ix. 58). He died without a single soldier carrying out His execution! And He willingly submitted to this deep poverty for our sakes, so that we might be made eternally rich beyond all comprehension!

With all this (and more) in view, surely the Corinthians did not need any *command* to give. It was a joyous privilege so to do and we should realize that it still is for each one of us today. It should be hardly necessary to say that Christian giving in the N.T. was without any material return in the way of entertainment. When one looks around on

modern Christendom and sees the whist drives, dances, etc. arranged in order to raise funds for Christian work, one is appalled and realizes that those who do these things can have absolutely no conception of the truth of the wonderful context we are studying. If a believer wants something back for his gift to the Lord—he had better not give it in the first place, for in any case it ceases to be a *gift* to Him.

Paul now gives his Christian advice (judgment) to the Corinthian church. They had been among the first to start a collection among themselves a year before. Let them now complete it. It was vitally important that they should have a willing mind (readiness R.V.) for without this, giving is of no value. The amount must be decided by their financial resources (verses 10-12).

It was a question of *proportion* rather than a fixed sum. On the surface the widow's two mites looked a very mean gift to put into the treasury. But, said the Lord Jesus, "she hath cast *more in than all they which have cast into the treasury*; for all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in *all that she had, even all her living*" (Mark xii. 43, 44). In this gift, small though it was, *she had given everything she had*, and the Lord who watched the donors took note of this. We should remind ourselves *that He still does*. God is never in any man's debt and the blessing that generous believers receive from Him outweighs all their giving, and in any case, as we have seen, all that we have is really His, and this includes our money. Let us constantly avail ourselves of the *privilege* of giving generously to the Lord Who has bought us by His supreme love and grace.

**No.8.   viii. 10 - x. 11.  
pp. 185 - 189**

We are examining the section of the epistle, namely chapters viii. and ix., which deals with the question of Christian giving in terms of money. The Corinthian church amongst others had started making a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, but somehow the work had got held up and now the Apostle Paul urges them to complete the task. He tells them that Titus would visit them to finalize this, together with two other unnamed brethren (verses 18 & 22). Titus did not need any urging to go. He had already conceived deep affection for the believers at Corinth on his previous visit (verse 17).

Who are the two brothers whom Paul does not name? The fact that he does not name them means that we cannot know them for certain, but both were well known to the various assemblies. The former one the Apostle says his 'praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches' (18) and of the latter, 'we have many times proved earnest in many things' (22). They were obviously two faithful and earnest Christians who could be relied on to handle possibly a large sum of money. Note Paul's wisdom in appointing *two men* where money was concerned, to avoid any adverse criticism of

misappropriation, for doubtless there were critics of him at Corinth who would have loved to have been able to level such a charge against him.

Some have thought that the former brother mentioned was Luke. This was Origen's opinion, but it largely rests on taking the word 'gospel' as meaning the Gospel of Luke. It is very doubtful indeed whether this Gospel was in circulation at this time and it is better in matters like this not to guess. That this brother was a well-known *preacher of the gospel* is the evident meaning. We do not know who these brethren were, but the churches most certainly did and we must leave it at that. They, together with Titus, were messengers of the churches and because of their worthy walk, were reflecting the glory of Christ (verse 23) and so Paul exhorts the Corinthians to show to them the genuineness of their Christian love.

Some have thought the beginning of chapter ix. to be somewhat awkward as though a new subject was being introduced, whereas it is the same theme of Christian giving that is continued. But *peri men gar* ('for') links it to what has gone before. Paul states that it is superfluous for him to repeat what he has already told them. He had praised them to the Macedonian churches, saying that Achaia, the Roman province that included Corinth, had been ready a year ago. There is a difficulty here for it looks as though the Apostle was going beyond what was true. But Professor R. V. Tasker points out that *parakeuastai* ('were ready') should be taken as a perfect middle rather than a perfect passive, in which case the sense would be 'was prepared' and *apo perusi* can mean 'last year' rather than 'a year ago' (Moulton and Milligan). Thus the difficulty vanishes.

Paul was not only sending the brethren to help with the completion of their gift, but also so that his commendation of them to the Macedonian churches would not be falsified. It would have been embarrassing, to say the least, had the Corinthians failed with their donation after such praise (ix. 3, 4). They should therefore complete their gift (bounty, literally blessing, *eulogia*). This willing gift would be a concrete blessing to others in need at Jerusalem. It must be a spontaneous gift of real generosity, not by compulsion, otherwise it would lose all its benefit as far as the donors were concerned (ix. 5).

Paul now goes on to describe the blessings that rest upon the generous giver to the Lord, for let us remind ourselves that our giving is first of all *to Him* and no one need feel fear of destitution who gives in this way, for the Lord is able to give back in return out of all proportion to the gift we give Him. Farming is often used in Scriptures to illustrate spiritual truths, and here the Apostle states:

"He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver" (ix. 6, 7 R.V.).

A number of passages in the O.T. confirm this. Prov. xi. 24, 25 reads:

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

The LXX reads ‘every liberal soul receives a blessing’. One of the sayings of the Lord Jesus was ‘Give, and it shall be given unto you’ (Luke vi. 38). As we have seen, this must not be done grudgingly or by compulsion, as either of these motives will spoil the gift. It is a *cheerful* and *willing* giver that God loves, and here Paul quotes from the LXX of Prov. xxii. 9, “God blesses a man who is cheerful and a giver”. One is reminded of the attitude of David with his gifts for the Lord’s house described in IChron.xxix. and note verses 14 and 17. Such giving delights the Lord’s heart and in return He multiplies grace and blessing to the donor (II Cor. ix. 8). The Apostle again quotes from the O.T., namely Psa. cxii. 9 concerning the man that fears the Lord and delights greatly in His commandments (verse 1). God will certainly enrich the generous giver so that he will have the opportunity of further giving which will lead to further thanksgiving to the Lord on the part of the recipients.

Not only this, but the love of those who receive the gift will increase towards the givers as they consider the liberality of the contribution made, and this would stimulate their prayerful remembrance of the Corinthians (ix. 13 and 14) for the exceeding grace of God which has worked in them to make this practical expression of their generosity and unselfishness.

The last thought on the subject expressed by Paul is:

“Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift” (ix. 15).

The Father’s gift of His beloved Son is the greatest of all gifts and when one contemplates the wonder and fullness of this, who can give in a niggardly way? Every time we support the Lord’s work and witness with our gifts of money, the Gift of all gifts should be constantly before our minds.

The Apostle Paul now changes the subject and deals with his personal ministry and the opposing minority at Corinth who constantly criticized him. They evidently accused him of being lowly or humble when with them face to face, but bold (‘of good courage’) when at a distance writing letters to them. But he followed One Who was ‘meek and lowly at heart’ (Matt. xi. 29) and so he ever sought to walk in this spirit, but if they did not realize this but opposed his apostolic authority, then he would be forced to adopt a different attitude. Paul was always reluctant to use severity, so he appeals to those who were confounding his gentleness with timidity to so behave that he may not have to deal with them severely in person when he visited Corinth. They may say that he was walking ‘according to the flesh’ (x. 3) but he forcibly reminds them:

“ . . . . we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (x. 3b, 4, 5 R.V.).

The Christian warfare is a spiritual one and not with flesh and blood (Eph. vi. 12), and carnal weapons are utterly useless here. Human cleverness, eloquent speech, organizing ability and propaganda are absolutely unavailing in the task of pulling down the

strongholds where Satan and evil are entrenched. Nothing less than the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, is needed here to overthrow all that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring it into captivity and obedience to Christ.

If entreaty is ineffective, the Apostle is ready to use his apostolic authority bestowed by the risen Christ when every disobedience would be dealt with and punished. Verse 7 is rendered as a question in the A.V. and a fact in the R.V. Either is permissible from the Greek and the verb can be either imperative or indicative, so three translations are possible: 'look on', 'you look on' or 'do you look on?'. "The things that are before your face" means things after the outward appearance. The Apostle apparently is reprimanding those who were judging merely by external appearance without going any deeper. His opponents claimed to have the authority of Christ; so did he likewise, for it was by special revelation that he had received the gospel of grace (Gal. i. 11, 12).

Even if he was to boast of his apostolic commission he could do so without shame or exaggeration:

"For though I should glory somewhat abundantly concerning our authority (which the Lord gave for building you up, and not for casting you down), I shall not be put to shame" (x. 8 R.V.).

Yet he did not wish to terrify them by his letters. Even his enemies had to admit that his letters were weighty and strong, even if his bodily presence was weak and his speech of no account (x. 9 and 10). And this characteristic of his epistles has been admitted ever since by all those who have seriously considered them. Where his detractors at Corinth made a mistake was in assuming that the Apostle could not act with the same vigour and directness when he was personally with them. He warns such:

"Let such a one reckon this, that, what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such are we also in deed when we are present" (x. 11 R.V.).

These people commended themselves, measuring themselves with themselves, making their own standards, and exalting themselves in their own estimation and conceit. "Self-praise is no recommendation", but some of the Corinthians were doing it unashamedly and were therefore without true understanding (x. 12 R.V.). If Paul is going to boast about his apostolic achievements, he will keep it within well-defined limits, that is, the sphere appointed to him by Christ as the minister of the gospel of the uncircumcision. This principle had been recognized by Peter, James and John at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 9) and the Apostle never built on another's foundation or intruded into someone else's sphere of witness (Rom. xv. 20).

In other words he was a pioneer missionary to the Gentiles and therefore Corinth came within his bounds, for he was the first to preach the gospel there, and it was predominantly a Gentile church. In view of this the false apostles were ministering at Corinth merely with the position they had arrogated to themselves.

**No.9. x. 12 - xi. 11.**  
**pp. 206 - 210**

The Apostle Paul has been stressing the province for service marked out for him by the risen Lord, which, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, he would not exceed or encroach into another's territory. This sphere, of course, included Corinth where the church had been founded by his faithful pioneering preaching of the gospel. His opponents there were interlopers. They had no right to interfere and they came with no commendation but their own. Yet there were some at Corinth who were listening to them! Paul, however, looks to the future and the possibility that Corinth may be a base for the extension of the gospel witness to lands beyond (II Cor. x. 15, 16). He does not specify these places, but doubtless they would include other parts of the Balkan peninsula, and after this Rome and even Spain (Rom. xv. 24, 28). He had no need to boast in another man's labours or sphere (II Cor. x. 16). The only true ground of boasting was the Lord Jesus and what He had done through His servants: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (quoting from Jer. ix. 24).

One remembers that when Paul and Barnabas returned from the first missionary journey, they rehearsed to the church at Antioch, not what *they* had done, but "all that *God had done with them* and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts xiv. 27) and when Paul wrote to the Roman Church he said concerning his ministry:

"I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. For I will not dare to speak of any things *save those which Christ wrought through me*, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xv. 17, 18 R.V.).

In chapter xi. the Apostle comes closer to the problem that the false apostles at Corinth were making. They did not hesitate to parade their so-called credentials and were obviously influencing some in the church. Because of this and Paul's great concern for the believers there, he is forced to do something he would have rather avoided and that is to indulge in what was apparently self-commendation, the thing he had just condemned! "A little foolishness" he called it, but so much was at stake that he is compelled to compare his own true apostleship with the false apostleship of his opponents.

His motive was a godly jealousy (xi. 2) such as God Himself had for the people of Israel in the O.T., this nation standing towards Him in the relationship of a wife to a husband. His yearning over them, especially when they went after other 'lovers', is described in many O.T. passages, and it is this same intense feeling that Paul had for the Corinthian church:

"For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (xi. 2 R.V.).

If the nation of Israel was looked upon as the faithless wife of Jehovah, the Bride represents the faithful remnant that remained true to the Lord all through; such, from faithful Abraham onwards, looked forward by faith to the better country linked with the heavenly Jerusalem whose destiny is the new earth (Rev. iii. 12; xxi. 2, 10) and this city is the Bride of the Lamb (Rev. xxi. 2, 9). This sphere would include the faithful and those that went on to perfection (Heb. vi. 1) in the Acts period, and those who are tested and found faithful on the future Day of the Lord, and it was Paul's great aim that those to whom he ministered, including the believers at Corinth, should be included in this favoured company. It is important to grasp that the heavenly city is a *reward sphere* for overcomers in Israel and those Gentiles linked with Israel. There is, therefore, no need to confuse this with the later revelation of the "Joint Body" of Christ, yet to be blessed with Christ in the heavenlies, 'far above all'.

Paul's godly concern for these Corinthian believers made him fear:

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (xi. 3 R.V.).

This fear centred in the possibility of 'another Jesus' being presented to them by his enemies, together with 'another gospel' and 'a different spirit' to what they originally received. Here is Satan with his most deceptive wiles, the 'angel of light', preaching a 'Jesus' and a 'gospel' which, although appearing to be right on the surface, is false to the core and has one object, to oust the Christ of the New Testament from His rightful place as the only Saviour and Lord. And we can be sure of one thing, *this activity of Satan has been going on in Christendom in this same way ever since.*

Every professing Christian movement must of necessity bring in Christ, but we should ask ourselves in all seriousness, is it the Christ of the Scriptures, the holy Word of God, or the Christ of men's imagination? Too often, alas, it is the latter, and indiscriminating listeners, who keep the Book shut, are easily deceived into thinking that the Christ they hear about and profess to follow is the Lord Jesus Christ of the New Testament! False Christs today are being proclaimed everywhere from pulpits and platforms just as the Lord Jesus predicted would be one of the characteristics of the 'end of the age' with its Satanic deception (Matt. xxiv. 4, 5, 11, 24, 25). Never was there more need for all to test what they hear over the radio or television or in the churches, with the Word of God.

We should beware too of the use of the word 'gospel'. Like the word 'democracy', it can mean *anything the user cares to make it mean.* Every church or chapel today professes to 'preach the gospel', but how often is it the true gospel which Paul stated he had received 'by the revelation of Jesus Christ'? (Gal. i. 11, 12). To the Galatian churches he complained some were being 'removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel:* which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would *pervert the gospel of Christ*' (Gal. i. 6, 7), and this is still going on around us. There never was such a time of world-wide confusion and deception, and we should remember that the Saviour warned that the ultimate object was, if possible, 'to

deceive the very elect' (Matt. xxiv. 24), and to do this what is put forward *must look like the real thing*, so let us be alert to this all the time.

Such corruption of the truth was being foisted upon the Corinthian church by the false apostles and no wonder the Apostle Paul was concerned lest their minds should be beguiled as Eve's was when she listened to the voice of the serpent (xi. 30).

"For if he that cometh preacheth *another Jesus*, whom we did not preach, or if ye receive a *different spirit*, which ye did not receive, or a *different gospel*, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with him" (xi. 4 R.V.).

It should be pointed out that both the A.V. and R.V. in the last phrase of verse 4 miss the point and actually give the impression that the Corinthians would be doing a good thing to tolerate these false teachers with their deception! "Ye might well bear with him" A.V., "Ye do well to bear with him" R.V. The R.S.V. gives the true sense, "You submit to it readily enough" and this was tragic, after they had received the Truth as ministered so faithfully to them by the Apostle Paul. To listen to and bear with such impostors was to be misled and dominated by them. Paul could say with truth:

"For I reckon I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (xi. 5 R.V.).

Who are these superlative apostles? There are two explanations. (1) They are the leaders of the Jerusalem assembly, Peter, James and John. (2) They refer to the false apostles at Corinth whose conceit arrogated to themselves the position of the most important apostles, and Paul is referring in irony to them. It is not easy to decide which is the more likely to be true. If the reference concerns the Jerusalem apostles, then it is his *opponents' portrayal of them* that he is criticizing, i.e., they were asserting that Paul's apostleship could not compare with the leaders at Jerusalem. The Apostle is certainly not directly criticizing the latter's position or witness. We do know that, when his own ministry was being considered at Jerusalem as recorded in Gal. ii., he referred to Peter, James and John as those who 'seemed to be somewhat' (Gal. ii. 6), but here the burning question of his own apostleship was at stake at the very beginning, and there could be no compromise with 'those who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus' who evidently associated themselves with the Jerusalem leaders, and probably asserted that their apostleship was greater than Paul's.

Again, such language as the 'very chiefest apostles' could hardly apply to anyone but them. Whatever is the true interpretation here, one thing is certain, namely, Paul's apostleship was the equal of any other and quite independent of them. He owed nothing to human leaders as far as his Apostleship goes. The threefold stress 'not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ' (Gal. i. 1, 11, 12, 16, 17) shows this quite clearly, and he now demonstrates this truth in the passage with which we are dealing.

Another important point to note is that the quality of his divine calling did not depend on the ability to speak fluently and persuasively:

"But though I be unskilled (rude) in speech, yet am I not in knowledge" (xi. 6),

and moreover he had already written to the Corinthian church, giving his reasons for avoiding mere oratory, so that their faith should stand in God and not the human ability of any speaker (I Cor. ii. 4, 5). No one could deny the Apostle's deep knowledge of the Truth. By this time this should have been abundantly plain.

Another thing that still rankled with some was the fact that he refused to accept material support from them, though he had done so from other churches. The reason for this he had made clear in I Cor. ix. He would not be beholden to them in any way, though, as this chapter clearly shows, he had the right to do so as an apostle. By not doing so he appeared to 'abase himself' in this capacity (II Cor. xi. 7). Had he received material gifts, it would surely have been misrepresented by his critics and the last thing he wished was to appear to be sponging on them. Consequently he supported himself by tent-making (Acts xviii. 3) when he was at Corinth.

In this way he did not burden anyone there, though it might have seemed on the surface as 'robbery' to accept money support from other churches (xi. 8). His needs were supplied by brethren from the Macedonian churches (xi. 9). The reason for his independent spirit in connection with the Corinthian church was certainly not due to lack of love (xi. 9-11). God was his witness to that. Rather, as we have seen, it was to give no opportunity for his enemies, the false apostles, to have any grounds for accusation and criticism. The Apostle Paul was a wise man. He had learned to do what he had exhorted others to do, to walk in wisdom, even if this was at considerable cost to himself.

**No.10. xi. 12 - 29.**  
**pp. 226 - 231**

Continuing our study of the eleventh chapter of II Corinthians, we are dealing with the section where the Apostle Paul, owing to misrepresentation on the part of his critics at Corinth, was forced to stress the superlative nature of his Christ-given apostleship, although this was very distasteful to him as it appeared to be self-praise. He had refused material support from the church and earned his own living by tent-making when he was with them. As he explains, this was not because he was too proud to receive such support, but rather because he would not give his opponents any opportunity to accuse him of making money out of them.

He now speaks of them in scathing terms:

“And I shall go on doing as I am doing now, to cut the ground from under those who would seize any chance to put their vaunted apostleship on the same level as ours. Such men are sham apostles, crooked in all their practices, masquerading as apostles of Christ. There is nothing surprising about that; Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is therefore a simple thing for his agents to masquerade as agents of good” (xi. 12-15, N.E.B.).

Satan goes about as a roaring lion ‘seeking whom he may devour’ Peter tells us (IPet.v.8). But more dangerous still is when he comes disguised as an angel of light and poses as a minister of truth! And never let us forget that he quotes the Bible when it suits his purpose (Matt. iv. 6). In fact, he knows the Word of God much better than many Christians and so do his ministers. These can be outwardly good living people with a show of righteousness, but underneath, they, like their master, are deceivers and one day will receive their just due from God. We need to be constantly on our guard lest we are carried away by any such deception, which alas, is everywhere around us today.

Paul now returns to his so-called ‘boasting’. With a little irony he tells the Corinthians that they bear with fools, as they are so wise themselves (xi. 19). Not only this, but some of them were putting up with those who enslaved them and took advantage of them:

“For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face” (xi. 20 R.S.V.).

If they went so far as this, surely they could tolerate the Apostle when he indulged in a little boasting! He compares himself with the false apostles at Corinth, showing in every way he exceeded all their personal claims:

“But whatever any one dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater honours, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings and often near death. Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches” (xi. 21-28, R.S.V.).

What a list of suffering and testing! Apart from the Son of God, did anyone ever approach this man in the cost that he willingly paid as a faithful servant of Christ? If his critics at Corinth had any spark of decency in them, they ought to have felt ashamed when they read these words. And when we read them today, do they not make us feel that we have hardly started to suffer for Christ yet, no matter what we have experienced? Every one of these statements is true without exaggeration and Paul calls God to witness to this fact (xi. 31).

The Corinthian troublemakers evidently boasted of their descent. Were they Hebrews? So was he; in fact he could call himself ‘a Hebrew of the Hebrews’ (Phil. iii. 5). A distinction is made in Acts vi. 1 where ‘Grecians’ are Jews of Greek language and culture and Hebrews who were Palestinian in origin and could speak Aramaic as Paul did in dealing with the crowd at Jerusalem recorded in Acts xxi. 40.

To be an Israelite was to claim a title of privilege, for Israel were a people chosen by God for His own peculiar possession to be guardians of His law, and to represent Him to the outside world. Paul was also a descendant of Abraham and not merely physically so 'in Israel', but spiritually, a distinction the letter to the Romans was to make abundantly clear (Rom. ix. 7). But coming to service for Christ, he leaves claims of birth for achievement and here, comparison with other servants of Christ appears to be self-aggrandizement and the utterance of someone out of his senses. However, he is forced to do it by his enemies' belittling of his apostolic status and witness.

Comparing with his detractors, Paul could say that he had undertaken more arduous campaigns in advancing the gospel (labours more abundant). He had suffered excessive corporal punishment, such as they had never endured. He had been imprisoned more frequently. Up to the writing of II Corinthians we only have the record of one imprisonment, i.e. at Philippi (Acts xvi.). Clement of Rome, writing in 96A.D. asserts that Paul was cast into prison seven times. Some modern scholars believe he was in prison at Ephesus during his stay recorded in Acts xix.

Five times he received the severe beatings by the Jews which were allowed under the law (Deut. xxv. 1-3). To assure that the maximum number of stripes was not exceeded ('forty' 40) it was ordained that this was limited to 39, a lash containing three thongs being used. Possibly from these beatings Paul nearly died ('in deaths oft'). Three times he was thrashed by the Roman authorities, one of these being at Philippi when he and Silas were beaten by the lictors' rods (Acts xvi. 22), although as a Roman citizen this was illegal. This was another experience of severe pain.

Once he was stoned and left for dead. This was at Lystra (Acts xiv. 19). Paul's experience of shipwreck must have been before the one described in Acts xxvii. on his way to Rome. A day and a night he was adrift at sea, possibly clinging to a fragment of a wreck. His travels were mostly dangerous owing to the brigands who infested the roads. Dangers from his own people, the Jews, from the Gentiles and in the city are graphically portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles. Perhaps the most bitter for the Apostle was 'danger from false brethren'. Open enmity outside is bad enough, but treachery within is worse and this has occurred right through the history of Christendom, starting with Judas among the original apostles.

On top of all this there was weariness and painfulness ('toil and hardship' R.S.V.) possibly referring to his manual labour, sleepless nights, through such experiences, hunger and thirst often, and as a climax, the burden and responsibility of all the churches, not just the one at Corinth, with their subversive doctrines, internal discord and unChristlike behaviour. What a weight to carry! "A daily pressure" Paul calls it and, but for the mighty enabling grace of God, he must have succumbed to it all long before this. In spite of everything, he was in sympathetic touch with all the churches' problems:

"Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I burn not?" (xi. 29 R.V.).

The Apostle could feel the weakness of some as though it was his own and he burned with indignation when others thoughtlessly upset a weaker believer by bad example and treatment.

This record of what it cost the Apostle Paul to follow his risen Lord faithfully seems incredible. Was ever a human experience like it? He solemnly states that God could vouch for the fact that it was all true in every detail (xi. 31). We should compare similar assertions in Gal. i. 20; Rom. ix. 1 and I Tim. ii. 7. The section is ended by narrating his escape from King Aretas at Damascus (Acts ix. 23-25) soon after his conversion. Aretas was a title for Arabian kings like 'Pharaoh' was used in Egypt. This king reigned over Nabataea, between the Red Sea and the Euphrates, from B.C.9 to 40A.D. He was father-in-law to Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee at the time of the earthly ministry of Christ. Paul had evidently incurred the enmity of this Aretas and that, together with the enmity of the Jews, caused him to make this dramatic escape through a little door or window in the city wall, through which he was lowered in a basket. This indeed was a foretaste of the great suffering and trials yet to come.

In dealing with his Corinthian enemies Paul now passes on to visions and revelations. They, too, possibly claimed to have received visions and once again the Apostle shows that in this respect, as in all others, he was their superior. Or they could have belittled his apostleship because it was based on a vision. The record of the Acts makes it clear that Paul received a number of visions of the risen Lord for imparting truth to him and guiding him in his ministry, commencing with the dramatic confrontation on the road to Damascus. Acts xviii. 9 records one at Corinth, another at Jerusalem during his last visit there (Acts xxiii. 11), another on the voyage to Rome (Acts xxvii. 23). See also Acts ix. 12 & xvi. 9 and note the promise of a future appearing of the Lord to him in Acts xxvi. 16 with further truth.

From these records we can see that the Apostle experienced a number of visions of and concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. He now speaks of himself impersonally, possibly to avoid the appearance of further boasting, very similar to the way in which the Apostle John in the fourth Gospel refers to himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. It has been suggested that Paul is not speaking of a revelatory experience of his in this context, but refers to the vision that John was given which is recorded in the Revelation concerning Paradise. But we should ask ourselves, in what sense does this fit the context which deals with Paul's vindication of his ministry and the spurious claims of the false teachers at Corinth? Paul was at pains to show that his experiences of Divine visions were far superior to any his opponents could claim to have had. The fact that John had a similar revelation does not touch the point at issue. Nor can it be proved that John was the only believer who was ever granted such a revelation. Abraham and those who followed in his steps of overcoming faith, saw the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem and country that John describes (Heb. xi. 8-10, 13-16) and for this they were willing to be strangers and pilgrims and forego much here and now.

Moreover, to keep Paul from becoming too elated and proud because of the abundance of the revelations which he had received concerning Paradise, the Lord gave the Apostle

the counter-balancing 'thorn in the flesh'. When he talks about the 'abundance of the revelations' he is surely speaking of his own experience, not that of the Apostle John. It would be difficult to understand why Paul should receive a thorn in the flesh because John had had an abundant revelation!

We therefore believe that in chapter xii. the Apostle is recounting his own great visionary experience in a modest manner. Let us not forget he states he will now pass on to visions and revelations of the Lord and the context is still that of dealing with his Corinthian opponents in connection with whom he has clearly shown he is infinitely superior in service and suffering.

## From Darkness to Light

No.2(?). “From glory to glory.”  
pp. 1 - 5

The figure of the veil, which covered the face of Moses, and which prevented Israel from perceiving the truth when they read the Old Covenant, is carried in II Cor. iii 18 and iv. 3, 4 by the Apostle, but because the A.V. reads ‘open’ face, and ‘hid’, the reader is not so conscious that the figure persists.

There are a number of different Greek words that can be translated ‘open’, some of which are used by Paul in his epistles to the Corinthians. He speaks of an opened door, and an opened mouth, of speaking boldly (which is elsewhere translated ‘openly’), of making the truth manifest (again using a word, the root of which is elsewhere translated ‘openly’). None of these are employed however in II Cor. iii. 18. The word there found is *anakalupto*. Now this selfsame word is found nowhere else in the New Testament than in verse 14 where it is translated ‘untaken away’ and refers to the veil over the heart and mind of Israel. This restores the Apostle’s connection and enables us to perceive his argument. It also emphasizes the need there is to allow Paul to speak for himself lest, by our translations, we too ‘veil’ the truth. Here are the various combinations of *kalupto* in the N.T.

*Kalumna* is a veil (II Cor. iii. 13, 14, 15, 16).

*Kalupto* is to veil. This word is translated cover and hide and is found in IICor.iv.3 “If our gospel be hid”.

*Apokalupto* is to unveil, or reveal, and occurs 26 times.

*Apokalupsis* is the unveiling, the Apocalypse, the Revelation and is used of the Second Coming of the Lord.

*Anakalupto* is to unveil (II Cor. iii. 14, 18).

*Akatakaluptos* is to be unveiled (I Cor. xi. 5, 15) not merely to be uncovered. As one writer says, a wisp of tulle worn on the head is in no sense obedience to the injunction not to be ‘unveiled’.

*Epikalumna* is a veil drawn over, a cloke (I Pet. ii. 26).

*Epikalupto* is to veil over (Rom. iv. 7).

*Parakalupto* is to veil beside, to screen (Luke ix. 45).

*Perikalupto* is to draw a veil about, to blindfold (Mark xiv. 65; Luke xxii. 64; Heb. ix. 4).

It will be perceived that this root word is used in many combinations, but that in most cases the idea is of hiding from view, whether through modesty, mercy or malignity. The LXX version of Isa. lx. 2 uses *kalupto* when speaking of the darkness that covers the earth, which will only be dispersed by the appearing of the glory of the Lord. In contrast, therefore with Israel, the Apostle speaks of those who are blessed under the New Covenant as those with ‘unveiled face’. These unveiled ones are said to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and that this glory which they behold changes them ‘from

glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord', in contrast with the evanescent glory of the face of Moses, which, so far as the record goes, changed nobody.

*Katoptrizomai*. This word is a compound, derived ultimately from *optomai* 'to see'. While the distinction between *optomai* and *horao* is extremely difficult to define, *optomai* is the more reflective seeing of the two. *Katoptron* is a mirror, and occurs in the LXX of Exod. xxxviii. 8 (verse 26 in the LXX), where we learn from the A.V. that the 'looking glasses' were made of 'brass'.

When writing to the Corinthians in the first epistle, the Apostle uses the figure of a mirror to show the contrast between present 'partial' knowledge, 'by means of a mirror, enigmatically', and the future revelation of truth when we are 'face to face' (ICor.xiii.12). Here in II Cor. iii., he reverts to the figure of a mirror, but this time with other thoughts in view.

Plato uses the word *katoptrizomai*, when he advised drunken persons *to look at themselves in a mirror*. Ancient mirrors were made of highly polished metal, and so it must necessarily have happened, as Parkhurst observes, that the person who looked at his image in them, would have his face strongly illuminated by the reflected rays.

Macknight translated the passage "Receiving and reflecting, in the manner of a mirror". Liddle and Scott, when dealing with *katoptrizomai* say, "In II Cor. iii. 18, to give back, reflect light, as by a mirror". As the believer looks into the burnished mirror of the Gospel, here in particular the New Covenant, he not only beholds, as James says his natural face, and then straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was (James i. 23, 24), but he beholds the glory of the Lord, for he cannot see 'his natural face'; he can only behold himself now as 'in Christ Jesus'. Moses when he beheld the glory of the Lord at the giving of the law, was momentarily transfigured, but like the Old Covenant itself, that glory faded. When we who believe behold and reflect that glory, "we are transfigured".

*Metamorphoo* has come over into our language in the form 'metamorphosis', and is used in science for the changes observed in rocks, and particularly in insects, from the caterpillar to the gorgeous butterfly. This is the word that is translated 'transfigure' in Matt. xvii. 2 and Mark ix. 2 and 'transform' in Rom. xii. 2. It is something for which we cannot be too thankful that evangelical preaching has always emphasized the Cross, the Death and the Resurrection of Christ, but it is to be deplored that neither the Ascension, nor the Transfiguration have been accorded their rightful places in the Gospel. These belong to the Gospel of the Glory, as surely as the others belong to the Gospel of grace. Peter refers to the confirming nature of the vision which he had 'in the holy mount' (II Pet. i. 18). Both Moses and Elijah too, were there, for all glory is passing, only the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ abides. That this 'transfiguration' has a spiritual equivalent in the believer, Rom. xii. 2 makes evident. In both I Cor. xiii and II Cor. iii. & iv. even though the purpose of the illustration is different, there is the passing from the present partial perception of truth to the full blaze of revelation, and this is indicated by the change from looking into a mirror, and speaking face to face. So II Cor. iii. 18 finds its glorious sequel and fulfillment in II Cor. iv. 6, the glory of the

Lord as seen in a mirror, and the glory of God as seen in the face of Jesus Christ. Wonderful as the inspired Scriptures are, their supreme purpose is to lead us to the excelling glory of the Saviour Himself, the one after all but a 'mirror', the other blessed and utter reality.

"From glory to glory." Many and varied interpretations have been given of these words, and to repeat them here would not only use up valuable space, but simply provide an exhibition of human failure and lead to an appearance of boasting in self. When once we have considered the two Covenants, and have noted the fading glory of the one, and the abiding and excelling glory of the other, no interpretation can be acceptable that does not give full recognition to these contrasts. The believer has been changed from the passing glory of the Old Covenant, to the abiding glory of the New, and this phrase is employed in much the same way as the words of John i. 16, 17,

"And of His fullness have all we received, and *grace for grace* (grace over against *anti* grace) for the law (which had grace, but only in type and shadow) was given through Moses, but grace and truth (i.e. real, antitypical grace) came by Jesus Christ."

This change is brought about by "The Spirit of the Lord". The A.V. translators were not happy about this rendering, so they put in the margin as an alternative 'or the Lord, the spirit'. This rendering is adopted by the Revisers, but they too were not quite satisfied, and so they have in the margin the alternative "The Spirit which is the Lord" *Kathaper apo kuriou pneumatos*. The indecision arises out of the order of the words *Kuriou pneumatos* under the heading 'The genitive of apposition'. The reader may possibly welcome a few illustrations of this use of the genitive "The temple of His body" which means, 'the temple, *that is to say*, His body' (John ii. 21). "The earnest of the Spirit" which means, 'the earnest, *which is* the Spirit' (II Cor. v. 5). "The bond of the peace" which means, 'the bond, *that is to say*, that peace (already indicated in ii. 14, 15)' (Eph. iv. 3).

The Apostle had already said in connection with the New Covenant, "The Lord is that Spirit", and so concludes that the transfiguration of the believer is the work of "The Lord", Who is the spirit of this Covenant, in contrast with the letter that killeth, associated with Moses.

One more development of this argument from the veil awaits us, but it is of such importance as to warrant a separate treatment. This we hope to give in our next study.

**No.8. The Veil of “Undispensational” Truth.**  
**pp. 37 - 40**

The figure of the veil, as we have seen, is carried on into the conclusion of II Cor. iii., the words ‘open face’ being literally ‘unveiled face’. We now turn our attention to the sequel in chapter iv. 3, 4:

“But 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 which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . . should shine unto them.”

