

A MAGAZINE TO ENCOURAGE THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES,
THE PRACTICE OF NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH PRINCIPLES
AND INTEREST IN GOSPEL WORK

Precious SEED

INTERNATIONAL



'So mightily grew
the word of God
and prevailed',
Acts 19. 20.

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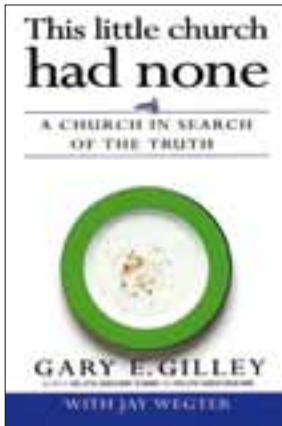
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Book Reviews

By JOHN BENNETT and JOHN SCARBROOK

Books are available from the publishers shown (or from John Ritchie in the UK or Gospel Folio Press in Canada), and **NOT** from Precious Seed Publications



This little church had none G. Gilley with J. Wegter

Paperback, 236 pages. Evangelical Press Books, Faverdale North, Darlington DL3 0PH, England. ISBN 9 780852 347089.

The title with its sub-title – ‘A church in search of the truth’ – is somewhat misleading. In fact, the author examines some churches in the USA and focuses on the social context in which they operate and their methods and gospel message. He considers the A-F movement, the emergent church, *lectio divina*, amongst other issues, whilst the people he looks at include Osteen (a ‘household name’), Webber, McLaren, Barna and a particular book, *The Secret*. These are all presenting a false picture of Christianity. Some of this, however, may be lost on a British readership.

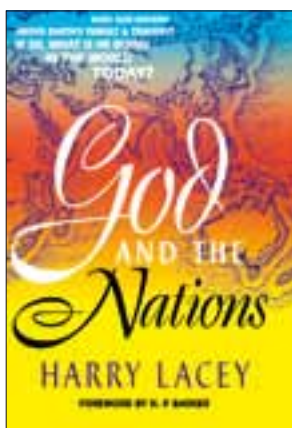
The writer reaches the damaging conclusion that various philosophies are infiltrating many churches whose methods and message are not true to scripture. Chapter headings include ‘The “Prosperity Gospel” Goes Mainstream’, ‘The Challenge of Pragmatism’ and ‘The New

Atheism’. This last chapter looks at the influence and teaching of Dawkins. Quite how relevant this is to believers in local Christ-honouring and scripturally based churches is a moot point. Indeed, what exactly is the thesis of the book is at times difficult to discern.

This is the more apparent when we reach parts 2 and 3. Part 2 looks at how pastors – that is *the* pastor in/of a local church – should approach their ministry today. Some helpful observations are made. Part 3 deals with evangelism and, in particular, focuses on repentance as a key part of the gospel message and on the contrast between the sinful, erroneous worldview of the unregenerate and the biblical worldview. Again, helpful thoughts are expressed. J. Wegter writes three of the four chapters of part 3. These are coherently presented. However, they are dealing only with *part* of the truth of scripture. Nor do they integrate fully with the rest of the book.

The writers quote from D. F. Wells’ writings. These include, *No Place for Truth – Whatever happened to Evangelical Theology?* (published by Eerdmans/IVP: 1993), a coherently argued book which places current issues in a historical context. It does not deal with evangelism specifically, but overall has more to offer a reader. This book may be useful to readers wanting to consider evangelical trends in the USA so that, forewarned, they can help untaught believers susceptible to false teaching.

[Our thanks to Bryan Charles, Appledore, Devon, UK, for this review]



God and the Nations Harry Lacey

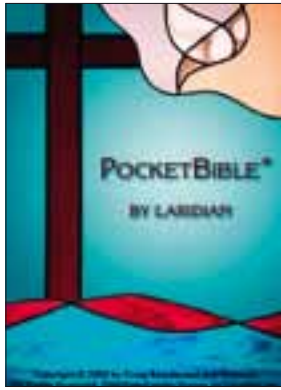
Paperback, Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. W. Port Colborne, ON L3K 6A6, Canada. Price: £8.95; ISBN 0-946351-82-1.

This book was first published in 1942 in the dark days of the Second World War. At that time the author’s oral ministry was much appreciated as he sought to expound from the Holy Scriptures God’s dealings with the nations of the world and to strengthen the faith of believers, many of whom were greatly perplexed by the onset of a second world-wide conflict following so soon after the appalling horrors of the 1914-18 war. Many who heard this oral ministry considered it so important that they urged the author to commit his exposition to writing. As we see this age drawing to a climax, this ministry is no less vital in our day than it was in 1942.

