

THE EARLY & PASTORAL EPISTLES OF PAUL

STUART ALLEN

The Early and Pastoral Epistles of Paul

An Exposition of

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

1 Timothy

Titus

by STUART ALLEN

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Letters from Prison

The Unfolding Purpose of God

On Reading the Bible

The Interpretation of Scripture

The Early Centuries and the Truth

The Lord Jesus Christ. God or only man?

etc., etc.

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FOREWORD

We have recently issued a collected edition of Stuart Allen's articles on the letters the Apostle Paul wrote from prison. This book produced in a handy and inexpensive style has had a good reception and generous demand from the friends of this Trust.

We feel therefore encouraged to issue as a companion volume Mr. Allen's articles on the Early and Pastoral Epistles of the Apostle Paul. The text has appeared in *The Berean Expositor* and has been re-edited where necessary. While this book includes First Timothy the commentary on Second Timothy will be found in the "*Letters from Prison*" also published by *The Berean Publishing Trust*.

The content of these two books will cover a great burden of vital doctrine entrusted by the risen Christ to the Apostle Paul for us Gentiles. One is utterly dismayed today at the attitude of the churches and their spokesmen to the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and for the most part, the paucity of knowledge displayed of the doctrine enshrined in Paul's letters. How necessary then for the faithful servants of Christ to constantly rehearse this deposit of truth that we may "exhort one another daily, while it is called today" (Heb. 3:13). May these two books serve to glorify God by leading many to the words and knowledge of the Son of God, our blessed Redeemer and Head.

1 THESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER ONE

The epistles to the Thessalonian church are among the earliest of Paul's writings. The older Bible scholars placed these epistles first, but with the added light from Sir William Ramsay's researches and others, we believe Galatians to be the first letter that the Apostle wrote and these Thessalonian epistles the next in order.

Paul's initial visit to Thessalonica, probably in the summer of A.D. 50, is narrated in Acts 17:1-9. This formed part of his second missionary journey, the ministry of which commenced at Philippi (16:12-40). He refers to his coming to Thessalonica after the persecution and shameful treatment he had received at Philippi with Silas, in 1 Thessalonians 2:2.

There, according to his custom, he visited the synagogue for three successive sabbaths and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures (i.e. the Old Testament) concerning the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, proving that He was and is the Christ. As a result, some of the Jews believed, together with a large number of God-fearing Gentiles, but as a result of further Jewish opposition, an uproar was started which spread over the whole of the city. Jason, Paul's host, and other friends of the Apostle, went bail for him and Silas, and finally sent them away by night to Berea (Acts 17:1-10).

The young church, which they were forced to leave behind at Thessalonica, was therefore exposed to active persecution which gave Paul great concern for their spiritual welfare, specially as his sudden departure prevented him from giving them all the instruction he could have wished (1 Thess. 3:10). From Thessalonica he went on to Berea where further Jewish opposition caused him to go on to Athens (Acts 17:14,15).

Meanwhile he sent Timothy back to inquire of their spiritual state and to establish and comfort them (1 Thess. 3:1-3). When Timothy returned to him, he was able to report that they were standing fast in spite of the persecution, and more than this, that they were actively propagating the gospel themselves (1 Thess. 3:6,7;1:8).

But there were several matters concerning which they desired further enlightenment. Among these was the return of the Lord Jesus and specially what would be the position of those believers who had died, in relation to this great event. The Apostle was obviously overjoyed and comforted at the good news Timothy brought of their spiritual welfare and wrote at once to encourage and strengthen them. This is the epistle we are now studying. It is well to remember that every epistle has a human background and a reason for writing, and while all are inspired by God, the reasons and origin concerned can only contribute to our understanding of their content.

Thessalonica (modern Saloniki) was originally called Therme, but was refounded by Cassander about 315 B.C. and renamed Thessalonica after his wife, who was a step-sister of Alexander the Great. It was an important city in Roman and Macedonian times and the Romans made it the capital of Macedonia in 164 B.C. The city has always had a large proportion of Jews among its inhabitants.

The first epistle which Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church revolves around the three graces of faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13:13). It is significant that the Apostle frequently groups them together in other epistles.

Thus we have faith followed by seven gifts in Romans 12:6; love in seven aspects in 12:9, and hope with seven consequences in 12:12. In Colossians 1:4,5 we find them grouped together again as also in Hebrews 10:22-24. It should be noted that in verse 23 "faith" should read "hope".

Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). We are saved by hope (Rom. 8:24) a hope that does not make ashamed (5:5) and the love of God which is poured out in our hearts is the greatest of all gifts and includes them all.

So in 1 Thessalonians we have the "work of faith, and the labour of love, and the patience of hope". These are gathered up again in the last chapter.

"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of *faith* and *love*; and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8).

Chapters one and two are largely introductory, the real theme being reached in chapter three and onwards. There the three graces form the framework of this section—thus:

Faith 3:1-10.
Love 3:11-4:12.
Hope 4:13-5:11.

We now give the outline of the two opening chapters.

1 Thessalonians one and two.

- A 1:2-10
 - a Remembrance without ceasing
 - b The gospel came not in word only
 - c Result. Ye became followers
 - d End. Deliverance from wrath
- B 2:1-12 How the gospel came to Thessalonica
- A 2:13-16
 - a Thanks without ceasing
 - b The Word received—not as the word of man
 - c Result. Ye became followers
 - d End. The opposers. Wrath to the uttermost

Chapter one has its own structure which is as follows:

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

- A 2,3
 - a Work of faith
 - b Labour of love
 - c Patience of hope
- B 5 "For"—the gospel's coming—
 - not only
 - But also
 - What manner
] How
- C 6 Followers
- D 6 The Word and much affliction
- C 7 Examples
- B 8 "For"—The Word's sounding out—
 - not only
 - But also
 - What manner
] Where
- A 9,10
 - a Turned to God
 - b To serve the living God
 - c Wait for His Son from heaven

By observing the members marked A we shall see that faith, hope and love are resolved by the faithful Thessalonian believers into action. The work of faith is exhibited by the fact that they turned away from idols to God and put their faith in Him. Their labour of love was shown in their service to the living and true God in contrast to their former service to dead idols, the work of men's hands.

Their patience of hope was manifested in their waiting for the Son from heaven. Christ was their hope—as He is the Hope of all believers, but this hope did not leave them with their heads in the clouds; it made them intensely practical in service and devotion to the One Who had so gloriously saved them. They had become examples to believers all over Greece for their faithful witness and through them the gospel had spread not only through Greece but beyond (1:7,8).

No wonder Paul, in his opening remarks, gave thanks to God always for them and constantly remembered them at the Throne of Grace (verse 2). We cannot help noticing that, wherever possible, the Apostle gave commendation, praise and encouragement. Even when he had to correct departure from Truth, he usually finds something to praise first. He did not look for faults, rather he sought and found the fruits of the Spirit wherever he could. "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely . . ." He reckoned in others (Phil. 4:9). What an example to all of us! How much easier would the work of the Lord be if believers would constantly manifest this spirit instead of the critical, harsh attitude that is sometimes found in Christian circles.

The Apostle continues "knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God". The Authorized Version margin reads "or, beloved of God, your election", and with this agrees the Revised Version. This more in harmony with the natural flow of the Greek.

How did Paul know their election? Had he some special access to Divine counsels which gave him this knowledge? While it was true that this great servant of the Lord had many revelations from God, some of them peculiar to his ministry, there is no reason to believe that this was the case here. Verse five supplies the answer. It commences with the Greek *hoti* translated "for", but better

rendered here "because". He knew their election *because of the manner* in which the gospel came "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" and also by the *practical effect* on the Thessalonian believers. "Ye became imitators (followers) of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (verse 6).

For every effect there must be a cause, and such manifest results as the Apostle saw could only spring from the fact that there had been a real work of the Spirit among them which proved their election. The *root* of a tree is invisible, but its *fruit* can be seen by all. Election is like the root and the practical effect in the believer's life, the fruit.

The gospel proclaimed by Paul had become something more than words. There had been abundant confirmation by the Holy Spirit, and during the Acts period, this was manifested by supernatural gifts (1 Cor. 12).

While there is no mention of such gifts in this context, we need not rule them out. This confirmation was not only *external* but *internal*. The gospel came with "much assurance" (verse 5). The Greek *plerophoria* occurs four times and only in Paul's epistles. Colossians 2:2 refers to "*full assurance* of understanding". Hebrews 6:11 to "*full assurance* of hope" and in 10:22 "*full assurance* of faith".

This is a magnificent word and a corrective to those who are always doubting and fearing and who regard assurance as being something parallel with pride. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye *may know* that ye have eternal life" wrote the Apostle John (1 John 5:13). Assurance is God's will for all His children and this comes when His Word is accepted and believed apart from anything else in the way of feelings or other attitudes of mind. A doubting believer is a contradiction and a paralysed man. He is incapable of any real witness for the Lord. Not in this way did the believers at Thessalonica receive the Word of the Lord preached by His servant Paul. They regarded it as the *Word of God* which energizes (worketh effectually) them that believe. This is the only source of spiritual power for Christian witness. It always has been

and ever will be so, and practically the last injunction that Paul gave was "preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2). Where the Word of God is not honoured as the Word of Truth and fully proclaimed as such, there is powerlessness, spiritual deadness, and lack of response. This is what we see largely around us in Christendom. It is useless to complain of the lack of lasting results in Christian witness when God's Word is not given its proper place.

Believers at Thessalonica had received the gospel not as the word of men, not as Pauline doctrine although preached by Paul, but as it is in Truth, the Word of God. When they had done this, results followed! And this was no surface stirring, for much affliction immediately occurred which failed to move them or shake their "much assurance" (1:6). Let us all remember that we have received the Word of God as a stewardship; that God has promised to honour and work through His Word by the Holy Spirit, and if we want to see a lasting effect in Christian witness we must minister that Word in all its purity and then look to Him to "give the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6).

After commenting upon the work of faith, labour of love and patience of hope of the Thessalonian believers, the Apostle declares that they had become imitators of him and of the Lord. This had led them through much tribulation and persecution for their faithful witness, but through it all there had been joy of the Holy Spirit to more than compensate.

The result was that they had become "ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia" (1:7). The critical texts read the singular number "ensample". This is the Greek *typos* which gives us the English word *type*. Paul stated that he had been an example or pattern to them in his behaviour, by working night and day so that he would not be chargeable to them (2 Thess. 3:8,9). Again he holds himself up as a pattern to the Philippian saints (Phil. 3:17). Both Timothy and Titus are exhorted to be "examples" or "types" (1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7). The church at Thessalonica had become a pattern to the whole of Greece and beyond (1:7). The Apostle could hardly give higher commendation than this. Their Christian testimony sounded out far and wide and so the Truth spread abroad.

The need for bold and fearless witness is not the less needed in our day. We all should show clearly Whose we are and Whom we serve. There are far too many secret disciples, those who are afraid to let the light shine. Specially is this so concerning the deeper truths revealed in Paul's prison epistles. Many keep quiet because of the fear of man that bringeth a snare even when these are believers. They are afraid of the price they will have to pay. May we all be so strengthened and inspired to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:15,16) and so avoid being "ashamed of the Lord and His prisoner" the Apostle Paul (2 Tim. 1:8).

In view of the practical effects that accrued from the outstanding witness of the Thessalonian saints, the Apostle states that he had no need to speak anything; rather the people of Macedonia and Achaia reported what manner of entering in he had to them and with the results that had glorified the Lord so much.

The closing verses of the chapter strike a dispensational note. Believers at Thessalonica were awaiting the Lord Jesus from heaven. This can only mean that they expected, as their hope, the return of the Saviour in their lifetime. The Apostle also identifies himself with this hope in the phrase in chapter four, verse seventeen, "we which are alive and remain". The early coming of Christ is not only a feature of this epistle, it is common to all the epistles written during the period covered by the Acts.

There are two classes of people who disregard this truth. One is the modernist, who plainly states that in his opinion, Paul and the early converts were quite sincere in their belief that Christ would return in their lifetime, but they were mistaken. The other is the more conservative believer, who, not seeing the epistle's dispensational setting, yet confronted with the fact of its stress upon the imminence of the Lord's Return and that this has not happened though nearly 2,000 years have passed by since it was written, seeks to resolve the difficulty by explaining that "a thousand years is as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8) and therefore scarcely two days have passed in the Lord's reckoning!

But this is forced and unnatural and in any case Peter reverses the statement by saying "one day is with the Lord as a thousand

years"! The epistles to the Thessalonian church were two of the earliest of Paul's writings and had their origin in the Acts period when the possibility of the Second Advent hung upon the repentance of Israel and their turning back to God (Acts 3:19-26). Believers in this church and elsewhere were instructed that practical faith was to turn away from idols to God; practical response was to serve the living and true God; and for a practical hope, they were to "wait for His Son from heaven" (1:9), being rescued from the coming wrath, so graphically and solemnly described later in the book of Revelation.

1 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER TWO

The Apostle now begins a long section in which he defends his conduct towards them. It was unlike Paul to give prominence to himself unless he had been deliberately misrepresented and the truth made known through him brought into danger. It is obvious that this was the case, otherwise he would not have denied the charges of deceit, uncleanness, and guile (2:3) or of flattering words and covetousness (verse 5), or of seeking glory for himself (verse 6) if these insinuations had not been made.

The tactics of the enemy are ever the same: smear the messenger and seek to ruin the message. It is splendid to realize that Paul did not hit back and render evil for evil. Rather he reminds them of his gentleness among them as a nurse carefully looking after her children. He had been willing not only to make known the gospel to them but to give himself to the limit for their sakes (verse 8). He had worked night and day so that he would not be chargeable and a burden to them (verse 9). He had behaved like a loving and wise father exhorting and consoling them (verse 11), and from this context we have brought before us the ideal leader who combines the tenderness of a mother with the strength of a father. One without the other may lead to undue hardness or softness of character. Would that we all could emulate the Apostle in his balanced witness in these respects.

The epistle continues with Paul's commendation of the way the Thessalonian believers had received his message. He makes a tremendous statement by saying that they received it not as something human, just the word of a man, but, as it is in truth, the *Word of God*. They must have been persuaded that Paul was not giving them his opinions. There could not have been any in this assembly who regarded the message as just "Pauline theology". It was as though God Himself had spoken to them and therefore what they had heard through the Apostle's lips was regarded as God's Word. If only this was the attitude of the churches today, what a difference we should see in faith and practice! It would start to work as it did in the Thessalonian believers:

"Ye received it (the message given through Paul) . . . as it is in truth, the Word of God, *which effectually worketh also in you that believe*" (2:13).

Effectually work is the translation of the Greek *energeo* from which we get our word *energise*. Lasting practical results followed such a reception of the Truth and would do so today if it was faithfully proclaimed and made known. The message would not return void to God and be barren of results. It is our responsibility to sow the seed of the Word of truth. It is the Lord's promise to "give the growth" (1 Cor. 3:7).

In the case of the Thessalonian church, the reception of the Truth had not been without cost:

"For ye, brethren, became the followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews . . ." (2:14).

The churches of Judaea had been formed by the dispersal of the mother church at Jerusalem through persecution (Acts 8:1). They had suffered from the bitterness and venom of the unbelieving Jews and it was this means that Satan used most of all at this time to antagonize the purpose of God and to frustrate His will. Over and over again the Apostle suffered at the hands of his own nation as the record of the Acts clearly shows. They dogged his footsteps wherever he went, seeking all the while to stir up strife and enmity. Not only did they do this to him, but they vented their spite on all those who believed the gospel and made a faithful stand for the Lord. No wonder he went on to write:

"Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (2:15,16).

Terrible words, but a true commentary on the attitude of Israel during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. No wonder Romans 10:21 was written of them later, describing the attitude of the Lord:

"All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people".

Turning away from the bitter opposition of the Jew, Paul now declares his longing to revisit Thessalonica and be united with them again. He writes:

"But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire" (2:17).

"Being taken from you" is a translation of the Greek *aporphanis-thentes* which literally means *to be bereaved* and shows us how keenly the Apostle felt his forced absence from the Thessalonian Christians. He desired to visit them, but the enemy hindered all his plans.

Just how far Satan can delay the plans of God and obstruct His servants is not possible to say. We do know that his power and that of the hosts of darkness under his control is very great. He was able to hold up an angelic messenger to Daniel for three weeks (Dan. 10:12,13), and there is no reason to believe that his power is lessened in any way today.

The conflict of the ages still goes on and but for the glorious redemptive work of our Saviour we should certainly not be on the winning side. The purpose of His saving grace is that we should be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). Meanwhile may we seek to put on the whole armour of God (Eph. 6:11) and clad in this way, we shall be safe from all the malignity and enmity of the foe.

The next section of this epistle commences with the words:

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His Coming? For ye are our glory and joy".

When the Apostle talks of a "crown", he is not dealing with foundation truths, but with the subsequent faithful "working out", resulting in reward, which is given when all service is tested by the Lord at His Bema or Award Seat. In his final summing up of his life's witness he said:

"I have finished my course . . . henceforth there is laid up for me a *crown of righteousness*, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4:7,8).

This is but a figurative way of speaking, not just of *living* with Christ in glory, but being associated with His *Throne*, or *reigning* with Him (2 Tim. 2:12).

Faithful service earns this crown, and in that day there will be practical evidence of this in the presence of all those believers who have been saved through his devoted labours for the Lord. The Thessalonian saints would then be "his crown of rejoicing (boasting)", even as the Philippian believers were (Phil. 4:1).

There are two words which are translated "boasting" in the New Testament: *kauchema* and *kauchesis*. They are obviously allied. Dr. E. W. Bullinger in his Lexicon says:

Kauchesis, reason to boast, denoting the act.
Kauchema, a subject of boasting.

Paul uses the latter word exclusively, and also the former word excepting one occurrence in James 4:16.

The verbal form *kauchaomai* occurs thirty-three times in the New Testament, thirty-one of them being found in Paul's writings.

His boasting or rejoicing was in his Lord or what his Lord had done through him. He had learned to avoid the emptiness of boasting in himself or of his own achievements. Even in the famous

passage where he does boast, it was forced on him by his detractors, and then he makes it clear that his labours and sufferings were on account of his devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:16-31).

The boasting in the Thessalonian saints would be at the Lord's Coming. The word is the familiar *parousia* and together with the word *apokalupsis* gives us the hope of the churches formed during the Acts period. *Parousia* does not denote the *act* of coming, but rather the *arrival* at a destination. It was used in secular literature of the arrival of kings and persons of importance. A clear setting forth of His *parousia* is made by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:27-30. There is no need to invent a "secret coming" as some have done. This is only a confession of inability to see the difference between the hope of the believer during the Acts of the Apostles compared with the revelation of the Mystery in Paul's prison epistles later on.

1 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER THREE

Chapter three commences with the connection link "wherefore" (*dio*). Because of the close link between the Apostle and his Thessalonian converts, when he could no longer forbear, he sent Timothy to them, being unable to go himself. "Forbear" is the Greek *stego* and is used four times and only in Paul's writings.

The word means to cover or conceal, and doubtless refers to his anxiety for them, as he knew full well the persecution they were enduring and wondered whether their faith was steadfast through it all.

Only those who have been used by the Lord in the salvation and building up of others know the intimate connection that exists between them. Every blow aimed at the convert affects the leader and all such can well understand Paul's deep concern for all the believers he had been forced to leave at Thessalonica. When he could conceal his anxiety no longer, he sends Timothy, whom he describes as his "brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ". (R.V.).

We have now arrived at the heart of the epistle, all else up to now being introductory. At the beginning we pointed out how the whole of this letter revolves around the three graces of faith, hope and love. We now commence a section dealing with *faith* and set out the middle section of the epistle as a whole:

	Comfort you concerning your faith (2)
FAITH	I sent to know your faith (5)
3:1-10	Timothy brought good tidings of your faith (6)
	Perfect that which is lacking in your faith (10).
LOVE	Abound in love (12)
3:11-4:12	Concerning brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you (4:9).
HOPE	Sorrow as others which have no hope (13)
4:13-5:11	Hope expanded in doctrine of the Lord's Coming.

There are four references to *faith* in the first section, 3:1-10. The Apostle had sent Timothy to comfort and encourage them concerning their faith, so that the severe afflictions they were undergoing would not move them away from the Truth. Paul had warned them beforehand of the inevitability of their faith being tested by suffering (4). What was a problem in Old Testament days concerning the suffering and trials of the righteous now became the normal experience of God's people and they were taught to accept this joyfully as the will of God for them. It was indeed a precious thing, as Peter asserts in his first epistle (1 Pet. 1:7), for it had a refining effect and took their faith out of the realm of theory and transplanted it into the realm of certainty and fact, so that they were in no doubt of its reality.

Paul had been anxious lest the Tempter had used these difficult experiences to turn them away from the faith (verse 5) and spoil his work, but the return of Timothy with the reassuring news of their steadfastness, greatly cheered him, as it did to learn that they longed to see him again. He had been concerned lest his enforced departure from Thessalonica had been used by Satan to break the link between them, but he was now overjoyed to know that his fears had been groundless:

"For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thess. 3:9, 10 R.V.).

He continues to pray that the way might be opened for him to revisit them; meanwhile he asks that their *love* may increase toward each other and verses 11 to 4:12 expands the theme as it touches Christian practice. Overflowing love would so touch their hearts and lives that it would lead to their strengthening and establishment, resulting in an unblameable walk before our God and Father (verses 11-13). The Greek *amemptos* translated "unblameable" occurs four times in Paul's epistles:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Phil. 2:15 | That ye may be <i>blameless</i> . |
| 3:6 | The righteousness which is in the law, <i>blameless</i> . |
| 1 Thess. 3:13 | Stablish your hearts <i>unblameable</i> . |
| Heb. 8:7 | If that first (covenant) had been <i>faultless</i> . |

As an adverb it occurs twice in the epistle we are studying. The Apostle had lived out the Truth before them, for he could write:

"Ye are witnesses, how . . . *unblameably* we behaved ourselves toward you that believe" (2:10).

In chapter five, verse twenty-three we have:

"I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved *blameless* unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Paul's prayer for these believers was not only that they might be preserved alive until the near return of the Lord Jesus, but that they might be found to His approval when this great event took place.

1 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER FOUR

Chapter four starts with the Greek *to loipon*, literally "for the rest", hardly "finally" as the Revised Version. The "furthermore" of the Authorized Version seems nearer its meaning, the Apostle continuing the theme of brotherly love as it works out in practice:

"We beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, even as ye do walk, that ye abound more and more" (4:1 R.V.).

Note the phrase "even as ye do (or are) walking" in the Revised Version which is added by reason of the best Greek texts. Even though their standard of walk was so exemplary, Paul would have them not rest on their laurels, but "abound" more and more. *Perisseuo* translated "abound" is a typical Pauline word being used by him some 26 times. In this epistle its occurrences are:

"The Lord make you to increase and *abound* in love" (3:12).

"So that ye would *abound* more and more" (4:1).

"We beseech you . . . that ye *increase* more and more" (4:10).

We never get to the limits of practical love in the Christian life. This greatest of all gifts is best shown in spending and being spent for others, pouring ourselves out, as it were, in loving service without stint for fellow-members of the Body of Christ. This will be not just love—but *overflowing* love which is such a characteristic feature of God's unfathomable love to us. It was this that Paul urged the Thessalonian believers to evidence more and more. What opportunity has the world, the flesh or the devil, to enter into a gathering of God's people where such a spirit is manifest?

The Apostle refers to the commands he had given them verbally "by the Lord Jesus". Later on in the chapter he speaks of details concerning the Lord's *parousia* or Coming which he had "by the word of the Lord" (verse 15). This does not necessarily mean, as some assume, that these matters are entirely *new*, but Paul received his commission and all it involved in revelation "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father" (Gal. 1:1). It was not necessary to refer them to anything that God had revealed through the Apostles of the Circumcision or by Christ when on earth. Paul's revelation from the Lord was complete in all points, and whether some of it characterized truth given in other callings or not, did not matter; it was "by the Lord Jesus", now risen and ascended, and conveyed through himself, an earthen vessel.

Before we go any further, let us examine the structure of the passage before us:

I Thessalonians 3:12-4:12 The labour of love.

- A 3:12,13 a Abound in love
 - b One to another
- B 4:1 c Walk and please God
 - d Abound (*perisseuein*) more and more
- C 4:2-8 e Commands of the Lord Jesus
 - f Sanctification, not lust
 - g The brother defrauded
 - g The Lord the Avenger
 - f Not uncleanness, but holiness
 - e Rejecting God
- A 4:9 a Brotherly love
 - b Love one another
- B 4:10-12 d Abound (*perisseuein*) more and more
 - c Walk honestly to those without.

The stress, not merely upon love, but on love that *overflows* or *abounds* is obvious, and such love will have a very marked effect upon the practical walk of the believer, as the context shows. The Apostle reminds the Thessalonian believers of the charge (R.V.) he had given them "through the Lord Jesus" (R.V.). As we have seen, this once more confirms the independent ministry of Paul who received this ministry and all it involved directly from the risen Christ and not from the Twelve, nor can it refer to the words spoken by the Lord when on earth, for these the Apostle never heard, and even if he had, as unconverted Saul of Tarsus, the Christ hater, they would have conveyed little.

This charge had to do with their sanctification, or separation to God by redemption, and their separation from all that the flesh and the world involved. The moral laxity of the time made it necessary to stress purity of living.

What does Paul mean when he says, "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour . . . that no man go beyond (transgress R.V.) and defraud (wrong) his brother in *the* matter (not 'any matter' as A.V., but the matter under discussion)"? There are two different views held by expositors as to the interpretation of this passage.

- (1) The "vessel" refers to the body, and the injunction is to self-control.

(2) The "vessel" refers to a "wife", and the need for faithfulness to the marriage bond.

The Greek word *skeuos*, vessel, occurs 22 times in the New Testament. It is used of a receptacle (John 19:29), a person's possessions (Matt. 12:29; Mark 3:27), the believer as a channel which God can use (2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:21). Not only this, but in 1 Peter 3:7 it is used of a wife:

"Likewise, ye husbands . . . giving honour to the wife, as unto the weaker vessel . . ."

"How to *possess* his vessel". The word translated "possess" is *ptaomai*, which means, not so much to possess, but to "gain possession of", to "acquire" or "purchase":

"Now this man *purchased* a field with the reward of iniquity" (Acts 1:18).

"Thou has thought that the gift of God may be *purchased* with money" (Acts 8:20).

"With a great sum *obtained* I this freedom" (Acts 22:28).

In what sense can the body be acquired or possessed? Moreover the sense of the next verses does not connect well if the word "vessel" is given this meaning.

On the other hand, if *skeuos* means "wife", then to "acquire a wife" can be understood, and with this sense it is rendered by a number of translations.

" . . . that each man among you shall know how to procure a wife who shall be his own in purity and honour" (Weymouth).

So also Alford, Moffatt, Cunningham, Twentieth Century Version, Goodspeed, Williams, and Berkeley Version. Leaning to the first view are Bloomfield, J. N. Darby, Rotherham and F. F. Bruce. Both views express truth, but the second fits into the context more naturally. The Apostle again stresses sanctification in verse seven:

"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification (holiness A.V.)".

However, love is still the dominating theme of this section and

now the saints at Thessalonica are reminded that one practical aspect of Christian love is to "study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you". Evidently there were some who were wrongly regarding the nearness of the Lord's return. Such were refusing to work, with the result that, instead of being occupied by their own affairs, they were prying into the affairs of others and causing disturbances.

"For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:11,12 R.V.).

Both in this epistle and in the context we are considering, there is a stress on being "quiet". *Hesuchazo* means to be silent, to be tranquil, as opposed to excitability which has a bad effect on others. The verb translated "study" is *philotimeomai*, "to be ambitious" literally, and the phrase almost means "be ambitious to be unambitious". "Make it your ambition to live quietly and to mind your own concerns (do your own things, literally), and to work with your own hands". Such a walk would be a good witness to the outside world and moreover each believer would then lack nothing (verse 12).

To this very day, the doctrine of the Second Advent has had a similar effect on some. We have heard of those who have given up their homes and businesses to wait for the Lord's return, forgetting that the best way to be ready is to do what He Himself commanded "occupy, till I come" (Luke 19:13). To do nothing, to be idle is to open the door to the Adversary and this was happening at Thessalonica, hence the Apostle's warning. By example as well as by precept, he taught them to be busily engaged in doing the Lord's will, whether in the home, trade, or in the Lord's work.

We now enter upon a new section of the epistle which revolves around the question of hope and accordingly we set out its structural outline.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 The "patience of hope".

- A 4:13 I would not have you ignorant concerning them that sleep
- B 14 First reason—Resurrection and sleep
- C 15 Second reason—Living shall not go before them that sleep
- D 16,17 Ever with the Lord
- E 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words
- A 5:1-3 You know perfectly concerning the day of the Lord
- B 4-6 First reason—Let us not sleep
- C 7,8 Second reason—Those that sleep in the night
- D 9,10 Live together with Him
- E 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together.

It is evident that some had lost dear ones and they were deeply concerned about them in view of the Lord's early return. Would they be left behind? Would those that are alive be taken and those who had died be left in their graves until a later period? To these problems Paul now turns and seeks to give them comfort and instruction:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep" (4:13).

In five other places the Apostle states that he did not wish believers to be ignorant or without knowledge of certain vital truths. In Romans 11:25 he is dealing with the secret of Israel's blindness lest they should be wise in their own conceits and imagine that God had cast off the unbelieving nation forever and exalted the Gentile to take their place. In 1 Corinthians 10:1 he reminds the Corinthian church that, while all Israel at the Exodus were "baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea", and were typically redeemed and linked with all that Moses stood for in law and ceremonial, in type and shadow, yet all did not enter the promised land, for with "many of them God was not well pleased" (10:5). They lost their prize, that is, entering into the inheritance of Canaan. In the same epistle Paul uses the phrase again and states that he would not have them ignorant concerning spiritual gifts (12:1). Detailed instructions were necessary so that these gifts should be used in an orderly fashion and to the edification of the local assembly.

When he writes his second letter to the church at Corinth he says that he would not have them ignorant of the trouble he had endured in Asia. So great was it that he despaired even of life (2 Cor. 1:8). This led him away from self-trust or self-confidence. "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (verse 9). In his letter to the Roman saints the Apostle stated that he had often planned to visit them but had been hindered. He was concerned that they should not be ignorant of this, or misunderstand his inability (Rom. 1:13).

In each context where this phrase is used, something important is being stressed and so it is in 1 Thessalonians chapter four. To the sorrowful saints who were mourning the loss of dear ones, Paul does not attempt to inculcate a Stoic indifference. Such mourners could not help sorrowing in these circumstances. At the same time they could remember for their own comfort that the Saviour Himself was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He stood beside the grave of a beloved friend and wept, and was deeply moved at the havoc and loss that death brings. One thing that we are apt to forget is that redemption not only delivers from sin, but from the penalty of sin which is *death*.

"I will ransom them from the power of *the grave*; I will *redeem them from death*: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hosea 13:14).

So that while we sorrow, we sorrow not as others who have *no hope*. This is one of the great differences between the saved and the unsaved. For believers, death is described in the Word as a sleep, an interlude before the real life starts in resurrection glory. This figure is never used for the unbeliever. For him the "sting of death is sin" and this sting has not been removed as far as he is concerned. Such a person is without Christ, without hope and of all men most miserable (1 Cor. 15:17-19). Regarding the state of death, no one, of themselves, can have any real or sure knowledge of what it is like. No ordinary mortal has come back from the grave to give us any information as to its character, saving those who in Bible times were raised from the dead, Lazarus being a case in point. Thus it is that we are shut up entirely to the revelation of God's Word for any knowledge we can have.

When God wishes to describe to us what the state of death is, what illustration will He use? And at least we must admit that His illustrations are always *apt*. Consistently in Old Testament and New He uses the figure of *sleep*, and if we will only consider what healthy sleep is like we shall know all that God has revealed on this subject. We are not aware of any Scripture that talks about death as the sleep of the *body*, the *soul* or the *spirit*, separately; it is the sleep of the *whole person concerned*. Likewise the Word does not speak of the resurrection of the *body*, that is what human creeds do. It treats of the resurrection of the *dead* (1 Cor. 15:12, 13, 16, 20, 21). If Christians would only carefully keep to Scriptural language, what trouble and false doctrine would be avoided! We should not hear then of such senseless and unscriptural phrases as "soul-sleep". The trouble is that so many Christians are not content with what God has revealed. They much prefer to indulge in wishful thinking and add their own faulty and misleading ideas concerning a subject that they can know nothing of themselves. Tradition and man-made creeds add their quota of error and the whole subject gets leavened with false notions which are very difficult to throw aside. How often has one heard the phrase "I like to believe my loved ones are in bliss; it is so comforting", which only goes to show that personal preferences are made the basis of belief, instead of the revelation of the Word of God.

There are two words in the Greek for sleep, *katheudo* "to go to sleep", referring to normal slumber, and *koimao* "to fall asleep involuntarily", which in the passive is used in the New Testament of the sleep of death. In verse fourteen we have the phrase "those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him". The word "in" is the preposition *dia* "through", "by means of", "those who are laid to sleep by Jesus". The thought underlying these words is extremely beautiful. Just as a parent lays his little child to rest at night time, so the Saviour does for His children, and resurrection is the morning of glory when He will say "wake up".

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which *all that are in the graves* (not heaven, or merely their bodies in the grave) *shall hear His voice*, and shall come forth . . ." (John 5:28,29).

"I am the Resurrection, and the Life" (John 11:25).

Realizing this, Bishop Ken (1692) wrote in one of his hymns:

Teach me to live, that I may dread the grave as little as my bed.

Believers, taught by God's Word, will know that death is no more to be feared than going to sleep at night time. It is sleep in Christ (1 Cor. 15:16-18). After the death of Lazarus, the Lord said to His disciples, "our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may *awake him out of sleep*" (John 11:11). This is just what death and resurrection is for the believer, and one would have thought that, to all such, these words of the Saviour would be sufficient; but alas, to so many who name the Name of Christ, it is not so. They are determined to keep their own traditional ideas on the subject. May we be found among those who believe what God says and reveals, rather than the opinions of men.

The Apostle Paul goes on to give the Scriptural basis of comfort for those who mourn:

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, that are left unto the Coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:15-18 R.V.).

The Apostle stresses the fact that he is writing "by the Word of the Lord". This doubly emphasizes the truth of the passage we are dealing with. We can find no reference to such teaching in the Lord's earthly ministry, but as Paul received the gospel and all subsequent truth by revelation (Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:3), there is no difficulty in understanding the source of the truth expressed here. He now explains the effect of the Lord's Coming on both living and dead believers, and includes himself among those that may be "alive and left" to this momentous event. This occasions no difficulty when we remember the possibility of the Lord's Coming during the period covered by the Acts (Acts 3:19-26), and that this epistle was one of the Apostle's earliest writings and thus stresses the nearness of His coming back to the earth.

The word "coming" translates the Greek *parousia*, which means "presence" (R.V. margin) or "arrival" rather than the motion of coming, as we have already indicated. This *parousia* had

been fully explained by the Lord in Matthew chapter twenty-four in response to the disciples' question as to what should be its sign and when it should take place. There the Lord Jesus had said:

"Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days . . . then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (24:29,30).

Here we are on sure ground. From this statement we know that the *parousia* must take place *after* the Great Tribulation and not before it. We know that some, in order to get out of the difficulty of the believer going through this awful time of trouble, invent another *parousia*, a secret one. But where is the passage of Scripture that clearly teaches this? Such are not helped either by the usage of the word *apokalupsis*, revelation. Where in the New Testament do we get a secret *apokalupsis* of the Lord for believers? *Apokalupsis* and *parousia* are used inter-changeably during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles and must refer to the same event. These words are not used in the Prison Epistles for the hope of the Body of Christ, which is distinct from the Coming of the Lord to the earth to destroy the man of sin and the antichristian kingdom of the end-time and to end the Great Tribulation, which is a time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble, although it involves the whole earth in a measure.

It may be helpful here if we observe the united testimony of the early epistles on the imminent Coming of the Lord.

" . . . so that ye come behind in no gift; *waiting for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 1:7).

" . . . *the time is short*: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none" (1 Cor. 7:29).

"Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the *ends of the ages are come*" (1 Cor. 10:11 R.V.).

"*Maranatha; the Lord cometh*" (1 Cor. 16:22 marg.).

"The God of peace shall *bruise Satan under your feet shortly*" (Rom. 16:20).

"The night is far spent, *the day is at hand*" (Rom. 13:12).

"*For yet a little while*, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37).

"Ye turned to God . . . *to wait for His Son from heaven*" (1 Thess. 1:9,10).

"We which are *alive and remain to the Coming of the Lord*" (1 Thess. 4:15).

"I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and *body be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Thess. 5:23).

"To you who are troubled *rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire*" (2 Thess. 1:7 R.V.).

"Now we beseech you, brethren . . . *by our gathering together unto Him*" (2 Thess. 2:1).

"*The end of all things is at hand*" (1 Pet. 4:7).

"*The Coming of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James 5:8).

"*The Lord cometh with ten thousands of His Saints*" (Jude 14).

"*The Judge standeth before the door*" (James 5:9).

"It is the last time (hour) . . . *even now* are there many antichrists; *whereby we know that it is the last time (or hour)*" (1 John 2:18).

This is an impressive list. Not only is it clear that believers at this period expected to be alive at the Lord's Coming, but *that Coming was looked upon as imminent*, and yet nearly 2,000 years have passed and still this great event has not taken place. This is surely one of the major problems of the New Testament and it is not resolved by assuming that the early Christians were mistaken in their beliefs. This would raise the problem of inspiration, enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and the very basis of the Christian faith. If they were mistaken here, they could be mistaken anywhere in their doctrine and all assurance would vanish. Nor can we accept the explanation that "a thousand years is as a day with the Lord". God has written His word to instruct us who are creatures of time and when He deals with time, *it is time as we know it*, that is of ordinary days, months and years. When He says "quickly" He means quickly. It would be mockery to ask believers to hold fast under fierce persecution with a view to the Coming of Christ, if that Coming was not possible for another two millenniums.

Speaking generally, evangelical Christendom has ignored or by-passed this great problem, and its great Scriptural importance has been missed. The Divine promise to Israel, given through Peter's lips in Acts 3:19-26, that, if the nation of Israel repented and turned to God, their sins would be forgiven and blotted out, *the Lord Jesus would be sent back to them* and the times of restoration and setting up of the earthly kingdom as revealed through the Old Testament prophets would come to pass, is the

key to this difficulty. In view of this, no wonder believers looked on the Lord's Second Coming as being a possibility in their lives and all the passages we have quoted reinforce this fact. The so-called orthodox position, having set Israel aside as being cast off by God at the crucifixion, throws away the key to the understanding of the Acts of the Apostles and then wonders why it has no Scriptural answer to such far reaching statements as that of Peter, "the end of all things has drawn near", or John "... we know it is the last hour . . ." (1 John 2:18), or Paul, "the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. 10:11 R.V.).

All these statements were completely true at the time they were written (i.e. during the Acts period), and clearly indicate that the end of the age was near and the return of the Lord Jesus was imminent, all, humanly speaking, depended upon the repentance of Israel. The fact that they were not going to be "converted" or "turned" to God at this time, was known to Him only, and no believer could have had any idea what God would do in such a circumstance. The temptation is great to read into these portions of Scripture future events and the condition of things *after* the Acts. If we do this, we nullify truth, blind our own minds and lose a correct understanding of the purpose of God. Always we must seek to put ourselves in the place of those to whom the portion of Scripture we are studying was given, and to go as far as the truth was explicitly revealed to them and no further.

If only believers could see that the near Coming of Christ was a possibility during the Acts period and will be truth again when God's prophetic clock starts once more and He resumes His dealings with Israel and Daniel's 70th week of years runs its course, they would then be in a position to consider and understand the Scriptures that deal with the *interval between these events* and reveal what God has been doing during this time. In other words the truth that covers *this age* would then stand out sharply in all its clearness and speak to heart and mind, giving Divine illumination and guidance as to where believers stand today in the Divine purpose of the ages, their calling and the practical response in testimony and service that the Lord is requiring from them.

Coming back to 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, we repeat that the

Apostle stresses that what he is teaching is the "Word of the Lord". There is no room here then for his own ideas. This is Christ's revelation on the hope of the believer then obtaining. He assures the Thessalonian believers that those who are living when the Lord returns will on no account precede (prevent—old English of the A. V.) or realize their hope before believers who have died. There was no need for them to worry about loved ones who had fallen asleep. They would not be left behind, but would rise from their graves first and then those who are living would be caught away to join them in the clouds and so—IN THIS WAY, and only in this way, would they *be with the Lord Jesus* for ever.

Together they would meet the Lord as He descends to the air. The word "meet" is the Greek *apantesis*. It has the thought of meeting with the idea of *returning*. Such is its meaning in Matthew 25:6, where the midnight cry exhorts the ten virgins to go out and *meet* the Bridegroom as he comes; also in Acts 28:15, where the brethren go as far as the Apii Forum to *meet* Paul and return with him to Rome.

"When a dignitary paid an official visit or *parousia* to a city in Hellenistic times, the action of the leading citizens in going out to meet him and escorting him on the final stage of his journey was called the *apantesis*".

F. F. Bruce, D.D.

This is all in line with the hope of the Acts period. The one hope that dominates this period is Israel's hope (Acts 26:6,7; 28:20). Romans 15:12,13 links this hope with the millennial chapter of Isaiah eleven, making quite clear that it is to be realized *on the earth*. What more natural then, that those who share in it should return to the earth with the returning Lord and the holy angels, at the *parousia* He revealed so clearly in Matthew 24:27-31?

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 does not teach that these saints are on the way to heaven. There is not the slightest hint here, that, after descending into the air, the Lord takes them back to heaven or the heavenly Jerusalem, yet this idea is often supplied in the minds of believers who are not careful to check their conceptions with what God has written and revealed.

The Lord descends with a "shout" *keleusma*. This means "the

word of command" and note its one occurrence in the Septuagint (Prov. 30:27). "With the voice of the archangel". Scripture gives us his name—Michael (Jude 9) and in Daniel 12:1 he is linked with Israel (the children of Daniel's people) and the Great Tribulation and this definitely fits the time described by the Lord in Matthew 24 and Israel's hope as we have seen. This is again confirmed by the next statement "and with the trumpet of God". 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 links the believer's hope in the Acts period with resurrection at the *last* trumpet. Now "the last trumpet" presupposes a series, and *the only series of trumpets in the New Testament are in the Book of Revelation*. The "last trumpet", the seventh, leads us to the same point as 1 Thessalonians 4, the realization of the kingdom of the Lord on the earth (Rev. 11:15) which most clearly takes place at His *parousia* or Second Coming.

It is pathetic to see the efforts of some expositors who seek to dissociate "the last trump" of 1 Corinthians 15 from the seventh trumpet of the Revelation. This is obviously because they are confusing the "things that differ" and seeking to make the hope of the period covered by the Acts, the hope of the church *after* the Acts as revealed in Paul's prison epistles, which is definitely not the *parousia* of Matthew 24 or 1 Thessalonians 4, with its *earthly* goal, but a hope that takes us to the glory of heaven's holiest of all.

I THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter five commences with the words, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you (or better as R.V. 'that aught be written unto you')". Why? Because their calling and its hope had no connection with times or seasons? So some teach who see no difference between the position and hope of the churches formed during the Acts, and the church of the joint-Body revealed afterwards. But the reason given by the Apostle Paul is very different and perfectly simple—they knew already. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night". This they had most probably learned from his oral ministry. That he had given them detailed instruction verbally concerning the prophetic period known as the

Day of the Lord and such happenings as the rise of the man of sin
2 Thessalonians 2:15 makes clear.

They knew that the Day of the Lord would come suddenly and without warning as a thief in the night. This most important prophetic time has its first occurrence in the Scriptures in Isaiah 2:12 and there are nineteen other occurrences in the Old Testament. The New Testament has three direct references (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10) and if we include Revelation 1:10 "the Lord's Day" meaning the Day of the Lord and not a day of the week, we have four. The main theme is the exaltation of Jehovah over all the earth and the abasement of man (Isaiah 2). Now God is silent and man has all the say—it is "man's day". When God begins to take a direct hand in government of this world; resuming his dealings with Israel and intervenes in history by the Second Advent of Christ, "the Lord alone will be exalted in that day" (Isa. 2:11,17) and all opposition of men will be silenced. This is the great prophetic time following this age of grace.

"When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape".

Evidently the Apostle means the unbelieving world at large when he uses the word "they". The crying need of the world is peace and safety and never more so than with the generation in which we live. The threat of war and the ever mounting weapons of destruction devised by man make these themes of paramount importance. The prophetic Scriptures make it clear that, at the end of this age, Satan will produce a spurious world peace.

"And the dragon (Satan) gave him (the beast) his power, and his throne, and great authority . . . and all the whole world wondered after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying who is like unto the beast; and *who is able to war with him?*" (Rev. 13:2-4).

Satan now has authority over the air (Eph. 2:2) and whoever can control the aerial regions, dominates the earth. The beast receives this Satanic power at the end time and so is able to guarantee peace in exchange for world worship. This is all part of the gigantic deception which characterizes the close of this age—world peace

without Christ! Paul, however, reminds the Thessalonians that the enlightenment of the Truth has saved them from such deception and darkness.

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:4).

He does not say this period would not overtake them, but that it would not find them unprepared and overtake them *as a thief*, which is a different matter. The Second Coming to the earth of the Lord Jesus would not only be the hope of the believer at this time, but would fall as a sudden catastrophic blow on an unbelieving world, just as Daniel portrays the stone cut without hands (the Lord Jesus) smashing the whole Image of Nebuchadnezzar (Gentile dominion) and destroying it completely. The Apostle goes on to remind them that they are "sons of light" (verse five R.V.), and as such they must watch and be sober. He then once more brings in the three graces around which this epistle is woven.

"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of *faith* and *love*; and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation" (verse 8).

This is only another way of "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ" and making no provision for the flesh. There was no excuse for the instructed believer at this time becoming drowsy or unwatchful. He was exhorted to be on the alert continually and ready for the Lord's arrival. The word "wake" of the Authorized Version in verse ten is the same as "watch" of verse six and should be so translated. The goal is the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ so that the believer "should live together with Him", and this living and being with Him is once more linked by implication with His Return and not with death.

"Wherefore encourage one another, and build each other up, even as also you are doing" (verse 11).

The Apostle lays great stress upon positive building up in the Truth throughout his epistles (see Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 14:26; 2 Cor. 12:19; Eph. 4:11,12,15,16,29; Col. 2:7). There can be no substitute for this, whether we are dealing with the Acts period or the present age. Where this is ignored, immaturity, spiritual weakness and

ineffectiveness surely follow.

The Thessalonian believers are now exhorted to highly esteem their leaders.

"But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake" (verses 12, 13 R.V.).

This is high commendation indeed, and it may be that the staunch and fruitful witness of this church was largely due to their faithful and enthusiastic leaders. Verses fourteen and fifteen may have been written for their guidance.

"And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all" (14 R.V.).

The word "disorderly" ("unruly" A.V.) is *ataktous* which literally means "those who do not remain in the ranks". Dr. F. F. Bruce's note here is "or those who play truant", referring to loafers (Moffatt) who neglected their daily duty and lived in idleness. Such would be a continual source of trouble and must be checked. There is a similar reference in 2 Thessalonians 3:11,12.

The Apostle now reminds them of the need for continual rejoicing, unceasing prayer and giving thanks, for this was the will of God for them, as it is for believers of all dispensations. This is the atmosphere in which the Christian life and witness should be lived and it is the only one in which it can flourish. The next injunctions relate specially to Pentecostal gifts.

"Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (19-20).

The special gifts which were peculiar to the Acts period are made clear in 1 Corinthians 12. They were given by the Holy Spirit and distributed to believers as He willed. The gift of prophecy was one of them, hence it was not so much the Holy Spirit who could be quenched, but the special gift he had given. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32). No one was compelled by irresistible power to use whatever gift had been

given. It could be neglected and therefore "quenched". The warning not to "quench the Spirit" was specially related to believers living in the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. Not only could these gifts be quenched, they could be counterfeited and so the Thessalonian saints are warned to "prove all things".

These sign gifts were not an unmixed blessing, for they gave the Enemy an opportunity of doing his clever work of copying and imitating the work of God in order to deceive. Those today who long for them back should remember this and the dangers attached to them. For ourselves, we are thankful to realize that we belong to a calling where there are none, but every blessing is spiritual and connected with riches beyond dreams associated with the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:3,18; 3:16-19).

"Hold fast that which is good. Abstain from every appearance (form R.V.) of evil" (1 Thess. 5:21,22).

These two commands are evidently complementary. *Eidos* evil has at least two meanings: (1) outward appearance; (2) kind. The Authorized Version leans to (1); the Revised Version to (2). Both meanings are suitable to the context. Holding fast that which is good must necessarily exclude all evil whether in appearance or fact.

The epistle continues:

"And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 23 R.V.).

We have the God of peace in Romans 15:33, Philippians 4:9 and in this context. Peace with God and the peace of God is wonderful, but the Giver must ever be greater than His gift! Here He is the Sanctifier, setting apart believers to His will, and guarding them, the Second Coming of the Lord being in view all the time, for, as we have seen, this hope dominates the epistle. It is doubtful whether verse 23 can be interpreted as teaching a tripartite nature for man. Mark 12:30 could be used to teach a fourfold nature for man, but would be straining the context so to do. The Apostle is not aiming to set forth a tripartite nature. His object is clear; he is

desiring that each believer should be preserved alive and blameless to the Lord's Coming back to the earth.

"Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do (or perform) it" (verse 24).

Paul is assured of the mighty power of God Who can accomplish all this. The epistle closes with a request for prayer by the Apostle for himself. He puts his own needs last, just as he does in Ephesians (Eph. 6:19). It is so good to realize that this great servant of Christ was not so strong and independent that he could disregard the intercessory ministry of others on his behalf. Prayer along the lines of the Lord's will, makes a difference as Philippians 1:19 and Philemon 22, clearly show. Here is service for the Saviour that is often disregarded perhaps because there is nothing to show for it *externally* as far as the intercessor is concerned.

Those who assess Christian work by what they call "results" may not be greatly drawn to such a hidden ministry. But a ministry it is and one of vast importance in whatever age we deal with. God's people are not like mechanical toys, wound up, as it were, by Him and forced in all they do day by day. The private prayer life of each one of us reflects accurately our spiritual condition and practical response to God's Truth.

Paul concludes by charging the Thessalonians that this epistle be read to all believers in the assembly.

"I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (27,28).

The word "charge" is *horkizo* "to cause someone to swear or take an oath". The R.V. following the critical Greek texts has the strengthened form of *enorkizo* translating it "adjure". There was evidently an important reason why Paul uses this solemn word to urge that this letter be read to everyone belonging to the Thessalonian church, though it is difficult for us to decide today exactly what it was. Possibly the reason was for those who were unruly, so that they should hear his warnings.

And so we come to the end of the epistle of "faith, hope and love", wherein is recorded a faith that was constantly growing, a

hope that burned all the brighter because of the possibility of the Lord's early return, and a love which showed itself by responding and making the most of the time that was left in spreading the Gospel and the wonders of God's redeeming grace.

2 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER ONE

The second letter to the Thessalonians, like the first, is addressed to the church of the Thessalonians by Paul, Silvanus and Timothy. It was evidently sent not long after the first letter, possibly from Corinth. When the Apostle sent a second letter to a church, it was normally to correct misunderstanding arising from the first letter, or an expansion of some aspect of truth that had not been fully understood. We have seen that the first letter revolves around the graces of "faith, hope and love". Both faith and love are mentioned in the introduction to this second letter.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your *faith* groweth exceedingly, and the *charity* (love) of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth" (1:3).

But as we read on we find that *hope* is missing, and it was largely because some had misunderstood his teaching concerning the Lord's Second Coming, possibly being misled by a spurious epistle purporting to come from him (2:2), that the Apostle writes this second epistle as a corrective.

Before we go any further, we set out the structure of the epistle as a whole:

2 Thessalonians.

- | | | | | |
|---|---------|------------------|----------|---|
| A | 1:1,2 | Grace and peace | | |
| B | [| a | 1:3-10 | Bound to thank Counted worthy |
| | | b | 1:11,12 | Prayer for you Work of faith |
| | | c | 2:1-12 | We beseech Man of lawlessness,
his coming and deception |
| B | [| a | 2:13-15 | Bound to thank Obtaining the glory |
| | | b | 2:16-3:5 | Pray for us Good work |
| | | c | 3:6-15 | We command Disorderliness |
| A | 3:16-18 | Peace and grace. | | |

The outstanding section is 2:1-12 dealing with the coming of the man of lawlessness, the son of perdition and the lying miracles whereby he accomplishes mass deception. The whole subject is compressed because Paul had dealt with it in detail when he was with the Thessalonian saints. He reminds them of this (2:15), and it is the compression of a complicated prophetic subject that makes this passage one of the most difficult to interpret in the New Testament.

Coming back to chapter one, the Apostle highly commends them for their courageous endurance in persecution, which was a proof of the genuineness of their faith:

“... we ourselves glory (boast) in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations which ye endure” (1:4).

Anechesthe, ye endure, is in the present tense, *you are enduring*, showing that the persecution was still going on when Paul wrote. He was greatly cheered as he saw this practical demonstration of the reality of their faith, the faith that keeps steadfast under suffering. In the first letter he had reminded them that this was part of God's will for them.

“that no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto”

so that they might be “counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (2 Thess. 1:5). Tribulation is the translation of *thlipsis* which is used four times either as a noun or verb in this context (verses 4, 6 and 7). It is difficult to bring this over into English as we have no verb associated with the word tribulation. If we render *thlipsis* “oppression”, then somewhat literally we have:

“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense *oppression* to those who *oppress* you. And to you who are *oppressed*, rest with us at the apocalypse (revelation) of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels ...”

The Revised Version preserves the insistence on these words by translating *thlipsis* “affliction”, “if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense *affliction* to them that *afflict* you, and to

you that are *afflicted* rest with us . . .” There is an even-handed justice being worked out here. The suffering endured by the Thessalonian believers would be meted out by the Lord to their persecutors and this, said the Apostle, was a righteous thing. The Lord’s apocalypse or revelation is brought before them as the final solution of their suffering. Then, after all the tension and affliction, there would be relaxation and rest.

“And to you that are *afflicted* rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (verses 7-8 R.V.).

Anesis, rest, is a vivid word which means release from tension, a sudden ending to all the testing and persecution. This apocalypse is the same event as described in Revelation 19, Matthew 24:25,31, (See also 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7,13). It is not possible to introduce a secret coming in any of these passages. Those who do so bring confusion into the context. Nor is it sound exposition to try and make the coming, *parousia*, the personal arrival or presence of the Lord detailed in 1 Thessalonians 4, different from His *revelation* here. In 1 Thessalonians believers are waiting for the Son from heaven and this is bound up with the *parousia*. The same believers are told in 2 Thessalonians that they would obtain rest from suffering at the Lord’s *revelation* from heaven with His mighty angels, therefore these two terms must refer to the same event, which Matthew 25:31 links with His arrival on the earth with power and great majesty, the King of kings and Lord of lords of Revelation 19. The Thessalonian saints could not have had two different phases of the Lord’s descent from His present glory as their hope at one and the same time.

The revelation of the Lord Jesus not only meant deliverance and vindication for the saints of the Acts period, but judgment on their enemies, those who know not God and obey not the gospel. “Taking vengeance” in verse eight is literally *giving* vengeance. The Revised Version translates *rendering* vengeance. *Ekdikesis*, vengeance, is a late Greek word from *ekdikeo* to vindicate, or give justice. This is not the action of a revengeful God, but a God of *justice* bringing retribution upon those ensnared in the lie of Babylonionism at the end time, so graphically described in the book of Revelation. These shall “suffer punishment”, *diken*

tisousin. *Tisousin* is the future of an old verb *тино* and occurs only here in the New Testament. It means literally to pay compensation for a wrong done, to pay penalty. *Dike* is right or justice, and was the name of the heathen goddess of Justice or Nemesis. The phrase is therefore "a penalty shall pay" and this is described as *olethron aionion*, literally age-long ruin.

Olethros occurs three more times in the New Testament and wise are we if we let these references colour our theology and not vice versa.

"To deliver such an one to Satan for the *destruction* of the *flesh*" (not the whole person) (1 Cor. 5:5).

"When they shall say, peace and safety; then sudden *destruction* cometh upon them" (1 Thess. 5:3).

"... many foolish and hurtful lusts, which *drown* men in *destruction* and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9).

In none of these cases can eternal conscious suffering be substituted. In the first case the "destruction" only applies to the *flesh*, but the *spirit* is saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:5). The verse in 1 Thessalonians does *not* teach that hell-fire suddenly comes to those on the earth who say "peace and safety". The eternal future of such is settled later at the day of judgement. In the third reference Paul is warning *believers* against seeking to be rich and the snares that come from such a course of action. Note the figurative language used—*drown* not burn men in destruction. We must be careful to understand *olethros* as a *result* and not a process, and consider it in the light of such statements as "eternal judgement" (Heb. 6:2 not eternal *judging*); eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9 not eternal saving). It is the eternal, or better, age-long *effect* of an act or state that is stressed. *Olethros aionios* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament but it is found in 4 Maccabees 10:15 "the eternal destruction of the tyrant" i.e. Antiochus Epiphanes, which likewise does not support the popular conception of hell.