Let us consider this just as it stands. The ‘lost’ evidently are unbelievers, to whom the gospel is hid. So far we can travel with the A.V. without difficulty. When, however we continue, and read “In whom” we must of necessity understand this of the unbelievers who are lost, but when we continue our reading the difficulty of making sense of the passage increases. “To them that are lost, IN whom . . . . the minds of them which believe not”.

The word translated “lost” is *apollumi*, and is used not only in I Cor. i. 18 and II Cor. ii. 15 but in such passages as John iii. 16.

This same word *apollumi* is used of the passing away of the present creation, ‘they shall perish’ (Heb. i. 11) which ‘waxes old’. This in its turn prefigures the passing away of the Old Covenant, for similar language is used of both:

“In that He saith, a New Covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. viii. 13).

So we see that the word ‘perish’ can be used of a system as well as of persons under that system. We will keep that thought in mind while we proceed. We have already said that the two words ‘hid’ in II Cor. iv. 3 are the translation of *kalupto* ‘to be veiled’, which translation we find in the R.V. Now a veil can be ‘over’ a face, or ‘upon’ a heart (II Cor. iii. 13, 15), and it is in this same context that we read the words “But their minds were blinded (or hardened)”. This blinding or hardening of the mind is the effect produced by the veil, and light will only drawn upon them when that veil is ‘done away’ (II Cor. iii. 14).

*Katargeo*, the word translated ‘done away’ is used four times in this chapter, thus:

“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; WHICH GLORY WAS TO BE DONE AWAY . . . .

For if not that which is DONE AWAY was glorious, . . . .

And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end OF THAT WHICH IS ABOLISHED:

But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Covenant, which veil is DONE AWAY IN CHRIST”

(II Cor. iii. 7, 11, 13, 14).

Returning to II Cor. iv. 3 we notice that it reads ‘it is hid TO them that are lost’. Now the Greek preposition which is here translated ‘to’ is *en*, which reappears at the opening of verse 4 “In whom”. Now the primitive meaning of *en* is ‘in’, but the figure of the veil prevented the translators saying ‘in’ them that are lost, and so they adopted the easier rendering ‘to’ them. The preposition *en*, is constantly used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *beth* ‘in’ ‘with’ and ‘by’, and this is called “The *en* of investiture” as when it is said “The general came *in* his sword, the peers *in* their robes”. The Greek of the N.T. extends this use of the preposition to accompaniments which do not literally ‘invest’ (Green). I Cor. iv. 21 *en rabdo* ‘Am I to come to you WITH a rod?’ In the epistles to the Corinthians, this preposition *en* is translated ‘by’ twenty-five times, thus ‘enriched by Him’, ‘revealed by fire’, etc. We believe the words ‘the lost’ of II Cor. iv. 3 do not refer to the individual unbeliever, but to the terms of the Old Covenant, which have now been ‘abolished’, and accordingly set out these two verses as follows:

“But if our gospel be VEILED, it is VEILED by *those things which are perishing*, (i.e. those things which are ‘abolished’ and ‘done away’, referred to in II Cor. iii. 13, 14), *by which the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*”

In other words, the enemy of truth fabricates a veil out of undispensational passages of Scripture, keeps the mind on a truth that has been abrogated, and so prevents the eye from beholding the light of the New Covenant gospel of glory, that shines, not in the face of Moses, but in the face of Christ. If many of the Lord’s own children set no value on the principle of “Right Division” the enemy of truth, apparently realizes its high and liberating value.

Where the god of this age finds a mind ready for the instillation of doubt he will lead that one to deny the place of Moses altogether, and so strike the first blow at the whole fabric of revelation. The evil one however has no scruples. He can quote Scripture when it suits his purpose. To one he will bring pressure to bear until the inspiration of Scripture is denied. To another he will bring pressure to bear, so that one part of Scripture that is obsolete and undispensational shall so becloud the vision that the present truth shall be obscured. That is what he is represented as doing here in II Cor. iv. A veil has been fabricated out of ‘those things that are perishing’, the law of Moses which is ‘abolished’. The Galatians had this veil over the eyes for a time, so that Paul had to write:

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? . . . . Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing . . . . Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. iv. 21; v. 2, 4).

The Apostle asked the Galatians “Who hath bewitched you?” for the preaching of Jesus Christ crucified had been so set forth before their eyes as to indicate the interposition of this ‘veil’.

Another element in the making of this veil is the fear of man, the fear of consequences, and to this the Apostle refers in Eph. i.:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation IN THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know . . . .” (Eph. i. 17, 18).

Where acknowledgment is withheld, illumination ceases, the veil has done its work.

Pentecostal gifts, wonderful as they were, are likened by the Apostle to the accompaniments of childhood, and like the glory of the face of Moses these gifts were destined to ‘vanish away’. Many a child of God is behind a thick veil fabricated of “Pentecostalism” and fails to realize that the cry ‘Back to Pentecost’ is really ‘Back to the nursery’. We have used the word ‘fabricate’ in its primary sense of making, and a woven material, such as a veil, could be called a ‘fabric’. The word ‘fabricate’ however has taken on a sinister meaning and means, a forgery, or a falsehood, especially with the intention of deceiving.

It is not enough to note that a book purporting to be Scriptural should be loaded with ‘texts’; it is far more important to note what texts are quoted, from which contexts of Scripture they are taken, and what dispensational distinctions are ignored in the process. The express purpose and intention of the evil one is the fabrication of this veil as revealed in verse 4:

“Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (II Cor. iv. 4).

We hope to go on from here in a further article. In the meantime may we read the Word with clear eyes making sure that no veil of tradition affects our view.

## **No.6. The Promise, and the Promises.**

**pp. 68 - 72**

The word *diatheke* occurs 33 times in the N.T., translated ‘covenant’ 20 times and ‘testament’ 13 times, and is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *berith*, the word most often rendered ‘covenant’ in the O.T. We have already given reasons for rejecting the translation ‘testament’ except in the exceptional case of Gal. iii. 15 which deals with a man’s will. We read of a covenant made with the fathers called the covenant of circumcision, which was the special glory of the people of Israel (Acts iii. 25; vii. 8; Gal. iii. 17; Rom. ix. 4). It is utterly impossible to observe the principle of ‘Right Division’ and apply this covenant to the Church of the Mystery. To do so must and does induce blindness and this is the very stuff and fabric of the ‘veil’ employed by the god of this age. The attempt made by some to place the epistle to the Hebrews in the dispensation of the Mystery is a pathetic example of this blinding confusion. “Two Covenants” are contrasted in Gal. iv. 24, the Old Covenant, the first Covenant, the Covenant in which Israel did not continue (II Cor. iii. 14; Heb. ix. 15; viii. 9), and the New Covenant, sometimes called a better Covenant and an everlasting Covenant (Hebrews viii. 6; vii. 22; xiii. 20).

It is impossible to avoid the fact that these covenants, old and new, made with the fathers, sealed with circumcision, and made at Sinai with Moses as the mediator, belong to Israel (Rom. ix. 4). Gentiles could become partakers of New Covenant blessings while the New Covenant people continued as a people before God, and this is recognized in the two epistles to the Corinthians. The true fulfillment of the New Covenant yet awaits the day of the Lord, but the earnest of its blessings was enjoyed during the period that came to an end with the setting aside of Israel at Acts xxviii.

The only reference to a covenant in the five prison epistles is a negative one, namely, where the Apostle emphasizes in Ephesians the utterly bankrupt condition of the Gentile world.

“Gentiles in the flesh . . . . aliens . . . . strangers from the covenants of promise . . .”  
(Eph. ii. 11, 12).

Let us now acquaint ourselves with the ‘promises’ that are found in the N.T., seeing that the Apostle has linked covenants and promises together in this one reference in Ephesians.

The Greek word is *epaggelia* which occurs 53 times in the N.T. Once it is translated ‘message’ (I John i. 5), the remaining 52 occurrences being consistently translated ‘promise’. Here the wayfaring man though a fool (Isa. xxxv. 8) need not err. The whole story lies open on the face of the A.V. First of all we give the occurrences of the word ‘promise’ in those Scriptures outside the Prison epistles.

**Acts.** Five references, to promises made to the fathers or to their children (ii. 29; vii. 17; xiii. 23, 32; xxvi. 6). Two references to the promise of the Spirit (i. 4; ii. 33).

**Luke.** (xxiv. 49) “The promise of the Father” is repeated in the Acts.

**Romans.** Eight references to promises made to Abraham, to Israel, and to the fathers (iv. 13, 14, 16, 20; ix. 4, 8, 9; xv. 8).

**II Corinthians.** “All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen” (i.20). “Having therefore these promises” (vii. 1).

**Galatians.** Nine references to promises made to Abraham (iii. 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 29; iv. 23, 28). One reference to the promise of the Spirit, but directly connected with Abraham (iii. 14).

**Hebrews.** Fourteen references, referring mainly to the promise made to Abraham, and to those of like faith, [one passage, xi. 33 refers to some individual promise made to those who suffered martyrdom] (iv. 1; vi. 12, 15, 17; vii. 6; viii. 6; ix. 15; x. 36; xi. 9, 13, 17, 39).

**II Peter.** Two references, to promises of the Lord’s Second Coming (iii. 4, 9).

**I John.** One reference, the promise of eternal life (ii. 25)

The reader is urged to acquaint himself with these references, observing in each case what the promise is and to whom it was made. He will find no promise that can legitimately be taken by a Gentile believer in the absence of Israel today. We turn from this negative aspect of the case to the epistles written by Paul since Acts xxviii. 28, for it

is here we find our calling, and there we shall discover what promises, if any, belong to the Church of the Mystery.

The epistles that contain the word 'promise' are Ephesians, 4 references; I Timothy, 1 reference; II Timothy, 1 reference, and so six in all. Upon examination, two that are found in Ephesians do not count in the present study, namely the one declaring that the Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise which refer to the past, and the other referring to the command "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Eph. vi. 2). This leaves but four promises in the epistles of the Mystery. Two of these speak of 'life' (ITim.iv.8; II Tim. i. 1), one of the seal (Eph. i. 13) and one of the unique character of the membership of the one Body (Eph. iii. 6). Of the references in the epistles to Timothy, the one in I Tim. iv. 8 must be removed from our list, as it speaks of 'the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come' in a general way, without associating this promise with any covenant made with the fathers, Abraham or Israel or special time period.

We have therefore three passages only in all the N.T. that use the word 'promise' specifically of the church of the Mystery. Let us examine these references carefully, for our hopes are bound up with the doctrines they contain. As II Timothy deals with a promise of life, and life must come before any possibility of experience, let us consider that passage first.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. i. 1).

With this passage we can read the opening verses of the epistle to Titus:

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus i. 2).

The expansion of this promise begins at II Tim. i. 8 with a reference to 'the testimony of our Lord' and with Paul 'His prisoner'. We do well to note the order here. It is not the teaching, idea or fancy of Paul. The epistles are as much the testimony of Jesus Christ as is the Sermon on the Mount, the parables of the mysteries of the kingdom (Matt. xiii.) or the prophecy of Matt. xxiv. The perpetuation of these testimonies was entrusted to either Matthew or Paul according to their stewardship, but inspiration knows no dispensational boundaries. The Christ Who spake on earth, has since spoken from heaven, and Paul is as much His mouthpiece as were Peter and John. The fact that Paul emphasized his prison ministry is in line with the fact that he is still dealing with that dispensation that came into force at Acts xxviii. Saved Gentiles, called during Israel's blindness are in view, and here we find our calling and the basis of our hope. This calling goes back 'before the world began' (II Tim. i. 9; Titus i. 2) *pro chronon aionion*, literally 'before times of ages'. This calling therefore is identical with that of Eph. i. 3,4, which goes back to 'before the foundation (or overthrow) of the world'. The life that is the subject of this promise is defined as 'eternal, or age-abiding life', 'that which is to come', and 'life and immortality'. The figure of speech called *hendiadys* seems to have been employed in II Tim. i. 10 in the phrase 'life and immortality', for there can be no immortality where there is no life. *Hendiadys*, is the figure that uses two words where

one thing is meant in order that one of the words may become emphatic. Thus 'grace and truth' (John i. 17) means 'TRUE grace' as contrasted with types and shadows of the laws, so 'Life and immortality' means 'IMMORTAL life'.

This promise is basic. It is not a distinctive prerogative of the calling of the church of the one Body. Immortality is predicated of all who take part in a blessed resurrection; it is here restated as being equally the hope of the church of the present dispensation.

The remaining references to a promise are those found in Ephesians, "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13); "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister" (Eph. iii. 6, 7).

Note the parallel between II Tim. i. 8-13 and Eph. iii. 1-13. In both the Apostle is 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles'; in both he links the gospel with his own exclusive apostleship 'the gospel whereunto I am appointed a preacher', 'the gospel whereof I was made a minister'. In both he speaks of himself in the first person 'unto me', 'of me', and in both some measure of suffering is linked with this exclusive ministry 'wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulation for you, which is your glory', 'For which cause I also suffer these things'. Eph. iii. 6, while difficult to translate, its threefold inspired emphasis with the preposition *sun* is nevertheless the very core of the Mystery so far as the participants are concerned. Under earlier economies the Gentiles could expect nothing but 'crumbs' that fell from Israel's table, they could look forward to being nothing but ploughmen and vine dressers to a dominant ruling people; at best they could be but wild olives grafted contrary to nature into the true olive, Israel. Here, however, in Eph. iii. 6 there is perfect equality. While by no means satisfied with the translation, the threefold use of the word 'joint' *does at least emphasize this new relationship*, "That the Gentiles should be JOINT heirs, JOINT body, and JOINT partakers". This relationship is new; and it is unique and of the utmost importance. It had never been enjoyed before and has no parallel in the economies that follow. It is exclusive to the dispensation of the Mystery. This promise is sealed to the believer, not as in former times with supernatural gifts, signs and miracles, but with the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of the future inheritance. Just as in Rom. viii. 15, the spirit of adoption was the pledge and earnest of the future adoption of verse 23, explained in that verse as 'the firstfruits of the Spirit', so the believer today has the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of sonship, as an earnest, pledge or firstfruits until the redemption of the purchased possession. The firstfruits are of the same nature as the subsequent harvest. Barley would be no firstfruits of a future harvest of grapes or olives, and the seal and earnest of II Corinthians, which included anointing and confirming gifts (II Cor. i. 21, 22) can be no seal and earnest of a calling which transcends in nature and in sphere any calling previously made known.

We must beware of the devices of the god of this age, who will provide the believer with a veil made out of truth that is undispensational in order that truth for the time, the truth of the Mystery, the truth entrusted to Paul the prisoner, shall not be perceived.

*No.(?).*    **“The Inheritance of the saints in Light.”**  
**pp. 81 - 85**

Darkness, like sin, is not the prerogative of any people or calling. It is as universal as natural man. The nations of antiquity (Rom. i. 21), the nation of Israel (Rom. xi. 10) and the far-off Gentiles of the present day (Eph. iv. 18) all share this deadly thing.

There are five passages in the Prison Epistles that speak of darkness, and one in the Acts that looks forward to the ministry of the Mystery. It is a thing to be noted with thanksgiving that there are many more references to ‘light’ in the N.T. than to ‘darkness’, but so far as the Prison Epistles are concerned there are just the same number of references as there are to darkness, and just the one reference in the Acts. To this can be added the reference in I Tim. vi. 16 concerning the Lord Himself, and the reference to lights that shine in the world (Phil. ii. 15); also the two passages that speak of enlightenment or making men see (Eph. i. 18; iii. 9), and the passage already considered in part ‘and hath brought life and immortality to light’ (II Tim. i. 10). These varied references we will first of all set out so that their distinctive meanings can be kept before us.

***Phos.*    “Light.”**

“To turn them from darkness to light” (Acts xxvi. 18).

“But now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Eph. v. 8).

“But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore He saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. v. 13, 14).

“Giving thanks unto the Father, Which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. i. 12).

***Phoster.*    “A luminary.”**

“Among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. ii. 15).

***Photizo*    “To enlighten.”**

“The eyes of understanding having been enlightened” (Eph. i. 18).

“To make all men *see* what is the fellowship (dispensation R.V.) of the Mystery” (Eph. iii. 9).

***Skotos.*    “Darkness.”**

“Ye were sometimes darkness” (Eph. v. 8).

“The unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. v. 11).

“The rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph. vi. 12).

“Hath delivered us from the power of darkness” (Col. i. 13).

***Skotizomai.*    “To be darkened.”**

“Having the understanding darkened” (Eph. iv. 18).

When the Apostle stood before Agrippa, he made known *for the first time* what the Lord had said to him on the road to Damascus.

### Paul before Agrippa (Acts xxvi.).

- A | 1-3. Agrippa acknowledged as an expert.
- B | 4-7. Paul's manner of life from his youth. A Pharisee.
- C | 8. Personal appeal to Agrippa. "Incredible" (*Apistos*).
- D | 9-15. Contrary to Jesus of Nazareth. Jerusalem. Damascus.
- E | 16-18. Paul's Commission. The two commissions. |
  - a | Stand (*Histemi*).
  - b | Witness.
  - c | Both. I have . . . I will.
  - d | People and Gentiles.
  - e | Forgiveness. Inheritance.
- D | 19-21. Obedience to heavenly vision. Damascus. Jerusalem.
- E | 22, 23. Paul's Commission. The first commission re-stated. |
  - a | Continue (*Histemi*).
  - b | Witnessing.
  - c | *None other things*.
  - e | Suffer. Rise.
  - d | People and Gentiles.
- C | 24-28. Personal appeal to Festus, and of Paul to Agrippa (*Pisteuo*).
- B | 29. Reference to present manner of life. Except bonds.
- A | 31, 32. Agrippa gives his opinion.

We will not go over the ground already covered by the Apostle in his former defences, but deal rather with those items that he brings into prominence in this particular speech before Agrippa.

The Apostle begins by going over the ground already covered by Acts ix. and xxii.—his early life, his persecuting zeal and the vision on the road to Damascus. At verse 16, however, he breaks new ground. Truth hitherto unrecorded is now revealed, and as this new revelation is of vital importance to all who rejoice in the dispensation of the Mystery, verses 16-18 must be given our closest attention. Let us note first that it is here for the first time that we are told what the Lord Himself said to the Apostle on the road to Damascus. It may, perhaps, be objected that this statement is not true, and that in Acts ix. we can read for ourselves what the Lord said. To make sure about this point, let us turn to Acts ix.:

- Verses 1 and 2 record the journey to Damascus.
- Verses 3 and 4 record the vision and the Voice.
- Verse 5 reveals that it is the Lord Who speaks.
- Verse 6 tells Paul to go into the city and wait for instructions.
- Verses 15 and 16 record what the Lord said *to Ananias about Paul*, but that is all.

It is clear therefore, that what the Lord actually said to Paul is not recorded in Acts ix., and it will be found that this is also true of Acts xxii. Chapter xxii. records *the words of Ananias* (verses 13-15), and we also learn that Paul was to be a witness of all that he had seen and heard, but it is to Acts xxvi. that we must turn to learn *for the first time* what the Lord actually said to Paul at his conversion and commission.

The new features contained in this record are found in the words “Both”, “I will appear unto thee”, and “Now I send thee” in verses 16 and 17, and in the summary of doctrine contained in verse 18:

“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.”

The close association between these words and the doctrine of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians will be obvious.

In contrast with this new commission, recorded here for the first time, is the old commission to which the Apostle returns in verses 20-23. In these verses he preaches “repentance”, and proclaiming “none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come”, which obviously could not refer to the Mystery hid in God.

We have already seen from Acts xx. 24 that Paul had received some commission from the Lord that was intimately associated with “bonds”, and now, having appealed to Cæsar, the Apostle is at liberty to reveal the fact that from the beginning he had known that his commission was two-fold:

- (1) Witnessing to Israel and the Gentiles the things which he had seen and heard, while
- (2) Awaiting a future appearing of the Lord, when the terms of the new ministry associated with prison would be made known to him.

At last the fresh appearing had taken place, and the terms of the new commission given. Verse 18 anticipates, in a condensed form, the doctrine that is more fully expressed in Ephesians and Colossians (*see* Eph. i. 7, 13, 14, 18, and Col. i. 12, 13).

The word “both” necessitates a two-fold witness. Just as a believing and intelligent reading of John xvi. 12-14 compels us to seek for a subsequent revelation after the Spirit of Truth had come, so equally a believing and intelligent reading of Acts xxvi. 16-18 compels us to seek for that subsequent revelation of truth that was given after Paul had become the prisoner of the Lord for the Gentiles. This revelation is found in those epistles that bear the stamp of prison, namely: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and II Timothy. These epistles contain the revelation of the Mystery, and give dispensational grounds for the Gentiles’ right to the blessings summarized in Acts xxvi. 18.

*(Acts of the Apostles* 32, pp.99-105).

The condition of the Gentiles at this time is indicated in Eph. iv. 18; v. 8 and vi. 12.

### *Moral Darkness.*

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. iv. 17-19).

This, according to verse 22, is the ‘old man’ and his ‘conversation’; this is a darkness like that of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt. Two words are employed in the Greek N.T. of Ephesians for ‘vain’ namely *kenos* empty, referring to the contents of anything, and *mataios*, foolish, idle, useless, empty, referring to the results. *Kenos* is used in Eph.v.6 “Let no man deceive you with vain words”. *Mataios* is used in Eph. iv. 17 “The vanity of their mind”. It is as though ‘Ichabod’ had been written across the mind of man, rendering all his thinking, his planning, his devising, purposeless. Sin, indeed makes man, originally made in the image of God, ‘come short’. Paul places over against the vanity of the mind, the darkening of the understanding. The faculty of moral reflection, *dianoia*, the ability to ‘think through’ a problem, was darkened, and this darkness was moral, and it was the outcome of the alienating character of sin. These Ephesians were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. ii. 12) and alienated from the life of God (Eph. iv. 18). As Gentiles they suffered dispensational alienation, and this but reflected the deeper moral alienation of their hearts.

Enlightenment is associated with knowledge (Eph. i. 18), darkness with ignorance. Now there is an ignorance which excites our pity, and which it would be unjust to punish, but the ignorance here intended is of the heart, and can be rendered callousness.

*Porosis*, is derived from *poros*, a stone, something like marble, and in medicine, a calculous or chalky concretion. Dr. Johnson says of the word ‘the hard substance by which broken bones are united’. The verb *poroo*, means to callous, to make insensible to the touch. In two passages, this verb is translated ‘to blind’ (Rom. xi. 7; II Cor. iii. 14), even as the noun *porosis* is so translated in Rom. xi. 25 and Eph. iv. 18. An insensibility whether of the eye, the ear, the mind or the heart, was the terrible condition of the Gentile world at the time when the light of God’s glorious revelation of grace was about to dawn.

In Rom. i. 24, 26 and 28, the word *paradidomi* which in Eph. iv. 19 is translated ‘have given (themselves) over’, is used of the nations “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness”, ‘to vile affections’, ‘to a reprobate mind’. This degenerate way was not followed with regret or any apparent hesitation, but was pursued ‘with greediness’. What a picture of moral degradation, a darkness indeed that recalls that which enveloped Egypt, a darkness that could be felt. It must have been grace indeed that could deliver from such a condition, translate from such an authority, and make meet for partaking of the inheritance of the saints IN LIGHT.

*No.(?).*    **The Excellent Glory, in the face of Jesus Christ.**  
**pp. 101 - 104**

We have been some time arriving at the ‘text’ adopted as the heading of this series, namely II Cor. iv. 6, but on the other hand, a text is not a verse lifted out of its context and used merely as a peg upon which to hang the three points of a sermon. The text should conform to its derivation *textus* ‘that which is woven, a fabric’, and so related to the whole as the threads of a textile fabric are related to the weft. Shakespeare’s words are worth remembering:

“In religion  
What error, but some sober brow  
Will bless it, and approve it with a text” (*Merchant of Venice*).

And so all the threads, the ‘watering down of the Word’ that is so strenuously repudiated, the solemn comparison of the two Covenants, the veiled face of Moses, the unveiled face of the believer, the veil fabricated by the evil one out of undispensational related texts, and the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, all these threads are now gathered up and presented in the words:

“For 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”  
(II Cor. iv. 6).

We have no knowledge, nor do we possess the power to understand what the conditions of life must have been before the overthrow of the world. We do know that so far as God Himself is concerned, He was under no necessity to be faced with darkness before He could appreciate light, “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (I John i. 5).

“Make no mistake about this, my beloved brothers: all we are given is good, and all our endowments are faultless, descending from above, from the Father of the heavenly lights, Who knows no change of rising and setting, Who casts no shadow on the earth”  
(James i. 16, 17, Moffatt).

During the ages, darkness alternates with light, and good is set over against evil, but these alternations are limited to the time being, and when the ages have run their courses the former things will pass away and a suggestion of what will be the new condition is found in the New Jerusalem:

“The city had no need of the sun, neither the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof . . . . . there shall be no night there”  
(Rev. xxi. 23, 25).

During the ages, however, we see through a glass darkly, we reflect as in a mirror the glory of the Lord; we see the story of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

There is a blending in II Cor. iv. 6 of the story of Gen. i. 3, a blending with the record concerning the face of Moses and the prophecies that speak of a day when the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, when the veil spread over the earth shall be removed and Israel's day shall have dawned, and they arise and shine and moreover there is a reference to the Apostle's own experience on the road to Damascus.

In our studies of the book of Job, which are to be found in *The Berean Expositor* Volumes XXXV and XXXVI, we noted a number of passages that anticipated the writings of Moses and the Prophets, but confessed that there were many more that awaited the patient investigator. We believe Paul, whose knowledge of the Septuagint Version is manifest makes reference here in II Cor. iv. 6 to a passage in Job which we had not previously noted. The parallel is not so obvious in the A.V. but the Greek rendering of Job xxxvii. 15 *phos (poiesas) ek skotus* "Light having made out of darkness", is similar to the Greek of II Cor. iv. 6 (*ho eipon) ek skotous phos (lampsai)* "The One commanding out of darkness light to shine".

We expected to find the Greek word *paragello* 'to command' employed by the Apostle here, but the Greek word *eipon* 'to say' is used instead. At first this seems less forceful than the English word 'command', but the true intention of *eipon* 'lays more in the adjuncts than in what is said' (Dr. Bullinger's *Lexicon*), consequently as Parkhurst points out:

- (1) With a view to enquiring, it is in fact *to ask* (Matt. xi. 3).
- (2) In reply it is *to answer*, as in Matt. ii. 5.
- (3) With a view to obtaining anything, it is *to request* (Mark ix. 18).

At times this word means 'to command', and is so translated in the A.V. eight times, seven of the occurrences being in the Gospels and one in the epistles, the text under review. It is very likely that the Apostle had in mind the wondrous simplicity of Gen.i.3 "And God SAID . . . ." where the word of the Lord was with creative power.

Something of the innate power in the word spoken by the Lord can be seen in the usage of Matt. iv. 3 "If Thou be the Son of God, command . . . ." Consequently where Paul uses *eipon* 'to say', Job used *poieo* 'to make', for with God there is no divorce between word and deed. This light of the gospel illuminates not the surface of the earth, as in Gen. i., but illuminates the heart. The heart can be darkened (Rom. i. 21) and nothing less than the light of the gospel can dispel that darkness. This illumination is for a purpose. The A.V. has the verb 'to give' in italics. The actual word is *pros* 'toward' indicating a goal, 'In order to the shining forth'. We must not forget the figure already employed in II Cor. iii. 18 'beholding' or 'reflecting' the glory of the Lord. We are illuminated in order that others may catch some of the beams that have so blessedly enlightened our darkness. "The light" of the gospel of glory of verse 4 becomes 'the light' of the knowledge of the glory of God of verse 6, and in this later reference some O.T. prophecies seem to be included.

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. ii. 14).

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa. lx. 1-3).

The expression ‘as the waters cover the sea’ demands a word of explanation. These words cannot apply to the sea itself, for the sea is composed of water, and the waters of the sea cover the sea-bed. The waters here refer to those living waters that are to flow from Jerusalem in the coming day, ‘half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea’ (Zech. xiv. 8), the ‘former’ being the eastern, and from Ezek xlvi. we learn by the reference to Engedi that this ‘former sea’ is what is known as The Dead Sea. Wherever these healing waters were seen to travel they brought life in their train. A paraphrase of Hab. ii. 14 might read:

“The earth shall be filled with the life giving knowledge of the glory of the Lord, even as the living waters that flow from Jerusalem, shall, in that day of restoration and Jubilee, blot out the typical Dead Sea.”

“The gospel of the glory of Christ” and “the knowledge of the glory of God” (II Cor. iv. 4, 6) are complementary, the one explaining and fulfilling the other. Glory is the ultimate, grace is the channel or means. The Gospel is received by faith; it leads on to knowledge. The interchange of teaching concerning ‘glory’ in chapter iii. (*doxa* is used eleven times), prepares for this glory that excelleth, the face of Jesus Christ being placed over against the face of Moses; the emancipating glory of the One set over against the fading glory of the other.

The word ‘face’ is often employed as a figure (the figure called *Synecdoche*) for the whole person, the most personal and recognizable part being used for the whole. Luke i. 76 speaks of a messenger going before ‘the face of the Lord’, Luke ii. 31 speaks of a preparation before ‘the face of all people’. So II Cor. ii. 10 reads ‘in the person of Christ’, which is identical except for the addition of the name ‘Jesus’ (which many critical texts omit) with the original of II Cor. iv. 6, *en prosopo Christou* (II Cor. ii. 10), *en prosopo Iesou Christou* (II Cor. iv. 6).

In this brief study we have traveled from the Covenant of Sinai with its ministration of death, to the New Covenant, sealed by a better sacrifice than Moses ever offered and leading to a liberty and a glory that Moses could never promise. If, however, we leave the matter here, we shall in our turn be guilty of spreading a veil over the eyes of the believer for however excellent may be the glory of the New Covenant, that Covenant has no place in the dispensation of the Mystery. Darkness still gives place to light in this most blessed of dispensations, and glory is still most intimately associated with the person of Christ, but Ephesian truth does not rest upon the New Covenant, but upon one infinitely better promise, a promise made in Christ before the overthrow of the world, and unrelated either with Abraham or with Moses. It is therefore imperative that having gone so far we must go further. We must consider the ground of the dispensation of the Mystery; we must distinguish ‘the promise’ made before age times from all other

promises made since and must seek a clear understanding of the true dispensational place of the New Covenant as compared with the basis of God's dealings with far off sinners of the Gentiles. To this we must apply ourselves in subsequent articles.

## Helpers of your joy

### The place that joy occupies

It is surprising in one sense, to note the emphasis which the apostle Paul puts upon “joy”. When we come to think of the life he lived, the nature and revelation made known to and through him—the stewardship of the Mystery—his bonds and imprisonment, the loneliness and the abuse that seemed his daily meat, we should not be surprised after the manner of men, if “joy” never entered his vocabulary.

But, thank God we do not speak after the manner of men, having seen enough of the grace of God to be prepared for songs in the night and psalms from the innermost prison. Again and again in the epistle to the Philippians Paul bids his readers “rejoice”, even though some brethren (not merely pagan enemies) were endeavouring to add affliction to his bonds.

The ministry for which *The Berean Expositor* was first called in existence, and which justified its continuance, is one so fraught with problems, and which makes such demands upon both reader and writer, that it is absolutely necessary that into all the hard study, and in some cases isolation that the truth entails, should be brought the remembrance that faith is not cold but warm and living, and that there is a “*joy of faith*” (Phil. 1:25) as well as the *subject matter* of the faith, the *fight* of faith and *steadfastness* in the faith. Faith not only leads to justification, acceptance, and life, blessings indeed beyond computation, but to “joy and peace in believing”(Rom. 15:13) with which we should be as much filled, as “with the spirit”.

Charles H. Welch

## Helpers of your joy

### The place that joy occupies

(Continued from May 1974)

Some of the fruits of the Spirit are enumerated in Galatians 5:22,23 which sets forth a veritable cluster of Eschol, nine in all, including gentleness, temperance, and faith. The first in order of mention is “love”, without which all knowledge, faith, and even martyrdom are reduced to nothing: and second in order of mentions is “joy”. Can we conceive of gentleness without joy and still associate it with the Spirit? Temperance without joy may be a mischief-worker and a cause for stumbling. A joyless faith producing a joyless creed neither commends the gospel nor glorifies the Lord. Joy differs from happiness largely and depends upon what “happens”, whereas joy is deeper, being independent of circumstances. The Apostle may at one time be exalted and at another

depressed: he may be full or hungry, be in comparative comfort or in lonely neglect. He may be even in fetters and prison, but his joy remains unchanged.

Strictly speaking, there should be no need in a magazine of this type specifically to deal with such a subject. We should all be so keen to learn all that is possible concerning the Lord and His Word, that the pursuit of some intricate piece of grammar should be a joyful undertaking, the labour of discovering or of verifying and using a structure should be as joyful a piece of work as the singing of a lovely melody. Indeed, a peep behind the scenes would sometimes reveal that when after hours of close study, some intricate point had been resolved, or a complicated structure discovered, and the writer's manner of celebrating the event so far removed from such the deportment we usually associate with such studies. Some exuberance not only echoes Archimedes' famous cry of Eureka, but, and which is more to the point, is an echo of a joy such as that of Jeremiah who exclaimed: "Thy words were found and I did eat them: and or of the Psalmist who said: "I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil" (Psa. 119:162).

*"I will not leave thee"*

The subject of Christian joy may be approached from several angles, and it is associated with a variety of themes, but the one theme that calls for immediate expression seems to be the close association that Scripture indicates as existing between joy and the presence of the Lord. We might establish the truth of this by an appeal to the epistle to the Philippians, where one of the key-words is "rejoice", and where in chapter four the secret is revealed that "The Lord is near". We might appeal to the Psalmist who said: "in Thy presence is fullness of joy" (Psa. 16:11), and realize that all such enjoyment of the Lord's presence in this life is an anticipation of that future day of resurrection when we shall be satisfied (Psa. 17:15).

But in the first epistle of John we read: "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4). Upon examination it will be discovered that John is writing about fellowship with the Father and with the Son, of walking in the light as He is in the light. In other words he associates joy with the presence of the Lord.