In his foreword to this latest edition J. B. Nicholson describes this work as, ‘Unique’. We know of no other volume which, in such succinct form, brings before us the practical ways in which God manifests His sovereignty among the nations of the world’. The reader is able to follow the author as he moves steadily through the scriptures and expounds the harmony of the divine purposes in creation, providence, and redemption. With clarity, and in simple language, he brings before us the consistency of divine activity both in judgement and in mercy. God’s purposes for the church, for Israel, and for the nations all come under review and the reader is enabled to see the victory of Calvary fully worked out in the consummation of the ages. What unspeakable comfort and encouragement to be reminded of the authority of Holy Scripture that, in H. P. Barker’s words, ‘Beyond the strife and turmoil, the struggling and conflict of the world, God is still working out His own purposes’.

This is a book which, when read alongside an open Bible, will refresh, enlighten, and encourage.

[Our thanks to Ed Hotchin, Hucknall, Nottingham, England, for this review]



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- choose a daily devotion,
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- change the biblical passage you want to read,
- do a simple search,
- list the results of your search, and
- look up the meaning of a word or phrase.



The facilities that are available within this program and the resources that it supports are definitely worthy of consideration for any who see their mobile device as a further means of Bible study.



The Magnificent Magnificat Timothy Cross

Paperback; 72pp; Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. W., Port Colborne, ON L3K 6A6, Canada. Price: £5.00; ISBN 978-1926765-08-2.

This is a short, mainly devotional, consideration of Mary's praise of God, in Luke chapter 1, identified as her 'Magnificat' and 'song'. There are some very helpful thoughts and applications, clearly expressed, as the writer goes through the 'song' verse by verse. It is the kind of book one might consider passing to a younger believer. However, for that very reason a serious warning is needed.

As one reads, quotations keep occurring from the 'Shorter Catechism', about which we are given no information. In a book of this kind footnotes and a bibliography are not expected; however, we find that some weighty theological issues are being raised. On Luke chapter 1 verse 47 the writer deals in particular with 'God my Saviour' and poses a question that he answers not from scripture – his usual practice – but from this source. The question is hardly minor – 'Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?' The answer is, 'God having, out of his mere good pleasure elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace'. We are introduced to Calvinistic teaching and covenant theology (which denies the literal fulfilment of the promises to Israel). Readers who are familiar with the 'Shorter Catechism' would expect this, but these are probably few. Indeed, the very question is taken from this source, but this is not apparent. This source also holds that 'God hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass'. In the consideration of God's mercy in verse 50, we read, 'our deepest need is for a Saviour' and 'in Christ we have the all-sufficient Saviour for our need', where reasonably we assume that 'our' refers to all people. However, in the next paragraph we read, 'His mercy is limited to a particular people who know his special, saving mercy'. The implications and logical deduction are clear but left implied.

As expected, therefore, a future for Israel is denied as verses 54 and 55 are considered. The writer affirms that God is faithful, but, in his view, the promise that He will reign over the house of Jacob is fulfilled in the church. Mary did not realize the full implications of what she was 'compelled' (author's word) to utter. Was she mistaken?

Proof reading could be better – there are 2 sentences, which do not make sense as they stand, and the same simple spelling error occurs twice.

[Our thanks to Bryan Charles, Appledore, Devon, England, for this review.]

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'Do I seek to please men?'

Gal. 1. 10

In the 21st Century the cult of the personality is rife. Whether it is musicians, media personalities, or sportsmen and women, so many seek to model themselves on the personality of the moment. Behind the hype there is a burgeoning industry, designed to determine the next fashion and to exploit it to financial advantage. Pleasing people is big business!

Sadly, amongst professing Christians, there are those who have sought to 'borrow' the same philosophy. Provide what the people want and you can fill your churches! The personality of the pastor begins to eclipse his preaching. Oratory is more important than spiritual content. External appearance obscures moral character. But the church building is full!

From our text, the apostle is asking us to assess our gospel preaching. Although we must not be offensive in our presentation of the truth, we are told that we are presenting a stumbling block before the Jew and foolishness before the Gentile, 1 Cor. 1. 23, even though Christ is 'the power of God unto salvation', v. 24. It may not win us friends amongst the people of the world but this is what the Spirit of God can use to save souls! This is our 'business'!

But as the servants of Christ, what is the focus of our ministry? Do we need to remind ourselves, 'Who then is Apollos and who Paul? Ministering servants', 1 Cor. 3. 5 JND? Equally, are we consistent in our desire to present all the truth of God, knowing that some parts will conflict with the thinking of the moment? Surely, it would be good if we could say with Paul, on another occasion, 'I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you', Acts 20. 20!