Concerning *aionios*, Dr. A. T. Robertson says "*aionios* in itself only means age-long and the papyri and inscriptions give it in the weakened sense of a Caesar's life (see Milligan)" *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. We believe Dr. Weymouth did the right thing in his New Testament translation rendering *aion* and *aionios* as age and age-long, and this is in line with the contemporary Greek

of New Testament times. Much light can be gained by seeing the revelation of the great span of time sub-divided into ages in the Bible, and all this is lost if eternal and eternity is substituted. In no way is our future as believers jeopardised, for such a future does not depend upon a word like *aion*, but rests on the glorious fact that the redeemed are permanently *united to the risen Saviour who can die no more*. "Because I live, ye shall live also", He said. "Christ being raised from the dead *dieth no more*; death hath no more dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9). Nor is this limited meaning of *aion* and *aionios* invalidated because it is used of God and salvation. While the phrase "the eternal God" sounds very majestic, and "the eonian God" or the "God of the ages" seems a poor substitute, yet this is nearer Scriptural truth, for this adjective does not touch or describe the being or attributes of God; rather that He is the origin or creator of the great span of time, during which He is working out His great redemptive purposes. Hebrews 1:2 tells us that through Christ the *ages were made* (not "world" as A.V.), and Isaiah 9:6 agrees with this, describing literally the Child that is born as the "Father (i.e. Origin) of the ages", not "everlasting Father" (A.V.). Christ is the God of the ages, the eonian God, and it is the ages that span the Bible. Because these are so vast and long that we cannot see their end, we have no right to assume they are the same as eternity.

Eternity can definitely be predicted both of God and the believer, but this is not explained in Biblical revelation, and it matters not how much the words "eternal" and "eternity" are rolled on the tongue, the fact is that we know absolutely nothing of the eternal state for the simple reason that God has not seen fit to reveal it. Evidently it is too much for our present limited understanding and we are far wiser to keep to the exact statements of Holy Writ and not let our imagination run away with us into idle speculation and guesswork.

There is a false argument based upon the word *aionios* that is sometimes used by evangelicals concerning Matthew 25:46, "And these (the goat nations living at the time of the Lord's Return) shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal". "Everlasting" and "eternal" here are translations of *aionios* and should be consistently rendered by one word as the Revised Version attempts to do. The reasoning above mentioned

is along these lines: the believer's life is eternal; the same word is used of the unbeliever and therefore the punishment of such must also be eternal and this is usually held as meaning eternal conscious torment and suffering too terrible for the human mind to comprehend.

On the surface this may look like sound reasoning, but there are at least three fallacies underlying such a conception. (1) First of all it must be proved *from Scriptural usage* that *kolasis*, punishment, means eternal conscious suffering. See its only other occurrence in the New Testament in 1 John 4:18 ("torment"), and carefully note whether it applies to the saved or the unsaved. (2) This idea assumes that what a limited number of mankind receive at the Second Advent, i.e. certain nations living at this time, is true of *all* unbelievers from Adam onwards and so makes this judgment God's assize for all the unsaved, assuming the resurrection of the wicked, whereas no resurrection is mentioned in the context. This is confusing this judgment with that of the Great White Throne (Rev. 20). (3) A false deduction is made from translating *aionios* as eternal, whereas in both cases *aionios* should be more accurately rendered *age-long*, leaving what is beyond in the hands of Him Who not only made the ages, but Who is bringing His "plan of the ages" (so the literal rendering of Eph. 3:11) with its age-long salvation, to a glorious finish, and then will follow the now incomprehensible wonders of eternity.

After describing the apocalypse of the Lord from heaven to the earth with His mighty angels, a stupendous event which is referred to in Luke 9:26, "... when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels", and also Matthew 24:29-31; 25:31, the Apostle Paul refers to it as "rest" for the believer, who belongs to the company of the saved of the Acts period, and age-long destruction or deprivation from the face of the Lord for those who know not God and obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:9). Professor F. F. Bruce's note here is "Everlasting destruction, i.e. the destruction of the age to come, with decisive implication of finality. It consists of exclusion from the presence of the Lord, with Whom alone is 'the fountain of life'".

The next two verses are better given in the Revised Version:

"... when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be

marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day. To which end we also pray always for you; that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power; that the Name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ”.

The glorifying and exalting of the Lord Jesus is the subject of this section. Paul longs that the Name of the Saviour shall be glorified in the present experience of these Thessalonian believers and not only this, but he directs their minds forward to His Second Advent when He shall be more fully glorified in them and marvelled at by each one as they see Him at last in all His wonder and majesty returning as King of kings and Lord of lords to take control and be vindicated and exalted in the earth that once rejected Him. These words describe an overwhelming experience, as the realization of the hope of every calling of God's people must surely do, and it was sufficient to enable these suffering saints to hold fast and endure to the end and so practically exhibit the fact that they had been counted worthy of their calling and of the kingdom of God for which they were suffering (verses five and eleven).

2 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER TWO

In chapter two the Apostle comes closer to the difficulties that were troubling some of them, causing them to have a wrong conception of their hope and the events leading up to the Lord's Second Advent:

“Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present” (2 Thess. 2:1, 2 R.V.).

Paul's subject is still the Lord's Coming, not “by the Coming” as the Authorized Version but “touching the Coming” as the Revised Version translates. Here he uses the word *parousia* instead of *apocalypsis* of 1:7, showing that these words describe the same glorious event. By the overruling of the Spirit of God

both these words are kept to the Gospels and the Acts and the epistles written by the apostles of the circumcision, Peter and John. They do not describe the hope of the Body of Christ as revealed in Paul's prison letters. This church as a heavenly company, has a heavenly hope, one that is realized in the heaven of heavens where Christ is enthroned, and so the aspect of the Lord's return to the earth, described in the early Thessalonian epistles, is not its hope and we must not import into these epistles something that was going to be revealed through Paul the prisoner later on.

"Our gathering together unto Him" *episunagoge*. This word contains the word "synagogue" in its make-up and occurs only once more in the New Testament namely Hebrews 10:25. In its verbal form it occurs seven times (Matt. 23:37; 24:31; Mark 1:33; 13:27; Luke 12:1; 13:34). The "gathering together" here is a reference back to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the "catching away" to meet the returning Lord in the air. The Apostle now puts his finger upon the causes which were misleading and upsetting some of the saints. He is concerned lest they are "shaken in" their minds and "troubled". *Saleuo*, shaken, means to agitate, to cause to totter like a reed (Matt. 11:7), or the earth being shaken (Heb. 12:26). *Throeomai* (from *throos*, clamour, tumult) means "to be in a state of nervous excitement" (A.T. Robertson). In both cases this state of mind played into the hands of the enemy who is always trying to undermine the peace and the confidence of the believer. "Either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us". Here were the means Satan was using—false revelation from evil spirits, travesty of the spiritual gifts of prophecy and utterance that had been directly given to some by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12); or a supposed "word" or remark by the Apostle; or a spurious epistle purporting to come from him. By these means the assertion was made that "the day of the Lord is now present" (verse 2 Revised Version with the best Greek texts). Not "the day of Christ" as Authorized Version but the great prophetic Lord's Day of the Old Testament, a day when God will intervene in this world's affairs in judgment. The first occurrence of this prophetic period is in Isaiah 2:12, 17, 19 (see also Isa. 13:6-13; Jer. 46:10; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 2; 3:14; Amos 5:18-20). Some commentators make the mistake of using the Day of the Lord and the Second Advent of Christ as interchangeable terms. Consequently, because Paul here definitely teaches that the Day of the Lord was not yet present and that

certain prophetic events must first take place, they assert that the Second Coming of Christ was not imminent or possible, and that the Apostle did not teach such a thing. But he most surely did, and so did Peter, James and John in their epistles written during this period.

"The end of all things *is at hand*" (1 Pet. 4:7).

"The Coming of the Lord *draweth nigh . . . the Judge standeth before the door*" (James 5:8-9).

"It is the last time (literally the last hour) . . . *even now* are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time (hour)" (1 John 2:18).

To these passages must be added the following in 1 Corinthians, Romans, and Hebrews:

" . . . so that ye come behind in no gift: *waiting for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 1:7).

" . . . *the time is short*: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none" (1 Cor. 7:29, yet after the Acts period the Apostle urges widows to marry—1 Tim. 5:14).

" . . . *Maranatha; the Lord Cometh*" (Margin) (1 Cor. 16:22).

"For yet a *little while*, and He that shall come *will come, and will not tarry*" (Heb. 10:37).

"The God of peace *shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*" (literally quickly Rom. 16:20).

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom *the ends of the world are come*" (literally, *the ends of the ages have arrived*, 1 Cor. 10:11).

The combined testimony of these passages is clear and definite. Believers at this time were being exhorted to avoid anything that would entangle or become a weight in view of the nearness of the Lord's Coming, even to the extent of avoiding marriage. They were encouraged to hold fast during persecution because it might be "only a little while" and the Lord would come back and that would mean deliverance. No one would have been helped to endure the discipline of suffering at that time by being pointed to an event that is even yet future to us today. They might have been pointed to the Lord's *strengthening grace* to assist them, but hardly to *His Second Advent*, if that event was not going to be realized until some 2,000 years later! The Apostle did not assert that the Second Coming of the Lord was fixed in the counsels of God to take place in the lifetime of believers then living, but of its

possibility, the only "if" being the "if" of Israel's repentance and conversion (Acts 3:19-26), which fact had been proclaimed publicly by the Apostle Peter. We need to avoid the two extremes of viewpoint, both of which are erroneous: (1) that neither Paul nor the other New Testament writers taught that the Lord's coming was imminent; (2) that the Second Advent would *definitely* take place at that time. Let us remember that what "draws near" can *withdraw*, if the Lord sees fit and His conditions are not realized. As with the earthly Kingdom purposes, so with the visible Return of the Lord, which is so intimately connected with its setting up, this too could be proclaimed as being "near", if Israel obeyed the Divine command to repent and turn back to God, or to be withdrawn if they refused to do so.

Paul now states that the prophetic Day of the Lord would not take place until certain events had first occurred. They are (1) the apostasy; (2) the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. We must not make the mistake of thinking that a long time must elapse before this was possible, or that these happenings would occupy a long period in running their course. The stage was already set in the Acts period for such conditions to develop. An age that could produce a monster like Nero could surely produce the wild Beast of Revelation 13 and the episode of Herod in royal apparel, taking Divine honours (Acts 12), is only a picture of events that this chapter in the Revelation also describes. The Apostle wrote:

"Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it (the Day of the Lord) will not be, except the falling away (apostasy) come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (2 Thess. 2:3-5 R. V.).

There commences now a passage of Scripture that is exceedingly difficult to interpret. It has been called by expositors "the little Apocalypse", because it gives much of the teaching of the Book of the Revelation in compressed form, the reason being that Paul had expounded the subject to them in his *oral* ministry and therefore there was no need for minute detail when he wrote to them. We of course have not the Apostle's spoken ministry which

doubtless treated the subject fully, and in this we are handicapped. The only sure help we can get is by comparing Scripture with Scripture and seeking the Holy Spirit's aid in understanding, and if we have this we have all that is necessary, although we may not be able to fully understand all that is latent in this passage.

Just as the Lord Jesus, when dealing with events leading up to His Second Advent, as recorded in Matthew 24, warned his followers against being deceived (verses 4, 6, 24), so the Apostle here warns the Thessalonian believers lest they should be "beguiled" (2:3). Prophecy has always been the happy hunting ground of the spiritual charlatan and utmost caution is necessary when we seek to expound or understand it. If we take care to keep exactly to what Scripture says we cannot go wrong. The theories of the various prophetic schools need not bother us provided that we have the solid ground of revealed truth, with due regard to context, under our feet.

Paul now states explicitly that the Day of the Lord cannot take place until the apostasy sets in. The words "falling away" are a rendering of the Greek *apostasia* a late form of *apostasis*. The Septuagint uses it for "rebellion" in Joshua 22:22. It is also used in the Apocrypha concerning Antiochus Epiphanes who was enforcing the apostasy from Judaism to Hellenism. The only other occurrence of the word in the New Testament is found in Acts 21:21.

"... thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses . . ."

The thought behind the word is "revolt" or "rebellion", a wilful departure from truth and this is obviously in direct contrast to the conception that the world is going to get better and better before Christ returns. Practically every context in the New Testament that deals with conditions prior to the Second Advent, portrays these as being utterly dark and unrelieved in gloom and departure from the Lord and Christian standards. This accords too with the teaching concerning the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament. Such a condition, the Apostle stated, will set in *before* the Day of the Lord. The next event would be the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. *Apokalupto*, to reveal, gives us the word

"apocalypse" and occurs in verses three, six and eight. It is the same word that is used of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the Lord's Second Advent, either as a noun or verb, by both Peter and Paul (1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13). It literally means to "unveil" and we see that all the great happenings connected with the Lord's Return are travestied by Satan, the Cross and the Resurrection (Rev. 13:3, 12; 17:8) and here the Second Coming.

The phrase, "the son of perdition", has already been used by the Lord of Judas Iscariot (John 17:12) and some believe that the man of sin will be Judas Iscariot resurrected. We do not think there is sufficient Scriptural evidence for this, but the man of sin is possibly one of the two Satanic personages of Revelation 13 portrayed there as wild beasts.

Some have interpreted this passage as relating to the Emperor Gaius, who in A.D. 40 attempted to have his statue set up in the Temple at Jerusalem. However, this was only one of the end-time characteristics of the Acts period which we have before sought to show. It certainly did not fulfil 2 Thessalonians 2:4. In his great discourse on the mount of Olives as recorded in Matthew twenty-four, one of the events described by the Lord Jesus as a forerunner to His Second Advent, is the "abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15). This marks the beginning of the great time of persecution, known as the Great Tribulation, and the faithful Jewish remnant are warned to escape to the mountains as quickly as possible.

Certain it is that the Satan inspired world dictator of the end of this age will seek Divine honours and will receive them from the majority of the world's inhabitants (Rev. 13:3, 4, 8), the book of the Revelation making it clear that it is Satan who finally receives this for worship which he has been scheming since his fall.

We continue with verses six to nine which bristle with difficulties of interpretation:

"And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the

Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His Coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders". (2 Thess. 2:6-9. R.V.).

It is obvious from this passage that *someone* or *something* is restraining or keeping in check the revelation of the man of sin. There have been varying explanations of this, such as:

- ① The Roman Empire,
- ② The Holy Spirit,
- ③ The Jewish State.

Regarding (1) there is an element of truth in it. Early in the Apostle's experience, the imperial power had protected him rather than hindered his message. As we have seen, it was his own nation, Israel, that continually opposed and persecuted him. On more than one occasion, Paul had reason to be grateful to the Roman authorities who restrained the forces which opposed the truth as proclaimed by him. But very soon Rome was to produce that monster Nero, whom many of the early Christians identified with the Beast. Nero came on the scene before the Apostle Paul finished his witness, exhibiting the very traits of the godless dictator of the end-time, and so Rome could hardly be the *fulfilment* of this passage which deals with the *restraining* of the man of lawlessness and his fearful deeds. In any case the Roman Empire has long since passed away and the lawless one has not been revealed.

(2) The Holy Spirit. Some evangelical expositors adopt this view, but when one asks what Scriptural support exists for it, one is met with a blank, for there is none. It is assumed that when the Church is raptured, the Holy Spirit departs from the earth, but if this is true, it means that believers such as the faithful Jewish remnant, who will have to live through this dread period, are left without the Holy Spirit's aid! The Lord Jesus described it as a time of "great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved" (Matt. 24:21,22 R.V.). In other words, it is the most terrible and desperate time of trouble in all the world's history. If ever those who determine to be faithful whatever the cost, even life itself, will

need the Holy Spirit, it is at such a time. We reject such an interpretation as completely lacking in Scriptural support and unthinkable.

(3) The Jewish State. B. B. Warfield adopts this view. He writes:

"So soon as the Jewish apostasy was complete and Jerusalem given over to the Gentiles . . . the separation of Christianity from Judaism, which had already begun, became evident to every eye; the conflict between the new faith and heathenism, culminating in and now alive almost only in Emperor-worship, became intense; and the persecuting power of the empire was inevitably let loose" (*Biblical and Theological Studies*).

But, as we have seen, the bulk of the Jewish nation was no *restrainer* of evil, very much the opposite, "All the day long did I spread out My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. 10:21 R.V.) is God's comment on Israel's attitude to Him and His attitude to them during the Acts period.

There is yet another interpretation of this difficult passage which has the merit of finding the explanation in the words of Scripture, which after all is the only safe way. First of all let us note that the verb translated "withhold" in verse six and "let" in verse seven is the same in the Greek and is *katecho*. The Revised Version renders it in each case "restrain". *Katecho* means "to hold firmly, to hold fast", and occurs nineteen times in the New Testament. We have not space to quote in full each of these references, but we give a representative selection, leaving it to the searcher for truth to investigate all of them by means of a concordance:

"Who *hold* the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18).

"Being dead wherein we were *held*" (Rom. 7:6).

"And yet *possessing* all things" (2 Cor. 6:10).

"*Hold fast* that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

"Whom I would have *retained* with me" (Philem. 13).

"If we *hold fast* the confidence" (Heb. 3:6).

"If we *hold* the beginning" (Heb. 3:14).

"Let us *hold fast* the profession" (Heb. 10:23).

"Hold fast" is therefore a good rendering of this Greek word. But we may ask "what is it that holds fast the man of sin, and who is it that holds something fast" (verse seven), for *katecho* is a transitive

verb and must have an object. It is omitted by the Figure *Ellipsis* and should be supplied to complete the sense. The answer to our first question is found in Revelation 9:1,2 and 11:7. The man of sin, that Satan inspired personage, is held fast by the "bottomless pit" or better "abyss" as rendered by the Revised Version, until the "appointed season" or time of his manifestation to the world.

The second question finds its solution in Satan, who holds fast to his possessions in the aerial regions (see Ephesians 2:2) until he is taken out of the way or removed. How this happens Revelation 12:7-17 describes. There is war in heaven; Michael and his angels fight against Satan and the fallen angels under his control, and the Deceiver is cast down to the earth with terrible results, leading to the Great Tribulation. When this happens, as a last desperate throw, Satan calls up his man from the abyss, and for a short time he dominates the whole world, Satan receiving, as we have seen, world worship through the Beast.

All this Paul must have explained in detail to the Thessalonian believers, for he says, "Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" Taking note of what we have seen of the usage of *katecho*, the following verses may be rendered as follows with explanations in brackets:

"And now ye know what holds him (the lawless one) fast, to the end that he may be revealed in his own appointed season (this is the abyss). For the secret of lawlessness already works; only there is one (Satan) who now holds fast (to the aerial regions), until he is taken out of the way (i.e. cast out into the earth, Rev. 12:9-12) and then shall be revealed that lawless one whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the spirit (or breath) of His mouth, and bring to nought by the brightness (*epiphaneia*) of His coming".

The Apostle, describing the destruction of the lawless one evidently has Isaiah 11:4 in mind.

"He shall smite the earth (or the oppressor) with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked (one)".

It takes the glory of the Lord's Coming and His almighty power to destroy this superhuman being. We believe it will be beyond the capacity of man to do this. Furthermore it explains why the Old

Testament Scriptures, such as the prophecy of Daniel, deal somewhat mysteriously with his end. In Daniel 11:44,45 Revised Version we read:

“But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him”

but the prophet does not describe *how* he comes to his end. That is left to 2 Thessalonians to reveal.

Paul uses the word *epiphaneia* here which gives us our English word *epiphany*. He uses it in an adjectival way with the word *parousia*, which, as we have seen, is the characteristic word to describe the hope of the Acts period, the Lord's arrival back on this earth in power and great glory. *Parousia* is not used again by the Apostle after Acts 28, but *epiphaneia* is, standing by itself from this point onwards, and usually rendered “appearing”, to set forth the new hope of the Body of Christ which is connected not with the air, but with the glory of the highest heaven where the Lord is now enthroned, and this church is seen positionally in Him (Eph. 2:6). 2 Thessalonians 2:8 is the only occurrence of *epiphaneia* before Acts 28, and then it is not used in a parallel way, but as a description of the magnificence of the Lord's Second Advent as He descends to the earth. The wonder of the revelation of His glory in heaven's holiest of all to which the hope of the Body is linked, is beyond the power of words to adequately describe. It needs the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:17,18), for it is far beyond all things earthly.

We note that Paul, under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit, does not hesitate to use *parousia* for the coming of the lawless one.

“Even he, whose coming (*parousia*) is according to the working of Satan, with all power, and signs and wonders of a lie (literally)”.

Satan is no creator, but he is a marvellous imitator. It could appear that he copies or travesties the basic truths of Christianity to ensnare and deceive the whole world at the time of the end. Christ's death, resurrection and coming again are copied by Satan acting through the Beast:

"And I saw one of his heads as though it had been *smitten unto death; and his death stroke was healed*: and the whole earth wondered after the beast" (Rev. 13:3 R.V.).

"The beast that thou sawest was, and *is not*; and *is about to come up out of the abyss* . . . and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, *and is not, and shall come*" (Rev. 17:8 R.V.).

Even the words of 2 Thessalonians 2:9 describing the advent of the lawless one are used directly of the Holy Spirit and His miraculous gifts:

"God also bearing them witness, both with *signs and wonders*, and with divers *miracles*, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will" (Heb. 2:4).

All these Satanic happenings are the climax of the evil system described in the Word of God as *the lie*, originating from the Deceiver at his fall, and in direct conflict with God and the truth as personified in Christ. The great battle of the ages now leaves its "mystery" form or secret working and comes right out into the open. There are two mysteries or secrets allied to these opposing forces and both are resolved in a *person*. The Beast, when manifested on the earth in his appointed time, is Satan personified (Rev. 13), or Satan's Messiah, or the mystery of lawlessness revealed. In opposition to this we have the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Mystery or Secret of God (Col. 2:2 R.V.). Those who think that miracles are necessarily a proof that a deed is of Divine origin are going to fare very badly at this period of history. Satan, to a certain point, can work miracles, but they are *lying* miracles with one object—to *deceive*. How great this deception will be can now be appreciated and the need realized, of the Lord's warning when He was dealing with this very time:

"For there shall arise *false Christs*, and *false prophets*, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24 R.V.).

The Apostle confirms this with the words:

"And with all *deceit* of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that

they should believe a lie: (Greek the *lie*) that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12 R.V.).

Having been deceived by Satan's miracles, these dupes willingly accept the lie, which is his system of evil directed against Christ, and they reject the truth and so bring themselves under God's judgment. They act like the early nations "who exchanged the truth of God for the lie" (Rom. 1:25). At last, Satan gets what he has been scheming for since his fall, the worship of the world, aspiring to the position of God, Who alone has the right to receive this.

But for what a short period he triumphs! At the most it can be 3½ years, the last half of Daniel's 70th week of years, and then the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords shatters this ghastly nightmare, destroys the man of sin and the Deceiver is taken and shut up for a 1,000 years (Rev. 20:3) in the abyss. Such are the momentous events which must have been explained by the Apostle Paul in his spoken ministry to the Thessalonian believers. Today we can only piece it together by comparing Scripture with Scripture and seeking the Spirit's guidance.

We now commence another section of the epistle which balances 1:3-10 in the structure thus:

A	1: 3-10	Bound to thank.	Counted worthy.
A	2:13-15	Bound to thank.	Obtaining the glory.

The Apostle, as he thinks of the Thessalonian believers with their loyalty and zeal in making known the truth, says:

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:13,14).

Paul evidently felt a debt to the Lord of thanksgiving for this church's wholehearted response to the truth. Then, as He thinks of God's purpose, he goes back to the "beginning" and forward to

the end when their hope would be realized, "the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ", at His Second Advent to the earth. J. Denney writes: "The thirteenth and fourteenth verses of this chapter are a system of theology in miniature. The Apostle's thanksgiving covers the whole work of salvation from the eternal choice of God to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world to come".

What does the Apostle mean by "from the beginning"? If he alluded to the earliest days of his preaching at Thessalonica we should have expected a phrase like "the beginning of the gospel" (Phil. 4:15). As it stands, he doubtless meant the choice of God at the beginning of His great redemptive purpose. However there is an alternative reading which is interesting. "From the beginning" is *ap' arches*. The Revised Version in the margin says "many ancient authorities read 'as firstfruits' ". This would be *aparchen*, which looks similar to *ap' arches*. *Aparchen* is adopted by the Nestlé Greek text and the meaning would then be in line with James 1:18:

"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of *firstfruits* of His creatures".

Actually this describes just what the Pentecostal churches were, that is a firstfruits of the earthly kingdom. The longsuffering of God was still waiting for the obedience of the people of Israel to "repent and turn again" as commanded through Peter's lips (Acts 3:19-26). Those who did respond were an earnest of the coming kingdom on earth. Had the whole nation been obedient, that kingdom could have come and the world blessed through Israel as the kingdom of priests, the Divine channel of blessing.

The word "salvation" in this context cannot be restricted to salvation from sin. The Apostle links with it sanctification wrought by the Spirit, a separation from Satan's sphere of domination and deception which the previous verses have described, and he adds "and belief of the truth". This is in sharp contrast to the "lie" and its outworking in the miracles and wonders performed through Satan's power by the man of sin, and those who are deceived and do not "love the truth", but willingly reject it. The faithful Thessalonian believers would be preserved unto salvation at the

Lord's Coming.

The Apostle continues:

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (verse 15).

Therefore, *ara oun*, is the practical conclusion to the preceeding verses. "*Accordingly then stand fast*". *Steko* which is derived from the perfect active of *histemi*, to stand, in its New Testament usage generally has the meaning of "stand fast" and not wavering.

"*Stand fast* therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1).

"... I may hear of your affairs, that ye *stand fast* in one spirit . . ." (Phil. 1:27).

"So *stand fast* in the Lord, my dearly beloved" (Phil. 4:1).

Krateo is often translated to "lay hold on" (Mark 3:21; 6:17; 12:12). It means to have a masterful grip on a thing and in this context "to hold fast" to the traditions which the Thessalonian believers had been taught. *Paradosis* (tradition) has an ominous sound to many Bible students. The Lord Jesus solemnly warned the Pharisees of rejecting and making of none effect the Word of God by their traditions (Mark 7:9,13). Both Paul and Peter knew its blinding power:

"I persecuted the church of God . . . being more exceedingly zealous of the *traditions* of my fathers" (Gal. 1:13-14).

"... your vain conversation *received by tradition* from your fathers" (1 Pet. 1:18).

This thing is one of the most potent forces in Satan's hands to blind the eyes and veil the truth from believers as well as unbelievers. How many of God's children are accepting certain things as truth, not because they have personally tested them from the Word of God and found them true, but because "Christians generally believe such things", or they are "taught by this denomination or that", or their parents believed them and so on. Such is tradition, and often believers are not only prepared to receive such ideas as truth, but even antagonize those who have taken the trouble to search the Scriptures and test and have found so much of it to be sheer error. It holds many a believer in a vice-like grip, and as the

Saviour said, makes void the Word of God and empties it of its real import. How we all need to pray to be redeemed from tradition! No progress in the knowledge of the Truth can be made while we are in such bondage.

However, in the context we are considering, tradition is used in a good sense. *Paradosis* and *paradidomi* refer to what is handed over to one. Closely allied to this is the Greek verb *paralambano*, "to receive in turn" and both words are used by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 11:23.

"For I have *received* (*parelabon*) of the Lord that which also I *delivered* (*paredoka*) unto you . . ."

Before the New Testament was completed, the early churches rested upon the *oral* ministry of the apostles which they in turn had received from the Lord Jesus, either in the days of His flesh, like the ministers of the circumcision, or from Him in resurrection by the Apostle Paul. There was therefore a continuity in the transmission of Truth. With the completion of the New Testament, the Word of God as a whole becomes the one basis for the Christian faith, and any addition becomes merely the word of man or tradition, a thing to be avoided at all costs.

Before the epistle closes, Paul uses the word "tradition" once more in a good sense:

"Now we command you, brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the *tradition which he received of us*" (3:6).

It is obvious then that we must take care in our handling of "tradition", learning to rightly divide between the true and the false.

The Apostle now interposes a prayer that the Thessalonian saints be comforted and established, reminding them of the eternal love and consolation of the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, and the good hope that was theirs through grace (verse 16), the fact of grace stressing that this was entirely undeserved on their part.

2 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER THREE

Having prayed for them, he requests prayer for himself and his witness:

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course (run, R.V.) and be glorified, even as it is with you” (3:1).

The tense of the verb “pray” is present and means “keep on praying”. Spasmodic intercession for others is useless. Effective praying is a work, a labour, as Epaphras well knew (Col. 4:12), and must be persisted in to be of lasting value. It costs both in time and strength. The Apostle Paul knew only too well the opposition of the evil one, working largely through his Jewish opponents, and so he asks that the Word of truth may “run” (R.V.) unhindered and be glorified in carrying out the purpose of its Divine Author. This running reminds one of Psalm 147:15:

“His Word *runneth* very swiftly”.

In this context we get one more example of the blending of prayer with the outworking of God’s plan. From one angle we might say that surely it was God’s will for His Word to run and prosper and all hindrances to be removed. Yet Paul did not hesitate to call for prayer that this might be realized in practice. Such praying is greatly needed today, for the blocks that Satan seeks to put in the pathway of the Word of Truth are not less at the present time than they were at the beginning. Lightfoot translates the phrase “may run and be glorified”, “may have a triumphant career”. This had already happened at Thessalonica and so Paul could add “even as it is with you”. We note too that both the verbs in the verse under consideration are in the present subjunctive tense, “may keep on running and being glorified”, that is a continual experience, and we too today can use this prayer effectively.

Paul now makes a second and more personal request:

“And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith” (3:2).

"Deliver" is *ruomai*, to rescue, which occurs so graphically in Colossians 1:13 where we are said to be *rescued* (delivered A.V.) from the authority of darkness. "Unreasonable" is *atopos*, literally out of place, and then comes to mean "perverse". The Apostle is referring to his Jewish opponents who dogged his footsteps wherever he went and violently opposed the truth proclaimed by him "for all men have not faith". This means either faith in Christ, or do not hold the faith—faith being equivalent to truth; either is possible. The last word in the sentence is *pistis* faith. The next word is *pistos* faithful, there being a play upon words to bring into contrast the faithfulness of the Lord. He can be relied on however perverse men may be. "Faithful is the Lord, who will confirm (establish) you and will guard you from the evil one". The Authorized Version reads impersonally "evil", but the Revised Version the "evil one", i.e. Satan, and this promise is for the comfort of the Thessalonian believers.

Paul is assured that they carry out his commands and will continue to do so (verse 4). Here is a note of apostolic authority, yet with love behind it.

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ" (3:5 R.V.).

The love of God can be regarded here either objectively or subjectively. If subjectively then it refers to God's love for His children, or if objectively, their love for Him. The Revised Version regards the phrase the "patience of Christ" as relating to the patience shown *by* Christ rather than the believers "patient waiting for Christ" as the Authorized Version. There is no word for "waiting" in the Greek. The example of His unflagging patience was to be the prime source of inspiration to any who were troubled.

With verse six a new section commences, going on to verse fifteen. In the structure of the epistle this balances the section 2:1-12 thus:

2:1-12 We beseech—Lawlessness
3:6-15 We command—Disorderliness.

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus

Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (3:6).

The Apostle now deals with some in the church who were lazy and giving a bad witness to an unbelieving world. *Ataktos* disorderly, is a military word "to break rank" or "play truant". It occurs as an adjective, as we have seen in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, where it is translated "unruly". The doctrine of the Second Advent was being misinterpreted by some and used as an excuse to give up working. The saying that "Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do" was well illustrated here. Paul declares that such were not only refusing to work, but were busybodies, interfering in other people's affairs, and so causing trouble:

"For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (3:11).

Again there is a play upon words in the Greek. Moffatt brings it over well into English by rendering: "Busybodies instead of busy". As a contrast to this the Apostle brings forward his own example, how he worked night and day so that he would not be chargeable to any one of them. How absolutely practical was this great man of God! Later on to the church at Philippi he could write:

"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (4:9).

Only one who is living very close to the Lord could write like this without idle boasting. May it be the aim of both writer and reader so to combine doctrine and practice, that it can be said truthfully that we are living epistles known and read of all men.

Not only in Philippians, but here in 2 Thessalonians he could write:

"For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us" (3:7-9).

The word "follow" in verses seven and nine is *mimeomai* from *mimos*, an actor, a mimic. It only occurs elsewhere in Hebrews 13:7 and 3 John 11, where the Revised Version correctly translates it "imitate". The Apostle could always draw attention to the way he combined doctrine and practice. He had set before the Thessalonian church a Christ-like example, working night and day at his trade of leather work, so that he might not be a financial burden to them. He had previously drawn their attention to this in his first epistle (1 Thess. 2:9,10). At the same time he reminds them that he had the apostolic authority (power, 2 Thess. 3:9) to be supported by them, but he waived it in order to be an example in all things. The Greek reads literally, "but that we might give ourselves a type to you".

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly (*ataktos*), working not at all, but are busybodies" (verses 10,11).

The Apostle quotes what is apparently a Jewish proverb based on Genesis 3:19. Those who refused to work, had no claim to receive food. Deissmann (*Light from the Ancient East*) sees Paul borrowing a piece of workshop morality, and it was plainly needed. There has always been a tendency to regard labour as a curse, something to be avoided as far as possible, and much of the labour trouble in the world today has its roots in this mistaken idea. But when Adam sinned, God cursed the ground *for his sake* (Gen. 3:17), for the worst possible thing for a sinner, is to have nothing to do to occupy his time. Such a situation always results in boredom and further declension, and the Apostle is concerned that this should not spread any further in the church at Thessalonica. The imperfect tense of the verb "command" shows that more than once he had urged such to diligence. Again he uses a play upon words, *ergazomenous alla periergazomenous*. As we have indicated before Moffatt renders it well, "busybodies instead of busy", that is, minding everyone's business but their own, and this as a result of idling and sponging upon others.

"Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with

him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (3:12-15).

Note how Paul combines the note of authority with a certain amount of tenderness, "we command and *exhort*". The Apostle was no hard autocrat. He knew how to blend firmness with love and so to handle wisely such difficult situations that sometimes arise among believers. The words "by our Lord Jesus Christ" indicate clearly that he was Christ's spokesman. It was as though the Lord Himself was speaking and commanding and so always ought we to regard the teaching given through Paul. Paul the man is only a channel, "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8), but as the Apostle (sent one) of Christ Jesus he speaks with all the Lord's authority. Would that professing Christendom could grasp this truth. They would then cease to talk of "Pauline doctrine" or to set up the teaching given through Christ in the days of His flesh as being superior to that He gave through the Apostle. In both, the Lord Jesus is the Author of the teaching, but in each case it is received through a human channel, His ministry when on earth being mediated to us by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and His heavenly ministry through the witness of Paul to us who are Gentiles, and the twelve apostles to the circumcision (Jew).

In the case of the Lord's earthly ministry, we have it on His authority that it was limited to the people of Israel (Matt. 15:24) and with this agrees Romans 9:3-5; 15:8, also that the fulness of revelation was *yet* future, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-14) and the time when in Resurrection and Ascension He Himself would have no such limitations as to one people. The false idea that the "words of Jesus" (the Gospels) give a higher revelation and are more authoritative than the epistles, are the cause of much of the spiritual blindness and stunted spiritual growth that we see around us today in the Christian world. This conception is a potent force in Satan's hands to prevent the fulness of the Lord's present exaltation in glory and the church's close association with Him there, from being realized and enjoyed by the believer. We who have had opened eyes in this respect need to combat such false ideas with all the energy and wisdom possible, for, until these are removed from the mind, any testimony concerning the unsearchable riches of Christ revealed in Paul's prison epistles will be practically valueless.

So we see that, in the context we are dealing with the Apostle could command as from the Lord, and expect to be obeyed by the faithful. The indolent are charged to work with quietness and eat what comes from their own labour, and then he writes to the whole assembly. Paul exhorts them not to "weary in well doing". This is the only occurrence of *kalopoieo* in the New Testament, but it is used in the Septuagint, and the Apostle uses a like expression in 2 Corinthians 13:7, *to kalon poiete*, "do that which is honest", Romans 7:21 "to do good" and very similarly to 2 Thessalonians 3:13 in Galatians 6:9, "let us not be weary in well doing". A similar word *agathoerges*, "to do good" is found in 1 Timothy 6:18.

Paul's last word to the idlers and busybodies is now given. All such are to be "marked men" ("note that man"). *Semeioo* is from *semeion*, a sign, token or mark. The faithful are not to mix with (have company with) such, in order to bring the offenders to a sense of shame. Such discipline was remedial in its object and was not excommunication as verse fifteen shows. Such were not to be regarded as enemies, but brothers who were erring, with the hope that they would repent and reform their ways. The professing church down the centuries has used the extreme discipline of excommunication far too freely. Very seldom has the New Testament basis for such action been considered. Too often the bad and narrow spirit of Luke 9:49, 54 has been manifest and many of God's children cast out of fellowship because "they followed not with us" and did not toe the line to every vagary of doctrine. Much heartbreak and sorrow could have been avoided if 2 Thessalonians 3:15 and Galatians 6:1 had been acted upon. The church of Rome has not been the only Christian group to exhibit this harshness. Professing Christians at the other extreme have been equally guilty and this is still going on in our own day with dire results to Christian witness.

The Apostle now draws to a conclusion with a prayer for their blessing:

"Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen".

In the first epistle he desired the God of peace to sanctify them

wholly (5:23). Now he requests that the same God, the Lord of peace, should give them peace "at all times in all ways" (R. V.). This is comprehensive indeed, and the precious gift of peace is more and more needed today with its pressure, rush and bustle and distraction. The Saviour promised it to His followers (John 14:27; 16:33) and it comes when everything has been committed to Him (Phil. 4:6,7), so enabling the believer to remain unruffled and confident whatever turmoil surrounds Him.

The Apostle closes with a greeting in his own handwriting. We have noted that the enemy of truth had seen to it that spurious letters were circulating among the churches purporting to come from Paul. He now gives them a guarantee whereby they can know for certain the epistle was his. Having dictated it so far, he now takes the pen, and in his own handwriting, which they knew, he gives the benediction connected with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a fact that every one of Paul's letters concludes with a reference to the grace of Christ and this is not the characteristic of the other epistles written by Peter, James, John and Jude. If any one draws attention to the Book of Revelation, then it must be pointed out that this is not an epistle, and if the late date generally assigned to it is true, it was written after Paul's day. It is noteworthy that the Epistle to the Hebrews also concludes with a similar benediction "Grace be with you all", which must be given due weight when the controversial subject of the authorship of this letter is discussed.

It seems to be obvious that the Holy Spirit who inspired the New Testament writers, kept this particular conclusion to the Apostle Paul, and this was for the protection of the early groups of believers from Satanic deception. It would have been nullified had others used it, and while it may seem a trivial matter to us today, it was of vital import to believers at the beginning when the evil one was doing his best to counteract the truth and the out-working of God's purposes of grace.

The Apostle therefore concludes, in his own handwriting with his usual benediction:

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all".

This is similar to the first epistle and Romans 16:20. So concludes two of the earliest letters of Paul. It should hardly be necessary to say that no doctrinal import can be placed on the *order* of the epistles given in the Authorized Version. Though the Thessalonian letters come last in this grouping, no teaching can be deduced from this. To teach that these letters give the climax of revelation given in Paul's epistles because of this position is false. The Apostle was in the early stages of his ministry at this point and the climax was yet to come in his prison letters after the nation of Israel had been set aside in unbelief at the end of the Acts period.

Those who hold the above mentioned view fail to understand the position of the people of Israel during this time and the relationship of I Thessalonians four, with its emphasis on the earthly return of Christ, to the purpose then being worked out. So much is usually *mentally* added by such to what is actually taught in this chapter that a distorted view is bound to result. How many who read the words, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air . . ." add in their minds the thought that these believers are then taken up to heaven? The addition of the word "up" in our English version partly suggests this idea, but there is no warrant for it in the original Greek. There is no thought of *direction* in the verb *harpago*; it could just as easily mean "caught downwards" as upwards. The immediate context does not deal with what happens after this "catching away". Only the remoter context and what had already been revealed can guide us here. It is the *descending* Lord that these saints meet and as both these letters deal with the Lord's arrival (*parousia*) there is nothing that need be added by ourselves in order to understand what 4:16,17 is teaching. Those who do so evidently have an axe to grind and this is not the way to get truth.

We are intensely grateful for these early epistles of Paul, showing us, as they do, his faithful concern for the well-being of the Thessalonian saints, their zeal as well as some of their problems which could only be resolved by understanding the purpose of God so far as it had been revealed at this time. May we have grace to imitate their practical keenness and outworking of the Truth, so that it can be said of us, as it was of them,

"Ye were ensamples to all that believe" (1 Thess. 1:7).

1 CORINTHIANS

INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER ONE

The Corinthian letters are the most personal of Paul's inspired writings. In none of them do we see Paul the man more clearly. This was probably due to the close and personal contact the Apostle had with the church at Corinth. Corinth, at this time, was the chief city of Achaia, situated on the narrow isthmus that connected the mainland of Greece and the Peloponnesus. It was on the main trade route from east to west and north to south, being the chief centre of commerce, and so had a continual stream of traffickers, and a mixed population of Roman colonists, Greeks and Jews. It was a strategic centre, and its importance must have influenced the Apostle Paul in his missionary activities.

Corinth's history was in two parts. The original city was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. In 46 B.C. it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar and given the status of a Roman colony. The old city contained the infamous temple of Aphrodite with its prostitution and the morals of the new one were no better. The Greek word *korinthiazomai*, meaning literally "to act as a Corinthian", was synonymous with immorality. Paul reached Corinth on his second missionary journey as recorded in Acts 18:1-17. How unlikely, yet how encouraging it must have been to the Apostle to receive the Lord's words "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace . . . for I have *much people in this city*" (Acts 18:9,10), which only goes to show that no one is too bad or depraved to respond to the gospel of God's love and grace.

Among the first converts were Aquila and Priscilla, who were not Corinthians, but were living there. Paul resided with them and began his ministry in the synagogue, which lasted over eighteen months with the result that many believed (18:8). And so the good

news of salvation in Christ Jesus reached Corinth within twenty years of the Crucifixion. Some notable people responded to the gospel, including Crispus, who was no less than the "chief ruler of the synagogue" (18:8). Not only did he believe, but all his house. Then there was Sosthenes (1 Cor. 1:1) also described as the "chief ruler of the synagogue", possibly succeeding Crispus (Acts 18:17). This must have been a great blow to Judaism and at the same time an impetus to Paul's witness.

The Authorship, Date and Place of writing and the background of the epistle.

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 A.D. 95 and refers 1 Corinthians to "the blessed Paul, the Apostle". This is the earliest instance of the quotation of a New Testament 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 A.D. 55, 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 initial visit to Corinth described in the Acts and referred to in 1 Corinthians 2:1. After this visit he wrote them a letter which has not been preserved (5:9). 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 1 Corinthians. Apparently this did not solve all the difficulties, and in

consequence Paul was forced to pay them a hurried painful visit (2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1,2). Following this the Apostle wrote them a third letter of very severe character (2 Cor. 2:4). 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 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5-16). After this he paid his last visit to the Corinthian church (Acts 20:1-4).

Some modern scholars hold that the "severe letter" is contained in 2 Corinthians and that this epistle is not a unified work. They claim that 6:14-7:1 is an interpolation, because it breaks the sequence of thought, that chapter nine largely duplicates what is in chapter eight, and that the last section (10:1-13:14) 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 1 Corinthians a little more closely. Apollos undoubtedly worked in Corinth (1 Cor. 3:6) 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 (1:11,12) thus producing disunity. There were problems and abuses at the Lord's Supper (11:18-22), public litigation among members (6:1-8), a notorious case of immorality (5:1-5), arguments about eating food that had been sacrificed to idols (8:1-13; 10:14-11:1), disagreements about the need for marriage (7:1-40) and of morality outside marriage (6:12-20). Resurrection was denied by some (15:12) and Paul's own apostleship questioned by those who were very likely Judaists (4:3; 9:1). 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 (1:11). Additionally a trio, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived from the Corinthian church, probably bringing the problems which Paul

was asked to answer (16:17). These may be seen in the recurring phrase "now concerning" (*peri de* 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12). 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.

Before we go any further, it will be helpful to give the outline of the epistle as a whole:

- A 1:1-9 Waiting for the Coming of the Lord
- B 1:10-4:21 "It hath been declared unto me",
the problems of the church presented to Paul
- C 5:1-14:40 The Body, physically, spiritually, ecclesiastically
- B 15: "I declare unto you"—the gospel and the resurrection
The antidote to their errors
- A 16: Maranatha. The Lord cometh.

The first section revolves around three words, *calling, confirmation, coming*. The word "call" occurs in the first two verses. In each case the Authorized Version supplies the words "to be", though they are lacking in the original. Whether they are supplied or not, truth is stated, for Paul was a "called Apostle" by none less than the risen Christ, and so was obviously called to exercise apostolic functions. Likewise in verse two the Corinthians were "called saints", (holy ones) through the salvation and grace of God, and certainly should have been saints in their everyday lives, though it is manifest from the epistle that many of them were anything but saintly in their walk. Here is a good example of the difference between *state* and *standing in Christ*. As God sees us in His Son, with all His holiness reckoned ours, we are indeed perfect and complete in Him. In ourselves, and in our experience and walk day by day, we come a long way behind such a glorious position, but it should be a constant concern to us to seek to balance state and standing in the strength of the risen Saviour.

Paul links Sosthenes with himself in the opening salutation. We read of a Sosthenes in Acts 18:17 who was a ruler of the Corinthian synagogue and was brought before Gallio's judgment seat and

beaten. The book of the Acts does not tell us that this Sosthenes became a believer, so we cannot say dogmatically that the Sosthenes of our epistle is the same person, but the probability is that he was. Not only does the Apostle refer to the Divine calling of the Corinthian believers, but he states that the epistle is "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (verse 2). The basic meaning of *sanctification* is *separation* in a twofold way: separated *to* and separated *from*. Basically God separates His children to and for Himself and His will. This is the first and positive aspect of sanctification. Secondly, all such are separated from everything that is opposed to His will. This is the negative aspect. We need to take care to stress the *positive* side first. Failure to do this has resulted in a man-made narrowness and finally in nunneries and monasteries. This is a false separation which can lead to barrenness and spiritual pride. Once we have realized fully what it means to be claimed by God for Himself, we shall see clearly that the old sinful nature and the spirit of the world which lies in Satan's power, must not intrude or be allowed to mix with such a position.

Paul links the believers at Corinth with "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (verse 2). The places he refers to were the meeting places for believers. In the early days it could have been the synagogue within the framework of which Hebrew Christians gave their witness. But more likely it was the homes of believers. In 16:19 we have a reference to Aquila and Priscilla and "the church that is in their house". We must not think of buildings specially erected for Christian worship as we see around us today. These did not come into being until a much later date. The house of the believer was the home of the church, and we can therefore see why an orderly Christian home was an essential qualification of a bishop or overseer; and warm hospitality a necessary virtue (1 Tim. 3:2,4,5).

We next come to *confirmation*. The Apostle expresses gratitude to the Lord for the grace that had been given them and also that they were made rich in every respect by a bountiful Lord and Saviour. We are not told they were rich in faith, hope or love, but in speech and knowledge of every kind (verses 4,5). Speech obviously includes the gift of speaking with tongues, and doubtless prophecy and every kind of Christian discourse. A great deal of attention is given to Christian speech in chapters one and two

which we must consider in its place. Knowledge refers to the apprehension of Christian truth and it is important to note that these gifts were peculiar to the Acts period as a means of confirmation to each believer. In the twelfth chapter we have a long list of these special confirmatory gifts which were given by the Holy Spirit, of which knowledge, *gnosis*, is one (1 Cor. 12:8). Here *wisdom* is linked with knowledge and Paul has a great deal to teach about wisdom in the early part of this epistle. The Apostle John evidently refers to the supernatural gift of knowledge in his first letter:

“Ye have an anointing (unction) from the Holy One, and ye know all things . . . 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 of all things . . .*” (1 John 2:20,27).

This is obviously not true today, for Divine knowledge does not come automatically as a gift of the Spirit. We all know that careful, persistent and prayerful searching of the Scripture of Truth is now necessary to arrive at an understanding of what God has written. The special gifts enumerated in 1 Corinthians were confirmatory miraculous gifts to prepare believers for the great event of the early coming of the Lord:

“So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 7),

In Hebrews six the testing of the heavenly gift, and of the Word of God is linked with “miracles of the coming age”, i.e. the Millennium (powers of the world to come A. V.). These gifts were a foretaste of the earthly kingdom age which would be set up at the Lord's return and it is obvious from this letter and others written at this period, that this Coming was then imminent (See Acts 3:19-26; 1 Cor. 7:29; 10:11; 16:22; 1 Thess. 1:9,10; 4:15-17; 2 Thess. 1:7; Heb. 10:37; 1 Pet. 4:7; James 5:7-9; 1 John 2:18). These Scriptures are of great importance and the reader should carefully weigh over each one of them.

Not only did the confirmatory miraculous gifts of the Acts period look forward to the age of the earthly Kingdom, but they were a confirmation of the testimony of Christ which He had given to Israel. The miracles which He had wrought on earth were a

Divine attestation of His Messiahship to the earthly people:

"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them" (Matt. 11:2-5).

"But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, *the same works* that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me" (John 5:36).

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, *a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you . . .*" (Acts 2:22).

The miraculous gifts and signs of the Acts period which followed were a testimony that the twelve apostles were continuing what Christ *began* to do and teach in His ministry to the chosen people:

"... so great salvation; which at the first *began* to be spoken by the Lord, and was *confirmed unto us* by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with *signs and wonders*, and with *divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, according to His own will?" (Heb. 2:3, 4).

"These signs shall follow them that believe; in My Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover . . . they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, *and confirming the word with signs following*. Amen" (Mark 16:17-20).

There is no doubt therefore what these miraculous gifts were, and why they were given. They were a Divine confirmation of the earthly kingdom testimony and they only have relevance when kept in this Scriptural setting. To force them into the present time when the earthly kingdom people Israel are laid aside in unbelief and this aspect of kingdom held in abeyance, is an error which can only reap confusion and division and play into the hands of the great deceiver.

The Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On page 57 we referred to no less than eleven New Testament references, chiefly from the epistles written around this time,

which describe the Lord's coming as imminent. This testimony is overwhelming and cannot be ignored by the true student of Scripture. Peter had been authorized by God to declare that the Second Advent of Christ only awaited the repentance and conversion of Israel, and to this the nation was commanded to respond there and then (Acts 3:19-26). No one knew whether the Jew would be obedient or not, but all had the hope that this would be realized in their lifetime. "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" was the standpoint of all believers at this time and was the comfort and great antidote for the sorrow resulting from the loss of those who were near and dear (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

In the letter we are studying, the Corinthian believers were "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:7). Here the word "coming" translates the Greek *apokalupsis*, apocalypse. This, together with the word *parousia*, also translated "coming", but better rendered "arrival", or "presence", are the words which the Holy Spirit uses to describe the hope of the church during the Acts. This arrival of the Lord Jesus on the earth had been clearly described by Him in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. From the words used, it was to be a visible bodily coming, not a spiritual one, and the Book of the Revelation expands it and describes it as being a time when "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him" (Rev. 1:7). If we note every occurrence of *apokalupsis* and *parousia* and the contexts they are used in, it will be noted that not one of them gives any clear backing to the idea of a *secret parousia*. This idea has been forced upon those who bring the later revelation of the Mystery into the Acts and fail to see in the Acts the close connection with God's longsuffering to Israel, and His waiting for their response to the command to repent and turn back to Him (Acts 3:19). This coming back to the earth is the hope of Israel which both the Old Testament (e.g. Zech. 14:4, 5), and the early epistles of the New Testament deal with and is the dominant hope of all believers during the period covered by Acts.

The confirmation which Paul has referred to, would last "unto the end", that is of this earthly life, whether terminated by death or the Coming of the Lord, so that they might be "blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 8). This period seems to look forward to the realization of the Corinthians' hope and the Divine

assessment of their service. A similar assessment is referred to again in the epistle to the Philippians. "Blameless" means "unimpeachable", literally "chargeless", and behind it all was the utter faithfulness of God, the only solid rock to rest upon (verse 9). The pattern of verses 1-9, as C. H. Welch has shown is as follows:

- A 1:1-3 Called. Fellowship in every place
- B 1:4-7 Confirmation. Gifts (as in ch. 12)
- C 1:7 Coming. Waiting for the Coming
- B 1:8 Confirmation. Graces (as in ch. 13)
- A 1:9 Called unto the fellowship of His Son.

A new section commences in verse 10 in which Paul reprimands the Corinthian believers for their cliques and disunity, appealing to them to put an end to this sort of thing which denied in practice the union that God has made between His children and makes spiritual growth impossible. We give C. K. Barrett's translation of verses 10-13:

"I beg you, brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be all agreed in what you say, and that there may be no divisions among you; rather, that you may be restored to unity of mind and opinion. I make this appeal, my brothers, because it has been made known to me by the members of Chloe's household that there are some contentions among you. What I mean is this: each one of you has his own watch-word—'I belong to Paul', 'I belong to Apollos', 'I belong to Cephas', 'I belong to Christ'".

The immaturity of these believers made the devil's work of splitting them so easy. Those who ranged themselves under the name of Apollos were possibly those who admired rhetoric and the polished style of this leader. One can well understand those who rated the gift of tongues highly, being attracted by Appollos who was an "eloquent man" (Acts 18:24), coming from Alexandria, a centre of Jewish rhetoric. Those who followed Peter were doubtless the Judaists who followed the Jewish law and ceremonial and the link with Jerusalem. Others chose the name of Christ, and while this appears better on the surface, they were equally condemned with the other factions, including those who said "I am of Paul". It may be that the Christ followers were those who took the attitude that the words of Christ spoken when on earth were more important than those of apostles, an attitude that many adopt today, forgetting that it was the same Christ who later

spoke from heaven (Heb. 12:25) through His servants, just as He had spoken on earth. To turn away from them, was to turn away from Him. "Perfectly joined together" (*katartizo*) was a technical word for setting a broken bone. It is used in Mark 1:19 for the mending of nets, and in Galatians 6:1 for the restoration of a brother overtaken in a fault. The Apostle insists that these divisions must end and that they should be restored to unity of mind and opinion.

Spiritual gifts do not automatically lead to a spiritual state of mind. No church in the New Testament had such an abundance of gifts as the church at Corinth, yet no other assembly equalled it for carnality and division. As a result Paul had to say:

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (3:1).

This condition made it impossible for them to advance in the knowledge of the truth:

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, *neither yet now are ye able*" (3:2).

He seeks to bring home to the Corinthians the true meaning of what was happening, by asking a series of rhetorical questions: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul Crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" He adds: "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized the household of Stephanas, besides (that) I know not whether I baptized any other".

Here and in verse seventeen the Apostle clearly shows the place that water baptism had in his ministry, which certainly was not in the forefront. He was glad he had only baptized a few of them and could not even remember how many! The last thing any truthful critic could say of Paul was that he was careless or unmindful of things pertaining to the truth of the special ministry with which Christ had entrusted him. If water baptism had the importance that many sects have put upon it, these words would have been impossible. Verse seventeen is explicit:

"For Christ sent me *not to baptize*, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect".

The word "sent" is the verb *apostello* and therefore nothing is clearer than that water baptism was *not* an essential part of this Christ-directed apostleship or the gospel that it contained, and makes it quite impossible that the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5 can be that of water. As a contrast, Peter's ministry and that of the eleven to the circumcision was definitely linked with baptism (Mark 16:14-18; Acts 2:38) and this was fitting with a nation so long linked with type, shadow and symbol. While these two servants of the Lord preached the same Christ and the same Saviour, yet there were differences in their ministries which it is foolish to ignore, and only those who have an axe to grind will wish to do so.

Whatever their attitude was to him, Paul was determined to preach to the Corinthians the gospel with which he had been entrusted by the risen Saviour (Gal. 1:11,12). But he was determined to avoid rhetorical skill (the wisdom of words) lest the cross of Christ be emptied (literally), that is, be emptied of its significance and dwindle to nothing under the weight of rhetorical argument. Paul does not represent himself as a brilliant orator, but a faithful proclaimer of the good news of God in his salvation of sinners. Eloquence by itself cannot save; it rather misleads, and the listener can be carried away by the personality and fluency of the speaker. Paul knew well the attraction that oratory had on the Greek mind and he deliberately avoided it so that nothing could detract from the power of the gospel. He now enlarges on wisdom and uses it in two ways both bad and good, the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God. The word occurs no less than sixteen times in the passage comprising 1:17—3:19. The section 1:18—2:5 is laid out as follows:

- A 1:18 The Power of God
- B 1:19-22 The wisdom of the world
- C 1:23 We preach Christ crucified
- D 1:24-31 Object—that no flesh should boast
- C 2:1,2 Jesus Christ and Him crucified
- B 2:3,4 Not with . . . man's wisdom
- A 2:5 Your faith . . . the power of God.

The wisdom of God is entirely beyond man's intellect and lies

behind the Divine purpose of the ages. It was only the matchless wisdom of God that could have devised such a plan and often in its outworking, the Scriptures comment on it. In Romans eleven, after dealing with the "reconciling of the world" (verse 15) and the "secret of Israel's blindness" (verse 25), the Apostle concludes with praise to God, specially for His wisdom (verse 33). In Romans 16:25-27 he likewise addresses praise to the only "wise God". In Ephesians three, after revealing the two secrets (verse 1) of Christ the Head and (verse 2) the Church, His Body, Paul refers to the fact that even principalities and powers are learning through the out-calling of this church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10). God not only has wisdom beyond the comprehension of man, but also the *power* to carry it out in practice. Hence the preaching of the cross and the salvation accomplished by it, is connected with the *power of God* (1 Cor. 1:18) which makes it completely effectual in those who believe, in spite of the opposition and misunderstanding of unbelievers, who cannot frustrate its working, however much they oppose.