Looking back to the verse in Psalm 16, proceeding that quoted above we read: "For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (Psa. 16:10), and this reference provided us with the first of many aspects of that experimental enjoyment of the presence of God, which is our theme.

*"Thou wilt not leave me"*. These words of the Lord spoken in the very valley of the shadow of death are calculated to minister to the joy of all who trust in Him. We observe that:

(1) The promise, "I will not leave thee" arises out of salvation itself:

"Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou has been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation" (Psa. 27:9).

As the God of our salvation we can confidently call upon Him to "leave us not", and when we contemplate all that salvation has cost Him, we may gladly rest upon the fact that He will not leave those to perish who have been bought with such a price.

(2) “I will not leave thee” is also implicit in the fact that we so belong to the God of our Salvation, that we are called by His name:

“O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy Name’s sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee. O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst Thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst Thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy Name: leave us not” (Jer. 14:7-9).

The context of this passage is one of terrible retribution. Not until Daniel, in his prayer of the ninth chapter, pleads for the city “which is called by Thy name...and They people (that) are called by Thy name” (Dan.9:18, 19) does an answer of peace come. Nevertheless, in spite of the long wait of 70 years, the prayer was heard. We are called by *His* name; He has called us by our name, and we can confidently put up the plea: “We are called by Thy name: leave us not”.

(3) “I will not leave thee” is implied in the promises of God:

“And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of” (Gen.28:15)

Here is a ground of strong confidence. “I am *with* thee”; I will *keep* thee”; “I will *bring* thee” are all implied in the words: “For I will not leave thee until...”

(4) “I will not leave thee” is our strength in the conflict and our pledge of victory:

“Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee, He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Deut. 31:16).

*“I will not forsake thee”*

Whenever we hear the words, “I will not leave thee”, we immediately add, if only mentally, the words, “neither will I forsake thee”. In one sense “leaving” and “forsaking” have an almost synonymous meaning and, indeed, the same original word is sometimes rendered “leave” and sometimes “forsake”. There are, however, one or two passages that we ought not to omit from our study together, and we trust that the survey will minister something of the joy of faith to any who may know something of what it means to be forsaken here below.

At the dedication of the temple, Solomon blessed the Lord saying,

“Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto His people Israel, according to all that He promised: there hath not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses His servant. The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; let Him not leave us, nor forsake us” (1 Kings 8:56,57)

The way in which Solomon links together the fulfillment of the promise with the plea, “leave us not, neither forsake us”, leads our thoughts back to the beginning of Israel’s history in the land, under Joshua:

“As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee...And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye may know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof” (Josh. 1:5, 23:14).

Let us notice one or two features that minister to the comfort of the believer.

(1) The fact that the Lord will not forsake His people is a pledge of preservation: “For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not His saints; they are preserved for ever” (Psa 37:28). Surely it must minister to our joy to realize that in spite of all the opposition of the enemy, and of the betrayal of their own failings, the saints are not forsaken, and their preservation is assured.

(2) the fact that the Lord will not forsake His people is because He is gracious and merciful, and slow to anger:

“...in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, this is thy God that brought thee out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations: yet Thou in Thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go ... Yet many years didst Thou forbear them, and testifiest against them... Nevertheless for Thy great mercies’ sake Thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them: for Thou are a gracious and merciful God” (Neh. 9:17,18,19,30,31).

(4) The fact that the Lord will not forsake His people delivers them from bondage of fear: “Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:5,6).

Many children of God are compelled to walk in lonely paths. Faithfulness often cuts them off from fellowship. Natural ties are also severed, and friends prove false or frail. It is to such that the blessed assurance comes, with all its sweetness, that the Lord will not forsake them:

“When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up” (Psa.27:10).

“Can a woman forget her sucking child...Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee” (Isa. 49:15).

“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me” (2 Tim.4:16,17).

The Apostle knew a little of the fellowship of His Lord’s sufferings. He, like the Saviour, was forsaken by his own, but there the parallel ceases. Paul could add, “notwithstanding the Lord stood with me”, but his Saviour, and ours, had to cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (Matt.27:46).

Let us never forget in all the joy that comes to us by His gracious presence, that part of the price for such blessing included the forsaking of the Holy One for our sakes.

CHARLES H. WELCH

## Helpers of Your Joy

*“I will be with thee”*

The Lord has promised that He will neither leave nor forsake, His own, and in his double promise of His presence we rejoice. The words “not leave” and “not forsake”, however, are negatives, and so we will turn to a positive declaration:

“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer Him: I will be with him in trouble (Psa. 91:15)

There is no promise in Scripture that the believer will be exempt from trouble, but what is promised is that he need never be alone in his trouble. The Lord has said: “I will be with him in trouble”. The saint may pass through fire and water, but the Lord will be with him and sanctify to him his deepest distress:

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee” (Isa. 43:2).

Joseph passed through a long period of trial and testing, yet in the midst of it all the Scriptures reveal the hidden source of his joy. First of all he was sold by his brethren into Egypt. At this the iron entered into his soul:

“Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron (Psa. 105:18).

Or, as the margin says, “His soul came into iron”. It must surely have been a bitter experience for the beloved son of Israel to be sold as a slave, and sold by his very brethren: yet one blessing, at least was his, the Lord was with him:

“Potphar...bought him...and the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man” (Gen. 39:1,2)

or, as Whycliffe’s quaint version puts it, “He was a lucky fellow”.

But Joseph suffered yet deeper humiliation. He was falsely condemned and put into prison, a position not conducive to joy or peace, which often produces resentment and rebellion:

“Joseph’s master...put him into the prison...but the Lord was with Joseph...and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper” (Gen. 39:20-23).

We are too apt to gauge our prosperity by our possessions or our standing in society, but these words reveal that truth prosperity is independent of circumstances: imprisonment may go hand in hand with prosperity, the deciding factor being the presence or absence of the Lord. The three men who were cast into the fiery furnace at the command of Nebuchadnezzar were certainly in an extremely perilous position, yet of them it could be written that upon their body the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their heads singed:

“Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”

Asked the king, and he continued:

“Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt: and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Dan.3:24,25).

Caleb, who wholly followed the Lord, knew the power of this blessed fellowship. At the division of the land under Joshua, Caleb came forward and reminded Joshua of what the Lord had said concerning both himself and Joshua forty-five years earlier:

“Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then shall I be able to drive them out, as the Lord said...Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb” (Josh 14:12-14).

Caleb’s one qualification was: “if so be the Lord will be with me”. That being granted, success was certain. The name of the place inherited by Caleb was Kirjath-arba and was named after Arba, a great man among the Anakims. The name was changed to Hebron, a word that means fellowship, and therefore enshrines the very thought of the gracious presence that Caleb so desired.

In His presence is fullness of joy, and that presence includes the promised: “I will not leave you”, “I will not forsake you”, and “I will be with you”. Thus does the conscious enjoyment of the presence of the Lord minister to our joy.

*“The joy of Thy salvation”*

Despite the pressure of circumstances, the depressing effect of ill-health, the corrosion of care, and the anxieties that pertain to this life, the fact that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, should lighten our everyday experience with joy.

The wise men from the east exemplify this. They had traveled far in search of the One that had been born King of the Jews, and, “when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy” (Matt.2:10). Notice how the inspired narrative emphasizes their joy. It is not enough to say that “they were glad” or that “they rejoiced”. They not only rejoiced, they rejoiced *with joy* and, more than that, with *exceeding* joy, yeah, exceeding *great* joy. And all this because the star at length stood over Bethlehem. What therefore ought to be our state of mind and heart who know not only the grace of Bethlehem, but the glory of Calvary, the triumph of the resurrection, and that ascension far above all!

Before the wise men found cause for rejoicing, the promise even of the forerunner of Christ was associated with joy. To Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, the angel said: “And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth” (Luke 1:14).

When Christ was born, not only did men rejoice, but angels too, were moved to say, “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy” (Luke 2:10).

The gospel is not only glad tidings of great joy that heralded the Saviour's birth, but an ever-living power unto salvation, and this, too, should lead us to rejoice. The Lord assures us that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). In spite of darkness of the present day, sinners are still repenting, and joy is still experienced in heaven. Shall we not also share this joy? Shall we not find a ground of rejoicing in every trophy of grace?

The report that God has opened a door of faith in any district should, if we are in the right spirit, fill us with joy:

"They passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren" (Acts 15:3).

Paul and Barnabas were on their way to Jerusalem to battle for the faith. They might have caused a great deal of harm had they discussed this matter with the churches in Phenice and Samaria. They chose the better path, and left great joy behind them.

Let us be unselfish in this matter of joy and will be flow like a river.

*"The joy set before"*

Writing to the church at Thessalonians the Apostle says that he gives thanks and prays unceasingly concerning their work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father, and then proceeds to tell them that he knew that they were the elect of God: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1 Thess.1:4).

While Paul has been the recipient of an abundance of revelations, and had received the stewardship of the mysteries of God, and had been caught away to paradise, there to hear unspeakable words, there is nowhere any suggestion that Paul or any many could ever look into the Book of Life, or that any man ever received from God private information concerning His elective purposes. Yet Paul knew that the Thessalonian saints were elect of God. He knew it *by their fruits*.

We may on some occasion have walked through an orchard. We may have admired and sampled some of its luscious fruits. Throughout the whole of our exploration of that orchard we should probably have not seen one single root, yet we should "know" that the invisible roots were there and functioning properly by reason of the visible fruit. So Paul saw the fruits of faith:

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye become followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much afflictions, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thess.1:5,6).

The place that joy occupies here is only seen in true perspective as we view it in juxtaposition with the "much affliction". This is a spiritual joy, the fruit of the Spirit, and

therefore in no wise dependent upon external circumstances. The reception of the gospel in its saving power, though accompanied by afflictions without, was accompanied by joy within, a joy that no man takes away.

In like manner, the Hebrew saints: “took joyfully the spoiling of their goods” (Heb.10:34). Unless there be some compensating element, no person takes joyfully the spoiling of his goods, and these Hebrew believers were not abnormal; they no more liked to see their poverty ruined than we should, but their joy was an anticipation of future glory:

“Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance (Heb.10:34).

This is the spirit of the Lord Himself:

“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” (Heb.12:2).

Thus all present joy is an anticipation of those pleasures which are for evermore at God’s right hand. To live looking for that blessed hope will minister to our joy even though goods are spoiled and afflictions suffered.

C. H. WELCH

## Helpers of your Joy

A great cause of rejoicing.

If we were asked what constituted our greatest joy, what should we answer? Our individual answers would probably reveal our spiritual apprehension. One very old saint has left on record what constituted his greatest joy, and we may profit by considering it:

“I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 3,4).

Here is a ground of rejoicing, far removed from personal feelings or motives, that we should do well to know. In his first epistle, it will be remembered this same Apostle had much to say concerning those who *say* and those who *walk* (1 John 1:6-10) Further he wrote:

“He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4).

“ He that saith he abideth in Him ought to himself also so to walk, even as He walked”  
(1 John 2:6).

John sums up his teaching in the words of 1 John 3:18:

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and truth”.

He speaks scathingly of the boast of light that is accompanied by hatred of the brethren (1 John 2:9). He tells his readers that the doing of righteousness is the finest evidence that they are born of Him (1 John 2:29). He declares that all the boasted possession of the love of God is nullified by lack of love (1 John 3:17; 4:20). He had written telling them of the many antichrists and of the domination of the lie. In his second epistle he said: “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth” (2 John 4), and, as we have seen, in his third epistle he says that he has no greater joy than to hear that his children walk in truth.

Some of us are apt to look around with the eyes of Elijah and say: “I only am left, and they seek my life”. The Apostle tells us to consider others better than ourselves, and if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, to reckon, or impute, these things. If we do not rejoice greatly whenever we hear of the Lord’s children putting into practice the doctrine they have learned, we have missed a real cause of joy, and allowed on part of our spiritual life to remain undeveloped. True joy is unselfish, and finds its cause in the blessing of others.

*“Count it all joy”.*

We found that John has no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in truth. What should we say we counted “all joy” if we were asked? James writing to the dispersion said:

“My brethren, count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations” (Jas 1:2).

This is certainly not a natural point of view. Most of us would count it all joy if we had escaped divers temptations. James, however, makes it clear that he is no misanthrope, no man who is only happy when he is miserable. He proceeds to explain:

“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him” (Jas 1:3, 4:12).

He can count it all joy and be called blessed, not because of the temptations themselves, but because of their issue.

In their meaning in modern usage, the words “temptation” and “tempt” are somewhat limited, but the true meaning, that of making trial, is still found in the word “attempt”, into which none dream of reading any idea of temptation. Temptation, or trial, can then be contemplated with joy by reason of its effects. It works patience, it leads to full maturity, it may at last lead to a crown. Much in the same spirit are the words of Paul in Romans 5:3,4: “We glory in tribulation”, he said, not for tribulation’s own sake, but because we know that “tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope”. Peter also conveys much the same thought when he says:

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth (though it be tried with fire), might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7).

Joy therefore may accrue from the most joyless of circumstances. We look beyond the present and immediate experience to see what its outworking will be. And *if* temptation or trial produces patience then we may rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is good to cultivate an eye for this joy, or it may remain hidden and unseen in many a dark circumstance.

### *“Unspeakable Joy”*

Zacharias was smitten with dumbness because of his unbelief. Christ was as a lamb dumb before his shearers. Yet again, some are rendered dumb through very excess of joy. The nearer any experience is the heart of things the less inclined are we to discuss it or talk about it. There is peace that passeth understanding, and there is a joy that is unspeakable:

“Whom having not seen, ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8).

There is a close connection between the invisible, “Ye see Him not”, and the unspeakable in this verse. At times we are tempted to endorse the desire expressed in the children’s hymn where it says:

“I wish that His hand had been placed on my head,  
That His arms had been thrown around me;  
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,  
‘Let the little ones come unto Me’ ”.

Yet the Saviour Himself pronounces a blessing upon those who believed although they had been seen Him:

“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou has seen Me, thou has believed: blessed are they who believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

And the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians:

“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” (2 Cor. 5:16).

CHARLES H. WELCH

## Let This Mind be in You

pp. 90 - 94

In the context of ‘lowliness of mind’ or humility of mind (Phil. ii. 3, 5), Paul writes to the Philippian Christians exhorting them “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”.

Many are the exhortations in Christian circles today to be humble, an emphasis which we hasten to add is perfectly Scriptural. Yet before the exhortation can be effective, we need to know what is meant by humility. Is humility an attitude to life which prevents us from either having convictions, or having them, from expressing them? “Hast thou convictions? Have them to thyself” seems to be the principle behind much that passes for humility at the present time. To be humble in the popular sense, we must be spineless and opinionless, always charming, and not daring to disagree with anybody. Or there is the self-conscious humility which results in a person well able to perform a particular task, and aware of the ability, responding “I could not possibly do that—I am sure some one else could do it much better”.

There are two particular references in Scripture which lay down the fundamental of humility: I Pet. v. 6 reads “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due season”. Similarly, James writes (iv. 10) “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up”. True humility is ‘under the mighty hand of the Lord’, is ‘in the sight of the Lord’—and such humility may, on occasions, appear ‘in the sight of men’ to be nothing short of sheer arrogance and conceit. A member of a committee spoke out of strongly, sincerely held Scriptural convictions against a proposed course of action, and was met with the response ‘What we need is a little humility’. In such a situation the believer’s response can only be ‘whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye’ (Acts iv. 19).

But for the most perfect exposition of true humility, we must look to the passage following Paul’s exhortation to “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. ii. 5-11).

Here is One (verse 6) “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God”. *The Companion Bible* tells us that *en morphe* (the Greek translated ‘in the form’) signifies ‘in the essential form of God’ Thayer says ‘the form by which a person or thing strikes the vision, the external appearance’. Perhaps we might paraphrase it by saying “Who was obviously God”. The thought takes us back to John i. 1—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. In essence God and Christ Jesus are indistinguishable. The significance of this fact is that here is a Being Who alone, either in or out of creation, has every right to insist upon His rights, to assert His abilities and claim His position. Yet, being in the essential form of God, He ‘thought it not robbery to be equal with God’.

The word 'robbery' has been variously explained: *The Schofield Bible* margin gives 'a thing to be grasped after' and suggests the comparison of Gen. iii. 5-6, where Eve considered that to 'be as gods' was something worth disobeying the explicit command of God in order to obtain it. *The Concordant Version* renders the phrase 'deems it not pillaging to be equal to God'; another suggestion is that He "thought it not a robber's prize". Christ's equality with God was not considered by Him to be of such value as to merit the deliberate disregard of God's will, nor to the extent of *violently* clinging to it at all costs. Here is the basic principle of Christian humility; nothing, nothing at all must hinder us from submission to the will of God. Our 'rights', any intrinsic 'worth' we may consider we have, reputation or standing, all must be laid under the mighty hand of God.

The next two verses of the passage go on to detail the *extent* to which Christ Jesus submitted to the will of God. He 'made Himself of no reputation', as the A.V. renders it. More accurately 'He emptied Himself'. This does not for one moment suggest that (as some say), He became a mere man, with a man's limitations—'a child of His times' is the phrase often used. He emptied Himself *in the sight of God*, not before men. An illustration which perhaps gives some help is that of a prince who wishes to discover for himself how some of his countrymen live; he divests himself of all his 'royalty', dresses and lives exactly as do his countrymen, and goes to live among them as one of them. He is still 'royal', he has not renounced royalty, and could, if he so wished at any time, exercise all the authority of royalty; but for the time being he has 'humbled' himself before the king. Having thus emptied Himself, Christ then further humbled Himself, "and took upon Him the form of a servant"—He took upon Him the essential form of a slave. He obviously became what all men should be, the bond-servant of God; He chose to have no will but the will of His Father.

"And being found in fashion as a man" continues Paul, saying in effect "as if *this* was not sufficient for such an One", "being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself (yet further), and became obedient unto death". He hearkened to the point of death. There were no limits to His submission to the Father. Indeed, when the disciples returned from the city where they went to buy meat, to Jacob's well where the Lord had spoken with the woman of Samaria, He told them (John iv. 34) "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work". It was as necessary for the Lord to do the Father's will as it was to eat, even though that will meant death. Here we touch the mystery of Christ's humility and obedience; the Deathless One becoming obedient to the point of death. Could there be greater abasement, greater submission than that? Yes! for He "became obedient unto death, *even the death of the Cross*". We find it difficult to appreciate the full force of 'even the death of the Cross'. The appropriation of the Cross as the symbol of various organizations of mercy such as the Red Cross, has surrounded the Cross with an aura of kindness, if not sentimentality. The sheer brutality, horror, shame and suffering of death on the Cross would have given tremendous force to Paul's readers in the words 'even the death of the Cross'. In His humility and submission to God, Christ Jesus held back nothing. Had greater submission and humiliation been possible, and a necessary part of God's will for His Son, it would still have been His 'meat'.

Let *this* mind be in *you*! *Can* we be so minded, to look upon anything God may purpose for us as our necessary food? If we can begin, as the old hymn puts it, to recognize that:

“He did it for me, He did it for me  
A sinner as guilty as guilty could be”,

we have our feet on the first rung of the ladder which leads to that true humility which is total submission to the demands of ‘the mighty hand of God’.

But what was the inspiration that carried our Lord through such depths of humiliation for us? We read in Heb. xii. 2 that it was ‘for the joy that was set before Him (He) endured the Cross, despising the shame’. “He shall exalt you in due season” (I Pet. v. 6), “He shall lift you up” (James iv. 10). If we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, this will be the result. Christ Jesus having ‘endured the Cross, despising the shame, is set down at the right hand of the throne of God’. This is very much in accord with the passage we are considering, for it continues (Phil. ii. 9-11) “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above every name, in order that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”. The Lord kept the end in view; His mind was set on things above, not on the earth, and for the joy set before Him He endured even unto the death of the Cross.

The end, for the Lord, was that He should be given THE Name which is above every name, that for the glory of God the Father every knee in the universe should bow, should submit, to Him, and every tongue confess (*homologeo*—say the same thing, agree) that Jesus Christ is Lord. At last the conflict is over, every rebel knee has submitted. Yes, every knee, even the knee of the arch-rebel Satan. This does not mean, as some have feared and some have hoped, that Satan will be restored, forgiven, for it is clear from Rev. xx. 10, 14 that the Adversary’s end is in the Lake of Fire, which is the second death; destruction is his lot. Yet ere that takes place the confession will have been drawn from him that ‘Jesus Christ *is* Lord’, and that not wrung from his unwilling lips by inquisitorial methods, but to the Glory of God the Father. One meaning of *doxa*, glory, is reputation; the end of all Christ’s humiliation and sufferings will be that the Father’s reputation will be established, even from the lips of him who from the beginning has been a liar. What joy that thought must bring to the heart of Him Who for the joy that was set before Him endured!

It is not wrong for us to bear in mind the joy that is set before us; even if it is only a little part we may have in establishing the reputation of God as we submit to Him, and to Him alone. Indeed, as we have seen both Peter and James link the humbling of ourselves before God with the fact that, in His Own time, He will exalt us, lift us up.

In Phil. iii. Paul tells how, in submitting to the mighty hand of God, he counts all things but dung for the joy of coming to know Christ. His inspiration is the ‘prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus’—he pursues this prize, and the word he uses is

that often translated 'persecute'. With all the intensity, zeal and energy with which persecution is carried out, Paul devotes himself to the submission of himself to God and His will to the extent of 'the fellowship of His sufferings and being made conformable unto His death'. He begins at the Cross in which alone he desires to glory, or boast; he continues with the intense desire for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus, with the desire for that exaltation in due time which is the lot of those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due season. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

## Male and Female Created He Them

(A consideration of the God-ordained positions of man and woman.)

### No.9. The Calling of Woman (*cont.*).

pp. 14 - 17

Under this title, 'The Calling of Woman', it was noticed in the previous article that the Scriptural conception is that woman was originally made as an 'help meet' for the man; she was created 'on account of' the man (Gen. ii. 18; I Cor. xi. 9). This being so, her *peculiar* calling, *as a woman*, cannot be properly understood without reference to the man's own *peculiar* calling. Hence some knowledge of what is involved in the headship of man is necessary, since that includes the idea of a relationship established between the two parties.

Also in the last article was discussed, just how far that part of the calling of woman which involved her originally in motherhood, is relevant today in the 'heavenlies' calling. If, as far as this latter point is concerned, it was not possible to quote Scripture so that there could be no doubt as to what God's will really is, at least it was possible to give some small guidance to the believer so that, as before the Lord, he could form his own judgment.

It might be as well, at this point, to remind the believer that when he (or she) is called upon to make specific judgments of such a nature as is mentioned above (i.e. with respect to the role of motherhood in the present calling of God), such judgments ought to be formed basically from general principles laid down in Scripture, and not from current views popular in the unbelieving world, or even professing Christendom.

"Civilization" (for all the respectability of the modern usage) has derived from the idea of *living in cities*, and it is not without significance that the first 'city' was built by Cain, *after* he 'went out from the Presence of the Lord' (Gen. iv. 16, 17). The next references are equally ominous, referring to Nimrod (whose kingdom began with Babel) and associated with judgment (Gen. x. 8-12; xi. 1-9). Those who sought to live by faith, looked only for a city 'whose builder and maker is God' (Heb. xi. 1, 2, 8-10).

It is not surprising, in the light of this, that although civilization, in the widest sense of that term, has conferred what are generally recognized as benefits, it has also led to a feeling of independence from God (even doubting His existence).

When the western world changed from an agricultural to an industrial society, civilization began to take on a new form, in which the distinction between man and woman's callings has slowly become more and more blurred. Two world wars have conditioned the mind to the acceptance of women working in almost every sphere, even in places of leadership, so that now, to return to the Scriptural conception of the calling of woman, is to be branded as denying the 'rights' that belong to her. Yet it behoves the

believer, in the face of popular opinion, to have nothing to do with beliefs which are grounded on the world's misconceptions, and it particularly behoves Christian women (who could so easily be taken in by the emotional cries of "women's rights") to see that their own position is built upon nothing other than the Word of God.

It was felt necessary to give this long introduction in view of the vexed subject which is to follow, involving the thoughts of leadership and teaching in women. So often judgments are formed on the basis of current trends, the professing church taking its lead from the world; following, rather than setting the pattern. So often 'progress' is confused with 'change', whereas true 'progress' often means going back to old standards, not bringing in new. So it is with the calling of woman.

When the wind of 'emancipation' blew through the western world, it blew out a number of things, which on the basis of Scripture ought never to have been there in the first place, and which detracted from woman's essential equality with man; but it has also since brought with it other things which no godly woman can, again in the light of Scripture, have anything to do with.

### **Praying and teaching.**

It is essential to an understanding of Paul's argument in I Tim. ii. concerning the place of woman with respect to prayer and teaching, for the reader to have in mind the events which led up to the tragedy in the garden of Eden. For this reason it is advisable that the reader should look again at Gen. iii. 1-7, keeping in mind those things which have already been observed in article No.6 (concerning 'identification') and article No.7 (under the title 'the deception of the woman'). Briefly they are as follows:

- (1) Identification. Paul's word concerning *all* women is based upon the position and failure of Eve in Eden.
- (2) Deception. The woman was cleverly weaned from the Word of God (which she misquoted and minimized) to form her own judgment on the basis of what she 'saw'. She was 'thoroughly deceived'.
- (3) Authority. Woman as not equipped to withstand the cunning of the serpent by reasoning with him on the Word of God; this was not her place in God's "order". Adam *was* so equipped, having been entrusted with the guardianship of the garden and the commandment concerning the tree of knowledge. He was not therefore deceived.

I Tim. ii. 8-15 is a passage about which diverse views have been entertained, a fact which seems strange in the light of the clear statements of the Apostle (at least concerning the *teaching* of women). Verse 12 cannot surely be gainsaid under any circumstances, except those which do away with the conviction that 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God' (II Tim. iii. 16) and reckon Paul to be giving his own opinion which may be accepted or rejected at will. A brief structure of the whole epistle was given by C. H. Welch in Volume XXXII of *The Berean Expositor* and in my next article I shall relate this to the subject before us.

**No.10. The Calling of Woman (cont).**  
**pp. 25 - 31**

Consideration has been given to Paul's word in I Tim. ii. 12 in the light of the background of Eden (verses 13, 14), concerning the teaching of women. Based upon her position in creation, 'Adam was first formed, *then* Eve' and her handling, and consequent 'deception', with the Word of God, Paul states unequivocally:

"I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

These words do not indicate any 'personal bias' but are as much a part of the Word of God as any others Paul wrote. They represent truth for all generations of the present age, and may *not* be considered as applying *only* to the society in which Paul lived.

But whilst the above is true with respect to the teaching of the Word of God, it ought not to be missed that certain women are instructed to 'teach' in another context:

"Bid the older women . . . . *to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited*" (Titus ii. 3-5, R.S.V.).

One ought not to discount this important part placed by the woman in bringing up her children, which must include some aspects of 'teaching', although not so as to contradict Eph. vi. 4:

"Ye *fathers*, provoke not your children to wrath: but *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*"

From Titus ii. it may be gathered that the 'home' was to play a large part in the calling of woman (especially married women), and the 'older women' were considered (no doubt because of their long experience in such matters) to be in a position to train (or 'school') the younger ones in this sphere of life. It may be noted that when, in a context dealing with the advisability of marriage for younger widows, Paul mentions the 'house', he uses the strong word *oikodespoteo*, master or rule of the house, in connection with the woman's place (I Tim. v. 14).

One cannot help observing also, that 'hospitality' was to characterize the believer (Rom. xii. 13; Heb. xiii. 2; I Pet. iv. 9), and there can be no doubt that such, whilst it was enjoined upon the man (cp. I Tim. iii. 2), greatly involved the woman (I Tim. v. 9, 10). It is sad indeed to see even Christian women despising the home, with all its important commitments, as though it represented some inferior part of life. Such have not appreciated what an important role it plays in the exhibition of truth in practice, as is witnessed by Eph. v. 22 - vi. 4. To speak of a 'kitchen sink philosophy' in connection with those who advocate a return to the Scriptural position of woman, is to misrepresent the whole case. If woman is to be degraded at all, it will not be by

accepting her God-ordained position in the economy of God, but by usurping it. Shame is first associated in Scripture with the results of stepping out of God's arrangement (Gen. iii. 6, 7), and a woman's part in the home is to be lived out so that 'the word of God may not be discredited' (Titus ii. 3-5).

It is quite evident from the writings of both Paul and Peter, that they considered the great strength of womanhood to lie, not in ability to discourse on the Word of truth, but in:

"the immortal beauty of a gentle, modest spirit, which in the sight of God is of rare value" (I Pet. iii. 4, Moffatt).

A husband, disobedient to the Word, may even be won over by such humble, quiet and unpretentious conduct (I Pet. iii. 1-4).

### Prayer

Closely connected with Paul's statement concerning the position of woman with respect to teaching, is another dealing with prayer:

"I desire therefore that the men pray in every place."

This quotation from the R.V. of I Tim. ii. 8 more accurately represents the original; the A.V. rather obscuring the sense. The verse obviously refers to *leading in prayer* in an assembly, as all (both men and women) *pray* in such a company.

Here again, diverse views have been, and still are held as to whether a woman ought to lead in prayer in any assembly. Sometimes an ellipsis has been supplied so that verses 8 and 9 read thus:

"I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands . . . . In like manner also, *that women pray everywhere*, adorning themselves in modest apparel . . . ."

In this way the equal right of women with men to lead in public prayer is maintained. But the weight of evidence is against this rendering, and it is *not* adopted by any of the following well known versions: A.V., R.V., R.S.V., Moffatt, Weymouth, Rotherham, J.N.D., N.E.B.

The context in which the 'adornment' of women is mentioned is however involved with prayer, and it may be that the instructions given by Paul 'refer particularly to their dress and deportment *at public prayer*' (F. F. Bruce). What is foremost in Paul's mind is 'the impropriety of women exploiting their physical charms on such occasions, and also the emotional disturbance they are liable to cause their male fellow-worshippers' (J.N.D. Kelly in his Commentary on 1 Timothy *in loco*). Women take part in prayer as much as men, but should not lead. Such a word, coming from the Apostle and in this context, is in complete harmony with all that he has taught concerning the God-ordained position of the woman in the present dispensation.

Some however see a difference between what they call ‘public’ and ‘private’ prayer, reckoning ‘public prayer’ to be of a formal nature, such as would take place in a church or chapel, whilst ‘private prayer’ belongs to gatherings in homes or similar ‘informal’ places. Before any comment is made on this concept, the reader might note again the literal rendering of I Tim. ii. 8 as given by the *Englishman’s Greek N.T.*:

“I will therefore the men to pray *in every place*.”

Are we to distinguish between ‘public’ and ‘private’ prayer in the light of Paul’s “every place”? Also, can it really be maintained that the *place* where people are met for prayer and the *nature* (formal or informal) of the meeting, makes any difference to the *principle* behind Paul’s word, ‘I will therefore *the men* to pray . . . .’? Added to this it may be noted that no ‘formal’ church buildings existed at the period when Paul wrote, believers meeting in each others houses (Rom. xvi. 5; I Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15; Philemon 2); all meetings were, from that point of view, ‘informal’.

There is no end to the qualifications that some people make to get round plain statements of Scriptures and find some loophole, whereby they can dodge the real issue. Such qualifications are particularly appealed to where subjects like the teaching and leading in prayer of women are concerned. Artificial divisions are invented (such as that between ‘public’ and ‘private’ above) which obscure the real issue and blunt the testimony of Scripture. But for those whose sole appeal is the Word itself, unadulterated by popular conceptions, there can be but one course, to face the truth and keep it all costs.

In the passage under review (I Tim. ii. 8-15) Paul’s injunctions concerning the relationship of woman to leadership and teaching are based solidly upon O.T. Scripture (verses 13, 14). His whole position acknowledges the God-ordained places of ‘male and female’ (13). He was wise enough to see that for a man or woman to step out of what God had originally intended was to court tragedy (14); let all be done ‘decently and in order’—God’s “order”. For that reason he instructed (with no contradiction from the Holy Spirit) that the ministry of teaching the Word of truth belonged to “faithful men . . . able to teach others also” (II Tim. ii. 2) and that overseership (even leading in prayer) belonged also amongst men. Was he wrong? Can we treat his words as ‘personal views’, biased by the society in which he lived? No reader of these pages will need the answer to such questions. Faithfulness must never be dispensed with in favour of usefulness.

### **Deacons**

It has been observed that Phebe (a woman) is referred to by Paul in Rom. xvi. 1 as a ‘deacon of the assembly in Cenchrea’ (the A.V. has translated the Greek *diakonos* ‘servant’). *Diakonos* (the verbal form is *diakoneo*, minister or serve) is used in the N.T. of ‘servants’ at a wedding feast (Matt. xxii. 13; John ii. 5), of rulers (Rom. xiii. 4), of Paul and Apollos (I Cor. iii. 5), of Tychicus (Eph. vi. 21), of Epaphras (Col. i. 7) and of Timothy (I Thess. iii. 2 omitted by some texts). In particular it ought to be noted that the word is used of Christ Himself:

“Christ became a *servant* to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs . . . .” (Rom. xv. 8 R.S.V.);

as well as of the ‘ministers’ of Satan (II Cor. xi. 15). In its verbal form it is used of angels (Matt. iv. 11), of Peter’s mother-in-law (Matt. viii. 15), of Martha (John xii. 2) and in connection with the ‘seven’ chosen to relieve the Twelve Apostles of ‘serving tables’ (Acts vi. 1-6).

In secular history *diakonos* had technical applications, being used of ‘the holders of various offices’ (1st century B.C.) and a religious connotation insofar that it is found in a ‘list of temple officials’ (*circa* B.C.100)—Moulton and Milligan.

Such a wide usage makes it difficult to define as a specific ministry in Rom. vi. 1, since it seems to cover every aspect of service in the propagation of the gospel. Later, in Christendom, a specific order of deacons arose, but the origin of such is obscure, and it is doubtful whether the present conception of ‘deacons’ bears much resemblance to the usage of the word in N.T. times.

The Lord associated the word *diakonos* with the thought of self-sacrifice, a necessary prelude to greatness:

“Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your *minister*; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant (*doulos*): even as the Son of man came not to be *ministered unto* (*diakoneo*), but to *minister* (*diakoneo*), and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. xx. 26-28).