As so many assemblies decline in number it can appear a lonely life to labour with a completely different objective in mind – to please God. It would be good to bear in mind, and remember in prayer, the servants of the Lord engaged in preaching and teaching. Apart from the time they have to spend in the study of the word of God, they can spend considerable periods of time travelling alone. The writer of the Hebrews bids us, 'Remember them which have . . . spoken unto you the word of God', Heb. 13. 7.

But, lest we miss the application to ourselves, the testimony of John the Baptist remains a challenge to all of us, 'He [the Lord] must increase, but I must decrease', John 3. 30!

We continue on our endeavour to produce a magazine that will provide food for the people of God. Apart from the core of material that we provide on Old and New Testament themes and prophetic and church truth, there are also articles on pastoral and devotional topics. In this copy there is the continuing series on elders, and a look at the impact of the King James Version upon the linguistic and cultural life of the United Kingdom. As Malcolm Horlock's series on the parables draws to a close we would express our thanks to him for all the effort he has expended in the production of each article. We continue to seek to please the Lord in our labours for Him. After all, this is His work!

JOHN BENNETT

Ministry Articles Editor



The Church and Prophecy

In considering Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy it was observed that within the time frame noted by Gabriel to Daniel, in which God would deal with Israel nationally, God will literally fulfil all the promises to Abraham and to David. The glorious day is coming when Israel will dwell in peace in the land of Canaan under the king of David's line, ruling in Jerusalem, with consequent blessing to mankind.

Strictly speaking, prophecy is to do with the earth and, in particular, God's dealings with Judah, 'thy people', Dan. 9. 24, and Israel. The church is found nowhere in the Old Testament, because truth regarding it had not then been revealed. The Old Testament prophets have nothing to say about it. The mystery truths of the New Testament connected to the church belong to the gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel's prophecy. They do not form part of that prophecy.¹

Believers of this present day have been severed from all earthly things to wait for God's Son from heaven.² We do not look for signs of His coming but simply wait for Him, 1 Thess. 1. 10, our deliverer from the coming wrath. In previous articles it has been pointed out that this deliverance, which takes place at the rapture, will occur before the seventieth week begins and the prophetic timetable resumes its course.

The Church and the Father's House

'I go to prepare a place for you', John 14. 2, are precious words of our Saviour. They do not refer to His going to Calvary but rather to His going to the Father's house. By His entering in there, a Man in a body of glory, He opened the way for His people. 'The forerunner is for us entered', Heb. 6. 20. But He will come again. Equally precious is His promise that 'if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again', John 14. 3. Maranatha: we await the imminent fulfilment of His personal word of hope.

He will meet us in the air. Dead

THE FUTURE OF T

saints will be raised up, and the living saints will be caught up and they will be together, for ever, with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4. 16-17. With bodies fashioned like unto His body of glory, Phil. 3. 21, suited to the expression of all that is spiritual, 1 Cor. 15. 44 and conformed to the image of His Son, Rom. 8. 30, we shall be fit for the Father's house. Those who have died in Christ are with Christ but they do not yet enjoy heaven in its character as the Father's house, for they do not yet have a glorified body. With those saints who are still living, they await the glorious moment when He who loved the church and gave Himself for her will cause her to stand at His side, His glorious church, having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, being holy and without blemish, Eph. 5. 27-28.

This will take place at the marriage of the Lamb but before that event takes place in heaven certain other matters must be fulfilled.

The Assertion of the Rights of the slain Lamb

The opening verse of the section of the book of Revelation that deals with those 'things that shall be hereafter', Rev. 1. 19, notes a door opened in heaven, 4. 1. The church age has run its course and the call is, 'Come up hither', 4. 1. A heavenly scene unfolds and amongst those who are round about the throne of God is the church, represented in the four and twenty elders. Unlike the thrones of men that have come and gone, that throne is set and the Throne-sitter sits in a scene of complete tranquillity. He is the object of continual worship, of which He is worthy.

In the right hand of the Throne-sitter is a seven-sealed book, the title deeds to the universe. Here is His right to govern in the world which He has made for His own pleasure, v. 11. Who is worthy to take the book? No man! But there is One who is worthy, and, at Calvary, He prevailed. John turns,

expecting to see the Lion of the tribe of Judah but, on turning, he sees a freshly slain Lamb. For John, it must have been an astonishing sight; mortal wounds in a living person and that Person none other than the slain Lamb of Calvary. It is little wonder that a chorus of praise and worship begins. The saints in glory, seen in the twenty-four elders, many angels, and the whole creation join together to ascribe worship to the One who was slain and who lives for ever and ever.