Such are perishing; they are on the road to destruction and to them the gospel of God is nothing but foolishness (1:18). To the Greek with his culture and art the cross was abhorrent. The idea that a dead Jew hanging on a cross, could meet all their needs was utterly stupid to them as well. To the Jew with his idea of a conquering Messiah, a powerful Being who could rid them of the Roman yoke, the cross with its outward portrayal of weakness was equally repulsive; it was a "scandal", a "stumbling block".

The only wisdom that man knows is centred in himself and entirely leaves God out of account. The only salvation that he can understand is what he imagines he can work out for himself and for the world. The essential difference between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man is that the former is Christ-centred, whereas the latter is man-centred and because of his sin and poverty of ability it is doomed to utter failure. The Greek mode of thought still persists today and is behind all the man-made schemes for "progress" so-called and the betterment of the world.

In the section of the epistle we are now considering, 1:18-2:5, it is surely clear that human wisdom is set in complete opposition to the wisdom of God. Sin and human limitation have so adversely

affected man's mind, that he cannot grasp the thoughts or ways of God (Isa. 55:8,9). Yet in his pride and blindness he deceives himself into thinking that his ideas are best, and does not hesitate to bring even the Creator to the bar of his own puny judgment. No wonder the wisdom of man at its best is looked on as foolishness by God, and the ways of God are looked on as foolishness by men (1 Cor. 1:18,20,21). "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (verse 21). Note that it does not say "by foolish preaching". Alas, there is too much of that. More accurately it is "by the folly of the Christian preaching". It is the *message preached* that appears to be folly to the unsaved, natural man. Whether it was to the Jew, who in his unbelief constantly demanded that God should back up His message by signs additional to those He had already given (Matt. 16:1-4), or the Gentile (Greek) who had an inflated idea of his own intellectual capacity. Christ crucified was the only truth that could meet both needs and this was the only proclamation that Paul determined he would give (22-24).

The Apostle now points to the Corinthian church as being a practical illustration of this:

"You can see what I mean, brothers, by looking at your own calling as Christians, for there are among you not many who are wise by human standards, not many who are powerful, not many who are nobly born"

(C.K. Barrett's translation verse 26).

The Countess of Huntingdon, who did such a fine work with the Gospel in the times of the Wesleys, was reputed to have said she thanked God for the letter "m". The context said "not *many* noble", rather than "not *any* noble", for she was a society woman who had nevertheless been gloriously saved. From what Paul said it was clear that the gospel was spreading most rapidly among the lower classes and this was another reason why it was despised by the elite. In this gospel not only do we see the deepest needs of every one being met, whatever class or race he might belong to, but also that God was engaged in overthrowing the world's false standards:

"God chose what the world counts foolish in order to put to shame

the world's wise men; and God chose what the world counts weak in order to put to shame what it counts strong, with what the world counts base and despised, even the things that did not exist God chose, that he might do away with what did exist, that no one might glory in His presence"

(verses 27-29 C. K. Barrett).

God has arranged the salvation of men so that they have "no finger in the pie"! If they had, they would surely boast of it, however small it might be, and this is one thing God will not tolerate. He himself will have all the glory and adoration as Redeemer and Lord.

Paul is not only concerned about the empty boasting of the world; he brings the truth to bear on false boasting in the church where they were "boasting in men" (3:21) and putting wrong valuation upon some of their own apostles and ministers (1:12). They tended to forget that their Christian calling and standing depended not upon the merits of these men, but upon God's call and His grace:

"But of Him (God) are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (verse 30).

The verse reads literally "you are from God", that is, you had your origin in God and His redemptive work through Christ, and *He* is the source of all you need in the way of real wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, and men, whether apostles or prophets, are but His servants. Of all the many titles of Christ, that of being the Wisdom of God is apt to be overlooked. In Proverbs 8:22-31 wisdom is personified as being with God at creation. In the Word of God, creation is always ascribed to Christ (see John 1:3; Col. 1:14-17). What more natural then for the Apostle to use Wisdom, not in the abstract as was so often done in Greece, but concretely, as a Person, and summed up in the Creator and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul concludes the section by saying that if anyone is to boast, let him boast in the same Lord. All of us have nothing but what we have received from Him (4:7), so it is only fit and right that He should receive our thanks and adoration.

I CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter two commences with the emphatic *kago*, which makes clear that the Apostle is continuing his argument and showing how it applied to his own ministry. If human wisdom at its best is foolishness with God and all true wisdom is embodied in Christ, then in line with this, in his ministry and the preaching of the gospel, he purposely avoided mere cleverness or eloquence and anything that could be construed as being showy or outwardly attractive, knowing that this, while it would appeal to the Greek mind, could only detract from the power of the message:

“And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the mystery of God” (2:1 R.V.).

The reader will notice that the Revised Version reads “mystery” instead of “testimony” (A.V.). It is not easy to decide which is the correct reading, for both have good manuscript backing. The words look somewhat similar in Greek *marturion* and *musterion* and could easily have been confused by a copyist. The balance seems to be in favour of “testimony” and this would line up with “the testimony of Christ” in 1:6. The phrase “the testimony of God” could either mean “testimony about God” (objective genitive) or “the testimony borne by God” (subjective genitive). Lightfoot takes the genitive of 1:6 as objective and 2:1 as subjective, the testimony borne by God to Christ. One thing is perfectly clear however, that in view of their carnal condition and attraction to clever oratory, Paul determined to proclaim among the Corinthians nothing more than the cross of Christ. As 3:2 expressly declares, they could only take the beginnings of truth, the milk of the Word. Verse two has often been misrepresented by being taken out of its setting and made to mean that gospel preaching sums up all truth, that true ministry should consist of nothing more than proclaiming the way God’s grace can save a sinner. There are believers who will listen to nothing else than what they term a “gospel message”. This conveniently absolves

them from any serious Bible study or searching after the deep things of God and apprehending what is "strong meat". They remain in the immature state of spiritual babyhood, taking nothing but the milk of the gospel and even imagine that this is a virtue!

Such do not hesitate to criticize those who want to go on to maturity (perfection). Many of the present day churches are cluttered up with this type of spiritual infant and it is no wonder that the deep things of God, the unsearchable riches of grace and glory as unfolded in the later prison epistles, are so little known or prized among them.

While the Apostle was forced to limit his testimony to the saints at Corinth, yet he was able to go deeper to some, for in 2:6 he states "howbeit we speak wisdom among the mature (perfect)", but, for the most part, this was impossible, and we may be sure that it gave him no pleasure to have to restrict his message in this way. Not only this, but he confesses to personal weakness and fear, which only shows how human he was:

"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (2:3).

How encouraging it is for us to realize that this great man of God knew what it was to be afraid and to be conscious of being inadequate and weak in himself. This but makes his faithful ministry and witness an eloquent testimony to the all-sufficient grace and power of God.

Deliberately avoiding persuasive words of human wisdom, he relied entirely upon this power:

"And my argument and my proclamation were not enforced by persuasive words of wisdom, but by a manifestation of spirit and power."

(verse 4, C. K. Barrett).

The Divine conviction and force that accompanied his preaching conveyed a better proof of its truth than external oratory could provide. This concerned its internal effect. Externally it was confirmed, as Romans 15:19 declares:

"Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

No wonder Paul avoided the shallow attractiveness of a golden tongue, especially as 1 Corinthians 2:5 states:

"In order that your faith should not depend on men's wisdom, but on God's power"

(C. K. Barrett).

There is only one safe place for faith to rest upon, and that is Christ, His Person and His work which are complete and changeless. To rest it anywhere else is to ask for disillusionment and misery. How often men and women have been swayed by attractive and brilliant speakers in Christian meetings, and been carried away by the messenger rather than the message! We can be certain of one thing, that any results from this are external only. They cannot and do not last, and when the effect has worn off, the listeners feel they have been "let down".

However, the Apostle declares that, while carnality prevents spiritual growth and keeps such in a state of babyhood, he was prepared to minister deeper truth to mature believers:

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among the mature (perfect): yet a wisdom not of this age (world), nor of the rulers of this age (world), which are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a secret (mystery), even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God fore-ordained before the ages (worlds) unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this age (world) knoweth: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (2:6-8 R.V.).

God's wisdom here is practically identical with His truth and His purpose. This, for good reasons, God kept hidden. One of the reasons for the "mystery" (secret) truths of the Scriptures is to hide from Satan and his hosts valuable knowledge about God's plans, just as in wartime, any facts that would be valuable to the enemy are suppressed. Let us never forget that ever since Satan's fall there has been enmity and spiritual warfare between himself and God. There is a tremendous battle being fought and redemption has as much to do with its final victory as with the

salvation of the individual sinner. Consequently we must be prepared to find that "the rulers of this age" (world A.V.) may mean more than human beings. Satan is described by Christ three times as the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and Ephesians 6:12 speaks of "world rulers of this darkness", "spiritual wickedness in heavenly places". These are the evil spirit hosts under the control of Satan who are animating unbelievers to carry out their deadly work. From these, God in His wisdom hides vital aspects of His redemptive purpose, so they shall not have the advantage.

In verse eight we cannot exclude the earthly rulers, such as Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas the high priest; these were but the tools of evil spiritual foes who engineered the crucifixion of Christ. Neither of these human beings could be truthfully called a *ruler of this age*. Little did Satan realize that in murdering the Son of God, this very act would accomplish his overthrow and destruction, for Calvary means victory over Satan and his hosts as well as over sin and death (Col. 2:14,15). Had they known this, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. This majestic title ascribed to Christ, is an outstanding witness to His Deity. No Jew would ever address such a title to anyone but God in the fullest sense.

Needless to say, the wisdom of God in a mystery does not refer to the later mystery of Ephesians 3 concerning the Body of Christ. It is not THE mystery but *en musterio* "in mystery" literally. It was the wisdom of God that had been hidden. Paul was making known God's secret hidden wisdom which He had determined before the ages began for our glory and ultimately His.

Before we proceed to consider the next section, we will give its structural outline, and for this we are indebted to Charles H. Welch:

- A 2:6,7 What Paul spoke. Wisdom among perfect (mature)
- B 2:8 Knowledge. None knew. Had they known
- C 2:9,10 Revelation. Eye, ear, heart. But God revealed
- D 2:10-13
 - a Things of God revealed by the Spirit
 - b Not spirit of the world
 - c But of God
- The Spirit
 - b Not man's wisdom
 - c But Holy Spirit
 - a Things of the Spirit explained by spiritual means
- C 2:14,15 Discernment. Spiritually discerned
- B 2:16 Knowledge. Known mind of the Lord. The mind of Christ
- A 3:1,2 Why Paul could not speak. Carnal, babes, milk.

The structure clearly shows the sharp distinction between the hidden wisdom of God which could be revealed to the mature, and the carnality of the Corinthian believers which for the most part made this impossible, keeping them in the state of spiritual infancy with the ability to receive only the "milk" of the Word, the simplest possible truths. In 2:9 the Apostle makes a Scriptural quotation:

"But as it is written, things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him" (2:9 R.V.).

The difficulty here is that this is not an exact quotation, but seems to be a blending of Isaiah 64:4 and 65:16. The former passage in the Septuagint reads: "From the beginning we did not hear nor did our eyes see any God but Thee, and Thy works, which Thou shalt do for those who wait (Thy) mercy", and the second passage thus: "They shall forget their former affliction, and it shall not enter into their mind". Origen believed that Paul was quoting not from the Old Testament, but the apochryphal *Apocalypse of Elijah*, but this would not justify the introductory "it is written" which always refers to the Scriptures. Whatever the answer to the problem is, we may be sure that the Apostle, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, was quoting truth, and therefore we need have no misgiving.

He now stresses what is most important to grasp, namely that

understanding of the Word of God is something that is beyond unaided human capability, however great this may be. Such understanding only comes from the Holy Spirit Who inspired men to write the Word. The Divine Author alone can be the Explainer:

"But unto us God revealed them *through the Spirit*: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God . . . even so *the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God*. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; *that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God*" (2:10-12 R.V.).

Man's knowledge is confined to human things (verse 11). Only God can communicate the truth about Himself, His purposes and His ways. There is no other means of attaining to this Divine knowledge. Human intellectual capacity and education will not throw one ray of light of itself upon the Word of God. Why? Because it is *spiritual* and can only be *spiritually* discerned, as enabled by the Holy Spirit. A theological course may teach a lot *about* the Bible and its background, but this is no substitute for Divine enlightenment. When will men learn this? A man may come from a university with a brilliant theological degree and in the eyes of Christendom be eminently suited for preaching and teaching the Scriptures, but if he is not a humble believer depending upon God to give him "opened eyes", he is as blind as a bat spiritually, and merely becomes a blind leader of the blind.

Not that we despise education, but we should know its limitations and keep it in its rightful place. No one knows the things of God save the Spirit of God (verse 11), and He has been given to us in order that "*we might know the things that are freely given to us by God, which things also we speak*", says the Apostle, "*not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual*" (13 R.V.). The spirit of the world and human wisdom and knowledge are less than useless here. The Holy Spirit Himself must be the Teacher, and He communicates His truth to us as we grow in grace and love and compare spiritual things with spiritual.

We may well ask, just what is the meaning of this last phrase? There have been a variety of translations and interpretations. It all

depends on the meaning of *sugkrino* translated comparing, and the gender of the adjective *pneumatikōis* spiritual. This can be either masculine or neuter. If masculine it will mean "spiritual persons"; if neuter it will be "spiritual things" or "spiritual words". *Sugkrino* can mean "combine", "interpret", or "compare". It only occurs again in 2 Corinthians 10:12 rendered "comparing". Darby translates 1 Corinthians 2:13 "communicating spiritual things by spiritual means". Knox: "matching what is spiritual with what is spiritual". Moffatt: "we interpret what is spiritual in spiritual language". Conybeare: "explaining spiritual things to spiritual men". Goodspeed: "giving spiritual truth a spiritual form". Revised Standard Version: "interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit", and in the footnote: or "interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual".

It is obvious that this verse is difficult to translate. The sense can either be comparing spiritual things, i.e. the words of Scripture, or interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual people or by means of spiritual words. The fact is that all these renderings express truth and it would be safer to take the meaning of them all. It would be useless to try to explain the truth of God to anyone who is not spiritual, that is not a saved person. On the other hand, if we want to correctly interpret God's truth, we must be ready to compare the spiritual words of Scripture and let one passage throw light on or interpret another.

The Apostle makes it quite clear that the unsaved, the natural man, however clever or educated, can never receive or understand the Word of God:

"Now the *natural man* receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and *he cannot know them*, because they are spiritually judged" (2:14 R.V.).

As we have before stressed it is only by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit that saved people can come to a full knowledge of the Truth. Even then this is not mechanical. The carnal Christian will not be given light on the Word. A believer must be "spiritual", with a mind and keen desire for the Spirit's work, and he must

search the Scriptures, for this is the means God chooses to use to bring him to Divine understanding. If a Christian keeps the Bible closed, he cannot expect enlightenment. Paul goes on to assert that the spiritual man judges or investigates all things, but he himself is not open to such judgment by anyone (verse 15). Does he mean by this that the spiritual man must not be exposed to testing? This cannot be, for he says in 14:29, "let the prophets speak two or three, and *let the other judge*". The answer seems to be in 4:3 where he states expressly that human judgment of praise or blame means nothing to him; his only judge is the Lord. So with the spiritual man; for him the final judgment and the only one that matters, is the Lord's verdict. And who can know the Lord's mind, apart from what He is willing to reveal? (verse 16). But we, says the Apostle, referring to himself and his spiritual colleagues, have such a revelation and outlook. In this sense "we have the mind of Christ".

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER THREE

The Apostle now returns to the present situation at Corinth. He has to lament that their carnal condition with their splits, divisions and jealousies had made it impossible for him to give them anything but the simplest truth which he likens to "milk". They were no better than Christian babies and could take nothing but the milk bottle. Solid food was impossible, though he longed to lead them on into deeper truths (3:1-4). He remonstrates with them for ranging themselves in splinter groups under his own name and that of Apollos and says:

"What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him" (3:5 R.V.).

The answer to these questions is not that Paul and Apollos are *nothing*, but they are *servants of Christ*, nothing more and nothing less. They are not to be idolized on the one hand, or ignored on the other. They were the channels Christ had chosen to reach them with the gospel, and appreciation of this would have saved the Corinthians from such party divisions.

"I planted, Apollos watered the plants. It was not we however, but God Who made them grow. It follows that neither he who plants nor he who waters counts for anything, but only He Who causes the growth—God"

(3:6,7 C. K. Barrett).

Paul likens the ministry of himself and Apollos to gardeners. No gardener, however diligent, can give either life or growth to the plant. This is God's work alone. The significance is that God accepts his labour and uses it. In himself, the gardener has no independent importance. So it was with the service of Paul and Apollos, and since they were but instruments in the hand of Christ, it was foolish to play one off against the other—"He that planteth and he that watereth are one" (verse 8). That is to say that the aim and result of their work are identical.

This naturally leads to the important question of the quality of Christian service and its final assessment by the Lord, leading either to reward or loss. This line of truth has always to be kept distinct from salvation as God's free gift by grace apart from works or merit. Much damage has resulted from these two linked yet separate truths being confused, or one being stressed at the expense of the other. Many Bible problems can be solved by "rightly dividing" these two aspects of doctrine and they are principles that run right throughout the Bible, and the importance of correctly evaluating them can hardly be over-stressed. The immediate context here relates first of all to the service of Paul and Apollos, but the argument broadens out to take in all believers:

"... But each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are God's fellow-workers: ye are God's husbandry, God's building" (3:8,9 R.V.).

The Authorized Version "we are labourers together with God" is possible from the Greek, but the Revised Version is to be preferred and fits the context better. It is not so much that the apostles were working together and God was working *with* them (although this was true), but rather that they were united in service and *belonged to* the Lord. They were "God's fellow-workers", whereas the church at Corinth was likened both to a field and a building. "Ye are God's husbandry, God's building". They were likened to agricultural and architectural work done by the Lord.

The Apostle now drops the horticultural metaphor and goes on to describe them as a structure and builders whom the great Architect was using. He reminds them of their responsibility as such; they could be wise builders or jerry builders using bad materials and becoming shoddy workers. At the end they would have to account to the Master, hence they should think very carefully about their present conduct and quality of service. Grace does not mean that God will overlook bad workmanship or disloyalty to His truth.

The Apostle Paul now elaborates the theme of Christian service, using the figure of a building, with its foundation and superstructure:

"According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (3:10,11 R.V.).

The exceeding grace of God which had been manifested in his salvation, still continued with him and enabled him to serve faithfully. As a wise or skilled master-builder he had laid the one Foundation, Jesus Christ. This great Foundation is true and unchangeable for all time, and for the whole of God's redemptive purpose. Paul was the original evangelist through whose ministry the first converts at Corinth had responded. He had faithfully preached Christ and this Foundation had been well and truly laid by him. But foundations are made for erections or superstructures and the Corinthians are now being told that they are all builders, but of what kind? Good builders or otherwise? "Let each man take heed *how* he buildeth thereupon". The materials used are all-important:

"But if any man buildeth on the Foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire" (3:12,13 R.V.).

The workman may use shoddy materials, and when the future Day of testing comes, there will be no possibility of concealment. Judgment by fire is not new in the Scriptures. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28,29). The fire of testing will not touch the workman, but his service:

"And the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire" (verses 13—15 R. V.).

Nothing could be clearer than the distinction here made between the believer who has been saved by grace apart from his works, and his service to the Lord which consists of his works. Because his salvation depends entirely upon the Lord's redemptive work on the cross, nothing can affect or alter this. Nothing can separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39). But it can be very different with his service. There are unfaithful children of God; there are those whose service has not conformed to the pattern of His will. Wrong motives have entered in. Self aggrandisement, error and other works of the sinful old nature have got mixed up with his actions. All this is likened to "wood, hay and stubble", which will be completely destroyed in the day of testing. The Apostle goes on to warn the Corinthian church that they constitute a temple of God, inhabited by the Spirit, and if this temple is marred by their conduct, God will destroy the offenders. The local church, a manifestation of God's Temple, could be removed under judgment and go out of existence. If it is insisted that Paul is referring to the individual believer rather than the assembly as a whole, then such judgment could end in physical death, as the abuses at the Lord's Table later on clearly show (1 Cor. 11:30). Direct Divine judgment for sin, a characteristic of the earthly kingdom, was still in force during the Acts period (cp. Acts 5:1-10; 13:6-11). There was indeed "a sin unto death" (1 John 5:16).

Paul now returns to the great contrast between earthly and heavenly wisdom, the conceptions of unredeemed man in spiritual darkness, and the thoughts and ways of God so infinitely above these:

"Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you supposes that he is wise by the standards of this age, let him become foolish by the standards of this age, in order that he may become truly wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For in Scripture God is described as 'He who catches the wise in their own craftiness'; and again 'The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are vain'. So let no one make his boast in men, for all things are yours—Paul, Apollos

or Cephas, the world, or life, or death, things present or things to come—all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God"

(3:18-23 C. K. Barrett).

Self deception is the fate of those who imagine themselves to be really wise apart from God, and this delusion is the fruit of estimation by the wrong standards. If any one wishes to be wise in the truest sense, then he must not expect to experience this by trying to add a little of God's wisdom to his own. His own wisdom must be cast away completely and God's estimation received by a child-like trust. These two are complete opposites and can never be reconciled. This the Apostle states in the sharpest terms:

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God".

The conclusion then is inescapable: "So let no one make his boast in men". This is just what the Corinthians had been doing, ranging themselves under the names of various servants of God, stating in effect that they belonged to Paul, Apollos or Peter. This inverted the truth. They really belonged to Christ, the Lord over all things, and as this was true, then the world, life, death, things present, things to come—all things belonged to them in and through Him. With such a vast heritage, how stupid it was for any of them to follow men, even if these were the Lord's servants!

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER FOUR

The fourth chapter commences with advice as to how God's servants, including himself, should be properly regarded:

"How then should a man think of us? As Christ's servants and stewards of God's mysteries (secrets)"

(4:1 C. K. Barrett).

If we read the first sentence as a question as C. K. Barrett does, then the answer is that Christian leaders are to be regarded as Christ's servants, no more and no less. The servant has no special significance of his own. His work is not his but his master's. He is also his master's steward or household manager (*oikonomos*). This is allied to the word *oikonomia* dispensation, and shows us that a dispensation in the New Testament is not the same as an age, a period of time merely, but a faithful handling and setting forth of some particular aspect of truth that belongs to God, which He has entrusted to the steward to dispense. What is the chief characteristic that one looks for in such a man? Not intellectual prowess or cleverness, but just complete reliability and trustworthiness, specially when one remembers a steward is handling, not his own property, but someone else's. There can be no deviation from this, or any substitute for faithfulness. The Lord's commendation in the parable was not "Well done, thou good and *successful* servant", but "well done, thou good and *faithful* servant" (Matt. 25:21), and every one of us who seeks to serve the Lord must continually keep this in the forefront of his mind, for it is of the utmost importance.

With the exception of the book of the Revelation, which deals with the future Day of the Lord described by the Old Testament, and the final winding up of things when the mystery of God will be finished (Rev. 10:7), the Apostle Paul is the only writer who uses the word "mystery" or secret in his epistles. His ministry deals with a number of secret aspects of the Lord's great redemptive plan, culminating in the great Secret of Ephesians and Colossians of which he alone claimed to be the minister or channel of revelation (Eph. 3:3-10; Col. 1:24-27). Peter faithfully gave his witness without using the word once. One must therefore take care to distinguish the fundamental truths relating to salvation that are common to *all* the apostles, and those other aspects which are peculiar to the ministry the risen Lord gave each of them and the particular sphere to which they were sent by Him.

Having stressed absolute loyalty and trustworthiness as the basic requirement of a steward of God, the question arises, by whose standards of trustworthiness is he to be judged? So the Apostle continues:

"To me it is a matter of the smallest importance that I should be examined by you, or by any human assize"

(4:3 C. K. Barrett).

If Paul had been affected by every criticism he received, he would surely have given up his ministry in despair. His argument, which is implicit, is that no fellow-believer can fairly or righteously assess the Christian service of another. Only the Lord Himself, the righteous Judge, can do this (Rom. 14:4). It is fairly obvious that the criticism which appears as a full-scale attack in 2 Corinthians, had already begun. The last words of the above translation are literally "by man's day". If the day of Christ is the time when He will righteously judge His people's service, then man's day is the present time when man has "all the say" and is judging, or more truthfully, mis-judging. The Apostle is quite indifferent to this, man's poor attempts to do God's work for Him. He even does not depend upon the verdict of his own conscience:

"... I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judges me is the Lord" (4:4 R. V.).

Even though my own conscience does not reprove me in any way, says the Apostle, I am not justified by this. My only real judge is the Lord Himself. As the Lord's coming during the Acts was imminent, and the Corinthian letters were written during this period, Paul insists that all judgment must be left to the soon Coming One:

"Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (4:5 R. V.).

"Now, my brothers, I have for your sake made these things seem to apply to Apollos and myself, in order that by our example you may learn the meaning of 'Nothing beyond what stands written', so that you may not be puffed up, each on behalf of one and against another. For what makes you different from your neighbour? And what have you that you did not receive? But if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

(3:6,7. C. K. Barrett).

The Apostle Paul evidently made the argument of the last few verses look as if they applied to himself and Apollos, so that the

Corinthians might learn by their example what the phrase "Nothing beyond what stands written" really means. It is not easy to interpret this today as we do not know all the circumstances that made up the situation at Corinth, but it was evidently easily understood by the believers there. It would seem to be a Christian slogan that was current in the district, whether Jewish or not, we cannot be sure. But it was a good one, advocating no belief but what could be substantiated by Scripture. It would indeed be good advice for all of us. How much error would be avoided if people would refuse to accept anything that is not clearly backed up by the Word of God rightly divided!

The Apostle Paul continues his argument dealing with the splits in the church and the boastfulness of some of its members. He reminds them that what knowledge they possessed had been given them by the Lord and did not originate in their own capability, so that they really had nothing to boast about in themselves:

"... that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other. For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory (boast), as if thou hadst not received it?" (4:6,7 R.V.).

The Apostle now turns to irony. The Corinthians were prepared to sit in judgment on Paul and his fellow workers and put them in their place. They imagine that they enjoyed the culmination of blessing and had received *all* the gifts of the Spirit, not merely some, and were acting as though the earthly kingdom had already been consummated and they had entered into it without the help of Paul or those associated with him:

"Already are ye filled (literally reached satiety), already ye are become rich, ye have reigned without us: yea and I would that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you" (verse 8 R.V.).

In one sense the Apostle could have wished this was true, for had that been so, many problems would be resolved. But the real position was very different:

"For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (verse 9 R.V.).

The apostles are presented by God to the world like the unfortunate beings, brought on at the close of a display in the arena, and as such condemned to death by mortal combat with one another, or with wild beasts. The word "spectacle" is *theatron*, theatre, the place where such spectacles were presented. The sense is "for we became a spectacle to the whole world, angels and men alike" (C. K. Barrett). How very different from the picture conjured up in the Corinthians' boastful minds! Paul now goes on to contrast himself and his fellow workers with the self-satisfied believers at Corinth:

"We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye have glory, but we have dishonour. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and we toil, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things, even until now" (4:10-13 R.V.).

The Corinthians may have imagined that they had come into their kingdom and their problems were over. Not so the Apostle. For him there was no relief from labour, privation or suffering. Going hungry, thirsty and naked possibly resulted from the depredations of robbers in his frequent journeyings and through sheer lack of supplies. He includes "perils of robbers" in his long list of sufferings for Christ (2 Cor. 11:26). His language here in 1 Corinthians reminds one of The Sermon on the Mount, returning good for evil.

He ends this section by describing himself as the world's scapegoat, no better than the scum of the earth. This was the price he was willing to pay in order to be a faithful servant and witness for Christ! How very different from some of the Christian leaders at Corinth! As they read this epistle, describing what Paul was undergoing, they ought to have been ashamed, though Paul insists that he did not deliberately set out to shame them, but rather to warn them as his dear children (verse 14). They might have thousands of tutors in Christ, yet not many fathers; for the relationship of father and son is much closer and intimate, and it was through his faithful preaching of the gospel when he first visited Corinth that they came to spiritual birth and a personal knowledge of Christ as Saviour. Paul had begotten them through

the gospel. He does not use the word 'regeneration' for this is God's work. The Apostle only uses this figure of begettal to stress the closeness of his relationship to the believers at Corinth. He can therefore ask them to be "imitators of me" (16). In 11:1 he again exhorts them to copy him, even as he imitated Christ. A man must live very closely to the Lord to be able to use such language with truth and without hypocrisy. But there was no doubt that this man's practice squared with his preaching and therefore he could sincerely make such a tremendous statement without any idea of advertising or exalting himself. We should see to it that we are worthy representatives of the Saviour in the same way, for the unbelieving world around us knows Him not. It would indeed be a great thing if they could see some reflection of Christ in us in the way we speak and act.

Because Paul is so concerned with the Corinthian saints he is going to help them to this end, by sending Timothy:

"For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church"

(4:17 R.V.).

Chapter 16:10 ("If Timothy come") seems to be a difficulty, but we do not know all the circumstances. If we did, there would doubtless be an explanation. The possibility is that there was some reason that *might* prevent him reaching Corinth. We have already seen the dangers of travelling in those days apart from anything else, so we need have no misgivings about this.

While the Apostle Paul loved these converts at Corinth, yet his wisdom ensured that, when they needed firm handling, this was forthcoming. He now tells them that he knows some among them had taken the view that he would not bother to come to Corinth again, so that they need not be unduly concerned about the state of the church:

"Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will; and I will know, not the word of them which are puffed up, but the power" (4:18,19 R.V.).

"Puffed up" is a characteristic word of this epistle and it expresses the sad state of arrogance in the Corinthian assembly. When Paul came he would be able to assess and deal with these conceited critics of his. There was evidently a good deal of talking going on at Corinth, but Paul now contrasts this and the carnal power behind it with the real power of the Spirit that operates and develops the kingdom of God, "for the kingdom of God is not (i.e. does not operate) in word, but in power" (verse 20). He then throws out a challenge:

"What would you like? Am I to come to you with a rod? or in love and a spirit of gentleness?"

(4:21 C. K. Barrett).

There was no doubt which the Apostle preferred, but it was for the Corinthians to decide. If some did not mend their ways, then he, as their spiritual father, must punish and discipline them with his apostolic power.

I CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER FIVE

A new section now develops in chapter five in which Paul deals with immorality inside and outside the assembly. We must remember that the state of morals at Corinth was low indeed and immorality was not considered to be a very bad thing. With the rapid drifting away from Christian standards, we have a similar situation developing in our day. As this trend goes on, we see fornication and adultery being universally advocated as something desirable. This is clearly a manifestation of the Babylonian lie, where standards are deliberately twisted and altered. Good is represented as being bad, and bad is represented as being good, and all this is a symptom of the terrible degeneracy both spiritual and natural at the end of this age which the Word has foretold.

Paul writes and tells the Corinthians that he has heard of immorality among them, in that one member was living with his father's wife. The Apostle does not call it adultery, from which we may conclude that either the offender's father was not living or that he had divorced his wife. Such a relationship was even condemned

by the Gentiles, and what was so distressing was not just the sin itself, but the arrogant way and the levity with which the Corinthian church had treated it. Doubtless they regarded this as real "freedom" as such an attitude is today. They were now not under law and could do what they liked:

"And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he that had done this deed might be taken away from among you" (5:2 R.V.).

But Paul had already come to a decision. Although he was not personally present at Corinth, in thought and spirit he was there and had already made up his mind regarding the one who had sinned:

"When you have been gathered together, with my spirit, in the name of the Lord Jesus, we should, with the power of our Lord Jesus, hand over such a man as this to Satan, for the destruction of his flesh, in order that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord"

(5:4,5 C. K. Barrett).

Paul was desirous that this severe judgment should not result from his apostolic power alone, but that it should be the judgment of the *whole church*, acting under the power of Christ as Lord. They would not only meet in the *name* of the Lord Jesus, but with the intention of acting in obedience to Him as Lord and with His power underlying them. We must remember that grace as a dispensation or administration, had not yet fully come. The definite judgments of God among believers during the Acts period (as Ananias and Sapphira) are evidence for this.

What does handing over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh mean? It does not envisage perishing eternally for the spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord. It cannot mean the flesh as the sinful old nature, for only the cross of Christ can deal with this (Rom. 6:6) and in any case it would not be in Satan's interest to destroy the old nature, for this is the very thing he seeks to work on and ensnare the believer. It can only mean the physical flesh, and in this case Satan would be permitted to inflict severe bodily suffering and possibly death. That Satan can attack the body of the believer with God's permission, Job and even Paul himself are sufficient evidence (2 Cor. 12:7). Just how far he can go is certainly controlled by the Lord.

Here Paul was concerned for the final salvation of the erring member and also with the purity of the church as a whole.

He tells them that their boasting (glorying) is not good, and that sin is like an infection—it can spread:

“Your boasting (glorying) is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened” (1 Cor. 5:6,7 R.V.).

We have before noted that leaven or yeast in Scripture is always used in a bad sense, and is a picture of sin. The Apostle makes the same quotation in Galatians 5:9. Here he is about to introduce the illustration of the Old Testament Passover feast, where leaven was not only prohibited in the bread, but had to be removed even from their houses (Exod. 12:8,15-20). In Matthew 16:6,11,12 the Lord Himself uses leaven to represent evil doctrine. In view of this, such popular phrases as the “leaven of the gospel” used by some Christians must be avoided. It needs only a *small* amount of yeast to permeate a large lump of dough, and from this we can gather that the Corinthian believers were taking a light view of the sin in their midst. Just as the Old Testament Israelite had to remove or purge out any yeast that had been introduced into the house before Passover, so the believers at Corinth must deal with this sin and remove the erring brother. They would then be like a fresh lump of dough without leaven and would approximate more nearly in practice to their “unleavened” position in Christ. This could only be experienced because the true Passover Lamb had been sacrificed:

“For besides, our Passover lamb, Christ, has already been sacrificed. So let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened loaves of sincerity and truth”.

(5:7,8 C. K. Barrett).

There is no doubt that, primarily, man cannot atone for, or deliver himself from the bondage of sin. Still less can he do it for someone else (Psa. 49:7). God Himself must bear the burden of His people's guilt and He does so in the Person of Christ. All the believer in Christ can do is to give continual thanksgiving to God for this mighty act of deliverance from sin's slavery and penalty,

and must express it not only in words, but in everyday life. It is quite likely that Paul was writing at Passover time, in which case his illustration would be more pointed.

From the next verse we can see that the Apostle had already written to the Corinthian church on the subject of immorality, but some there had misunderstood him. We need have no misgiving that part of inspired Scripture has been lost. It is not necessary to assume that every letter Paul wrote in his lifetime was "God-breathed" or inspired by the Holy Spirit. But every one that had this hall-mark has certainly been preserved by God in the New Testament. He had previously written to them that they should not keep company with fornicators. This, in the absolute sense, would be impossible in a place like Corinth. To carry this out perfectly, one would have to go out of the world, which would be impossible:

"No: what I now write you is that you should not mix with anyone known as a Christian brother who is a fornicator, or rapacious man, or idolater, or abusive man, or drunkard, or robber, with such a man you ought not even to eat"

(verse 11 C. K. Barrett).

It is significant that Paul gives no encouragement to the monasticism that arose in the early centuries, the idea of which is that one can escape the world and its pollution by withdrawing into solitude or religious community life. What such people do not realize is that they take their greatest enemy in with them, namely their sinful old nature! In the same way the Lord Jesus prayed:

"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

And if all God's children retired into monasteries, how could the testimony to His truth spread and His light shine out to a world of darkness? Paul now goes on to instruct the Corinthians that it is their duty to correctly assess and deal with the problem in their midst. This is what he means by the word "judge", and this must not be done in any spirit of censoriousness or fault finding. This type of judgment is often too prevalent, alas, and must be avoided. Their concern should be towards "those within" (i.e. the church, namely, believers). Those outside (unbelievers) must be left to the province of God to judge (verses 12 and 13). Meanwhile, they must exclude from their company the wicked person who was causing all this trouble (13).

I CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER SIX

Chapter six starts with another failure in the church at Corinth which had probably been reported to him by the household of Chloe, or through Stephanas and his friends. Believers were going to law with each other before pagan courts, and so giving a thoroughly bad witness to an unbelieving world. This should not be necessary for (verse 1) they should be able to settle their own disputes among themselves and (verse 2) these disputes would never arise if they were walking in love and Christ-likeness. The Apostle commences with a strong word (*tolmao*) as Romans 5:7 and 15:18 show:

“Does any one of you dare, when he has a suit against his fellow, to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?”

(6:1 C. K. Barrett).

The “unrighteous” and the “saints” are clearly the unsaved and the saved. The New Testament writers do not use the word “unrighteous” (*adikos*) for a believer in Christ. When such slip into sin, Paul describes them as “carnal”; they are walking according to the sinful old nature. The *sin itself* is of course unrighteous. One must not glamorize sin. The “unjust” or “unrighteous” (either of these translates *adikos*) are those who know nothing of righteousness imputed by God, as set forth in the epistle to the Romans. They are the unsaved; whereas the saved are righteous *in Christ*, in the sense that Romans uses the term and “holy” in Him (i.e. saints) although, like the Corinthians, they may be far from holy or righteous in their walk day by day.

Paul now follows with an astounding statement:

"Or know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world is judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more, things that pertain to this life?" (verses 2,3 R.V.).

Here is what is known as a *majori ad minus* argument. If at some future time God's children are going to join with Him, not only in the tremendous task of judging the world, but angels too, then what a poor thing if they could not settle their petty differences amongst themselves here and now! These angels doubtless include those who are being reserved in everlasting chains for the future judgment of "the great day" (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Not only are the sinning angels being *reserved* for this future judgment, but Peter assures us that the unrighteous (*adikoi*) are being likewise *reserved* for the day of judgment to be punished (2 Pet. 2:9), and he gives a vivid description of some of these throughout the chapter.

When the Corinthians realized that they were to take part in such future judgment as that of angels, Paul hopes that they would be ashamed of themselves in their resort to heathen courts:

"I say this to move you to shame. Is it so, that there cannot be found among you one wise man, who shall be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goeth to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?" (verses 5 and 6 R.V.).

Such conduct was absolute failure in Christian practice ("fault" A.V., "defect" R.V.). It would have been much better for them to suffer wrong and put up with the consequences. If it meant being defrauded, this was better than the bad spectacle of believers quarrelling in a public court before a pagan, unbelieving world. To do wrong is the greater evil, to suffer wrong the less. The Apostle could have referred to the Sermon on the Mount as confirmation of this (Matt. 5:39-42), but he does not do so. In any case he spoke with the Lord's authority. They were indeed "doing wrong" (8), and now he vividly reminds them in verse nine that wrong doers such as he lists in verses nine and ten cannot look forward to possessing any future inheritance in the kingdom of God. Some of them in their pre-conversion days had been in this category,

"But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (6:11 R.V.).

The Revised Version, as is often the case, is more accurate in rendering the Greek tenses, for the cleansing, sanctification and justification look back to the moment of salvation and quickening into spiritual life, resting, as it does, upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary. Paul now works back to the theme of sexual licence which he left at the end of chapter five:

"All things are lawful for me; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any" (6:12 R.V.).

"All things are permitted me". It would seem that this was a phrase used at Corinth and it seems very up to date! Paul quotes it with certain definite reservations. He was the first to champion Christian freedom (Gal. 5:1) but this was always to be encircled by Christian love, and never meant that the believer was free to do just whatever he liked and to indulge in sin. Such a phrase might well have been used as a watchword by a pre-gnostic party in the Corinthian church. We know that the developed gnosticism of the second century sometimes moved in the direction of asceticism and sometimes in that of libertinism. Its disparagement of the material led to an indifference to morality—the body was material and therefore its acts did not really matter—"all things were lawful", and this spirit could easily have invaded the Corinthian assembly. A believer could be a glutton or immoral; it did not really matter. Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food (verse 13), but, far from this, the body as a whole is for the Lord and therefore not for fornication or for uncontrolled gratification of its desires. "I will not be overpowered by any of them" is the Apostle's attitude, for if this is so, it nullifies redemption from bondage and brings back the old slavery. If the Lord has redeemed us, and purchased us for Himself, this includes our bodies, and we have no right to act as though they were exclusively our own possession. This the Corinthians had yet to learn.

Having made it quite clear that the "all things are permitted me" did not include anything sinful, the Apostle now shows that, as redemption includes our present bodies, fornication is not only a sin against the Lord but against the body itself:

"... Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18 R.V.).

Such a person certainly sins against the Lord, for the Holy Spirit indwells him (verse 19). The human body of itself is neutral; it can either be dominated by the sinful old nature, or controlled by the Spirit of God. To whichever of these it is yielded, it becomes *united*, either for evil or good:

“... know ye not that he that is joined to a harlot is *one body* (with her)? ... But he that is joined unto the Lord is *one spirit*” (verses 16 and 17).

Thus the Corinthian believers are urged to flee from fornication (verse 18), and to learn to glorify God even in their bodies (verse 20). It is to be noted that Paul calls things by their proper name. He does not falsify matters by calling immorality “making love” as is done today, thus putting a glamour upon sin, and turning it from black to white and making it appear respectable and desirable. One of the most insidious things around us at the present time is this deliberate falsifying of standards of conduct, making wrong appear right, and right appear wrong. This is Babylonianism coming right out into the open. No wonder individual, national and world problems are increasing apace. A society which permits this sort of thing is sowing the seeds of disintegration and destruction.

I CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER SEVEN

Paul now turns to behaviour within marriage, for this is one of the problems concerning which the church at Corinth had written for guidance (7:1). A married couple have *equal* conjugal rights (verses 3 and 4), which should not be denied, lest they should be tempted to fornication (verse 2). Incidentally, verse two is a prohibition against polygamy, which finds no place in the New Testament. The Apostle goes on to refer to himself and to state:

“Yet I would that all men were even as I myself” (7:7 R.V.).

This does not mean that celibacy is necessarily ideal. What Paul desired was that all had the capacity for resistance to sensual allurements that he himself possessed. Yet he recognized that this was not so, and that it was "better to marry than to burn" (in desire, verse 9). However, there was a far more important reason even than this, and that was the possibility of the early return of the Lord, according to the conditions and promises of Acts 3:19-26. There was little point in taking on the obligations of marriage if the Lord might come at any time. If one was unmarried, it was far better to remain so providing continence was maintained. On the other hand, marriage was not a sin:

"Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned" (7:27,28 R.V.).

But as the end of the age was near with its tribulation, such would have "trouble in the flesh" (verse 28). If the problem of separation arose, owing to one of the partners being an unbeliever (one being saved after marriage), providing the unbeliever was willing, such separation should be avoided (verses 12-14). Divorce between believers must be avoided at all costs. Paul uses two words in this context, *chorizo*, separate, and *aphiemi*, divorce. In Judaism only the husband had the right to divorce, but here the Apostle uses the word for both sexes, "... and that the husband divorces not his wife" (verse 11), "... and the woman which hath an unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not divorce her husband" (verse 13). A word must be said concerning the difficulty of verses fourteen and fifteen:

"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (R.V.).

It is surely obvious that Paul was not teaching that an unbelieving partner in marriage was automatically saved by being so linked with a believer, nor that children of such a marriage were likewise automatically saved, for this would be entirely contrary to all his teaching regarding salvation by grace and faith in Christ and the tenor of the New Testament generally.

The uncleanness here is the ceremonial uncleanness of the Old

Testament. The reader should note the argument on such uncleanness in Haggai 2:11-13. The linking in marriage with a foreigner in Old Testament days would have resulted in uncleanness and being cut off from the covenant relationship. The Apostle is now saying that the Old Testament principle of the communication of uncleanness does not hold in this case. And there was also the possibility that the believing partner might be the means of leading the unsaved one to a saving knowledge of Christ (verse 16).

In any case, the general principle, touching every sphere of life, is to abide in one's calling, providing this was straightforward and acceptable to God (18-24). Even slaves were advised to be willing to stay as they were (21,22). This was the wisest way of being prepared and ready for the imminent coming of the Lord, which was the overriding consideration.

A new section now commences. The *peri de* indicates that an answer follows to another of the church's problems concerning which they had written him. Three groups are now dealt with (1) the unmarried young (25-35); (2) the parents or engaged couples (36-38); and (3) widows (39,40). With the Lord's coming in mind, celibacy was desirable but not enforced. The single man was wiser if he did not marry. Conversely a married man should not seek release from marriage (27,28). In giving his advice, Paul had only one thing in mind, sparing them trouble and anxiety (verse 28). If wars, rumours of wars, earthquakes, pestilence and famine, were at hand, as the Lord Himself predicted before His second coming (Mark 13:7,8,17), then to take on the obligations of marriage was a foolish act tending to multiply difficulties.

“But this I say, brethren, the time is shortened . . .” (verse 29).

The end of the age was near. In chapter 10:11 the Apostle asserts that the “conclusion of the ages” had arrived. The Apostle John in his first epistle stated that it was the “last hour” (literally 2:18), and Peter, that “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Pet. 4:7). There can be no doubt that the age was drawing to a close, and the end, which would be terminated by the Lord's coming, was imminent. It behoved every believer to be on the alert, waiting for the Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10), and to see to it that they were as loose

as possible to all earthly relationships and cares that would distract them from their final witness and service for the Lord, so that they might "attend upon the Lord without distraction" (verse 35). In the married state the tendency is for the married man to be anxious (careful R. V.) as to how he may please his wife, and likewise the wife her husband (32-34), whereas the unmarried can more easily be taken up with the things of the Lord and how to please Him first and foremost.

Verses 36-38 create a problem. What does the word "virgin" mean in this context? At least three ideas have been put forward (1) a father and his unmarried daughter is in view. (2) A spiritual marriage in which people went through a form of marriage, and yet lived together as brother and sister. We know that such relationships existed later in the history of the church, though it is very doubtful if it took place as early as this, and also it is difficult to conceive that such a union would have received Paul's approval. (3) An engaged couple who are in doubt as to whether they should marry or not under the circumstances. As for (1) the father had control of his daughter's marriage and this interpretation is possible, though "his virgin" is a peculiar way of referring to his daughter. The second interpretation can be discounted. Taking everything into consideration, the fewest difficulties seem to be raised by the third view. If such a couple found the unmarried state too much of a strain, then marriage was desirable and not a sin. On the other hand, were they able to exercise self-control, to stay as they were would be better, for the reasons given before.

The Apostle now deals with the problem of widows. Marriage is a life-long tie (verse 39), but if a woman loses her husband by death, she is perfectly free to marry again, though the then exceptional times made it better if she did not do so (verse 40). It is very important to note that Paul limits her marriage and choice of a husband to being "only in the Lord". This means that she can only marry a *believer* and further than that, a *believer who was in the Lord's will* as far as she was concerned. In his second letter marriage with unbelievers is expressly forbidden:

"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?" (2 Cor. 6:14, 15 R. V.).

We need to remember that God's prohibitions are not with the object of denying us pleasures, or anything of value. They are to save us trouble, anxiety, and misery; and to keep us in the best conditions to serve Him fully and faithfully. Never was this Divine rule for the marriage of believers needed to be stressed more than now. We have seen so many cases of tragedy, life-long unhappiness and spiritual fruitlessness in young people result from its disobedience, and to everyone who is contemplating marriage with an unbeliever, we would say *don't*. The unsaved one may be very attractive in many ways and the believer may delude himself into thinking that after marriage "it will all come right" and such a one will be saved, *but this is just wishful thinking and nothing more*. Marriage must never be looked at as a kind of god to which everything must be sacrificed. How can the Lord bless a union which He has forbidden? And how can there be any lasting happiness for a believer in a life-long relationship without His blessing? For it needs to be stressed that God's children cannot take the lax view of marriage and divorce that the unbelieving world does. If every detail of our lives is a concern to the Lord (and it surely is), then we can say with absolute certainty that such an important and lasting step as marriage must be controlled by Him and He will certainly indicate His will in this matter, if we will only have patience and wisdom *to await His leading and providing*. Failure to do this not only means unhappiness and frustration, but spiritual decline and backsliding, and a life of no real testimony for the Lord Who has redeemed us.

This may sound harsh and unsympathetic, but it is not really so. As with Paul of old, we wish to save believers from "trouble in the flesh". Is not the Lord worth trusting in this matter, and for everything else in this life?

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER EIGHT

In chapter eight Paul deals with another theme which apparently had been raised in the Corinthians' letter to him, concerning food which had been sacrificed to idols; and he returns to it again in chapter 10:14-33. This was a problem confined to apostolic times, but nevertheless a pressing one for believers. Much of the food offered for sale had passed through the rites of heathen temples. Being associated with idolatry, it was offensive to the Jewish mind, but would not be a particular problem to a Gentile. What was the answer to this difficulty in a close community consisting of Jews and Gentiles? First of all, the Apostle deals with knowledge as a whole, possibly with special regard to a "gnostic" section in the Corinthian church, which held a conceited idea of their intellectual attainments. Knowledge without divine love is valueless. It merely "puffs up" the old sinful nature, and therefore can be dangerous:

"Now concerning things sacrificed to idols: we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth. If any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought to know; but if any man loveth God, the same is known of Him" (1 Cor. 8:1-3 R.V.).

Love builds up, and is the antidote to a barren knowledge which merely puffs up. Moreover, it is the sign that God has taken the initiative. It is His love that comes first, just as John wrote in his first epistle, "We love Him: because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). But returning to the theme of idolatrous food and idols themselves, Paul writes "we know that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one" (verse 4 R.V.). This does not mean that idolatry was not a reality, but it was the *conception* of the idolater that was wrong. There was not an idol in the sense such a person regarded it, for the gods they thought the idols represented were nothing more than demons. The word *god* was in common use in the ancient world, which was thickly populated with so-called divine beings who, though their natural home was thought to be in heaven, from time to time appeared on earth. But these "many gods" and "many lords" had no real existence, and were in direct conflict with the stern monotheism of the Scripture (8:4,5). This thought the Apostle now expands:

"Yet to us there is *one* God, the Father, of (*ek*) Whom are all things (*ta panta*), and we unto (*eis*) Him; and *one* Lord, Jesus Christ, through (*dia*) Whom are all things (*ta panta*), and we through (*dia*) Him" (verse 6 R.V.).

From the prepositions used, the Father is brought before us as the *source*, and the Lord Jesus as the *mediator* of creation and redemption. We must be very careful to avoid the idea that the mediatorial position of Christ gives Him a lower place as regards the Godhead than the Father. In a similar passage in Colossians 1:16 we read "all things (*ta panta*) were created by (*dia*) Him (Christ), and FOR or UNTO (*eis*) Him (as the goal)". In Revelation 4:8-11 the (R.V.) ascription of praise is to "*The Lord God, the Almighty*, which was and which is and which is to come (Christ, 1:8) . . . for Thou didst create all things (*ta panta*), and *because of Thy will* they were, and were created". It should be noted too that in neither of these contexts do we find the plain *panta*, all things. This could include evil. The more defined expression, *ta panta*, excludes this, and either refers to creation in its perfected form, or is limited to whatever the context is dealing with, and then means *all (these) things*.

Now, wrote the Apostle, all men have not this knowledge (verse 7), and some who are in this category are weak in the faith and they must be considered by those who are stronger and more advanced. This is real love—love and consideration for others *in practice*. The weak ones, when eating food which had been consecrated and sacrificed to an idol, would have a distressed and defiled conscience. Others who are stronger and with more knowledge could eat such food without any objection, realizing that such a thing as food in itself will not bring us under condemnation with God. They would be neither better nor worse before God as regards what they ate (verses 7 and 8). However, there was one thing that the stronger ones must consider, which should influence their actions, and that is *the effect of their conduct on the weaker brother*. Take care, said the Apostle, lest this authority (liberty A.V.) of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak (verse 9). The word *exousia*, authority, obviously means the authority to eat *any* kind of food. Paul now gives a concrete illustration:

"For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, sitting at table

in an idol-shrine, will not his conscience be fortified to eat things sacrificed to idols? For the weak man perishes by your knowledge, your brother, for whose sake Christ died. And so, by sinning against your brothers, and wounding their conscience, weak as it is, you sin against Christ" (verses 10-12, C. K. Barrett).

Nothing is clearer from this than the fact that our conduct affects other people. We may stress our liberty and stress it wrongly, for liberty must always be regulated by love. If the Lord loved the weaker brethren enough to die for them, then the strong ought to love them well enough to be willing to forego some of their rights. They should be ready to do this, not because the weak demand it, but rather, that this is the way of self-effacing love as the Lord has loved. The word "perish" is strong and may refer to the "sin unto death". If the weak brother continually offended his conscience, he would be persistently sinning, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23, and the whole of this chapter should be read as it deals with a similar context). Paul brings his argument to a climax by saying:

"And thus, sinning against the brethren, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, *ye sin against Christ*. Wherefore, if meat maketh my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I make not my brother to stumble" (12,13 R.V.).

Let us face the fact that by pushing our liberty too far, *we can sin* not only against fellow-believers, *but against the Lord*. We are not bothered today with the problem of food sacrificed to idols, *but the principle of all this is still true*. The mature Christian's attitude to Sunday and various pleasures for instance, needs to be constantly examined in the light of this, and we should always remember the practical example of the Apostle, who was even willing to curtail his rights rather than cause someone weaker in the faith to stumble.

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CHAPTER NINE

Chapter nine, on the surface, seems to change the theme, but if we carefully consider what underlies these verses, we shall see this is not so. Paul now makes it clear that even an apostle should be ready to renounce his rights for the sake of the truth of the gospel and those to whom he ministers. He could say:

"Nevertheless we did not use this right . . . that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ . . . that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel . . . to the Jews I became as a Jew . . . to the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (9:12,18,20,22 R.V.).

This is a summary of the section now before us. How different Paul's ministry and witness would have been if he had continually insisted on his rights as an apostle and leader! But as always, he was willing to put self into the background with a view to the blessing and building up of others. Doubtless at Corinth there would be some who would not be pleased with his teaching concerning the restriction of Christian liberty, specially those whose watchword was freedom at all costs irrespective of the effect on other people. Such would question Paul's own authority and say that, if he were a true apostle, he would not allow himself to be restricted in this way. It is certain that the Apostle would hardly have spent so long on the subject of apostolic rights, if this had not been queried at Corinth. He deals with this situation by a series of challenging questions, as though in debate:

"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord?" (9:1 R.V.).

Do you think (you Corinthians) that because I limit my freedom out of love, my freedom does not exist? Is not my apostleship real? An apostle must have *personal* dealings with the risen Christ to be a true witness. I have actually seen Jesus Christ our Lord and been commissioned by Him! And as a practical result of my apostleship, you Corinthians are the product of my labours! Even if others do not recognize my apostleship, yet at least to you I should be a real apostle, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord!

So Paul reasons with them in a way that was unanswerable to those who were willing to face facts. He deals now directly with his critics:

“My defence against those who would like to cross-examine me is this”
(verse 3, C. K. Barrett).

Again, he throws at them a series of rhetorical questions:

“Have we no right to eat and to drink? Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? (Peter). Or I only and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working? What soldier ever serveth at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?” (9:4-7 R.V.).

What he says in effect is this. As true apostles, Barnabas and I have the right to (1) have our food provided by the Christian community. (2) We could bring wives with us as other apostles do and claim that they should also be supported by the community. (3) We need not work for our living, but have a right to maintenance from the churches. A soldier on service expects to be maintained. Why not an apostle? The owner of a vineyard expects nourishment from the ground on which he bestows his labour. Why not an apostle? A herdsman who looks after cattle expects some of the milk the flock yields. Why not an apostle? These human analogies are right to the point. But there is something even stronger, namely, the teaching of Scripture:

“Saith not the law also the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. Is it for the oxen that God careth, or saith He it altogether for our sake” (9:8-10 R.V.).

It was only natural that an animal when threshing should take what mouthfuls of food it wanted while it was working. God had this in mind in the law, but also something more. Is He not speaking simply on our account, asks the Apostle? If the farm worker expects practical results from his labours, should not an apostle, who has sown spiritual things, expect the necessary material things? If others share in authority over you Corinthians, should not I the more? (who was the means used for the founding of the

church at Corinth?). *"Nevertheless we did not use this right; but we bear all things (i.e. endure hardship, etc.), that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ"* (verse 12 R.V.).

At last Paul comes to his main point. If he did not claim the full rights of an apostle, it was no reflection on his true apostleship. He refrained in the interests of the Gospel itself. Others might appear to make a good thing out of their missionary work at Corinth and so give a bad impression to the outsider. The Apostle took great care that this kind of conduct could never truthfully be levelled at him. He would rather work night and day with his own hands at tent-making and so be independent, rather than the enemies of truth should make capital out of the exercise of his apostolic rights.

How wise was this man! True wisdom is what we all need in abundance if our Christian witness is not to be spoiled by human failing or short-sightedness.

The Apostle Paul now sums up the section of the epistle we have been dealing with, relative to the believer's rights and his voluntary limitation of these for the sake of weaker brethren, by saying:

"... I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22 R.V.).