As applied to women in Scripture, it is obvious that we must not read anything into their ‘ministry’ which contradicts what has already been noted under the ideas of teaching and overseership. Such a wide usage of the term ‘deacon’ must not be made an excuse to open *every aspect* of ‘ministry’ to woman, against the prohibitions listed elsewhere. Phebe was a valued servant in the assembly at Cenchrea, but her particular ministry (whatever else it may have included, and here we cannot be specific) involved the fact that ‘she hath been a succourer of many’, including Paul himself (Rom. xvi. 1, 2) *not* that she had preached the gospel or taught the Word.

“Succourer” is the Greek *prostatis*, occurring only here: it means a protectress, patroness or helper. Moulton and Milligan, whilst not being able to cite any usage of the noun, quote the verb *prostateo* (*circa* B.C.252) where a son writes to his father:

“There will be nothing of more importance for me than to *look after* you for the remainder of life, in a manner worthy of you, and worthy of me” (*Vocabulary of the Greek N.T.*).

It is quite obvious that this ministry of Phebe, in the light of the above observations, involved hospitality of a particularly sacrificial nature, even to the point of offering protection to such as Paul, perhaps at great personal risk to her own life (cp. Rom. xvi. 3, 4).

In I Tim. iii. 11, in the light of the context, it seems the verse must be understood of 'women deacons', as for example Weymouth, who renders 'deaconness' and the N.E.B. margin which suggests the same. The word *diakonos* is not of course present in this verse, but it would be strange indeed if, in a passage devoted to the qualifications of 'deacons' (verses 8 to 13) Paul has interpolated a reference to women in general.

The A.V. which sees these 'women' as the 'wives' of men to be chosen for the diaconate may possibly be correct, but as J. N. D. Kelly points out:

"it is very strange that only deacons' wives are singled out for mention, since the overseers' wives occupied an even more influential position" (Commentary on I Timothy *in loco*).

It is also logical to expect that since women did 'serve' in the assemblies (as witness Phebe at Cenchrea) then Paul would have given some instructions to Timothy for their appointment.

The qualifications for these deaconesses can perhaps be best appreciated from F. F. Bruce's paraphrase of I Tim. iii. 11:

"Similarly, ministering women should be dignified in their conduct, free from any tendency to spread scandal, sober in their habits and marked by thorough fidelity" (*Expanded Paraphrase*).

It must not be imagined for one moment that because the woman is not allowed to hold positions which speak of leadership and authority, that she cannot contribute just as much as the man to both the spread of the gospel and the building up of believers. Paul valued highly the labours of those who were associated with him in the gospel, who had 'laboured side by side' with him (Phil. iv. 3). In his salutations he mentions a number of women, who in various ways had done much to the advancement of the gospel (Phebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, the mother of Rufus, etc., Rom. xvi.). "Certain women" were also associated with the Lord's earthly ministry 'which *ministered (diakoneo)* unto Him of their substance' (Luke viii. 2, 3). None of these had apparently either preached or taught, but they will be just as much commended for the part they did play, as the men they laboured alongside.

## The Plan of God.

*(Being a series of studies in the Scriptures, made for broadcasting in America.  
They have the beginner and even the unbeliever in mind,  
and are an attempt to present the Truth of the Scriptures in the simplest possible way.)*

### No.49. The Epistle to the Philippians (16). pp. 5 - 9

Although we have a chapter break at Phil. iii. 21, it is evident that the first verse of chapter iv. is linked with the previous subject matter:

“Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved” (Phil. iv. 1 R.V.).

The exhortation to ‘stand fast’ has been stressed in i. 27. The *oneness* of spirit, soul and mind of i. 17 is repeated in iv. 2 as is the thought of ‘striving together’ *sunathleo* (i. 27 and iv. 3). Paul includes words of endearment reminiscent of his tribute to the Thessalonian believers (I Thess. ii. 19) “my joy and crown”. *Epipothetoi*, ‘longed for’, recalls the words of i. 8 where he expresses his ardent desire to see the Philippians again. They would be his ‘crown’ in the Day of Christ, the seal of his apostleship, but the all important thing was to ‘stand fast’ and not yield an inch in faithful witness to the Truth, and this is just as important today and should constantly be before the minds of all of us.

The Apostle now addresses a personal message to two women who were evidently prominent in the Philippian church:

“I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life” (iv. 2, 3 R.V.).

These believers had evidently quarreled and imperilled the unity of the assembly. Women figured prominently in the beginning of the work at Philippi (Acts xvi. 13) and were held in high esteem in this part of the world. Bishop Lightfoot comments:

“The active zeal of the women in this country is a remarkable fact, without parallel in the Apostle’s history elsewhere and only to be compared with their prominence at an earlier date in the personal ministry of our Lord.”

The rift between the two women mentioned had its dangers for there was always the possibility of a split developing in the church, some supporting one and some of other. This has happened countless times in Christian circles, much to the delight of the evil one whose object is to divide the brethren and ruin the witness. Paul now appeals to a third person whom he addresses as ‘true yokefellow’. As this adjective is in the masculine form it must refer to a man and there have been many guesses as to who he was. Some link him with Epaphroditus or Luke. Others take the two words together as a proper

name—"Syzygos (comrade), truly so called", but no trace of such a name has been found elsewhere.

Clement is the name of a believer in the Philippian assembly otherwise unknown. Some have tried to identify him with Clement, the bishop of Rome, but this is an unlikely conjecture. The name was common in the first century and would be familiar in a Roman colony like Philippi.

It is better not to guess, and one thing is sure—even though we do not know his name, he was certainly not forgotten by the Lord, for his record was in the "book of life". God's record in a 'book' occurs in the Old Testament as well as the New (Exod.xxxii.32; Psa. lxxix. 28; cxxxix. 16) and in Luke x. 20 the Lord bids His followers to 'rejoice, because your names are *written in heaven*'. The Revelation has a lot to say concerning the record contained in 'books'. *Biblion* occurs 19 times; and *biblos* five times in connection with the 'book of life'. The important thing to realize is though men forget Christian virtues and service, God never does. He takes note and will praise and reward at the last all that has been faithfully accomplished with His glory in view.

Paul now sounds a stirring note:

"Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, rejoice" (iv. 4 R.V.).

Earlier on we noted that, in spite of the suffering and conflict, real and abiding joy was possible. It is important to note that the *ground* of the believer's rejoicing is the *Lord* not circumstances. These may indeed be adverse and perplexing, but the Saviour, Who is the 'same yesterday, today and for ever' is the solid Rock on which we can always rely and in Whom we can constantly rejoice.

The Apostle now appeals for 'moderation' or 'forbearance' (verse 5 R.V.). It is not easy to find an English equivalent for *epieikes*. Kindliness, thoughtfulness for others, graciousness, yieldingness, are some of the shades of meaning it contains. C. H. Welch puts it beautifully when he says 'grace alone can enable the believer to exhibit at the same time inflexible tenacity, infinite gentleness, incorruptible loyalty, and a willingness to yield to every legitimate claim made by others' (*The Prize of the High Calling*, p.183).

"The Lord is near." This is another reason given to show forth this Christian grace. Some expositors read this as though it said 'the Lord's *coming* is near', but *parousia* does not occur in the context, nor is there any need to supply it. Psa. cxlv. 18 declares that 'the Lord is near to all them that call upon Him' and this has been always a consoling truth. He is always near at hand to guide, strengthen, encourage and bless. Paul continues:

"In nothing be anxious; but everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (iv. 6, 7 R.V.).

*Merimnao* is translated in the A.V. 'take thought' with the future in view six times in Matt. vi. and is misleading, for wise provision for the future is right (I Tim. v. 8). It is

foreboding or worry that is wrong and the Lord is referring to *anxiety* in the first Gospel. It has been said that ‘hard work seldom kills, but worry does’. There was surely never a time like the present when increasing pressure is being brought to bear on us all in so many ways. Hence the turning to drugs and tranquilizers to ease the tension. But the wise believer, who casts all his cares on the Lord experiences something that is infinitely better and always works! In the place of worry comes the ‘peace of God that passes all understanding’. He may not get all his requests answered in the way he desires, but he is assured of one answer always, the answer of peace.

“Our requests” covers every problem both spiritual and temporal to which the ingredient of ‘thanksgiving’ should always be added. Ingratitude is one of the basest of sins. We may not know how to pray as we ought, but we can always *praise*! A moment’s reflection on the many blessings spiritual and physical which we constantly receive will provide subject matter for our prayers, and if we kept in this grateful state of mind, ever realizing what we owe to the Lord, we shall not stray far from His will day by day. “Peace *with* God” is the experience of the believer on realizing what salvation and justification by faith in Christ really means. The peace *of* God can be the permanent possession as all anxieties are cast upon Him. He offers to be our permanent burden-bearer! (Psa. lv. 22), and then we can continually know what is to have the *God of peace* with us and near us (Phil. iv. 9) all through our journey home to glory. Then indeed our hearts and minds are ‘guarded’ or protected by Him and nothing can enter that can harm.

“Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, 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” (iv. 8 R.V.).

It is important in this context to realize that *logizesthe*, ‘think’ does not mean merely to ‘meditate upon’, but to ‘reckon’ or ‘take account of’ (see R.V. margin here). It is one of the important words of Rom. iv., where it is translated ‘reckon’, and ‘impute’. This long list of graces is not given just to think about, but to ‘take account of’ in our own lives and the lives of other believers.

Instead of the tendency of criticize others, which we all have in some measure, how much better it would be to note these graces in other fellow-members of the Body of Christ and to thank God for them! How much easier Christian work and witness would be if this was our daily practice! It has been point out by expositors that this list gives the ideals and accepted virtues of pagan morality. If this was so, how much more should they be present in the life of the redeemed! “Virtue” is a frequent word in classical Greek, and is only used here by the Apostle Paul. It only occurs elsewhere in the N.T. twice in Peter’s epistles (II Pet. i. 3, 5). Perhaps ‘excellence’ is the best translation of it.

“Praise” can be construed as ‘what deserves praise’ or ‘anything that calls down the approval of the Lord’. The Apostle who followed the Lord so closely could point to his own example without egotism, for pre-eminently Paul was a man who practiced what he preached to others. *Learned, received, heard* and *seen* show how true this was and we

should remember that before there was a complete N.T. the truth of God was *learned, received, heard* and *seen* in the lives and practice of the Apostles. They were indeed a living Bible! May we in our measure *live* the truth every day in the sight of others who are often totally ignorant of God and His Word.

## **No.50. The Epistle to the Philippians (17). pp. 21 - 25**

The Apostle Paul now gives attention to the gift the Philippian church had sent by means of Epaphroditus (iv. 18):

“But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity” (iv. 10 R.V.).

The arrival of the gift caused great rejoicing in the Apostle’s heart to the Lord. Paul was a man who was obviously sensitive where gifts of money or goods were concerned. The last thing he wanted was for anyone to think that he *expected* them to give him presents. He had a natural independence that could never stoop to begging. Yet on the other hand, when such gifts were made as a free expression of love, he was deeply touched and showed his appreciation. This is seen quite clearly in the context we are considering.

He declared that the Philippians’ concern for him had flourished again. Not that they had forgotten his needs, but they had had no previous opportunity of showing practically their regard for him. *Anethalete* is found only here in the N.T. but is used in the LXX of Ezek. xvii. 24 of trees ‘blooming again’. *Ekairēisthe* (you were unable to find occasion) is another word occurring only once in the N.T. and rarely elsewhere. Normally Paul supplied his own needs by working with his own hands, although he had declared that those who proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel (I Cor. ix. 11-15), yet he hated to be a burden to anyone:

“. . . . I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children” (II Cor. xii. 14).

Although he was obviously in need in his Roman prison, yet he would never complain about it, and now he is going to explain to the Philippians how it was possible to be completely *independent of circumstances*:

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me” (Phil. iv. 11-13, R.V.).

The Apostle had indeed “learned”, but it was not from a book but rather in the school of experience. *Autarkes* is yet another word only occurring here, meaning

“self-sufficient, independent” (*Manual Greek Lexicon of the N.T.* by Abbott-Smith). ‘Content’ as the A.V. is misleading, as is the translation ‘therewith’. The R.V. is the better rendering, ‘therein’. Paul was not *content with* his circumstances, but he was *independent IN them*. The Stoics used the same word and tried to face with equanimity and resolution all that life brought to them in difficulty and sorrow, but they attempted this in their own strength and often failed. Paul, however, is going to reveal his secret as to how he lived victoriously under all conditions however extreme. He could have everything and yet nothing. He could be full and at another time empty; he could be abased and yet abound. ‘I have been initiated into a secret’ he declared, using *mueo* a word which primarily meant ‘to initiate into the mysteries’ of the pagan cults.

The Lord had made known to Paul many secrets. He was indeed a steward of the mysteries (secrets) of God, and many of us are rejoicing in the great ones revealed in Eph. iii. But here was a secret devoted entirely to practice:

“I have strength for everything in Him Who makes me strong” (iv. 13).

The Apostle had no ‘confidence in the flesh’ (iii. 3). He was well aware of his own weakness, yet realized that it was in this condition he could experience the mighty resurrection power of the risen and ascended Christ.

To him the Saviour revealed:

“And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for *My strength is made perfect in weakness*. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, *that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . . .* for when I am weak, then am I strong” (II Cor. xii. 9, 10).

Here is the secret then that we all must learn to put into practice if we are going to triumph over all circumstances instead of being overwhelmed by them, that is absolute confidence in the power of the Lord’s resurrection that can ‘work in us’, and no confidence in self. No wonder Paul aimed at realizing more and more in experience of the ‘power of His resurrection’! (iii. 10) and the Lord’s ability to match every situation that could occur.

Paul now resumes his appreciation of the Philippian church’s assistance: “Howbeit ye did well, that ye had fellowship with my affliction”. To ‘have fellowship’ or ‘share’ meant more than appreciating doctrine together. It meant to share practically in another’s need, and this characterized the Philippians’ relationship with the Apostle from the very beginning of his gospel work at Philippi (verse 15) and later on when he was at Thessalonica. They had sent gifts to him ‘once and again’, that is, more than once they had practically remembered him. The Apostle here uses commercial terms *fruit, abound, account*. He did not personally seek any gift. His overriding desire was ‘fruit that increaseth to your account’ (verse 17 R.V.). Moule translates this as ‘the interest which is accruing to your credit’. The Philippian gift was like an investment that would repay rich dividends in the service of the Lord, as accumulating interest stands to the credit of a depositor which, in the day of Christ, would not go unrecognized by the righteous Judge (II Tim. iv. 8).

“But I have all things, and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. And my God shall fulfil every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (iv. 18, 19 R.V.).

“I have all and abound.” The papyri throw light on the special meaning of *I have, apecho*. In every day use it meant ‘I have received’, a technical expression for drawing up a receipt. The R.S.V. renders it ‘I have received full payment, and more’. The Apostle uses this in an illustrative sense, and now he describes the gift as not only pleasing to him, but pleasing to the Lord (verse 18). It was like an ‘odour of sweet smell’ using O.T. symbolism in connection with the sweet savour sacrifices which ascended to the Lord as something *especially fragrant*. The Apostle used terms which he employed of the supreme sacrifice of Christ in Eph. v. 2. What an honour that any service for the Lord can be bracketed with His! Paul’s own service had been likened to the pouring out of a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of the faith (ii. 17). It looks as though all real and effective service for the Lord will be touched *by sacrifice*. What costs us little is not worth much in His sight. And is not our love for Him measured by how much we are prepared to spend ourselves, just that and no more? David said ‘neither will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which doth cost me nothing’ (II Sam. xxiv. 24). May we ever be willing to give without stint to Him of ourselves and our possessions and then the next verse in Philippians will be true in our experience:

“And my God shall fulfil every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (iv. 19 R.V.).

The A.V. ‘but’ is misleading. Verse 19 is not disassociated from verse 18 as ‘but’ suggests. The thought is ‘you have been generous to me, *and therefore* God will be generous to you’. Some take verse 19 out of its context and do not fulfil the condition of verse 18 and then they wonder why the 19th verse does not work in their experience. However, can mean Christians expect to know in reality the overwhelming generosity of God? It was to a generous church this tremendous promise was made. Note the measure of the Lord’s giving. It is not OUT OF His wealth but ACCORDING (kata) to it. Who can estimate the range and depth of this richness? (cp. Rom. xi. 33). If a millionaire gives *out of* his riches, he could just give a penny and no more. If he gives *according to* his wealth, he would have to give a very large sum indeed. God will be no man’s debtor and we are dealing with a heavenly Father Whose generosity is beyond our computation. His riches are IN glory IN Christ Jesus Who is seated in the heavenly holiest of all above everything that can be conceived. What immense wealth is here!

The final greetings are now given from ‘all the saints’ specially “those of Caesar’s household”. This does not mean the relatives of Caesar, but persons employed in the domestic and administrative establishment of the Emperor. Most of them would be slaves and freed men equivalent to civil servants, some of whom had come into contact with Paul and thereby a knowledge a salvation. Such a ‘household’ existed in every Roman colony, but this does not militate against a Roman origin for this epistle, for such an establishment existed at Rome and must have numbered hundreds of employees in the capital.

Paul's last words, as always, refer to the Lord's abiding grace and thus ends this precious epistle, a wonderful balance to the Ephesian letter, with its stress on 'working out' in practice what God has so wonderfully 'worked in', with a view to the *prize* in connection with the 'high calling of God in Christ Jesus'. May we all participate in this 'working out' day by day.

## **No.51. The Epistle to the Colossians (1).** **pp. 51 - 56**

In the first century, Colossae was an ancient but declining commercial centre, situated in Phrygia on the south bank of the River Lycus, a tributary of the Maeander, about 100 miles eastward from Ephesus, near the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. The Christian message was evidently introduced there during Paul's Ephesian ministry (Acts xix. 5) possibly through the faithful witness of Epaphras (cp. Col. i. 7; iv. 12). Within 5 years the Apostle was a prisoner at Rome, waiting to have his case heard by the Emperor, to whom he had appealed. He was free to receive visitors, and among them Epaphras, who gave Paul up to date news of the churches in that area. The question as to whether any of his prison letters were written from an imprisonment at Caesarea or Ephesus rather than Rome has been dealt with in the introduction to the epistle to the Philippians (see Volume XLV, p.192).

Although there was much for which to thank God, one disquieting feature was the introduction at Colossae of teaching which, although outwardly appearing very spiritual, actually dethroned the Lord Jesus Christ from His unique place of having the preeminence in all things. It was a sort of pre-gnosticism combining Jewish and Greek elements which later developed more fully in the second century and it was to combat this error that the epistle to the Colossians was written. From its contents it is obviously a companion to the epistle to the Ephesians, and although some of the same ground is covered, yet it has its own distinct message with its central section of warning.

With the Colossian letter we must also link that to Philemon written at the same time and both were delivered by Tychicus and Onesimus, the runaway slave (iv. 3, 7-9; Philemon 12). As to which was written first with regard to Ephesians and Colossians, we do not elaborate, as it does not affect the doctrine of the epistles. Some expositors think that Colossians was the prior letter, but that they were written within a short time of each other there seems no doubt.

As regards the heresy which had developed at Colossae, we only have the internal evidence of the epistle to reconstruct it. It evidently combined Judaism with a stress on legal ordinances such as circumcision, food prohibitions, and the times of feasts of the sabbath and the new moon. Combined with this was a Gentile philosophy which dealt with the spirit world. A large place was made for angels, who had figured so largely in

Israel's history and through whom the law was given. Some were of a higher order than others—principalities and powers, who controlled the spheres and the lines of communications between God and man. So important were these supposed to be that all prayer, worship and revelation could only be received through them and by their permission. They had special knowledge to impart and were therefore to be feared and respected. This could only be done by keeping the law and in addition to this, observing a rigorous asceticism.

This error was obviously more dangerous than the Galatian legalism which Paul had combated before. It struck at the roots of the doctrine concerning pre-eminency of the Person and work of Christ, consequently the Apostle lost no time in seeking to expose its satanic origin and cunning deception. It is therefore in the Colossian epistle the majesty, glory and fullness of the Lord Jesus are developed more fully than in any of the other writings of Paul. The 'tradition of men' is measured against the One in Whom dwells *all* the fullness of the God-head bodily, Who is pre-eminent in both the old and new creations. He is the one Mediator between God and men, combining Godhead and manhood, and is the victor over the very principalities and powers who were ensnaring the Colossian saints.

Not only this, but as Lord and Head of the church which is His Body, He fills to the full every member. What need then was there for the empty shadows the Colossians were striving after? They were only satanic means of canceling the liberty and fullness in Christ and bringing them into abject bondage. The Christians at Colossae had to learn that anything that detracts from the supremacy of Christ and the completeness of the believer in Him is deceiving error. In fact it can be said that all error does one of two things. It either tries to *add* something of its own to the unique position of the Saviour, or it *detracts* from Him. There can be no 'extras' to the Lord Jesus Christ. HE IS ALL and in all (Col. iii. 11). Once this profound lesson is grasped, one is saved from all sorts of deceit and deception which come from the wiles of the devil.

Everyone who names the name of Christ should seriously ask themselves: is Christ *everything* both as God and Man to me? Or must I *add* something else to Him to feel really comfortable and secure in my life and witness? And remember that these 'additions' can look very spiritual and attractive on the surface and not in the least fleshly or wrong. The *Lordship* of Christ needs greatly stressing today among His people. Too many of them know Him as Saviour and no more, and have advanced little beyond the stage of spiritual babyhood. This is often the result, specially in young believers, of *doing* a lot and keeping *the Book shut*, thus mistaking activity for spirituality. Whereas the great need of all is to soak ourselves, as it were, in the truth of these N.T. epistles, especially the prison letters of Paul—the apostle to the Gentiles, whose writings so wonderfully cover this age of grace with their distinctive and supreme revelation of 'our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ' (Titus ii. 13 R.V.) and the heavenly Body and Temple He is now building (Eph. i. 19-23; ii. 19-22).

We come then to the exposition of this magnificent epistle and start with its divine structure which has been exhibited by C. H. Welch.

## The Structure of Colossians as a whole.

- A | i. 1, 2. Epistolary and salutation.
- B | i. 3-8. Faithful; ministry of Epaphras.
- C | a | i. 9-12. Prayer and spiritual walk.
  - b | i. 13-23. Christ before all things.
- E | i. 23-27. Mystery (secret) manifested by God.
- F | i. 28 - ii. 1. Preaching to present perfect (mature).
- G | ii. 2, 3. Hid—the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- H | ii. 4-23. BEWARE.
- G | iii. 1-4. Hid—your life with Christ.
- C | b | iii. 5-15. Christ is ALL and in all.
  - a | iii. 16 - iv. 1. The Word and spiritual walk.
- E | iv. 2-11. Mystery (secret) manifested by Paul.
- F | iv. 12-16. Prayer that they stand perfect (mature).
- B | iv. 17. Fulfil ministry—Archippus.
- A | iv. 18. Epistolary and salutation.

The balance between the various sections is self-evident, barring the central warning section H which is peculiar to this epistle, and deals with the Colossian heresy and its remedy. The opening verses associate Timothy with Paul, as in other letters (II Cor., Phil., I & II Thess., Philemon). Paul reserves the title ‘apostle’ for himself. Originally it was used for those who were directly commissioned by the risen Christ, and then later in a wider sense. As with the Ephesian letter, those addressed are not just saints, but *faithful* saints, and we have no right to omit this. Can all believers be truthfully described as faithful or loyal?

“We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, having heard of your *faith* in Christ Jesus, and of the *love* which ye have towards all the saints, because of the *hope* which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. i. 3-5 R.V.).

It is noteworthy that Paul’s usual habit is to commence with *thanksgiving* for the good news he hears of the various groups of Christians to whom he is writing. He looked for the *good* in believers first of all, not their faults. Later on, in true love, he has to correct what he finds wrong, but this love and Christian tact *praises* before it criticizes. Most of us can learn a lesson here in our contacts with others. The trio of graces that figure so prominently in I Corinthians, faith, hope and love, find their place also in Colossians and elsewhere, and they seem to sum up the spiritual qualities which should be evident in the lives of all God’s redeemed children. The Colossian faith did not exist by itself; it rested upon and was placed *in Christ Jesus*, the only secure Foundation for faith. Thousands can talk of possessing faith, but the main thing is upon what or Whom is this faith placed? With many the faith is misplaced, for under test and the stress of life their foundation collapses and then utter disillusionment follows. Christ Himself is the only secure Foundation, the One Who is almighty, the same ‘yesterday, today and for ever’, the immovable Rock of ages.

The faith of the Colossian believers looked forward to the hope, sure and certain, laid up for them in the heavens. *Ouranos* is used here, whereas *epouranios* is the corresponding word in the Ephesian letter. But there is no contradiction. *Ouranos* is all embracive, starting with the region here birds fly (Matt. xiii. 32) right up to the abode of God Himself (Matt. v. 16), whereas the adjective *epouranios* is used of the highest heavens to which Christ ascended and is supreme above all (Eph. i. 19-23). This more restricted term must obviously be contained in the larger one, so there is no contradiction.

Peter also speaks of an inheritance reserved in heaven, and as he is one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, he must be linked with the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem which is now reserved in heaven, but awaiting the time in God's great purpose, when in the new creation of heaven and earth at the goal of the ages it leaves the heavenly sphere and descends to the new earth (Rev. iii. 12; xxi. 2, 10). This was the 'better country' that the tested and suffering worthies of Heb. xi. looked for and Peter writes to a similar company enduring great trials (I Pet. i. 4-9) who had respect unto the recompense of reward like Moses of old. Although heavenly in character and now reserved in heaven, this glorious city is not destined by God to *stay there*. Hence those believers will finally enjoy its wonders when it descends and is linked with the *new earth*.

In contrast to this, the Body of Christ, which finally merges into the Temple as a dwelling place or home for God (Eph. ii. 19-22) is not only seated in Christ Jesus in the heavenlies *now*, but will realize its hope in the same heavenly places 'far above all'. They have been made meet or sufficient by the Father for this supreme inheritance of the 'holiest of all in the light' (Col. i. 12), the very holy of holies in heaven. Nothing less than this will fulfil the purpose of God for this exalted company which has its origin from first to last in abounding grace, beyond our dreams or our comprehension. Does our faith rise to this?

## **No.52. The Epistle to the Colossians (2).** **pp. 73 - 77**

We have seen how the Apostle Paul had heard of the Colossian believers' *faith, hope* and *love*, which resulted from their acceptance of the word of the truth of the gospel. This good news had not only come to them, but had spread 'in all the world' (i. 6). No longer was Israel the first and practically the sole recipient of God's message, as had occurred during the earthly ministry of the Lord and the Twelve (see Matt. x. & xv. 24; Rom. xv. 8). The truth had spread right across the Roman empire and had reached the Lycus valley, resulting in the formation of the churches there of which Colossae was one.

Paul was glad to note that not only had the word of the gospel been received by faith Colossae, but since then it had borne fruit and grown:

“ . . . . the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth” (i. 6 R.V.).

This was real evidence of the working of God in their midst, for the gospel was never meant to be static but a tremendous impetus urging the believer on to a deeper knowledge and love of the Lord, resulting in a more practical response in lip and life. The personal link between these believers and the Apostle was Epaphras, whom Paul describes as a ‘beloved fellow-slave’ and a ‘faithful minister of Christ’ on the Apostle’s behalf. Epaphras had therefore visited Paul in prison and given him up-to-date news of the church at Colossae. Epaphras is a contracted form of Epaphroditus, but we cannot identify him with the Epaphroditus of the Philippian letter with certainty. Nor do we know the circumstances which enabled Paul to describe him as a ‘fellow-prisoner’ in Philemon 23. He had possibly shared one of the Apostle’s many imprisonments (II Cor. xi. 23). What is certain is this man’s sterling character as a leader and servant of the church, and his highly effective and continuous intercession for them (Col. iv. 12), the hall-mark of a true and faithful overseer.

The impaired news from Epaphras leads to the prayer of Paul for their spiritual welfare and then on to one of the great Christ-exalting passages of the N.T.:

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joy” (Colossians i. 9-11 R.V.).

This section is balanced by chapter iii. 16 - iv. 1 where the words ‘wisdom’, ‘spiritual’, ‘work’, ‘giving thanks’, ‘pleasing’ and ‘inheritance’ are all repeated and light and understanding can be gained by carefully comparing these contexts. The first thing the Apostle mentions in his prayer is the ‘knowledge (*epignosis*) of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding’. We have seen in other studies that *epignosis* goes deeper than *gnosis*, as knowledge that *causes response* by the recipient, hence it is something more than mere intellectual grasp of facts. The Bible can be learned and stored in the brain like any other subject, but this does not and cannot give *spiritual* understanding or spiritual enlightenment which is absolutely essential if the truth lying behind the words is to be received and appreciated. The ‘natural man’ cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, ‘neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually discerned*’ (I Cor. ii. 13, 14), and so he needs *enlightenment*, opened eyes, which only the Holy Spirit can give (Eph. i. 17, 18). It is absolutely essential to understand this. To go through a theological course does not and cannot of itself give this enlightenment or *spiritual* understanding. Natural understanding, as with ordinary earthly subjects, is useless here.

It is possible, in the context we are considering, that Paul makes a subtle contrast with the false knowledge of his opponents at Colossae, professedly more advanced than ordinary knowledge. He shows that mere intellectualism or any occult experience is no

substitute for the thorough knowledge of the will of God in accordance with Divine wisdom and perception. So, before dealing with the false teaching which was Satan's substitute for the Truth in chapter ii., the Apostle stresses the *real* knowledge and acknowledgment which leads to lasting practical results. The reader should compare here the first prayer of Eph. i. 15-23 which likewise starts with *wisdom*. This is the first requirement if we are ever to have a real grip of God's truth with its riches of grace and glory. These supreme riches of God are the subject of Paul's prison letters. Is the Lord going to entrust them to foolish people?—and let us be honest, we are *all foolish to some extent by nature*. “If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, Who giveth unto all men liberally . . . .” (James i. 5) is the Divine promise that alone can remedy this.

“In experience then, this is where we must all start, with the *gift of Divine wisdom*, which the human intellect of itself cannot provide. From this will follow Divine understanding, the *spiritual discernment*, which again is a gift of God, and both of them leading to *practical* results, a walk that is *worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing* that is, giving Him *complete satisfaction*. This should be the *first aim* of our lives, and reminds us of Enoch, who *pleased* God with his walk and was later *translated* by God and ‘was not found’ (Gen. v. 24; Heb. xi. 5). We, too, as members of the Body of Christ are ‘translated’ ones (Col. i. 13). The worthy walk is expressed in three ways in Paul's prison letters—‘worthy of the calling’ (Eph. iv. 1), ‘worthy of the gospel’ (Phil. i. 27) and ‘worthy of the Lord’ (Col. i. 10). The Apostle likens such a walk to ‘bearing fruit’ and from this practical working out of the Truth comes a growing knowledge (*epignosis*) of God. Or could it mean that this vital spiritual growth springs from the *acknowledgment* of God and His claims. Both of these statements are of immense importance to each member of the Body of Christ. We only grow spiritually as we *respond* to the truth of God, and *obedience* to the knowledge of God that one has already received, is the necessary condition for reception of further knowledge. In other words, cramming the brain with Bible facts, merely an *intellectual* approach, accomplishes nothing. Nor will our heavenly Father give greater heavenly knowledge to us when we are not acting on what we already possess.

In his prayer, Paul now requests that the believers at Colossae be ‘empowered with all power in accordance with the might of His glory’. This takes our minds to Eph. i. 19-23 where the Apostle describes this as the ‘power of His resurrection’ which conquered death and exalted Him to the supreme position at the right hand of the Father. This overwhelming force is put at the disposal of the redeemed. It is to ‘usward who believe’ and its practical apprehension would be all-sufficient to enable these believers to face up to all opposition and every trial that would test their faith. It is well to note that ‘strengthened’ translates the present participle *dunamoumenoi* which indicates a *continuous* experience, not one that is seldom or never repeated.

From this we are led to a three-fold fruit, *patience, long-suffering* and *joyfulness*. ‘Patience’ is better rendered ‘endurance’, the steady persistence exhibited by a runner in a race, who continues right to the goal without giving up. ‘Longsuffering’ will stand up to provocation without retaliation or bitterness. It has been pointed out that the Stoic often exhibited patience and longsuffering, but he seldom did it with *joyfulness*. One can show

a measure of both and yet be a picture of misery. The Christian grace of abiding 'joy', not the empty bubble that the world calls 'fun', will transform the previous fruits and make the whole attractive for Christ.

All this should be accompanied by a grateful spirit:

“Giving thanks unto the Father, Who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (i. 12 R.V.).

One of the basest of human faults is ingratitude, and to be ungrateful in view of the supreme work of the Father described in this context is to sink low indeed. He has 'made us sufficient' or fitted us for a tremendous goal, nothing less than an inheritance in the heavenly holiest of all in the light. *Hagion* we can read as 'holy things' as well as 'holy people', and bearing in mind Heb. ix. 8 where the same word is rendered 'holiest (of all)', referring to the most holy place, the dwelling place of God's glory in the Tabernacle, we can better appreciate how this inheritance is 'in the light', the (*shekinah*) glory of God.

Here is something that eclipses any blessing that Israel possessed, great though these were. No Israelite would ever dream of *dwelling in* this most sacred place. Indeed, he lived his whole life *without entering it once*. Only the high priest, Aaron, had this unique privilege and then *only once a year* on the Day of Atonement, by virtue of his being a type of Christ Who has entered 'within the veil' in resurrection and ascension as the Forerunner (Heb. vi. 19, 20). But the Body of Christ is so favoured and graced that it will not only enter heaven's most sacred place, *but will dwell there permanently*, for *there* and not on earth, is their inheritance and each one is a living stone in this heavenly Temple and habitation of God (Eph. ii. 19-22). Nothing short of this is the tremendous goal for which the Father has fitted us. How grateful in practice should we then be!

Before the Apostle passes on to further truth, he bids us take a look back into the past:

“Who (the Father) delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (i. 13 R.V.).