This exhibition of the rights of the Lamb to assert the rule of God in the created universe is necessary prior to the unfolding of the events on earth between chapters 6 and 19 of the book of Revelation³ and before His manifestation when He comes to reign upon the earth. When He is manifested, He will not appear alone. At the very beginning of time, it was the intention of God that a Man crowned with glory and honour would rule on the earth for God, in association with the woman God brought to him; so it will be when Jesus reigns. In risen glory God gave Him, as head over all things, to His church and she is His complement, the 'fulness of him that filleth all in all', Eph. 1. 23.

The Judgement Seat of Christ

When the marriage of the Lamb is about to take place the voice, as it were, 'of a great multitude' in heaven, Rev. 19. 6, proclaims that His wife has made herself ready. This she has done by arraying herself in fine linen, clean and white, v. 8. This linen is said to be the righteous acts of the saints and the arraying takes place as a result of the judgement seat of Christ.⁴ It has often been said that we shall wear up there what we weave down here, each believer's righteous acts adding to the lustrous whole.

In order to help us distinguish the various future judgements, questions ought to be asked as to the identity of the people who are

judged, the nature of that which will be judged, when and where they will take place, and what will be the outcome. It will be seen immediately that the judgement seat of Christ is not the same judgement as the judgement of the living nations, Matt. 25. 31-46 or the great white throne, Rev. 20. 11-15. The first of these takes place on earth and the outcome is entrance into or exclusion from the millennial kingdom. The great white throne is the judgement of the wicked dead; it takes place after the present heavens and earth are no more and the outcome is eternal punishment in the lake of fire. The judgement seat of Christ is altogether different. Those who appear there are saved; the question of sins does not arise; there is no punitive outcome; there is reward given for service to Christ.

Those areas of life that will be reviewed include how we have dealt with our fellow-believers, how we have contributed to the local assembly, how faithful we have been to the Lord in the matter of service that He has placed into our hands, and whether we have been well-pleasing to the Lord.⁵

At the *bema*, Christ will not be judging in respect of the sins of His people for they were eternally dealt with at Calvary. His people rejoice in the thought that judicially God has said of them, 'Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more', Heb. 10. 17. However, it must not be thought that this means that the judgement will not be testing and severe.⁶ All shall give account there and it is therefore good to live each of the days of our life in the light of that review. At the judgement seat there will be rewards given and loss of reward experienced. Anything that abides the test of fire shall be rewarded but for that which does burn up there will be loss. All that remains, therefore, will be found unto praise and honour and glory. Great encouragement may be obtained from the fact that

'then shall every man have praise of God', 1 Cor. 4. 5.

The Marriage of the Lamb

The marriage of the Lamb will take place in heaven, as will the marriage supper, after the judgement seat of Christ and before the appearing in glory of Christ and His church.

There are two reasons why heaven is ablaze with joy in Revelation chapter 19. These relate to the whore and the bride. The great whore of chapter 17 has been judged and her smoke ascends for ever and ever, but the greatest joy arises from the fact that 'the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready', Rev. 19. 7. In Western culture the day of the marriage is all about the bride but in the Old Testament the wedding day was for the greater glory of the groom. Thus, it is the 'marriage of the Lamb'.

He will present her to Himself, causing her to stand at His side, as in unsullied array she is there, 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing', Eph. 5. 27.⁷ And that nuptial freshness will never change. A thousand years later she is called not His 'wife' but His 'bride' as the holy city, new Jerusalem, comes down from God out of heaven, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband', Rev. 21. 2.

When He appears to the amazed eyes of the kings and nations of the earth she will be with Him in glorious display. There is a glory that will belong to her exclusively in that future day; it is a glory given to her by her eternal Lover.⁸

The Church and the Millennial Kingdom

Thereafter, He will set up on earth His millennial kingdom. The administration of that kingdom will be in the hands of the enthroned elders. In Revelation chapter 4 they are seen worshipping but in chapter 20 verse 4 they are seen, with others, in relation to the administration of the kingdom, though no other

group will ever be as close to Christ as the church. It is a wonderful truth that in that kingdom the church will be the vehicle for the display to the world of the glory of God, 21. 11. Ephesians chapter 3 verse 21 will then be fulfilled, 'Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen'.