His utter unselfishness and consideration for others made such an attitude a constant experience with him. As long as there was no compromise with truth, he was willing to go as far as possible with both Jew and Gentile in spite of their totally opposite backgrounds, with one object, that some of them would be won for Christ (20,21). We notice that Paul gives no hint of universal salvation. He knew only too well, that in spite of his faithful proclamation of the gospel of Christ, only some would respond; nevertheless he did everything for the sake of the gospel, that in it he might be a joint-partaker (23 R.V.). It was a privilege indeed to have any share in its witness, and this led on to the thought of service and its outcome. The Corinthians seemed to believe that as long as they were saved, this was all that mattered. The Christian life and service afterwards counted little with them, otherwise they would never have tolerated the condition that existed in their midst. Now the Apostle has to remind them that, although salva-

tion is by grace, quite apart from works, the practical response after salvation would be taken account of by the Lord and all would be finally answerable to Him for this. So once again he introduces the teaching concerning reward for faithful service, as he had already done in chapter three (3:10-15), and for this uses the illustration of the games which would be universally understood in the Greek world. Paul is fond of using the "race course" as a concrete example of what faithful Christian witness should be like. He does so in Hebrews* (12:1,2), Galatians (2:2; 5:7), Philippians (3:13,14) and 2 Timothy (2:5; 4:7,8), and to these we might add Acts 20:24.

The believers at Corinth evidently thought that there was an automatic connection between running and winning; in other words, to be saved meant automatically being rewarded by the Lord, and there are not wanting today Christians who think likewise. Some even reject the possibility of reward entirely and so stress grace that reward is impossible. Such should carefully ponder the Apostle's argument here:

"Do you not know that all the competitors in the stadium run, but only one of them receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Everyone who takes part in the contests disciplines himself in every way. They do it to receive a perishable crown, we to receive an imperishable one" (9:24,25 C. K. Barrett).

The entry into any race does not in itself guarantee a prize either in athletics or in Christianity. But we must not deduce from Paul's illustration that only *one* believer can win God's prize, or one out of each group. The point at issue is that the believer must not only *start* correctly. He must *continue* correctly, press on, and reach the goal. No runner can afford to drop out of the race for any reason if he desires to breast the tape and win. Likewise for the believer, the *whole* of human life is like a racecourse. Service for the Lord is not for a part of our lives on earth, it must absorb all of it, from salvation to either death or the realization of our hope in glory.

As we are not machines or puppets, but moral creatures who have the inestimable benefit of being freed from the domination of

*For the human authorship of the epistle to the Hebrews, see *Perfection or Perdition* by Charles Welch and Stuart Allen.

sin by redemption, we are thereby accountable to the Lord for our practical response to Him day-by-day. If this were not so the command to "walk worthy" would be empty indeed. The Word of God makes it quite clear that, while all of His children are His servants, some are good servants and others are bad ones. Some are faithful, while others are unfaithful. It matters not whether we are dealing with the Old Testament, the Gospels or Epistles, this is most clearly taught. Now a God of righteousness and justice will surely take account of this, and if such justice must be seen to be done (and this certainly will be so), then there must be a reckoning day for all the Lord's servants (2 Cor. 5:9,10; Rom. 14:10-12).

Paul reminds the Corinthians that every athlete disciplines himself in every way in rigorous training. This was not a hardship to any keen runner. He regarded it as the greatest of privileges to do so, and possibly to obtain the wreath of pine with all the honour attached to it as a symbol of victory. The Corinthians therefore must take stock of themselves and realize that (1) God's prizes are worth having, and (2) that they are not obtained cheaply.

The Apostle now transfers the figure to himself and not only alludes to the controlled effort needed in a race, but the purposeful energy used in a boxing match:

"So, for my part, that is how I run—not as if I did not know where I was going; that is how I box, not as though I were beating the air. But I buffet my body, and bring it into slavery, lest, when I have preached to others, I should myself prove to be rejected"

(9:26,27 C. K. Barrett).

The successful runner does not wander aimlessly. He keeps his eye on the course and the tape at the end, and presses straight towards it with all speed. Likewise, the believer cannot afford to be negligent with regard to his service and witness for the Lord. There can be no holidays from this, or periods when he can afford to slack. It is useless being a spasmodic runner. It is only consistent effort that finally wins. Or take the example of a boxer. He does not waste his strength in dealing ineffectual blows, for this would be just beating the air and would achieve nothing. *Every blow must tell.* And the one whom Paul is fighting is not another person, *but himself.* He buffets or disciplines his body, so that it becomes his slave. He is in complete control of himself as he takes

God's grace and strength so to be. Too many of us are ruled by our bodies. They can be the most demanding of masters, and unless we are careful, their whims can turn us this way and that, and so affect our running in the heavenly race.

To some, verse twenty-seven is a problem, for, on the surface, it seems as though Paul feared lest he could lose his salvation at the end. The Authorized Version "castaway" is too strong. "Rejected" or "disapproved" is better. The word *adokimos* is the negative of *dokimos*, approved, occurring in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself *approved* unto God, a *workman* that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth". Here again the context is dealing with a *good workman*; in other words it speaks of *service*. When the Lord finally tests "every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13), all will be in two categories: faithful, with the Lord's approval, or unfaithful, with His disapproval. The former will receive the Lord's eternal reward, symbolized by a *prize* or *crown*, the latter will be denied it (2 Tim. 2:11-13). This doctrine then is to be distinguished from salvation by grace, apart from works. It is additional to salvation and must never be confused with it. Failure to do this has resulted in the teaching of being saved today and possibly lost tomorrow. Such an idea undermines the whole redemptive purpose of God and would make this dependent on the creature, rather than on the almighty power and wisdom of the Creator and Saviour of men.

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CHAPTER TEN

On the surface, it looks as though the subject changes at the beginning of chapter ten, but a careful examination shows that this is not so. Having clearly taught that a believer can be securely saved, yet lose the Divine prize through slackness or unfaithfulness, the Apostle now illustrates this by appealing to Israel's past history in the wilderness:

"For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, how that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ. Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (1 Cor. 10:1-5 R.V.).

Nothing was more certain than that *all* Israel were delivered from the bondage of Egypt and typically redeemed. Yet it is equally clear that *only two* out of the great multitude who were rescued from Egypt attained the promised land, i.e. Caleb and Joshua. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us why. They could not enter in because of their unbelief (Heb. 3:16-19). And unbelief means more than not believing; it includes active disobedience. Entering the promised land was equivalent to "going on to maturity" of Hebrews 6:1, and represents the prize element which they lost.

In these verses one should note the stress on *all*, and then contrast it with *most of them* in verse five. *All* the Israelites enjoyed the privileges of redemption i.e. freedom from bondage and the provision of all their pilgrim needs in respect to food, drink, clothing and protection. *All* of them ate the manna, so wondrously provided every day by the Lord. This was *spiritual* food, as likewise the water from the smitten rock was *spiritual* drink, and the rock itself represented that which was spiritual (verses 3 and 4). This is an interesting and instructive usage in the Scriptures of the word "spiritual". So many seem to think that this word always designates something shadowy and unreal, but the manna and the water were definitely literal and material. They were "spiritual" as well, which shows that they had a further significance in addition to their material function as food and drink. In other words they were *typical*; they represented spiritual truth as the Lord's great discourse in John 6:30-42 clearly shows.

The Old Testament record sets forth the ten times Israel provoked the Lord by reason of which they lost their prize—entry into the promised land (Num. 14:22). The Corinthian believers were therefore to take warning. They need not think that they would escape such a penalty if they provoked God in a similar manner. Their fathers lusted after evil things. They became

idolaters and fell into vice (verses 6-8). They tempted the Lord and perished through the snake bites (verse 9). They tried to see how far they could go into sin without the Lord intervening. They continually grumbled about the Lord's leading and dealings with them. We may think that grumbling is not nearly so bad as idolatry, but the Lord took a different and solemn view of this. They wearied Him with their constant complaints and dissatisfaction. It is no wonder that we, as members of the Body of Christ are warned against this sin, and we should note that it is in the epistle concerning the prize, namely Philippians 2:14, that we are told: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings".

The Apostle sums up by saying:

"Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (10:11 R.V.).

Some of the Corinthians apparently thought that, because they were saved, they could get away with idolatry and sin, so that this was of little account in their estimation. Paul is at pains to show the falsity and danger of such a conception.

In 10:11 he uses the striking expression, "the ends of the ages". The whole verse translated literally would read, "Now these things happened to them by way of example; and they were written for our warning, upon whom the ends of the ages have arrived". Such a drastic expression can only be understood in the light of the early Second Coming of the Lord as a possibility during the Acts period (Acts 3:19-26). Nothing less than this would warrant such an expression, which would otherwise be a gross exaggeration. The Apostle had already stated that the "time was short" (7.29), and he instructed believers to wait daily for the return of the Saviour. We have seen that this was the united testimony of all the early epistles and it is difficult to understand how this has been ignored by expositors and believers generally over the centuries.

It is true to say that the early epistles cannot be understood properly without a recognition of this tremendous fact and its implications at the time of writing. The Apostle has been stressing the responsibility to the Lord that Truth brings, and the need for its practical outworking, in terms of a heavenly race. This was to

counter the complacency of some of the Corinthian believers. However, to balance things up, lest this responsibility should appear too great, he now brings forward a Divine promise of great encouragement:

"No testing has fallen upon you but what is the common lot of men. But God can be trusted not to allow you to be tested beyond your power; on the contrary, along with the trial He will provide also the way out, so that you may be able to endure" (10:13 C. K. Barrett).

God knows even better than the believer just how much testing he can endure, and never will He allow the burden to become too great. Sometimes we may feel that we have come to the limit of our capability of endurance, but if this promise is true, this is not really so, otherwise the Lord would have lightened the burden. He indeed can "suit the burden to the back", and if we can see behind it all our need for His loving discipline, we shall not fail Him by becoming impatient or bitter. The second part of the promise is given a wrong slant in the Authorized Version. If a "way to escape" is made for us, then we are not bearing the trial. *Ekbasis*, literally way out, can mean the end, issue or outcome, and the word only occurs twice in the New Testament (here and Heb. 13:7). The promise means that He Who has led us *into* the trial has all of it, and its *outcome*, securely under His control. It will not continue one moment longer than is necessary, and we can be brought out of it "more than conquerors" by His grace and strength. This gives great assurance even though there may be details of the trial we cannot understand.

Paul now sums this section up: "Wherefore (or the conclusion of this) my beloved (is), flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise (or sensible) men; judge ye what I say" (verses 14 and 15 R.V.). Idolatry must be avoided at all costs and therefore there should be no direct contact with it if it could be avoided. "Run away from it", said the Apostle. In direct contrast to this was the New Covenant feast, the Lord's Supper.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion (sharing) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion (sharing) of the body of Christ?" (verse 16 R.V.).

The cup of blessing was one of the cups of wine which were drunk

at the Passover meal. As many may not be familiar with the procedure which prevailed at the time of Christ we give a summary. (1) Those celebrating the feast gathered together with the head of the house blessing the cup of wine which all partook. (2) Then followed washing of the hands accompanied with a benediction. (3) The table was set with the passover lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs and sauce. (4) The head of the house, and then the others, dipped a portion of bitter herbs into the sauce and ate them. (5) The dishes were then removed and a cup of wine brought, followed by an interval for asking questions concerning the feast, and then the wine was drunk (see Exod. 12:26,27). (6) The table was again set, the head repeating the commemorative words which opened what was strictly the paschal supper, and Psalms 103 and 104 were sung (the first part of the Hallel). (7) The second washing of the hands followed with a short blessing, breaking one of the two cakes of unleavened bread, with thanks. The bread was partaken, after dipping it, with the bitter herbs, into the sauce. (8) The flesh was then eaten with the bread and another blessing, together with a third cup of wine, known as "the cup of blessing". (9) Then came the fourth cup, with a recital or singing of Psalms 115-118, from which this cup was known as "the cup of the Hallel", or of the Song. (10) There might be, in conclusion, a fifth cup, provided that the great Hallel was sung over it (possibly Psalms 120-138). In connection with all this, the student should read Exodus 12:1-27 which gives the original instructions concerning the Passover.

When we compare the above ritual with the institution of the New Covenant feast by the Lord, we find it throws a certain amount of light on the procedure, although we cannot be certain of every detail. To (1), (5) or (8) we may refer the first words and the first distribution of the cup (Luke 22:17,18); to (4) or (7) the dipping of the sop (John 13:26); to (7) or an interval during or after (8), the distribution of the broken bread (Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23,24); to (9) or (10) "after supper" (Luke 22:20); then the thanksgiving and distribution of the cup, and the hymn with which the whole was ended.

There have been differences of opinion as to whether the meal which the Lord instituted was actually the Passover or an anticipation of it. But it seems quite clear from the Gospel

narrative, that it was the actual Passover (Matt. 26:2,17,18,19; Mark 14:1,12,14,16; Luke 22:7,8,11,13,15); and that the Lord was giving it an added significance with a view to His impending death and sacrifice of Himself, and connecting it with the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-37 made with Israel and Judah. It should be noted that the Passover was celebrated once a year only, and the Lord gave no direct indication of the frequency of the new feast ("Do this as oft as ye drink it", 1 Cor. 11:25). Even if it could be proved that it was definitely kept once a week by the early disciples, there was certainly no Divine command so to keep it.

Another factor which must be recognized and without which a correct assessment cannot be made of this meal, is its early connection with the *agape* or love-feast. One great feature of the original Pentecost of Acts 2 was that the disciples learned to share everything, their possessions and even their food (see also Acts 4:32). This was indeed a Divine communism with Christ in the centre. What we see today called "communism" is the Devil's counterfeit without Christ. The newly saved gathering of Acts 2 expressed their brotherly love in this practical way:

"And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and *had all things common (i.e. shared)*; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, *did eat their meat (food) with gladness and singleness of heart*" (Acts 2:43-46).

The "breaking of bread" was a common Jewish idiom for simply partaking of a meal. It is quite a mistake to limit it, as some do, to the Lord's Supper. The flat, round Jewish loaves were always broken and not cut, hence the origin of the phrase (see Matt. 15:36; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16). In Acts 2:46 "breaking bread from house to house" is explained by the next phrase "did eat their food with gladness", and shows this was a communal meal and came to be known as an *agape*, a love-feast. There were other practical expressions of brotherly love, such as almsgiving, and the kiss of greeting of man to man, and woman to woman (1 Pet. 5:14; Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26). By the time of Acts 6:1 the growth of the Jerusalem assembly led to the appointment of the seven to serve tables, which apparently

included the responsibility for arranging the common meals. Early the practice arose of ending the communal meal with the Lord's Supper, though again this was done without any Divine command recorded in the New Testament. Soon this began to be abused. There was over-eating and gluttony and this necessitated the sharp rebuke of the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 11. Jude 12 likewise warns of these excesses ("These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts" R.V.), and possibly 2 Peter 2:13, where there is a variant reading of *agapais*, love-feasts, for *apatais*, deceivings. The church Fathers refer to these feasts, among them Ignatius, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Chrysostom.

The love-feast later on became separated from the Lord's Supper. Such edicts as that of Trajan against secret societies, led to this. The *agape* was adjudged by the Emperor to pertain to secret clubs. By the fourth century the *agape* came into disfavour through various reasons such as disorders and the increasing emphasis placed upon the Eucharist—which finally degenerated into the Roman Mass. The Council of Laodicea (363), the third council of Carthage (393), and the second council of Orleans (541) led to finally prohibiting feasting in churches, though the rite still persisted in the Eastern Church. John Wesley introduced the practice within Methodism, but it has not survived. The practice of the Sovereign distributing Maundy money is a relic of the *agape*.

It is important to note that the Lord Jesus, either substituted or added the "washing of the feet" to the Passover ritual. He may have substituted this for one of the hand washings of this Service. Now we are often told that "all the commands of Jesus" are binding on the church today and that, in instituting the Supper, He was giving an example for all time to believers. If we notice carefully what He said in connection with that wondrous and lowly act of washing the disciples' feet, we shall indeed wonder why those who talk like this have turned a blind eye to this important part of the Supper:

"He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. . . . He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also

ought to wash one another's feet. *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you*" (John 13:4-15).

There can be no doubt as to the meaning of the Lord's words. He was expressly giving an example for the disciples to follow. Why has not the professing church been keen to put this into practice then? Can it be that washing people's feet is too lowly an act and is not nearly so thrilling as sipping wine and engaging in all the ritual that has accumulated through the centuries and obliterated the real meaning of this simple feast?

Coming back to 1 Corinthians, we shall not find it easy to distinguish between the love-feast and the Lord's Supper, but it is essential to have this background of knowledge if we are to understand properly the situation at Corinth with which Paul was dealing. There is no doubt that, because of human failing and infirmity, all ritual can become dangerous and finally gain an importance that it was never meant to have. The senses are entertained by it, and finally feeling is substituted for faith. We should be grateful that we belong to a heavenly calling where all shadows have vanished and we have all the fullness and spiritual reality in Christ.

Having glanced at the connection of the *agape*, the love-feast or communal meal, with the Lord's Supper, we return to the Apostle Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 10:16:

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion (sharing) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion (sharing) of the body of Christ? Seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread"
(1 Cor. 10:16,17 R.V.).

We have pointed out that the cup of blessing was a technical Jewish term for the cup of wine drunk at the end of the meal with an appropriate grace: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Who givest us the fruit of the vine." In the Passover meal, this was the third of the four cups that had to be drunk. The Apostle is now going to argue that the symbols of the wine and broken bread set forth the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus, the redemptive benefits of which they all shared together by faith in Him; this fact binding them into one body or company of be-

lievers. This was set forth pictorially, by their drinking the cup and eating the broken bread. In this sense they had a common participation in the body and blood of Christ. The phrase "one body" used here is explained: "Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, form one body, for we all partake" (verse 16 C. K. Barrett). The common participation bound them into one company, and so, as Romans 12:5 later expressed it, they were "one body IN Christ, and every one members one of another". Note, Paul does not say they were the Body OF Christ. *In Christ* is positional, such as we have it used in 2 Corinthians 5:17. The joint-Body (*sussoma*) of Ephesians was a later revelation: the latter word is not used in the Acts epistles, and we need to be very accurate in our reading of the context we are studying. Let us not forget that the discussion concerning the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper arose from the warning to flee from idolatry (10:14), and to avoid as far as possible food offered to idols. Any participation in these things after sharing in the tremendous benefits that flowed from the Lord's death, symbolized by the broken bread and the wine, would be treachery indeed.

Paul now points to an analogy to re-inforce his argument:

"Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they which eat the sacrifices communion with the altar?" (10:18 R.V.).

In some of the Old Testament sacrifices, the priests and the offerer shared together in the eating of the sacrifice. They were "partners at the altar" and equally partook of the benefits. But no such idea of blessing could be read into idolatry:

"Well: what do I mean by this? That food sacrificed to an idol is anything? Or that an idol is anything?" (10:19 C. K. Barrett).

Idolatry was dangerous from many aspects, but chiefly because behind all idolatry was demonism and Satan worship: "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons (devils), and not to God; and I would not that ye should have communion (fellowship) with demons" (devils, verse 20). Let us not forget that there is only one Devil or slanderer, but there are multitudes of demons, evil spirits, under his control. All idolatry, whether ancient or modern, is only another form of the worship of Satan, and is the very thing that he covets most of all. The very

thought of sharing in the redemptive blessings that flow from Calvary and sharing in Satan worship was abhorrent in the extreme:

"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons. Or are we to provoke the Lord? Are we stronger than He?"

(verses 21,22 C. K. Barrett).

We must remember that many of the Corinthian church were formerly pagans who had enjoyed the heathen sacrificial worship in their temples. Possibly this still had a fascination for them. But, said the Apostle, there must be a clean break. Eating food which had been sold in the market, after previously being used at an idolatrous feast, was one thing; but direct participation in such feasts was quite another. Furthermore, they had the warning of the provocation of the Lord of Israel of old, and the punishment that followed. Did they think they could provoke the Lord and get away with it?

In the section that follows, the Apostle sums up his teaching concerning food offered to idols which was one of the problems the Corinthian church had written to him about. There was a situation in which it might be harmless to eat food which had previously been offered to an idol. On the other hand it might be wrong so to do. The circumstances in each case must be taken into account, with the over-riding consideration of "his neighbour's good" (verse 24).

"Whatsoever is sold in the shambles (market), eat, asking no question for conscience sake; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If one of them that believe not biddeth you to a feast, and ye are disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This hath been offered in sacrifice, eat not, for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake; conscience, I say, not thine own, but the others . . ." (10:25-29 R.V.).

The sense of these verses is clear. Meat sold at the markets would almost surely contain a proportion which had been sacrificed in heathen worship. The Christian was not under any obligation to make a searching enquiry as to the origin of such food. In the final sense it was the Lord's, Who is the Creator and to

Whom all things of the earth belong. In these circumstances there was nothing wrong in buying and eating it. But if anyone pointed out that a particular portion of meat or food of any kind had definitely been used in idol worship, then a believer must abstain for the sake of the informant, whoever he was. It was really a case of practical Christian witness and self-limitation so as not to cause anyone else to stumble, which conduct has been previously emphasized by the Apostle. In passing, we should note that the words in verse 27 "to a feast" are supplied and are not in the original. It is better to limit the word to "invite", that is, to give an invitation to a meal in another person's home.

Verses 30 and 31 are difficult in their connection with what has gone before. It may be they are an interjection by someone with a strong conscience, asking why his liberty must be regulated by someone else's attitude of mind, and why should his action be misinterpreted? The answer is of course practical love, which ever considers the effects of one's actions on other people, and is willing to forego rights for the sake of others. The summing up is:

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Given no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God: even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved" (31-33 R.V.).

How near this man must have been walking with the Lord to be able to say without self-advertisement: "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (11:1)! This verse belongs more naturally with the end of chapter ten and should be kept with it. Paul gives a similar injunction in Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6, and 2 Thessalonians 3:7,9. Would that all of us who profess to know Christ could do likewise.

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER ELEVEN

In chapter eleven the Apostle deals with the public worship in the assembly, either touching problems concerning which they had written him, or what he realized they needed, judging from the reports he had received of their actions and spiritual condition. We have seen that when he can praise and encourage, he always does so. He is glad to know that they were holding fast the tradition of truth which he himself had delivered to them, that is, his oral teaching; and this method occupied a very important place in passing on the truth before the written Word was completed. This is tradition in a good sense, and is used similarly in 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6. It is only when *extra*-Scriptural things are taught as being truth, that tradition becomes so dangerous and blinding to those who receive such ideas. Modern Christendom is rife with this sort of thing, and the progressive Christian continually has to disentangle the Truth of the Scriptures from it.

Before he deals with some aspects of their behaviour in their assembly, Paul defines the God-given relationship between man and God, and man and woman:

“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”
(1 Cor. 11:3 R.V.).

How are we to understand the word “head” here? It can represent metaphorically the outstanding part of a whole, or in the Greek usage, the *origin* of things. The Lord Jesus Christ, as Creator and last Adam, is the “head” of the human race. Man is the “head” of the woman. Paul does not teach that man is woman’s *lord*, or that there is inequality in the sexes mentally or morally; but man is the origin of the woman, as Genesis 2:18-23 shows. He is the explanation of her being. The position of the Messiah in the Godhead is explained by “the head of Christ is God”. Thus a chain of relationships is set up—God, Christ, man, woman. This is the foundation for the regulations he is going to give respecting public prayer and prophecy. If a man prays

(publicly) with his head covered, he dishonours or disgraces his head (verse 4). Does the second occurrence of "head" refer to his head physically, or metaphorically to Christ (the Head)? If it is the former, then the meaning is that his uncovered head is a mark of his relationship to God as his Head, and it would be wrong for this to be concealed with a covering. If the latter, then the sense is that the man who is a believer, with his unveiled head, reflects the glory of Christ. If he covered it (like Moses was compelled to do) he would hide this glory. It is difficult to decide which is correct. It is possible that there is a combination of both meanings. What is clear is that men must be bareheaded in public worship. What of the women?

"But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoureth her head: for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn; but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man" (verses 5-7 R.V.)

This passage is without meaning unless women from time to time took part in the worship of the assembly, and this in spite of 14:34,35 which will be considered in its place. If it had been wrong for women so to do, the Apostle would certainly have forbidden the practice. He reminds the Corinthians that man came originally from God and displays typically the authority and glory of God on earth. Woman came originally from man, with the express purpose of being a helper for him, and she finds her fulfilment in this. As such she is "the glory of the man" (verses 7-9). From this the Apostle goes on to deduce:

"For this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels" (11:10 R.V.).

This verse is indeed difficult to interpret. What does Paul mean, and how does this fit in as a reason from what has gone before? There are at least two differing explanations of the reference to angels. (1) They are the wicked "sons of God" of Genesis six. (2) They are good angels who are the guardians of God's people (Heb. 1:13,14) and they would be offended by any improper behaviour in worship.

We must remember that social customs are bound to play a part and affect Christian witness, and unless they are definitely contrary to Biblical doctrine, they cannot be ignored by the believer in his daily life. The social customs at Corinth during New Testament times are, of course, different from ours, but the factors involved, specially in public worship, are the same, namely modesty, propriety and orderliness. Among the Greeks, only prostitutes, so numerous in Corinth, went about unveiled in public. If Christian women discarded the veil in the assembly, they automatically placed themselves on this level, thus losing their reputation, and bringing the whole assembly into disgrace.

The Greeks wore no head covering in private prayer, whereas the Jewish men wore the *tallith*, "a four-cornered shawl having fringes consisting of eight threads, each knotted five times" (Vincent) to show reverence to God and their unworthiness to look on Him. However, Maimonides (*Mishna*) excepts cases where (as in Greece) the custom of the place was different. But the Apostle has more than custom to consider in his regulation of conduct in the Corinthian assembly. His first regard was for truth and the right relationship between God, man, and then woman. Hence the argument of verses 3-16.

As we have seen, the relationship between Christian men and women is not one of superiority or otherwise, but of God-given position, and this, the Apostle argues, should be evident in dress and deportment. A man ought not to have his head veiled inasmuch as he is a representation of the image and glory of God. If the *tallith* was customary at this particular time for Jewish men in worship (we are not absolutely sure about this) then this was revolutionary teaching so far as they were concerned. But not so with the woman, as we have seen. It would have been revolutionary for her *not* to wear a veil in public, and as man was constituted by God to be her "head" (verse 3), the wearing of a veil, showing this symbolically, made it even more right and proper.

This is what Paul means when he says she should have "a sign of authority on her head", where "authority" is put by metonymy for "the veil" or head-covering. The Apostle does not stop here, but adds "because of the angels" (verse 10). The explanations of this clause have been legion. Here are some already mentioned:

- (1) The angels are "presidents" or leaders of the assembly, just as some interpret the "angels of the seven churches" in Revelation 1:20.
- (2) They are good angels who are present at worship and would be offended by indecorous conduct of women.
- (3) They are good angels who might be ensnared as the "sons of God" were in Genesis 6, when they contemplated unveiled women.
- (4) They are the fallen angels of Genesis 6 who worked such havoc with humanity which finally resulted in the Flood.

No. 1 we can reject outright. When the Lord Jesus interprets the symbol of "stars" as "angels" in Revelation 1:20, we have no right to re-interpret his interpretation and make them human leaders. This is opening the door to error and not light and understanding.

No. 2 is popular with many evangelical expositors, but when we take it to the test of Scripture, what do we find? Just where do we have any command in the Old or New Testament to avoid offending angels? And even if angels were offended by the behaviour of some of the Corinthian believers, what practical effect would this have had on this church? To avoid offending God is of supreme importance, but we have no divine commands concerning the effect of human conduct upon angels.

View No. 3 may be possible, but again, we have no clear teaching of Scripture as to the attitude of angels towards humanity, and therefore we cannot accept this idea.

We are left therefore with view No. 4, and lest any should think that this is one of the cranky ideas of modern dispensationalists, we would point out that it was put forward as early as Tertullian (A.D. 160-222). The Apostle has already used Genesis 1-3 in his arguments concerning the relationship of the sexes. What more natural that his thoughts should travel on to chapter six of the same book where, in the Septuagint, *angeloi*, angels are used of the "sons of God"? These "kept not their first estate" (Jude 6) and co-habited with women, which resulted in the evil Satanic seed who were physical monstrosities (giants Gen. 6:4), and finally produced the conditions which necessitated the Flood.

If this is what Paul is referring to, it will fit in with his arguments and the context we are now considering. It should be clear that neither men or women are safe in the spiritual conflict that surrounds us unless they abide in the position that God has placed them in, the one to the other. If a woman steps out of her God-appointed relationship with the man, then she puts herself in danger. Refusal to wear the veil would have been tantamount to doing this, and such a woman would then have been open to the powers of darkness who would not have been slow to take advantage. There is plenty of evidence in the Acts of active demonism, and the time was not without its dangers, just as it will be at the end of this age (2 Tim. 3:1).

Paul goes on to state the right relationship of the sexes (verses 11 and 12) and to point out that all these things (*ta panta*) have their origin in God. Even naturally and bodily, the man has been made different to the woman. Relating to the hair of the head, women grow considerably longer hair than men, so nature (or the God of nature) teaches us that woman has been given a natural covering which men lack (15). Nothing is clearer than the fact, that, whatever similarities men and women may have, they also have definite differences which distinguish them and this is according to God's will.

Many modern tendencies and fashions in the way the hair is treated and in dress, obliterate these distinctions between the sexes and are definitely bad. Believers should take care with such modern fashions, and see to it that they are not being enslaved by these things and so becoming conformed to this age (Rom. 12:1,2).

Having made the relationship between men and women clear (even appealing to nature and custom of the Greek world at the time of writing), he now asks:

"Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled? . . . but if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (verses 13-16 R.V.).

The Apostle does not say that it was unseemly for any woman to engage in prayer, but to do so *unveiled* would be unseemly and even dangerous, because of the evil spirit world. In addition there was no other church doing these things in this way, so the

Corinthians who were doing this, could not appeal to such action elsewhere in support of their own.

Paul, all through this section, is regulating the conduct of the Corinthian assembly. The Holy Spirit had distributed his evidential gifts to both men and women (12:4-6). The Apostle had written to the Thessalonian church that these gifts must not be quenched (1 Thess. 5:19). There is no possibility of man quenching God here. "Spirit" is put for His gift which could be neglected. However, the way these gifts were used in the meetings together must be regulated so that all was done decently and in order. Later on in this epistle Paul returns to the use of these gifts, with special reference to tongues and prophecy.

A new section commences with verse 17, where, instead of commending as in verse 2, the Apostle is compelled to censure them for their bad conduct in connection with the Lord's Supper:

"But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it" (11:17,18 R.V.).

The situation was so bad that Paul tells them that their coming together in assembly, instead of being a help, had become a hindrance by reason of their behaviour. We need not assume that the divisions here were the same as those mentioned in 3:3. They seem to have arisen in the context of chapter eleven out of pure selfishness and greed. It is essential to remember that the Supper itself was preceded by the communal meal, the *agape*, which has its origin in Acts 2:42-47. This we have dealt with earlier on to which the reader is referred. The abuses obviously commenced with this love-feast, which, instead of being a practical expression of love and sharing, became an opportunity to indulge in gluttony and disgraceful conduct. Paul said that he had heard of all this (doubtless from Chloe's house, 1:11; or from Stephanas and his friends, 16:17), and he partly believed it. Most people believe *more* than they hear. The gracious Apostle believes *less* than has been reported to him. On the surface, it seemed impossible that such scandalous behaviour could occur among Christians, but Paul knew to what depths such could sink when the old sinful nature is indulged.

He uses two words for divisions, *schisma* and *hairesis*, which, while having different shades of meaning, can only refer to the same thing here. Divisions resulted in separate parties being formed, evidently antagonistic to each other. The only good thing about this sorry state of affairs was "there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved (*dokimoi*) may be made manifest among you" (verse 19). In other words, people's true characters are exposed in such a situation; those walking worthy and therefore approved by the Lord, being manifestly distinct from the backsliders. The Lord Jesus, in His lifetime, had hinted that such divisions would occur, but that those responsible would come under judgment (Matt. 18:7). Alas, the history of the professing church right through the centuries, has been strewn with such happenings.

The Corinthian communal meal was certainly a meal of sorts, but it was not the *Lord's* Supper in the way the believers at Corinth were treating it. The word *Lord's* is the adjective *kuriakon*, "relating to the Lord", and here is emphatic. Instead of the Lord being in control, the sinful flesh was dominating, and this meal, which could have beautifully set forth their practical oneness in Christ, was being used for gluttony and selfishness. No wonder Paul was so indignant. The chief offenders appeared to be the rich, who were in a position to set an example in generosity and thoughtfulness for the poorer brethren. Instead of this, they were grossly over-eating and drinking, even to the point of getting drunk, with the result that the poor were left without food and went hungry (verses 20 & 21).

"What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or depise ye the Church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not" (1 Cor. 11:22 R.V.).

This disgraceful behaviour was bringing Christianity into contempt and Paul charged them to remedy this at once.

It was even worse in view of the fact that the love-feast was so closely connected with the New Covenant feast, which was a memorial of the Lord's atoning death for them; and to link such conduct with such rich and solemn symbols was intolerable.

The Apostle now elaborates this:

"For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, This is My body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:23,24, R.V.).

That the actual words of the Lord Jesus at this Passover supper were handed down from the apostles to their disciples and then to others there is no doubt, and it is possible that they could have reached Paul in this way. But in view of Galatians 1:12, with its great stress on the Lord's revelation to Paul independently of any human source, it is better to take the words "I received of the Lord" as meaning that the Apostle received this record directly from Christ.

There should be no need to stress that this meal was directly connected with the Passover, as all the four evangelists make perfectly clear. Likewise its connection with the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is plain, and that covenant is specially related to Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31). It is tradition that wrenches this feast away from its divinely Israelitish setting, so much so that many Christians have never realized that, in its inception, it was connected with the Passover at all!

The Lord gives the symbolical meaning to the broken bread and the wine by the figure *Metaphor*, in which the verb "to be" means "represents" (see *Figures of Speech used in the Bible* by E. W. Bullinger, D.D. (p. 738). "This (broken bread) *represents* My body, which is for you". The ghastly failure of the Roman Church to recognize this fact has resulted in the blasphemy and bondage of the Mass that has enslaved and deceived thousands down the centuries.

The twelve apostles were exhorted to keep this feast as a "memorial"—"do this as My memorial" (1 Cor. 11:25 literally). Now both the Passover and this feast were memorials, the one reminding Israel of their miraculous deliverance from the bondage of Egypt (Exod. 13:9), and the other of a greater deliverance at Calvary from the bondage of sin and death. In both cases blood was shed stressing death, the former a type of the great reality, the

precious life of Christ, voluntarily laid down in bearing the penalty of the sins of His people. This figure *Metaphor* would have been readily understood by these twelve Jews, to whom the eating of the literal flesh and blood of the Lord would have been revolting and utterly contrary to the Law.

These symbols not only looked back by faith into the past. They looked forward too, to the *completion* of the saving work which they represented, at the expected early coming of Christ, when the goal of salvation would be attained.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come" (11:26 R.V.).

It should hardly be necessary to say, in view of our past studies, that the second advent of Christ, *as yet future to us*, could not have been in their minds. During the Acts, the coming of the Lord was imminent as practically all the early epistles clearly teach (cp. Acts 3:19-26). Paul, together with the Christian groups of believers, expected to see and participate in this great event. Therefore this supper was a *proclamation of the nearness and reality of the Second Advent*. This sacrificial meal then linked *both* the comings together, and had real point at this time.

Moreover, this typical meal was not one-sided. If it spoke of basic truths which conferred eternal blessings, it also brought great responsibility upon those who partook of it and it was this that Paul wanted to bring home to those in the Corinthian assembly who were so grossly abusing their great privileges. One of the big mistakes that evangelists have made is to teach that the *age of grace* commenced at Calvary. God certainly *acted in grace* and long-suffering to Israel during the Acts period in giving them yet another opportunity to repent and turn back to Him. The gospel Paul preached was one based upon grace, but as a dispensation, grace did not operate in all its fulness until after the laying aside in unbelief of the chosen nation, and as such it was then made known in the first letter written after this event which occurred at Acts 28, namely Ephesians (3:2).

During the Acts, divine judgment was as much manifest as it had been in Old Testament days. James, stressing the imminent return of Christ, had declared that His coming drew near, and as Judge,

He was then standing before the door (5:7-9). It is quite wrong to regard the Second Advent as one of blessing only. Many Scriptures reveal the fact that it is also a time of judgment for sin. During the time we are considering (the period covered by the Acts), the Lord was already judging among His people. His severe dealings with Ananias and Sapphira were typical. We remember this resulted from their telling lies, not the worst of sins in the estimation of many people, and one wonders what would happen amongst Christians today if we were still living in the same dispensation! And yet this *would* be happening if the present dispensation had commenced at the Cross.

The Apostle is now going to warn the sinning Christians that their abuses of the supper of the Lord would certainly come under His direct judgment, and had already done so in a solemn way on some of them.

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep” (11:27-30 R.V.).

Those in the Corinthian assembly who were so grossly indulging the sinful old nature by gluttony and drunkenness were playing with fire. The Lord could not be indifferent to such conduct, and as a result, a great number of them were ill, and some had actually been visited with death.

This was the Lord’s judgment indeed beginning at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17), and was an earnest of the earthly Kingdom age when, not only will there be world-wide blessing, but divine judgment and discipline too so that sin may be restrained, and without this, such a kingdom and blessing would be impossible of realization.

Again we would point out that this direct judgment for sin is not typical of this present age of grace. When one considers the errors in connection with the Roman Mass participated in by many thousands; the many unbelievers who regularly have taken

communion over the centuries, "not discerning the Lord's body", one wonders again just what would have happened in Christendom down the centuries had the Lord been dealing with His people in the same way as the time we are here considering. As one has said, undertakers could not have coped with the work! Yet Paul warned the Corinthians that he who did not discern the spiritual teaching underlying the meal relating to the Lord's body "eats and drinks judgment unto himself", and this judgment was not one in the far future at the last day, but *was taking place at that very time in a drastic way.*

This fact, together with other features, should make it clear to the discerning believer, that the Acts is a separate dispensation, even though we have the fundamental gospel of grace, true for all time dealing with sin and death, preached throughout the period. The solemn conclusion of all this is stated in verse 31:

"But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another. If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come" (11:31-34 R.V.).

If the believers at Corinth would only turn the searchlight of judgment upon themselves instead of on others, they would have disciplined themselves and avoided the Lord having to discipline them, although this discipline, even if severe, was better than being condemned with the unsaved world around them.

It is still true today, believers should never judge or harshly condemn one another. It is easier and more pleasant to judge someone else than to rigorously judge and discipline ourselves, but this is the only condemnation that God allows us! How much more pleasant the history of the professing Church would have been if only this had been carried out consistently! In this blatant age, when self-discipline is so little known, it behoves the believer to give a witness that his faith in Christ has taught him to control himself, remembering that this is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23, where "temperance" should read "self-control"), which should be on the "tree" of our lives, bringing glory to the Lord.

This section of the epistle ends with the Apostle exhorting the believers at Corinth to wait for one another (verse 33) at their love-feasts. It is obvious that there was no spiritual hierarchy in the Corinthian set-up who could have forced obedience of the rank and file. They were not told to wait for their leaders to arrive, but each to wait for the other, thus bringing responsibility to all. Any undue hunger should be first satisfied at home (verse 34), so that their conduct might be worthy, and the painful experience of the Lord's judgment avoided.

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER TWELVE

Paul now commences an important section dealing with spiritual gifts. It is clear that the Corinthian church had an abundance of these gifts, and this in spite of their carnal state. To teach that the possession of these gifts today is a mark of spirituality, or of some special filling of the Spirit, is quite contrary to Scriptural facts, as we shall see. It is possible that the believers at Corinth had raised the matter concerning gifts in their communication with him. As this matter was directly connected with their public worship, the Apostle now deals with it.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that when ye were Gentiles ye were led away unto those dumb idols, howsoever ye might be led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (12:1-3 R.V.).

The word "gifts" is not in the original; it could be rendered "spiritual matters", but as the context makes clear that it is special gifts of the Holy Spirit which are being discussed, it is better to supply the word "gifts". There was evidently a large Gentile section in the Corinthian assembly, for the Apostle refers to their pre-conversion days as idolaters under the domination of the evil Satanic spirits that were behind the dumb idols they worshipped.

While redemption had delivered them from this bondage, it was a mistake to suppose that there was no danger now from Satanic activity. In one sense these gifts constituted a danger, for Paul makes it clear in this epistle and the one that was to follow, that Satan, as an angel of light, can travesty these gifts and so deceive the unwary. It is quite wrong to imagine that the great enemy of God and His children, gave believers a holiday, as it were, till the second century with its developed Gnosticism. The battle between light and darkness never ceases, and the error that the Apostle combated at Colossae, the warnings contained in the Pastoral epistles and the command of the Apostle John to "test the spirits whether they are of God, *because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (1 John 4:1) and that the spirit of antichrist *was already present* (2:18), show quite clearly that this was so, and therefore the danger existed of being led astray.

We wish that those today who are anxious to bring back *some* of these gifts, in particular tongue speaking, would bear in mind the danger of what they are seeking to do.

In New Testament times ecstatic heathen worship was a *fact*, as it is still today in dark centres of heathendom. Paul either knew that this had already entered the Corinthian church, or there was the possibility of it doing so.

Thus he states categorically that no one under the influence of God's Spirit can say that Jesus is accursed, nor would anyone under Satanic domination own His lordship, for this is the very thing that Satan covets for himself, and he certainly would not allow any of his dupes to advertise the supremacy of Christ!

It seems clear that the Apostle had the worship of the assembly in mind in this long section dealing with spiritual gifts, which occupies this chapter and also chapters thirteen and fourteen. In consequence, he is not referring to every day speech (although what he said would cover this) but speech in the assembly, which would be either under the guidance of God, or under Satanic influence. Anyone of course at any time could *pronounce* the words "Lord Jesus", whether saved or unsaved, but no one in the assembly's worship could use this phrase in *teaching or witness* and be under the control of the evil one.

Having made this clear, Paul now goes on to discuss the spiritual gifts themselves:

"There are distributions of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are distributions of services, and the same Lord; and there are distributions of operations, but the same God who operates all things in all men. To each one is given his own manifestation of the Spirit, with a view to mutual profit. For to one there is given, through the Spirit, a word of wisdom; to another, in accordance with the same Spirit, a word of knowledge; to another faith, in the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing, in the one Spirit; to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the power to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these things the same one Spirit puts into operation, distributing individually to each one as He wills"

(1 Cor. 12:4-11 C. K. Barrett).

There is no difficulty with the main theme of this section. Note that Spirit, Lord and God are used interchangeably. However varied the gifts may be, they have one source, the Holy Spirit of God. They were not distributed to give any feeling of superiority, but for the mutual profit of the whole church (verse 7). Just as there was no uniformity of experience, neither was there of gifts. Nor were these gifts the privilege of the few who had had some *special* spiritual experience. *To each one* of the assembly is given his own manifestation of the Spirit (verse 7) and the Spirit divided these gifts exactly "as He willed". No believer was responsible for the kind of gift he received, but he was certainly responsible for the way he used it, which primarily was meant for the Lord's glory and the common good. In view of the attempts to revive tongue speaking today apart from the gifts *as a whole*, it is significant that Paul puts speaking in tongues at the bottom of the list. Furthermore, he nowhere teaches that tongue speaking was a gift which the Holy Spirit gave to *every* believer, or that it was an evidence of spiritual maturity. It was probably coveted by some because of its outward showiness, but the Apostle commences with one that is infinitely more important, but without any external attraction, that of *wisdom*. Why? *Because wisdom is fundamental in the practical out-working of any gift or service for the Lord*. Who is going to give away anything of real value to foolish people who will only misuse it?

It is noteworthy that, in his prayer for the Ephesian believers,

Paul again puts wisdom first (Eph. 1:17). "If any man lack wisdom (and we all do to some extent) let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally . . ." (James 1:5), so there is no excuse for any believer to remain foolish, or to think or act foolishly. This only hinders the Truth, and lets the Lord down before an unbelieving world.

The next evidential gift of the Spirit in chapter 12 is *knowledge*. That this was given without human mediation is clear by the context, where all the gifts come directly from the Spirit of God. 1 John 2:20 refers to this by saying, "But ye have an unction (anointing) from the Holy One (i.e. The Holy Spirit) and ye know all things". And again in 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you."

One of the gifts of the ascended Christ for His Body is "teachers" (Eph. 4:11), but there is no mention in this epistle of any supernatural gift of knowledge without human effort, such as existed in the church at Corinth. We may wish there was such today, but now we find we have to search the Scriptures patiently, comparing spiritual things with spiritual; we need to pray for enlightenment too before such Divine knowledge becomes our personal possession. While there were teachers in the churches during the period covered by the Acts, it is evident that some who had the special gift of knowledge were independent of them, though not in a schismatic sense, for the will of God was for all to work together as members of a body, in united witness.

Faith is the next special gift, and it is obvious this cannot be the initiatory faith of the sinner believing in Christ as Saviour, for such a faith would be possessed by all true believers. It would be rather the faith of the pioneer, willing to undertake new and possibly difficult work for Christ, not only in the assembly, but outside. We have a modern example of this in George Muller and his work for destitute children.

Now follows gifts of healing, and the Acts is full of concrete examples of this. (Acts 3:7,8; 4:16,30; 5:15,16; 8:6,7; 9:33,34; 14:8-10; 19:11,12; 28:8,9). Note that the healing was *instantaneous and complete*, and we may be sure that there was no relapse! When

modern healing campaigns are compared to this, their pitiful inadequacy is only too obvious. And yet they claim to be fulfilling the same ministry as obtained in the Acts! How folk can be so duped as to believe this only goes to show the utter ignorance of the New Testament that abounds today.

The healing ministry we are dealing with has its roots in the Old Testament in God's promises to Israel:

"... If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God . . . I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians . . ." (Exod. 15:26).

"And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and He shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (Exod. 23:25).

"Thou shalt be blessed above all people: . . . and the Lord will take away from thee all sickness . . ." (Deut. 7:14,15).

There is no doubt that definite Divine healing was promised to this earthly people of God. This was repeated in the Lord's commission of the Twelve to Israel:

"And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons . . ." (Matt. 10:7,8).

This very healing ministry was also performed by the Lord day by day, as the Gospel records clearly show, and the same ministry continues without a break till Israel is laid aside at the end of the Acts. After this, Paul's healing ministry, so effective before (see Acts 19:11,12), now no longer obtains (Phil. 2:25-27; 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20).

This divine healing was one of the foretastes of the coming earthly kingdom, where there will not only be abundant spiritual blessing but physical health and blessing as well. If we are aiming for truth and not wishful thinking, we shall keep this ministry where the Bible places it—with Israel and God's earthly kingdom purposes. To wrench it from this setting as so many have done is to get difficulty, and disillusionment, as well as confusion in our understanding of the Divine plan of the ages.

The next of the Spirit's evidential gifts is the working of

miracles, and again there is no need to argue as to what today can be regarded as miraculous. The Acts of the Apostles is full of what the Holy Spirit means by the working of miracles and the following Scriptures should be carefully verified as they are too long to quote in full here (Acts 2:22,43; 4:29,30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:5-7,39; 9:37-41; 12:7; 13:10,11; 14:3; 16:16-18,25,26; 20:9-11; 28:3-9).

There can be no doubt that we do not live in such an age today. The power to work such miracles was another earthly kingdom evidence, and to some at Corinth this divine gift was given by the Holy Spirit. There is another reference to this gift in Paul's early letter to the Galatians:

"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?" (Gal. 3:5).

It is important to note that these miracles were not just displays of great power which overwhelmed or stupified those who saw them. They were *signs*, that is they signified and gave a special message; hence their evidential value to Israel who had the countersign, the Old Testament Scriptures.

The reader who has carefully perused the above list of references, cannot fail to note the number of times the word "sign" is connected with the word "miracle".

The Apostle follows this gift with that of *prophecy*, and it is important to remember that a Bible prophet was a *forth-teller* as well as being a *foreteller*. Prophets in the New Testament were linked with apostles as a foundation ministry by the risen Christ (Eph. 4:11), and this was essential for the delivery of truth to God's people until the great foundation of inspired Scripture was complete, through which God could speak to men and meet every need by the Holy Spirit's enlightenment. No further additions to God's completed Word are necessary or can be allowed. Our task is the *proclamation* of this completed revelation, and we no longer need the ministry either of the apostle or prophet, the sure foundation now being the Word of God and the Christ of the Word.

The ministry of the prophet during the Acts ranked high in the Apostle Paul's estimation (1 Cor. 14:3-5) in importance above the

gift of tongues.

In view of the satanic spirit of deception concerning which Christ so clearly warned (Matt. 24:4,5,11,24 and see 2 Thess. 2:7-10), a divine gift of discrimination was needed at this time to distinguish the true from the false; thus *discerning of spirits* was an important gift and we have already seen the Apostle John's command to test the spirits in view of false prophets (1 John 4:1-3). Thus those who claimed to give a word of wisdom, or knowledge, or prophecy could be infallibly sorted out as to whether their utterances were actuated by the Spirit of God or by some satanic and demonic power.

The last on Paul's list is tongues and their interpretation. We shall have more to say about this gift when we reach chapter fourteen where the Apostle deals with tongue speaking and its proper place in the assembly, so that everything could be done "decently and in order".

The Apostle now stresses the *source* of all gifts—the Holy Spirit Himself who is sovereign in his distribution of them:

"But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will" (12:11 R.V.).

He alone chooses what gift *each believer* should have, so that none should have ground either for boasting or for being inferior. Nor were they given just to the "spiritual". All were necessary at this time for the great earthly kingdom testimony. This naturally leads to the thought of the Pentecostal church as a whole and what the working of every part could achieve for the Lord. What better illustration could be given than a human body, with its various members working together harmoniously for the body and the person as a whole?

This illustration was by no means unique. It was frequently employed in the ancient world and we find allusions to it in Socrates, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and Marcus Antoninus. The Apostle writes:

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is *the* Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12).

The Authorized Version and Revised Version omit the expressed definite article before "Christ". Many expositors can see that "the Christ" cannot refer just to Christ *personally*, for how can He be likened to a human body which has uncomely as well as comely parts? (verse 23). "Christ" (*Christos*) means anointed, and "the Christ" can be used as the title of a church which has been specially anointed. The believers to whom the Apostle John wrote were told "Ye have an anointing" (*chrisma*) (1 John 20,27), and this gave them the supernatural gift of knowledge which we have already seen is contained in the list detailed in verses 8-10 of the chapter with which we are dealing. In his second letter to the Corinthian church the Apostle wrote:

"Now He that *confirmeth* us with you in Christ, and *hath anointed* us (*chrismo*), is God" (2 Cor. 1:21).

This "anointing" is very much to the point in 1 Corinthians 12:12. Moreover, the above reference acquaints us with the fact that these supernatural gifts were *confirmatory* in character as well as being *signs*. The teaching then in 1 Corinthians 12:12 is clear. Just as a human body has many members, and each member has a particular part to play, not independently, but for the well-being of the body as a whole, so should the Corinthian assembly have functioned. The cliques which had come into being at Corinth and the misusing of some of the spiritual gifts were rendering this unity null and void in practice, and it is this unity which was so important and which Paul has stressed from various angles.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (12:13).

To be baptized into a special company was no new truth. We have already had the baptism of all Israel unto Moses in 1 Corinthians ten, and this baptism was a *spiritual* baptism without water, which united them with Moses and all for which He stood, and had its origin in God's action, not in anything that Israel did. So it is here. The words "baptized" and "made to drink" are in the aorist tense denoting that the action is past (not something future to be sought) and was true of *all* believers at that time irrespective of their condition. It was an action never to be repeated, being the work of the Holy Spirit.

It cannot refer to water baptism, for Paul had already told the Corinthians that water baptism *did not form part of His Christ-directed ministry* (1 Cor. 1:17), and no kind of water baptism would ever effect this *spiritual unity of the believer with God*. Nothing less than the Holy Spirit's work could do this. Such a unity certainly did *not* depend upon the work of man in carrying out any external ritual.

In proceeding with the illustration of a human body, Paul stresses the inter-dependence of the various members. We have seen that this usage of the word "body" was not confined to the Scriptures. In spite of a superficial likeness, the Apostle is not describing the Body of Christ, yet to be revealed in all its fulness after the Acts in Ephesians and Colossians. At this time it was still a secret, hid in God from all past ages and generations of people (Eph. 3:9 R.V., Col. 1:26 R.V.) and there is not a hint in these Corinthian epistles, or for that matter in *any* epistle written during the Acts, that such a secret of God is being unfolded. In fact the word mystery (secret) is not used once to designate the church individually or as a whole, such as it is used later on after Acts 28 in Ephesians and Colossians. If we carefully note the language of 1 Corinthians twelve and Romans twelve, we shall note differences from Ephesians. One which should be obvious is that the one Body of Ephesians is distinguished from Christ as the Head. The likeness of the Corinthian church to a human body and its members, speaks of eyes, ears and nose, all members of the human head and illustrative of those in the Corinthian church (verses 17-24). Every member of the Body of Christ in Ephesians is "accepted in the Beloved", but the body of 1 Corinthians twelve has "uncomely" parts which certainly is not true of the former. If Paul is teaching here Ephesian truth, then he is using the figure of a human body in a very careless way and we cannot accept this for a moment.

Moreover, he asserts in Ephesians that the Church related to the Mystery is a "*joint-Body*" (*sussoma*), a unique word (3:6). No such body, *where every member is equal in size and importance* had ever existed before, either naturally or spiritually. It never occurs in any Acts epistle, and in fact could not be used while the position at this time symbolized by the olive tree (Israel) and the wild grafts (Gentiles), was true (Rom. 11:16-24, and note verses 18

and 22). We should also realize that the gifts set by God in the Corinthian assembly are different from those of Ephesians 4:11, inasmuch that gifts of healing, helps, governments and diversities of tongues are omitted in the Ephesian list, healings and tongues being specially linked, as we have seen again and again, with the earthly kingdom ministry of which Israel is the centre and form no part of the heavenly calling of Ephesians. Apostles, prophets, and teachers are repeated after Acts twenty-eight which shows clearly that there is a definite selection by the Holy Spirit, repeating what was *continuous*, and leaving out that which was *transitory*, for so many of these Acts gifts were such, and never intended to be permanent (1 Cor. 13:8).

The whole point of Paul's argument concerning these gifts is that no one is responsible for the *kind* of gift he has, and even if some are more important, *all* are necessary for the proper functioning of the assembly in Christian witness. None should feel any sense of superiority or inferiority whatever gift he possesses, and all should lead, above all, to *unity*. After showing the diversity in unity of the human body, he says:

"Now you are Christ's body, and, individually members"
(12:27 C. K. Barrett).

Both the Authorized Version and Revised Version translate "Now ye are *the* body of Christ", but there is no definite article in the Greek. We cannot translate it baldly "you are *a* body of Christ", for this does not give the sense. The only way is, as Dr. C. K. Barrett renders it, "you are Christ's body".

At first sight this seems to upset the distinction between the Pentecostal church and the Body of Christ after the Acts period, but we should ask ourselves, how could *one* of the many assemblies existing at this time be *The Body* of Christ? What of the rest? Paul uses the phrase "one body" again in Romans and this helps us to understand the usage of the word "body" in the Acts as applied to believers. "So we, being many, are one body *in* Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). Note he did *not* say "we are the one Body *OF* Christ", but "one body (of believers) *in* Christ", which is a very different thing and shows *the standing* by grace of the Roman church in Christ. So with the Corinthian assembly. They were a company (body) of believers

belonging to Christ (Christ's body); like all the other churches; they were not part of the *sussoma*, the joint-Body of which Christ is the Head. Nothing is said about the Headship of Christ in these Acts epistles. If we are absolutely accurate in our reading and note just what the Apostle wrote under inspiration, not adding in our minds what was to be revealed later, we shall have no difficulty with this context, or try to identify what God has made to differ. Nor need we be concerned with the old jibe that this teaches there are *two* Bodies of Christ, for this would only be true if they existed *at the same time*. Of course this is not so, for the *sussoma*, the Joint-Body of Christ was not revealed till after Israel failed at Acts 28, thus superseding the Acts period position.

The God-given human gifts of ministry commence with the foundation work of apostles and prophets. As we have seen, these were necessary to lay the foundation of truth until the written Word of God was complete and then the completed inspired Word took over. The gifts that follow are secondary and fall in line with the supernatural gifts already detailed. "Helps" *antilepseis* is a common word in the papyri, but only used here in the New Testament. It probably referred to the work of the deacons, assisting the poor and the sick. "Governments" (*kuberneseis*), speak of ruling or leading, and Paul doubtless has in mind the overseers (bishops), the outstanding leaders of the local assembly.

The questions asked by the Apostle (1 Cor. 12:29,30) refer back to verse fourteen and its argument that the human body is not one member, but many and all essential. In each question *me* in the Greek demands the answer "no". It is significant that "tongues" comes at the bottom of the list and the answer "no" deals a death blow to the modern Pentecostal argument that tongue speaking is a sign of the in-filling or special baptism of the Holy Spirit for those who are seeking it. "Eagerly desire the *greater* gifts" said the Apostle (verse 31) and there is no doubt that Paul unhesitatingly ranks some spiritual gifts above others, but tongue speaking is certainly not one, as this context and chapter fourteen clearly reveal. The Apostle goes on to say there is something better, "I show you a supremely excellent way", a way *par excellence* which exceeds all that has been given before. It is *the way of divine love*, and those who have the mind of the Spirit will always put the emphasis on this first and foremost. What this involves is made clear in the poetic hymn to love which follows in chapter thirteen.