The word 'deliver' means to 'rescue from danger' and how great this danger can be realized by remembering that in our unsaved state we were under 'the authority of darkness' or, as Eph. ii. 1-3 expresses it, we walked according to the 'prince of the power of the air', namely Satan himself, who animates all the unsaved. Eph. vi. 12 refers to the 'world rulers of this darkness' under his control, the evil principalities and powers who were defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary (Col. ii. 15) but who still seek to overthrow us and against whom our 'wrestling' is directed. The whole might of these dark Satanic forces was directed against the Son of God at Gethsemane to prevent Him reaching the Cross and accomplishing there complete victory over them all. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" He said (Luke xxii. 53). Let us never forget that Calvary means final victory over every foe for all the redeemed.

**No.53. The Epistle to the Colossians (3).**  
**pp. 85 - 90**

We are considering the mighty work of the Father Who has made us 'sufficient to be partakers of the inheritance of the heavenly holiest of all', a tremendous goal, whose magnitude is beyond our limited comprehension. Foreseeing our great danger, our being under the dominion of sin and death and the powers of darkness, He has rescued us from this (Col. i. 13) and translated us into the 'kingdom of the Son of His love', a beautiful expression, not only expressing the great love that exists between the Father and the Son (John xvii. 22-24), but also the practical showing forth of it in His most gracious dealings with those who are members of the Body of Christ. Every member is a translated one from the domination and kingdom of Satan and the powers of darkness into the supreme glories of the heavenly phase of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is well to realize that in the 'dispensation of the Mystery' (Eph. iii. 9 R.V.) we have not left the thought of a kingdom behind. Many who value dispensational truth apparently do not realize this, for they say we must distinguish between the 'Kingdom and the Church', as though the word 'Kingdom' is always limited to Israel and does not occur after Acts xxviii. What they mean is right, but it is wrongly or inaccurately expressed. Paul uses the word 'kingdom' five times *after* Acts xxviii. (Ephesians v. 5; Col. i. 13; iv. 11; II Tim. vi. 1, 18), and to be faithful to what God has written we must not divorce the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, related to the Mystery, from the thought of a kingdom. As the context we are considering tells us, each member of the body has been translated and brought into the *kingdom of Christ*. Those with whom the Apostle was working when he wrote to the Colossians, he describes as "my fellow-workers unto *the kingdom of God*", and one of his last thoughts in his last epistle is that the Lord will 'preserve me unto His *heavenly kingdom*' (II Tim. iv. 18).

What we must realize is that there is more than one phase of God's kingdom purposes. There are His *earthly* kingdom purposes of which the redeemed people of Israel are the centre. This phase was postponed at Acts xxviii. when this people were laid aside in spiritual darkness after their rejection of Christ and the further offer of mercy and forgiveness in Acts iii. 19-26. But there is a *heavenly* side to God's kingdom purposes and here the Body of Christ is the centre and 'heavenly places, far above all' the sphere of operation. We must therefore 'rightly divide' and distinguish between these differing aspects of the purpose of the ages and not be lax in the way we use the word 'kingdom'. It is not sufficient to say we must not confuse the 'Kingdom' and the 'Church'. We should be more specific and say the *earthly* kingdom of God, (when the so-called Lord's prayer is fulfilled Matt. vi. 10), and the church, the heavenly people of the heavenly kingdom (which embraces the highest heavens as the sphere of blessing).

Realizing this, let us rejoice in the teaching of Col. i. 13, that at the present time we are members of this supreme calling in the *Kingdom of the Son of His love*. Its basis is of course *redemption*:

“In Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins” (Col. i. 14).

The words ‘through His blood’ are omitted by the best Greek texts, though, keeping Eph. i. 7 in mind, they are obviously implied. The Word of God knows nothing about redemption that is not based upon the sacrificial death of Christ. This is absolutely central to all the great plan of God and verses 20 & 22 of Col. i. give us this basic truth (and compare Rom. iii. 24). We now enter a section that experiences depths and heights, dealing with the old and new creations, one material and the other spiritual, and this with the object of combating the Colossian heresy. Paul shows that the Lord Jesus is *preeminent in both*, which would be a shattering blow to the seducing doctrines promulgated by the opposers at Colossae.

Several points of doctrine brought forward in this section are echoed again in iii. 9-15:

**Colossians i. 13 - 20 and iii. 9 - 15.**

- G | i. 15, 16. The Creator. The Image.
- H | i. 20. Reconciliation of heaven and earth.
- I | i. 17, 18. Christ pre-eminent. All in Him.
- J | i. 20. Peace and forgiveness of sins.
- K | i. 22. Holy, blameless, unproveable.
- G | iii. 10. Created after Image.
- H | iii. 11. Reconciliation of Jew and Greek.
- I | iii. 11. Christ is all and in all.
- J | iii. 13, 15. Peace. Forgive quarrel.
- K | iii. 9, 12. Put off, put on, holy and beloved.

Charles H. Welch draws our attention to the parallels between John i., Colossians i. and Hebrews i.:

<b>John i.</b>	<b>Colossians i.</b>	<b>Hebrews i.</b>
The Word	The Image	The express Image
God never seen	The invisible God	The substance
All things made by Him	All things created by Him	Ages, heaven and earth made by Him
Preferred before John	Pre-eminent in all	Superior to angels
His fullness	All the fullness	Heir of all things
	All things by Him consist	All things upheld by Him
The Word was God		Thy Throne, O God
The only-begotten Son	Firstborn	Firstborn

The tremendous statements of these three contexts and others as well must be taken into consideration if we are to get any true appreciation of the passage we are considering. The Apostle here goes right to the heart of the matter that was troubling the Colossians by asserting the *primacy* of Christ in all things. The truth of this was sufficient to show up the false teaching at Colossae for what it was, the ‘angel of light’

doctrine that emanated from the arch-deceiver, Satan himself. The mediatorial position and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in creation is first brought before us:

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Col. i. 15-17 R.V.).

God is spirit (John iv. 24 R.V. margin), and as such He is invisible and unapproachable. He needs a concrete representation of Himself if ever He is to be known in any measure by limited created beings and this has been fulfilled in Christ as the Image of God, or, as Heb. i. puts it, “the Express Image of His substance”, the exact representation of all God is. This was the pre-existent Christ, the Logos, through Whom everything came into being and in Whose Image Adam was created (Gen. i. 26). We must be very careful with the word ‘firstborn’ (*prototokos*) and not make the gross error of arguing from the English word that Christ was the first being who was ‘born’ or created. This the Arians do, but they conveniently ignore the argument of the context. Christ was the Firstborn *because by Him all things were created* (Col. i. 16). In other words, it is as *God the Creator* He is described as the ‘Firstborn’ and only as such could it be said with truth that “*He is before ALL things*” (verse 17). This could never be said of a created being. We quote from *The Deity of Christ* by Professor F. F. Bruce and Dr. W. J. Martin:

“The word ‘firstborn’ had long since ceased to be used exclusively in its literal sense, just as ‘prime’ (from Latin *primus*—first) with us. The Prime Minister is not the first minister we have had, he is the most pre-eminent. A man in the ‘prime’ of life has long since left the first part of his life behind. Similarly ‘firstborn’ came to denote *not priority in time, but pre-eminence in rank.*” (Italics ours.)

In other words, *prototokos* expresses *primacy and great dignity of rank* and rather than limiting Christ or degrading Him into the position of a created being, it does just the opposite. Furthermore the word used by Paul, *all*, means exactly what it says. Had the Lord been a created being, the Apostle would have had to use the Greek word meaning ‘other things’ or the word meaning ‘remainder’ or ‘rest’ and the phrase would then have read that He was the first of all other beings to be created or born. Not only this, but Paul would have described Him as *first-created*, a term never applied to Christ. But let us note verse 17. “And He *is* before all things”; not He *was* before all things. This is surely parallel to the great statement of the Lord in John viii. 58 “Before Abraham was, I AM (*ego eimi*).

We must also take careful note of the fact that not only did the whole creation come into being through His agency, *its goal is to Him also*. It is not only *through* Him, but “*unto* Him”. This again stresses His primacy in all things. Such a statement could never have been made with truth in connection with any *created* being, however great. Not only was He the Creator, but His omnipotence holds the creation together—“by Him all things consist”. This goes far beyond the impersonal force of cohesion.

There is no doubt then, that as far as the material creation is concerned, the Lord Jesus Christ was its originator and is its upholder, and only One could fill this role, namely God Himself. Anything less than this would have nullified Paul's aim and argument, namely to combat the Colossian heresy in respect to degrading the Person and Work of Christ. It would have played into the hands of the opposers.

When the Apostle describes creation, he relates it to all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, but he concentrates on the invisible heavenly beings, 'thrones, dominion', 'authorities', 'principalities and powers', for he had the erroneous teaching at Colossae in view, which exalted angels and worshipped them (Col. ii. 18) putting them in the place of Christ Himself. These heavenly beings rather than being equal with God, *must have been created by Christ* and such owed their being to His work and were subject to Him. These five classes of angel-princes seem to represent the highest orders of the angelic realm, the aristocracy of heaven. Some were hostile powers and were conquered by the Saviour's work on the cross (Col. ii. 15). This, too, exalted Christ far above them.

There is no doubt, then, relative to the creation of this gigantic universe which includes the heavens, Christ is pre-eminent as Creator and Lord. No created being, however great, could fill this role. The whole witness of the Word of God, the Old and New Testaments, points to *God* as Creator. The epistle to the Hebrews states that "He laid the foundations of the earth, the heavens are the work of His hands" (Heb. i. 10), and "He that built all things is God" (Heb. iii. 4). God has not deputized any creature to do this work, nor could such a being accomplish anything so gigantic. But this is only half the story. Paul is now going to consider *the new creation*, and here, as in the material realm, the Lord Jesus Christ is First and Supreme.

#### **No.54. The Epistle to the Colossians (4). pp. 105 - 109**

We have seen how the Apostle Paul in chapter i. was seeking to counteract the error that was creeping into the Colossian church, which denigrated the Lord Jesus Christ from His position as First and Last. The Apostle has asserted the Lord's primacy in creation and its maintenance. He now turns to the spiritual creation, and here, as in the material creation, Christ is first:

"And He is the head of the Body, the church: Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; *that in all things He might have the pre-eminence* (first place)"  
(Colossians i. 18 R.V.).

It is clear that the title 'the Firstborn from the dead' balances 'the Firstborn of all creation' (i. 15). It was in resurrection, His victory over death, that He became the First of a new order. He was the 'Firstfruits' (I Cor. xv. 23) in resurrection and the Beginning (*arche*) of a new creation. This word occurs in the Divine titles used in Rev. xxi. 6, "I

am Alpha and Omega, the *beginning* (*arche*) and the end”, and Rev. xxii. 13, “I am Alpha and Omega, the *beginning* (*arche*) and the end, the first and the last”. These majestic titles take us back to the middle chapters of Isaiah’s prophecy where God asserts:

“I am the *first*, and I am the *last*; and *beside Me there is no God* . . . . Is there a God beside Me? Yea, there is no God” (Isa. xliv. 6-8).

“Hearken unto Me, O Jacob and Israel, My called; I am He; I am the first, I also am the last” (Isa. xlvi. 12).

There can be no doubt from these verses that the title ‘the first and the last’ belongs to Jehovah, God alone. *They are unconditionally given to the Lord Jesus in the book of Revelation.* It is *in this sense* that He is the *beginning*, the First in all creation, either material or spiritual, and this is the meaning the word bears in the much misunderstood title in Rev. iii. 14, where the word *beginning* is this very word *arche*, ‘first’. And in the context we are studying He is revealed as the ‘Beginning’ or ‘the First’, with one object:

“that in ALL things He might have *the first place* (pre-eminence)” (verse 18).

Note it is not merely the first place in *some things*, but the *first place in everything*, and there is only one Person Who can rightly have such an exalted and unique position and that is God Himself and He has been revealed to us ‘in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Image of the invisible God, the Head of the church, the Body’. In the light of all this, the heresy at Colossae was shown up in its true colours. The pre-gnostic ideas of many spiritual angelic mediators between God and men, claiming man’s adoration, are swept aside and shown to be part of the Satanic lie. The opposers at Colossae who were seeking to put over these ideas were faced with a challenge of the first magnitude. They either had to abandon them completely or persist in their deception and apostasy, and all today who belittle or down-grade Christ are in a similar position. In these perilous times we should maintain the utmost watchfulness over all that comes our way concerning Him, either spoken or written. No one who names the name of the Lord Jesus and wishes to be regarded as sincere and faithful can take any less or different position. Men today either stone Him or worship Him as God manifest in the flesh. There is no middle position.

The Apostle Paul continues the theme of the uniqueness of Christ:

“For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens” (i. 19, 20 R.V.).

Not only is Christ first as Creator and as Head of the Body, but in Him *all* the fullness of the Godhead dwells in a bodily form (i. 19; ii. 9). Members of the Body as earthen vessels can be filled with God’s fullness (Eph. iii. 19 R.V.—and note the ‘unto’ rather than ‘with’ of the A.V.), but neither they nor any other being, angelic or otherwise, can contain ALL the fullness of God. *Pleroma*, fullness, is one of the great words of the prison epistles, but it also occurs elsewhere. In the Gospels it is used of the patch put in to ‘fill up’ the rent in an old garment (Matt. ix. 16; Mark ii. 21) and of the left-over

fragments which ‘filled’ several baskets after the miraculous feeding of the multitudes (Mark vi. 43). In Romans it is used both of the Jew and the Gentile (xi. 12, 25). For the Jew, restoration after their ‘diminishing’ in judgment for their unbelief, and for the Gentile, the completion of the Gentile period covering Israel’s *lo-ammi* condition.

In Ephesians, the church is the *fullness* of Christ (Eph. i. 23) and each member is “filled full (complete) in Him” (Col. ii. 10 R.V.) and in the verses we are studying, the Lord Jesus Himself contains *all* God’s fullness. *Pleroma* is obviously a word of great doctrinal import, sometimes with the thought of a rent or gap in the background, or it concerns the completion or totality of what the context treats. Here in Colossians, Paul is asserting that in Christ the completion of Deity dwells. He is not merely a being endued with great power, but is rather the dwelling place of the very essence of God.

From this follows His great reconciling work based on the offering of Himself on Calvary’s cross which touches heaven and earth, *ta panta*, all things that are contained in the mighty, redemptive purpose and will of God. We have no real basis for universalism here, for we must remember that the same cross that is the Divine basis for the reconciliation of “the all things” (literally) is also the means whereby principalities and powers who were the enemies of God have been defeated and brought into subjection. The wide sweep of reconciliation here has in mind the creation which became subject to vanity because of man’s sin (Rom. viii. 20) and looks forward to the final new creation of a heaven and earth wherein dwells righteousness and from which all rebels and sinners, whether angelic or man, are excluded.

In Col. i. 20 this reconciliation was a decisive act (note the *aorist* tense of the verb, not future) pointing to us the *basis* wrought once for all on the cross by the Lord Jesus, and upon this alone this mighty reconciliation rests and comes down to individual believers who once were ‘alienated and enemies in their minds’ to God. The verb for ‘reconcile’ is *apokatallasso*, found also in Eph. ii. 16 and nowhere else in the N.T. The shorter word *katallasso* occurs in Rom. v. 10 (twice), II Cor. v. 18, 19, 20 and the cognate noun *katallage* is found in Rom. v. 11; xi. 15; II Cor. v. 18, 19. *Apokatallasso* appears to be an intensified form of the verb ‘to reconcile’ and is kept by the Holy Spirit to the prison letters of Paul where reconciliation is seen in its highest and widest sense. All this has been accomplished by *one Person* and *one act*, that is the Lord Jesus Christ and the sacrificial offering of Himself on the cross, paying the penalty of sin, which is death. No angelic mediator could have accomplished this and all the while we must bear in mind the *object* here of Paul’s writing, to show up the falsity of the heresy that was undermining the faith of believers at Colossae.

The reconciliation of Eph. ii. deals with the creation of a ‘new man’ from the Jew who was nigh and the Gentile who was alienated and at a distance, and the removal of all barriers between them in this newly created company. Here in Colossians after the mighty sweep of all creation, Paul shows how this full reconciliation touches each individual believer in the Body of Christ:

“Yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unproveable before Him” (i. 22 R.V.).

The ultimate aim of this great work of the Lord is to present each member, and the Body as a whole before Himself, in holiness and perfection. In the original will of the Father, this company was 'chosen in Christ' to be 'holy and without blemish before Him in love' (Eph. i. 14 R.V.) in the future presentation day and that will is carried out and completed in all its fullness through the redemptive work of the Son. *Amomos*, 'without spot', is used of Christ Himself in I Pet. i. 19 and this means that this church has nothing less than the very holiness of the Lord and in such a condition is 'unreproveable', literally, 'not accused'. There are no grounds in them for any accusation (Rom. viii. 33, 34). What a goal for sinners such as we are! Can we ever thank the Lord enough for all this? Surely words alone will not do. Our very lives must reflect here and now something of this Christ-likeness.

The Apostle Paul was concerned that this glorious prospect which he brought before the Colossian believers should not lead to complacency or slackness. If it is God's will that they should be presented as holy as He is, then he wills their continuing in faithfulness during this life:

"If so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister" (i. 23 R.V.).

The Apostle assumes they will continue in the course in which they have begun, no matter what temptations or difficulties come their way. He knew the danger of being hindered in the 'race' and the possibility of falling out with the Lord's disqualification at His award day as regards reward for service. Did not Paul say of himself 'I do not run aimlessly . . . lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified' (I Cor. ix. 26. 27 R.S.V.). This indeed would be a shameful thing after all that God has accomplished for the members of His Body. Hence the importance of their not being enticed away from the truth by the insidious teaching that was being circulated in their midst. The Colossian believers should not think that they were a small isolated group, for the fullness of this great gospel had been declared far and wide to the limits of the then known world.

In the Lord's strength they could stand and become 'more than conquerors' through Him that loved, died, rose again and ascended for them.

**No.55. The Epistle to the Colossians (5).**  
**pp. 129 - 133**

Having stated that the good news concerning which he had been made a minister by the ascended Christ had been preached everywhere without any barriers (Col. i. 23), Paul now deals with the effect of that ministry upon himself and its relationship to the church which is the Body of Christ:

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body’s sake which is the church; whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward” (Col. i. 24, 25 R.V.).

In the letter to the Ephesians the Apostle expresses the desire that these believers should not faint at his tribulations *for them* (Eph. iii. 13). Rather than indulging in self-pity, he rejoices at the sufferings he was enduring which were a necessary part of his faithful witness for the Lord and His people. At his conversion, Christ had expressly stated “For I will show him *how great things* he must suffer for My Name’s sake” (Acts ix. 16) and in this perhaps Paul was unique. In the ordinary way the Lord does not inform us beforehand as to the trials and difficulties we must undergo in the future. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. vi. 34) and we can be thankful that this is so. How many of us could stand up to such knowledge, such as, if we knew that some terrible suffering and loss awaited us in a year’s time? But with the Apostle Paul suffering would not be surprising after the Lord’s statement recorded in the Acts. He did not shrink from such suffering, but rather was anxious to fill up just that measure that the Lord had willed for him. When writing to the Colossians he had not yet reached this state, but was ready to go on in his experience of trial and difficulty until the measure had been reached and ‘filled’.

A similar figure is used when speaking of ‘filling up’ sins (I Thess. ii. 16) or of filling up ‘the measure of the fathers’ (Matt. xxiii. 32). While it is possible that some of our suffering may result from our own foolishness or lack of faithfulness, it is a joy to realize that all sufferings connected with true service and witness are the ‘sufferings *of Christ*’. The link between the Lord and His redeemed people is so close that what affects them affects Him. Paul learned this at the outset, on the road to Damascus. “Why are you persecuting *Me?*”, the Lord said to him, referring to his persecution of believers (Acts ix. 4).

The sufferings then that the Apostle was enduring when writing to the Colossian church, had a two fold aspect: (1) as it affected the Lord and (2) its connection with the instructing and building up of the Body of Christ. What it does *not* mean is that Paul or any other believer could have a share in the redemptive sufferings and work of salvation endured by the Saviour on the cross. This would have contradicted the whole witness of the Apostle in connection with the proclamation of the gospel of God’s grace apart from

merit or works, and indeed goes against the whole tenor of Scripture on this subject. If anyone cites Matt. xxiv. 13, then the context and time setting must be carefully studied. The verse cannot be properly understood if this is not done and in any case Scripture cannot contradict Scripture.

Paul realized his special calling and its significance. He knew that he had been divinely called to discharge a special stewardship of truth that was entirely new, for up to this point God had hid it *in Himself* (Eph. iii. 9) from all previous times and generations of people (Col. i. 26). It was a calling associated with riches of grace and glory beyond imagination and all this was principally for those who from a spiritual standpoint had been outcasts, Godless, Christless and hopeless (Eph. ii. 11-13). This stewardship or 'dispensation' had been a 'mystery' or secret because of the fact that God had hidden it, not even in the Scriptures where searching might have discovered it, but *in Himself*. And if God hides in this way, who can find, until He chooses to reveal? Yet how many profess to find this secret in the O.T. or in Scriptures written earlier than the prison epistles of Paul! This surely must be unbelief and deception, yet it often poses as spirituality! The Apostle had faithfully ministered all through the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles, but he never once described this ministry as *God's secret* which he was making known for the first time. Rather he insisted that all of it accorded with and went no further than Moses and the Prophets, i.e. the Old Testament (Acts xxvi. 22, 23). Therefore this early ministry of his could not have described as a 'mystery', something Divinely hidden, but was one of *revelation* since the Pentateuch and the Prophets had declared it.

It would be a good thing in our Bible study to contrast the secret of Ephesians iii. and Colossians i. with truth which has never been hidden, such as the condition of man as a sinner and the only remedy for it, God's salvation. Or the fact that from Abraham onwards God had Gentile blessing in mind all the while, even though for a long time He concentrated on Israel, preparing them as a channel of truth to reach the whole world. Those who imagine this great 'secret' is made known in the gospel of grace, or in Gentile blessing with Israel, have surely not gripped just what the 'mystery' really is, for both these things were *never hidden*. One almost gets tired of reading this sort of explanation of the Mystery in expositions of Ephesians and Colossians, the writers apparently being unable to see that they are making the Word of God contradict itself.

The Apostle now enlarges on this special ministry which Christ had given him relating to the church which is His Body:

“. . . . His Body's sake, which is the church, whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation (stewardship) of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the word of God, even the mystery (secret) which hath been hid from all ages and generations, but now hath it been manifested to His saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery (secret) among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (i. 24-27 R.V.).

This revelation and stewardship was given to Paul alone. There is no hint by any other N.T. writer that they had received such a commission from the ascended Christ, nor do they claim to reveal any such Divine secrets. They were appointed to serve elsewhere

in the great purpose of God and they speak with authority in that particular sphere of service to which they were sent, chiefly in connection with the people of Israel who are the key to world blessing and the kingdom of God *on earth*. But Paul's commission deals with outcast Gentiles whose divine destiny after salvation is *heavenly*, whose commonwealth exists *in the heavens* (Phil. iii. 20), and who are now seen *positionally* in those very heavens 'seated together in Christ' (Eph. ii. 6). This was certainly a fullness of revelation that had never been made known before. The O.T. knows nothing of it, nor does the N.T. until we reach the prison letters of the Apostle Paul where he first unfolds the wonders of this divine secret and its purpose.

He assures us that, at this point, God *willed* or *chose* (R.S.V.) to make it known. Israel, the covenant people of God, had miserably failed and been set aside in blindness, hardness of heart and unbelief (Acts xxviii. 28). Instead of choosing another channel and proceeding with His purpose of world blessing and the establishment of His kingdom of righteousness and peace on earth, God now reveals a *heavenly* side to His kingdom, principally Gentile, with a heavenly hope, with whom the aristocracy of heaven, principalities and powers, are connected and are now learning the manifold wisdom of God. This company He plans to be a permanent home (habitation) for Himself (Ephesians ii. 20-22). What a destiny and what a revelation!

As far as the redeemed are concerned, it is surely unmatched in the rest of Scripture! No wonder the Apostle counted it the highest honour to be the human channel through which it was revealed! No wonder he desired above all things to make it known at whatever cost to himself!

Eph. iii. 3, 6-9 and Col. i. 27 are complementary in revealing this great secret. The Ephesian context tells us that the Body consists of chosen Jews and Gentiles who in this out-calling lose their status *as such*. In this church there is no Israelite or Gentile (Colossians iii. 10, 11). They are divinely called to be a *new creation* (not an evolution or improvement from what had gone before), a *new man* (Eph. ii. 15), and are members on a perfect equality for the first time, "joint-heirs", "joint-partakers" and forming a "joint-Body" (Eph. iii. 6). As we have seen, it had never been a secret that Gentiles would be blessed with and through Israel. This was God's express purpose in calling out Israel, as He clearly made known to Abraham (Gen. xii. 1-3). But in this relationship Israel did not lose her identity or her priority. Even during the Acts period the Gentile was reminded that he was but a wild olive grafted into the true (Israel) to partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree, that is, Israel's covenant blessings, but in doing this he was reminded 'thou bearest not the root, *but the root thee*' (Rom. xi. 18). Only by the means salvation was attained were they equal, that is by grace alone (Rom. iii. 21-23), for God has only *one* way of salvation whether it touches Jew or Gentile, namely—faith in Christ Jesus apart from any human works or merit.

The context in Colossians with which we are dealing gives another aspect. In Colossians i. 27 the preposition *en* occurs twice 'this mystery *among (en)* the Gentiles, which is Christ *en* (in or among) you, the hope of glory'. It does not seem likely that Paul uses this preposition in two different senses in these phrases which are so closely

linked in position and meaning. The normal sense of *en* is 'in', but we cannot translate the former occurrence as 'Christ *in* the Gentiles'. With the plural, *en* can mean 'among' and translators are forced to render it as such. Why not keep this for its second occurrence which would then be 'Christ *amongst* you' (Gentiles, as the A.V. margin). If we render it as 'Christ *in* you', we make the indwelling of Christ the secret hid from all past time and generations of people. But a careful study of Scripture will reveal the fact that this marvelous privilege (and God forbid that we should ever appear to lessen it) *had been known* before, and in our next study we hope to deal with this. Meanwhile, may the Spirit of wisdom and *revelation* be given to us and the darkness of our minds taken away, lest we miss the priceless jewel of the Mystery from God's treasury of Truth.

## **No.56. The Epistle to the Colossians (6).** **pp. 150 - 154**

In our last study we reached the point in Col. i. where the Apostle Paul described the unique ministry that had been given by the ascended Christ to him to make known to the 'Gentiles'. It concerned a phase of the great purpose of God that up to this point He had kept hidden in Himself. Eph. iii. and this context in Colossians give us two aspects of it which relate to the church which is the joint-Body of Christ:

“. . . . to whom God would (or wills to) make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery (secret) *among* the Gentiles; which is Christ *among* (A.V. margin) you (Gentiles), the Hope of glory” (Col. i. 27).

As we pointed out previously, this Divine secret is not that of the indwelling Christ as the A.V. suggests. Their marginal reading is more accurate to the doctrine concerning the Mystery. The fact of Christ's indwelling of the believer is wonderful indeed and its experience is a matchless privilege. But this had been made known long before Ephesians and Colossians had been written and had never been called a secret. In Isa.lvii.15 we read:

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy; I  *dwell* in the high and lofty place, *with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit . . .*”

“Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love Me, he will keep my words: and My Father will love him, and *We will come unto him, and make Our abode (dwelling place) with him*” (John xiv. 23).

“And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One: *I in them, and Thou in Me . . . .*” (John xvii. 22, 23).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, *but Christ liveth in me . . .*” (Gal. ii. 20).

From these Scriptures it will be evident that God's indwelling of His redeemed children, wonderful though it is, is no secret which had been kept hidden 'from ages and from generations' (Col. i. 26). It had been known as far back as O.T. times and Paul in his first epistle (Galatians, written during the Acts) had declared this to be his precious experience and he was writing to churches *who had a large proportion of Gentile*

*believers*. But he does not say here that this constituted the Mystery and Secret which he had been given as a special stewardship to pass on to the Gentiles. In fact he does not once speak of the churches of the Acts period as being linked with the Mystery.

Later on in the letter to the Ephesians he shows that the Gentiles were by nature ‘without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world’ (ii. 12). But in this new creation their great distance from Christ Jesus was cancelled. Now, instead of being ‘far off’, Christ was *among them*, independently of Israel or the covenants made with Israel. A new vista was opened to them connected with ‘riches of glory’ that belong to heavenly places where Christ is now enthroned and positionally they are seen by God as ‘seated together *in Christ Jesus*’ in these heavenly places (Eph. ii. 6). No such calling had ever been made known before, least of all to Gentiles so far off from God and utterly hopeless in themselves! What riches of glory are here! This new calling is closely connected to the *wealth* of the Godhead. ‘Riches’ occurs eight times in Paul’s prison epistles and each reference is tremendous in its implications and needs revelation and careful and prolonged meditation to savour its fullness and wonder. We give the occurrences:

- “. . . . the forgiveness of sins, according to the *riches* of His grace” (Eph. i. 17).
- “What the *riches* of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (of in the ‘holiest of all’)” (Eph. i. 18).
- “That . . . . He might show *exceeding riches* of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. ii. 7).
- “That I should preach among the Gentiles the *unsearchable riches* of Christ” (Eph. iii. 8).
- “That He would grant you, according to the *riches* of His glory” (Eph. iii. 16).
- “My God shall supply all your need according to His *riches* in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. iv. 19).
- “. . . . what is the *riches* of the glory of this mystery” (Col. i. 27).
- “unto all *riches* of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ” (Col. ii. 2 R.V.).

These verses make known some of the almost incredible wonder of this new dispensation or stewardship which is God’s revelation ‘for us Gentiles’. Here indeed is truth, that up to this point had been kept secret. Where previously can we find such wealth, such spiritual treasure given in grace to far-off outsiders? All this was summed up in Christ Jesus and He is now ‘among us’ Gentiles in all His fullness. This indeed warrants Paul’s statement ‘the riches of the glory of this secret, Christ among you (Gentiles) the hope of glory’.

We wish however to point out that the indwelling Christ is certainly true for members of the church which is His Body for in the second prayer of Ephesians the Apostle prays:

- “. . . . that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; *that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . . .*” (iii. 16, 17),

but Paul does not include this as part of *the secret* Christ had commissioned him to make known to the Gentiles. It is profitable to note that the important word ‘Gentile’ in the prison epistles also occurs 8 times, like the word ‘riches’ (Eph. ii. 11; iii. 1, 6, 8; iv. 17;

Col. i. 27; II Tim.i.11; iv.17). Another key word is *doxa*, glory, which occurs 24 times in Paul's epistles written after the Acts. However baffled we may be to explain this great word, we may rest assured that it stands for something absolutely real, even though too wonderful for explanation in human terms, for it enters into the very nature of God and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus 'far above all' that can be conceived, and He is the 'hope of (this) glory', which is so vitally connected with the heavenly inheritance of the Body, destined to become the 'dwelling place of God' when completed (Eph. ii. 20-22).

Paul now tells the Colossian believers that it is this ascended Christ, in Whom dwells all this spiritual wealth, that he is proclaiming to them:

“. . . . Christ in you (among you), the hope of glory: Whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ; whereunto I labour also, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily” (Col. i. 27-29 R.V.).

We should notice that there are two 'presentations' in Col. i. and they are not just repetitions of each other. In verse 22 every member of the Body is assured of being presented 'holy, and without blemish and unreprouvable in His sight' for this is what the Father originally willed (Eph. i. 3, 4) and the Son has died to procure (v. 25-27). In verse 28 however the presentation is different although the English version appears to teach the same, that is to 'present every man perfect in Christ'. Here the word 'perfect' is the very important word *teleios* which means 'mature' as opposed to infancy and inexperience. That all believers should develop spiritually and grow up, leaving babyhood behind Eph. iv. 13, 14 makes perfectly clear. That there is a danger of this not happening the context we are considering in Colossians reveals. Paul laboured intensely *kopiaio* (implying labouring to the point of weariness) that this would not be the experience of the Colossians saints. He knew well that immature believers easily become the dupes of Satan. His 'cunning craftiness' easily deceives such, and this may have been at the root of the trouble at Colossae. The error that was creeping in and which this epistle directly combats, most probably was gaining ground in the minds of some who were not growing in grace and the knowledge and acknowledgment of Christ. Such are always a danger in a Christian community and the Apostle therefore strives, according to the working of Christ's resurrection power, to bring such back to Truth and vital spiritual growth which can only take place when the Lord Jesus is accorded His rightful place as the pre-eminent One in the Divine purpose of the ages. So important is this that Paul in ii. 1 refers again to his striving for them and also for those at neighbouring Laodicea and the fact that they had not 'seen his face in the flesh' shows that they had been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ through the ministry of others, in this case most probably the witness of Epaphras. The Apostle's concern for them was that they might be strengthened ('comforted') and 'knit together in love'. Divine love he assures us later on in the epistle is 'the tie of maturity' (iii. 14) that binds together the people of God. This love is pre-eminent among the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Gal. v. 22) and the unity of spirit which is cemented by this love has been made by Him and must now be jealously guarded (Eph. iv. 3). Satan always seeks to *divide*. God always *unites* His children. Real unity is strength and division leads to weakness. Let no one be deceived. There can be no 'worthy walk' without keeping 'this unity of the Spirit' which has been made

between the members of the Body. Any breaking of this can only lead to trouble and a grieved Spirit of God (Eph. iv. 30). Not only this but it gives place to the Devil and he will not be slow to take advantage of the situation.

## **No.57. The Epistle to the Colossians (7).** **pp. 166 - 170**

The context in Col. ii. which we are studying lays great emphasis on *unity* which is so important in the out-working of God's gracious purposes. Hence the injunction to guard this unity as the first part of the worthy walk (Eph. iv. 1-16).

“. . . . being *knit together* in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery (secret) of God, even Christ” (Col. ii. 2 R.V.).

Then follows one of Paul's supreme phrases, an antidote surely to the false knowledge that was leading some astray at Colossae and possibly elsewhere. The *gnosis*, knowledge, that the false teachers were trying to foist on the Colossians might have been externally impressive with its prohibitions and false holiness, but it could never lead to the 'full assurance of understanding' of God and the One Who sums Him up concretely, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. The 'secret of God' *is Christ*—He is not just a part of it. This should remind us that not all God's secret are *fully* revealed. The Saviour declared:

“. . . . *no man knoweth the Son, but the Father*; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Matt. xi. 27).