References

- 1 The apostle Paul indicates that the mystery of the body of Christ 'was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets', Eph. 3. 5. That mystery concerns the fact that in this dispensation Jews and Gentiles who believe on God's Son are fellow heirs, fellow members of the same body and fellow partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel, v. 6. The church does not occupy ground promised to the nation of Israel but 'according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord', v. 11, she has a heavenly calling, a heavenly character and a heavenly destiny.
- 2 cf. Col. 2. 20; 3. 2-3.
- 3 These events correspond to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy.
- 4 The *bema*, or judgement seat, was a raised dais upon which the judges would sit at the games, rather than a throne upon which a monarch or judge might sit in a court.
- 5 Major passages dealing with the judgement seat of Christ are found in Romans chapter 14, 1 Corinthians chapters 3-4 and 2 Corinthians chapter 5.
- 6 Cp. 1 Cor. 3. 13.
- 7 For her He gave Himself at Calvary, where He went that He might secure to Himself the object of His eternal love. He has, in the meanwhile, sanctified and cleansed her with the washing of water by the word. He has nourished and cherished her. Nothing, however, will match that greatest of all moments when the church in glory, arrayed so beautifully, will stand at His side.
- 8 'The glory which thou hast given me I have given them', John 17. 22. Then the world shall know that the Son was sent by the Father and that the Father has loved them even as He loved the Son. The life she possesses is hidden in the present day but 'when Christ, who is our life, shall appear', Col. 3. 4, then shall we also appear in glory with Him.

IAN JACKSON is in fellowship with the assembly meeting at Marine Hall, Eastbourne, England. He is married with three children and five grandchildren. He is a commended full-time worker travelling widely as an evangelist and Bible teacher.



KING JEHOSEPHAT

2 Sam. 1. 25. Although this was David's lament over Saul, it might be a fitting summary of the early days of Jehoshaphat, but in a battle that was not military but spiritual.

Jehoshaphat started well. He sought to fortify Judah by securing her borders. He built castles and cities of store and surrounded himself with mighty men of valour: Adnah, Jehohanan, Amasiah, Eliada, and Jehozabad. He 'walked in the first ways of his father David', 2 Chr. 17. 3. Spiritually, he was obedient to the commandments of God and took away the high places and groves from Judah. He enjoyed the Lord's presence and blessing. He sent his princes and Levites throughout all the cities of Judah to teach the people from the book of the law of the Lord. As a consequence, it is stated that 'the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah', v. 10. After such an auspicious start, what a future opened up for the kingdom of Judah!

But a king who starts well does not always continue well. As with Asa his father, so, it seemed, with Jehoshaphat. Paul warned Timothy, 'But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition', 1 Tim. 6. 9. In the case of Jehoshaphat it was when he 'had riches and honour in abundance' that he allied himself with Ahab. How strange that a man who, in the opening years of his reign, 'strengthened himself against Israel' should, in the middle part of his reign, join 'affinity with Ahab', one of Israel's most infamous monarchs.

The lessons for us today are equally real and important. A good start does not ensure a faithful continuance. We each have a responsibility to remain close to the Lord and obedient to the word of God in our daily walk if we are to be preserved from error. To be spiritually complacent is to become extremely vulnerable. We should never underestimate our own weakness. It may be riches. It may be honour and status. The superlatives abound –

'How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!'

By **JOHN BENNETT** Kirkby-in-Ashfield, England

Jehoshaphat's riches and honour were in abundance, 2 Chr. 17. 5, he 'waxed great exceedingly', v. 12. It may be our seeming strength, surrounded by 'mighty men of valour', vv. 14, 16, 17. 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall', 1 Cor. 10. 12.

We often speak of the benefits of hindsight and this is equally true in the life of Jehoshaphat. There were signs that should have provided ample warning of the danger that he was in. He asked the question of Ahab, 'Is there not here a prophet of the Lord?' 2 Chr. 18. 6. Yet he failed to see the implications of the answer. The wise man said, 'Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he', Prov. 29. 18. If there was clearly so little vision in Israel, what was Jehoshaphat doing there, allied with Ahab? Equally, when the challenge of Micaiah the prophet rang out, 'If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the Lord spoken by me', 2 Chr. 18. 27, should there not have been a sense of foreboding? Even Ahab's desire to disguise himself when he went into battle did not sound the alarm in Jehoshaphat's ear. How impervious we can become!

Finally, in the midst of the battle against the king of Syria, Jehoshaphat realized the enormity of his folly and his plight – he 'cried out, and the Lord helped him', v. 31. After the death of Ahab in the battle, Jehoshaphat was brought back to his senses and 'returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem', 19. 1. He had learned a salutary lesson, as Jehu the son of Hanani told him! What sort of 'wake up' call do we need to arrest us, to check us in our folly? While there is a testimony to the foolishness of man there is also a testimony to the goodness and grace of God!