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

What is definitely more important in God's eyes than evidential gifts is the practical "fruit of the Spirit" of Galatians 5:22,23. It is *fruit* that the Lord wants upon the tree of our lives, and without this our heavenly Father cannot be glorified by us (John 15:1-8). The first in the list of fruit is *love*, and to the church at Corinth, Paul is now going to show that "supremely excellent way", which was better even than the evidential gifts they possessed.

This "way" is now set out in the wonderful hymn to love of chapter thirteen. In this poem, a contrast is first made with the gifts and one great and essential difference is stressed, namely, that the gifts, including that of tongues, were temporal and passing, whereas love abides and is eternal:

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal"

(13:1 R.V.).

It is clear from chapters 12-14 that the Apostle did not rate the gift of tongues highly. Even if the believers at Corinth were able to understand the speech of angels and all other languages, this would be meaningless and valueless without practising love. It would be no better than the paganism that surrounded them, just an empty noise. Let this be made clear from the start. We must empty our minds of all human conceptions of love if we wish to understand 1 Corinthians 13. If ever a word has been misunderstood and grossly debased and misrepresented it is the word "love". Today it has sunk so low as to mean little more than the physical.

The character of divine love is clearly stated in the Scripture. It is pure unselfishness which gives to the limit for others. "A studied denial of self in the interest of others". "God so loved . . . *that He gave His only begotten Son*" (John 3:16). "Walk in love, as Christ also hath *loved* us, and hath *given Himself* for us . . ." (Eph. 5:2). Real love does not merely give of one's possessions; it *gives no less than one's self* for others. The Lord Jesus not only gave *out* of His inexhaustible fullness, but even more, He gave no less than *Himself* for us.

It is this conception of love that obtains in 1 Corinthians 13. Anything less is a mockery, and this was what was so lacking in the Corinthian assembly. Plenty of gifts, plenty of show, but so little real fruit of the Spirit evidenced in the practical out-working of Divine love. Speaking in tongues without such love was just a jangling noise that accomplished nothing.

“And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries [secrets] and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (13:2 R.V.).

The Apostle ranked prophecy much higher than the gift of tongues (14:1-4), but even prophecy or such faith that could accomplish what was seemingly impossible (“remove mountains”), was useless without love, and rendered such a person as nothing, an absolute zero.

One could give away all one's goods to the poor and needy, and even be willing to suffer a martyr's death (whether by being burned or by self-immolation is not clear), *and it would profit nothing*. There is an alternative reading “that I may glory”, as the reason for acts of charity, which would nullify its virtue by the wrong motive of self-aggrandisement (note the R.V. margin).

There is no record of martyrdom by fire before the persecutions under Nero, but in spite of this it is quite likely that the Byzantine text of the Authorized Version is right and that Paul is taking his instruction to a climax in saying in effect, “Even if I give myself up to the most painful of deaths in some great cause, but have no divine love, it would do me no good”. This is startling but true, and it means to say that all of us should be honest with ourselves and make sure of our *motives* for Christian service. Is it being done to please ourselves in some way, because it appeals to us? Are we doing it in order to please others? Do we want to give an impression before others of being a splendid charitable character? All these motives are wrong, and in the Lord's assessment for service, will profit *nothing*. There is only *one* motive that the Lord will accept, and that is *real love for Him*. It is the “love of Christ” that “constraineth us”, said the Apostle (2 Cor. 5:14) and this is the only reason for service that counts with our Master.

Paul now proceeds to describe such a love *in action*. It is easier

to say what love will or will not *do*, rather than to state what it *is*.

"Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth" (4-6 R.V.).

This love does not lose patience with others, however provoking they may be ("long-suffering"). It is always kind (*chrestos* from *chraomai*, to use), meaning gracious, useful. Love is not envious or jealous, a bad sin that can creep insidiously into the heart of a believer and blight his thinking and Christian activities.

Love does not brag ("vaunteth not itself"), is not arrogant and full of self-importance ("puffed up"). It does not behave in an unseemly or indecent way, nor is it selfish, seeking its own interests. Love does not get irritable ("provoked"), or put evil down to any one's account. It does not rejoice at unrighteousness, taking pleasure at being censorious, or having a sense of superiority, but rather rejoices in what is opposite, namely, the truth.

The Apostle now treats with the *extent* to which love operates and uses *panta*, all things, four times. This is a word that always needs great care in the New Testament. All sorts of false conclusions can be adduced from this word unless the nearer and remoter context is carefully considered. "All things" is not equivalent to "everything universally". Here we are told "love believeth all things" (verse 7). Does divine love believe *everything*? If so, it must believe the false as well as the true! Is it just credulous, or does it carefully select what it believes? Surely it should be obvious that "all things" here is limited to everything that is in accord with *truth*, and nothing outside of it.

Divine love covers, protects, supports all things that relate to truth ("beareth all things"). It never ceases to hope ("hopeth all things"); it endures all things. No hardship or rebuff affects it. In other words, *love never fails* (verse 8). It survives everything, and like God Himself (1 John 4:8), it is eternal; in contrast to the evidential gifts which were only temporary and destined to pass away:

"Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (verses 8-10 R. V.).

The modern revivers of tongue-speaking and those who mistakenly wish to emulate them, should consider these statements seriously. Tongues will cease. The verb is the future middle indicative and means they shall make themselves cease, or cease automatically and we know from the testimony of the Acts and the Pauline epistles written afterwards that this is what actually did occur. There may have been a few sporadic outbursts later on but these were confined to heretical groups like the Montanists. As we have seen, there was no more need of prophecy when the New Testament and the whole of the Scriptures were completed, neither was there for tongues when the earthly kingdom testimony ceased. This was when Israel finally failed and was temporarily set aside by God at Acts 28.

The Corinthian believers who were putting a false value on tongues and possibly the gifts as a whole, were reminded again that this was a mark of spiritual babyhood (see 3:1-3). "That which is perfect", *to teleion*, refers to maturity, full-growth, not merely to a *future* period of time when the Lord returns—as some teach, but a *present* personal possibility (compare 2:6 and 14:20 margin). This is reinforced by Paul's *personal experience* which he now gives, contrasting his thinking and speaking as a child to his present adulthood. He can now put away the things that once were necessary to him when he was an infant. This was also true spiritually. He is now well on the way to full growth (Phil. 3:12-14). He can walk by *faith* and not by *sight or sense*. He can indeed come into the category of blessing which the risen Lord indicated, when He said to Thomas, so limited by his *sense experience*: "Because thou hast *seen* me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that *have not seen, and yet have believed*" (John 20:29).

These gifts then, were not necessary to spiritual maturity. When one grows up, one can put away the things of childhood (1 Cor. 13:9-11). This maturity is a reflection of the complete perfection of the glorified state in resurrection.

"For now we see in a mirror, darkly (lit. in an enigma); but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I have been known" (13:12 R. V.).

This verse gives facts that must ever be borne in mind. However much we know of God's truth *it is partial*, not complete, and will not be so until our hope is realized and we are with the Lord with bodies fashioned like the body of His glory (Phil. 3), and the present limitations of comprehension gone for ever. It is this very human limitation that causes so many of our present problems, specially in regard to our understanding of the Scriptures. What we are seeing now is likened to a reflection in a mirror and often puzzling at that ("in an enigma" literally).

This should stop us from acting and talking as though we have *all* knowledge now and can solve every problem that comes our way, specially those concerning God's person and His being! In this present life, God has been stooping in condescension in His revelation of Himself and His ways, having respect to our great limitations of comprehension. We can only know a small part *now*. What is beyond us can be covered by faith in Him, for we know that He has the answer to all problems, and in the next life He will justify all His dealings with mankind which are incomprehensible at the present time.

Meanwhile we can thank Him for the *abiding* gifts of faith (in Him and His word), hope (the certain fulfilment of all His promises) and love, the supreme expression of the Lord and His gracious purposes which is now shed abroad in our hearts. This must ever be the fruit of all fruits, dominating our lives and witness for Him.

I CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

In chapter fourteen, the Apostle returns to the evidential gifts, specially that of tongues. First of all we shall note his assessment of this gift, and the way it should be controlled in the Corinthian assembly. In view of the fact that Pentecostalism and tongue speaking in particular is on the increase today, we shall give this too a Scriptural consideration as to whether it is a bad thing, or a

good thing to be sought after.

Actually the Apostle never counsels the Corinthians to seek for the gift of tongues separately as though it was the highest and best of the gifts (as most Pentecostalists assert). What he does do is to emphasize once more the importance of *love*.

"Pursue love as your aim. Strive for spiritual gifts, and specially that you may prophesy" (14:1 C. K. Barrett).

Love must be sought for with the eagerness of pursuit. No half-hearted regard will do. This comes first always in importance where Christian witness and service are concerned. It is quite obvious from what follows, that Paul is down-grading the gift of tongues; not that it had no value, but it was *not* the most important gift, and the Corinthian believers were over-rating it.

We must first of all point out there is no justification for the word "unknown" in the Authorized Version throughout this chapter. The word is not in the original and should be omitted as in the Revised Version and modern translations, for it is misleading. How are we to understand the word "tongue"? There are two divergent views on this. One is that it refers to *languages*. Another is that the reference is to *ecstatic speech*. The best way to decide this is to go back to the inception of tongues at Pentecost, and here there is no doubt whatsoever that languages or dialects are meant. The opening verses declare that there were Jews gathered at Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). Luke goes on to tell us that they were confounded because "every man heard them speak in his own dialect" (language). They ask, "how hear we every man *in our own dialect* (language), wherein we were born?" (verses 8 and 11).

The Lord had told the eleven disciples that they were to be witnesses for Him "in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8).

In order that this should be rapidly accomplished, God removed the speech barrier to the spread of the Gospel and the earthly kingdom message. This was a reversal of the confusion of tongues at Babel. Seen in this light, the gift of tongues makes sense and was one of the miraculous signs that accompanied the earthly kingdom

ministry in the Acts, first to Israel and later on to the Gentiles who were admitted as wild olive grafts into the true olive tree, Israel, in order to "provoke them to jealousy" and stir them up to obey the Divine command to repent and turn to God (Acts 3:19-26) so that, at the Lord's return, through their mediation, the restoration of the earthly kingdom to them might become a fact and then be realized all over the earth.

Some insist that the gift of tongues at Pentecost was recognized languages, but at Corinth it was different, being akin to ecstatic speech. But this is by no means proved; Corinth was a port and would have a mixed flow of races passing through it. That strangers visited the assembly is clear from 1 Corinthians 14:23, where the Apostle Paul refers to "unlearned and unbelieving" coming in. These would certainly need a message in their own language if of foreign extraction, and a believer with the gift of tongues could minister this, followed by another with the gift of interpretation so that the whole assembly could benefit. It is interesting to note that *hermeneuo* can mean "translate" as well as "interpret" (see Arntd and Gingrich). *The New Bible Dictionary* states that the Greek words for "interpret" always mean "translate" except Luke 24:27 (p. 1287). It is a good principle of interpretation that the unknown should be interpreted by the known, in which case 1 Corinthians should be interpreted by the Acts of the Apostles, which is the historical book dealing with this church from its beginning.

Paul's and Luke's terminology agree, for both use the word *glossa*, "tongue", and Luke further defines it as being a *dialektos* (Acts 1:19; 2:6,8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14), which in every case refers to a language of a nation or region, and it is most unlikely that the experience of tongue speaking, described by the two writers in identical terms, would be dissimilar.

Moreover, the Divine intention was that this gift should be a sign to Israel (1 Cor. 14:21,22) as prophesied in Isaiah 28:11, and took its place with the other earthly kingdom signs of the Acts period. In what way could unintelligible ecstatic speech be such a sign? Such speech occurred in the excitable worship in the pagan temples around and therefore would not speak with Divine conviction to any Jew.

When one sees *glossalia*, or speaking in tongues in its *Scriptural setting*, it makes sense and falls in line with the evidential miracles of the Acts period, when Israel was being tested after the Lord's earthly ministry to them, giving them a further opportunity of repenting and becoming usable, in order that they might take the knowledge of the Lord as Saviour and King to the ends of the earth. To take the gift of tongues out of the place that God put it originally is misleading and dangerous, and this is just what Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals have done.

Not only does speaking in tongues occupy an important place in the present day Pentecostal movement, we see it now occurring in other denominations even among Roman Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses and certain evangelicals are doing their best to promote it in every Christian quarter.

Pentecostals, for the most part, teach that one may be saved apart from the baptism of the Spirit, but without this experience which they claim is subsequent to salvation, one does not have full consecration or power for service, so that one's Christian life is incomplete and one's ministry hampered. If this is true, one has a right to ask *why such spiritual giants as Luther, Calvin and many others accomplished so much for the Lord without the gift of tongues?* Pentecostals should honestly face up to this. They are often exhorted to "tarry before the Lord" in order to receive this special baptism of the Spirit, the outward evidence of which, they teach, is speaking in tongues.

Luke 24:49 is adduced as Scriptural ground for this idea, but it is a misuse of this verse. The eleven were not kept waiting to prove them or to encourage them to ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit accompanied by tongues. They had to wait *because the feast of Pentecost was Divinely dated*, being 50 days after Passover (Calvary, Lev. 23:15,16).

What Scriptural backing has the Pentecostal view that the baptism of the Spirit should *follow* salvation? Some turn to Ephesians 1:13:

"... Christ, in Whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise".

On the surface, this looks as though there is some ground for such teaching, but the Authorized Version is not accurate. Here we have a verb in the aorist tense (*esphragisthete*), preceded by an aorist participle (*pisteusantes*). Professor F. F. Bruce writes:

"The words 'having also believed' mean when you Gentiles believed in your turn, as we Jewish Christians had already done. The participle 'having believed' is identical with that occurring in Paul's question to the disciples at Ephesus in Acts 19:2 'Did ye receive the Holy Ghost *when ye believed?*' It is called by grammarians the coincident aorist participle because it denotes an action coincident in time with that of the main verb"

(*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 36).

In other words the believing and the sealing *occurred at the same time*, not at some future date. This is made clear by the Revised Version and many modern versions. If Pentecostalists would carefully read Acts 10:46 they would see that the bestowal of the Spirit's gift of tongues was *simultaneous* with the coming to faith both of Cornelius and his group. It was an extension of Pentecost, as was the experience of the disciples at Ephesus in chapter 19, who had only heard of John the Baptist's ministry.

There is no clear Scriptural teaching for the idea that the Spirit's baptism, evidenced by tongues, is something to be sought for *after* salvation. Nor in the Scriptural record do we find *glossalia* always following the work or filling of the Holy Spirit. If the reader will consult the following passages in the Acts which refer to the filling of the Holy Spirit, *he will not find one occurrence that is accompanied by tongues*—Acts 4:8,31; 6:3,5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9,52, and he certainly will not find any occurrence in Scripture of tongue speaking after the Acts period.

It should be quite clear for every unbiassed student of the Word that the Holy Spirit, far from aiming to give the gift of tongues to all believers as a special experience after salvation, *did not intend all the saved to have this gift*. As we have seen, the seven questions of the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:29,30 demand, in the Greek, a *negative answer*. "Do all speak with tongues?" The answer is "no", and God never intended that all should do so, but distributed tongues with other gifts, some more important, like prophecy, "severally as He willed" (1 Cor. 12:11).

Nor was the ability to speak in tongues a necessary requirement for leaders and teachers in the New Testament, *nor do we find one instance of any believer specially seeking this gift*. In 1 Timothy 3, there is a list of "musts" for the office of a bishop or overseer, but tongues are not mentioned. Some Pentecostals link their conception of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with sinless perfection, what they call "entire sanctification", and so one error leads to another.

We are amazed that any true believer who loves the Word of God and bases his all upon it, could ever accept what is so patently unscriptural and also false to experience. If what these people say is really true then they have advanced far beyond the great characters of the Bible and the great saints that followed.

A fine upright character, as the prophet Isaiah, saw a vision of the Lord in glory, and we take it that his character was up to the standard of any modern believer, and the result was to make him confess "Woe is me! for *I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*" (Isa. 6:1-5). The Apostle Paul declared that "in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth (present tense) *no good thing*" (Rom. 7:18). The Apostle John wrote "if we say that we have no sin, *we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" (1 John 1:8). Pentecostals who claim sinless perfection have obviously advanced in experience beyond these outstanding children of God.

The trouble with these so-called sinless Pentecostals is that, unlike Isaiah, they have never really seen the Lord Jesus in the blaze of His glory and holiness (see 1 Tim. 6:15,16). Had they done so, they would have nothing but shame for what that searching light would inevitably reveal. They can have little conception of the burning holiness of God. Sinlessness and incorruption is *put on at resurrection* (1 Cor. 15:53,54) and not before, and it is self-deception to think otherwise. If tongues and holiness go together, then the Corinthian church should have been the holiest, but in reality they were the most carnal and immature (1 Cor. 3:1-3), which gives the lie to such Pentecostal pretensions.

One danger that results from the teaching that tongue speaking is an outward evidence of a special baptism of the Spirit subsequent

to salvation, and that believers are sadly lacking without this, is the psychological and spiritual tensions which this teaching creates. When a believer does not receive this "baptism", he tries a little harder to get it. When, after several attempts he still does not receive it, he begins to feel frustrated and depressed and many have become physically and mentally ill because they failed to "receive".

One hears too of such people being accused of some hidden sin or failure which accounts for this, all of which is deplorable and unnecessary, and is in itself the sin of judgment on others which we are warned against. Another danger is the emphasis this kind of teaching gives to "*feeling*" and *emotional experiences* at the expense of faith. "We walk by faith and not by sight," said the Apostle, but this doctrine leads to the opposite. One can see very little difference between the unsaved doing things for "thrills" and the believer who hankers after the special spiritual thrill of the separate "baptism of the Spirit". When one grows spiritually, feelings give way to absolute trust in *what the Lord is in Himself* and this is changeless.

We should know too, that *glossalia* can be psychologically induced and therefore is no proof whatsoever of the Holy Spirit's work. A Christian psychiatrist writes:

"The product of our analysis is the demonstration of the very natural mechanisms which produced glossalia. As a psychological phenomenon, glossalia is easy to produce and readily understandable."

(*Speaking in Tongues and about Tongues*
by E. Mansell Pattison).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica has this to say:

"The gift of tongues and their interpretation was not peculiar to the Christian Church, but was a repetition in it of a phase common in ancient religions. The very phrase *glossais lalein*, 'to speak with tongues', was not invented by the New Testament writers, but borrowed from ordinary speech. Virgil (Aen. vi. 46,97) draws a life-like picture of the ancient prophetess 'speaking with tongues' . . . the same morbid and abnormal trance utterances occur in Christian revivals of every age, e.g. among the mendicant friars of the 13th century, among the Jansenites, the early Quakers, the converts of Wesley and Whitefield, the persecuted Protestants of the Cevennes,

the Irvingites and the revivalists of Wales and America. Oracular possession of the kind above described is also common among savages and people of lower culture . . .” (pp. 288, 9, 1963 edition).

No wonder then Satan can use tongue speaking in order to deceive! With regard to the Irvingite movement which was the beginning of modern Pentecostalism, Sir Robert Anderson gives a detailed account in his *Spirit Manifestations and the Gift of Tongues*.

Edward Irving (1792-1834), a pastor of a London church, founded the Catholic Apostolic Church and began to introduce tongue speaking into his ministry. Sir Robert Anderson shows the excesses to which this finally led. Richard Baxter, a lawyer, first took an active part in the movement, but when prophecies made failed to be fulfilled, his eyes were opened and he broke away after telling Irving “we had all been speaking by a lying spirit and not by the Spirit of the Lord”. Scores of people were deceived by this “angel of light” teaching.

Irving relates that the power of the Holy Spirit came upon him irresistibly, so much so that he was compelled to put his handkerchief into his mouth to stop the sound so that he should not alarm others. This in itself should have been a warning to him for “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32); in other words the power is *controllable* by the prophet. The Holy Spirit does not force people or lead to such excesses that have occurred from time to time in Pentecostal meetings.

One of the great dangers of such Pentecostal teaching is that it exalts the Holy Spirit *at the expense of Christ*, so that the Lord Jesus in effect is subordinated to the Holy Spirit. The Saviour said:

“He shall *not* speak of Himself . . . *He shall glorify me*: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:13,14).

The main object of the Holy Spirit then is to *glorify and exalt the Lord Jesus*, so that in all things *He might have the preeminence* (Col. 1:18), and whenever He is put in His rightful place of being ALL (Col. 3:11) and “First and Last”, the Holy Spirit is certainly there. Where the Spirit is unduly stressed and the Lordship of Christ unknown, we have not truth, but error which comes from

the father of lies.

If modern tongue speaking is really of God, where are those who undeniably have the gift of interpretation (without which tongues are useless) and also *the discerning of spirits*, that is the divine ability to sift the true from the false? (1 Cor. 12:10). This was God's check against the work of Satan during the Acts when tongues were valid. Without this, the whole thing can be highly dangerous, for, as we know so well, Satan can travesty and copy the work of God. Not even miracles, by themselves, are a proof of divine origin:

"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me . . ." (Matt. 7:22,23).

The Apostles Paul and John warn us of the *deceptive miracles* of Satan at the end time of this age so that, even in the Acts period, tongue speaking was not without its dangers (2 Thess. 2:8-10; Rev. 13:11-14) and the Lord Jesus Himself likewise forewarned of the terrible deception of this most dangerous time (Matt. 24:4,5,11,24). Many believers feel, as they look around on world conditions, that we are fast approaching such a period.

But some will say, many Pentecostalists testify to the blessing they have received from speaking in tongues. The answer to this is simple and clear. If we want nothing but Truth and to avoid such deception, *we must base our beliefs solely on the Word of God which is Truth, and not on human experience*. We may not begin with a certain type of religious experience and then proceed to build a doctrine on it. We dare not build on *any experience primarily, but on the teaching of Holy Scripture which is true and changeless*.

If the importance of a doctrine in the New Testament is shown by the Divine emphasis upon it (and this is surely true) then we must face the fact that tongue speaking is only mentioned in *one* of the 21 epistles and even then it is not held up as a mark of spiritual growth, or something to be sought after.

Those believers who go on to know and enjoy the exceeding riches of grace and glory revealed in the prison epistles of Paul will certainly not be attracted by speaking in tongues. When one has tasted the best, one does not want the second-best! In the high and holy calling revealed therein Christ is ALL and each believer *filled to the full* in Him (Col. 2:10; 3:10,11) to which nothing can be added, for there is nothing higher or possible beyond this revealed in the whole length and breadth of God's Word. In our long Christian experience *we have never known anyone grounded in this glorious truth and in conscious enjoyment of it, ever to desire or turn to tongue speaking.*

While we are forced to be critical of the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit baptism and glossalia, we readily acknowledge that many Pentecostals are keen to proclaim the gospel and bring others to a saving knowledge of the Lord. If only they would put more emphasis on the *fruit of the Spirit* (Gal. 5:22,23) rather than isolated *gifts* of the Spirit which belonged to the Acts period!

The gift of tongues was temporal and was to cease (1 Cor. 13:8). It was put at the bottom of the list in importance by the Apostle Paul. Prophecy was certainly of more value (1 Cor. 14:4). Taken out of its Divine setting, tongues can be highly dangerous and those attracted to it should ponder over the words of the Apostle:

"Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding . . . *than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.*" (1 Cor. 14:19).

Having considered the New Testament teaching concerning the gift of tongues and seen the false importance the Corinthian church were placing on this gift, we next note that the Apostle Paul makes perfectly clear that prophecy was preferable if only for the fact that it edified *others* as well as the speaker. Tongue speaking by itself at the best only brought benefit to the one who uttered it:

"For he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; *for no man understandeth*; but in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and comfort, and consolation. He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church" (1 Cor. 14:2-4 R.V.).

From this it is perfectly clear that the gift of tongues without interpretation was of no benefit to the church as a whole, whereas prophecy gave a message of comfort and edification to all who heard it. When explained by the Divine gift of interpretation so that all could benefit, it was acceptable; otherwise it remained true that he who prophesied was greater than any who spoke in tongues (verse 5). As this was so, why is it that Pentecostalists do not put more value on prophets rather than tongue-speakers? The Apostle reinforces this point by saying that even if he himself gave them a message in another tongue, what good would it do them unless it was accompanied by revelation, knowledge, prophecy or teaching? (verse 6). This is stressed still further by the illustration of a musical instrument, which can either produce distinguishable notes or just a noise. Furthermore each instrument has its own "tone colour". If this was not so, it would be impossible to distinguish between them (verses 6-12). Tongue speaking, unless understood by others, was merely "speaking into the air" (verse 9) and made the one who uttered it as a foreigner (barbarian), someone who could not be understood by others. The real value of all the evidential gifts of the Acts period was their *witness to other people and the building up of the church as a whole*.

"So also ye, since ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may abound *unto the edifying of the church*" (14:12 R.V.).

This was the crucial test, not what each individual got out of the experience for himself.

Tongue-speaking in connection with prayer.

The Apostle now deals with tongue-speaking as it affected prayer. He wrote:

"For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding (or mind) is unfruitful" (14:14 R.V.).

Paul seems to be using here the word "spirit" for the new nature. In this case the mind was unfruitful or inactive, that is, it contributed nothing to the process. Now the mind is extremely important to the believer as a study of the word *nous* as used by Paul will make clear. When writing to the Roman church, he insisted that the believer should be "transformed by the renewing

of the mind" (Rom. 12:2) and it is only by this mind that one can prove what is "that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"; and thus render service and witness that is well-pleasing to Him.

Intercession for others is one of the highest expressions of the prayer life of the believer, and how can one engage in this effectively without the renewed mind being consciously employed? The Apostle puts his finger on a danger point when a tongue was used in prayer without the conscious control of the Spirit-renewed mind. This would mean that a most important part of the believer remained out of action, which would be dangerous and neither good for him or for his fellow-believers and others with whom he came into contact.

"What is to be done then? I will pray with the spirit, *but I will pray with the mind too*. I will sing praise with the spirit, *but I will sing praise with the mind too*"
(verse 15 C. K. Barrett).

We ask again, how can the ministry of intercession be engaged in, when, knowing the needs of others, something unintelligible goes on in the believer concerned and his mind is completely inactive?

When Paul asks for prayer for himself, he tells the assemblies of his needs in plain words, showing them what to pray for on his behalf. (Rom. 15:30-32; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-4). There is not the slightest idea in these contexts that such prayer could be rendered automatically in an unknown tongue, with the believers concerned being unconscious of what they uttered. Furthermore, as we have just stated, such a condition would be one of real danger. There cannot be a hiatus or blank in the human mind and its activities. It must be controlled by *somebody* or *something*. If the believer's thinking is not consciously controlled by the renewed mind produced by the Holy Spirit, then Satan and the powers of darkness have an opportunity which they will not be slow to use.

That a believer's mind and words can be activated by the evil one is clear from what the Lord said to Peter in Matthew 16:22,23. One moment Peter's words expressed the revelation of the Father (verse 17); a moment later *Satan was directing his thoughts and his words!* (verse 23). This is solemn indeed. So many keen

Pentecostals seem to be very ignorant of Satan and his wiles (Eph. 6:11,12) and the warning that Scripture gives the believer of this great enemy and his deception, which is going to be world-wide at the time of the end, inasmuch that, if possible, the very elect will be deceived (Matt. 24:4,5,11,24). Hence, the importance of the Divine gift of *discernment* in the Acts which separated the true from the false (1 Cor. 12:10). Where is this gift today without controversy or argument?

The Apostle Paul insists, therefore, that the believer's *mind* must be actively engaged either in prayer or praise (1 Cor. 14:15). He goes on to argue that if a Corinthian believer utters a blessing and someone who is a simple listener (unlearned A.V. and R.V.) hears it, how can he respond intelligently with an Amen? for he does not *understand* what is being said. It is therefore perfectly clear that Paul expected the Corinthian assembly as a whole, to hear, understand, test and control all that took place in their gatherings and this would be impossible without words being spoken that could be understood by all. He continues:

"For thou verily givest thanks well (in a tongue), but the other (man) is not edified (built up)" (verse 17).

The whole value of the gift was not what it did for the one who uttered it, *but what benefit it conferred upon others*. Even with himself, Paul, who could speak in tongues more than any of them, states most definitely:

"Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak *five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue*" (19 R.S.V.).

In other words, *the employment of the mind was essential for fruitful witness and was infinitely of more importance than the act of speaking in a tongue*.

We cannot help but note the insistence of this context that *the renewed mind* must be employed with the spirit "I will pray with the spirit, but *I will pray with the mind too*. I will sing praise with the spirit, but *I will sing praise with the mind too*" (1 Cor. 14:15 C. K. Barrett), and also verse nineteen "I had rather *speak five words with my mind than ten thousand words in a tongue*". Keeping this

in the forefront we were amazed to read in a booklet entitled *Speaking in Tongues* by Larry Christenson, a pastor of a Californian Lutheran church:

"... what possible value can speaking in tongues have, if a person has no idea what he is saying? According to the Bible even though one does not understand what he is saying, his spirit is in a state of prayer (1 Cor. 14:14). In other words, for the person himself, *speaking in tongues is praying not with the mind, but with the spirit*" (page 4, italics ours).

"One speaks with tongues, for the most part in his private devotions. *This is by far its most important use and value* . . . Although one does not know what he is saying as he prays in tongues, he does have a clear sense that he is praying to God" (page 8).

Much of this is obviously a direct negation of the teaching of Scripture above. Yet it is "according to the Bible" we are told! Moreover how the mind can be completely inactive and words used which are not understood by the speaker yet "he has a clear sense he is praying to God", is past comprehending.

On page nine the writer continues:

"In order to speak in tongues, you have to quit praying in English . . . you simply lapse into silence and resolve to speak not a syllable of any language you have ever learned. *Your thoughts are focussed on Christ* . . . you take no thought of what you are saying. As far as you are concerned it is just a series of sounds . . ." (italics ours).

Again we ask, how can the *thoughts* be focussed on Christ, and yet the mind be by-passed or remain inactive? There is surely confusion here and we can say with certainty that *the New Testament knows nothing of such methods of prayer*. There is not a single command to the believer in the New Testament to connect tongue-speaking with prayer. Did the disciples on the day of Pentecost have to prepare themselves and practise in this way in order to receive the gift of tongues? Was not this rather the sovereign act of the Holy Spirit, distributing this gift "as He willed" (1 Cor. 12:11), this being the New Testament way this gift was always received? There is not the slightest indication that there had to be practice and effort in order to obtain this gift as the booklet suggests.

We do not believe that anywhere in the Bible can God's truth

and blessing be received apart from faith and *understanding*. "*With all thy getting, get understanding*" (Prov. 4:7) and note carefully the following passages:

"Jesus saith unto them, Have ye *understood* all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord" (Matt. 13:51).

"Then opened He their *understanding*, that they might *understand the Scriptures*" (Luke 24:45).

"... the eyes of your *understanding* being enlightened; that ye may know..." (Eph. 1:18).

"Whereby, when ye read, ye may *understand* my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4).

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but *understanding* what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

"that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual *understanding*" (Col. 1:9).

"Being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of *understanding*" (Col. 2:2).

"... the Lord give thee *understanding in all things*" (2 Tim. 2:7).

These verses and contexts make it quite clear that a measure of understanding is absolutely vital both to the reception of truth and its practice. This being so, if the Lord wills to teach anyone, He will do so in the language that person uses and can understand and receive His truth, otherwise it would be meaningless. This was surely the object of the original gift of tongues at Pentecost, for the hearers said, "how hear we every man *in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*" (Acts 2:8) not "what are all these unintelligible sounds we hear?"

Moreover, as we have seen, those at Corinth who placed so much value on tongues were still in the infant stage spiritually. In 3:1-3 he had severely reprimanded them for their immaturity and carnality, and the over emphasis they were placing on a showy gift, like tongue speaking, was only another evidence of this.

"Brothers, do not be children in intelligence. In wickedness be mere infants, but in intelligence be mature"

(verse 20 C. K. Barrett).

Teleios, mature ("men", A.V. and R.V.) is one of an important group of words, signifying adulthood or maturity as opposed to babyhood. The New Testament has some very stringent things to say about believers who do not grow up spiritually (see

Heb. 5:12-14). The things of the nursery can be very delightful for infants, but for grown-ups they are entirely out of place and unbecoming. Moreover, what can babies achieve in Christian witness and spiritual warfare? The need for constant growth in grace and knowledge of the truth should be a continual challenge to us all.

Paul does not hesitate to back up his argument by an appeal to the Old Testament:

“In the law it is written, By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers will I speak unto this people; and not even thus will they hear Me, saith the Lord” (21 R.V.).

Here the “law” is a term for the whole Old Testament rather than the Pentateuch, as it is also in John 10:34, where a citation from the Psalms is termed the “law” (see also 12:34; 15:25 and Rom. 3:19). The Apostle quotes freely from the Septuagint of Isaiah 28:11. Possibly he was using another version known also to the later Old Testament translator Aquila. In Isaiah’s day, God is saying that Israel would not listen to Him in obedience, even though He spoke in a tongue that was familiar to them. He will therefore speak to them in an unfamiliar tongue, that of their enemies, the Assyrians, but even then they would not hear. It is very important to notice that God is speaking to *Israel* in warning and judgment, not to Gentiles and *so it was in the Acts period*. The gift of tongues was primarily for *unbelievers among Israel*.

“Wherefore tongues are for a sign, *not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving*” (verse 22 R.V.).

To the Jew, who had the counter-sign, the Old Testament, tongues should have spoken as a *sign* and a warning to unbelief. It is clear that known languages, such as were used at Pentecost, would be the only forceful sign to hard-hearted Israelites. Ecstatic language admits of too many natural explanations, as we have seen, not the least being the historical fact that the pagans were acquainted with such speech in their temples. The divine reason for the gift of tongues is clearly given in the chapter we are studying, “wherefore tongues are for a sign, *not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving*” (verse 22).

Tongue-speaking in the New Testament takes its place among the signs of Mark 16 that confirmed the earthly kingdom purpose throughout the Acts. Modern Pentecostalism takes it out of its Divine setting and message to the *unbeliever*, and to a large extent, reverses the teaching of Scripture, making it an evidence of spirituality, and "entire sanctification" of the *believer*. This is dangerous, indeed and will be avoided by all who seek to base their doctrine and practice on a rightly-divided Word alone. The gift of tongues, by itself, would have been highly inadequate, for even the striking exhibition of tongues on the day of Pentecost, was put down to drunkenness on the part of some (Acts 2:12,13).

As a warning to the unbelieving Jew and a means of the rapid spread of the gospel and the earthly kingdom message (Acts 3:19-26), this gift had its place, but taken out of its Divine context, it can be dangerous. When Satan, at the end time of this age, produces his *deceiving miracles and signs* (2 Thess. 2:7-12) who can say that he will not use tongue-speaking to seek to deceive the very elect? *He has already used tongue speaking in the past in the worship of the pagan temples of old.* And if he does so in the future, what can the Pentecostalist offer in the way of Scriptural refutation, and protection of those who are exposed to such terrible deception?*

To sum up—not all the miraculous evidential gifts of the Acts period were of equal importance: Prophecy was more important than speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:5). Some of them, like tongues, were to "cease" (13:8); others were "to abide", the three principal ones being "faith, hope and love", with love as the crown of them all (13:13).

This gift of love, said the Apostle Paul, must be sought after with the eagerness of pursuit (14:1). What a difference we might see today in the Christian world if this was put into practice! It is surely a question of getting our priorities right.

The Apostle Paul now gives explicit directions to the Corinthian church as to how the miraculous gifts were to be used when they assembled together.

*The reader is directed to a booklet by the author entitled *Tongue Speaking Today, a mark of spirituality or deception?* obtainable from *The Berean Publishing Trust*.

They had to consider not only the effect on themselves, but also on any outsiders who might come in.

“If therefore the whole church be assembled together, and all speak with tongues, and there come in men unlearned or unbelieving, will they not say that ye are mad?” (1 Cor. 14:23 R.V.).

Those who were “unlearned or unbelieving”, probably refer to one group, namely “unbelieving outsiders”. That such found their way into the Christian assemblies, there is no doubt. If more than one believer spoke at once, there could be nothing but confusion, and such new folk would be disgusted and deem them to be insane. That this happened is evident from the context. We must not suppose that the church's meetings always took place indoors. Some Jewish communities had no building to meet in. Whether out-of-doors or inside a building, there was every likelihood that unbelievers might arrive or be brought in by other Christians. In these circumstances the gift of tongues, properly controlled, could be a help. If they were foreigners they would possibly hear a message delivered in their own language and the rest of the group would share in it when it was interpreted by someone with this Divine gift. But this could only happen with profit when these gifts were controlled by those who possessed them. . . . No one was forced to use them against their will (verse 32), so that anything that approached confusion because more than one was speaking at a time, was inexcusable.

If the gift of prophecy alone was being used when any stranger entered, then conviction would surely follow, with the result that such would own the fact that God was truly with them (verses 24 and 25).

Paul now sums up his instructions concerning the exercise of tongues and prophecy in the assembly:

“What is to be done, then, brothers? When you assemble, each one of you has a hymn, a piece of teaching, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation. Let all these be exercised for the building up of the community” (26,27. C. K. Barrett).

As we have before seen, the exercise of these gifts was principally for the benefit of the church *as a whole*, not for the individual. Any shifting of this emphasis was dangerous and still is,

and is not according to truth. It has been said that in verses 26, 27 we have a small glimpse of the simplicity of early church meetings.

It is noteworthy that there was no one in charge like the modern clergyman and when one considers the ornate modes of service and ritual that we see all around us in modern Christendom, we can judge how far this has gone astray from the Divine set-up at the beginning.

However, we must not fall into the error of assuming that this gives *in every detail* the example for assemblies today, for, despite Pentecostal claims, we have not the confirmatory gifts of the earthly kingdom that were prominent during the Acts. When these lapsed after Israel's failure at Acts 28, no doubt the order of service and worship was modified and God-given leaders, humble men drawn from the ranks, took their place in ministering the truth of the Word of God. We can be perfectly sure that all conformed to the administration of the Truth of the Mystery and that nothing was added or detracted from this climax truth and the gospel of God's grace upon which it is based.

Coming back to the Apostle's instructions to the Corinthian church, tongue speaking was limited to two or at the most three speakers on each occasion, and then only one at a time, to be followed by another member interpreting (verse 27). If no interpreter was present, the tongue speaker was commanded to keep quiet. Regarding prophets, they were also limited to two or three and then the important injunction is "let the others test what they say" (29 C. K. Barrett). Here was God's check against the deceiving work of Satan. In no case were the early Christians expected to swallow uncritically everything they heard (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1). This Divine check is conspicuously absent today, specially among those who profess to have these kingdom gifts. No wonder we read of excesses from time to time. Satan can have a "field-day" when Christian gatherings are not directly controlled by a rightly-divided Word, and the result is deception, confusion and division.

The Corinthians were further told that prophecy must be controlled as with tongues, and while it was possible that all *could* prophesy, if the Spirit willed, yet it did not mean that all *would*

necessarily take part in this activity (verses 30 and 31). And then follows the important statement:

"The spirits by which prophets speak are under the control of the prophets, for God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (verses 32 and 33. C. K. Barrett).

No one could plead that he was *compelled* to speak by the Holy Spirit. When one sometimes reads that a Pentecostal leader or speaker was dominated by the Holy Spirit and was not able to keep silent (e.g. Edward Irving, one of the founders of the modern Pentecostal movement), one can be assured that such experiences do not come from God but from the old deceiver of mankind.

Paul now reverts to the attitude of women in the assembly and we must be careful that we do not interpret the verses to conflict with what has already been said in chapter eleven verse five. Apart from inspiration, one would not expect a logically-minded man as Paul to contradict himself. In the eleventh chapter it is not the *gift* that women are using which is the point at issue, but *how they are dressed* for the occasion. Acts 21:9 shows that women prophets existed, though possibly rarely.

What Paul is now going to say is that, apart from the teaching given in chapter eleven, women should be silent in Christian gatherings, in just the same way as the male tongue speaker or prophet was enjoined to be silent, all being in the interests of peace and good order. If this was not so, then uncontrolled discussion and argument would take place which could become heated and give the enemy an opportunity of taking control and spoiling the witness. Such discussion should take place at home and not in the assembly.

Whether discussion should ever be allowed in a public meeting is indeed a difficult one to settle. We have seen meetings ruined by this. On the other hand if love and self-control prevail, then such discussion can prove helpful. No rigid rule today can be laid down on this point, but we may be assured of one thing, that no Christian woman who is versed in God's truth will ever want to push herself into a position that is not according to His will. The relationship of the sexes in God's sight has already been dealt with, and this should be the dominating factor in any problem that is related

to a public assembly.

Paul now reminds the believers at Corinth that they should consider Christian practice generally. They had no monopoly of the gospel, Divine gifts, or truth as a whole.

“What? was it from you that the word of God went forth? or came it unto you alone?” (verse 36 R. V.).

They should therefore consider how other assemblies were behaving and not suppose that they were right and every one else wrong. The Apostle, who had before stressed the need of testing and checking all they heard, now gives another important test:

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or a spiritual person, he should recognize that what I am writing to you comes from the Lord” or, as some mss. “is the Lord’s command”

(37. C. K. Barrett).

This does not mean that Paul is quoting from the words Christ uttered on earth, but that all was in accordance with the truth deposited with him by revelation from the risen Lord (cp. Gal. 1:11,12). If this is not inspiration in the fullest sense, what is it? This verse and the statement in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 makes it perfectly clear that there is no such thing as *Pauline* doctrine, that is, doctrine founded on Paul’s ideas. There are indeed *distinctive* truths given by God through Paul the channel, but in no sense are we dealing with Paul’s opinions or conceptions. *It is God’s truth*, and neither we nor the early churches follow a man purely and simply.

If Paul exhorts us to follow him, he immediately adds “even as I follow Christ”. We have *one Lord*, Who only has the right to teach and control us and we cannot acknowledge anyone else as such. But no one at Corinth could claim to have reached this position who denied the Apostle Paul’s ministry and authority. There are those today who think they can by-pass Paul and as long as they adhere to the “teaching of Jesus” in the Gospels, they imagine they are receiving the Truth in all its fulness. Such deceive themselves and others whom they seek to influence.

The mark of spirituality which the Apostle gives in the context we are studying, is still true. The majority of Christendom today

has little place for, still less an understanding of the truth given through the Apostle. Is it any wonder that we see it divided, powerless, with no divine answer to the enormous problems that face us?

Paul now closes this section by stating that while tongues should not be suppressed (the earthly kingdom was still a possibility —Acts 3:19-26), yet prophecy, the greater gift, should be sought after (verse 39). The overriding consideration was that all should be done in a decent and orderly manner (verse 40), for only in this way could the God of law and order be honoured and a witness given to the outsider that would be likely to impress and convince him of its truth.

The Apostle now turns to another vital subject concerning which they had possibly written him, that of resurrection. In the whole range of inspired revelation this is one of the most important subjects, for it underlies the whole purpose of God.

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

It is evident that the first epistle to the Corinthians came into being by reason of the problems of the church at Corinth made known to Paul by the household of Chloe (1:11), or by the questions they themselves had sent him (7:1). Chapter fifteen verse twelve informs us that there were some at Corinth who disbelieved the resurrection from the dead, and as this great doctrine is fundamental to the whole purpose of God, the Apostle devotes a long section to its consideration. The fifteenth chapter is divided into three parts. (1) verses 1-11, the evidence and the importance of the resurrection of Christ in connection with the gospel. (2) verses 12-34, deal with the fact of the resurrection of Christ and of man. (3) verses 35-58, the manner of the resurrection.

Paul commences by drawing attention to the gospel he preached. In his first letter, Galatians, he had made it quite clear that he had received it directly by the Lord's revelation, and not through any human instrumentality (1:11,12). The resurrection of Christ was the fundamental basis of this good news:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3, 4 R.V.).

This good news he had handed on to them “first of all”. “First” here may indicate priority in importance, as well as time and this gospel was clearly made known in the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul does not quote any particular passage, but redemption and atonement in the Old Testament are clearly linked with death and could not be experienced apart from it. The Passover is directly mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:7 and the Apostle evidently felt there was no need to back his statement up with Old Testament details, for it was so obvious.

It is interesting to note the stress on *burial*, for this confirmed the reality of both death and resurrection. Christ must have *really* died, if He was buried, and resurrection was the taking up again of the life He laid down voluntarily on our behalf (John 10:17,18). As both sin and death are the great enemies of God, His age-long purpose, and His people, the death of Christ and His resurrection are obviously God’s answer to these tremendous problems. Nor could they have been dealt with and abolished in any other way.

Paul now brings forward the testimony of eye-witnesses, many of whom would have been still alive at this time. To gainsay this, the Corinthian objectors would have to maintain that the whole of the number were either deceived or liars upon whom no reliance could be placed. First in the list of appearances of the Lord is that to Peter (Cephas). Peter was certainly known at Corinth as 1:12 and 9:5 clearly indicate: Luke 24:34 reveals that Christ did appear to him. It may be that Peter is put first, because of the prominent position he held in the affairs related in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, as the Apostle of the circumcision (Gal. 2:7,8).

After this the Lord appeared to the Twelve (1 Cor. 15:5). This is Paul’s only reference to the Twelve and it makes quite clear that *he did not consider himself to be one of them*. Those who like to talk about “apostolic mistakes”, may try to place Paul amongst the Twelve, but when they do this it is obvious that they have not gripped the position the Apostle and his ministry have in the

Divine programme. Nor can the consummation of his ministry, expressed in his prison letters, ever be understood if Paul is linked with the Twelve and Israel, of whom they were representatives (cp. Rev. 21:10-14).

Next we have the witness of 500 brothers at once, the majority living at the time Paul was writing (verse 6), which was some twenty years later than the resurrection appearances. We can find no reference to this in the Gospels, nor should we expect it, for they are a concentrated account of the earthly life and witness of our Lord and make no pretence of being exhaustive. In exactly the same way the appearance to James is not mentioned in the Gospels and it seems that by the phrase "all the Apostles", Paul is going wider than the Twelve, as it seems unlikely he would repeat what he has already said (verse 5).

Last of all was the Apostle's own witness—the dramatic appearance of the Lord Jesus to him on the road to Damascus, "as one born out of due time" (literally, an abortion). This is a strange word to use. It sounds as though, from a natural standpoint, he was hurried into the world to take his important place in the outworking of God's mighty purpose.

It may be that the thought behind the word had already been used by his enemies, who not only ridiculed his ministry, but even his physical appearance (2 Cor. 10:10). They dismissed him as a freak. But in spite of this, his apostleship was one of reality (cp. Galatians one), although, whenever Paul thought about it, he marvelled at the exceeding grace and love of the Lord that should choose and call him to such a service and witness.

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am . . ." (verses 9,10 R.V.).

If we compare Ephesians 3:8 and 1 Timothy 1:15, the Apostle expresses similar thoughts. The contrast is of course between himself and the Lord, not himself and other apostles, for in this case, he was in no way inferior to the superlative apostles (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11). Concerning himself, Paul had no illusions, he was once "a blasphemer, and persecutor and injurious" (1 Tim. 1:13), one who could have no claim on God. It was nothing less than

God's rich grace that saved and called him and he never forgot it. No wonder then that he refers to grace more frequently than any other New Testament writer. He was indeed the apostle of grace and this was manifest in his faithful and unremitting labours for the Lord and His people after his conversion. This was indeed not "in vain". He could say truthfully that he laboured more abundantly than all the other apostles (verse 10). 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 gives only an abbreviated summing up of all his faithful witness for the Lord and at what tremendous cost! Yet the Apostle did not want to take the credit:

"Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (10 R.V.).

This section is now summed up by saying that all the apostles, including himself, had had practical experience of the Lord's resurrection. All had truthfully testified to this and the Corinthians had accepted this and believed, except a minority that Paul is now going to deal with.

"Now if Christ is preached that He hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (12 R.V.).

If the resurrection was not an historical fact, then the inescapable conclusion was that Christ was still dead, and in that case the gospel proclamation was empty, their faith useless, and the apostles were deceivers in proclaiming such a message. "No one can give himself to a dead man; no one can expect anything or receive anything from a dead man" (Schlatter). In other words, the Christian faith was completely destroyed. This would not only affect living believers, but those who had died.

"Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (18 R.V.).

This is an unfortunate verse for the traditionalist who bases his hope for the future on the pagan conception of the immortality of the soul. Nothing could make the resurrection of the believer more basic or fundamental. Instead of considering dead believers as being consciously in the presence of the Lord and being safe for ever, this verse states the exact opposite. When will the Christian world really believe this and not give the resurrection of the saved

just a nominal adherence? How often do we hear addresses emphasizing that without resurrection, a saved person is *perished*, the same fact that is accorded to the unbeliever according to John 3:16?

Cannot we see that the great doctrine of resurrection is absolutely fundamental to the whole redeeming purpose of God and without it, the plan collapses?*

Paul now continues the argument by saying that if Christian hope pertains to this life only, then we are the most pitiable of all men (verse 19).

The Apostle now leaves unreality for fact, with one of his magnificent "buts" (cp. Eph. 2:4 and 13 and note what has gone before).

"*But* now in fact Christ has been raised from the dead as the firstfruits of those who are asleep. Since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be brought to life" (verses 20,21 C. K. Barrett).

Christ and Adam are here regarded as heads of the *race*. Here we have resurrection and its *racial* aspect. Paul now goes beyond those who have been touched by the gospel, and deals with the connection which the Lord's resurrection has with the whole race in Adam, in relation to the matter of headship. "The head of every man is Christ", even as the head of every woman is man which obviously goes further than those who are saved.

We must be very careful with the terms "in Adam" and "in Christ". The latter phrase, as we have seen, stands for those in relation with Christ. Does every human being that has ever been born come within the scope of "in Adam"? But for the Scriptural doctrine of the two seeds, the answer would be "yes". However one may dislike the thought of some being designated as "tares" by the Lord, the fact remains that He used this term in the parable of the tares and Genesis 3:15 clearly teaches that there is a seed of God and a seed of the Devil. The parable of the tares and the Lord's explanation of it should be carefully studied in Matthew 13:24-30; 36-42. It should be noted that the tares are quite separate from the true wheat from their inception to their destruction at the

*See the author's *Resurrection and the Purpose of the Ages* obtainable from *The Berean Publishing Trust*.

end. *In no case are the "tares" "wheat" that has gone wrong.* Their introduction is by Satan to counterfeit and seek to overthrow God's purpose for the "wheat". Those that are represented by "wheat" cannot become "tares", neither can "tares" be changed into "wheat", if we carefully regard the plain teaching of this parable.

From the human standpoint their appearance was identical, and looking at them from this standpoint one could assume that they were all one and the same company; but their origin was from Satan (John 8:42-44 and note *ek patros tou diabolou* "of your father the devil", *ek* being characteristic of John's writing to denote *origin*, both in his Gospel and epistles).

They were not "of God", *ek tou Theou* (verse 47), or of the Father (verse 42) but were positively of "their father the devil" (verse 44). If the "tares" did not find their origin, being and end in God, we have no right to include them in the true "wheat". In other words we should not include the seed of the devil among those truly "in Adam".

We should also note that Paul does not deal with the subject of resurrection from *every* angle in 1 Corinthians 15. Nothing is said of the special resurrection of Luke 20:35 (note the personal "worthiness", and the preposition *ek*, out from the dead). Neither is resurrection expounded as it applies to Israel in the future. Likewise it does not deal with the theme as it applies to unbelievers. This obviously did not come within the scope of the problem started at Corinth by some who denied resurrection. The Apostle is concerned to show the falsity of this and that resurrection was absolutely fundamental to the hope of believers who had died.

"All in Adam" goes wider than the elective purpose now in operation, either for the earthly kingdom or the heavenly Body of Christ. It must include millions who have died in heathen lands not ever having the opportunity of hearing the Word of God or the Christ of the Word. These are dealt with in resurrection along the lines of Romans 2:12—16.

It should be hardly necessary to say that this is *not* universalism.

Adam and Christ are the respective "heads" of this company and as all the true seed are "in Adam", even so they will all be made alive in Christ. *But not all at once*. There is no Scriptural basis for one general resurrection as is often held, for the next verse in the chapter we are studying says:

"Each one, however, will be brought to life *in his own rank*; Christ Himself as the firstfruits, then, at His coming, those who belong to Christ"
(verse 23 C. K. Barrett).

Let us not forget that 1 Corinthians was written during the Acts period when the Second Coming of Christ was imminent. The resurrection of the Lord having taken place, the next thing that believers eagerly awaited was His early return and the bringing to life of those believers who had already died. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 makes this quite clear. The truth of the Mystery in Ephesians and Colossians had yet to be revealed and therefore finds no direct reference in 1 Corinthians 15.

The Apostle continues:

"Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet . . ." (1 Cor. 15:24, 25 R.V.).

Verse 24 reads literally, "then the end" and if we stop reading here we might assume that directly after the second Advent of Christ the termination of all things takes place. It is however important to note that *telos*, end, means *goal* as well as end in time, the completion or conclusion of a purpose or object. Matthew 26:58 and James 5:11 are examples of this.

The goal the Apostle had in view is stated in verse 28 "that God may be all in all", but the intervening verses make it clear that this is not attained at once. "Then" of verse 24 is dependant upon the two occurrences of "when" which follow. There is the abolishing of all rule and the subjugation of all enemies and until this is secured, *Christ reigns* (verse 25) which must cover a period of time.

Allowance must therefore be made for this reign with the objects stated, namely to put "all things under His feet". There is no

ground for the amillennial view that the winding up of all things takes place immediately at the Second Advent. The goal is not arrived at in an unbroken sequence. The Lord Jesus we repeat, reigns as King until all enemies are subdued. These are included in the words "all rule and authority and power". Colossians 2:15 teaches that the work on the cross is the basis for the destruction of "principalities and powers" who are hostile to God and His children. They are linked with death in the closing verses of Romans 8, over which the believer is "more than conqueror". On the other hand Colossians 1:16-20 shows that some principalities will be reconciled. When all enemies of God have been abolished and all the redeemed brought into line or "subjected" to the great purpose of God, then the goal is reached and God is "all in all" (verse 28). The word *hupotasso*, subdue, is linked with *tagma*, "order" or "rank" of verse 23. It is not a harsh word meaning despotic rule, but suggests the perfect alignment of all the redeemed in heaven and earth to the will and plan of the ages devised by the Lord.

This takes man back into the place intended for him in that great plan, for which sin and death had unfitted him. We can say that the whole of revelation is largely concerned with this object, namely the removal of all things that bar the accomplishment of the Divine purpose and this is what redemption and resurrection are all about and without them, such fruition would be impossible.

It is important to note that all enemies go under the *feet* of Christ (an Eastern figure of a conqueror), whereas the redeemed go under His *headship*, and the reign of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords will not cease until this is accomplished. When this state of things has been reached:

"... When all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected unto Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all" (28 R.V.).

Here we must take great care to note exactly what is said, for all sorts of wrong conceptions have sprung from a misreading of this verse. Many misread it as reading "... then shall the Son also Himself be subjected unto Him that did subject all things unto Him, that *the Father* may be all in all". This is the result of an erroneous conception of the Godhead in which the Father is God

and the Son takes a lesser place in the Godhead. This is a confusing of *status* with *role* and *operation*. Oscar Cullman is right when he states "to speak of the Son has meaning only in reference to *God's revelatory action*, not in reference to *God's being*."

The revelation of the Trinity was necessary to carry out the great plan of redemption and victory over Satan, sin and death. We have no means of knowing whether this relationship obtains right throughout eternity, for Scripture does not inform us and it is foolish to speculate. Some have made up their minds that such a relationship is eternal, hence their substituting, in their minds at least, the Father in place of God in verse 28.

When the great goal has been reached at the end of the ages, it is not the *Father, Son, or Holy Spirit* Who is said to be "all in all", but *GOD*, without any reference to such relationship or need of mediation in the realized kingdom of God and we should be content to leave it there.

The verse that follows is problematic and has led to all sorts of extraordinary ideas in interpretation:

"Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are they baptized for them? (29 R.V.).

Some, like the Mormons, think this teaches baptism for the dead by proxy. Others teach that Paul is referring to those who were baptized on the basis of the testimony of some who had died. Yet another view postulates that such baptism refers to young converts who took the place of older brethren who had died. The difficulty lies in the preposition *huper*, "on behalf of". With regard to the Mormon view, there is no evidence that a rite of this kind arose at any time in the first century. There is nothing like it till the second century and then only in connection with heretics like the Marcionites, and in any case, knowing the Apostle's horror of false teaching, we should expect him to expose its falsity had it occurred at Corinth.

One thing is quite clear, namely that water baptism, symbolizing death, burial, and resurrection, would have no point if there was no resurrection. The rite would have been empty and meaningless. Dr. E. W. Bullinger suggests there is the figure *Ellipsis* here and by

supplying the words "it is" as the translators have done in Romans 8:34, the verse then reads "What shall they do who are being baptized? It is on behalf of the dead if the dead rise not at all." He points out that *nekros*, 'dead', with the article as is the verse we are considering, usually means dead *bodies*, whereas without the article it refers to dead *people*.

We believe this to be the best solution of the difficulty that confronts us in verse 29. It fits perfectly with the context and is in harmony with the verse that follows, "why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour?" What point would there be in incurring continual dangers that accompanied his apostleship if death was the end of everything? "In death oft" he wrote in his second letter to the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 11:23). We come to another problem in verse 32. What did he mean by fighting with beasts at Ephesus? He could not have been exposed literally to wild animals in the arena unless he had lost his Roman citizenship, of which there is no evidence whatsoever. It looks as though he was using it metaphorically of his enemies. "I die daily", he declared, that is, he was daily exposed to the risk of death, and if "merely as a man" he faced this then there was no point in it without the Christian hope.