It is impossible for any finite being to completely comprehend God whether revealed as Christ or as the Father. Now we only know 'in part' (I Cor. xiii. 12). Those who deny the deity of Christ and glibly talk of Him being a created being should remember this. Our knowledge of this profound mystery can only grow and deepen as we *acknowledge in practice* the One of Whom it can be said with truth that 'in Him dwelleth *all* the fullness of the Godhead bodily' (Col. ii. 9). The words of C. H. Welch are to the point here:

“The touchstone of all doctrine, whether it be expressed as 'philosophy', whether it has the sanction of 'tradition', or comes with all the force of the accepted 'rudiments of the world', is CHRIST (Col. ii. 8). Christ is revealed as our very life itself (Col. iii. 4), and eventually as our 'ALL and in all' (Col. iii. 11).

It is the simplest yet the most profound lesson of the ages. 'The mystery of God' is the all embracing secret within which all other mysteries find their sphere, and which are solved in the Person of Christ. 'That I may know *Him*' is the climax of all prayer. 'I know *Whom* I have believed' is the basis of all assurance. 'To know the love of *Christ*' is to possess a knowledge far beyond our greatest faculties. 'The excellency of the knowledge of *Christ*' makes all lesser attainments so much offal, and the very unity of the faith unto which we all press is, above all, 'the knowledge of the *Son of God*' (Eph.iv.13). Paul's gospel was *Christ* (I Cor. i. 23; II Cor. iv. 5; Gal. i. 16). Paul's

doctrine was *Christ* (Eph. iv. 20). *His* life here in the flesh (Gal. ii. 20), the goal of this life (Phil. i. 21), and the life of resurrection glory (Col. iii. 4) was *Christ*.

No language of ours can express anything approaching the fullness that the heart realized to be resident in these words of Col. ii. 2. Nothing less than a life-long exposition of these epistles could hope to touch the fringe of so mighty a theme.”  
(*The Berean Expositor*, Volume XXIII, pp.44, 45).

If these wise words impress afresh with the mightiness of the theme of Christ Jesus they are not in vain. Truly in Him alone are ‘*all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden’ (Col. ii. 3 R.V.) and this is the great antidote to all error of doctrine, such as the false teachers were seeking to foist upon the Colossian believers. As Paul had previously insisted to the Corinthian church, Christ alone is the wisdom of God (I Cor. i. 24, 30). This glorification of the Lord Jesus was for the express purpose of preventing those at Colossae from being deceived:

“This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ” (ii. 4, 5 R.V.).

Although the Apostle was severed by distance in his Roman prison, yet in the tidings that were brought to him by Epaphras he was with them in thought and prayer, keenly alert to their needs and noting their response. In the next two verses Paul sums up their Christian experience in their vital relationship to Christ Jesus, the One Who is Lord and God:

“As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and builded up in Him, and stablished in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (Col. ii. 6, 7 R.V.).

They had received Him as Saviour and Lord and thus were ‘rooted’ in Him. They were now expected to *acknowledge* Him in practice as Lord and Master. The Apostle uses two illustrations here to express the truth. ‘Rooted’ is the perfect participle in the Greek which points to an act that took place in the past, but whose effects persist in the present. This ‘rooting’ in Christ and close unity with Him is true for all time and therefore speaks of continuous security. Such healthy rootage leads to healthy growth and fruit. ‘Built up’ is the present participle which indicates a steady spiritual growth. ‘Established’ likewise expresses a continuous experience of strengthening and confirming resulting from this Christ-centred living. The ‘faith’ is the body of revealed truth that had been given by the risen and ascended Christ through the Apostle Paul (Gal. i. 11, 12; Eph. iii. 1-9; II Tim. i. 13, 14; ii. 2) and as a final note, abounding thanksgiving and gratitude is stressed, for this directs thought away from self to the Lord Who is the only source and substance of these glorious truths and to Whom all praise and glory should be given.

We now enter the distinctive section of this epistle which deals with the Colossian heresy and its antidote (Col. ii. 8 - iii. 4). Consequently the Apostle commences with a word of warning:

“Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full, Who is the Head of all principality and power” (ii. 8-10 R.V.).

We have already touched upon the false teaching that was creeping into the Colossian church. While it is difficult to get a clear picture of it in detail, it was apparently a blending of Jewish legalism and pagan philosophy with its stress on the complete antithesis between spirit and matter which was considered to be evil. Consequently a holy God was divorced from His creation and no direct contact was possible between them. Any contact could only be achieved through intermediaries who were looked on as spiritual lords or rulers of the seven planetary spheres in which Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn moved. Each was believed to be governed by one of these lords (an *archon*) and no direct approach to God was possible except through these angelic mediators. If this was accepted as truth, then one could understand the concern to please or placate these spirit beings.

The whole of this deceptive lie was an attack upon the Biblical doctrine of creation and redemption wrought through the sole agency of the Lord Jesus. He alone was the antidote to such falsity. The new teaching stressed a higher wisdom, but *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found solely in Him. He alone was Creator; He alone summed up the Godhead bodily. He alone was the *one Mediator* between God and men and was also the conqueror of principalities and powers that were the believers' enemies. Therefore to leave him was to slip back into darkness and bondage from which they had been redeemed, no matter how plausible the new ideas were put across with their stress on a sanctity and humility which, seen in their true colours, were completely false.

The whole history of man since Eden has been interwoven with deception. Satan is above all the arch-deceiver. As such he deceived Eve and has been deceiving mankind ever since. There is no protection from this apart from the revelation of Truth, the Word of God, and the living Word Whom it reveals, Who is the Truth (John xiv. 6). In Him alone there is safety. So long as we hold fast to God's Word of truth and rightly divide it, refusing to go one step beyond what is revealed we are safe. To do otherwise is to follow darkness rather than light, to sow the seeds of error and finally to reap the harvest of shame, bondage and Divine disapproval. This is Satan's one aim, to lead believers away from the freedom in Christ and to bring them back under his control and slavery. “Let no man deceive you” said the Apostle, and the call is just as vital and necessary today as ever it was. Satan may alter his tactics but the end is always the same although it is covered up by attractive presentation, ‘plausible speech’ and the striking and capable personality of the so-called ‘ministers of righteousness’ that Satan often uses.

We should note from this context in Colossians that his attack is three-fold, described as ‘false reasoning’, ‘enticing’ and ‘spoiling’ and in carrying this out he uses three means (1) a vain and deceitful philosophy, (2) human tradition and (3) rudiments or elements of the world.

We can easily be deceived by false reasoning. While faith is never *unreasonable*, there are many Divine things that are *above* our reasoning or ability to comprehend. We are therefore shut up in these things to the Word of God and this should be enough for all who are convinced of its truth. If we do not accept this, then we become a prey to the Deceiver and his lies which are put over with ‘enticing words’ and made to appear so attractive and right. The Apostle deliberately avoided ‘plausible speech’ in his dealings with the Corinthian church, so that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (I Cor. ii. 1-5) and so be safe from Satan’s wiles.

To ‘spoil’ is *sulagoeo*, ‘to take captive or to kidnap’. We repeat, this is ever Satan’s aim—to undo the freedom which has been wrought for us by Christ’s redemption and to bring again into slavery. May our eyes ever be open to the deadly tactics of the Enemy.

### **No.58. The Epistle to the Colossians (8). pp. 181 - 185**

We are dealing with the section of the epistle which makes known the Satanic error that was enslaving some of the Colossian believers. In our last study we saw that the attack was three-fold, false reasoning, enticing and plausible arguments, and spoiling or leading into captivity. Col. ii. 8 shows the three-fold means Satan uses to achieve this end: (1) a vain and deceitful philosophy, (2) human tradition, and (3) rudiments or elements of the world. Philosophy and vain deceit can be treated as *hendiadys*, that is, not two separate things, but one, a philosophy that is both empty (vain) and deceitful.

What is philosophy? It is the search by unaided human minds to discover knowledge and wisdom and to generally get to the bottom of things. There is nothing wrong in the quest for knowledge providing the searcher keeps within the limits of human capability of understanding. But directly he ventures further than this, that is into the realm of God and infinity, he is right out of his depth and is like a cork being tossed about by the ocean. His ideas then become mere speculation, however cleverly presented, and thus are empty (vain) and devoid of truth and are complete deception.

We should not limit Paul’s term ‘philosophy’ to the Greeks and Romans. Josephus makes clear that the word was applied to the various sects of Israel:

“The Jews had for a great while those sects of philosophy peculiar to themselves; the sect of the Essenes, and the sect of the Sadducees and the third set of opinions was that called the Pharisees” (*Antiquities* 18:1,2).

It apparently was a mixture of Jewish and Greek philosophy that was creeping in at Colossae as a substitute for the Divine realities in Christ. It emphasized the primacy of human reason and knowledge as against God’s revelation of Himself in the Person of the Lord Jesus in Whom He had spoken finally. Christ-centred revelation is the opposite of any humanistic philosophy which begins with man and makes man’s reason and intellect

the measure of truth. Such a philosophy is utterly unconscious of its finite limitations, nor does it realize the human mind has been affected and blinded by sin.

The wise believer on the other hand comes to the Word of truth in humility to hear what God has to say to him. He is conscious of the limitations of his intellect and is willing to be taught by the Holy Spirit and not make his own reason the final arbiter of truth. It is still true to say with the Apostle Paul “the world by wisdom knew not God” (I Cor. i. 21). The false philosophy at Colossae had two supports, the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world. Tradition is used in both a good and bad sense in the Scriptures. The word refers to knowledge that is passed on to others and while the New Testament was being written, this was done *orally* from the apostles. Consequently Paul in II Thess. iii. 6 warns the one who walks disorderly and ‘not after *the tradition which he received of us*’. Thus it is used here in a good sense. This was the truth in its purity. But, alas, truth often gets human additions which finally swamp it. Christ accused the Jewish leaders of transgressing the commandment of God, and making it of none effect by their tradition (Matt. xv. 2-6) and this has been a characteristic of Christendom ever since. How many tenets are held by professing Christians because *they have personally tested them from the Word of God*? For the most part they are believed because a certain church teaches them, or they are looked upon as the accepted thing and not questioned. This is disastrous to the appreciation of God’s Truth, and brings the person into bondage who blindly accepts such tradition. Both Peter and Paul knew the binding power of tradition (see Gal. i. 14 and I Pet. i. 18). We need to make quite certain we are not being held by its shackles. Many a belief, hoary with age, has become attached to the pure Word of God and been accepted as truth. This then was what Satan was using at Colossae to ensnare the believers there.

The third means of the enemy’s attack was the ‘rudiments of the world’. *Stoicheion* means a ‘first step’ or the elements or beginnings of learning, the ABC of any subject as it were. In Heb. v. 12-14 it is translated ‘first principles’ and so linked with childhood and immaturity as contrasted with ‘full age’ (perfect A.V.). The word also means *elemental substances*, the basic elements from which everything in the natural world is made. Peter assures us that the time is coming when these shall melt with fervent heat (II Pet. iii. 10, 12) and a new heavens and earth created by God. Its third meaning is *heavenly bodies*, the signs of the zodiac and then the *elemental spirits* which were supposed to control the planets. Hence the reading of the R.S.V. in Col. ii. 8:

“See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the *elemental spirits of the universe*, and not according to Christ.”

These ‘elemental spirits’ are the evil spiritual rulers supposedly in control of the seven planetary spheres to which we referred in our last study. Modern astrology, which has now become so popular, is a first step towards this sort of conception. It is difficult to decide which of the two meanings represented by the A.V. and R.S.V. obtain in Col. ii. Probably there is truth in both as regards to error in the Colossians church. Both could be means that the enemy of truth was using to lead the believers at Colossae away from Christ and the rich fullness they had in Him. The vain and deceitful philosophy

undoubtedly was presented very attractively, but it was *not after Christ* (ii. 8). Here is the touchstone of all truth, the standard by which all things must be measured. Let us not be deceived. We need not waste our time with any Christian scheme that does not stand this test. What does it make of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He First and Last, the Centre and the Circumference of it all? If He is not, then if we are faithful, we can only do one thing, namely turn away from it.

The Apostle now applies the corrective to all this error:

“For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full, Who is the Head of all principality and power” (ii. 9, 10 R.V.).

Those who had *really embraced* by faith the supreme revelation of these two verses would surely not turn to the poverty-stricken substitute of spirit powers who had in any case been conquered by Christ on the cross (verse 15). In Christ Jesus alone the fullness of deity resided and that fullness had been imparted to believers. They had been ‘filled full’ in Him, no matter what size vessel they were, small, medium or large. The link between the fullness of God and the filling of the believer, so apparent in the Greek has been veiled by the A.V. translation ‘complete’ unless we think of it as ‘filled to the brim’. This is surely *one of the most stupendous truths for a believer to grasp*.

Once this has been realized, it immediately becomes apparent that each member of the Body *has everything* in Christ that is precious, worthwhile and eternal. There are no desirable extras. Anything that appears to be so, is a snare and a delusion. The Apostle is going to follow with the argument that this ‘filling’ makes types and ritual completely unnecessary. At the best they can only be as unsubstantial *as shadows*. This Divine fullness which is spiritual is *the supreme reality* and none the less so because it cannot be touched or assessed by the senses. Who wants to try and grasp shadows when they have this incomparable fullness? Thousands alas do and in fact still cling to the shadows, which only shows how little conception they have of this overwhelming wealth in Christ.

The Apostle now gives the Divine ground work that makes this filling of God possible for the members of the Body:

“In Whom (Christ) ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him, through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead” (ii. 11, 12 R.V.).

The circumcision of Christ was not the rite performed when He was eight days old but rather His crucifixion, the putting off of the body of the flesh as i. 22 has already expressed. The baptism is not the result of anything a man does. It is not the work of any Christian minister or leader. It is positively the *working of God* as verse 12 stresses. Just as the circumcision relating to the believer is not literally but spiritual (not made by human hands), so is this Divine linking and identification of the believer with Christ which is treated in Rom. vi. and Eph. ii. No human being could accomplish this for himself or for anyone else. God does not wait till a saved person is immersed in water before He accomplishes this great work. It is *His operation* through and through and this

becomes true the moment salvation is experienced. In just the same way the raising of the believer *with Christ* must be God's work alone. No dipping in water or raising out of it by a man can accomplish this. The dying, burial, quickening, raising and seating of the believer in Christ in the heavenlies is, we repeat, solely the *operation of God*. To bring any ritual operated by man here is to spoil the wonders of the context and ruin the Apostle's argument. He tells us that types and shadows have vanished because we now have the fullness of spiritual reality, being completely identified and made one with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. It is pitiful to bring in *water baptism* here. This sticks out like a sore thumb. Even if one believed in baptismal regeneration (as do the Roman Catholic and high Churchmen) it is still out of place. If we are enjoying the glorious spiritual reality to the full, we need not be concerned with the types that once set it forth and even then not perfectly. We can surely let the 'picture book' go and praise God for the stupendous fact that *in Christ*, we are now *filled to the brim* with His fullness and that is all of His doing.

### **No.59. The Epistle to the Colossians (9). pp. 201 - 205**

Having stressed the glorious fact that by the working of God the believer has been identified with Christ in His death, burial, quickening and resurrection, all his sin having been graciously forgiven, the Apostle Paul also proclaims the fact that each member of the Body of Christ is now free from the dominion of the law which was 'contrary to us' and 'against us':

"Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (ii. 14 R.V.).

The word *cheirographon*, handwriting, was a statement of debt signed by the debtor, setting forth his 'indebtedness'. The law of God with its ordinances stands as a Divine statement of our indebtedness as sinners. This has been cancelled and removed by the death of Christ, because not only did He perfectly fulfil that law, but He stood in the sinner's place and accepted in His Own Person the penalty due to the law-breaker. Thus the law as an instrument of condemnation has been dealt with by God and cancelled. It has been satisfied completely by the offering of the Son of God and now has no power to accuse or condemn and it is in this sense that it has been removed as far as the believer is concerned.

But this is not all that results from the victory of the cross. Not only has the bond of the law been cancelled, but it also spells victory over the spirit forces of evil:

"Having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (ii. 15 R.V.).

This was like a conqueror who strips his foes and leads them as captives behind his chariot in his victory procession. Finally, Calvary means utter defeat for Satan and his

hosts and, as this is so, how foolish and dangerous it was for the Colossians to seek to worship angels and subjugate themselves to them! In doing this they were throwing away the glorious freedom wrought by Christ from abject slavery from which they had been delivered! It was the great lesson of Galatians all over again:

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. v. 1).

While this freedom must not be exercised in a selfish way (Paul was always ready to limit his freedom to avoid upsetting someone who was weaker in the faith), yet to put the shackles on again where fundamentals are concerned is to put oneself under the power of Satan which redemption has cancelled. Therefore, continues the Apostle:

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat (food), or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ’s” (ii. 16 R.V.).

Bondage to legalistic requirements was past, whether it related to annual, monthly or weekly observances. Verse 16 may go wider than Mosaic ceremonial, which did not touch drink regulations in connection with foods ceremoniously clean or unclean. It could have included special regulations stressed by the false teachers at Colossae with their spurious holiness. However, it did include observance of the seventh day, the sabbath, and we quote from Dean Alford here who certainly had no dispensational bias:

“We may observe, that if the ordinance of the Sabbath had been, *in any form*, of lasting obligation on the Christian church, it would have been quite impossible for the Apostle to have spoken thus. The fact of an obligatory rest of one day, whether the seventh or the first, would have been directly in the teeth of his assertion here; the holding of such would have been still to retain the shadow, while we possess the substance. And no answer can be given to this by the transparent special pleading, that he is speaking only of that which was *Jewish* in such observances; the whole argument being general, and the axiom of verse 17 universally applicable” (*Greek Testament* Volume 3, p.225).

The same thing could be said of Paul’s argument in Rom. xiv. 5, 6. Our Sunday is *not* the Sabbath of the O.T.; it is always designated ‘the first day of the week’ in the N.T. and there is no Divine command in the N.T. to observe it as the O.T. Sabbath. This does not mean that we do not appreciate having this day as one of rest and the opportunity to worship together and witness. Nor should we use our freedom to upset weaker brethren; we seek only to be regulated by what is clearly revealed in God’s Word as commands for the church.

The fact remains that sabbath days are joined by Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with ‘food and drinks’ and classed as *shadows*. But, we are assured, the *body* (*the substance, the reality*) is of *Christ*. All types were prophetic; they looked forward to their fulfillment in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. Once He had fulfilled them they had achieved their purpose. At the best they were only *shadows*, pointers to Him, but shadows have no purpose or place when the reality they set forth has come. We should remember that a shadow has no permanence apart from the body that projects it. *When the body stands directly beneath the light the shadow disappears*. And this is

exactly where we are in the purpose of God. We now stand in the full blaze of revelation given in the prison epistles of Paul and, if we have any real appreciation of these supreme spiritual riches, we shall be quite ready to drop the shadows. They will vanish in the light of His ascended glory and our exalted position *in Him*, ‘seated together in Christ Jesus in the heavenly places’ (Eph. ii. 5, 6). By nature we are creatures of sense and feeling. If there is something we can see or hold on to or touch or taste, that is what appears to be real to us. But we must learn that this is not so in actuality: it is only the shadow as far as spiritual truth is concerned. *The realities are the exceeding riches we have in Christ.* These are eternal and unchanging and it is these that we should be holding fast by faith and rejoicing in; there is nothing earthly or visible that can compare with them in value.

So to all who might judge us on these things, our answer is the same, namely Colossians ii. 16. Having the Lord Jesus in all His fullness, *we have everything*. We are ‘filled to the full (complete) in Him’ (verse 10) and for us the shadows are for ever finished and passed away. The Apostle continues:

“Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast the Head . . . .” (ii. 18, 19 R.V.).

*Katabrabeuo*, rob, occurs only here in the N.T. Its meaning in classical Greek varies from ‘to deprive of a prize’ to the more general ‘to give an adverse judgment’; its usual meaning conveys the idea of depriving someone of something which he would have otherwise possessed. In view of the Apostle’s fondness for illustrations drawn from the racecourse ‘depriving someone of the prize’ is undoubtedly his meaning here. It is good to realize that the enemy does not waste his time trying to make a believer lose his *life in Christ* or his *salvation*. This is impossible, for that life is safely ‘hidden with Christ in God’ (Col. iii. 3) and is, therefore, out of the enemy’s reach. We remember that Satan was permitted to touch everything belonging to Job except *his life*. Satan does, however, seek to trip up the believer so that possibly a *divine reward* may be forfeited. It is ‘prizes’ and ‘crowns’ that can be lost (Rev. iii. 11), and those at Colossae who were being ensnared by the false teaching that was circulating there, were in danger of this very thing, a serious loss indeed that would be accompanied by shame, as II Tim. ii. 15 makes clear.

It is extremely difficult to render the Greek of the phrase ‘intruding into those things which he hath not seen’ (A.V.) for the textual evidence of many manuscripts omits the negative and *embateuon* occurs nowhere else in the N.T. and, therefore, we do not have usage to guide us. Only those with an advanced knowledge of N.T. Greek would be able to assess the technical difficulties which are discussed by such authorities as F. F. Bruce, J. B. Lightfoot, E. Percy, G. Taylor, J. R. Harris and others. The weight of evidence comes down on the R.V. rendering which fits the context very well. Those who were being led astray were receiving and dwelling on ‘visions’ which resulted in pride (puffing up by the sinful flesh). Although outwardly appearing to be humble (verse 23), this was a hollow caricature of the real thing, for it sprang from man’s speculations rather than God’s revelation and came from those who had lost touch with Christ (‘not holding the Head’) and were at the mercy of the darkened ‘mind of the flesh’.

These pseudo-visions were evidently related to angels who posed as being the necessary mediators between God and men and so supplanted the One Mediator, Christ Jesus. This led to their worship, the very thing Satan craved, for he was behind these false spiritual powers. Satan desires nothing less than the position of God Himself and the adoration of all creation. How pleased he must have been about the developments at Colossae! And when we grasp what was happening there, we can better appreciate Paul's deep concern for the believers who formed the church in that place.

To cease to 'hold fast to the Head' could only lead to disaster. Using another figure, the Lord Himself said, 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me . . . . if a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned' (John xv. 4-6).

Severance from Christ means spiritual death and fruitlessness. So the Apostle goes on to state:

"If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh" (ii. 20-23 R.V.).

Paul has already insisted on the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, quickening, raising and ascension. He goes on to further apply this to them in a practical way. If this was true, why did they act as though they were still the slaves of Satan and of men? Why subject themselves to such negative restrictions such as "don't handle this", "don't eat or touch that", etc., etc.? This was only a mockery of real sanctification. On the surface it might *appear* to be humble and wise and spiritual. In reality it was futile and utterly of no value in preventing the indulgence of the old sinful nature. Such taboos were also perishable and passed away in the very acts themselves. They were purely of human invention and were completely deceptive.

There are Christians today who need reminding that real sanctification is *positive* and *active*, not merely negative. It is not sufficient for a believer to say, 'I do *not* do this or that'. It is what we *actually are and do* that really matters. This is what an unbelieving world is watching, not merely our negatives.

**No.60. The Epistle to the Colossians (10).**  
**pp. 221 - 226**

Having magnified the Lord Jesus Christ and put Him in the first place in material creation as Creator and spiritual creation as Lord and Head of the Church which is His Body, and having insisted that the redeeming work of God has united the believer with Him in His death, burial, quickening, raising and ascension, the Apostle Paul now seeks to bring the Colossian believers to the *practical* issue of all this. They were not to be side-tracked and robbed of their reward by being drawn away to worship false spiritual powers who in fact had been defeated by the victory of Calvary. They must continually view themselves as linked with the triumphant Lord Jesus in glory and not view things just from the earthly standpoint:

“If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory” (Col. iii. 1-4 R.V.).

It is evident that the attitude of the mind is of great importance here. As with the body, the mind of the believer can be allied with and controlled by the ‘flesh’, the sinful old nature inherited from fallen Adam, or it can be under the domination of the ‘spirit’, the new Divine nature bestowed at regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Under His control the mind then can aspire to heavenly things. The unregenerate world with its ways and its thinking is past and gone as far as the believer is concerned; heavenly places ‘far above all’, where not only the ascended Lord is, but the believer’s inheritance too, can now be the sphere of his *bent* of mind. This inheritance is not earthly, like Israel’s, for this ‘citizenship *exists in heaven*’ (Phil. iii. 20) as a present fact, we are assured, and also as a future hope. What is at the ‘back’ of a believer’s mind is all-important, even though he has to employ his conscious mind in his daily employment.

The result of this should be reflected in the believer’s life, in his words and actions, as well as his thinking and this should go on until the consummation of his faith is reached, the realization of the ‘blessed hope’, being manifested in the glory where the Saviour is enthroned ‘far above all’. *Now* the believer is seen to be seated together in the ‘heavenly places IN Christ’ (Eph. ii. 6). *Then* he will be WITH Christ in the same exalted sphere. Christ Jesus expresses all our *hope* and He also expresses all our *life* and when this is realized and acted on, the sins of the flesh have no place (Col. iii. 5-9). The ‘old man’ and his deeds are ‘put off’, relying on the fact that they were crucified with the Lord when He died on the Cross. The ‘new man’ is constantly ‘put on’.

“Mortify” (*nekroo*) means here ‘to treat as dead’, that is to *count on* the slaying of the old man with Christ crucified *as being an actual fact*. *Then* Rom. vi. assures us that it is nullified or ‘put out of working order’ (‘destroyed’ is too strong in the A.V. of

Rom.vi.6). This being so, why try to fight and kill what God has already slain, as though we had the power to conquer the sinful old nature?

The climax of the list of sins is covetousness, which we might think was not nearly so bad as sexual impurity. But the Apostle insists that those who indulge in it are idolaters (Col. iii. 5; Eph. v. 5). The Greek word *pleonexia* means the desire to possess more than one ought to have, particularly that which belongs to someone else. This puts some object of desire in the central place which the Lord Jesus should occupy, and so it becomes idolatry. This is indeed dangerous and all the more so because it can assume so many respectable forms.

As against all this, the 'new man', the life and power of Christ within, is renewed by the Holy Spirit 'day by day' (II Cor. iv. 16) and thus Christ-likeness is being reproduced continually in the believer's life. It is 'renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him' (Col. iii. 10 R.V.). This takes us back to the creation of Adam, made in the likeness of the One Who is the Image of the invisible God. The believer's life is not just an improvement or reformation of the old. It is something completely new, a *creation* by God and it is this that should dominate him right through to the end of his earthly pilgrimage.

But it is not only sinful habits that should not intrude into this new creation. All barriers that divided one from another are abolished, too, whether *racial* (Jew and Gentile), *cultural* (primitive Scythians and other barbarians who did not share in the Graeco-Roman culture), or *social* (such as that between slaves and free men). In the unsaved world these barriers still counted, but *in Christ* they ceased to exist. In the spiritual sphere and in His relationship to the church which is His Body, Christ is ALL. These last three words really sum up the Truth. There are no extras to the Lord Jesus Christ. Only when the believer, *in his experience* reaches the stage that this is real and vital in relation to himself, does he reach his full spiritual stature. There are so many 'other lords' which seek to have dominion over us and there is only One Who has the indisputable right to be there as Lord.

When we in truth crown Him 'Lord of all', then we are at last, from a practical standpoint, in the right relationship to Him, one in which we can realize to the full what He plans for us in our lives and service, and how rich then our Christian lives and witness can be!

The result of all this is bound to be shown in the day to day Christian walk of the believer, in his estimate of himself, his treatment *of* others and his treatment *by* others. The ground has already been stressed in Eph. iv. and v. There must be humbleness of mind leading to meekness and longsuffering. This certainly does not imply *weakness*, but refusal to retaliate in the face of provocation. These graces must be 'put on' by the believer continually (Col. iii. 12-14). There must be gracious forgiveness if one has been wronged and all is summed up in the greatest Christian virtue, 'love, which is the bond of perfectness (or maturity)', which forgets about self, its needs, and thinks constantly of the Lord and how much we owe Him and, after this, the needs of others. This is the only tie

between believers that is really effective. When love is constantly in the forefront, misunderstanding and splits disappear. It is the tie that expresses *maturity* (perfectness) and should always be in evidence among those who have left spiritual infancy behind and are growing up in all things into Christ (Eph. iv. 15). The *peace of Christ* automatically follows when this is experienced and ‘rules in the heart’ as also does a thankful spirit. We have seen before what a safeguard this is against spiritual declension and forgetfulness of the many mercies we continually enjoy day by day. The pagan world had slid into darkness, not only because ‘they glorified Him not as God’, but also because they were not ‘*thankful*’ (Rom. i. 21). We do well to keep the spirit of gratitude ever before us.

With gratitude, praise naturally follows:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God” (iii. 16 R.V.).

It is hardly necessary to say that the ‘Word of Christ’ which should dwell in us richly, can hardly mean all that He spoke on earth in His ministry to the people of Israel, for it would have been most unlikely for these Gospels to have circulated at this time as far as Colossae. The Word of Christ embodies all the revelation of the ‘good deposit’ of truth the risen Christ had made known to Paul and which he had so faithfully proclaimed and taught in the churches. It is amazing how great is this treasury of Truth which can only be appreciated by a close and careful study of his epistles. When this is personally appropriated by faith and divine understanding, we have a rich storehouse to draw on in every experience, need or emergency.

Does the ‘you’ mean individually, or collectively as an assembly? The answer is both. The more each individual member is indwelt by the Truth the more the assembly as a whole is indwelt and the greater the possibility that God’s Truth will reign therein and He will be supreme. The praise that naturally follows, as Eph. v. 19 declares, is expressed in a threefold way: ‘psalms, hymns and spiritual songs’. Little has been left on record to clearly indicate what these were, but the psalms almost certainly were drawn from the O.T. Psalter; the hymns possibly from N.T. passages of Scripture; and spiritual songs composed by members of the church who were gifted spiritually and musically to express truth in this way. Professor F. F. Bruce quotes from Tertullian (*Apology* 39) where the latter states “. . . . each is invited to sing to God in the presence of others from what he knows of the Holy Scriptures or from his own heart”, and from Pliny the Younger who, giving an account to the Emperor Trajan, states that the Christians of Bithynia met on a fixed day before dawn and ‘recited an antiphonal hymn to Christ as God’ (Epistles X.96). There is no doubt that Christian praise is important for the believer and it should be the best that we can render to the Lord, for He is surely worthy of nothing less than the best. At the same time we should bear in mind that praise should not only be with our lips, but continually with our lives, ‘by giving up ourselves to His service’.

Verse 17 finally sums up the preceding verses, embracing every aspect of life and practically expressing the sovereignty of Christ not only in the so-called 'sacred', but also in the secular.

“And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (iii. 17 R.V.).

To do this means to live and act as those who are indwelt by the Lord Jesus and entirely under His control as Head, and such obedience will not be merely a dry duty, but a joyous expression of thankfulness to Him. The injunctions that follow cover in a shorter form the same ground as Eph. v. 22 - vi. 9 and they touch all aspects of the home and business life. The phrase 'in the Lord' shows that, for the believer human relationships must be considered from the basic relationship to Christ. The practical attitude of the husband to the wife and the wife to the husband should reflect the original design of the Creator, both realizing that the part they play is an illustration of Christ Himself and the church which is His Body. There is then no question of one being inferior or superior to the other, but rather there will be harmony, lasting happiness and fruitfulness in Christian witness together when this is put into practice.

There is a complementary responsibility of parents and children. The latter are to be obedient and if parents do not wisely and lovingly discipline children to this end, how are the children ever to learn what obedience to God means? So many children today are totally ignorant of the meaning of this word and therefore one does not wonder at the terrible increase in lawlessness that we see all over the world.

On the other hand, parents are exhorted not to irritate or discourage their children. God's Word is not one-sided, and sometimes difficult children are the product of unwise treatment by parents. There is a longer section given to the relationship of masters and slaves, possibly because slavery was part of the social structure of the time. The companion epistle to Philemon clearly shows the practical duties of these two classes in the Christian fellowship. The Christian slave or the Christian employer had to remember that they were both servants of a heavenly Master and were fully answerable to Him Who will deal with both with impartial fairness. "Whatsoever good thing done is recognized by Him for commendation and reward, whereas 'wrong' is equally dealt with by the 'righteous Judge', for with Him there is no respect of persons". The O.T. likewise required similar impartiality: "thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty" (Lev. xix. 15) in lawsuits. The extremely important doctrine of reward or loss for the service of the believer is here touched upon and is dealt with more fully in other Pauline epistles such as I Corinthians, Philippians and II Timothy.

## **The Prayer of Faith.** pp. 47 - 51

Over the past fifty years or so, it has become fairly common to hear comments to the effect that in the past ‘the church has neglected the ministry of healing’. It has taken for granted that the church of today has such a ministry.

A recent occurrence raises some doubts concerning this view point. A patient was admitted to hospital for a fairly serious operation; during the next few days little, if any, real progress was made. On the sixth day following the operation the ‘laying on of hands with prayer’ was administered. The next day the patient died. Had those involved been questioned, they would doubtless have answered that through the ministrations of the laying on of hands, or anointing, God does one of three things: He either heals, or gives grace and strength to live with the disability, or He delivers through death. Probably the ‘main plank’ for those who believe that the church has a ministry of healing today is James v. 15, where it is clearly stated that ‘the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up’. Perhaps we need to be reminded that to ‘save’ has a wider significance than is often given to it in Christian circles: Dr. Bullinger’s *Critical Lexicon* gives the definition “to make sound, to save, preserve from danger, loss or destruction. To save in a Christian sense, is to save from death and judgment, (as the consequence of sin), and to bring in all positive blessing in the place of condemnation”. Liddell and Scott’s *Lexicon* states “. . . especially to keep alive . . .”—especially to keep alive!! What then went wrong in the instance mentioned above? Who, of those taking part in the little service, lacked faith? Was the rite of laying on of hands wrongly administered? According to James ‘the prayer of faith’ should ‘keep alive’ the sick person.