Thankfully, failure does not have to be final. We see in the latter years of king Jehoshaphat a chastened and a largely wiser man. He brought the people

'back to the Lord God of their fathers', v. 4. He set judges in the land and instructed them to operate in the fear of the Lord, vv. 7, 9. He linked the priesthood and the Levites with the judges to ensure 'the judgment of the Lord' would prevail. However, it was when the children of Moab and the children of Ammon came against Judah that we see Jehoshaphat's finest hour.

When he had gone out with Ahab to fight against Syria there had been only Micaiah to act as prophet and reveal the mind of the Lord. Here, Jehoshaphat 'set himself to seek the Lord', 20. 3. He united the nation 'to ask help of the Lord', and they came 'out of all the cities of Judah', v. 4. Standing in the house of the Lord, it is Jehoshaphat that leads the prayers. How this demonstrates the power for good of spiritual leaders!

Jehoshaphat had grown in his knowledge and appreciation of the God that had blessed him. He spoke of, because he had proved, the awesome power of God, v. 6. He delighted in the covenant-keeping God who dwelt amongst His people, vv. 7-8. He acknowledged a God who had heard and answered prayer, v. 9. He rejoiced in the terms of the covenant, that God had given the land to His people, v. 11. But Jehoshaphat also had a clearer understanding of his own plight, 'We have no might against this great company . . . but our eyes are upon thee', v. 12.

There may be those today who have failed and their folly has been a salutary lesson in their relatively tender spiritual lives. Let us grasp the lesson of the life of Jehoshaphat – there is a way back and the grace of God that has saved us is able to restore us. The key to the return of the king is given us in the words of Jehu, the son of Hanani, 'Thou . . . hast prepared thine heart to seek God', 19. 3. The evidence of that fact is before





us in the verses of chapter 20 that we have just considered. Complacency has been replaced with confidence in God – a God that he has come to know in a real way. Coupled with Jehoshaphat's growing knowledge of God comes a deeper appreciation of himself. Like Paul, he could say, 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong', 2 Cor. 12. 10. But, sadly, at the close of his life Jehoshaphat repeated the same mistake when he joined 'himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly', 2 Chr. 20. 35. It might be said that when Jehoshaphat considered himself strong he was at his weakest. In reality it should be in the midst of our weakness that we realize the power of God and give Him the glory for all that He is able to accomplish in us and through us.

As we draw our brief study of Jehoshaphat to a close, it is worth pondering the implications of the historical record for our collective lives as companies of the Lord's people. Have we experienced what Judah experienced, 'Then . . . came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation', 20. 14? When was the last time we felt that the Spirit of God was at work in our midst? We have looked at what was in the heart of Jehoshaphat, indicating the spiritual condition of those that lead. We can note that the king 'stood in the congregation' and was identified as an integral part of it. But there is also evidence of the heart of the people as a whole, 'all Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones, their wives, and their children', v. 13. What a sight! Here is a united people, men, women, and children, standing before the Lord in humble acknowledgement of the truth of the words of the king and in complete dependence upon God. This is the ground for blessing! The cry goes out, 'Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord', v. 17. As we seek the blessing of God in the gospel and in the building up of the assembly, are we united? Equally, if, in His grace, God has chosen to bless us, do we, like Jehoshaphat and all Judah, fall before the Lord to worship and stand up to praise the Lord with a loud voice, vv. 18-19?