Heroditus, of Ephesus, had described his countrymen as "wild beasts" 400 years before. Likewise Epimenedes called the Cretans "beasts" (Titus 1:12), and Ignatius, later on, described himself as "fighting with wild beasts, being bound to ten leopards" by which he meant a detachment of soldiers who were guarding him. The whole point is that such experiences were valueless if there was not the hope of resurrection; why not seek to avoid all such difficulty and danger? Why not "eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"? (verse 32). This is a quotation from Isaiah 22:13, but with a different context. Note Paul does not add the words "and be merry", as many do who misquote it without the solid hope of eternal life. There is little to be merry about in a world that is dominated by sin, death and disappointment.

If death is the end of everything, 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”
(1 Cor. 15:33 R.V.),

or it could possibly mean “good characters” and so would read “bad company ruins good characters”. This quotation is not from the Old Testament, 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 people 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” (15:34 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?” (verse 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” (15:36-38 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 12:24). 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” (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 the present 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" (45-49 R.V.).

It is hardly necessary for us to state that Genesis 2:7 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 Genesis 1:20, "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. 8:29), 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 His is able even to subject all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:21 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”

(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 New Testament 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 Ephesians 3 either at Pentecost or Acts 13 and so bring it into the earlier position of the Pentecostal assembly being dealt with in 1 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 Genesis 3:22,23:

“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 (1 Tim. 6:15,16) 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 Revelation 11, "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. 11:15-18). 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. 24:21,29). Let us rightly apportion the Word of Truth and not confuse this with the hope of Colossians 3:1-4.

After looking forward to the resurrection of the believer as the culmination of his redemption (see also Romans 8:23), 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" (1 Cor. 15:54-57 R.V.).

The Apostle is alluding to Isaiah 25:8, "He will swallow up death in victory"; and Hosea 13:14, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction". Death is the result of sin (Rom. 5:12), but for the believer the sting has been drawn, for the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary covers "all trespasses" (Col. 2:13), 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"

(verse 58 C. K. Barrett).

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The subject now changes and Paul returns to further questions concerning which the Corinthian believers had asked his guidance (see 7:1; 8:1; 12:1). 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” (1 Cor. 16:1,2 R.V.).

At Jerusalem the Apostle had undertaken to “remember the poor” (Gal. 2:10). For his activities in this direction the reader should consult Acts 11:29,30; 24:17; Rom. 15:25-28; 2 Cor. 8,9). 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 1 Corinthians make clear what these were. They had possibly been passed on orally during the journey described in Acts 18:23.

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” (16:4 R.V.). The reader should study 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 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 travelling. 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"

(1 Cor. 16:5-9 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 (verse 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" (verse 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 Revelation 3:7 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"

(verses 10,11 R.V.).

Before Paul's visit to Corinth, they could expect one from Timothy. According to 4:17, Timothy had already been sent, but the reference here expresses doubt, "if Timothy comes". This could be because of the perils which beset all travellers (see 2 Cor. 11:23), 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 travelling 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 eleven 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 (verse 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" (verses 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 (3:19-26, and see Mark 13:35-37). They were to "stand fast" and not yield (compare "unmoveable" 15:58), to "play the man" and "be strong". All must be done "in love" which had been so vividly described in chapter thirteen:

"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"

(verses 15,16 R. V.).

The household of Stephanas (1:16) 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 (7:1). They had refreshed Paul's spirit and supplied his need (verse 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. 16:3). 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 believer's 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" (verses 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 Revelation 22:20 "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.

2 CORINTHIANS

INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER ONE

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. We repeat some of the facts stated in the introduction to the first epistle.

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 A.D. 95 and refers 1 Corinthians to 'the blessed Paul, the Apostle'. This is the earliest instance of the quotation of a New Testament 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 A.D. 55, 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 initial visit to Corinth described in the Acts and referred to in 1 Corinthians 2:1. After this visit he wrote them a letter which has not been preserved (5:9). 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 1 Corinthians.

Apparently this did not solve all the difficulties, and in consequence Paul was forced to pay them a hurried painful visit (2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1,2). Following this the Apostle wrote them a third letter of very severe character (2 Cor. 2:4). 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 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5-16). After this he paid his last visit to the Corinthian church (Acts 20:1-4).

Some modern scholars hold that the "severe letter" is contained in 2 Corinthians and that this epistle is not a unified work. They claim that 6:14-7:1 is an interpolation, because it breaks the sequence of thought; that chapter nine largely duplicates what is in chapter eight, and that the last section (10:1-13:14) 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.

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:

2 Corinthians

- A 1:1,2 Introduction. Salutation
- B a 1:3-11 Thanksgiving for comfort in affliction
- b 1:12 The Apostle's manner of life
- C 1:13-2:13 Subject of writing. Visit. Vindication
- No rest in spirit. Macedonia
- B a 2:14-16 Thanksgiving for triumph in affliction
- b 2:17-7:4 The Apostle's ministry
- C 7:5-13:10 Subject of writing. Visit. Vindication
- No rest in flesh. Macedonia
- A 13:11-14 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”

(2 Cor. 1:1 R.V.).

In the opening verses of 1 Corinthians Sosthenes is associated with Paul, but here Timothy is mentioned instead. From 1 Corinthians 4:17 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” (verses 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 2 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 comprehend, 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 six and seven 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 stedfast; 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 despaired even of life" (verse 8 R.V.).

Whatever this may mean, it must have been very serious, for "pressed out of measure" Authorized Version, or "weighed down exceedingly" Revised Version 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 19:23-41, 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 11:23 he states that he was "in deaths 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 practise, 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 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. 1:19); ". . . For I trust that *through your prayers* I shall be given unto you" (Philem. 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 eleven 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” (verse 12 R.V.).

The reader will notice the better rendering of *kauchesis*, “glorying” rather than “rejoicing” Authorized Version 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” (verse 13 R.S.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.

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 1 Corinthians 16:5 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 1 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"

(2 Cor. 1:15,16 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?"

(verses 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 yea. For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea: wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us" (1:19,20 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. 3:14). 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. These we have considered in the exposition of the first epistle. Among them 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" (1 John 2:20). "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 . . ." (1 John 2:27). 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" (1:23-2:4 R.S.V.).

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER TWO

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 who 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" (verses 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 1:8-10. 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 16:8-11). 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" (2:12,13 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 2:14 although Paul does not describe his meeting with Titus until chapter seven. 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. 1:21) this is what he really meant, spending himself without limit and with practical concern for the Lord and for His people. He now expresses his thanks:

"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" (verses 14,15 R.V.).

It is difficult to be sure of the exact meaning of *thriambeuo*. The Revised Version and the Revised Standard Version give it its classical meaning "leads in triumph" whereas the Authorized Version 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 respond it is a "savour from life unto life". To those who reject it is a "savour from death unto death" (verses 15 and 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 the 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!

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CHAPTER THREE

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 . . ." (3:1-3 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 18:27). 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. 31:18). This law of God was a covenant made between Himself and the people of Israel (Exod. 19:5; 24:7,8). 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 31:31-37. 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. 19:1-6; 34:27; Deut. 5:2-4; Jer. 31:31-37) 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. 1:6-8). 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 28:25-28) and, in the *new man* now being formed (Eph. 2:15), 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 (Jer. 31:31-34; Rom. 9:4). Gentiles were "strangers from the covenants" (Eph. 2:12) 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. 19:5,6; Jer. 31:36). Saved Gentiles in the Acts period who were

like wild olive grafts into the true (Rom. 11:16-21) 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. 31:33) whereas all through this age, Israel's heart has been "gross" through their rejection of God's offer of mercy (Acts 3:19-26) and so they cannot "understand with the heart" (Acts 28:27). 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. 3:2) 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 2 Corinthians 3 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" (3:6) he is *not* dealing with the interpretation of Scripture, referring to a *literal* or *spiritualising* 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. 7:9,10; Gal. 3:10). 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. 7:12). It reflected the character of the thrice holy God Who gave it, and at its inception there was

glory and awe-inspiring majesty (Exod. 19:16-20; Heb. 12:18-21), 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. 34:29-35). 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 New Covenants in 2 Corinthians 3:

<i>The Old Covenant</i>	<i>The New Covenant</i>
The letter that killeth (3:6)	The spirit that quickeneth (3:6)
The ministration of death (3:7,8)	The ministration of the spirit (3:7,8)
The ministration of condemnation (3:9)	The ministration of righteousness (3:9)
That which is done away (3:11)	That which remaineth (3:11)
Moses and Israel veiled (3:13-15)	The veil done away in Christ (3:13-15)
When Israel turn, the veil removed (3:16-18)	We all with unveiled face (3:16-18)
The glory of God in the face of Moses "done away" (3:7)	The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (4:6)

Though the Old Covenant of law-keeping had its glory, it was only a temporary one and fading at that, owing to the fact that it was "weak on account of the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). 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 (3:10). 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 New Testament 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 Old Testament Israelite had his mind "veiled" like the face of Moses (3:14) 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" (verse 16). This turning was vital to the Jew of the New Testament 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. 12:10). They will then wholeheartedly turn to Him and be saved and this is all part of God's New Covenant dealing with Israel (Rom. 11:25-29) 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 "first fruits", 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" (3:18 R.V.).

The Revised Version "unveiled face" is more accurate than the "open face" of the Authorized Version 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 4:6 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.

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER FOUR

The nation of Israel was the centre of the New Covenant from a human standpoint and thus had first place in the Acts period during which 2 Corinthians was written. Paul and those with him were made "able ministers" of this covenant (3:6) and they fully realized the responsibility that this divine appointment brought upon them. It may be in the opening of chapter four 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" (4:1,2 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 (1 Tim. 1:12,13) 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" (4:3,4 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 Colossians 1:13 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" (verses 5 and 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. 1:3). 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 (2 Cor. 12:9).

Paul now contrasts the often humiliating experiences he passed through as a faithful servant of Christ and minister of the gospel with the exceeding divine power that he found 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 11:16-28. In chapter four 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” (verses 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 *aporoumenoi* and *exaporoumenoi* 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 14:19). 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” (4:10-12 R.V.).

Paul, in a sense, was always under the sentence of death. “In deaths oft”, he writes later on in the epistle (11:23). 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 13:13).

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

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

The grand truth of resurrection is going to dominate the section which follows right into chapter five. 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 fifteen).

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" (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" (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" (J. Moffatt).

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER FIVE

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" (1 Thess. 4:15). 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 15 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" (2 Cor. 5:1-4 R. V.).

In Romans 8:23 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 Philippians 1:23 must be interpreted in the light of Philippians 3:11 and the context we are studying in 2 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 2 Corinthians 5.

Redemption and Resurrection are the key to the final fulfilment 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" (5:1) 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 1 Corinthians 15:53-55. Resurrection is the time when immortality is attained and not before. It is "put on" *then*, and death at that 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" (5:5), 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" (5:6-8 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 (1 Cor. 3:10-15). 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” (verse 9).

The thought of Christ as the righteous Judge (2 Tim. 4:8) 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”
(5:10 R.V.).

Romans 14:10 Revised Version 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 5:22,27), 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” (verse 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 12 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 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" (verses 14,15 R. V.).

The Greek *sunecho* constrain, is used in Luke 12:50 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 baptised with; and how am I *straitened* (R.S.V. constrained) till it be accomplished."

Weymouth beautifully renders "constrains us" as "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. 3:19).

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” (verses 16,17 R.V.).

Paul is contrasting the standards and estimation of the old creation of unregeneracy with the entirely 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 . . .” (18 R.S.V.).

All things is *ta panta*, literally “the all things”, not all things without exception, and the *Revised Standard Version* 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. 5:21),

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. 3:22), so men are exhorted "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20) and true believers are those who have "*received the reconciliation*" (Rom. 5:11 "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 Revised Standard Version:

"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."

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER SIX

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. 53:6) 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 through Christ (Phil. 3:9; Rom. 3:22). 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)" (6:1, 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 Isaiah 49:8. 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 long-suffering, 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" (6:4-10 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” (verse 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 and 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” (6:14-18 R.V.).

Do not become diversely yoked with unbelievers, says the Apostle. “Mismatched” is the translation of the Revised Standard Version. 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 Old Testament. Such references as Leviticus 11:44; 26:11,12; Exodus 25:8; Ezekiel 11:20; 36:28; 37:27 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.

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER SEVEN

Chapter seven 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" (2 Cor. 7:1 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 (1 Cor. 1:30) 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 6:11-13 and he urges them to "open their hearts to him" (7:2). 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 2:13. 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 1 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" (verses 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 who had caused so much trouble. 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 and 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 (verse 16).

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER EIGHT

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 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 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" (2 Cor. 8:1-5 R.V.).

These churches were at Philippi, Thessalonica and Beroea. 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 did not 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 Thessalonians 1:6 and 2:14 record the suffering of the Thessalonians and Paul had himself received persecution at Philippi (Acts 16:20) and at Thessalonica (Acts 17:5). Fourthly, none of these were *wealthy* churches. The Apostle talks of their deep poverty (verse 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 Macedonians' 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 1 Corinthians 16:2 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 New Testament. In the Old Testament 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 (2 Cor. 9:6-10).

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 (8:7). 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 your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (8:9 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. 17:25-27) nor even anywhere to lay His head (Luke 9:58). He died without a single possession and even His clothes were taken from Him by the soldiers 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 New

Testament 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 12:43, 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.

The Apostle Paul now urges the Corinthians to complete their money gift for the poor saints at Jerusalem. He tells them that Titus would visit them to finalize this, together with two other unnamed brethren (verses 18 and 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" (verse 18) and of the latter, "we have many times proved earnest in many things" (verse 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.

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER NINE

Some have thought the beginning of chapter nine to be somewhat awkward as though a new subject was being introduced, whereas it is the same theme of Christian giving that is continued. *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 *pareskeuastai* ("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 (verses 3 and 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 (verse 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 Scripture 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” (verses 6 and 7 R.V.).

A number of passages in the Old Testament confirm this. Proverbs 11:24,25 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 Septuagint 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 6:38). 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 Septuagint of Proverbs 22:9, “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 1 Chronicles 29 and note verses 14 and 17. Such giving delights the Lord’s heart and in return He multiplies grace and blessing to the donor (2 Cor. 9:8). The Apostle again quotes from the Old Testament, namely Psalm 112:9 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 (verses 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” (verse 15).

The Father’s gift of His beloved Son is the greatest of all gifts and when one contemplates the wonder and fulness 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.

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER TEN

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. 11:29) 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 behave so 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” (verse 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" (10:4,5 R.V.).

The Christian warfare is a spiritual one and not with flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12), 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 seven is rendered as a question in the Authorized Version and a fact in the Revised Version. 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. 1:11,12).

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" (2 Cor. 10:8 R.V.).

Yet he did not wish to terrify them by his letters. His enemies had to admit that these were weighty and strong, even if his bodily presence was weak and his speech of no account (verses 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" (verse 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 (verse 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. 2:9) and the Apostle never built on another's foundation or intruded into someone else's sphere of witness (Rom. 15:20).

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.

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 (2 Cor. 10:15,16). 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. 15:24,28). He had no need to boast in another man's labours or sphere (2 Cor. 10:16). 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. 9:24).

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 14:27) 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. 15:17,18 R.V.).

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER ELEVEN

In chapter eleven 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 (11:2) such as God Himself had for the people of Israel in the Old Testament, 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 Old Testament 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".

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. 3:12; 21:2,10) and this city is the Bride of the Lamb (Rev. 21:2,9). This

sphere would include the faithful and those that went on to perfection (Heb. 6:1) 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 over comers 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" (Verse 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. 24:4,5,11,24,25). 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. 1:11,12). 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. 1:6,7), 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. 24:24), 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 (2 Cor. 11:3):

"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" (verse 4 R.V.).

It should be pointed out that both the Authorized Version and Revised Version in the last phrase of verse four 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" Authorized Version, "Ye do well to bear with him" Revised Version. The Revised Standard Version 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 imposters 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" (Verse 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 Galatians 2, he referred to Peter, James and John as those who "seemed to be somewhat" (Gal. 2:6), 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. 1:1,11,12,16,17) 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" (verse 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 (1 Cor. 2:4,5). 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 1 Corinthians 9. 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 (2 Cor. 11:7). 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 18:3) 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 (verse 8). His needs were supplied by brethren from the Macedonian churches (verse 9). The reason for his independent spirit in connection with the Corinthian church was certainly not due to lack of love (verses 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.

He now speaks of his enemies 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" (2 Cor. 11:12-15 N.E.B.).

Satan goes about as a roaring lion "seeking whom he may devour" Peter tells us (1 Pet. 5:8). 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. 4:6). 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 around us everywhere 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 (verse 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" (verse 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 labours, 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" (verses 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 (verse 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. 3:5). A distinction is made in Acts 6:1 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 21:40.

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 (Romans 9:7). 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-aggrandisement 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 2 Corinthians we only have the record of one imprisonment, i.e. at Philippi (Acts 16). Clement of Rome, writing in A.D.96 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 19.

Five times he received the severe beatings by the Jews which were allowed under the law (Deut 25:1-3). To assure that the maximum number of stripes was not exceeded (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 16:22), 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 14:19). Paul's experience of shipwreck must have been before the

one described in Acts 27 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 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 these dangers 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?" (verse 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 (verse 31). We should compare similar assertions in Galatians 1:20; Romans 9:1 and 1 Timothy 2:7. The section is ended by narrating his escape from King Aretas at Damascus (Acts 9:23-25) 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 9 B.C. to A.D. 40. 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.

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER TWELVE

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 18:9 records one at Corinth, another at Jerusalem during his last visit there (Acts 23:11), another on the voyage to Rome (27:23). See also Acts 9:12 and 16:9 and note the promise of a future appearing of the Lord to him in Acts 26:16 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. 11:8-10, 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 counterbalancing "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 twelve 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. These the Lord had given him 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.

It would seem that his enemies were also claiming to have such visions and revelations, but here again his experience far outweighed theirs. He is so averse to personal boasting and the exaltation of self that he begins to speak of himself impersonally:

"I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2 R. V.).

The Authorized Version "*I knew* a man" is incorrect here and also in verse 3. This gives the impression that the man referred to was no longer known to Paul!

We have already noted that the book of the Acts records a number of appearances of the Lord Jesus to the Apostle, but the one he is dealing with here cannot be equated with any of these, unless we add our own thoughts and ideas to Luke's narrative and this we refuse to do. Nor must we make the mistake of identifying these "fourteen years" with the fourteen years of Galatians 2:1. If we go back from the probable date of the epistle we arrive at the time when Paul was sent to Tarsus and then fetched by Barnabas from Tarsus to Antioch (Acts 9:30; 11:25). About this time he was caught away to the third heaven. The Greek verb is found in Acts 8:39 where it is stated that "the Spirit of the Lord *caught away* Philip" who was found later on at Azotus. It is also used in 1

Thessalonians 4:17 which describes the Lord's *parousia*, His arrival on the earth, to set up the earthly kingdom. Those believers who are alive and remain shall be *caught up* to meet the Lord in the air and then return with Him in His triumphal procession to the earth in power and great glory attended by the angels of heaven.

The expression "the third heaven" occurs only here in the New Testament, but one must not forget the phrase "all heavens" in Ephesians 4:10 in connection with the Lord's ascension. While we sometimes read of *heaven* in the singular in the Bible, describing the whole heavenly sphere, yet this is obviously subdivided into sections, otherwise Ephesians 4:10 and 2 Corinthians 12:2 are meaningless. We cannot tell how many sections there are, for this is not revealed*, but there must be at least three or more. Peter, in his second epistle refers to (1) the heavens that were of old (2 Peter 3:5), (2) the heavens and the earth that are now (verse 7) and (3) a new heaven and a new earth yet to be created wherein dwelleth righteousness (verse 13).

So there are three heavens *in time* as well as at least three departments of heaven itself. The Apostle John, in the Revelation, links this new creation with Paradise (Rev. 2:7), so it would appear that both Paul and John were given a preview, as it were, of this wonderful new heaven and earth where at last is absolute perfection and untold glory and joy. The word "paradise", a Persian word meaning "park", is used in the Septuagint of the garden of Eden and in the Revelation of the new earth. We should note that in both cases it is linked with *the earth* and not with heaven.

The rapturous experience that Paul had was beyond expression in human words. He did not know whether it was "in the body" or "out of the body" (verse 2). He says nothing about what he *saw*. What he *heard* he describes as "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter". The Scriptures say little about resurrection life after death. Suffice it to say that it is so wonderful that there are no human means of adequately describing it. But its superlative and eternal wonders are real, and faith is willing to wait

*It is interesting to know that in Jewish writings about the time of Christ, *seven* heavens were enumerated. cf. *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, "The Testament of Levi", chapter 3.

until the day of glory when all the shadows and limitations will have gone and we shall know and enjoy fully the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore (Psa. 16:11).

Such an exalted revelation might have puffed up the pride of any man and even the Apostle was not immune from this, for he states:

"And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated" (verse 7 R.S.V.).

Our heavenly Father, in His love and wisdom, knows how to balance us up so that we can remain in the centre of His will and be usable by Him. Some Pentecostalists assert that all bodily ailments are foreign to the will of the Lord for the believer. The Lord's death, they claim, was to save us from bodily illness as well as from our sins.

However, this is completely disproved by Paul's experience here. Three times he prayed and asked the Lord to remove the "thorn". Doubtless he thought he could do better work for the Lord if he was relieved of this burden. But the Lord's answer was "No". He said to the Apostle "My grace is sufficient for you and My power is made perfect in weakness". There was a lesson that Paul had to learn through the experience of "the thorn", so the Lord did not remove it.

We should be wise too, if, instead of asking for our "thorns" to be removed, we prayed that we might learn whatever lesson the Lord wants to teach us in the experience we are undergoing. Let us not make the mistake of keeping grace to the gospel of salvation. Grace, as well as saving, strengthens, guides and enables us to become "more than conquerors through Him Who loved us" (Rom. 8:37). In fact, grace follows us all through our earthly pilgrimage and service, and will be with us till the day of glory dawns, and there is not a moment we can dispense with it.

Just what was Paul's thorn in the flesh? Many have been the opinions of believers on this point. Professor F. F. Bruce summarizes some of them:

"Pain in the ear or head (Tertullian). Such troublesome characters

as Hymenaeus and Alexander (Chrysostom), epilepsy (M. Krenkel, J. Klausner), convulsive attacks (M. Dibelius), ophthalmia (J. T. Brain), malaria (W. M. Ramsay, E. B. Allo), sufferings caused by constant persecutions (J. Murick), attacks of depression after periods of exaltation (H. Clavier), the agony caused by the unbelief of his Jewish brethren (P. H. Menoud), or by the memory of his persecution of the church (A. Osiander, A Schlatter)".

The very variety of ideas shows that certainty is unattainable. The Greek *skolops* means "thorn" or "splinter" rather than "stake" (R. V. margin). This is confirmed by the Septuagint (compare Num. 33:55; Ezek. 28:24; Hosea 2:6). The examples of this word in the papyri strongly confirm this rendering. The dative case (*te sarki*) could be either locative "in the flesh", or a "*dativus incommodi*", "for the inconvenience of the flesh". If the latter, then we have to understand the word "flesh" in the peculiar sense of the sinful old nature. This was the interpretation of the Reformers and some of the early Fathers who regarded the word in a spiritual way, sent by the Lord "for the flesh", i.e., to quell any possible pride or arrogance that might have arisen in the Apostle after such an exalted experience.

However, we believe that the plain, literal meaning of the Bible, wherever it makes good sense and is in accord with the general teaching of Scripture, is always to be preferred to "spiritualizing". That Paul suffered severe physical trials, 2 Corinthians has already made clear in chapter eleven. In Galatians 4:13-15 the Apostle referred to a physical ailment evidently connected with his eyes, for he bears witness to the fact that the Galatian believers would have given him their own eyes if they could have done so. It would appear that he suffered from a chronic and ugly discharge from his eyes. The word "reject" in verse 14 is literally "spitting out" something offensive. In spite of this affliction which sometimes made him look revolting, these believers loved him so much that they could completely overlook this. And after his vision of the glory of the risen Saviour at his conversion which he described as "above the brightness of the sun" (Acts 26:13), and which rendered him blind for three days (Acts 9:9), we can well believe that his eyes were left permanently weak. Satan could have aggravated this condition, for the Word of God reveals that with the Lord's permission, he can affect the body. Job was an Old Testament example, and the bent woman in Luke 13:16 (described as "whom Satan hath bound") is another.

However, the Lord's grace is all-sufficient at all times and for every experience; as He said, "My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Thus, when the effectiveness of Paul's preaching was so evident, then the transcendent power was manifestly the Lord's and not his own. This was a witness in itself. "Most gladly therefore", he said, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (verse 9). This is not the statement of a fanatic who rejoices in pain, but rather of one who is being protected by the overshadowing and almighty power of Christ. The phrase "may rest upon me", means literally "may pitch His tent upon me", a beautiful thought.

Thus he was able to endure the "thorn" and the suffering it caused, *for Christ's sake*. No one in his senses can take pleasure in suffering which is brought on either by inflicting it upon himself or is the consequence of his own folly, but the believer, *for the Lord's sake*, can even welcome it, for then he can be strong, not in himself, but in the Lord and the power of His might (Eph. 6:10).

May we all learn the lesson of the "thorn that remains", and the glorious overshadowing power of the Saviour which can be our continual experience.

Chapter 12:11 commences a new section in this epistle which deals with the signs of a true apostle. Paul has finished his "foolish boasting". As we have seen, it would not have been necessary for him to have started it had not his opposers at Corinth forced him to do so by reason of their exalting themselves and belittling him as the apostle of Christ. He could say "in nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I am nothing" (verse eleven). The Corinthians had had the miraculous signs of a true apostle manifested before their eyes when Paul evangelized their city:

"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Cor. 12:12 R.V.).

Just as Christ's earthly ministry to Israel had been confirmed by evidential miracles ("miracles, wonders and signs" Acts 2:22) as also was the witness of the Jerusalem apostles (Acts 2:43), so had the ministry of Paul been attested by God in the same way. There could be no doubt then of his apostleship. None of the false

apostles at Corinth could claim such Divine credentials. Why did some of them then reject him? They had enjoyed all the blessings that other churches had received through his ministry. Why should they then think they had received inferior treatment (verse 13)? He had refused to be burdensome to them and for this "wrong" he ironically begs their pardon.

Paul now refers to a third visit in verse fourteen. The second visit to them was the "painful" one referred to in 2:1. This third visit would also prove painful if the situation warranted it (see 13:1,2), though the Apostle doubtless fervently hoped that they would mend their ways and make such apostolic discipline unnecessary.

Once more he makes known his motives to them. He does not want to be a burden, nor does he want their property, but it is *themselves* he is anxious to win. They are his spiritual children and as such it was right for him as their spiritual father to make provision for them, not the reverse (verse 14). He is prepared to go to the limit in spending himself for their spiritual profit and his love for them was unbounded. If only theirs for him had been likewise! (verse 15).

He continues:

"But be it so, I did not myself burden you, but, being crafty, I caught you with guile" (12:16 R.V.).

The latter part of the verse must not be misunderstood. The Apostle had stated in chapter 4:2 that he had renounced craftiness (*panourgia*), so he certainly was not being crafty (*panourgos*) in his dealings with the Corinthian church. Rather he is quoting what some at Corinth were saying about him. The Revised Standard Version makes this clear by supplying the words "you say".

He challenges them to say if he had taken advantage of them in financial or other matters through any of his messengers:

"Did Titus take any advantage of you?"

The question is expressed so as to require the answer "No", for it is introduced by the negative *me*. Paul had urged Titus to visit

them in connection with their money gift for the poor saints at Jerusalem (cp. 8:6 and 17). Only one brother is mentioned here accompanying him, whereas two are mentioned in chapter 8:18. One is probably omitted here because he was not Paul's representative, but sent as a delegate from one of the other churches who were contributing. Titus' companions are called "messengers of the churches" in 8:23.

Paul now further challenges them:

"Ye think all this time that we are excusing ourselves unto you. In the sight of God speak we in Christ. But all things, beloved, are for your edifying" (verse 19 R.V.).

This could be read as a question "Have you been thinking . . .?" The Apostle was not concerned about his own reputation. As one sent by Christ he knew what constituted his ministry and this was principally the building up of believers everywhere. What he desired above all things was their spiritual growth and maturity. The last thing he wanted was to find them in the same state as when he made the "painful" visit. This would not only be painful to them, but to him also. He would certainly feel humbled if he continued to find some of them indulging in the sins listed in verse 20. He would then "mourn for many who had sinned and not repented" (verse 21) for this would probably mean excommunication.

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Once again, in the first verse of chapter 13, he refers to his proposed third visit and also to Deuteronomy 19:15 (and compare 17:6 and Numbers 35:30), where accusation must be backed up by more than one witness to avoid a false charge. Again he warns them that he will be forced to deal ruthlessly with those who ignored him and continued in their evil ways, just as he did on his second visit (verse 2), and this statement shows us that this upsetting visit actually took place although we only have allusions to it.

Some had evidently said that his reluctance to use his apostolic powers in judgment meant that in reality he was no apostle:

“Since you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me, He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. For He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God” (verses 3 & 4 R.S.V.).

To all such he asserts that the power of Christ would be a reality amongst them and he would be a vehicle of that power. By worldly standards the Lord was “crucified in weakness”, but Christ crucified in reality was the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18) and this power would be manifested in no uncertain way in their midst.

Did they demand proof of his apostleship? Let them examine themselves first and test the genuineness of their own faith:

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” (verse 5 R.S.V.).

The Apostle expresses the hope that the Corinthians will realize that he is no “counterfeit” (*adokimos*, reprobate) apostle. Also that they may not do wrong, rather the reverse (verses 6 and 7). He would gladly appear to be weak in their eyes, as long as they are strong, not in themselves, but in Christ and the power He alone can impart:

“This we also pray for, even your perfecting” (verse 9 R.V.).

The word translated “perfecting” here is *katartisis*, which is cognate with *katartizesthe*, “be perfected” in verse 11. This is not the usual word which means maturity as “let us go on to maturity” (perfection) of Hebrews 6:1. *Katartizo* is twice rendered *mending* their nets in Matthew 4:21 and Mark 1:19. It occurs in Galatians 6:1 where a believer who is overtaken in a fault is *restored*. The word means “restoration to wholeness”, and usually there is the thought of rupture in the background.

At Corinth there was certainly rupture and disunity caused by sin and failing, and Paul is concerned to see this lamentable condition remedied and full unity in walk and witness restored. If this was done there would be no need for him to have to deal

severely with offenders when he visited them:

"For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal sharply, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down" (verse 10 R.V.).

Thus he feels it essential to repeat himself (see 10:8) and warn them again, doubtless hoping that this would be effective, so avoiding another painful confrontation such as had occurred on his second visit. Paul was always desirous of constructive building up. It is a rewarding study to note the contexts which deal with "edification" which is at the root of all profitable ministry and teaching. It is so easy to tear down and criticize, but it takes a real knowledge of the Word of God together with patience and wisdom to build up believers in the Truth.

We now come to the final exhortation, greetings and benediction in 13:11-14:

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (13:11-14 R.S.V.).

"Be comforted" (verse 11 R.V.). *Parakaleo* can mean "be exhorted" or "be comforted", but in view of the context "exhort" is better. It could be taken as the middle voice rather than the passive and then it could be rendered "exhort one another". The title the "God of love and peace" is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. It is possible that, in view of the fact that the Corinthian failure was due to lack of practical love to the Lord and to one another, that love is linked with peace here.

As in 1 Corinthians 16:20, they are advised to greet one another with a holy kiss. This was the recognized form of salutation in those days, very much like shaking hands is today. We are not sure who the saints were who joined with Paul in salutation, as we cannot say with certainty where the Apostle was when he despatched this letter. In all probability they belonged to one of the Macedonian churches.

Paul, as his custom was, now writes the benediction with its

reference to grace, that wonderful gift that was at the heart of all his faithful ministry and witness. He uses a Trinitarian formula, a three-fold expression of the Godhead. While the word "trinity" is not used in the holy Scriptures, yet the *fact* of it certainly is, whatever those who deny the Lord's deity may say.

And so we come to the end of one of the most personal of Paul's letters, revealing his personality possibly more than any other.

What was the effect of this epistle on the Corinthian church? The answer is we do not know, for Scripture does not give us any indication as to the result. However, forty years later, we have information about the church at Corinth in the letter addressed to it from the Roman church, traditionally known as the first epistle of Clement (of Rome). In it we find that division and anarchy are still in evidence and there is little indication that this church had made much progress towards spiritual maturity. This reminds us of the fact that the apostolic age was not ideal in unity and purity of doctrine and practice as is sometimes asserted. In our booklet, *The Early Centuries and the Truth* we have sought to show that few really gripped the truth given through the Apostle in his day and the succeeding generations.

If we today are rejoicing in any knowledge of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" made known through Paul, how thankful we should be and how diligently we should be seeking to make this known to others while the day of grace lasts!

I TIMOTHY

CHAPTER ONE

It is evident that the three Pastoral Epistles of Paul form a group and were written within a short interval of time between his two Roman imprisonments. Thus they were written after the end of the Acts and their contents cannot be fitted into the Acts period.

Authorship.

It was universally held by the early church that Paul was the author and this was never questioned until about 100 years ago. Ignatius, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Athenagoras, Justin Martyr and the early Muratorian fragment give their testimony to the Pauline authorship. The reader is referred to the introduction to 2 Timothy for further facts*. We shall only touch upon the assertions of the critics here.

Their main reasons for denying the authorship of Paul are:

(1) There is no exposition of the great basic doctrines (such as justification by faith) which are characteristic of Paul's epistles. But the Apostle was addressing *leaders* in the truth, Timothy and Titus, who did not need this for they had been well grounded by Paul's oral teaching for some 15-20 years.

(2) The church set-up (e.g. as regarding bishops) was not that of the first century but the second, during the lifetime of Ignatius. But this is not true. We find there were bishops (note the plural) and deacons at Philippi (Phil. 1:1) and Paul had ordained *elders* in every church he founded (Acts 14:23). When a new assembly came into being there was obviously the need for someone to take charge and care for the spiritual welfare of the group. We find nothing of the exaggerated elevation of *one* bishop ruling over assemblies such as took place at the time of Ignatius and was finally exhibited in the Roman Catholic set-up.

(3) The Pastorals exhibit the developed Gnosticism of the *second* century. This again is not true. In the Pastorals we find an incipient

* This is found in the author's exposition of 2 Timothy in his *Letters from Prison* p.259 and published by *The Berean Publishing Trust*.

Gnosticism, a transitional stage from Judaism to developed Gnosticism. And even if this were not so, we should remember that Paul had the gift of prophecy and could foresee how events were going to shape (cp. Acts 20:29-31).

(4) *Linguistic difficulties.* In the Pastoral epistles there are a number of words not used elsewhere in the New Testament. But this can be accounted for by the different circumstances of writing. Some have laid great importance on word statistics, but the comment of Dr. R. P. Martin is to the point here:

"One of the great gains of recent Pauline studies is the growing distrust of the value of word statistics in determining apostolic authorship, and our admission that we cannot say with dogmatism just what he could or could not have written" (*Philippians*, p. 107).

It is absurd to try to guess just what Paul's vocabulary was or to try to restrict it to one's own ideas. In any case would a forger introduce non-Pauline words at about 17 words per page of the Greek Text if he wanted the epistle to be accepted as Paul's writing?

We shall say no more about the human authorship, believing that the author was Paul the Apostle and that this rests upon a solid foundation.

We next give the structure of the epistle:

The Structure of I Timothy

- A 1:1,2 Salutation
- B 1:3-20 Teach no other doctrine (*hetero didaskaleo* 3)
The King, incorruptible, invisible (17)
Shipwreck (19)
- C 2:1-7 Salvation of all men (4)
- D 2:8-3:15 These things I write (14)
- E 3:15,16 The Mystery of godliness—Angels
4:1-8 The Apostasy—Demons
- C 4:9-12 Saviour of all men (10)
- D 4:13-6:2 These things teach (6:2)
- B 6:3-20 Teach otherwise (*hetero didaskaleo* 3)
The King, immortal, unseen (13,16)
Drowning (9)
- A 6:21 Salutations.

This structure shows the balance of the epistle and its leading features. The correspondence is shown by noting the sections headed by capitals. The purpose of the epistle was the guidance of Timothy as a Christian leader as to his attitude to those *within* and those *without*; what his charge involved and what his personal conduct and example should be. The same can be said of the epistle to Titus.

In the opening verses of 1 Timothy Paul stresses his God-given authority:

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope; unto Timothy, my true child in faith: grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (1 Tim. 1:1,2 R.V.).

This personal commission is in order to make unmistakable the authority of the message he teaches and this is intensified by the expression “by the commandment of God”. He usually says “by the *will* of God”, but he wanted Timothy to realize afresh, and any others who would read the epistle, that he was not expressing his own ideas, but was a man under authority and that authority was nothing less than the authority of God Himself.

The expression “God our Saviour” may appear unusual for the Apostle, but he uses it interchangeably with the phrase “Christ our Saviour” as the occurrences in the epistle to Titus show:

God our Saviour 1:3
 Christ our Saviour 1:4
 Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ 2:13
 God our Saviour 3:4
 Christ our Saviour 3:6

Those who deny the deity of Christ will have an insoluble difficulty here, unless they are prepared to state there are *two* Gods and *two* Saviours referred to in this epistle, which is of course sheer heresy, denying the truth of the Old and New Testaments concerning *one* God and *one* Saviour and “none else”.

Well may E. K. Simpson write concerning the opening verses of 1 Timothy:

"This is no slender proof of his conviction of the deity of Christ, especially when we reflect that the statement comes from a monotheist to his finger tips like this Hebrew of the Hebrews"

(*The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 25).

The word "Saviour" could have a contemporary significance when we remember it was used in the cult of Emperor-worship, being applied to such an infamous character as Nero. What a contrast! Here, Christ Jesus is both Lord and Hope. Let us never forget our hope is indissolubly bound up with a *Person* not a creed, and that Person is the ever-living Saviour.

This is what gives the word "hope" absolute certainty in the New Testament, an element that is usually lacking in our modern usage. The true believer, grounded in the Lord Jesus Christ, does not have to speculate about his final end. He knows for certain he is linked for ever by grace with the One Who said "Because I live, ye shall live also" and He lives, never to die again, the eternal Saviour and Lord, Who, "being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9).

Timothy is addressed as *gnesios*, "true-born", "genuine". There was nothing spurious about Timothy or his standing in the faith. He was the recognized representative of the Apostle. *Teknon*, "child", rather than *huios*, "son", strikes a caressing note and shows the close and warm relationship between Timothy and his spiritual father. The Apostle continues:

"As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, the which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith; so do I now" (I Tim. 1:3-4 R.V.).

The reference to Ephesus need not imply that Paul had recently been there or that Ephesus was his starting point. *Poreuomenos*, "when I was going", not "when I went" Authorized Version, seems to indicate that Timothy was left *en route* for Ephesus and was charged by the Apostle to remain there for the reason expressed by the next verse, namely to correct the false teachers and uphold the truth committed by the Lord. Timothy's sensitive nature may have shrunk from this, but he was exhorted to take a strong line with the offenders and maintain the "good deposit" of

truth. This was obviously a recognised body of doctrine, as we have seen in other studies, and related to what the risen Christ had revealed and committed to Paul as his human vehicle for making it known to the Christian world. Timothy was to charge certain ones that they were not to teach a different doctrine. "Charge" *parangello*, is a strong military term which means literally "to pass commands from one to another". *Heterodidaskaleo*, means "to teach amiss". This word gives a timely warning against introducing novelty or deviating from the specific truth which God had deposited with Paul. All who teach should have this warning before them continually. The Lord does not take a light view of any mishandling of His Word and those of His children who do this must not be suprised if, instead of meeting Him with joy in the future, they do so with shame. Faithfulness is the first requirement by God.

The error of the false teachers consisted in "fables and endless genealogies". *Muthoi*, "fables" occurs in Titus 1:14, where they are described as Jewish, and it is more than likely that we have the same thing here. While we have not the developed Gnosticism of the second century the beginnings are here with semi-Gnostical theories of aeons and emanations. In addition there was the Jewish delight in speculation, leading to the composition of mythical histories based on the Old Testament such as is found in the Jewish book of *Jubilees*. This mixture of error was doubtless being promulgated at Ephesus and was Satan's counter attack to the truth of the Mystery. The "endless genealogies" possibly resulted from the idea that God, called *Buthos* or *Depth*, by acting on His own mind produced two other beings of different sexes called *Aeons* or *Emanations* and from these two sprang a series of other *Aeons*. When anyone attempted to trace this celestial pedigree or genealogy, there arose great arguments as to the number of *Aeons* and their order of procession. Here was Satan's travesty of the purpose of the ages with its false mediators in the place of the only genuine One, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The danger of all this was that it broke the spiritual unity among members of the Body of Christ and so led to endless queries and doubts. This is always the aim of the enemy, to split the people of God who hold the truth and, looking back upon the past centuries, he has been eminently successful. These are *still* his tactics today, so let us keep a watchful eye and not be drawn aside from what

God has committed to our charge. This truth Paul describes as a "dispensation of God" (verse 4 R.V.). This is nearer in translation to what Paul was inspired to write than "godly edifying" of the Authorized Version.

There is hardly any need for us to stress the importance of the word "dispensation". It is *not* synonymous with the word "age", but means the *administration of a stewardship*. We have this word and its cognate rendered "steward" in Luke 16:1,2. In revealing the great truth of the Mystery (Secret) in Ephesians 3, Paul declared it to be a *dispensation* or stewardship in verse 9 (R.V.) and *grace* in verse 2. Of course it is a "fellowship" (A.V.) but the Apostle reveals that it is something much deeper and higher than this. It was this precious dispensation of God that these false teachers were marring by their unfaithfulness and erroneous doctrine, hence the serious warning Paul gave to his son in the faith.

Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus to deal with false teachers who were straying from the Truth committed to him and made known through his witness. The best antidote to error is always the truth of God and here the Apostle calls it a "dispensation (stewardship) of God", which had been the subject of the Ephesian and Colossian epistles (1 Tim. 1:4 R.V.) and the goal of it all was love:

"But the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned" (Verse 5).

The word *parangelia*, "commandment" (a military term) is cognate with the verb in verse 3. *Telos* is the *aim* or goal; surely the goal of all truth is divine love in all its sacrificial giving and unselfishness. Its source is made clear by the preposition *ek* (*out of*) which clearly draws attention to its origin in three ways:

(1) *A pure heart*. The *heart* stands for the totality of a man's moral affections and outlook, and without purity there, Christian love is impossible. The Lord Jesus had a special promise for the pure in heart (Matt. 5:8).

(2) *A good conscience*. The word *suneidesis* (conscience) implies self-judgment and moral consciousness, a constant awareness of God and His truth. In this very epistle we find the

opposers of the truth have a seared or branded conscience (1 Tim. 4:2), one that cannot act because it has been quenched and ignored so many times and finally put out of action by the system known in Scripture as "the lie", whose author is Satan.

(3) *Faith unfeigned*. True faith or trust is where we start in our dealings with God. "He that cometh to God must believe (have faith) that He exists . . ." (Heb. 11:6). Pretence here ruins the whole approach and in fact all our relationship with Him. The Apostle links love and faith together in his great hymn recorded in 1 Corinthians 13 and such faith leads to the greatest of all graces—divine love.

This trinity of graces was conspicuously absent from the opposers of the truth in our context:

"From which things some having swerved have turned aside unto vain talking; desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm" (verses 6 & 7 R.V.).

These false teachers, instead of keeping to the race track of truth, had swerved off it into a barren waste, their words being nothing more than meaningless chatter (vain jangling). The desire to be "teachers of the law" shows their Jewish character and their ambition seemed to be to rival contemporary Rabbinical exposition, rather than to minister the truth.

Paul's indictment of them is scathing. They were utterly incompetent, being both ignorant and unintelligent. The mention of the law leads the Apostle to discuss it and its purpose, but he does not attempt to deal with it exhaustively. To appreciate this we must study both Romans and Galatians, especially Romans 7. In 1 Timothy Paul gives one of the main reasons for the law, the restraint of evil doing:

"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for men-stealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine; according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (verses 8-11 R.V.).

The law has little relevance for law-abiding people; they do not need its restraints and it was not designed for them, but for the lawless and insubordinate, who are not amenable to discipline. The catalogue of sins here begins with those against God and then against one's fellow man. The reference to murderers of fathers and mothers should probably be understood as *smitters* of parents as the Revised Version margin suggests, an extreme violation of the fifth commandment.

Paul rounds off these offences with anything that is contrary to sound (healthy) doctrine. There is a tremendous contrast between teaching designed for criminals (the law) and teaching designed for the believer who wants to go on to perfection (maturity). Both *didaskalia* teaching, and *hugiainouse*, sound or healthy, are peculiarly words of the Pastoral Epistles. *Didaskalia* occurs fifteen times in these epistles, eight of them being in 1 Timothy (1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3). Furthermore the following cognate words should be noted which are also a feature of these important epistles, all revolving round the thought of teaching: *Heterodidaskalia*, to teach otherwise (1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3). *Nomodidaskalos*, teacher of the law, 1:7. *Didaskalos*, teacher, 2:7. *Didasko*, to teach, 2:12; 4:11; 6:2. *Didaktikos*, apt to teach, 3:2. The prevalence of these words is easily accounted for when we remember that they were addressed to *leaders* and *teachers* like Timothy and Titus. But nothing is clearer than the fact that all such teaching, to be acceptable to the Lord, must conform to His good deposit of truth made known through Paul. In his second epistle the Apostle reminds Timothy of this when he states "Hold the pattern of sound words *which thou hast heard from me*" (2 Tim. 1:13 R.V.).

This exceedingly rich and uplifting deposit of truth Paul now designates as:

"According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, *which was committed to my trust*" (1 Tim. 1:11 R.V.).

The full grandeur of the original Greek has been missed by the Authorized Version "glorious gospel". The emphasis is not so much on the word "gospel", but rather the word "glory", (*doxa*) which is so intimately bound up with the Mystery and its supreme hope (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14, 17, 18; 3:16, 21; Phil. 1:11; 2:11; 3:21; 4:19,

20; Col. 1:11, 27; 3:4; 1 Tim. 1:11, 17; 3:16; Titus 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:10; 4:18). Note that in every case the noun *doxa* is used, even when the Authorized Version translates it as "glorious". For instance, our blessed hope is "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). That tremendous glory is now hidden and the hope of the Body of Christ coincides with its manifestation (Col. 3:4).

In 1 Timothy Paul thrills with joy at the thought of his high commission of proclaiming the good news (gospel) contained in the priceless deposit of truth, filled with the unsearchable riches of Christ and ablaze with His glory (Eph. 3:9). Yet, at the same time, he cannot help thinking of his own unworthiness especially his pre-conversion days. If the Lord Jesus could change Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners into Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, then there is no limit to His transforming power, and there is hope for the weakest of us if we come into contact by faith with such an almighty Saviour and Lord. This sudden outburst of thanksgiving is typical of the Apostle, who never ceased to marvel at the grace and long-suffering of God and his own past sinfulness and blindness.

He does not attempt to excuse himself in his headstrong persecution of the Lord's people. He ravaged the early church like a wild animal (Gal. 1:13). In 1 Timothy he describes himself as a "blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious", only the English "injurious" is not strong enough. *Hubristen* means a violent man, one who is arrogant and overbearing. In his self-drawn sketch we can hardly believe that such a person could ever become one of the most faithful and Christlike servants of the Lord, but such is the truth. All people are naked and open to the all-seeing God (Heb. 4:13) and in considering Saul of Tarsus, the Lord recognized one who was absolutely faithful to his light, however small it might have been, and that there was a mighty potential in this man once he was saved and enlightened. Whatever Saul of Tarsus was in his pre-conversion days, he was not a hypocrite, "I did it ignorantly in unbelief", he says (1 Tim. 1:13). Here was no wilful ignorance which cannot be excused, but the blindness of unregeneracy which, when removed by the risen Christ, could be replaced by the full knowledge and acknowledgement of the liberating truth of God which is resident alone in the ascended Lord. No wonder the Apostle Paul never forgot the wonders of *grace* and we are not

surprised to find that he makes more references to grace than any other New Testament writer. It was the Lord's saving grace that stopped him in his mad career, replaced it by a new spirit of faith and love and a keen desire to "apprehend that for which he had been apprehended by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12).

The striking formula, "Faithful is the saying" occurs five times in the Pastoral Epistles and nowhere else (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; Titus 3:8; 2 Tim. 2:11). This is supposed to present a problem to Pauline authorship, but who can dogmatically say that Paul could not, or would not have appealed to such sayings if they were truth? It appears that he is quoting statements in a rhythmical form current in the churches, which were acknowledged to be "sure words", and *pistos*, faithful, is a characteristic word of the Pastorals, occurring no less than seventeen times. Truth and fidelity are brought to the fore here. The statement that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" breathes the very soul of the gospel as one writer has expressed it, and gives us the basic fact of the Christian faith. In introducing it, Paul is still thinking about himself and the depths of his sinful past for he adds, "of whom I am chief". Paul holds no inflated idea of his own importance. It is "less than the least" (Eph. 3:8) and "the least of the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:9). But here he thinks not only of himself for he realizes that, in laying hold of him, the ringleader of the revolt against Him, the Lord was not only displaying the riches of His grace as far as he was concerned, but was also giving an example of what His grace could do for all subsequent sinners:

"... that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all His longsuffering, for an example of them which should hereafter believe on Him unto everlasting life" (1:16 R.V.).

Hypotuposis, "example", occurs again in 2 Timothy 1:13, "the form of sound words". The word means an outline sketch or a word illustration. Paul's experience was to serve as a compelling example of grace abounding to countless numbers who should hereafter believe on the Lord Jesus unto life everlasting. *Epi*, "on", with the dative case is rare in the New Testament, but Paul uses it again in Romans 9:33 and 10:11. It points to Christ as the only firm basis of faith. Remember no one is saved by faith alone. Faith must rest on someone or something. It cannot be suspended as it were in mid-air. The faith that saves and brings eternal life of

inexpressible joy must be faith or trust that is resting solely and securely on the great Rock of ages, the unchanging Christ and all that He has accomplished for sinners.

Once more an irresistible impulse prompts the Apostle to break forth into praise and thanksgiving:

“Now unto the King of the ages (margin), incorruptible, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever (to the ages of the ages). Amen” (1 Tim. 1:17 R.V.).

The striking title, “the King of the ages”, occurs in Revelation 15:3 (R.V.) and in the Apochrypha (Tobit 13:6, 10) so it was evidently current in Jewish circles. It is incorrect to keep the title of God as King solely to Israel, for it is used twice in 1 Timothy, here and 6:15 (See also Rev. 19:16). The invisibility of God as Spirit is stressed in other Scriptures, (e.g. Col. 1:15). He is the Author and Ruler of the ages which He has appointed to carry out His great redemptive purpose and this “plan of the ages” (eternal purpose A.V. Eph. 3:11) is centred in Christ Jesus. He is *mono Theo*, “God alone”, and there is “none else” to be compared with Him as the middle chapters of Isaiah reveal. To Him be all the adoration and praise for all time and eternity to follow!

After his rapturous doxology (1 Tim. 1:17), Paul reverts to the main purpose of his letter, to impress upon Timothy the solemn charge he had been given in connection with the Truth:

“This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience . . .”
(1 Tim. 1:18, 19 R.V.).

It is significant that the verb commit or deposit (*paratithemi*) is used of Timothy passing the good deposit of Truth to others (2 Tim. 2:2). This young fellow had evidently been marked out by those who had been given the gift of prophecy during the Acts, as being God’s choice for being Paul’s successor, and as such he had no light responsibility, as this epistle makes clear. Satanic opposition and the forces of darkness made warfare inevitable and this has been true ever since Satan’s fall, but Timothy must be the Lord’s good soldier and loyally take his stand and not yield an

inch, "fighting the good fight of faith" (6:12) and holding faith and a good conscience. Faith and conscience are joined together three times in this epistle (compare 1:5 and 3:9). These embrace the fundamentals of true doctrine and practice and the surrender of one can ruin the other. Faith keeps us in close contact with the Lord and His truth, and a sensitive conscience will tamper with nothing that is false, lax, or doubtful. These are really the expansion of the whole armour of God that is described in Ephesians six, which ensures the safety of the believer in this highly dangerous conflict. Paul had witnessed many a spiritual downfall due to lax regard of these essentials and so he warns his son in the faith:

"... holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme" (verses 19 and 20 R.V.).

Hymenaeus and Alexander were the concrete examples of this who would have been known to Timothy. Hymenaeus is mentioned again in 2 Timothy 2:17 in connection with false teaching concerning resurrection and Alexander is spoken of in Acts 19:33 and 2 Timothy 4:14. As Alexander was a common name it is not possible to say definitely that these are one and the same person, but it seems unlikely that Paul would be referring to two different Alexanders in the Pastoral Epistles without making this clear.

Whoever these men were, they called for strong disciplinary action, if the purity of the Truth was to be preserved. One of the Apostle's powers was to be able "to deliver to Satan" such people for chastisement, and if possible reformation, under the overruling of God. Some think this means excommunication, but in view of Job's experience in the Old Testament it could have related to serious bodily affliction. Acts 13:11 and 1 Corinthians 11:30 are examples of this. In the case of the two mentioned in 1 Timothy one, the object was remedial: "that they may learn not to blaspheme", so there was mercy at the back of it all.

I TIMOTHY

CHAPTER TWO

The Apostle now proceeds from his general charge to specific regulations concerning the worship and organization of the church:

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4 R.V.).

The words "first of all" relate not to time but to *importance*. How easy it is to become narrow in our praying! Paul would have us take in *all men* in our prayers. The four words he uses here throw light on the great ministry of prayer. *Deesis* (supplications) brings out the sense of *need*. *Proseuchai* (prayers) is the more general word for prayer as a whole. *Enteuxeis* (intercessions) is the regular word for petition on behalf of someone else, a vastly important aspect of our prayer life and a ministry in itself. The very variety of terms serves to emphasize the richness and fulness of this spiritual exercise. Giving of thanks (*eucharistias*) is an element that is too often forgotten. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8:26) is so true, but we need have no difficulty in giving thanks and praising the Lord for all His goodness and mercy to each one of us! If we have problems in our prayer life, let us think of the innumerable blessings we receive from day to day and then express our heartfelt gratitude to the Lord.

Paul brings before Timothy the need for prayer on behalf of kings and those in authority. Too often this is forgotten. Whether rulers or civil authorities are perverted and hostile or not, they should be subjects for remembrance at the Throne of Grace, the object being "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life" so that the work and witness for the Lord may not be hindered. Let us not think that rulers are beyond the Lord's influence:

"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Prov. 21:1).

The exiled Jews at Babylon were bidden to pray for the pagan city by Jeremiah, saying "for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace" (Jer. 29:7), and in the first century, prayer for those in authority would have included the infamous Nero! Let us not forget then, in our prayer for "all men" to remember the government of nations and those in authority, for we are assured, in the context we are studying, that this is good and acceptable to God our Saviour, and here is the criterion of all prayer and worship. Is it acceptable and well pleasing to the Lord? If not, it is just "will worship" of our devising and quite empty and fruitless.

The words "Who will have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth" (verse 4) have been the centre of controversy for a long time between Calvinism and Arminianism specially in the seventeenth century. It is not easy to assess the distinction between (*thelo*) "will", used here and *boulomai* also translated "to will" in other passages. Sometimes they are used interchangeably in Greek, but generally speaking *boulomai* as G. Abbott-Smith says in his Lexicon, means "to will, wish, desire, purpose, be minded implying more strongly than *thelo* the deliberate exercise of volition", whereas *thelo* expresses desire as the simple act of volition without deliberation or consideration. So, in the context we are considering, it would appear that Paul is stating not the decrees of God, but His general attitude to men, without distinction of race, colour, condition or status.

It is foolish for any Christian to get involved in lengthy and unprofitable arguments as to God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. However contradictory they may seem to us, they are *both* found in God's will and His Word and the problem arises from our short-sightedness and inability to comprehend all the ways of God. Heavenly wisdom will keep us from stressing one at the expense of the other. We can be certain of one thing, namely that 1 Timothy 2:4 is *not* a proof text for universalism and those that use it in this way are disregarding the wider context of Scripture as a whole.

E. K. Simpson points out that *sozein*, to save, to the ordinary Greek ear conveyed nothing more than making safe and preserving. "Saviour" was a popular term of adulation given to the Roman emperors signifying little more than Protector. The word is used in this lesser sense in Matthew 14:30; John 12:27; Acts 27:31

and it could be used in this sense in the context of 1 Timothy. The first coming of Christ was a revelation of the kindness and love of God towards mankind as a whole (Titus 3:4). Prayer for rulers accords with the divine willingness that all should be preserved from lawless misrule and come to a recognition of the truth which is resident only in Christ, for peaceful conditions give scope to the propagation of the gospel.

The source of all mercies and blessings is one and the same for all, whoever they may be, and *Christ is the sole medium of their bestowal*, which is what the Apostle is now going to emphasize:

“For there is one God, one Mediator also between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times; whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (1 Tim. 2:5-7 R.V.).