The problem is not lessened if we look further into the passage in the epistle of James. In the previous verse (James v. 14) we read “Is any sick among you?” The one ‘sick’ is literally one ‘without strength’, not necessarily someone who is *ill*. The passage has very much in mind the thought of ‘bringing in all positive blessing’. In verse 15 the word for ‘sick’ is rather more specific signifying those who are really sick—from the same root comes a word meaning ‘the dead’. Yet the prayer of faith shall ‘keep alive’ such sick folk, ‘and the Lord shall raise him up’. The word translated ‘raise up’ occurs 141 times in the N.T., 70 times *referring to resurrection*. It would seem then, that we should be justified in saying that this passage (James v. 14, 15) refers to those who are ‘off colour’ (as we should say), and to those who are very sick indeed, possibly ‘nigh unto death’ when, if necessary, in response to the prayer of faith, the Lord will *resurrect* the patient.

Let us turn, in this connection, to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, spoken to Martha in John xi. 25—“I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall *never die*”. Clearly this latter statement has been a problem for hundred of years: in a prayer used in the Funeral Service the compilers of the Book of Common Prayer altered it to read ‘and whosoever liveth, and believeth in Him, *shall not die eternally*’. In other words he *will die*, but he is assured of resurrection. But the Lord has already made that

statement—“he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”. Surely there must be something more behind the second statement?—and we believe there is. If we translate it literally it reads: “and everyone living and believing into Me by no means shall die unto the age”. What does it mean ‘shall not die unto the age’? There was another occasion when the Lord made a similar statement—and similarly of disputed significance: six days before the Transfiguration He said “Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom” (Matt. xvi. 28). But the little Greek word *an* has not been translated, and indeed is more easily paraphrased than translated—“till they *may* see the Son of man coming”. They would live long enough to see the Kingdom dawn, *if* . . . . The Greek *an* signifies a contingency. Had the Jews received the Lord Jesus as Christ—the Messiah—it could have taken place within the lifetime of those ‘standing here’. The same word *an* also occurs in John xi. 25, where it appears with *kai* (and, or even) as *kan*: an element of contingency is present. The Concordant Version renders it: “He who is believing into Me, even if he should be dying, will be living. And everyone who is living and believing into Me may by no means be dying for the eon”. The element of doubt is found in ‘even if he should be dying’, the contingency being the coming of the eon or age of the Kingdom. To paraphrase: “Whoever is believing in Me, even if he should die before the coming of the age, shall live. And everyone who is alive and believes in Me shall by no means die before the coming of the age”. Death, while not totally excluded, was viewed by the Lord as a fairly remote possibility. If the church today has the same ‘ministry of healing’ as that entrusted to the Lord’s apostles and disciples, and evidently envisaged by the Lord in His words to Martha, why are there not those alive today who were then ‘living and believing’ in Him?

When John the Baptist sent to enquire whether the Lord Jesus was indeed ‘He that should come’ (Matt. xi. 2-6), the reply sent back to him was that ‘the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are healed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them’ (verse 5). These were the evidences that the Messiah was present, that the King had come, and included the raising of the dead. Throughout the Book of Acts we find these evidences are still present—including the raising of the dead. Tabitha (or Dorcas) was raised (Acts ix. 36-43); Eutychus, ‘who fell down from the third loft’ during Paul’s “long preaching”, “and was taken up dead” was brought alive (Acts xx. 9-12). It is true that there are also records of deaths which were not followed by resurrection: the martyrs James and Stephen, Ananias and Sapphira who ‘lied to the Holy Ghost’. But these would seem to be special cases, the former to receive “the martyr’s crown”, the latter to be saved ‘as by fire’. In I Cor. xv. Paul tells of those to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection, and in verse 6 says “After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but *some* are fallen asleep”. At first sight this appears to be the normal toll by death to be expected; but the word translated ‘some’ is the Greek *tines*—‘*certain ones*’. The same word is used by Paul in his second epistle to the Corinthians—iii. 1—“Need we”, he says, “as *certain ones*, epistles of commendation?” implying that the ‘some others’ (as the A.V. puts it) were known to the Corinthians. Of the five hundred brethren to whom the Lord had appeared *certain ones* had fallen asleep, but the majority were still alive. As for the sick, not only did the ‘prayer of faith save the sick’

but Acts xix. 12 tells us ‘So that from his (Paul’s) body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them’. On at least one occasion (Acts v. 16) we read ‘and they were healed *every one*’. So it continues until the end of the period covered by the Book of Acts.

For evidence of the situation following Acts, we can only turn to the later epistles of Paul. After the healings (including ‘every one’), and even ‘special miracles’ of which we have been reading, we are confronted with ‘Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier’ who has been ‘sick nigh unto death’; with Trophimus ‘I have left at Miletum sick’; with advice to Timothy “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities”. But there is no hint that any, at all, were healed. How can this situation be reconciled with that found in Acts?

In II Tim. ii. 17, 18 Paul writes of ‘Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that *the resurrection is past already* and overthrow the faith of some’. We are given no indication of the grounds of their argument. It has been thought by some that they based their reasoning on the resurrection of the saints mentioned by Matthew (xxvii. 52-53)—“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the Holy city, and appeared unto many”. Yet, as we have seen, there were others raised from the dead during the course of several years following this, and it appears at least equally likely that Hymenaeus and Philetus argued that as now the dead were no longer being restored to life, the resurrection must therefore be past. It is certain that we have no record in Scripture of either healings or the raising of the dead, after the end of Acts.

Has the church of today a ministry of healing?—a ministry of healing which includes the raising of the dead, which ensures that whoever is living and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be no means die until the coming of the kingdom? If it has, then we can only conclude that there is something terribly wrong with the church today, and that there has been something terribly wrong with it from about the middle of the 100A.D. Apart from straining at a doctrinal gnat and swallowing a theological camel in the process, the facts demand an approach other than that usually taken. The facts are that up to the end of the Book of Acts there were ‘special miracles’, extraordinary healings and raisings from the dead; from that point onwards there is no record whatever, in Scripture (and we dare not seek evidence elsewhere), of any healing or raising of the dead. The only solution which accepts these facts without seeking to distort them, or to provide extra-Biblical evidence or reasoning, is that provided by ‘right division’: that with the end of the Book of Acts came the end of a dispensation, that henceforth God is dealing with mankind on a different basis. The Covenant People had rejected the King, and following that rejection the earthly Kingdom, with its evidential signs and miracles, is in abeyance. We can only conclude that the church of today has no ministry of healing, and to teach to the contrary can only lead to disappointment and error, and serves to ‘overthrow the faith of some’. Clearly this is not to say that God cannot now ‘save the sick’, for that would be unwarrantably to limit the Grace of God: it does mean that the prayer of faith today has its basis in the assurance given in Rom. viii. 28—“We know

that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”.

# The Will of God

## No.1. The need for its Assessment. pp. 114 - 119

We hope to write a number of articles on “The Will of God”. This is a subject which is perplexing, perhaps particularly to young believers. At the outset, let us be quite clear that this is not the easy matter some would have us believe—save in its fundamental aspect, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification”. We are well aware we have taken this out of its immediate context in I Thess. iv. which is that of moral impurity. Nonetheless the sanctification of the believer, is, above all else, the will of God for him. Many are the references to bear this out, e.g., I Pet. i. 15,16:

“As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written ‘Be ye holy; for I am holy’.”

In the context of the knowledge of the will of God, Rom. xii. 1, 2 is particularly apt, for it outlines the pre-requisite of this knowledge:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable 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.”

That this is particularly important is shown by Paul’s appeal to the ‘mercies of God’. Surely there can be no stronger appeal to a believer than the mercies of God, involving, as they do for us, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Yet in this epistle Paul musters a great ‘weight’ of the mercies of God; in the earlier chapters he deals with the believer’s deliverance from sin and its power, with justification by faith, the believer’s identification with Christ in His baptism into death—in short, with many of the fruits of Christ’s death on our behalf. Often chapters ix.-xi. are referred to as a parenthesis—the appeal being back to chapter viii., yet who can deny that these three chapters also deal with the mercies of God? What are these chapters but the exposition of the particular mercies of God applied dispensationally? The believer is reminded of God’s absolute faithfulness to His Word and Covenant, though man may be faithless; is reminded of the extension of His mercies to others in spite of, and indeed by reason of, the failure of His Chosen People.

It is on the basis of such incredible mercies of God—to ‘speak as a man’—that Paul makes this appeal: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, that ye yield your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing unto God, which is your rational service . . . . to your assessing what is that good, and well pleasing, and perfect will of God”.

The mind needs renewing (of which more later) in order that the believer may *assess* what is the will of God. Not only that he may be able to weigh up the situation and

decide “this is His will for me”; but also, and more importantly, be able to discover the ‘sterling worth’ of the will of God. The word translated ‘prove’ in the A.V. is one which can be used of ‘assaying’ metals, proving their value. No one can know how good, how well pleasing and perfect is the will of God, unless he presents himself a living sacrifice to God—as the old saying has it, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating”, so the proof of the will of God is in its performance.

Present your bodies a living sacrifice. The word translated ‘present’ in the A.V. is rendered ‘yield’ in Rom. vi. 13, 19, and in this sense implies that this, also, is the will of God for the believer. The primary sense is ‘to stand beside’ (hence, to yield), and in the days in which we live, how essential it is that in yielding to the mercies of God, we also take our stand beside Him! Unless we are prepared to do this, we shall never be in the position to ‘assess’ how good, well pleasing and perfect is His will.

In Rom. xii. 1, 2 Paul mentions two aspects of yielding—one negative, ‘be not conformed’, the other positive ‘be transformed’.

Be not conformed to this world: more accurately, be not conformed to this *age*. Basically the word for age has the significance of a long time, but a time with definite limits to it, and therefore, according to context, can have the significance of an age, a generation, or a *lifetime*, and in the latter sense speaks particularly to us: do not be conformed to the things of your lifetime. In the course of a lifetime many things change, and not always for the better. In the course of our own lifetime we have seen many things change in connection with Christian life and witness, *conforming* to current fashions and trends, and know from experience something of the pressures, both deliberate and incidental, to conform to the things of one’s lifetime.

The word ‘conform’ is one which occurs only twice in the whole of the N.T., and is not found in the LXX version of the O.T. The only other occurrence is I Pet. i. 14 “As obedient children, not *fashioning* yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance”—not conforming to former desires (the word does not necessarily have the implications associated with our normal use of ‘lusts’) when we knew no better. Rather, as Peter continues in the following verse, “as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy”. The basic thought of ‘holy’ is separation—“Be separate from the things of your former conversation” Peter says in effect, and this is Paul’s thought when he exhorts “be not conformed to the things of your lifetime”.

Dr. Bullinger’s *Critical Lexicon* defines “conform”: ‘to form, fashion, or shape one thing after or like another’. Perhaps we might put it this way: Do not ape the things of your lifetime. The word also has implications of unreality and pretence, so that we could also put it “Don’t try to be what you are not: don’t pretend to be like others”, for the believer is a new creature in Christ; he is not of the world, and he should be like Christ.

The word translated ‘conform’ is a compound one *suschematizo*, ‘*su*’ being a form of *sun* meaning in conjunction with, jointly, the whole word, therefore, signifying here to

fashion oneself like the world in conjunction with the world. The world plays its part in so fashioning the believer who wishes to conform to it, and in conforming, the believer becomes a part of the world. How can the believer do such a thing? In Rom. vi. 2 Paul says “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”, and in Gal. vi. 14 he boasts “in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”. If the believer is indeed ‘in Christ’, then the world is dead to him, he sees it as something lifeless and corrupting; but also he is himself dead to the world, there is nothing in him now to respond to anything in the world. How indeed shall we that are dead to the world, or to the things of our lifetime, live any longer therein?

Do not join the times in which you live by aping their ways . . . . but be ye TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind. The transformation is the result of the renewing of the mind. The original does not give ‘the renewing of *your* mind’, but ‘the mind’. If *your* mind is renewed, it is the mind of the old nature which is reinvigorated, and clearly this is not in Paul’s thought here. There is a significant hint in the word used for ‘renewing’ which is *anakainosis*, the latter meaning ‘to make new’, while *ana* indicates motion upwards—a new mind which is higher, the whole word have the meaning of ‘making other and different from that which had been formerly’. “We have the mind of Christ” says Paul in I Cor. ii. 16, and surely it is the mind of Christ which needs to be constantly renewed in the believer, transforming him from what he was into the new creature he is in Christ. We can do no more here than to say that the renewal of the mind of Christ in us comes as the result of searching the Scriptures, through prayer and by setting our minds on things above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. The result will be transformed lives.

Like the word for conform, transform also is little used in Scripture. Apart from the use in Rom. xii. 2, and by both Matthew and Mark in their description of the Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ, it occurs only in II Cor. iii. 18:

“But we all, with open (unveiled) face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed (transformed) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Moses’ unveiled face shone with the glory of the Old Covenant, when he returned from the mount. The believer’s life should shine with the glory of the Lord. Far from being ‘like the world’, the believer should be ‘like Christ’. The believer who is like the world, like those of this lifetime, is one who has not yielded himself a living sacrifice to God. Several years ago a young believer, clad in the rags of the latest fashion of the pop scene excused his appearance and practice, by claiming it was a sacrifice for him to do and be so—“I don’t like it; I do it to reach the unconverted!”. The magnet which is de-magnetized will never make another piece of iron into a magnet.

*The Companion Bible* defines “transform” thus: “to change to a new condition”—a very different thought from aping the world, albeit on the pretence of winning others for Christ. This word has also its own implication—of beauty. Paul is appealing on the basis of the compassions of God, for the believer to live a life of beauty before the Lord. When we recall the Psalmist’s words (xxix. 2) “Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness”,

there can be little doubt that Rom. xii. 1, 2 is an appeal for a life which is beautiful with holiness—beautiful in its separation from the things of this life.

Again, like the word for ‘conform’, the word translated ‘transform’ is a compound: *meta-morphoomai*, *meta* having the significance of ‘in the presence of’ or ‘in the midst of’. The perfect illustration of the whole word is to be found in the account of the Transfiguration, where both Matthew and Mark make the clear statement, He ‘was transfigured *before* them’. He changed to a new condition before the disciples, and at that moment was not associated with them in any way. So the believer should be changed to a new condition before the world, in no sense in association with them. It is not surprising to discover that the word Paul has used is exactly the word used by the evangelists to describe the change which took place in the Lord: Be not conformed, but be transfigured. The Lord became obviously different from the disciples; the believer should increasingly become *obviously different* from those of this age. This is what Paul desires for the believer, that he should become obviously different from those in the world among whom he lives.

We have already said that the believer’s relationship with the will of God is not as easy as some would have us believe. This Scripture makes this point quite plain: “Yield yourselves a living sacrifice”. It is a sacrifice which goes on day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year: there is a cost to the reasonable service. Yet compared with the compassions of God, and in the light of the increasing assessment that the will of God *is* good, and well pleasing, and perfect, how small is the cost! Nonetheless, the cost must be faced squarely first.

This aspect has to be faced before transfiguration can begin. The Lord Himself faced this question before His transfiguration.

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed . . . . And after six days Jesus . . . . was transfigured before them” (Matt. xvi. 21 and xvii. 1, 2).

And there, on the mount of Transfiguration He entered into a foretaste of the joy that was set before Him. He, ‘for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame’ (Heb. xii. 2). He knew the will of the Father to be good, and well pleasing, and perfect, and that its fulfillment could only result in glory.

Considering the compassions of God, and the eternal weight of glory which will result from our fulfillment of the will of God for us, in spite of the sacrifice involved, we should be living a transfigured life, which is a foretaste of the joy and glory which is set before us.

By the mercies of God, I beseech you! What compassion God has shown to us! He gave His Son for us a Sacrifice for sin on the cross; by Christ’s death on the cross we are justified by faith and the righteousness of God is reckoned to us; we are members of the Church which is His Body; hence, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in

heavenly places; our hope is to be manifested with Him in glory. So we could go on. But all begins with the cross: with the sacrifice of Christ. Surely, in the light of such love, of such compassions, it is but our reasonable, logical service, to yield our bodies living sacrifices, separated, well pleasing unto God, being not conformed to this age, but being transformed by the renewing of the mind to our assessing what is the good, and well pleasing, and perfect will of God.

## **No.2. Desire and Determination.** **pp. 133 - 138**

Before we progress further in our studies on the will of God, it will be well for us to consider the two main words which are translated 'will'. For the sake of simplicity we refer only to the verbs at this point: *thelo* desire, wish; *boulomai* take counsel, determine, purpose. There is a marked degree of intensity between saying "I wished I could . . . ." and "I am determined to . . . .", or "I purpose to . . . .". The difference is illustrated clearly in Mark xv. 7-15. In the questions put by Pilate to the people in verses 9 and 12, he uses the weaker word: "Do you wish me to release unto you the King of the Jews?" But in recording Pilate's action in verse 15, Mark uses the stronger word: "And so Pilate determined (or purposing) to content the people, released Barabbas . . .". Perhaps we could say *thelo* is a neutral word, while *boulomai* is active. After the meeting of the Sanhedrin mentioned in John xi., we read (verse 53): "Then from that day forth they *took counsel together* for to put Him to death". The verb 'took counsel together' (*bouleuomai*) has the same root as *boulomai*. It is clear they were *determined* to put Christ to death. A further instance of the strength of the second group of words is to be found in Acts xv. 37: "Barnabas *determined* to take with them John, whose surname was Mark . . . . And (39) the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other . . . .". Barnabas had made up his mind, not even a rift between himself and his friend Paul would turn him from his purpose.

It is, perhaps, rather surprising to find how seldom *boulomai* and its associated words are used in connection with the sovereign God. These words are used in the N.T. between 50 and 60 times; but only on 10 occasions in reference to God Himself. (These ten references are Acts ii. 23; xiii. 36; xx. 27; Rom. ix. 19; I Cor. xii. 11; Eph. i. 11; Heb. vi. 17; James i. 18; II Pet. iii. 9; and Luke xxii. 42, in the Lord's Prayer in Gethsemane.) In the latter case *The Companion Bible* suggests: "If it be Thine intention remove this cup from Me". Possibly we might paraphrase it thus: "If it is in accord with Thy *purpose*". It is instructive to look a little more closely into the rest of this verse: "If it is in accord with Thy purpose remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My wish (or 'desire'), but Thine be done". This verse establishes the relationship between the Father and the Son, between God and His Servant, and between us who are 'in the Son' and our God and Father. God's *purpose* must be carried out, our wishes and desires must be subordinate to His purpose. Whether or not we pray that His will may be done, His purpose will be fulfilled; but we certainly should pray that His wishes are fulfilled on

earth among men. In the “Lord’s Prayer” (Matt. vi. 9-13; Luke xi. 2-4) the petition “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven” is to do with God’s desire, not His purpose. It was His desire that the Kingdom should come, and His wishes be carried out, but the response of Israel was lacking, the coming of the Kingdom is yet in abeyance, and His desires still ignored.

This thought is brought out in a comparison of II Pet. iii. 9 with I Tim. ii. 4. Peter, referring to the appearance of scoffers who ask “Where is the promise of His coming?” says in verse 9: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise . . . . but is . . . . not willing that any should perish . . . .”. The Lord does not determine, or purpose that any should perish. Here, surely, is the answer to those who say there are those predestined to damnation. This is *not*, says Peter, God’s purpose. Writing to Timothy, Paul says “God our Saviour . . . . will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth”. God *desires* to have *all* men saved. But God has given to man the freedom of choice (not freedom of will, but the freedom either to comply with the desires of God for man, or to refuse so to do), and He will not override that freedom. Speaking of the sovereign will of God in Rom. ix., Paul refers to Pharaoh (verse 17): “For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose (lit. ‘thing’) have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth”. He continues in verse 19: “Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?”; who hath resisted His *purpose*? Had Pharaoh complied with that request or not, it was God’s purpose to shew forth His power and to declare His name throughout all the earth, and nothing could prevent it. While Pharaoh resisted God’s wish, he could do nothing to resist God’s purpose. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee” says the Psalmist (lxxvi. 10). If God’s purpose could be resisted and prevented by man, or any other being, there could be no assurance, no certainty, no salvation.

With Israel’s failure to repent and receive the Messiah, it seemed that Satan had succeeded in resisting and preventing the fulfillment of God’s purpose. But through His foreknowledge, God was not found unprepared. He had planned to meet the eventuality. In terms of our subject, this is made clear in Eph. i. 9-11: Having made known unto us the mystery of His *desire*, according to (or perhaps, ‘in harmony with’) His good pleasure which He designed (lit. ‘set before’, hence to plan or design) in Him; unto the dispensation of the fullness of times to sum up for Himself in one all things in Christ, things above the heavens and things on the earth; in Him, in Whom we obtain an inheritance having been marked out beforehand in harmony with the design (or plan) of Him Who worketh all things in harmony with the purpose of His desire. God has made known to us the (now) ‘open secret’ (as Moffatt has it) of His desire which He designed ‘before the foundation of the world’ (verse 4), a design still in harmony with His desire, and still well-pleasing to Himself. He had not been ‘caught out’. His desire for His creatures left them a degree of latitude enabling them to frustrate His desire; but, as it were, within the sphere of His desire is the ‘hard core’ of His purpose which cannot be frustrated, and it is in harmony with this ‘hard core’ that he worketh all things. Hence, upon the failure of Israel to conform to His desire for them, His purpose was continued in the Church which is the Body of Christ.

Nevertheless, “Hath God cast away His People?”. No! for within His desire for Israel is the ‘hard core’ of His purpose to fulfil the covenants with them, and with Abraham their forefather.

“Thus saith the Lord; if ye can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also My covenant be broken with David My servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priest, My ministers . . . . If My covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them” (Jer. xxxiii. 20-26).

There are two Scriptures only, involving the use of a word to do with the purpose of God, which have possible applications to members of the Body of Christ. The first is to be found in James i. 18:

“Of His Own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures”,

or more literally having purposed (or determined) He begat us. God does not merely wish, or desire that certain ones should be begotten with the word of truth, for that would leave our new nature and our salvation at the mercy of *our* desires, and our response, we should be saved by our decision. We are saved ‘according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His Own will’. As with those to whom James wrote, so we also are ‘begotten’ with the word of truth, and if they were to be ‘a kind of firstfruits of His creatures’, may we not say, in the light of Ephesians, that we are to be ‘a kind of firstfruits’ of ‘the all things’? In Heb. vi. 17 we read:

“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath.”

God purposing . . . . to shew . . . . the immutability of His purpose; and by the unchangeableness of His purpose to ‘the heirs of promise’, confirms to us ‘the immutability of His purpose’ for us. We have every reason for the utmost confidence; our salvation depends upon His purpose, and our hope is secured to us by the ‘immutability of His purpose’.

But for those whose salvation is certain, and their hope secure, God has certain desires. It is of these that Paul writes in Rom. xii. 1, 2: “that ye may assess what is the good and well pleasing, and perfect *desire* of God”. Clearly as human beings, even if we were in the position fully to know the purpose of God, our limitations would prevent us from being able to ‘assess’ it. We do need to be able to discover the good and well pleasing and perfect desire of God to us, and above all, as we experience it, as we test it, to discover that it is indeed, for us, good and well pleasing and perfect. Fundamentally this desire is, as we saw in the last study, our sanctification: “This is the desire of God, even your sanctification”. He desires that we should be separated, not so much separated *from* anything, as to be separated *to* Himself. As, increasingly, we are separated *to* Him,

we shall thereby be separated *from* those things which are not well pleasing to Him. It is quite possible for a person to be separated from the things of the present age, and yet not separated *to* God. Such a person may have all sorts of reasons for becoming separate from the world, indeed, is this not what so many 'drop outs' are in fact seeking to do? They have become disillusioned by the things of the world, tired of the speed of modern life, and from such things they have separated themselves, and not infrequently they have separated themselves to drugs and the like. God desires those who are His to separate themselves *to Him*.

James has a word of warning which is particularly applicable to some forms of 'evangelism'. In chapter iv. 4 he has this to say:

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Let us note that the word translated 'will' is the one we have mainly considered in this article, purpose, intent. Whoever *intends* to be a friend of the world, James tells us, is the enemy of God. Surely a very sobering thought, when so many today are advocating friendship with those in the world, with the consequent use of the methods of the world, in order, so they claim, to bring the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. How very near they may be coming to enmity to God.

As we started in the previous article, the knowledge of the will of God is not the easy matter some would have us believe. We must distinguish between His purpose, or intent, and His wish or desire. As we realize His purpose we find security, strength and confidence in Him, and surely by so doing, it should be *our* intent to fulfil His desires for us. In the light of His purpose made plain in Christ Jesus, the mercies of God, we should offer ourselves as living sacrifices, that we may fulfil His desire to be separated to Himself.

### **No.3. This is the Will of God. pp. 155 - 160**

In our last study we distinguished between the desire, or wish of God, and His Purpose or Intention. For most believers the problem is to know what is the wish of God for them, in their particular circumstances. This is no easy matter, and in the last resort is a matter entirely for the individual to decide in the light of prayer and study. There are however, certain clear guidelines in the N.T., which may be helpful in coming to a decision. Twice we read "For this is the will (or desire) of God" (I Thess. iv. 3; v 18), and once "For so is the will of God" (I Pet. ii. 15). The first concerns sanctification, the second giving of thanks, and the third submission to lawful authority.

We have briefly considered sanctification in an earlier study, and we saw that sanctification is a matter of separation, and that not so much *from* anything, as *to God*.

As we are separated to God, so we shall thereby be separated from all that displeases Him. Yet sanctification is one of the subjects on which a very great deal of confusion reigns. There are those who believe sanctification is a matter of a 'second blessing' and should result in 'sinless perfection'; others express the opinion that they are already sanctified, and therefore can now do as they like; yet others make this an experience which is entirely the work of the believer. While there is some truth in each of these positions, not one of them is wholly true, and each one of them has its own particular perils.

It is true that the believer is already sanctified, such Scriptures as I Cor. i. 29-31 bear this out:

“That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us . . . . sanctification . . . . : that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

In the same epistle Paul is writing (verse 2) “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints . . . .”. The original shows a very close relationship between the words for ‘sanctified’ and ‘saints’, so much so that it could be rendered “to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called ‘sanctified ones’.” Yet these sanctified ones are, we find as we read on in the letter, guilty of immorality “as is not so much as named among the Gentiles” (v. 1). Nonetheless they are called of God and sanctified. It is significant that of all his letters, only in this one, to a church which is particularly unsanctified and carnal (iii. 1, 3) does Paul lay such stress upon the fact that they ‘are sanctified’. It seems clear that his purpose is to encourage them to reckon on the fact of their sanctification in Christ Jesus, and so to live according to the fact, to be in practice what they are in Christ in the sight of God. Having dealt with their divisions, their immorality, their litigiousness and their general unrighteousness in chapter v. and the first part of vi., he continues (vi. 11) “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, *but ye are sanctified*, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”. Of such people the Apostle could say “ye are sanctified!” But obviously he is not satisfied with their behaviour, for he continues: “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any”. While it may be true that because they are sanctified and justified “all things are lawful”, nevertheless “all things are not expedient”, and they should not be ‘under the power of any’ of those things which once exercised authority over them. The reason for this is “ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price.” Paul reminds them that the supreme compulsion for their behaviour should be ‘the mercies of God’ (Rom. xii. 1), ‘therefore’ he says, ‘glorify God in you body’. The motivation for Christian living is the glory of God.

The word for glory, *doxa*, has to do with opinion, judgment, reputation; from the same root comes *doxoo* ‘to give one the character of being so and so’. Hence, whatever else may be involved in the meaning of glory, it has very much to do with the character of God. The believer’s life should accord with the character of God. No longer is it what I wish to do, but a life which will reveal, increasingly, the true character and reputation of

God. There is no sphere of life which is exempt from this high standard. Some one has written: "Thus there are those (a) who do not accept Christ and are subject to the desires of their own mind and body and (b) who have accepted the sovereignty of God and have settled for a life of unity with and obedience to God through the operation of His Spirit working with the believer's spirit".

"What constitutes the outward difference between (a) and (b)? Think about this yourself. Mainly it will be a choice of friends, pastimes, reading material and viewing. Convince yourself that these are pleasing to the Lord, especially your thoughts. Your thoughts are an open book to Him. The allocation of your time and money; the choice of a marriage partner are all subjects that should be placed before the Lord in prayer. If we have trusted Him to give us an answer in His own time, and moreover we have followed this lead, then we may be sure that our lives will be transformed. If we chose the things of the Spirit, life's empty pleasures will lose their hold and will be replaced by the lasting joy of the knowledge of God and a conscious participation in His will."

This kind of life will be very much 'other' than the life lived by the majority of folk today. It is a life of complete honesty before God: how easy it is to convince oneself that a particular activity is pleasing to the Lord, and will bring glory to Him, when in fact we are simply rationalizing our own desires. It is a life which, in the eyes of the world, is narrow and we must be prepared to be known as 'narrow-minded'; but it is a life which is increasingly filled with the joy of the Lord. It is a life which in every detail submits to the approval of God. *This* is the desire of God, even your sanctification.

In I Thess. v. 18 we read 'in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you'. Here is an aspect of God's desire for His people which is often overlooked. He desires that *in everything* we should give thanks: not merely in those things which we enjoy, nor in those matters in which we are successful and prosperous, nor in those times when all goes smoothly; but in the things we do not enjoy, in those matters where failure and loss attend us, in those times when all seems to go wrong for us. Do we give thanks *in everything*?

Among the answers the Psalmist gives to his own question: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (Psa. cxvi. 12) is this: "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord" (17). It becomes the more pointed when we realize that it signifies "I will *sacrifice* the sacrifice of thanksgiving". Thanksgiving can be costly. In O.T. times this was recognized in the offering of an animal without blemish, as a peace offering for thanksgiving. *All* thanksgiving thus is marked with a cost. It may be that there are times when we do not 'feel' like thanking God for the various experiences we are undergoing, nonetheless there is every cause for so doing. "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. viii. 28). This is not an easy lesson to learn; it is one which can take a lifetime. Yet we have cause to 'in every thing give thanks'. We are inclined to think that thanksgiving must always

spring from a 'feeling', but the believer's thanksgiving should spring from the fact of his knowledge that even in this circumstance, God is working for his good. In everything give thanks: for this is the desire of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

The third reference before us (I Pet. ii. 15) has particular reference to submission to every human creature for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king . . . . or unto governors. Peter also brings in the same thought we found to be Paul's in considering sanctification:

"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" (I Pet. ii. 15, 16).

Perhaps 'a covering of badness' might be a little simpler to understand than 'a cloak of maliciousness'. The thought is that, because of the liberty which is the believer's in Christ, some may say they are no longer under obligation to obey human authorities, and in so doing they would take their stand beside the lawless and appear as bad as they. But the believer is now lawless, though he may be free from every human ordinance. As the servant of God, however, he puts himself under every human ordinance *for the Lord's sake*. The thought is similar to that of Paul in Rom. xiii., where (verse 1) we read:

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. *For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*"

Paul continues in the next verse "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, *resisteth* the ordinance of God". In submitting therefore to the 'powers that be', the believer is submitting to God, and we have come very close to the thought that he should in all he does bring glory to God. Both Paul and Peter, in what they say on this matter are quite unequivocal, so much so, that there are those who express the opinion that 'every ordinance of man' should be obeyed unquestioningly, even if it should be against the ordinance of God. Yet if we look more closely into Rom. xiii. 1-7, it becomes apparent that Paul assumes, for sake of argument, that the 'power' will not misuse the authority given him by God. In verse 4 we read:

"For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

Again verse 7:

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Peter concludes his exhortation to submit to every ordinance of man, I Pet. ii. 17: "Honour all. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king". Respect all: love fellow-believers: fear, even dead, God: respect the king. In this context surely only one conclusion can be arrived at: the believer's submission to God overrides his submission to all others. If the higher power so abuses his God-given authority that he orders his subjects to undertake some course which conflicts with the known will of God, then the

servant of God must fear Him. The statement of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself would seem conclusive:

“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. x. 28).

Where there is a conflict of submission, then the submission must be to the Greater, God Himself. Submit . . . . for so is the desire of God.

God’s desire is that each one of us should live moment by moment “as unto the Lord, and not unto men”: He desires that in *everything* we should give thanks, knowing that everything works together for our good: He desires that we should submit to earthly authorities who hold their position from Him, only withholding submission to them, when their ordinance conflicts with His.

#### **No.4. Human Freewill. pp. 170 - 175**

In any study of the Will of God, sooner or later we must consider the response of man. Often this is referred to as ‘free-will’ by theologians and Christian writers. It is taken as axiomatic that man’s will is free.

It must, however, be borne in mind that the expression ‘free-will’ is not a Scriptural term; nor, for that matter, is the alternative ‘freedom of choice’. Both terms represent human attempts to express a fundamental aspect of the human situation. Whether either is accurate remains to be seen.

We can make no progress in our consideration of this subject without first seeking to discover whether man’s will is free. Paul, in Gal. iv. 3 tells the believers to whom he is writing that at one stage in their experience “we . . . . were in bondage under the elements of the world”: we were *enslaved*. A little further light is shed on the subject by Rom. vi. 17-18: “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servant of righteousness”. Ye were the *slaves* of sin . . . . ye became *enslaved* to righteousness. Dr. Bullinger’s Critical Lexicon defines *doulos* (slave) in the following terms: “a slave, one bound to serve . . . . one whose *will and capacities are wholly at the service of another* . . . . *doulos* is use of the lowest scale of servitude . . . .” (The italics are ours). Your wills and capacities were wholly at the service of sin! Where is either freedom of will, or freedom of choice? Ye became those whose wills and capacities are wholly at the service of righteousness. Where is either freedom of will, or freedom of choice? *Bound* to serve sin, or *bound* to serve righteousness! (The believer’s experience is that, in the latter case he does not always fulfil his bond. This point will be discussed later.)

But it may be argued that at least in Eden Adam and Eve had freewill, or freedom of choice. Is this so? Gen. ii. 16, 17 tells us “And the Lord God *commanded* the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”. The *freedom* to eat of every tree was *commanded* by God! The prohibition to refrain from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was commanded by God! The word for ‘command’ is so translated well over 400 times, the other 60 or so alternative translations all have the underlying sense of command, e.g. appoint, forbid, etc. Even in Eden man was ordered to do right, and to refrain from wrong. “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her; and he did eat” (Gen. iii. 6). Immediately, in accord with the command of God, ‘death (entered into the world) by sin’ (Rom. v. 12). From that moment the situation was radically changed.