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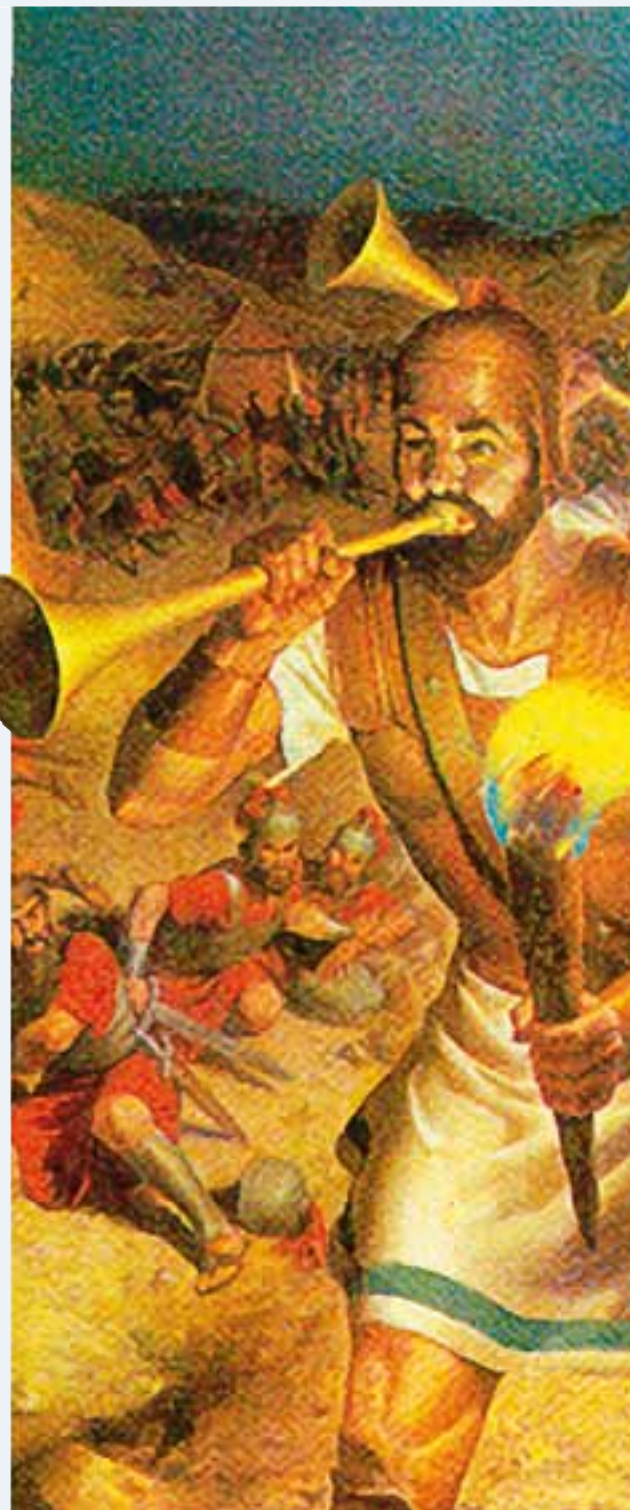
The Life and Times of Gideon

Gideon seemed a very unlikely candidate for God's service! His father worshipped Baal, and his family was among the poorest in Manasseh: on his own confession, he was of little consequence in that poor family, v. 15. Religiously, and socially, he had no pedigree! But as ever, God's choice was independent of background or status. He used Isaiah who was happily married to a prophetess, Isa. 8. 3, and Hosea whose marriage was fragile, Hos. 1. 2. He called Jeremiah, a young bachelor, Jer. 1. 6; 16. 2, and Ezekiel who became a widower during his ministry, Ezek. 24. 15-18. He chose Daniel, a prince, Dan. 1. 3, 6, and Amos, a herdsman, Amos 1. 1. He commissioned the 'unlearned and ignorant' Peter, Acts 4. 13, and Paul, schooled at the feet of Gamaliel, Acts 22. 3. These men were all different, different as to marital status, social standing, and educational opportunities, yet God used them all; God's servants are not clones! Background and status neither qualify nor disqualify us from being useful to Him. See yourself as having potential for His service.

A Busy Man

As with others throughout Scripture, Gideon was busy when God called him. He was not caring for sheep as was Moses, Exod. 3. 1, or ploughing as was Elisha, 1 Kgs. 19. 19, or casting a net like Simon and Andrew, Matt. 4. 18, but he was busy! God never uses lazy men. Gideon was threshing wheat, doing it in a secretive way to hide it from the Midianites, v. 11. Remember, Midian means 'strife', and when strife deprives God's people of their food, it is more necessary for believers to read, meditate, and study for themselves. It was wheat he was threshing, and not the inferior barley! 'Fed . . . with the finest of the wheat', Ps. 81. 16. If you are earnest in seeking spiritual nourishment for yourself, you will never be disappointed. 'As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word', 1 Pet. 2. 2.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third of a short series on this very needy and practical area of elders. It is designed to emphasize the spiritual nature of this work and how we need to encourage younger men to be exercised about the responsibility of caring for the flock of God locally.

The Shepherd Character of God

There are frequent references throughout the Old Testament to the shepherd character of God in relationship to His people. Asaph described Him as, 'the Shepherd of Israel', Ps. 80. 1. David wrote, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want', Ps. 23. 1, and described in detail the shepherd care that he received, and would rejoice in day by day until he reached heaven. In Ezekiel chapter 34, God promised His people that, even though their leaders might fail in their shepherding of them, He would never fail.