The position of the Lord Jesus as Mediator—a go-between for men and God is brought forward in Paul's epistles. The need for such a one has been felt from the earliest times. Hence Job's pathetic cry for a Daysman (Job 9:32,33). The gulf between man with his smallness and limitations and the limitless and infinite God is so tremendous that it calls for someone who can fully touch both God and man and the only person who can achieve this is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. As God and Man, He can completely touch both heaven and earth and this doctrine needs emphasizing today for it has largely been forgotten by evangelicals. Our Saviour is like Jacob's ladder that stretched from heaven to the earth (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51). A true Mediator must be both God and man. If he is not God, he cannot fully reach to heaven and if he is not man, he cannot fully touch and understand mankind. He must be able to fully represent both God and man and this is exactly what the Lord Jesus does. We learn from the papyri that *mesites* was a business term for *middleman*. Let us constantly thank God for such a wondrous Mediator, and remember that our approach to God must always be through Christ as the one and only Way to God (John 10:1-9; 14:6), the great Intermediary on our behalf.

It is only because He is the only Mediator, that He can become the all-needed Ransom for men. In Matthew 20:28 the Lord asserts that He came to give His life, a ransom for many (*lutron anti*

pollon). But Paul uses here *antilutron*, a very rare word which indicates something more than this. It signifies a *counter ransom price* and draws our attention to the infinitude of the Offering. As E. K. Simpson so aptly expresses it: "Of priceless jewels we say they are worth a 'king's ransom'; but Christ crucified presents the ransom of the King of kings, a Sacrifice intrinsically illimitable, outweighing everything that can be placed in the counter scale".

Spurgeon once said: "in Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore". This transcendent sacrifice for sin is the basis on which freedom may be granted to all. Yet not all enjoy that freedom. The ransom has infinite value, but the benefits require the appropriation of individual faith in Christ. God does not force His supreme benefits on men. Man must have a real sense of need, and as he is not a machine, but a moral creature with the power of choice, he must decide whether this priceless treasure is to be his own possession or not.

Now is the time, or season, the Apostle asserts, for the proclamation of this glorious truth far and wide. Once again we see the emphasis on the *right time* for the revelation of truth. God is never too early or too late and the careful student of the Word of God will never spoil the revelation of God by ignoring these divine time-periods.

Paul declares that in his ministry, the right time had come to make this known (1 Tim. 2:6, 7) and he makes a solemn assertion that, in stating this, he is not lying. The critics of this epistle find a difficulty here that the Apostle needed to make such a statement to a loyal believer like Timothy who knew him so well. But Paul is looking wider with his opposers in view, who constantly sought to undermine his apostleship. Note the stress on his *Gentile* mission. He was pre-eminently the Apostle of the Gentiles, the human mouthpiece of Christ to the Gentile world in this age of grace. And not only this, but he was the prisoner of Christ Jesus for us Gentiles (Eph. 3:1). It does seem extraordinary that so many who are Gentiles by birth, seek for God's truth anywhere but through the channel God has appointed!

Paul now passes on to deal with the attitude of men in prayer and the delicate subject of women's actions and attire in the assembly

and outside it, for there is nothing in the passage to restrict it to the gatherings of believers for prayer, worship and proclamation of the truth. *Katastole*, translated apparel, can mean demeanour as well as clothing. The Apostle's injunctions here are addressed to believers whom the pagan world were watching closely. Those who wished to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things would reflect this in simplicity of dress and modesty of behaviour in direct contrast to the ostentation that many Asiatic women assumed with their finery, showy jewellery etc.

"I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair, or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (2:8,9,10 N.I.V.).

Dress is a reflection of personality and a woman's dress is a mirror of her mind. Outward ostentation is not in keeping with a devout approach to God. The old English *shamefacedness and sobriety* can be rendered "modesty and self-control", or as the New International Version has rendered it above. These words do not indicate mere seriousness of face and expression, but seriousness of *purpose* as opposed to frivolity and outward display. Paul is not denying all adornment for women, but if a woman's greatest asset is a devout and godly life, then her exterior will harmonize with this in contrast to the gaudy dress which so many Eastern women assumed. In addition to this there was a danger of newly emancipated Christian women abusing their new-found freedom by lording it over men and indulging in empty chatter during the worship of the assembly.

The Apostle enjoins silence on women in public worship reminding them of the God-given status of men and women. This he had already done to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34,35). If disrepute was not to be brought on the whole community, as had evidently happened at Corinth, the subject needed to be dealt with firmly and tactfully. A woman should discuss her problems at home, not in the public assembly. Nor should she teach a mixed congregation including men, for this contradicted God's order to which we have just alluded. Let us not forget that Paul is dealing with *public* teaching. There was no injunction against women teaching women or children in the home.

In these days when the equality of the sexes is so much stressed, such injunctions are not likely to be popular but are to be explained, one finds so often, by the assertion that Paul was a woman hater. Nothing could be further from the truth for he gladly acknowledges his indebtedness to women helpers among his fellow-labourers, such as Priscilla (Rom. 16:3-5) and Euodias and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2,3). Paul could hardly write the words "I lie not", and then a little further promulgate his own ideas and make them binding on the church. Much is being made today of women's public ministry as teachers, but the fact remains that this is not in accordance with God's will, whether we understand the reason for it or not.

It is not that men are better characters, cleverer or better teachers than women. It could often be the other way round, but God Who has a good and sufficient reason for all He does and commands, has made His mind known on this subject, and we do not believe that any Christian woman who reverences the Lord and is sensitive to His mind and will is going to object to this.

The question of the relationship of the sexes is taken further by the Apostle:

"For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression: but she shall be saved through the child-bearing (or her child-bearing, margin), if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety" (2:13-15 R.V.).

In 1 Corinthians 11:9 Paul had already taught that the priority of man's creation places him as head in relation to the woman. This relationship, as E. K. Simpson has pointed out was "not competitive, but concordant and counterpart"—it is not a question of superiority or inferiority.

Another reason given by the Apostle here is that Adam was not deceived, but the woman was, and became a transgressor. At the same time Paul did not absolve Adam from responsibility and sin as Romans 5:12 and onwards makes perfectly clear. "By *one man* sin entered the world, and death by sin", and in this context, Eve is not mentioned. There was evidently a reason why the tempter approached Eve rather than Adam. Generally speaking, women,

with their more sensitive nature and awareness, are more impressionable than men.

This in many respects may be perfectly harmless, but when it comes to spiritual things can be very dangerous, and Satan knew only too well that his arguments and deception would have far greater effect on Eve than Adam. It is significant that many of the false religious cults have originated from women and an all-wise God has ruled that women teaching men is not allowable in connection with Christian doctrine and its proclamation.

From the reference to Eve, Paul passes on to women in general, by stating "she shall be saved in child-bearing" which is one of the most difficult expressions used in the Pastoral Epistles.

In what sense is the word "saved" used here? There are at least four different explanations to be considered:

(1) Moffatt translates the phrase "women will get safely through child-birth", giving them encouragement to have children without fear and this accords with Genesis three where a doom is pronounced on Eve, that in sorrow she shall conceive and bring forth children. It could be that child-bearing is emphasized here to counter the false teachers who advocated abstinence from marriage (1 Tim. 4:3).

(2) In this view the word "saved" is used in its spiritual sense, but this brings tremendous difficulties for this would make women's salvation from sin a matter of works on her part, and it is inconceivable that Paul could mean this and so contradict the whole of his witness for salvation by grace apart from human effort or merit. And in any case what were unmarried women to do who could not legitimately bear children—or childless wives for that matter?

(3) There is a third suggestion, but equally improbable, that the words should read "she shall be saved by *the* child-bearing" (i.e. the Messiah). If this is what Paul really meant he could hardly have used a more ambiguous way of saying it. The Greek article is generic, describing the whole process of child-bearing, rather than one particular instance. Does the Scripture anywhere teach that

the virgin Mary was saved and her sins cancelled, because she bore the Saviour?

(4) The fourth idea takes the phrase in question to mean "she will be saved, even though she must bear children", but this imposes an unnatural meaning on the preposition *dia*. There seems no doubt to us that (1) is the true meaning of the passage and this imposes no strain on any other part of the Word.

We note that the verbs change from the singular to the plural, "she shall be saved", "if they continue", which shows that the latter part of the verse refers to Christian wives in general. They are to show the virtues of *faith*, *love* and *self-control* and in so doing they need have no fear of child-birth. It is the sphere of home life where the woman shines pre-eminently and as E. K. Simpson says, "the pity is that the 'new woman' so often scorns her rightful crown and seems to nurse a standing grudge against heaven that she was not born a man . . . when extraordinary cases arise, they must be accredited by peculiar circumstances like David's seizure of the shew bread. Many tasks not strictly feminine must fall to the lot of female mission pioneers in solitary posts, or in seasons of emergency elsewhere. But the Head of the Church allots the posts of the members of His Body as His wisdom wills; and those who quit that appointed station for one of their own affecting, flout His prerogative of choice to their certain harm and loss" (*The Pastoral Epistles* p. 49).

I TIMOTHY

CHAPTER THREE

Paul now proceeds to guide Timothy regarding the qualifications of those who were to lead the local assembly. He gives another of the faithful sayings of the Pastoral Epistles:

"Faithful is the saying, if a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (3:1 R.V.).

It is important to realize that the modern word "bishop" does not represent the Greek word *episkopos*, which means an overseer. Bishops in the time of the Apostle Paul were not highly educated scholars who had been theologically trained and wore a

particular garb. There was no division into clergy and laity. Bishops were ordinary believers who had been adjudged faithful and had the spiritual qualifications the Apostle is about to enumerate. There was no hint here or elsewhere in the New Testament of the monarchical conception of episcopacy such as was later lauded by Ignatius, one man controlling a province consisting of a number of churches. This was a backward step finally leading to Romanism with its spiritual autocracy and its domination by the priesthood.

Every assembly had its leaders or *bishops*, (not one controlling bishop). The Philippian church had its *bishops and deacons* (Phil. 1:1) and the Ephesian its *elders* (Acts 20:17). *Shepherds* (pastors) and *teachers* are the gifts of the ascended Christ in Ephesians 4:11.

Moffatt translates 1 Timothy 3:1:

"It is a popular saying that whoever aspires to office is set upon an excellent occupation".

Oregomai translated "desire" literally means "to stretch oneself out", hence "to aspire to", but not in a bad sense. The second verb *epithumeo* expresses strong desire "to set one's heart upon".

An overseer or bishop was not a sphere of service demanding special theological training or exceptional mental ability, but rather one of Christian character. This is made clear in the verses that follow:

"The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, soberminded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:2-6 R.V.).

Some of these conditions seem to be obvious as relating to a leader, but we must remember that most of these believers were converts from the grossest paganism and so these qualities needed to be stressed. An overseer must be blameless, of good report, specially in respect to the items that follow, which are largely

connected with his home life. Practical Christianity starts in the home, as the Prison Epistles of Paul clearly teach, and if conditions are wrong here, they are likely to be wrong everywhere else. "Husband of one wife" has caused much controversy. Is this directed against polygamy or does it ban second marriages? Regarding the former, it can be stated quite clearly that no one would have been allowed to practice polygamy in Christian circles, even though this was rife in the Gentile world. However, it could have been a ban to exclude any who *before* their conversion had been polygamists.

We may find help from 5:9, where one of the qualifications for the support of a destitute widow was that she must have been "the wife of one man" and this can only mean that she had been married once. A Christian woman could not have had a plurality of husbands. It could well be that the lax views on divorce which obtained at this time could have resulted in a man having a number of wives living, such as we often see in the entertainment and society world of today, thus bringing the sacred state of marriage in God's sight into disrepute.

The next virtues might be better rendered "temperate, self-controlled, well-behaved, hospitable, competent to teach". The first three are linked and described an orderly life. The importance of hospitality will be better appreciated when we consider the stress Paul lays on the overseer's command of his family and home. A "striker" represents a violent, pugnacious person and a "brawler" one who is contentious. The opposite of this is *epieikes*, a gracious, kindly and considerate person, who is not a money grubber.

The Apostle now looks upon the home; in fact all the Christian qualifications here are reflected in the home-life. The would-be overseer must be one who exercises wise, but firm control over his family. Slipshod paternal discipline disqualified him from rule in the assembly of God's people and the reason the Apostle gives is unanswerable. If a man fails in a lesser sphere, he is not likely to succeed in a larger one. If he cannot control and lead his own household wisely, how can he take care of the church of God? (verse 5).

Moreover, there was another important reason. The early

church met in a believer's home. Three times in the New Testament we have the phrase the "church in the house", there being no buildings specially erected at this time for meeting and worship (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Philem. 2). We can now understand the importance of hospitality and a well controlled household. One can easily imagine the problems that would have arisen in a home where there was a lack of warm hospitality and a disorderly, undisciplined family. On the other hand what greater honour was there for a Christian home than to be the meeting place of the church of God where His Word was honoured and proclaimed, members of His Body built up in the faith and encouraged in their daily lives, and the warmth of true Christian fellowship experienced?

Taking the subject further, Paul insists that the aspirant to the office of overseer must not be a novice, which means both immaturity of age and recent experience of conversion and salvation. Rapid promotion of such meant running the risk of pride creeping in and so committing the sin that brought about the fall of Satan (verse six).

Not only this, a good report from non-Christians ("those that are without") was needed. On the surface this may have appeared to be impossible, remembering the antipathy shown towards Christianity in the pagan world. Yet those outside usually have a good idea of the sincerity and genuineness of a person's character and faith, and it was essential that an overseer had the respect of those living in his neighbourhood.

The Apostle Paul now deals with the office of a deacon. The earliest reference to deacons is found in Acts 6, where they were concerned in the distribution of the church's charities and with the "ways and means" of its outward maintenance. They were the assistants of the bishops or overseers and appear together in Philippians 1:1. The list of qualities that follow are closely akin to those already mentioned:

"Deacons in like manner must be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless" (verses 8-10 R. V.).

Semnos, grave, once more lays stress on high-mindedness, seriousness of purpose, not seriousness of outward facial expression. "Double tongued" means saying one thing to one person and something different to another, in fact being unreliable gossips. A deacon must be impervious to avarice or money bribes, his visitation of homes possibly exposing him to this temptation. Moreover he must be a man of spiritual conviction and discernment, faithfully adhering to the faith, the body of truth relating to the Mystery of Ephesians and Colossians. If he came up to the standard of these tests, he was eligible to serve as a deacon in the local assembly of believers.

The Apostle now passes on to women in a parenthesis. Are these the wives of deacons or are they deaconesses? It would seem that the latter are intended, for there appears to be no reason why special rules should apply to the wives of deacons and not also to the wives of bishops which are not mentioned. If the wives of deacons were meant one would expect the word "their" (their wives) which is not in the Greek. Also *hosautos*, "in like manner" denotes a transition to another class of persons. We must not forget that a deacon was not confined to the male sex. Phoebe was a deaconess at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1, where "servant" is *diakonos*, deacon). It seems natural that Paul, after specifying the qualities of a deacon should pass on to those of the kindred office, the deaconess:

"Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things" (verse 11 R.V.).

A deaconess must exhibit the same qualities as a deacon. She must be "faithful in all things" or "absolutely trustworthy" as Moffatt renders it. More showy gifts would be made of none effect without complete reliability. If one cannot rely on a Christian, what is the use of his or her profession?

Reverting to deacons, Paul asserts that they, like bishops, must be in complete parental control and then he says:

"For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (verse 13 R.V.).

The word rendered "degree" Authorized Version or "standing" Revised Version is *bathmos*, literally a "step" or vantage ground, apparently referring to the esteem of the community of believers to which bishops and deacons belonged. "Boldness", *parrhesia*, means outspokenness, a confidence that comes from experience in the practical outworking of the faith.

The next section of the epistle gives the reason for the Apostle's injunctions to the leaders of the assemblies. In the Greek text the subject of the verb "behave" is omitted and therefore could refer to Timothy himself (as the A.V.), or to men generally (as the R.V.) or both:

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (verses 14, 15 R.V.).

Paul hoped to meet Timothy soon, but he wrote his instructions in case he was delayed. This was most likely to be confirmatory of oral advice given to Timothy at the Apostle's departure, thus strengthening Timothy's authority. At this point we come to the key to this epistle and the Pastoral Epistles as a whole, which was to give Timothy and those leaders under his charge explicit guidance as to the discharge of their official Christian duties.

The idea of the assembly as an household has already been given in verse five. This is no material building but a spiritual one, and the absence of the definite article before "church" here and in verse five suggests that the local community is envisaged, yet conceived as a part of a larger whole.

The phrase "pillar and ground of the truth" has caused great difficulties because it appears to give greater eminence to the church than to the truth represented by Christ, the living Word and the Scriptures the written Word of God. Bengel and other Protestant expositors got over the difficulty by repunctuating the sentence to read:

"The pillar and ground of the truth and confessedly great is the mystery of godliness".

On the surface this looks attractive and would act as an antidote

to any Romish pretensions, but alas this does violence to the Greek original. E. K. Simpson pronounces it as "fatally artificial and cumbersome". Dean Alford goes so far as to say that such a clumsy Greek would be sufficient to prove the Epistle spurious.

When we give this context a closer inspection we shall see that such an explanation is unnecessary and is like putting out our hand to stay the ark of God.

Let us look closer at verse fifteen. *Stulos* means a pillar, prop or support. *Hedraïoma* (ground A.V.) can be translated "bulwark" (Moulton and Milligan's *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*). Peter, James and John were likened to "pillars" in Galatians 2:9, but this did not oust Christ from His position as the primary Foundation.

We must note that the definite article is not used before either of these nouns, so the sense of the verse is that the church was *a* support and bulwark of the truth (amongst others). A building needs more than one pillar and the truth of God has more than one "stay" to support it. Obviously there could be no pillar for the truth in the darkened pagan world. Surely in the groups of God's people who had been lately enlightened into the teaching of the Mystery the Truth was resident, as they shone as lights in the world of darkness, their corporate witness being a support and bulwark for the truth made known through Paul's ministry.

The fact that the churches declined from this cannot alter the fact that Christ intended the members of His Body to be a bulwark and guard for the truth committed to them, as these Pastoral epistles clearly teach. Once this is seen the difficulties of verse fifteen vanish.

But our problems are not over for another one faces us in the next verse:

"And without controversy great is the Mystery (Secret) of godliness; He Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16 R.V.).

The Authorized Version, based on the Received Text, reads

"God was manifest in the flesh". Into the vexed question of what is the correct text here we cannot enter because this touches the very specialized knowledge of textual criticism. Let it be said straight away that few have the deep knowledge of New Testament Greek and long experience in handling the various classes of manuscripts which form the basis for all translations and this is necessary for any sound judgment on this matter. We are sometimes amazed at the dogmatism shown by some who truthfully are no more than amateurs in this respect, and we deplore some of the wild and partisan statements that have been made regarding the Received Text. All who desire to be "bulwarks" for the truth should shun this sort of thing.

The reader may be acquainted with the arguments concerning the original reading of the phrase under consideration in the Alexandrian manuscript in the British Museum. Since it came to England 250 years ago the writing has faded considerably and it is so frayed that it is practically impossible to decide whether it reads *Theos*, contracted, (God) or *Hos*, (He Who). In spite of all the investigation, including X-ray treatment of the manuscript, it must be declared as "not proven", and in any case we must remember that no dependence can be placed on *one* manuscript by itself.

Andrew R. Fausset, who edited Bengel's *Gnomon*, puts in a footnote in volume 4, page 263:

"*Theos* (God) of the Received Text has none of the oldest Mss. in its favour, no version as early as the seventh century, and as to the fathers, ex. gr. Cyril of Alexandria and Chrysostom, quoted for *Theos* (God), see Tregelles on the printed text of the New Testament in which he shows that these fathers are misquoted. Theodore, however, does support it. Liberatus, Victor Tununensist, (both of 6th century) affirm that Macedonius, under the Emperor Anastasius changed *Hos*, (who) into *Theos* (God) in order to support Nestorianism. AC corrected, G, read *Hos* (Who), . . . The Syr. Peschito, and in fact *all* the versions older than the seventh century have the relative *Hos* (Who) not *Theos* (God) . . . The *silence* of the fathers of the fourth century, though *Theos* (God) would have furnished them with a strong argument, is conclusive against it".

The Companion Bible in the margin says:

"The Revised Version prints 'He Who', and adds in the margin, '*Theos* (God) rests on no sufficient evidence'. The probability is that

the original reading was *hō*, (which), with the Syriac and all the Latin Versions, to agree with *musterion* (neuter). The Greek uncial being O, some scribe added the letter S, making OC (He Who), which he thought made better sense. Later another put a mark in this O, making the word OC, the contraction for ΘEOC, God. This mark in Codex A in the British Museum, is said by some to be in different ink".

As we did with verse fifteen, we will look at the next verse more closely. The reading "He Who was manifest in the flesh" can only refer to Christ. It denotes pre-existence and cannot describe any created being. If anyone objects and says that angels have appeared as men in Scripture both in the Old and New Testaments, this does not contradict what we have just written. The first chapter of John's Gospel declares that the Word (Christ) was with God *and was God* (John 1:1). In verse fourteen John states "the Word (Who is God) was made flesh, and *dwelt among us*". This is what angels have never done. They were given the power to assume a body (as the angels appearing to Abraham Gen. 18:1,2,8) but they never stayed and lived with humanity in order to aid the human race. John's Gospel reveals "God manifest in the flesh" and this is what 1 Timothy 3:16 does, so whether we translate as the Authorized Version or Revised Version the deity of Christ is not touched. In any case this fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith *does not rest on one text*. The testimony of the *whole* of Scripture to this truth is overwhelming. The reader is referred to the author's booklet, *The Lord Jesus Christ, God or only man?* where much of this evidence is assembled.

Paul continues by saying that the Lord Jesus was "justified in the spirit". This appears to be parallel to the previous phrase. "In the flesh" denotes the sphere of operation of the Word "manifest", and "in the spirit" the sphere of the word "justified". This is very much like the statement in Romans 1:2-4:

"The gospel of God . . . concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead".

The Lord Jesus was vindicated by God in the spiritual realm – specially in resurrection. He was "seen of angels". Angels rendered praise at His birth; they appeared to strengthen Him in

Gethsemane, and after His resurrection they were at the empty tomb, and finally at His Ascension (Acts 1:10,11). They were never able to see God in His essential nature as spirit.

Christ was "preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16). The failure of Israel was overruled by the Lord for the gospel to spread over the then known world, and in this the ministry of the Apostle Paul was pre-eminent. The verse fittingly closes with the triumphant return of the Lord to the glory that was previously His:

"And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

And the Ascension records the answer to this prayer. He was "received up in glory". Glory is a place – evidently associated with the "right hand of God", the highest of all heights, and it is this exalted sphere where the Saviour is now seated, and the church which is His Body is seen to be seated with Him (Eph. 2:6).

Many expositors have felt that in the verses of 1 Timothy that we have been considering, we have the outline of an early Christian hymn. The short unconnected sentences with the words similarly arranged, and the number of syllables almost equal and the ideas antithetically related, are characteristic of such a hymn. The clauses stand in parallelism; each two are connected as a pair turning on the opposition of heaven to earth: flesh and spirit, angels and Gentiles, world and glory, and there is a correspondence between the first and the last – "manifested in the flesh, . . . received up in glory".

Whether this is a primitive hymn or not, one thing is certain, namely that at the beginning and end of the epistle we have "God invisible" and in the middle, "God manifest":

- A 1:17 The King immortal, invisible
- B 3:16 Christ, Who is God, manifest in the flesh
- A 6:15,16 King of kings . . . Whom no man hath seen or can see.

We should note that the "Mystery of godliness" is in direct opposition to the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess. 2:7), and both find their expression in a person, (1) the Lord Jesus Christ and (2) the man of sin, the son of perdition, energized by Satan, and both

represent a climax of revelation of these two opposing forces. Let us never forget that Christ is Himself the Mystery (secret) of God (Col. 2:2 R.V.) – Who later became “manifest in the flesh”.

Having pointed out the exaltation of Christ in ascension, Paul now deals with the opposition of the evil one in the next chapter, for wherever truth flourishes, Satan will see to it that error will raise its head. This has been so from the beginning and will be intensified as this age comes to its end. We warn all who know and value the dispensation of the Mystery to be on their guard for this, to “test all things” by the Word of God rightly divided, rigorously rejecting all that fails to meet this divine standard, no matter where it comes from. Satan’s object is to undermine the truth committed to us, and divide those whose eyes have been enlightened to see it and who are faithfully doing their utmost to make it known. Paul could say, regarding himself, “we are not ignorant of his (Satan’s) devices” (2 Cor. 2:11).

Would that this were true of all who love the truth of the “good deposit”. The divided state of Christendom is a warning to us all as to how well Satan can do his deadly work. Let us see to it that, putting on the whole armour of God (Eph. 6), we do not give place to the great deceiver in any respect.

1 TIMOTHY

CHAPTER FOUR

Having dealt with the mystery (secret) of godliness, which was Christ Jesus manifest in the flesh, culminating with His being received up into glory, the Apostle Paul now comes to the opposing elements under the domination of Satan. We should always be prepared for the fact that wherever Christ as the Truth is proclaimed, the enemy will contest every inch of the way. Thus chapter four begins:

“But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth”
(1 Tim. 4:1-3 R.V.).

This ministry of the Spirit is emphasized by the word *rhetos* "expressly" or "in specific terms". The phrase "in later times" is not parallel with "in the last days" of 2 Timothy 3:1. It suggests a more imminent time, subsequent to the Apostle's day. "Fall away", *apostesontai* gives us the word "apostasy", and this is brought about by some who give heed to deceiving spirits or demons and put forward their lying doctrines. These apostates are hypocrites and liars, through which these evil powers find a ready channel. Doubtless these are the "world rulers of this darkness" to which Paul makes reference in Ephesians six, the great spiritual foes of the Body of Christ, under Satan's control. Those who come under this domination, have consciences that cannot function because they have been "cauterized" or quenched.

Their false teaching comprises two prohibitions: marriage and certain foods. This is surely incipient gnosticism, and a form of it had already taken place in the Colossian church where we have a "neglecting of the body" and a spurious asceticism, which was a travesty of real holiness. In opposition to this, the Apostle insists that these foods, as well as marriage, are the gifts of the Creator which should be received in a thankful spirit. Nothing is to be rejected, for it has been "sanctified through the Word of God and prayer" (verse 5). This seems to be a clear reference to grace before meals. In His earthly lifetime, the Saviour blessed food before it was eaten (Mark 6:41; 14:22), and we may be sure this was not an empty formality. Such food is then sanctified, i.e. set apart for the body's use. Chrysostom said "grace before meat disinfects even what has been offered to idols".

Timothy, in order to be a faithful leader, must bring these things before the notice of the brethren under his charge:

"If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed until now" (verse 6 R.V.).

The good doctrine is obviously in contrast with the evil doctrine that Paul had just been mentioning. The word used for "nourished" is the present participle *entrephomenos*, which shows there was a continual process of being nourished up in the words of the faith, that body of doctrine which the ascended Christ had deposited with the Apostle Paul. The false teaching was

likened to "profane and old wives' fables", vividly rendered by Moffatt "drivelling myths". These must be rejected firmly for there must be no compromise (verse 7).

The Apostle now makes a further comparison between physical and spiritual discipline. He does not say that there is no value in bodily exercise, but that it profits for a little time (cp. James 4:14) in contrast to the lasting profit of spiritual training which not only embraces this life but also the life to come (verse 8).

Another of the "faithful sayings" follows in verses nine to eleven:

"Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe. These things command and teach".

It is difficult to say whether the "faithful saying" relates to the previous verse (8) or the verses that follow. Either way, truth is being stressed. We must be careful with the word *soter*, Saviour, remembering that its usual Greek meaning is "preserver", such as is expressed in Psalm 36:6:

"... Thy judgments are a great deep; O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast".

The Scriptures often raise this word to a higher level and the fact that believers are specially mentioned in verse 10 shows that Paul uses it here in a double sense. What is certain is that the Apostle is not teaching universalism, and those who use it for this purpose must be hard pressed indeed.

Timothy is now enjoined to teach these things with authority even though this meant instructing believers who were older than himself. "Let no man despise thy youth", said the Apostle, but we must not infer from this that Timothy was a mere stripling. Moulton and Milligan quote from Irenaeus showing that *neotes* could apply to anyone up to the age of forty, and Timothy at this point could have been between thirty-five and forty years. Whatever his age may have been, he was to be an example (*typos*, type) to all under his charge, manifesting seriousness of purpose, trustworthiness, consideration for others and self-control.

Verse thirteen instructs Timothy to devote himself to these pursuits, public reading, exhortation and teaching. The reading referred to his public services, the reading aloud of the Old Testament Scriptures to the congregation. The phrase occurs in Luke 4:16 and Acts 13:15 of the synagogue lessons. The proclamation of the Word of truth was of the utmost importance and still is, and should always accompany Christian gatherings for worship and divine instruction. There is a need for those who can read the Scriptures distinctly and with understanding. God is always prepared to work on His own Word.

The public reading was followed by exhortation based upon the passage concerned and teaching (doctrine), the importance of which is given prominence in the New Testament specially in the Pastoral Epistles. There is scarcely a deeper need today than faithful teachers who can clearly expound the Word of God. Preaching sermons can often be beside the point and ineffectual. "Preach the Word" was one of Paul's last commands (2 Tim. 4:2) and the lack of this largely accounts for the ignorance of God's truth in professing Christian circles with its consequential falling away from spiritual standards. The Apostle continues:

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery"
(verse 14 R. V.).

Prophecy has already been mentioned in 1:18, but in the reference above it refers to the beginning of Timothy's public ministry received by the "laying on of hands" of the body of elders (presbytery). There should be no difficulty with a somewhat similar statement by Paul in 2 Timothy 1:6, for there the Apostle speaks of his own part on this occasion; nor need there be any problem over the fact that this goes back to the Acts period. Not every gift (*charisma*) of the Spirit was necessarily linked with the testimony to Israel. Some were of enduring value in public service for all time, and though Paul does not specifically mention what the gift was, it was evidently of this nature. Here his son in the faith is not to neglect it, and in 2 Timothy he is bidden to "stir it up", the word being used of a dying fire that needed re-kindling. He is to be "diligent" in these things. *Meletao* can mean either "practise" or "meditate" and both meanings fit the context.

Timothy was to absorb these necessary qualities till they became second nature. "Give thyself wholly to them", the result being that his "progress" (not profiting A.V.) might be recognized by all. He must "keep an eye on himself", then on the teaching he gives, and lastly over his hearers, "for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee" (verse 16). The verb "save" here must be used in the sense of Philippians 2:12, that is, working it out in practice. In no sense could it refer to the salvation and new creation of the sinner which is wholly of grace, apart from works (Eph. 2:8). This was one of the fundamentals of the doctrine committed to Paul and never does he deviate from it.

I TIMOTHY

CHAPTER FIVE

The next section of the epistle, commencing with chapter five, deals with the needs of various sections of the assembly under Timothy's charge. First of all he is to avoid severely censuring those who were older in years. *Presbuteros* here does not refer to the body of leaders, but to a person's age. His contemporaries he was to treat as though they were brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger ones as sisters "in all purity". This phrase is added to safeguard his relationship. The N.I.V. renders the passage:

"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat the younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity".

The Apostle now deals with the needs of widows in verses 3-16. This is quite a long passage, but ever since Acts 6:1-4 the position of widows had been one of great concern to the churches.

Timothy is bidden to honour widows who are in real need. The word "honour" means more than being respectful, and includes the idea of material support. "Widows indeed" means widows with no other means of support, that is, those who were genuinely destitute. It was a Christian duty to provide for such. But Paul is concerned that this should not be abused. Widows who had close relatives should be maintained by them (verse 4). The Apostle knew the tendency of some to avoid their responsibility and expect

the church or other benevolent institutions to keep relatives in need. This was selfishness and a definite breach of the fifth commandment of the law, whereas practical concern for them was acceptable and pleasing to God (verse 4 and cp. 1 Tim. 2:3).

No age has a monopoly of poverty, and it is good to realize all through the Scriptures, the poor and the needy are recognized by God and He expects His people, whether earthly or heavenly, to respond generously to their needs.

Paul now gives the characteristics of the true widow who was eligible for practical support by the local church. She was "desolate" (*memonomene*, meaning left entirely alone). She had her hope set on God (that is, she was a true believer), and was also a woman of constant prayer (she *continued* in prayer, verse 5). This reminds one of Anna (Luke 2:37), whereas the widow, whose needs were not genuine, lived for an empty life of pleasure, and Paul likens her condition graphically to a living corpse (verse 6). Such had no claim on the assembly's care and provision.

"These things" Timothy should command, that is, the responsibility of children to support their parents in need, and in so doing they would be irreproachable (*anepileptos* cp. 3:2). Provision for one's own close relatives was an indisputable Christian duty and those who omitted to do this were "worse than unbelievers" (verse 8). The word "infidel" (A. V.) in its modern sense is too strong. Even the unregenerate pagan world recognized its family ties and it was unthinkable that Christian standards should sink below this.

The Apostle goes on to deal with eligible widows and the service they can render.

Some of the statements are not easy to apprehend:

"Let none be enrolled as a widow under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she hath brought up children, if she hath used hospitality to strangers, if she hath washed the saints' feet, if she hath relieved the afflicted, if she hath diligently followed every good work" (5:9, 10 R. V.).

A careful consideration of this passage leads one to think that a special set of widows is referred to here, not destitute widows

generally, for it is inconceivable that a destitute woman would have to reach the age of sixty before she became eligible for any practical help from the church.

It would appear that special duties in the local church were reserved for some of the old widows receiving aid, official recognition of this being given by being placed on a list. Apart from the age-restriction, it was necessary that she was "the wife of one man", which can only mean she had not re-married after her husband's death (on this point compare a similar condition for an overseer of the assembly, 3:2,12). Furthermore she must be well reported for her conduct in the home and outside.

Such a person would be a valuable aid in entertaining visiting Christians, looking after orphans and attending to many practical details, such as feet-washing which reminds one of the Lord's own humble action (John 13:1-7).

All these points were not so likely to be in evidence with a younger person who was not so experienced or mature. They might commence well and then change their minds and want to give up the work and to be re-married.

The N.I.V. gives the sense well:

"As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan" (5:11-15).

One thing is clear, that any service begun for the Lord was to be regarded as a serious thing with first priority. Those widows who had commenced such work and then given it up had "waxed wanton against Christ" (verse 11). And we mber today that service for the Lord is not something for us to take up and drop when we feel like it. There is a solemn as well as a joyful aspect to Christian service, knowing that one day this, together with all our works is coming under His searching scrutiny.

It is evident that Paul is legislating for conditions as he knew them and was using heavenly wisdom in the directions he gave to Timothy, so that problems might be avoided and witness go on unhindered. If anyone has difficulty with the fact that during the Acts period, in 1 Corinthians, Paul recommended the unmarried to remain as they were, we would remind the reader that at that time "the end of all things was at hand", with the possibility of the Lord's Second Coming being very near, waiting upon the repentance of Israel (Acts 3:19-26; 5:30,31). This chosen nation was laid aside in unbelief at the end of the Acts, for they did not repent, and that aspect of the earthly kingdom was postponed, the revelation of the dispensation of the Mystery or Secret, taking its place (Eph. 3:1-11) for the age in which we are now living.

In verse 16 "if any woman believer has widows" may raise problems, but there is an alternative reading "if any *man* or *woman* who believes" and this accords better with the context, for it is difficult to accept that the responsibility to relieve destitute widows would be confined to women alone.

Paul now deals once more with elders, this time concerning their remuneration. That "honour" (*time*) is used in this sense, verse 18 makes clear. The Apostle quotes the Mosaic precept of Deuteronomy 25:4 which he had previously used in 1 Corinthians 9:9, and also the saying of the Lord recorded in Luke 10:7 which is more than a current proverb. The adjective "double" appears to have the sense of generous provision. If God was concerned for cattle treading the corn and ordained that ample provision should be made for them, surely, the Apostle argues, those who take responsibility in service, ("rule well"), specially those who preach and teach (verse 17) should be adequately compensated.

Further rules are now given to protect leaders from false accusations. The law God gave through Moses required the agreement of at least *two* witnesses before a man was called to answer a charge against him (Deut. 19:15). Matthew 18:16 and 2 Corinthians 13:1 agree with this. The Apostle writes:

"Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of *two* or *three* witnesses. Them that sin (meaning persist in sin) reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear" (verse 19 R.V.).

At this point Paul gives Timothy a solemn charge concerning these regulations:

"I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality" (verse 21 R.V.).

This stresses even further the importance of the commands given. We do not know who "the elect angels" are. There appears to be a variety of grades of heavenly beings. Those mentioned here evidently belong to the highest class. In 2 Timothy 4:1 we have a similar solemn charge, but without any reference to angels. Timothy must carefully observe all the instructions given and be absolutely unprejudiced and impartial, never allowing his personal feelings to influence his judgment:

"Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (verse 22 R.V.).

This warned Timothy against hastily appointing anyone for specific Christian service without due regard to their suitability. Some think it might refer to the restoration of penitents after discipline, but this is far-fetched and there seems no doubt that the former meaning is the correct one. It would be easy to appoint someone for Christian work who appeared to be keen, but was he worthy and fitted to carry out his task? That is what Timothy must carefully ponder and do nothing in a hurry.

Undue haste in Christian appointments has led to unworthy people brought into the Lord's work, which has wrought havoc and played into the enemy's hands. Someone has said that today there are too many "untaught teachers" who are quite unsuitable for the work they have taken upon themselves. Such should remember the warning of James 3:1, bearing in mind that the word James used which is translated "masters" in the Authorized Version is really the word "teachers". Expounding the Word of God is a solemn responsibility which should never be taken on lightly. Those who do so are deeply responsible to the Lord, and if they have taught error instead of truth they will surely receive "the greater condemnation", for they have not only professed to know more than the people they teach, but have been misled themselves, and consequently have misled others also.

Commentators have been puzzled over the next verse because it appears to have no connection with the context:

“Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” (verse 23).

But Timothy had just been advised “to keep himself pure” and he might have construed this as meaning asceticism. He evidently was not robust physically and had a tendency toward “neglecting the body”. Now the body must be neither over-indulged nor neglected. We know that “neglecting of the body” was part of the false holiness propounded by some in the Colossian church (Col. 2:20–23), and the Apostle Paul, who knew Timothy better than anyone else, took care to check any tendency in him to this sort of thing. Hence his advice to the young man who was the leader of his assembly, to take a little wine as a tonic. Some Christians may be surprised at this, but Paul was a good deal wiser than his critics and knew what he was doing. He had not only Timothy’s welfare at heart, but that of the whole church over which he presided.

Regarding the next verse, it is better to link it with verse 22 and treat verse 23 as a parenthesis:

“Some men’s sins are evident, going before unto judgment; and some men also they follow after. In like manner also there are good works that are evident; and such as are otherwise cannot be hid” (verses 24, 25 R.V.).

We also give this passage in the modern N.I.V. translation:

“The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden”.

The Apostle is giving Timothy further advice concerning the appointment of men to Christian service. A distinction is drawn between those whose faults are obvious and others whose failings are not immediately apparent but come out later on. Timothy’s judgment must take this into consideration and this is another reason why he must not be in a hurry to appoint anyone to a Christian office. First impressions may be wrong, leading him to make wrong decisions, but this must be avoided at all costs. Of

course the judgment of sin finally will be made by God, but Timothy must exercise wisdom and caution, so that the Lord's witness and work may not be hindered.

I TIMOTHY

CHAPTER SIX

At the beginning of chapter six, the Apostle Paul turns from instructions that affect the local church to those touching the household. The relationship of believing slaves to Christian or unbelieving masters raised problems. If a slave worked for a truly saved master, he should count this a privilege and not lose his respect for such a master because he had become a brother in Christ:

"Let as many as are servants (slaves) under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and the doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but let them serve them the rather, because, they that partake of the benefit are believing and beloved. These things teach and exhort"

(1 Tim. 6:1,2 R.V.).

The overriding consideration was the effect their conduct would have on Christian witness as a whole. The "benefit" that would accrue could apply to either master or servant in the increased goodwill on both sides.

The Apostle now reverts once more to the false teachers:

"If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings, and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is a way of gain" (verses 3-5 R.V.).

"Those who teach a different doctrine" are referred to in 1:3 and *heterodidaskaleo* is used in both contexts. The "sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" are descriptive of the "good deposit" of truth which Paul had received from the ascended Lord Jesus and had passed on to Timothy (6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12,13; 2:2). This is the "doctrine" of the Pastoral Epistles

around which these epistles revolve in its proclamation and practice.

It is unlikely to refer to the Gospel records of the Lord's earthly ministry, which did not embrace the truth of the Mystery or the heavenly calling of the Body of Christ. It is not even certain that they were in circulation at this time.

Paul's prison ministry formed the pattern ("form of sound words") to which all teaching must conform. Those who refused to do this left a trail of havoc behind them. The N.I.V. renders these verses:

"He (the false teacher) is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and arguments that result in envy, quarrelling, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain".

The Apostle does not wrap things up, but clearly warns Timothy and those who stood with him of the dangers that would result if this pernicious teaching was embraced. Not only were these false teachers leading believers astray, but they were making a good thing out of it financially. "They imagine religion is a paying concern" is Moffatt's translation.

Having touched on the topic of money, Paul gives it a closer scrutiny and points out some of its dangers in relation to the believer:

"But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering, we shall be therewith content. But they that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil; which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (verses 6-10 R. V.).

These are indeed graphic words and need to be constantly before the mind of the believer. The Father's gracious provision sees to it that His children get all the necessities of life but not necessarily all they desire. It is important to note that "they that *will* be rich" of the Authorized Version is not just the future tense, but refers to

those who *desire* or make it their object to amass money. The futility of this is seen in verse seven which Paul apparently bases on Ecclesiastes 5:15:

“As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand”.

This is a lesson that so few learn. Materialism is dangled before people in so many ways today and represented as being essential for happiness. Thus governments constantly bring before the electorate the desirability of a “rise in the standard of living” and people really believe that if they had more money and more possessions they would be perfectly content. This deceptive myth is accepted by millions and most of modern living is geared round it. The believer needs to be constantly on the alert that he avoids this attitude of mind, for it can only lead to frustration, spiritual barrenness and a poverty of Christian witness and service. The Lord warned: “Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15), and “ye cannot serve God and mammon (riches)”. To see a Christian ensnared by this sort of attitude is pathetic in the extreme. Solomon’s experience of materialism should be a warning to all (Eccles. 2) and his conclusion is “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver” (5:10). Rather than satisfying, Paul asserts that such a view can only lead to serious hurt and destruction (verse 9).

Verse 10 in the Authorized Version is not accurate. The Apostle does not say that money is *the* root of all evil, because this is not true. An inordinate love of money is at the root of much evil, but not *all* evil. The definite article is omitted in the Greek. The Revised Version is more accurate, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”. How much better is it for the believer to look on money and the ability to earn it as a gift from the Lord, and for Him to have first claim upon it! “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts” (Hag. 2:8), and when we give money to Him we should say, as David did of old, “of Thine own have we given Thee” (1 Chron. 29:14).

As a contrast to money grabbing, Timothy as a “man of God” must flee from this sort of thing (verse 11). Paul gives a similar

warning in 2 Timothy 2:22. Timothy would doubtless remember that the title "man of God" was given to such illustrious characters as Moses, Elijah, Elisha, David, Shemaiah and Igdaliah, and he therefore had a high standard set before him, and so he must pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness (verse 11). He is now exhorted to:

"Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses" (verse 12 R.V.).

The word "fight" (*agonizo*) means "to contend in the games" and the cognate *agon*, "race", is also used. E. K. Simpson claims that the military meaning is also present. Whether this is so or not, the verb implies a disciplined struggle that is continuous. He is also to lay hold of, or clasp, eternal life. This does not mean that he did not possess it by faith apart from works, but that now he was to continually appropriate it with a sure hold in his daily life and service. The good confession in the sight of many witnesses doubtless refers to his ordination to which allusion has already been made.

Paul now gives the last charge of this epistle to Timothy and breaks into a magnificent doxology:

"In the sight of God, Who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, Who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this commandment without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in His own time – God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone is immortal and Who lives in unapproachable light, Whom no one has seen or can see. To Him be honour and might for ever. Amen" (verses 11–16 N.I.V.).

Some commentators apply the whole of this doxology to the Father, although the Apostle does not address God as such here. It is better to see this as an ascription of praise to the Triune God. He is the Quickener, the Giver of life, (the Holy Spirit). The title "King of kings and Lord of lords", the supreme King and the supreme Lord, is twice ascribed to the Lord Jesus in Revelation 17:14 and 19:16, and reminds one of Deuteronomy 10:17: "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh

reward". God the Father, in His essence as Spirit, cannot be seen or approached and it is Christ, as the Image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15; 2:9), Who sums Him up concretely.

Already in 1 Timothy 1:17 immortality (*athanasia*) is ascribed to God. In the context we are considering we have the statement "Who only hath immortality", that is, inherently. If this most important statement had really been believed by the professing church down the centuries, we should never have had the unscriptural and pagan idea of the immortality of the soul. The words "soul" and "spirit", occurring many hundreds of times in Scripture, are never termed immortal. God alone possesses it. Man can be described as a *candidate* for immortality. Adam the sinner lost it ("and now, lest he 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" Genesis 3:22,23). Immortal life is found only in Christ and can be received by faith in Him as Saviour and Lord, for He has brought life and immortality (incorruption) to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8-11), and both immortality and incorruption are to be "put on" by the redeemed at resurrection and not before (1 Cor. 15:51-55). Needless to say, one cannot "put on" what is already possessed.

Having poured out his praise in this doxology the Apostle Paul returns to the theme of riches, with the difference, that, in the former section he dealt with those *aspiring* to be rich, whereas here he is concerned with those who are *already* rich:

"Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not high-minded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6:17-19 R.V.).

Believers who were wealthy were warned against a proud and lofty attitude of mind and too much dependence upon money. An abundance of material possessions is apt to produce a feeling of superiority – a dangerous attitude of mind for any believer, who is only usable by the Lord as long as he keeps really humble. There is always the danger too of relying on wealth, forgetting that money can easily take wings and fly away. In fact we all have a duty to

keep a check on ourselves that our hope is not resting on the transient material things of this life, but upon the Lord and the eternal abiding riches we have in Him by grace. The advent of the Welfare State today can also be a danger, where everything is supposedly cared for "from the cradle to the grave". Let us never forget that our constant assurance rests solely upon the changeless Saviour Whose love and bounty towards us never wavers.

Those who have money in good supply are exhorted by the Apostle to use it, not for themselves, but for the benefit of others with whom they can have the privilege of sharing. In doing so they would be laying up for themselves a good and solid foundation for the future, culminating with their appearance before the Lord, the righteous Judge, Who will test and assess every man's service as to its quality, and decide whether it merits His approval.

The concluding phrase "that they may lay hold on eternal life" echoes verse 12, but with the variation that should be translated "life which is life indeed". This is the *real* life—the unending life to come. The present one is only a shadow, a prelude to this eternal reality. Millions live just for the present life with its problems, uncertainties and short duration. Only the believer in Christ can look forward with absolute certainty to the life to come with its unending and eternally satisfying richness, and happy is he who can live the life on earth with the future life ever in view by faith.

The Apostle Paul concludes by giving his spiritual son a final reminder of the good deposit of truth which first of all had been given him (Paul) by the risen and ascended Lord Jesus, and now had been placed in Timothy's charge:

"O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee, (the deposit, literally), turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so-called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with you."

(verses 20,21 R.V.).

"The deposit" or "the good deposit" (2 Tim. 1:14), had been already set forth vividly in Ephesians and Colossians, relating to the Body of Christ. This Timothy must watch over and guard as precious treasure, not allowing himself to be distracted with secondary pre-occupations. As a trustee, he must keep the terms of this divine trust and neither turn to the right hand nor to the left. Constantly he must exhort those under his charge to do likewise,

for the activities of the enemy were ceaseless. His dupes would constantly seek to divert him and them by their endless arguments and disputes, which Paul called "godless chatter and opposition" (N.I.V.). They were the ones who claimed to have the real knowledge, but all of it was false. The word translated "science" (A.V.) must not be restricted to the modern meaning. It is *knowledge* (*gnoseos*), but false knowledge can apply today in much that is deemed scientific, for it is nothing more than unproved theory. It may have a "show of wisdom", and on the surface appears to be right, but Satan, the great enemy of God and His people, uses it to cause those who embrace it to "deviate" (*astocheo*) from the truth. The Apostle has used this word in 1:6 where it is translated "swerve from".

Alas, we see Satan's deadly work at the present time. There are quite a number who once stood faithfully for "the good deposit" of truth witnessed by the spoken and written word. Now they have "swerved aside" and left the track of truth, even opposing the things they once stood for so loyally. This is indeed distressing, but at the same time it is a warning to us all.

In the mercy of God, the rich and precious teaching associated with the Body of Christ through Paul's writings has been preserved by Him, coming down to us today. It should be a constant challenge to us all who profess to receive it by faith, that we seek to proclaim it in every way possible by life and lip. The age darkens and hastens to its terrible end, but let us make sure that the light of this "good deposit" is constantly shining through us unhindered in any way. The divine charge to Timothy comes down to us who profess to be members of Christ's Body, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all". Let us see to it that, by the infinite grace of God and His almighty resurrection power, we do not fail Him, but prove to be faithful members, "meet for the Master's use", channels through which He can constantly bless and enlighten others.

The last words of the epistle centre around this *grace*, which conclusion is peculiar to Paul's epistles. In this benediction the word "ye" is plural, showing that this letter was designed for others besides Timothy, doubtless those under his charge. Let the last thought of the free and undeserved grace of God constantly be before our minds, for we were chosen and saved by His grace, and by that same grace alone we live and serve Him acceptably.

TITUS

INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER ONE

It is always important to note when dealing with the epistles of Paul, the way they group themselves with relation to the dispensational dividing line at Acts 28. While Israel was still in covenant relationship with God, and this held good right through the Acts, Paul wrote seven epistles. Galatians, Hebrews, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans. After the Acts, when Israel became *lo-ammi*, not My people, that covenant relationship was broken and they were soon scattered in judgment throughout the world. The Apostle is then inspired to write seven more epistles, namely Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 Timothy, Titus and 2 Timothy.

It is evident by what Paul said when he wrote to Philemon and the church at Philippi that he expected to be released from his Roman prison (Phil. 2:24; Philem. 22). Then follows some five years in which he resumed his ministry as a free man.

During this time the possibility is that he realized his intention of visiting Spain and preaching the gospel there (Rom. 15:23,24). This view is supported by writers of the early church, such as Clement, first bishop of Rome, Eusebius and Chrysostom as well as the Muratorian Canon. Towards the end of the five years the Apostle evidently returned to Ephesus and found the predictions which he had long ago uttered to the Ephesian overseers were already receiving their fulfilment. People like Hymenaeus and Philetus were sowing seeds of error which were destined to bear deadly fruit in time to come. Jewish superstitions and erroneous teachings concerning the law, together with the baneful influence of the early Gnostics, the self-styled aristocrats of knowledge, were already doing deadly work among the assemblies.

From the epistles to Timothy and Titus written about this time, we gather that Paul was prevented by other duties from staying in this region and hence he writes to these two fellow-labourers and gives them instructions how to meet this error in order to prevent its spreading and overthrowing the faith of believers.

Furthermore we must remember that after the truth of the Mystery had been revealed in Ephesians, local assemblies did not cease to exist. They embraced the new teaching as a whole and continued to function as before. Consequently at this time the Truth was still organized and leaders like Timothy would need guidance as to how to conduct themselves in the "house of God" which was the "church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

By the time that we come to 2 Timothy, which cannot have been written much later than 1 Timothy and Titus, we find a state of affairs which is anything but healthy. "This thou knowest, that all that are in Asia turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15 R.V.) and in chapter 4 verse 16 we read, "At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me" (R.V.). The second statement may be a commentary on the first, but there may be more in it than that just a company of Christians in Asia were afraid to stay by the Apostle in this time of danger. It appeared to be a definite act of repudiation on their part. Had the truth for which he stood been held tenaciously and worked out in practice by believers in Asia, such a situation could not have arisen despite the perils of the times. And when we remember the one other verse in this epistle that uses the verb "turn away" – we are led to believe that the Apostle is describing a falling away from the Truth that was then taking place. "For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine . . . and they shall *turn away* their ears from the truth and shall be turned to myths. But watch then in all things . . ." Paul is forewarning Timothy of conditions he would have to face, not of something that would take place centuries later.

When we bear in mind this departure from the "good deposit" of Truth entrusted for this present age to the Apostle of the Gentiles, and also the leaven of false doctrine actively working before Paul's death, we are not surprised that most, if not all that he stood for, was soon lost. The early Christian writers of the first and succeeding centuries exhibit little or no understanding of his distinctive ministry and a study of church history fails to show any general recovery of such truth. The Reformation was a beginning, but it was left to roughly 100 years ago for the Truth of the Mystery with all its wonder and glory, to begin to come to the forefront again. Not that this truth has been completely blotted out, for there must have been individuals all through the centuries who have

believed God's Word however dimly, regarding this distinctive heavenly calling*. Coming back to the Pastoral Epistles, we see there that 1 Timothy and Titus were written after Acts 28 when the Apostle Paul had been liberated from his first imprisonment. Hence we find in them no references to prison, but definite instructions to two believers who were to take the lead at a time when the Truth was still organized in assemblies.

Concerning Titus himself we know little. The strange thing is that he is not once mentioned during the Acts by Luke and yet by Paul's references to him he evidently stood high in the Apostle's esteem. We know of no satisfactory explanation of this. In the second letter to the Corinthian church, he is referred to no less than nine times (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18—twice).

Paul had sent him to investigate and report to him the state of the church at Corinth, particularly after his first epistle had been received, and also to hasten the collection for the poor brethren in Judaea.

He was a Gentile converted under the Apostle's ministry (Titus 1:4), and was taken by Paul and Barnabas to the council of the apostles and elders which was convened at Jerusalem to consider the question of the relationship of Gentile believers to the Mosaic law (Gal. 2:1,3). The reason was clear; Titus was uncircumcised and Paul was determined not to allow any act of ritual to mar the glorious doctrine of justification by faith in Christ apart from works.

We know little more of Titus than the above mentioned facts. He evidently visited Crete with Paul after his liberation and was left there to "set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). He is bidden to come to the Apostle (after the arrival of Artemas or Tychicus, 3:12). Paul had decided to spend the winter at Nicopolis and Titus is exhorted to join him there. The next reference is in Paul's last epistle, 2 Timothy. He has now been apprehended the second time from which he realizes there will be no deliverance and is prepared to give his life for his

* See the author's *The Early Centuries and the Truth. For the human authorship of the epistle to the Hebrews see Perfection or Perdition* by C. H. Welch and Stuart Allen. All published by B.P.T.

Saviour and Lord very shortly (2 Tim. 4:6). Only Luke is with him (2 Tim. 4:11). Demas has forsaken him, Crescens had gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia (verse 10). This is the last reference to Titus in the Scriptures. We cannot help noticing that he is mentioned and Crescens in the same breath almost as forsaking Demas. One is left wondering. Does this mean that Titus had also manifested the same spirit as Demas? Nothing definite is said, only the context is not an encouraging one. We can only hope he made the journey to Dalmatia at the advice of the Apostle, although Paul does not state this to be the case.

We may now ask what Christian witness existed in Crète at this time. We know from Josephus that it abounded with Jews of wealth and influence (Ant. 17:12,1). But how did the gospel reach there? In Acts 2:11 Cretans are named among those who heard the utterance of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It is more than likely that the Cretan churches owed their origin to the witness of those people who brought back a knowledge of salvation with them.

Two things remain to be noticed, the condition of the churches and the character of the Cretans in general. From the epistle it is evident that false teachers had crept in and were putting forward doctrines which were essentially antichristian. There is much that is parallel between 1 Timothy and Titus, for they had more or less the same errors to face. From the start Satan has never left the truth unchallenged. It is all a part of the great conflict of the ages and will not cease until the mystery of iniquity has been revealed and dealt with by the glorious Return of Christ to the earth and Satan is bound and cast into the abyss. In our day we must expect opposition to the proclamation of the Truth of a rightly divided Word and the sacred deposit committed to our charge. This opposition is more likely to come from *within* than from *without*, and we must not be unprepared to meet it.

Concerning the Cretans themselves, Paul apparently quotes one of their own poets, Epimenides who lived in the 6th century B.C. "Always liars and beasts are the Cretans and inwardly sluggish" (1:12). So infamous were some of them for their habitual practice of falsehood that the Greek word *kretizein*, to act like a Cretan, was a proverbial term for telling a lie.

What unlikely and difficult material for the grace of God to work upon! Yet this but magnifies that grace all the more, reminding us that God has not picked the *best*, rather sometimes He has apparently chosen the *worst* to lavish His love and mercy upon with the object that He may have all the glory at the end. "God hath chosen the foolish things . . . the weak things . . . the base things and things which are despised . . . that no flesh should glory in His Presence" (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

Before we proceed with the study of the epistle, we will set forth its structure so that we get the Divine outline to guide us as we seek to unfold its truth.

One thing stands out clearly, the six references to good works in the members marked B. In fact it would be true to say that the whole epistle revolves around the question of works, first of all in its relationship to those who are called to lead, like Timothy and Titus, and then to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ whatever their sphere of witness and work for the Lord.

The next thing we would draw attention to is the way the title Saviour is used in this epistle. It occurs six times and is distributed as follows:

- A 1:3 Commandment of God our Saviour
- B 1:14 Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour
- A 2:10 Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour
- B 2:13 Appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (R.V.)
- A 3:4 Love of God our Saviour
- B 3:16 Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

These occur in the members marked A in the structure and it will be noticed that they alternate between God and Christ.

TITUS* (as a whole).