Until death entered into the world ‘as by one man’, Adam and Eve were ‘free’ to do God’s Will in the sense that to obey Him they had to do nothing. The only other course open to them was to disobey, and to do this they had to act, and from the moment they acted, a reversal of the situation took place. The Concordant Version of the New Testament translates Rom. v. 12 thus:

“Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death came through into all mankind, on which all sinned . . . .”.

The ‘natural’ result of the entrance of death into the world by sin, was that all men sin: the result of sin is death, for ‘the wages of sin is death’ (Rom. vi. 23). In consequence of the Fall mankind has ever since been held in the bitter bondage of the vicious circle of death giving rise to sin, and sin resulting in death. From that sequence man cannot break free. In his bondage man is free to sin, free to disobey his Creator: he needs to do nothing to remain in rebellion, and the life of obedience is beyond his power.

Neither in Eden, nor at any time since, has man had freewill. Freewill implies that man can do anything, but as we have seen, man has at all time been strictly confined so that at best he might be said to have freedom of choice. In no sphere of life is man able to do anything or everything. A topical illustration of this point is the environment where, in the opinion of many, pollution has reached a critical level. Persistently man has exploited nature and is now reaping what he has sown. It has been suggested that the atmosphere is so badly polluted that there is sufficient oxygen for only twenty years left. While this may be panic conclusion, it is true that the Mediterranean Sea is becoming one vast sewer, already bring death and desolation to vegetation on its shores in some areas. Man has flouted and continues to flout God’s will in the laws of nature: if the laws of nature are obeyed, all is well; but if the laws of nature are disregarded disaster inevitably follows. There may be many different ways of disregarding the laws of nature, but the outcome is always the same—disaster. In the sphere of the environment there are only two courses open to man: to accede to the laws of nature . . . . or, to choose disaster. The ‘freedom’ accorded to man is *very* limited: he has, basically, the choice between two ways, one result in blessing, the other in disaster.

Throughout the Bible, throughout human history and experience this remains true. Man's choice is between blessing and disaster, salvation and perdition. To *man*, in any one given situation, there may seem to be many ways, but essentially there are only two: God's way, or man's way. The choice for Israel is clearly outlined in Deut. xxx. 15-19:

“See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing . . . .”.

Though it might seem to some of those who heard these words it was a choice of one out of *many* gods, it was simply a choice between the one true Lord God and the worship of falsehood. A similar choice was given to the nation by Joshua “Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served . . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. xxiv. 15). Again the choice is put by Elijah on Carmel (I Kings xviii.) where it would seem indecision is the issue (verse 21):

“How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.”

Indecision is as much a mark of the bondage of man's will as outright rebellion. This was made clear by the Lord Jesus Christ “He that is not with Me is against Me” (Matt. xii. 30). As we have suggested above Adam and Eve needed to do nothing to remain ‘with’ God, they had to *act* to disobey: man today need to do nothing to remain in rebellion. Adam and Eve had to *choose* to go against God: man today must choose to go *with* God. But that very choice means the right choice will put man against the main stream of life on earth: added to the bondage of his will is the further discouragement and opposition of the way of life of those around him.

The Man Christ Jesus chose God's way, chose God's will. At the well at Sychar when the disciples, bringing Him food, questioned whether ‘any man brought Him ought to eat’, He told them “My meat (or My necessary food) is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to accomplish His work”. To do the will of His Father was more important to Him than anything else. The result of His choice was that “he was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. liii. 3). He was concerned to do the will of God, He chose the will of God, and inevitably all the influence of a fallen race was against Him. In *Him* was nothing to respond to that influence, in *us* is so much which is responsive that we well nigh despair of performing the good that we would.

When we choose the will of God rather than our own, the magnitude of the problem becomes apparent. We find with Paul “to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not”. Some have suggested this was the apostle's experience before his conversion; but is it possible for one whose will is in bondage to choose the

will of God? “With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Rom. vii. 25). This is one whose will has been set free from the bondage of sin and death, whose will is in bondage now to righteousness, whose cry, because of the conflict, is “O wretched man that I am!” Paul has no difficulty in desiring that which is good—“the willing is on hand”, as it might be put, “but the accomplishment is not”. With all his heart he desires to do the will of God, but in spite of everything he finds a law “that, when I would do good, evil is present with me”. But because he delights in the law of God after the inward man (verse 22), because his desire is to do the will of God, he discovers “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. viii. 1). The *desire* for the will of God is accounted to him for righteousness.

This is no easy way out of the problem: it does not mean that the believer can now do exactly as he pleases. How can the man who desires with all his heart to do the will of God, now go his own way? This easing of the problem is for the man (or woman) who has a definite, almost desperate, desire for the will of God; for the one who echoes the Apostle’s cry “O wretched man that I am”—a phrase which could almost be translated “O *suffering* man that I am”. The conflict between the desire for the will of God, and the inability ‘to perform that which is good’ gives rise to anguish of spirit. For such, for those truly desiring ‘that which is good’ then Rom. viii. 28 holds good:

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”,

and the will, the desire is accounted for that which is good.

This great doctrine of justification by faith relieves the anxiety of the problem, enabling us, in addition to desiring the will of God, to set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. iii. 2); enabling us to look for Christ, and to leave with Him the conflict and the problem, for He has set us free (Gal. v. 1). And as our minds are thus freed from the strife and anxiety, being set on things above, that which God has worked in us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. ii. 13), is worked out in our daily living. It cannot be without significance that that which God works in us begins with the will, with the desire.

Freewill? No. Free choice?—even here it seems our wills are not free until they are freed by God working in us. We have a bias, a leaning to go *against* God. Thus we naturally, *freely* choose that which is against the will of God. Even when by faith we are ‘in Christ’, while we can desire God’s will, *our* will knows not ‘how to perform that which is good’, for it is not sufficiently free, for there is in the flesh no good thing (Romans vii. 18). Added to the opposition of the flesh is also the external opposition of the influence of the fallen race among which we live.

Freedom of will, freedom of choice, becomes possible only in proportion to the measure in which we yield our bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God . . . . that we may prove (or assess) what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. xii. 1, 2). Then, as our minds are freed from the bondage of sin and death, we

submit ourselves as the bondservants of righteousness and of God, “Whose service is perfect freedom”.

The natural man knows no freedom of will or of choice. Release from the bondage of sin and death comes only through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, when we become the servants of righteousness, and with the Apostle Paul delight to call ourselves the bondservants of Jesus Christ.

## **No.5. The Ten Commandments.** **pp. 190 - 196**

It would seem strange if God had not given certain explicit indications of His will to His ancient People who were under tutelage. These indications we find in the Law. For our purposes perhaps we may place the covenantal Law under three division: the ceremonial or ritual, the dietary and the Ten Commandments. As to the ceremonial or ritual, clearly this has been fulfilled in Christ and was obviously a shadow of that which was to come. The dietary may be considered outside the scope of this study as being a subject which is seldom, if ever, raised as a point of dispute. There remains, however, the Ten Commandments.

There are those believers who are convinced that the Ten Commandments are as obligatory today as they were for those to whom they were first given, while on the other hand there are those who are firmly convinced that the obligations of the Ten Commandments were included in the ‘handwriting of ordinances that was against us’ and which Christ took ‘out of the way, nailing it to His cross’ (Col. ii. 14). It is by no means a question of unimportance to the members of the Church which is Christ’s Body: are *we* under obligation to observe the Ten Commandments?

We will seek to deal with this question in two ways: (1) what, if anything, is said in the prison epistles in connection with the Commandments and (2) the ‘lawful’ use of the Law.

The first Commandment states: “I am the Lord thy God . . . . Thou shalt have no other gods before my face” (Exod. xx. 2, 3, see *The Companion Bible* note). What is here enjoined is stated as a fact by Paul in Eph. iv. 6 “There is . . . . One God and Father of all”. No member of the Body of Christ is likely to dispute this, nor claim the liberty to have any other god. So the will of God concerning the relationship existing between Himself and His people of all dispensations is made plain: There is one God.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” says the second Commandment, ‘or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth’. Paul, however, takes the standard higher in his statement “No . . . . covetous man, who is an idolater hath any inheritance in the kingdom of

Christ and of God” (Eph. v. 5, cf. Col. iii. 5). To covet anything is to make of it a god, an idol. Perhaps here is an instance where we need to exercise particular care due to the influence of the materialistic society in which we live.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Among those things ‘which are upon the earth’ and are to be mortified (Col. iii. 5, 8) Paul include ‘blasphemy’. This he tells Timothy is one of the marks of the last days (II Tim. iii. 1, 2), pointing out that ‘men shall be lovers of their own selves . . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God’ (verses 2, 4). In such a situation the name of God and all things holy are unlikely to be held in reverence. Nor, would we think, even allowing for the influence of the ungodly society around us, would any member of Christ’s Body wish to speak lightly, or without reverence, of God.

Of all the Ten Commandments, the fourth is the one which is most in dispute so far as members of the One Body are concerned. But there are certain points to be noted: the fourth Commandment is as much (perhaps more) a command to ‘labour six days’, a point worth noting at the present time when the working week grows gradually shorter and even nominal acknowledgment of God grows less. In the second place the emphasis is upon *remembering* the sabbath day to keep it holy. “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and *rested* the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hollowed it.” The sabbath, as such, is then first an *ordinance of creation* and then, following six days of labour, a welcome opportunity for man to rest from his labours, as God did from His. Dr. E. W. Bullinger’s comments in *Number in Scriptures* are of interest here (p.9):

“Moreover, man appears to be made on what we may call the *seven-day* principle. In various diseases the *seventh*, fourteenth, and twenty-first are critical days; and in others *seven* or 14 half-days. Man’s pulse beats on the *seven* day principle, for Dr. Stratton points out that for six days out of *seven* it beats faster in the morning than in the evening, while *on the seventh day it beats slower*. Thus the number *seven* is stamped upon physiology, and he is thus admonished, as man, to rest one day in *seven*. He cannot violate this law with impunity, for it is interwoven with his very being.”

Man therefore, being made on ‘the seven day principle’, it is hardly surprising to find that the People of God were enjoined in this covenant relationship with God ‘to remember the sabbath day’ following six days of labour.

But what should be *our* attitude to the ‘sabbath’? Paul makes but one reference to it in the prison epistles, Col. ii. 16, “Let no man judge you . . . . in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the *sabbath days*”. The matters of which he has been speaking are, he says, ‘a shadow of things to come; but the body (or substance) is of Christ’. “Let no man judge you”; but precisely what does Paul mean by this? The primary significance of ‘judge’ (*krino*) is ‘to separate, divide, put apart: hence to pick out’. “Let no man *pick you out* . . . . in respect of an holy day, etc.” The principalities and powers, who, it would seem, had some jurisdiction or authority in these matters have been ‘spoiled’. Indeed the inference suggests that prior to the triumph of the cross, these principalities and powers clung to Christ Himself in an adverse way; these He ‘stripped off’ as a garment, divesting Himself of their influence. Having done this, He displayed

them freely, revealing them for the ‘weak and beggarly’ things they are and showing that the areas in which they had held sway were mere shadows of the reality to be found in Himself (Col. ii. 15). Let no man ‘pick you out’ in respect of shadows.

A few verses later (Col. ii. 20) Paul questions their *subjection* to ordinances, *according to the precepts and teachings of men*. This, surely, is the crux of the matter. It is wrong for the believer to be *subject* to the *opinions* of men, and unthinkingly to adopt a course of action or a way of life, simply because other people, albeit other Christians, ‘lay down the law’ on the matter. There is the danger that members of Christ’s Body may err by going from the extreme of “thou shalt not” to “thou shalt” and vice versa, thereby equally becoming ‘subject to ordinances according to the precepts and teachings of men’. We are free ‘with the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free’; free to do the will of God. We are freed from the *bondage* of the sabbath law, or the first day of the week: the fact that there is the possibility of choice on this point indicates the *bondage* has been removed.

But what should be our attitude to ‘Sunday observance’? We have already seen that ‘man appears to be made on what we may call the seven day principle’, and thus *needs*, physically one day’s rest in seven: is it not equally true that he may need a similar opportunity for his spirit? C. H. Welch has this to say (*Just and the Justifier*, p.316):

“While the believer today may not be in danger of judging or despising so far as ‘meats’ are concerned, there are many who adopt the attitude here condemned (Rom.xiv.) regarding the observance of the so-called ‘Lord’s Day’. Those of us who are free from the tradition concerning the observance of either the Sabbath or the First Day of the Week, should remember that we are called upon to respect the consciences of those who, though ‘weak’, ‘regard the day unto the Lord’. It is not the first part of this sentence that matters, it is the second part: ‘unto the Lord’.”

Following his discourse on the question of meats and the observance of ‘days’ in Rom. xiv., Paul continues in chapter xv. thus:

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us *please his neighbour for his good to edification*. For even Christ pleased not Himself . . . .”.

Again in Volume XI, p.27, of *The Berean Expositor*, C.H.W. says:

“We are bound to observe no day in particular (this does not give license to outrage other believers’ feelings concerning Sunday) but gladly seek to walk worthy before the Lord and our fellows.”

We have dealt at some length with the Fourth Commandment because we believe this to be an issue of particular relevance in the days in which we live. The way in which we treat Sunday can have a great influence upon our witness as believers.

Passing on, then, to the Fifth Commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother”, we find the Apostle Paul makes specific reference to this in Eph. vi. 1-3 and Col. iii. 20 and it is worth noting his comment in the former: “which is the first *commandment* with promise”. So also the comment in Col. iii. 20 should be noted: “for this is well pleasing

unto the Lord". Here at least is a commandment which should be taken as an indication of what is 'well pleasing unto the Lord', and hence of His will for His people.

While it is true there is no specific mention of murder in the prison epistles, bearing in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ said:

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill . . . . But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment . . . ." (Matt. v. 21-22).

Eph. iv. 26, 31 and Col. iii. 8 make it clear that wrath and anger, the root of murder, have no place in the life of the member of Christ's Body.

So it is with theft: "Let him that stole steal no more" (Eph. iv. 28). Similarly with false witness, Eph. iv. 25 exhorts the putting away of lying and the speaking of truth every man with his neighbour. Covetousness is doubly condemned both as covetousness and idolatry.

Clearly and logically, nine of the Ten Words will be fulfilled by members of the Church which is Christ's Body. This being the case is there any good reason why the Fourth should be an exception?

However, why should we be bound by any of the Ten Commandments when Christ has made us free from the Law? In writing his first letter to Timothy Paul gives us the answer, Chapter i. 8-11:

"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine . . . .".

So then the law is not for the 'righteous' man, but rather for the 'unrighteous'. The principle is laid down in Rom. iii. 31:

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

That is to say, we are no longer *subject* to the law, nonetheless our conduct does not make the law pointless; rather it gives point to the law, for those for whom it is intended, i.e., 'the lawless', etc.

Perhaps we can make the difference clearer by referring to Gal. iv. 1-7. Before the 'redemption' which is in Christ Jesus we were *infants* (better than 'child' as in A.V.), but since "God sent forth His Son . . . . to redeem them that were under the Law", we have received 'the adoption of *sons*', and are no more servants, but heirs. "The law was our schoolmaster" (Gal. iii. 24). It is the difference between the immaturity of the infant and the responsibility of the mature son; the latter can be relied upon to conduct himself properly without the need for the discipline of the law. The reason for the existence of

laws in our own society is often the irresponsibility of many people. For example, the responsible driver would naturally slow down when traveling through a built up area, but there were many who did not do so, with the result that a law had to be drawn up restricting the liberty of the 'lawless'. This law was not given for the law-abiding, but for the law-breaker. Thus those who are 'in Christ', are not subject to the law, but this does not give them license to break the law, nor does it mean that they will do so, for by so doing they number themselves among those for whom it was given!

What believer is there who willfully breaks the Ten Commandments? Do we know of any believer who has another god as well as God or who worships a 'graven image', who claims the right to commit adultery or bear false witness? Why then should there be any who turn from the privilege afforded by our society for one day's rest in seven: an opportunity to turn from the specific claims of daily living for worship, meditation on the Word of God, fellowship with other believers, an opportunity for a 'day of rest and gladness'? We are not *subject* to such a day, we are not *obliged* to observe one day above another, nor in our observance of it do we hedge it about with all sorts of pettifogging restrictions. But as nine of the Ten Commandments are clearly the expression of God's desire for us, why should the one (the fourth) not be also His desire for us?

It seems clear then that in the Ten Commandments we have laid down for us the basic principles of the Will of God for us and that, while we may not be 'under the law', the members of Christ's Body will delight to do His will with the psalmist of old. For it was for this reason:

"He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children (better: placing as sons) by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. i. 4-6).

God has placed us as sons in Christ that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love to the praise of the glory of His grace.

## **No.6. The Way of Responsibility.** **pp. 211 - 216**

In the last article reference was made to the adoption, or 'placing as sons'. This we suggested involved responsibility, and it is of this we wish to think more fully in the current article.

We commenced this series of articles with the consideration of Rom. xii. 1, 2 which includes the exhortation to be 'transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that . . . . will of God'. Hence, as we saw, the renewed mind is of the utmost importance both in discovering and confirming the will of God as it is carried out. Probably the mind plays a far greater part in discerning the will of God, and in the Christian life in general, than we are wont to think.

Yet this is no easy way out of the problems which confront us concerning the discernment and fulfillment of the will of God. Something of the problem is indicated in Rom. viii. 5-8:

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

In this passage the noun and verb translated 'mind' both have the significance of 'what one has in mind', 'to regard, care for'. That is to say it is the *content* of the mind which is in question. "They that *are after* the flesh . . . they that *are after* the spirit . . .". The significance of the Greek *kata* translated 'after' is that of 'going along with'; they that *go along with* the flesh are compared with those who *go along with* spirit, and here a tragedy is revealed. It is quite possible for believers who have experienced regeneration by the Holy Spirit to 'go along with the flesh'. There are those of whom Paul speaks in Phil. iii. 18, 19:

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, *who mind earthly things.*"

The content of their minds is 'things on the earth'; they are those who, in the context of the chapter, have 'confidence in the flesh' (verse 3). They seek to live the Christian life in the wisdom and strength of the flesh. "They are the enemies of the cross of Christ"; "the carnal mind is enmity against God". The primary thought behind 'enemy' is something 'hated, odious, adverse'. Small wonder that the Apostle speaks of such 'even weeping', for here are believers whose minds are filled with matters odious to God and opposed to the cross of Christ. Their end is 'utter loss': they have not been prepared to 'count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus', and if

they so continue, the fulfillment of their lives will be nothing, they have sown to their flesh and will reap ruin (Gal. vi. 8). How sad it is that ‘many walk’ so.

But there are those who ‘go long with’ the new nature begotten in the believer by God. Such occupy their minds with spiritual things (Rom. viii. 5). They find that ‘to be spiritually minded is life and peace’: a clear inference, surely, that if our minds are occupied with spiritual things we shall find we are doing the will of God, for the things of the spirit are the things of God.

It is precisely the same verb ‘to mind’ (*phroneo*) which Paul uses in Phil. ii. 5 “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”. Let this disposition, intention, or purpose be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; let the content of your mind be as the content of His mind. Clearly the content of His mind was ‘things above’. It is not surprising, then, to find Paul using the same verb in Col. iii. 2 “Set your *affection* on things above”: the things above occupy your minds, not those upon the earth. The previous verse perhaps makes clearer what is entailed in setting the affections on the things above:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, *seek* those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

“Seek after, search out, inquire into, investigate” those things which are above. Obviously this entails effort and the expenditure of time. The passive aspect of it is that we should be *mindful* of the things above, the active that we search out, give diligence to the things above. Nor should “Bereans” need any exhortation so to do, professing to emulate the Bereans of Acts xvii. 11, who ‘searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so’. A different word is used for ‘search’, but it is one which is at least equally strong, meaning ‘to search out’. Again there is emphasis on zeal in connection with the Scriptures and things above in II Tim. ii. 15, “*Study* to shew thyself approved unto God”. The word ‘study’ is perhaps rather limited compared with the original, which would better be translated “Give diligence”. Clearly in the context of ‘rightly dividing the word of truth’ study is involved, but diligence also is required. It is not enough to do study for the purpose of preparing a talk, and then do no further ‘searching out’ until another talk demands it. So also diligence is required in *making* time for the things of the spirit, and sometimes in making the effort to search them out.

We need to ‘let this mind’ be in *us* ‘which was also in Christ Jesus’. We need minds so occupied with the things and will of God that there is *nothing* we count so dear as to keep us from the things of the spirit. If we find the prospect daunting, let us remember that the one who exhorted ‘Let this mind be in you’, himself said:

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil.iii.12).

Again he strikes the note of diligence in the word he uses for ‘follow’; it is the word often translated ‘persecute’. He will give all the zeal and intensity, the persistence and patience which is the mark of a persecutor, to the attainment of that for which he has been

‘apprehended of Christ Jesus’. But has he not already done enough? He has, he tells us, ‘counted loss’ all the things of the flesh in which he might have confidence, and counts them but dung that he might win Christ. His all prevailing passion is, he tells us, “That I may (come to) know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death” (Phil. iii. 10). He continues (15-17):

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect (mature), be *thus minded* . . . . Brethren, be followers together of me.”

Become fellow-imitators of me in being ‘thus minded’. As Christ was completely devoted to the mind of God, so Paul was completely devoted to the mind of Christ, and his desire for other believers is that they should be equally devoted to the mind of Christ.

Paul could say, probably with unmatched devotion, “With the mind I myself serve the law of God”. But here he uses a different word for ‘mind’: *nous*, it is ‘the organ of thinking and knowledge, the understanding; *or especially*, the organ of moral thinking’. It is that which is filled either with the ‘carnal mind’ or ‘the mind of the spirit’. This is the word he uses when he says, ‘we have the *mind* of Christ’ (I Cor. ii. 16). *The Companion Bible* note on Rom. vii. 25 includes this comment: “mind = mind (the new nature) indeed”. It is this which Paul says in Rom. xii. 2 needs to be ‘renewed’ that being thus transformed, we may ‘prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God’. It is also plain from the first two verses of Rom. xii. that the renewal of the mind comes as we present our bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.

We have the responsibility as believers to see that the content of our minds, the ‘minding’, is worthy of the ‘mind’ which is given to us. This mind, the organ of our thinking and understanding, may be strengthened and nourished if occupied with ‘those things which are above’; it will certainly be choked and weakened if occupied with the things ‘which are upon the earth’. The more it is occupied with the things of the spirit, the more effective it will become and the more certainly shall we fulfil the desires of God for us. But if constantly kept occupied with the things of earth, with the ‘mind of the flesh’, it should hardly surprise us if we find great difficulty concerning the will of God. Someone once said ‘Love God, and do as you please’: if we love Him sufficiently to count all things but loss, if our minds are so completely taken up with Him, then the things we do will be such as will please Him.

We pointed out in the first article that in Rom. xii. 2 it would be more accurate to render ‘the renewing of *your* mind’ as ‘the mind’, and that the word for ‘renew’ includes the preposition *ana*, which in a composite word has the significance of ‘up to, towards, up, . . . . hence with a sense of strengthening’. The mind of the believer needs to be strengthened by being occupied with the things above. This results both in the transformation of the life, and the proving ‘what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God’.

However, few of us attain to the standard put forward by Paul in Phil. iii., and, as we have seen, even he was not satisfied with his attainment in this connection. Are we then

doomed to a Christian life in which we just manage to ‘muddle through’? Must we then ‘do the best we can’ and leave it at that? Can we never satisfy our God by fulfilling His wishes for us? It is at this point the great doctrine of Justification by Faith comes to our aid. For in Rom. xii. we read of the conflict between ‘the good that I would’ and ‘the evil which I would not’. The solution is in verse 25:

“So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Paul at least, of the next chapter clarifies the matter:

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. viii. 5-8).

Here is a clear denial of the idea wrongly attributed to the doctrine of Justification by Faith, that the one justified can now do as he pleases, living a carnal life. For those who ‘mind’ the things of the flesh ‘cannot please God’. It is plain that the mind which serves ‘the law of God’, is a mind which is occupied with the things of the Spirit. If our thinking and our desires are directed to pleasing God, then, and only then, our endeavours, our intentions are accepted as well pleasing unto the Lord. As some one has put it “The Will of God for us is that we should will to do the will of God”. Our minds and our ‘minding’ should be directed to God and set ‘on things above’, for ‘as he thinketh in his heart, so is he’ (Prov. xxiii. 7). The believer is what his thoughts are. Am I no better than my thoughts? What a challenge to us all!

The responsibility for our thoughts rests squarely with us. It is true we cannot keep wrong thoughts out of our minds, but we are accountable if they remain there. Luther is reported to have said, in this connection, “You cannot stop the crows alighting on your heads; but you can stop them making nests in your hair”. Many thoughts, in the course of the day, come into our minds from ‘the world, the flesh and the devil’, we have the responsibility not to welcome them into our minds. Our responsibility to God is to be able to say with Paul:

“With the *mind* I myself serve the law of God.”

## **No.7. The Worthy Walk---“Practical Teaching”.** **pp. 231 - 237**

In the course of our studies on this important subject, we have ranged over a variety of aspects, but there still remains the difficult problem of relating the Will of God personally. Perhaps there is no greater emphasis on “the worthy walk” than in our own fellowship. But what is the worthy walk? What advice can be given to enable anyone young in the faith to attain to a worthy walk? What practical teaching can be given to this end?

At the present time there is a great demand in Christian circles to ‘be practical’, for it is considered that only a practical life can be one which constitute the worthy walk. Hence there is a great demand for practical teaching, for it is argued that if the Christian faith is anything, it must be practical. It is a demand which places in opposition ‘practical’ and ‘doctrinal’ teaching. But are there two kinds of teaching, ‘practical’ and ‘doctrinal’ or dogmatic? Although theological students are taught ‘dogmatics’ & ‘ethics’, this is no proof that the two can be separated, and indeed such double-mindedness can lead to serious errors and consequences.

In Roman Catholic theology such a division, arising from the assumed need for practical guidance, has given rise to the distinction between ‘mortal’ and ‘venial’ sins. We quote from an authorized Roman book of instruction:

“In the world to come mortal sin is punished with the fire of hell, so is venial sin punished with the fire of purgatory . . . . No number of venial sins, however great, will of themselves destroy the grace of God in the soul, or make a mortal sin.”

One kind of sin, then, will destroy ‘the grace of God in the soul’, while another kind of sin, no matter how often committed, nor how numerous they may be, will not of themselves do so. Rom. iii. 23 defines sin as ‘coming short of the glory of God’, and indeed one of the words of sin, perhaps the most frequently used one, both in Hebrew and Greek, signifies ‘to miss the mark’. “Practical teaching” concludes that we can ‘miss the mark’ or ‘fall short’ in certain areas (and that time and again), without suffering eternal consequences! It matters little whether the rope thrown to a drowning man falls short by one inch or by one mile: the man still drowns. Sin, whether ‘great’ or ‘small’ (in the eyes of man), is a very serious matter, and any distinction arising from the desire for ‘practical’ guidance can only belittle the seriousness of sin. The only ‘practical’ solution to the problem of sin is doctrinal: “The Blood of Jesus Christ (God’s) Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Neither purgatorial suffering, nor the flames of the traditional ‘hell’ can deal with sin. Yet the desire for ‘practical’ teaching and guidance, a desire which seeks to avoid personal responsibility, leads only to serious doctrinal error.

In other areas ‘practical’ teaching leads on to very serious consequences. We have heard of a Bible Class leader who recommends that before condemning anything, we need to have experience of it. His advice is given, it is true, in the context of films: he

therefore advises his young people to see such films as “The Clockwork Orange” or “The Exorcist” before they are condemned. One young woman following this advice saw the latter film only to be seriously disturbed for some time afterwards: she could indeed condemn it from personal experience, but at a cost to herself which may not have been fully paid yet. Several years ago a young woman, of eighteen or so, working among drug addicts concluded her help would be the more ‘practical’ if she had personal experience. She died a horrible death as a drug addict herself. ‘Practical’ teaching can have some very serious and far-reaching consequences.

Yet clearly, if these studies are to be of value, they must be *practical* and give practical teaching concerning the worthy walk of the believer, and especially the believer who is a member of the Church which is the Body of Christ.

In the desire to walk worthy, there are those who look towards involvement with ‘good works’. Such would value advice concerning the drug addict, the alcoholic, the social ‘dropout’, lawlessness or any of the other spheres of popular concern. WE ARE NOT SAYING THERE IS NO PLACE FOR GOOD WORKS IN THE ACCEPTED SENSE OF THE EXPRESSION; but it may be we shall find the ‘good works’ to which the believer is exhorted are not necessarily quite what they are popularly supposed to be. The question is often asked “How will the world know of our faith, apart from good works, if we do not show our love?” But who is the Christian told to love? In giving what none can deny was practical teaching to His disciples shortly before His death, the Lord Jesus Christ said ‘If ye love Me, keep My commandments’ (John xiv. 15). In the next chapter, verse 12, He said “This is My commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you”. Again in John xiii. 34, 35:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. *By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, IF YE HAVE LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER.*”

There is plenty of similar evidence elsewhere in the N.T. John’s First Epistle is full of the thought:

“And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”

Much turns on the question “Who is my brother?” John also answers this question in his First Epistle (v. 1):

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: *and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him.*”

Paul also indicates a similar emphasis on love for one another: e.g. I Thess. iv. 9:

“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.”

Perhaps the nearest Paul comes to telling us to love, or care for, all men is in Gal. vi. 10:

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household (or family) of faith.”

We are, then, to have a prime concern for the welfare of our fellow-believers; even when ‘all men’ are mentioned the emphasis is laid upon ‘especially them who are of the household of faith’.

It is not infrequently suggested that the believer shows his love for God by demonstrating his love for others. What saith the Scripture?

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments” (I John v. 2).

We only know that we do in fact love our brethren in Christ, when we love God and put Him first. How often ‘other commitments’ are our excuse for not giving first place to God! And ‘other commitments’ can be the means whereby we deny our fellow-believers fellowship. How many ministers have become dispirited by lack of support by reason of ‘other commitments’: in turn they fail those to whom they minister because so dispirited: and indeed those whose ‘other commitments’ have led to such a situation are also deprived of the ministry they need. It is true that Paul was speaking of ‘the other Body’, but his words in I Cor. xii. 25, 26 are pertinent to the situation of the members of the One Body:

“. . . . the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”

“We are members one of another” (Eph. iv. 25). In the context of our dealings with the ‘weaker brother’ Paul says “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself” (Rom. xiv. 7). As believers and members of the Body of Christ we cannot live in isolation: each member needs ‘that which every joint supplieth’; each member, being in a right relationship with Christ, the Head, is a means whereby spiritual nourishment is ministered to his fellow members.

But it may be argued that in Matt. v. 44 the Lord Himself appears to take it further:

“But I say unto you, Love your *enemies*, bless them that *curse* you, do good to them that *hate* you, and pray for them that *despitefully use* you.”

This, however, is found in the Sermon on the Mount in which the Lord expounded the laws for entering the Kingdom, and occurred early in His ministry and before the Kingdom and the King had been rejected by the Jews. After His rejection, and just prior to the crucifixion we read:

“These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if

they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me" (John xv.17-21).

By the time these words were spoken the situation had radically changed: because of persecution believers would need help the one from another, they would need to have 'love one for another'. From this time on there would be hostility between the world and those 'born of God', for 'the whole world lieth in the wicked one' (I John v. 19). The time was approaching when it could be saith "(the Father) hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. i. 13). In this country we know little of persecution at the present time; but as the days darken and 'lawlessness abounds' we may find ourselves confronted with suffering for Christ's sake, then we shall realize the need to show our love one for the other. There are those in other countries who have for some time known the importance of caring for their fellow believers: it has been forced upon them by the secular and Godless state. Yet perhaps in our society, a society which is indifferent to the things of God, there is a greater need that we should recognize this aspect of the worthy walk and of the will of God, for the indifference of the society in which we live, breeds indifference in the believer unless he is awake to the situation. Why am I so indifferent? Is it because you are indifferent? And why are you so indifferent? Is it because I am indifferent? We each need all the support and fellowship the other can give; and if one fails, all suffer with him.

We live in days when the hostility of the world and the Prince of this World for the believe is coming to a climax, at a time when the 'perilous times' to which Paul make reference in II Tim. iii. 1 are drawing near (if they have not already dawned). What practical advice has the Apostle for his young friend for those days? Beginning with chapter ii. 15 "Give diligence (study) . . . . the Word of Truth", he leads on through 'profane and vain babblings . . . . ungodliness' to the perilous times, concluding that passage with the injunction:

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. iii. 14-17).

The only practical teaching for such times as those in which we live is that we give diligence to the Word of Truth, recognizing that all Scriptures is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.

Our first concern as we seek to know and do the will of God, walking worthy of our calling and our Lord, should be to love God, and to get to know Christ. This may well call for a reappraisal of our priorities and our commitments, may call for self-sacrifice in order to give diligence to these matters, but as Rom. xii. 1, 2 points out (as we have more than once in these studies suggested), it is as we present our bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, that we shall prove what is the Will of God. We have the responsibility to set our minds on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col. iii. 2) the responsibility to fill our minds with the things of God.

“They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. viii. 5-8).

As we have already pointed out in the previous article, the mind is filled either with the things of the flesh, or with the things of the Spirit. There are those believers who allow themselves to be ‘at home’ in the flesh, and are therefore minding the things of the flesh; we should be just ‘lodgers’, waiting until the time comes when we shall be where our minds are set.

The only really practical teaching in the Word of God is to be found in doctrine which outlines principles which must be personally worked out. No one can do this for me, nor can anyone do it for you. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom.xiv.5), for ‘a double minded man is unstable in all his ways’ (James i. 8). To be ‘double minded’, to be less than ‘fully persuaded’ can lead to disaster: the man of God in I Kings xiii. allowed himself to be persuaded contrary to his own conviction, and died. The fact that it was a prophet who brought to him the “Word of Jehovah” made no difference; he was not *fully* persuaded in his own mind. Many will tell us what is God’s will for us, but we dare not heed their advice without first searching the Scriptures to see whether these things are so.

*The* practical advice for Christian living, for the worthy walk, for finding out the will of God is to give diligence to the Word of Truth, searching the Scriptures, remembering that every Scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. The object of the effort (and it may well take a great deal of effort to find the time) is simply “to (get to) know Him”, for He is “the Way, the Truth and the Life”.