- A 1:1-4 HOPE of eternal life
 Commandment of GOD OUR SAVIOUR
 Grace from the LORD JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR
- B 1:5-16 Titus left in Crete
 Set right what is lacking (*leiponta*)
 Unruly vain talkers circumcision
 Every GOOD WORK reprobate
- C 2:1 Titus speak (*lalei*) sound doctrine
- B 2:2-8 Believers subject (*hupotasso*) that Word be not
 blasphemed (*blasphemetai*)
 Titus a pattern of GOOD WORKS
- A 2:9-14 Adorn doctrine of GOD OUR SAVIOUR
 Grace of God hath appeared (*epephane*)
 Blessed HOPE and APPEARING (*epiphaneian*) of our
 GREAT GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST
- B 2:14 Peculiar people zealous of GOOD WORKS
- C 2:15-3:1 Titus speak (*lalei*) rebuke exhort
- B 3:1,2 Believers subject (*hupatasso*) to authorities
 Ready to every GOOD WORK not speak evil
 (*Blasphemein*)
- A 3:3-7 Kindness and love of GOD OUR SAVIOUR appeared
 (*epephane*)
 JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR
 HOPE of eternal life
- B 3:8-15 Those who have believed maintain GOOD WORKS
 Striving about law heretic reject
 Zenas and Apollos set forward nothing lacking
 (*leipe*)
 Our (people) maintain GOOD WORKS.

The occurrence in 2:13 has given rise to debate. Those who deny the deity of Christ, insist that two persons are referred to, the title "great God" not referring to Jesus Christ in their estimation.

"Awaiting the blessed hope of the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our Saviour Christ Jesus" (Moffatt).

"While we wait for the happy hope and the glorious manifestation of the great God and of our Saviour Christ Jesus" (*New World Translation*).

* This structure has not appeared in any previous publication.

The Authorized Version likewise separates the two titles. But the Revised Version reads:

“Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”,

putting the other reading in the margin. The Revised Version translation was the view of the Greek orthodox Fathers and of the most ancient commentators. Professor A. T. Robertson, one of the greatest authorities on New Testament Greek, writes, “This is the necessary meaning of the one article with *theou* and *soterou*”. There is a similar construction in 2 Peter 1:1 which the Revised Version correctly renders, “Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ” as against the Authorized Version “God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”; see likewise in verse eleven “our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”, where again only one article is used. The structure given above, however, finally throws in its weight, for we have a definite alternation between the titles God our Saviour and Jesus Christ our Saviour. The occurrence in chapter two verse thirteen we have taken from the Revised Version to show the perfect balance which is completely spoiled if the Authorized Version and the modernist rendering be adhered to.

Nothing is clearer in the Scriptures than that there is *one* Saviour, and that Saviour is God in the highest sense.

“I, even I, am Jehovah; and *beside me there is no Saviour*”
(Isa. 43:11; 45:21).

God has never delegated the work of salvation to any created being, however great. The Apostle Paul, under inspiration, does not hesitate in the epistle to Titus to apply the title “Saviour” to God, and also to Christ, and if the Lord Jesus is not God in the highest sense and the one Saviour, then words are meaningless, and moreover to bracket a creature (if Christ be not God) with One Who is the great God as in 2:13 would be blasphemy indeed. Moreover, we might ask what Scriptural foundation is there for a glorious appearing of the Father and Son together? There is absolutely none. We have one God, one Lord (Eph. 4:5) and one Saviour (Isa. 43:11) and He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us. Anything less than this comes from the father of lies whose one aim is to dethrone Christ and usurp his place as God.

Before we pass on, we give Cunningham's translation of Titus 2:13:

"Looking for the blessed hope and manifestation of our great God and Saviour's glory, Christ Jesus".

The next point of interest is the occurrences of the verb *epiphaino* and the noun *epiphaneia*. In 2:11 we have the grace of God, salvation-bringing to all men, hath appeared (A.V.) or was manifested, and in 3:4 the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared or was manifested, both being the same tense of the verb *epiphaino*.

Epiphaneia, the noun, occurs in 2 Timothy 1:10, "the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ", all these references pointing to His first Advent. *Epiphaneia* is also used of the hope of the Church which is His Body.

"The Lord Jesus Christ Who shall judge the living and the dead at His *appearing* and His kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1).

"A crown of righteousness . . . not to me only, but unto all them also that love His *appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:8).

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the *appearing* of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

The word *epiphaneia* as a noun standing alone, is only used after Acts 28 to describe the new aspect of hope of the redeemed who form the church of the Mystery revealed in Ephesians chapter three.

Its occurrence in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 is not parallel. There it is used like an adjective to describe one of the aspects of the *parousia* which the Lord had revealed in Matthew 24:27-30.

Thus, in the post-Acts epistles of Paul, it describes the giving of God's unspeakable Gift, His own Beloved Son and with Him the riches of His grace and surpassing love in choosing, saving and redeeming each member of the Church which is His Body, and also looks forward to the climax of their salvation, when His glory shall be revealed to the wondering gaze of heaven's principalities and powers and this church shall be manifested there with Him, Head and Body united in heaven's Holiest of all (Col. 3:1-4).

Another word which is characteristic of the Pastoral Epistles, and one which is greatly stressed, is the word doctrine *didaskalia*. It occurs fifteen times in these epistles, eight times in 1 Timothy, four times in Titus and three times in 2 Timothy. We now give a concordance of this word in these epistles:

Didaskalia in the Pastoral Epistles.

- | | | |
|-----------|------|--|
| 1 Timothy | 1:10 | if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound <i>doctrine</i> . |
| | 4:1 | giving heed to seducing spirits, and <i>doctrines</i> of devils. |
| | 4:6 | words of faith and of good <i>doctrine</i> . |
| | 4:13 | give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to <i>doctrine</i> . |
| | 4:16 | take heed unto thyself, and unto the <i>doctrine</i> . |
| | 5:17 | they who labour in the word and <i>doctrine</i> . |
| | 6:1 | that the name of God and His <i>doctrine</i> be not blasphemed. |
| | 6:3 | the <i>doctrine</i> which is according to godliness. |
| Titus | 1:9 | that he may be able by sound <i>doctrine</i> . . . to convince the gainsayers. |
| | 2:1 | the things which become sound <i>doctrine</i> . |
| | 2:7 | in <i>doctrine</i> showing uncorruptness. |
| | 2:10 | that they may adorn the <i>doctrine</i> of God our Saviour. |
| 2 Timothy | 3:10 | thou hast fully known my <i>doctrine</i> . |
| | 3:16 | all scripture is . . . profitable for <i>doctrine</i> . |
| | 4:3 | the time will come when they will not endure sound <i>doctrine</i> . |

That this is one of the key words of these epistles is obvious. The word "doctrine" is often linked in the mind with something that is dry and uninteresting. If we substitute the word *teaching* we shall see the closer link with *teacher*, as *didaskalia*, doctrine, is linked with *didaskalos*, one who teaches. The epistles to Timothy and Titus were addressed to those who had been called to teach and to lead, hence the vast importance of the *subject or subjects taught*.

These believers could be sound teachers of the Truth, not like some of the Apostle's day and at the end time, teachers of

myths, pleasing those who have itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3,4). There is sound or healthy teaching (Titus 1:9) and in contrast the teaching of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). The former is linked with the One who is the Truth (John 14:6) and His Word which is Truth (John 17:17), and the other with the father of lies (John 8:44).

From this it will be seen that the responsibility of the teacher is very great. What he teaches is either furthering the Truth or the lie. "My brethren be not many teachers (*didaskaloi*) knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). The ministry of the teacher is therefore not to be sought lightly. The faithful teacher has one great subject, the Word of God, and the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the last injunctions to Timothy by the Apostle Paul was this: "proclaim (preach) the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2), and a rightly-divided Word at that, as the previous chapter so solemnly stresses (2 Tim. 2:15). Merely quoting the Bible is not sufficient. The Judaizers undoubtedly quoted chapter and verse when they said to the early churches "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). But they were not teaching truth, rather the grossest error, for they were lifting it out of its Divine setting and propagating the way of Cain which presumes to come to God as a sinner with works, thus nullifying the gospel of His grace.

All the creeds appeal to the Bible, but how many rightly divide the Word of Truth? How many are bringing over to this dispensation teaching which was true in a past dispensation but is not truth for today? Surely it is right to say that if the professing church had made known as its doctrine or message for this Gentile age the teaching of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and obeyed the commandment of 2 Timothy 2:15, the present divided state of modern Christendom would never have happened.

Doctrine *does* matter. It is absolutely vital, and those who have absorbed the glorious teaching of the ascended Christ through Paul will never lack a subject to expound and will never need to descend to the puerilities and errors of much modern preaching.

"Thou hast fully known *my doctrine*" (2 Tim. 3:10).

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto *the doctrine*; continue in them"
(1 Tim. 4:16).

We now commence our study of the epistle and turn to the first chapter. It reads: "Paul, a bonds slave (servant) of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ". This is somewhat like his introduction to the Roman epistle. "Paul a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, a called apostle". When he writes to the Philippian church he likewise describes himself, with Timothy, bonds slaves (servants) of Jesus Christ and omits any reference to his apostleship. *Philippians* is pre-eminently the epistle of *service* and this sets the tone of the letter straight away.

Romans, *Philippians* and *Titus* are the only epistles where Paul describes himself as a bonds slave in the introduction. Usually it is his apostleship, conferred by the ascended Christ, that is brought forward first thus stressing his divine authority. But here the champion of liberty presents himself as a slave! A seeming paradox, but one in which the Apostle gloried. So much real doctrine is wrapped up in this word. It reminds us that, while redemption snaps the chains of sin and death, and leads us into liberty, yet that liberty is not without its Divine obligations. We have not been delivered from Satan, the flesh and the world system to please ourselves and go the way of our choosing, but to acknowledge the lordship or domination of the One Who has saved us by His precious Blood.

We are not our own, we are bought with a price and this nothing less than the life and death of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us (1 Cor. 6:19,20; Gal. 2:20). *We are His property, His slave*, and saving grace has simply changed masters for us, the Lord Jesus Christ instead of Satan, self and sin. Yet how many of God's people practically own this? Many know him as Saviour, who have never acknowledged His Lordship. Such could never call themselves, as Paul did, *bonds slaves* of Jesus Christ, for a slave has no rights, no property, no will of his own; he existed solely for his master. The Apostle had laid everything at the feet of His Saviour without reserve, and we should face up to the fact that none of us can truly call ourselves "servants (bonds slaves) of God", until we have done likewise. And then how wonderfully God is willing to accept such living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1) and commence to do His work through them!

So Paul, writing to *Titus* who had been called of God as a

servant, into which service the Apostle was about to guide him, likewise describes himself as a servant and an apostle (a sent one) of Jesus Christ.

This ministry and apostleship was "according to the faith of God's elect". *Kata*, the preposition used here with the accusative case, has the meaning of "in harmony with". We meet the truth of election at the beginning of this epistle, even as we do in Ephesians (Eph. 1:4). *Eklektos* is used in the Pauline epistles six times:

Rom. 8:33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's *elect*?

Rom. 16:13 Salute Rufus, *chosen* in the Lord.

Col. 3:12 Put on therefore, as the *elect* of God.

1 Tim. 5:21 Jesus Christ and the *elect* angels.

2 Tim. 2:10 I endure all things for the *elect's* sakes.

Titus 1:1 According to the faith of God's *elect*.

The noun *ekloge* is used of the Apostle himself by the Lord. "He is a *chosen* vessel unto Me", literally, he is a vessel of election unto Me (Acts 9:15). The only other occurrences in Paul's epistles are in 1 Thessalonians 1:4, and four times in the dispensational section of Romans, each reference referring to Israel and the faithful remnant (Rom. 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28). The verb *eklegomai*, to choose or elect, occurs three times in 1 Corinthians chapter one (verses 27 and 28) and the one reference in Ephesians before mentioned (1:4).

It is clear then, that no one can believe the truth given through the Apostle of the Gentiles unless he accepts the truth of election. But we must be careful here. In Scripture, election and predestination are definitely linked with God's *foreknowledge* (Rom. 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2) and Divine foreknowledge is as important as election and is indispensable in seeking to understand what election implies. Some have torn these two truths apart and have in consequence put forward views which come little short of fatalism. This is disastrous to growth in grace and response to the revealed will of God.

Verse one continues "and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness". *Epignosis*, translated "acknowledge" has not only the meaning of full knowledge but *knowledge acted on*, that is *acknowledgement*. Paul is not only revealing truth here, but stressing its practical claims on the believer's life. The whole

epistle revolving as it does around the subject of good works, is really an exposition of what the believer's practical acknowledgement should be. This truth is "after godliness". The word godliness is a translation of the Greek *eusebeia* and occurs ten times in Paul's writings, all of them being in the Pastoral epistles. They are 1 Timothy 2:2; 3:16; 4:7,8; 6:3,5,6,11; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:1. *Eusebeia* is composed of *eu*, meaning "well", and *sebomai* "to worship". Perhaps "God-fearing" comes nearer its meaning than "godliness", remembering the Old Testament phrase "the fear of the Lord" which occurs fourteen times in the Book of Proverbs. This fear is not the same as fear in the sense of being afraid, but *reverence* for God, a strong desire not to do anything that will hurt or grieve the One Who is our Heavenly Father. Such will "well-reverence" Him and so exhibit the godliness that these epistles stress so much. Thus the word has a deeper meaning than piety and is closely linked with *true worship* which is at the heart of all truth.

Verse two leads on to eternal life; "in hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the ages of time". This is the "promise of life which is *in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim. 1:1), hope and promise being often linked together in Scripture. Men, as sinners, are "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18) but "life and incorruption" have been brought to light through the gospel of the grace of God (2 Tim. 1:10,11) ministered by the Apostle Paul. John in his first epistle tells us "God hath given unto us eternal life and this life is *in His Son* . . . he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11,12).

From these Scriptures it is surely clear that living forever (divorced from Christ), is a delusion, but for the believer in the Lord Jesus this is an absolute certainty, for it is based on a *promise* made by God and He *cannot lie*. How sure and steadfast this must be then! We can have indeed "full assurance of faith" as we look beyond this present life which Scripture likens to a disappearing vapour (James 4:14). Strictly speaking the word "eternal" is the Greek *aiônios*, eonian or age-long. There is a phase of this which relates to the earthly purpose of God through redeemed Israel and is featured in the Gospels. Another aspect of it is the basis of the hope of the Mystery. It is useless looking forward to being seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus and being shown the exceeding riches of God's grace in the ages to come (Eph. 2:6,7)

unless we have the necessary life given us to enjoy it.

God's promise of life goes back "*before* the world began", or better, *before* the ages of time, which is nearer the original. This is linked up with the *plan of God* and His grace which also takes us back *before* time commenced, using the same phrase as here (2 Tim. 1:9). Ephesians 1:4 assures us that we were elected in Christ *before* the foundation of the world. The Body of Christ is the only calling of the redeemed that reaches so far back into the past. Other callings have the time period "*since* the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Some have sought to limit the phrase "eternal or age-long life" to the Millennium and the restored people of Israel. This is unnecessary as, while the ages run their course, members of the Body, as we have just seen, will need life in the heavenlies. This still leaves intact the special usage of eternal life in the Gospels.

The Lord Jesus said in John 7:6,8, "My time (season) is not yet come", but in Matthew 26:18 it had come, for He now says "My time (season) is at hand" (drawn near). This was the particular point of all time when He should offer Himself as the Antitype of the Passover Lamb, with the consequence that the gospel of His grace can be proclaimed and we can tell men and women that "now is the accepted time (season), now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

There is not only a season for truth, but also for the lie and its outworking. The Apostle in 2 Timothy 3:1 warns of perilous times (seasons) to come in the last days of this age, a season when sound doctrine, the truth of God, will not be endured (2 Tim. 4:3). This will lead on to the time or season when Antichrist shall be revealed (2 Thess. 2:6) who will be destroyed by the revelation from heaven of the Lord Jesus (2 Thess. 2:8). There is a season and a fitting time to every purpose under the heaven (Eccles. 3:1) and truth for this Gentile age, while Israel as a nation is laid aside in unbelief, is revealed by the ascended Christ through Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. This completes the Word of God (Col. 1:25).

So in Titus 1:3 he refers to the proclamation (preaching) of the truth which had been entrusted to him according to God's commandment. This was now manifested, because "its own

peculiar season" for its revelation had come with the rejection of Israel, the covenant people.

Paul uses the same phrase in 1 Timothy 2:6. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all *to be testified in due time*". The Greek reads literally "the testimony (concerning His work as Mediator) to be rendered *in its own season*". That season had arrived and Paul was the channel through which it was made known. The essence of dispensational truth is that recognition of the fact that there is a *fitting time in the purpose of God for the revelation of truth*. This is decided by the all-wise God and confusion is bound to result if due recognition is not given to this fact. If we read future truth into the past, or past truth into the present or future, we shall cloud our own minds and those with whom we come into contact.

The witness given by the Lord Jesus Christ through the Apostle of the Gentiles, after Israel's apostasy, is essentially *truth for the times*. Now is the fitting season of its revelation and the working out of that phase of the Divine Plan which is made known therein. This concerns God's purpose for the *heavenlies* and the Church of the Mystery which is the glorious subject of Paul's Prison Epistles and the Pastoral epistles written after Acts 28. Let us search this treasury of truth afresh and seek the Spirit of wisdom and *revelation* without which we can never get to know its unsearchable riches (Eph. 1:17,18; 3:8,9).

The Apostle goes on to address the letter to Titus, "my own son". The Revised Version corrects this to "my *true* child, after the common faith". *Gnesios* is used as a substantive in 2 Corinthians 8:8 and is translated there "the *sincerity* of your love". In Philippians 4:3 Paul addresses one whom he calls "*true* yokefellow". He uses this same phrase of Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:2. This clearly indicates that both Timothy and Titus were saved under the Apostle's ministry, and while he may not have had children in the flesh, the Lord gave him true spiritual sons who followed in his footsteps, and in view of the nearness of the end of his witness and the growing false teaching which was endangering the truth, he concentrates in these pastoral letters his instructions and spiritual guidance so that they should stand fast themselves and encourage others so to do.

The salutation is "grace and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Saviour" (R. V.). We have before commented on the way these titles are alternated in this epistle. The structure shows this clearly, throwing into prominence the word "Saviour", which is used both of God the Father and the Lord Jesus. We have one God and one Saviour and He is God manifest in the flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is one with the Father.

Verse five continues "for this cause I left thee behind in Crete that thou mightest set right the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded thee".

It is obvious from this statement that Paul was not able to finish the work he had commenced when visiting the island after his release from imprisonment, and so he left Titus behind to "set right" or "correct" things that were still lacking. As to what these were the rest of the epistle makes clear. First of all there were no recognized leaders, and knowing the importance of true leadership, Paul gives this first place in his instructions to his son in the faith.

One must clearly keep in mind two things concerning the background of this epistle, (1) the character of the Cretans (see verses 12, 13) and (2) the false teaching which was spreading so insidiously into the assemblies and upsetting the faith of many. The leader had to be separate from all that this represents. Two words are used for such in the pastoral letters of Paul, *presbuteros* (elder) and *episkopos* (bishop). These designate one office (compare Acts 20:17 with verse 28 where these words are used interchangeably). They occur again in the context we are considering (Titus 1:5,7). It hardly seems necessary to say that these elders or bishops bear little or no relationship to those of the present day. There were no such distinctions as clergy and laity at this time, which came into being centuries later and are completely unscriptural being a hang-over from Romanism. These overseers were humble men, chosen for their character in the home and loyalty to the truth, and were thus able to take care of the church of God.

The Apostle now points out these characteristics to Titus and exhorts him to seek for such and appoint them as leaders. Such

leaders must be blameless (verses 6 and 7), the meaning of which is expanded by the context and the items that follow, the husband of one wife, and having faithful or believing children, not under accusation of riot or disobedience. The phrase "the husband of one wife" is also found in 1 Timothy 3:2 and can be interpreted in two ways: (1) the opposite of polygamy; (2) only marrying once and having one wife, so that in the event of the wife's death, the husband must not marry again. Alford strongly contends for view (2) though it is difficult to see why a man should be better equipped in the Lord's work by not marrying the second time, unless the Apostle had the principle of 1 Corinthians 7:32,35 in mind. We know that polygamy was practised by the Jews at the time of writing this epistle and it may be that this is what is warned against. The Greek can bear either meaning, but if the second is the teaching of the passage, then it would certainly rule out many prominent Christian leaders of the present time. View (2) is strengthened by 1 Timothy 5:9 where a widow, to receive the benefits of the context, must only have been married once.

Verse six goes on to stress the character of the home, "having believing children, not accused of riot or insubordinate". Paul had also stressed this in his first letter to Timothy. Chapter 3, verses 1-7 largely cover the same ground as the context we are considering. An overseer (bishop) must be "one that ruleth well his own house . . . (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)". The logic of this is inescapable. The manifestation of truth begins in the home, if a man cannot shine there, he cannot shine anywhere for the Lord.

It is interesting to notice the words which are common to 1 Timothy and Titus. *Sophron*, "of good behaviour" (1 Tim. 3:2); sober (Titus 1:8); *me plekten*, "no striker" (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7); *philoxenon* "hospitable" (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8). In both cases "A husband of one wife" is stressed. Hospitality was an important Christian grace in early times. The church was often found in the house and travelling Christians could not resort to the houses of the heathen. The need therefore for hospitality on the part of those called to lead was obvious. This is still an essential part of Christian witness today. The burden usually falls more on the woman than the man, but in doing this as unto the Lord, a sister

in Christ is rendering a valuable Christian act which is not unnoticed by Him. "Do not forget hospitality, for by this some entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). "Use hospitality to one another without murmuring" (1 Pet. 4:9). Any element of grudging or complaining spoils this important service in the Lord's sight. It must be done willingly and gladly as unto Him.

The word *sophron* (sober) and its derivatives form a prominent feature of this epistle. We tabulate them accordingly:

	<i>Sophron</i>
1:8	Sober
2:2	Temperate
2:5	Discreet.
	<i>Sophronos</i>
2:12	Live soberly.
	<i>Sophroneo</i>
2:6	Sober minded.
	<i>Sophronizo</i>
2:4	Young women to be sober.

Sophron comes from two words, *sos*, "sound" and allied to "salvation", and *phren*, "mind" and means of a *sound mind* as opposed to madness or even perhaps "salvation-minded". *Sophronismos* occurs in 2 Timothy 1:7, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a *sound mind*". This surely is one of the greatest of God's gifts to His redeemed children. Of what use can we be to Him or to our fellow creatures, apart from a healthy balanced mind? We walk with our *minds* primarily, not our feet, and every conscious action is directed by the mind. Salvation starts internally with the *mind* and the Greek *sophron* describes this mind and its effects in action. It is difficult to find one word in English that will adequately carry its meaning over. Perhaps "discreet" and "discretion" come nearest.

Dr. E. W. Bullinger says of *sophroneo* in his Lexicon "to be of sound mind; think and act discreetly, to use sound judgment and moderation". The rendering of the Authorized Version "sober" is not good, as it is likely to be restricted in meaning to restraint in respect of wine, or to going about with a long face, a feature which some Christians seem to think glorifies the Lord.

It was essential that one who was called to be an overseer or

bishop should practically exhibit this healthy, balanced and controlled outlook in word and action. This is attractive and would have a beneficial effect in every way on those who were in his charge. It is none the less essential today. If Christian beliefs do not lead to a wholesome sanity and balance, then they are of little use however high sounding they may appear.

A man truthfully so described would be a "lover of good, just, holy and temperate" (Titus 1:8). He is called upon to "hold fast the faithful word" and according to the instruction (*didachen*) in order that he may be able both to encourage with healthy teaching and to reprove (or convict) the gainsayers". We give here a rendering that is nearer the original. The instruction referred to, was that pattern of truth given to Paul by the ascended Christ and now passed on to Timothy and Titus and all those who were called of God to take the lead in witness. Anything else would not be "truth for the times". Such were reminded that they were "stewards of God" (verse 7). *Oikonomos* translated steward, is allied to *oikonomia*, dispensation, which is not so much a period of time, but a *stewardship committed*, that is, truth that had been entrusted by God to use and proclaim faithfully and live out in practice. All members of the Body are in some measure dispensers of a dispensation. They must do it in view of God's reckoning day when all will be asked by Him to "give an account of their stewardship". Only two classes will exist at that time, good (just) stewards, and bad (unjust) stewards. How we should covet to be in the former class! Of what use will be any material or worldly gains then? Or the approval of men whether Christian or otherwise?

The healthy teaching the context talks about is linked with the healthy mind we have been considering, although the word here is not *sophron*, but a part of the verb *hugiaiino* "to be well in health", and then with regard to doctrine, to be sound, having no mixture of falsehood. This healthy teaching has two ends in view: (1) to encourage the faithful and (2) to reprove the opposers of the Truth.

The word translated encourage gives us the English *paraclete* rendered Comforter and Advocate as applied to the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:7; 1 John 2:1). All who are determined to walk the way of the Truth rightly divided, will need encouragement and how great this is when we go on to absorb the

testimony of the Lord given through His Prisoner! (2 Tim. 1:8). It leads to a full assurance of faith and hope and steadfastness.

On the other hand we shall not go far before we meet the opposers. Satan will see to this, for he has challenged God's truth right from the beginning and the battle is still raging. The only equipment which is sufficient for all needs is this faithful Word committed to us. To attempt to combat error in any other way is to meet it with the arm of flesh and court defeat. We should hold it forth in a spirit of love and meekness as we are enjoined in 2 Timothy 2:25, knowing that the inspired Word is profitable for reproof and correction as well as for doctrine and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

Thus Paul enjoined Titus to instruct those who were called to be overseers. The qualifications were rigid. They must be faithful men who would cling fast to the faithful Word and proclaim it in season and out of season, whether it pleased or displeased their hearers. Only in this way could false teaching be successfully combated and the Truth made known.

An overseer in Crete had special difficulties to contend with, namely, the lax character generally of Cretans (verse 12) and the opposition to the Truth that was endangering the faith of believers.

This opposition Timothy had to face too, and this accounts for the similarity of warnings in both 1 Timothy and Titus. Paul describes the opposers as "many insubordinate and vain talkers and mind-deceivers, specially those of the circumcision" (1:10). The word *phrenapatai*, translated deceivers, only occurs here and in verbal form in Galatians 6:3. It is the very opposite of *sophron*, the sound mind that we have already considered.

The mind of man is the battle ground between truth and error. Sin darkens and enslaves the mind and its thinking, whereas salvation and redemption snap the chains, and the Holy Spirit renews the mind so that the things of God can be appreciated and received in each person's measure. Satan uses many and various means to get control of the human mind, but the object is always the same, namely its enslavement and subjection to himself. Even for the believer in Christ there is the danger of giving place to the

Devil (Eph. 4:27) and coming under his snare (2 Tim. 2:25,26), and there is only one sure safeguard and that is to "hold fast the faithful word" (Titus 1:9). Directly a Christian refuses to submit his thinking to God's revealed Word of truth he becomes a prey to error and bondage, however fair and good it is dressed up externally.

Those concerning whom Paul is warning Titus were in such a position. They were "insubordinate" (unruly); they refused to submit themselves to that pattern of truth which had been committed to the Apostle and made known through him. They were chiefly Jews (1:10) and while it may not be possible to say in detail what was the error they were propagating, one can judge from the references given in 1 Timothy and Titus that they were largely misinterpretations and additions to the Old Testament. Thus we have "endless genealogies and fables" (myths) 1 Timothy 1:4-7; Titus 3:9. They adulterated God's pure Word with their own fanciful and pernicious idea concerning descent, human or divine, so adding the "commandments of men" (Titus 1:14) and destroying its truth. There were "strivings about the law" (3:9) all of which the Apostle describes as "unprofitable and vain" (verse 9) only leading to contention and disunity. Paul also refers to "Jewish myths" (fables) Titus 1:14. These were probably the seeds of gnostic mythology already taking root and which were later on in the second century to bear such evil results. As we compare 1 Timothy 4:3 and Colossians 2:16,22 it appears that these "commandments of men" related to abstinence from meats and other things, seeking to promulgate a false standard of holiness (1 Tim. 4:3). To such the Apostle's reply was "unto the pure all things (including the question of foods) are pure". Those who have the sound healthy mind that the Truth brings can regard all legitimate things in this way. The differences in foods clean or unclean belonged to a past dispensation and their introduction here could only be a backward step that would lead to bondage and swerving from the good deposit which had been made known to Paul by the risen and ascended Saviour.

Those who were promulgating such teaching might "profess to know God" (verse 16); indeed they did, hence the term "gnosticism" which comes from the Greek word for knowledge. They claimed to be "knowing ones", to have divine knowledge,

but this knowledge was not in accordance with the sound pattern of Truth ministered through the Apostle of the Gentiles. It was "knowledge falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20,21). The reader must remember that the Authorized Version "science" has no reference to the modern usage of the term. Here it is again *gnosis* (knowledge) but a knowledge derived from the lie (*pseudonumou*).

All error does one or both of two things to the Living Word and the Written Word. It either *adds* or *detracts*, in either case taking away from the *completeness* of the Lord Jesus and the Word of God. The traditions of the Pharisees and of the present day are an example of the former, while modernism is an example of the latter.

As before mentioned, in Paul's day we have the beginnings of error which afterwards developed into what is known as gnosticism. Broadly speaking its basic ideas were that matter is evil and only spirit is good, but by special knowledge of a kind known only to the initiates, the spirit of man might be released from its material bondage and rise upward to God through various mediators of their own devising. Thus it denied the possibility of a real incarnation, for God, being holy, could not be regarded as coming into contact with evil matter such as the body. It also sets aside the *one* Mediator, Christ Jesus. So redemption by blood was ruled out and a blow struck at the very foundation of Christian Truth.

It is important to note too that John, in his first epistle, combats the same error, insisting that it was the spirit of antichrist that denied that Jesus Christ *had come in the flesh* (1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 7) and as the epistle closes, he reiterates the word "know" as a challenge to the false teachers (1 John 5:2,13,15,18,19,20).

All this was what Titus and Timothy as instructors and leaders had to face, hence Paul's insistence on sound or healthy doctrine. "My doctrine", he calls it (2 Timothy 3:10), or the "form of sound words which thou hast heard of me" which must be held fast (1:13). It was the "testimony of the Lord" passing through His prisoner (1:8), and as such has been the standard of truth for this age against which all Christian witness and service must be measured.

Paul designates the opposers as “abominable, and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). *Adokimos* is the word translated reprobate; literally “not approved”, the very opposite to the unashamed workman of 2 Timothy 2:15. But in contrast the Apostle exhorts Titus to “speak the things that become healthy doctrine” (2:1). If the reader consults the structure of the epistle given at the beginning of this series, he will see that this member “C” balances 2:15–3:1, where again Titus is encouraged to “speak, exhort and rebuke with all authority”, and the context gives the same healthy doctrine dealing with the One Who has redeemed us from all lawlessness and purified to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (verse 14).

TITUS

CHAPTER TWO

Sound or healthy doctrine occurs four times in the Pastoral Epistles as follows:

- A 1 Tim 1:10 Any other thing contrary to sound doctrine
- B Titus 1:9 Sound doctrine to convince the gainsayers
- B Titus 2:1 Speak things which become sound doctrine
- A 2 Tim. 4:3 They will not endure sound doctrine.

Doctrine or teaching is referred to four times in the epistle to Titus (1:9; 2:1; 2:7; 2:10) and is one of the characteristic words of the Pastoral Epistles. Sound doctrine is now expanded and brought to bear upon the conduct of those who are elderly both men and women (2:2,3), then the young women and young men (4-6), and slaves with respect to their masters (verse 9). The elderly men are to be sober. This is not the translation of *sophron*, discreet, but *nephaliou* which comes nearer the English sober than *sophron*. It means temperate specially in respect to wine. They are to be grave (*semnos*). The word occurs in 1 Timothy 3:8,11 and Philippians 4:8 where it is translated *honest*. The noun *semnotes* is found in 1 Timothy 2:2. It occurs in 3:4, and Titus 2:7 where it is rendered *gravity*.

This is as likely to be misunderstood as the word *sophron*, usually translated sober. It is derived from *sebomai* to worship or reverence, and it indicates a dignity or character that merits respect, not one that is long faced and miserable. Such would always be serious in purpose though not necessarily always serious in demeanour. They too must be "discreet, sound in faith, in love, in endurance". The aged women in deportment are to be as becomes saints, not slanderers not enslaved to much wine but teachers of beautiful things (literally), that they may school the young women to be lovers of their husbands and children, discreet, chaste, workers at home, obedient to their own husbands, so that the Word of God be not brought into disrepute.

The Authorized Version translates the Greek *blasphemetai* literally, "that the word of God be not blasphemed". This occurs twice in this epistle, which the structure throws into relief. Its second occurrence is in chapter three verse two: "put them in remembrance . . . to speak evil of no man". In English we keep the word blaspheme to impious words against God, but this context shows it is possible to *blaspheme one another*. Parkhurst's definition of this word is "to hurt or wound a person's reputation by evil reports". Alas, what terrible damage the little member called the tongue can do if it is not controlled by grace! The Apostle James vividly portrays what unsanctified speech can lead to:

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell . . . the tongue no man can tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:5-8).

Paul knew what it was to suffer by the evil reports, spread about by others. In Romans 3:8 he declares he was "*slanderosly reported*" (*blasphemoumetha*). He uses the word again when he says, "*being defamed*, we intreat", (1 Cor. 4:13).

Growth in grace and progression to maturity or perfection (Heb. 6:1) is marked not only by controlled action, but by *controlled speech*.

"If any man offend not *in word*, the same is a *perfect* (mature) man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2).

The Lord Jesus said in a solemn context: "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36). The word idle is *argos* which means literally "not working", or non-productive, that is, of good.

Again in James 1:26 we are reminded that:

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and *bridleth not his tongue* . . . *this man's religion is vain*".

We do well, therefore, to take our words seriously especially of others, lest we blaspheme both God and man. The Old Testament has also something solemn to say about this (Lev. 19:16).

Love in action will mould speech as well as deeds and will endeavour to "cover a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). It will always seek to be just and fair and to give credit where it is due, encouragement and a word in season where it is needed. All this is wrapped up in the healthy doctrine of Titus 2:1. We shall need the emptying of self and Divine strengthening in order that we can not only believe and accept such healthy teaching but seek to *adorn* it by a practical response in word and deed. In this way it will be made beautiful in the eyes of others who are watching our lives and witness (Titus 2:10).

The Apostle has explained the practical implications of healthy (sound) doctrine as it affects the elder and younger men and women, and also slaves with regard to their relationship to their masters. All this flows out of verse eleven of chapter two:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ".

The carrying into effect of Paul's "healthy teaching" is the "adornment" of the wondrous revelation of God's grace which instructs us so to respond and glorify Him.

The structure of the epistle brings out the two occurrences of *epephane*, "appeared". Chapter 2:11, the grace of God

"appeared", and in 3:4 the kindness and love toward man of God our Saviour "appeared", resulting in salvation for all who have responded to such exceeding grace. This takes us back to His first Coming. But in 2:13 our minds are directed to the future Hope and here we have *epiphaneia*, appearing, which is derived from *epiphanes*, a related word. It is also used of the first Coming in 2 Timothy 1:10. So we see that all practical Christian response resolves around the great doctrines concerning the first appearing of Christ in the flesh and His future appearing in glory.

As the word *epiphaneia* is so intimately connected with our hope, we must pause to give careful consideration to its usage and teaching. The verbal form, *epiphaino* means "to shine over or upon", "to give light to" (Luke 1:79) and in the passive, "to appear" or "be manifested". In this latter form the verb occurs in the two contexts we have mentioned in Titus. In classical Greek the word has the force of coming suddenly into view, and *epiphaneia*, the sudden appearance of an enemy. Parkhurst points out that the Greek writers particularly apply this word to the appearance of some deity in splendour. In later Greek, the papyri show that it is used in the sense of manifestation, or any conspicuous intervention on the part of higher powers.

It only occurs twice in the Septuagint (2 Sam. 7:23 and Amos 5:22) but often in the Apocrypha (Maccabees 2) where it is used of God's supernatural appearances in aid of His people. Some English versions translate it as "advent", but this word, through the Latin with its meaning of "coming", does not convey the real sense and therefore must be rejected. Moreover, if translated thus it is apt to be used as synonymous with word *parousia* (also translated "coming"), which it is not.

To sum up, *epiphaneia*, when connected with a person, means his sudden appearance, manifestation, or coming into view, after being hidden.

Let us now note the occurrences of this word in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul is the only writer who is inspired to use it, and with one exception, all the occurrences are in the epistles written *after* Acts 28:

- 2 Thess. 2:8 That wicked one . . . whom the Lord . . . shall destroy with the *brightness* of His *parousia* (coming).
 1 Tim. 6:14 Thou keep . . . until the *appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 2 Tim. 1:10 By the *appearing* of our Saviour Jesus Christ.
 4:1 At His *appearing* and His Kingdom.
 4:8 To them who have loved His *appearing*.
 Titus 2:13 The *appearing* of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It will be noted that the one occurrence before Acts 28, namely 2 Thessalonians 2:8, is not parallel with its usage afterwards. There it does not stand alone describing the hope of the church, but is used to add detail to the *parousia* of Christ (Matt. 24:29,30), Whose revealed power will destroy the man of sin. In the later occurrences it stands alone, bringing before us a new aspect of hope for the church which is His Body. Up to the end of the Acts, the *hope of Israel* has been dominant (Acts 3:19-26; 26:6, 7; 28:20) and coloured the hope of the church of that period.

Now that Israel, the nation, has been laid aside in unbelief and hardness of heart, and the Mystery revealed concerning God's purpose to bless some of His redeemed children in the heavenly places where Christ is seated, a new aspect of hope is stressed and *epiphaneia*, standing by itself, is used by the Holy Spirit to describe the consummation of salvation for this church.

The word "appearing" suggests that, in some way, the glory of Christ is now hidden. This is also brought forward in Colossians 3:1-4:

" . . . Seek those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye died, and your life has been hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then also you with Him will be manifested in glory".

The word translated manifested is *phaneroo* and also has the thought of bringing to light something that has been hidden (Mark 16:12,14; Col. 1:26; 1 Tim. 3:16).

Hope is the final *realization* of what we now hold by *faith*. By *faith* we are now seated together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6); *realized hope* will take us actually there, whether

living or dead (2 Tim. 4:1). Then the stupendous glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus will be revealed in the heavenly holiest of all. But this will not be the glory of Christ by Himself. It will be the revealed glory of Head and Body united for the first time. Or if we look to the great goal of Ephesians 2:19-22 when this church will be completed and will then constitute a holy temple, a "dwelling place for God" in the heavenly places, then the glory of our Saviour will fill it completely, as the glory of God did in the earthly type of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 7:1,2). It will be *manifested* there to all the heavenly host and we shall have the highest honour of being living stones in that dwelling place of splendour, majesty and infinite joy.

This is indeed a "blessed hope", one that words can only faintly portray. No wonder Paul prayed for the Ephesian saints that they should have enlightened eyes in order to know it for themselves (Eph. 1:17,18). We are sometimes told that this is "nebulous", "ephemeral" or "unreal". People who talk like this want us to be able to describe this hope in earthly terms that our human senses can appreciate. They do not realize that this high calling, going far beyond the limitation of earthly things and earthly experiences, being related to a heavenly sphere that we know nothing about apart from the Scriptures, is practically indescribable in human words. If we *could* so describe it, then it would not be the tremendous goal that the post-Acts epistles of Paul reveal.

The phase of the Second Advent that relates to the *earth* can be far more easily appreciated because we are within our own human sphere and can well imagine what the effect of such a Coming will be on earthly things and the activities of men. But the destiny of this church is so exalted that earthly terms utterly fail to describe it adequately. It is true to say that this highly favoured company will constitute the holiest of all itself. It will then indeed be "the *fulness* of Christ" (Eph. 1:23). In which case we can give humble and grateful thanks to the Father "who has made us sufficient to be partakers of the holiest of all in the light" (Col. 1:12 and contrast 1 Tim. 6:14-16). What an exceeding work of grace was needed to do this! And what a change will be necessary for this body of weakness and humiliation! It will need nothing less than being fashioned like the body of His glory! (Phil. 3:20,21).

Some believers are greatly concerned as to *how* this will happen. In fact they seem to be more concerned with *how* they will get to glory than the appreciation and the realization of the hope itself. The method has already been given in earlier epistles. It will be by change and rapture for those who are living and resurrection for those who have died. We have no reason to believe that the hope of the Church which is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, will be any less instantaneous than that of 1 Corinthians 15:51,52. We shall know nothing about the process for it will be quicker than the "twinkling of an eye". The fact remains that *we shall be there in the glory with our exalted Saviour and Head*. Surely then we can live, looking for such a blessed hope to be realized (Titus 2:13)? The word translated "looking" is *prosdechomai*. This is used (1) of things, to admit or to allow; (2) of persons, to receive kindly, to entertain as a guest and (3) of things future, to wait for, to expect with confidence.

In this third sense it is used in Luke 12:36, "and ye yourselves like unto men that *wait for* their lord" or of Joseph of Arimathaea who *waited for* the kingdom of God (Luke 23:51). So here in Titus 2:13, we should "live . . . waiting for that blessed hope and the manifesting of the glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus". We shall certainly need divine patience to wait. This is one item of the fruit of the Spirit which we all need so much, but it must be *practical* patience, not the patience of idleness. The best way we can practically manifest such an attitude is to continually seek His will in service and witness and then, by His grace and strengthening, to carry this out in deed and truth, all the while remembering that our eternal home is not here, but it already exists as a present fact in the heavens (Phil. 3:20).

During this present life we have to deal with the things of earth in a measure, but wise are we if we do not allow these things to completely monopolise our thinking and outlook. The *bent of our mind* should be upon heavenly things where Christ is now seated (Col. 3:1,2) and where our life and citizenship now exists. To have the bent of our minds on earthly things is exceedingly dangerous, as Philippians 3:19 warns us. Beware of any system of Bible teaching or theology that leans this way even though it may be dressed up attractively. We are a heavenly people with a destiny in the plan of God to carry out a phase of His purposes in the heavens "far above all", just as redeemed Israel will be used on the earth.

Our high calling has wonders beyond our dreams, which are safely treasured in Christ Jesus. Let us live with exceeding joy, anticipating the glories to come, which are as sure and certain, as our Saviour Himself, concerning Whom verse fourteen continues:

“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works”.

This redemption was not effected by God merely putting forth His mighty power on our behalf. It goes infinitely deeper than that. It needed nothing less than the Lord Jesus “giving Himself”, and in giving Himself, He gave everything; “the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me” said the Apostle (Gal.2:20). In the same epistle we are told Christ “gave Himself for our sins” (1:4). Twice in Ephesians is this supreme Gift mentioned:

“Walk in love . . . as Christ also . . . hath given Himself for us . . .” (5:2).

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (5:25).

Again in 1 Timothy 2:6 R.V.:

“... Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times”.

The last reference is linked with the verse we are considering, for the verb *lutroo* translated “redeem” in Titus 2:14, is from *lutron* a ransom, “to deliver by the payment of a price”. Two distinct aspects of the redeeming work of the Son of God are brought forward here; “to *redeem*” and “to *purify*”. In the Old Testament types the Passover and the Exodus set forth the former, whereas the Tabernacle with its cleansing by water, or by the blood and ashes of a red heifer, show forth the latter. We not only need to be *set free* from the bondage of sin and death, but also to be *made clean* from their defilement. Iniquity is the Greek *anomia*, “not subject to law”, and therefore is better rendered “lawlessness”. The cleansing or purifying (*katharizo*) is brought before us again in Ephesians 5:26:

“That He might sanctify and cleanse (*katharizo*) it (the church) with the washing of water by the Word”.

and how we can rejoice when we realize that not a spot or blemish remains after God's cleansing! This, the Apostle tells us, relates to "a peculiar people, zealous of good works". "Peculiar people" is *laon periousion*. The latter word comes from *perieimi*, to be over and above. As regards the Scripture it is found only in the Septuagint and here, although there are examples of it in the papyri. The translators of the Septuagint seemed to use it in the sense of "one's own possession", and they use it to translate the Hebrew *segullah* "peculiar treasure", referring to the people of Israel:

"Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a *peculiar treasure* unto Me above all people . . ." (Ex. 19:5).

It is used similarly in Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135:4; Malachi 3:17 (jewels). The phrase "peculiar people" in 1 Peter 2:9 is not the same. *Peripoiesis* is the word used in this context, but the thought is similar. It should be noted that these words are used of Jewish believers, the Israel of God, and so there is a link with the "peculiar treasure" of the Old Testament. Neither of these terms is used of Gentiles independently of Israel till after that nation is laid aside in unbelief at Acts 28. Now the Body of Christ, the heavenly people, is the special treasure, a people for the Lord's own possession, and they should be "zealous of good works".

It is possible for us to be keen on many things, but can we honestly say we have a burning zeal for good works? Knowledge without zeal is barren and unfruitful. Zeal without knowledge can be dangerous. Some may be surprised that Paul stresses good works so emphatically in this epistle. While he is led to set aside completely any form of good works or merit in obtaining salvation, "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:9), yet he immediately adds "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (verse 10) and truth is not seen in balance until equal prominence is given to both these statements. There have been those who have so emphasized grace apart from works, that the need for righteous living has been overlooked. This is certainly not to the glory of God.

It will be helpful if we set out the occurrences of "works" in the epistle to Titus:

- A 1:16 In works they deny Him
- 1:16 unto every good work reprobate
- B 2:7 Titus, a pattern of good works
- C 2:14 A redeemed people zealous of good works
- B 3:1 (Cretan believers) ready unto every good work
- C 3:5 His mercy saved us, not by works of righteousness
- A 3:8 Believers maintain good works
- 3:14 Our (people) maintain good works.

The emphasis on the believer producing and maintaining good works is plain for all to see, and may the Lord give us all grace and strength so to do (see also 2 Cor. 9:8; 2 Tim. 2:21 and 3:17).

Not only does the Apostle stress this, but he instructs Titus to follow his example:

“These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (2:15 R. V.).

We find similar teaching in 1 Timothy 4:11,12.

TITUS CHAPTER THREE

The first verse of chapter three again mentions good works with the added injunction to be obedient to rulers. We give the Revised Version rendering:

“Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work”.

What should be the attitude of the believer to civil authorities? How wisely the Saviour expressed it when He said:

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:15-21).

This does not mean that God approves of all that governments do, but a measure of organized government is essential if we are to avoid chaos and anarchy, and the Christian does not glorify the Lord by refusing to pay taxes or to comply with regulations which he finds unpleasant. On the contrary he is exhorted to “pray for kings and all that are in authority” (1 Tim. 2:2). It is only when

"For we also were aforetime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another" (3:3 R.V.).

Not that every believer necessarily exhibited all these vices, but this was the general picture, indicating the great need of God our Saviour:

"But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and His love toward man appeared" (4).

We are now taken back to the Lord's first appearing and the rich blessings that flow because of His redemptive work at Calvary. *Chrestotes* kindness, is several times translated "goodness" e.g. Romans 2:4; 11:22. Love towards man is *philanthropia*, our English "philanthropy", which only occurs twice in the New Testament, here and Acts 28:2. God's philanthropy rises immeasurably above man's. It is exhibited supremely in the gift of His Beloved Son. In this way was the fathomless love of God manifested (John 3:16), and it was absolutely undeserved:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed (poured out) upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (verse 5).

Not only do we experience God's kindness and His rich love, but His pity as well, which realized the depth of our need.

What does the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost mean? The word washing is *loutron* and many commentaries refer this to water baptism and see in it a reference to baptismal regeneration. If this is true, then it means that all who have not been immersed in water are unsaved. The general teaching regarding salvation by grace is perfectly clear in Paul's epistles and is completely divorced from good works, merit, or participation in any sort of ritual. The very context we are considering has just insisted that no righteous deed on our part can save us. One would have thought that this very fact would have prevented expositors from reading any act of water baptism into verse five. When the New Testament wishes to teach the type or shadow, it uses the word baptism. Paul did not say the "baptism of regeneration". Had he meant this, he would have surely said so.

Loutron only occurs once more and that by the Apostle, so we have guidance in the way he uses it. This is found in Ephesians 5:26 "the *loutron* washing of water by the Word". The last phrase "by the Word" shows us that literal water cannot be meant, but a figure is being employed. We are cleansed by the Word and the Lord Jesus taught the same truth in John 15:3:

"Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you".

Likewise in Titus 3:5. In a dispensation where all the shadows are gone and each member of the Body is filled to the full in Christ (Col. 2:10,16,17) and therefore has the complete and lasting spiritual reality, water baptism is not only unnecessary, it would be an intrusion. The Apostle is teaching the cleansing that accompanies regeneration, and he follows it with the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The genitive here is subjective and is better rendered "renewal by the Holy Spirit". *Anakainosis* is used only elsewhere in Romans 12:2 "be ye transformed by the *renewing* of your mind" and the verb *anakainoo* also occurs only twice in the New Testament, "the inward man is *renewed* day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16), and "ye have . . . put on the new man, which is *being renewed* unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col. 3:10 R.V.). In each occurrence it is the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the mind and its constant renewing. In this way it is also used in Titus 3:5. This vital and necessary work of the Holy Spirit is no mere trickle. It has been "*poured out* upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour". The glorious redemptive work of the Lord Jesus is the basis upon which this rich ministry of the Holy Spirit operates, putting each member of the Body into the position of being cleansed, and given a constantly renewed mind, which is then capable of receiving Truth and growing thereby.

Having stressed the importance of the particular aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit in the cleansing and renewal of the mind, the Apostle continues:

"That, being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life".

"That" expresses a purpose. It is *hina* "in order that", showing us

that the great work of salvation, cleansing and renewing has the object of fitting us for an *inheritance*. All God's redeemed children must have an inheritance *somewhere* in the perfect new heavens and earth that will eventually come into being. "If children, then heirs" (Rom. 8:17) is true for all time. The inheritance that lies before the members of the Body is no earthly one, but as Ephesians and Colossians make clear, is linked with the heavenly holiest of all. In other studies we have shown that instead of the word "saints", we can translate the "holiest of all" in Ephesians 1:18 and Colossians 1:12. Ephesians 1:14 tells us that the Spirit of promise gives us the *earnest* or foretaste of this stupendous inheritance now, so this must be included in the "renewing of the mind" we have jared.

Justification is nearly always linked with faith in the New Testament, but here it is *by grace* and grace definitely excludes works of any kind, as Romans 11:6 makes clear, and this again shows that the washing of regeneration cannot be referring to any act of ritual which can be added to salvation. The hope of eternal life balances chapter 1:2 in the structure of the epistle, and we have seen that there is a phase of *eonian life* to be enjoyed by the Body of Christ in the heavenlies while the ages run their course, which is not to be confused with the earthly kingdom during the Millennium:

"Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I will that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they which have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men (8. R.V.).

Verse eight is one of the five "faithful sayings" of the Pastoral Epistles. We bring together the other occurrences, quoting from the Revised Version:

"Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15).

"Faithful is the saying, if a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (3:1).

"... godliness, is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance" (4:8,9).

"Faithful is the saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Tim. 2:11).

Some expositors have felt that these sayings are fragments of the earliest Christian hymns, as they exhibit a regular pattern, such as poetry or a hymn would furnish and would tend to impress their truth upon the memory. Note the Revised Version "affirms *confidently*" rather than the Authorized Version "affirms *constantly*". *Diabebaioomai* only occurs elsewhere in 1 Timothy 1:7 where it is used of the dogmatism of the false teachers. The Apostle was insistent that the *balance* of truth should be constantly and confidently proclaimed by Titus as a leader; that is to say, while salvation is of God's free grace, apart from any human work, yet, once experienced, it *must be followed by good works* and Christ-like living as an external fruit of the internal work of the Spirit. There have been some in our day who have so stressed grace in the calling of the Body of Christ that the need for good works has been ruled out, hence the need is still to stress this most practical note, for how otherwise can we *adorn* or make beautiful the doctrine of God our Saviour? (Titus 2:10).

Ophelimos profitable is confined to these pastoral letters. 1 Timothy 4:8 reminds us that bodily exercise profiteth for a little while, not that it has no value at all. In moderation it is necessary for health but it has to be continued for any lasting effect. Godliness, however, is profitable unto all things (1 Tim. 4:8). 2 Timothy 3:16 asserts that the God-breathed holy Writings, the Scriptures, are "profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and instruction which is in righteousness" (R.V.) and in Titus 3:8 we have the profit of this continued emphasis upon the good works in daily life which practically exhibit the Truth connected with the Body of Christ. These must be *maintained, proistemi*. This word is used intransitively, "to take the lead in". The Apostle is concerned that believers should not only continue in good works, but *take the lead in them*, as examples to others. May God give us all grace to learn the proper place that this epistle teaches concerning good works and to keep this constantly in mind and practice.

"but shun foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (9 R.V.).

These were opposite to the conduct previously enjoined. They were as unprofitable as the maintenance of good works was profitable. Timothy was warned by the Apostle in a similar way, for he had to face like opposition as Titus did:

“If any man teacheth a different doctrine . . . he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth”

(1 Tim. 6:4,5 R.V.).

These were the Judaistic opposers that Satan was using to seek to wreck the progress of the Truth.

“A man that is heretical after a first and second admonition refuse, knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned” (10,11 R.V.).

Heretical, *hairetikos* from *haireomai*, to choose, really means a self-chooser, one who has decided to reject revealed truth and choose his own ideas. This word has often been used unjustly of those who have sought to progress in the knowledge and acknowledgement of the Word of God, specially when this has conflicted with so-called orthodoxy. Such have been forced to be “non-conformists” in the truest sense. The Reformers were such, and going back to the beginning so was the Apostle Paul as judged by some of his fellow countrymen:

“After the way which *they call heresy*, so worship I the God of my fathers . . .” (Acts 24:14).

There is only one standard of *true* orthodoxy and that is an acceptance and practice of the Word of God rightly divided. As long as this is our position we need not be afraid of such taunts. In fact we are in good company. All else is but the fallible opinion of men, however eminent or religious.

However, the Apostle instructs Titus concerning those who rightly come under the description of heretics, self-choosers, and dividers. Such were perverted. *Ekstrepho*, to turn inside out, to twist or pervert, is used only here in the New Testament. They were to be given two warnings and then, if not heeded, were to be avoided. The Authorized Version “reject” is somewhat too

strong, for it sounds like excommunication, but this is not what Paul is enjoining. The Revised Version translates "refuse" and puts "avoid" in the margin. Similar exhortations are given in the epistles to Timothy, "from such withdraw thyself" (1 Tim. 6:5). "Foolish and unlearned questions avoid" (2 Tim. 2:23). "From such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5). The only hope for such backsliders is that "God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25).

The closing verses of the epistle have several personal touches. Paul gives instructions concerning Artemas, Tychicus, Zenas and Apollos. Of Artemas we know nothing, for this is the only reference in the New Testament to him, likewise Zenas, the lawyer. The designation "lawyer" should be understood as one who was expert in the Mosaic law, not necessarily in ordinary civil law. Tychicus is the well-loved follower of the Apostle (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12), also Apollos, the disciple who was "mighty in the Scriptures" and who had been led on further into the Truth by the gracious witness of Aquila and Priscilla. Zenas and Apollos were possibly bearers of this epistle. They were to be given all facilities for their journey and this would doubtless include hospitality. The early Christians were taught to entertain and provide for Christian travellers, specially those who ministered the Word.

Titus is exhorted to hasten (give diligence) to come to the Apostle at Nicopolis, where he had decided to spend the winter. There were three cities which bore this name, in Cilicia, Thrace or Macedonia, and in Epirus. The latter is probably the one referred to. Augustus had built it to commemorate his naval victory over Mark Antony in 31 B.C. The title means "city of victory", a fitting place for the close of the Apostle's life; victorious in a very different sense to Caesar Augustus.

"And let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful" (14 R. V.).

Paul cannot close the epistle without another reference to the importance of maintaining good works. If ever a portion of the New Testament clearly teaches the right and the wrong place for good works it is this letter. Much unbalance and wrong doctrine has resulted from this aspect of truth not being appreciated. Good

works are likened to fruit. They are the outcome of a healthy root just as in the realm of nature. "Rooted and grounded" in Christ is the basis for all spiritual growth and practical response, and without this there is no possibility of producing works which will be acceptable to the Lord. The closing words are characteristic of the Apostle:

"All that are with me salute thee. Salute them that love us in faith. Grace be with you all" (15 R.V.).

Most evidently he valued the love of his friends, some of whom manifested it by staying with him right to the end, as Luke did (2 Tim. 4:11). He concludes with his usual reference to grace as the mark of this being a genuine epistle from him (2 Thess. 3:17,18).

This letter, together with the two to Timothy, throw a flood of light on the conditions these two overseers had to face, and the wisdom, strength and grace they would need to discharge their responsibilities to the Lord, and to those to whom they ministered. They are a word in season to all who are called upon to lead, for such will always have to deal with those who respond and others who reject and even oppose.

We are thankful for this epistle to Titus with its wholesome balance on doctrine and good works (practice) which should surely follow. It has vividly brought before us the two appearances of the Lord Jesus, the first accomplished nearly 2,000 years ago which provides the basis of all our salvation and calling, and the second which takes our mind to the future and the full assurance of hope that will be realized at the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour. Nothing is dated here; it is a moment known only to God, but there is no prophetic event to be fulfilled first, so we can "live . . . looking" in joyful anticipation for it each day. For we know not when the last member of the Body will be gathered in and this may not be long delayed.

Meanwhile may we prove that this is not only a happy and a certain hope, but a very practical one as well, enabling us to make the most of the time left in faithful witness and full response to whatever the claims of the Lord and His will are upon each of us.

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