The Lord Jesus described Himself as 'the good shepherd', who 'giveth his life for the sheep'.¹ The writer to the Hebrews calls Him, 'that great shepherd of the sheep'.² In this, as in everything else, He is the supreme example to elders who are shepherds. To be a good shepherd is to give one's life to the work.

Shepherds are Gifts to the Church

In Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11, shepherds are seen as a gift of the ascended Christ to the church. Apostles and prophets were foundational and temporary, 2. 20. Evangelists, pastors (shepherds) and teachers are the permanent gifts which are still with us today.

Isaiah reminds us that humanity is sheep-like in character. Peter wrote to believers, reminding them that, 'Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop (Overseer) of your souls', 1 Pet. 2. 25.³ In our Saviour we see the work of shepherd and overseer combined as He provides constant ongoing care for His sheep.

He who is the Good Shepherd is also the 'Chief Shepherd'.⁴ He who gifts the church with 'pastors', or under-shepherds, giving them responsibility to care for His flock, will in a coming day

ELDERS AS SHEPHERDS

review and reward their faithfulness in their stewardship as shepherds.

Overseership is a noble, a high calling to which a man aspires, being called by the Holy Spirit to this work.⁵ This man, we have seen, is a gift of the ascended Christ to the church, taking character from the Giver, who is Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. He is answerable to the Chief Shepherd for his stewardship. It is therefore an awesome work that the overseer-shepherd engages in. Can there be any higher calling than to serve the Chief Shepherd as an under-shepherd amongst the flock of God which He has purchased with his own blood?

The Flock of God has many needs

The needs of the people of God are many and varied. They are hungry; some are weak, some are sick, some are broken, some have strayed or have been driven away! The one great need of the day is for leaders who are true shepherds. Many of God's children in assembly fellowship know how easy it is to feel unloved and uncared for, unimportant and lonely. As such, these dear saints are in need of shepherd care which sadly seems to be lacking in many quarters. God gives us His view of the needs of His people and sends a strong rebuke to failing shepherds in Ezekiel chapter 34 verses 1-10.

What does God expect of Shepherds?

They must feed the flock; they must strengthen those that are weak; they must bring healing to those that are spiritually sick; they must gently restore those that are broken, and they must go after those that have strayed. It is clear that shepherding is a full-time occupation and is not something reserved for monthly 'elders' meetings! In fact, shepherding is what is done every day between those meetings.

Shepherding is Spiritual Work

Shepherding is a spiritual work involving the spiritual well-being of the people of God. Shepherds should not

become distracted by other avenues of service, but take to heart the lessons of Acts chapter 6. There the apostles were presented with a pressing need regarding the welfare of the Greek widows which required immediate action. They fully appreciated the need and would have been well able to deal with this matter themselves, but instead they instructed the believers to choose seven eminently spiritual men to undertake the task. They explained their reaction to this crisis by saying that it was not a reasonable thing for them 'to leave the word of God,

and serve tables', Acts 6. 2. They went on to explain that while other spiritual men were engaged in this practical service for God, 'We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word'. What was the result? 'The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly', v. 7.⁶

Sadly, it is often the case that shepherds involve themselves in too many assembly activities and ministries to the detriment of the spiritual well-being of the flock of God. Shepherds are men of prayer, men who give themselves to the study and teaching of the word of God, both of which take time. The demands on the time of overseers are immense and they need to remain focussed on their divine calling, not become distracted by involvement in every avenue of service around them.

Some aspects of the work of the shepherd are:

Watching over the Flock

The expression 'flock' in the New Testament is really 'little flock', emphasizing the vulnerability of the local assembly to attacks from within and without, and the need for protection on the part of shepherds. Early in the Gospels we are introduced to shepherds 'keeping watch over their flock by night', Luke 2. 8. What an apt description, a night scene, with its potential danger, but a flock safely resting under the constant care of a group of shepherds!

By

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PHERDS

In Acts chapter 20, Paul instructed the Ephesian elders to 'watch'.⁷ What for? For those from without, who would devour and destroy, 'grievous wolves' who would 'enter in among you, not sparing the flock'. For those from within, who would divide and draw away, 'Of your own selves shall men arise' seeking to 'draw away disciples after them'.

Paul understood the cost of shepherding. He 'ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears'. If saints are warned or corrected by their shepherds, they must remember that they are doing so because they are watching over them in light of their accountability to the Chief Shepherd.⁸

Feeding the Flock

Feeding is specific. Peter was commissioned by his Lord to, 'Feed my lambs . . . feed my sheep'. He would always remember who the flock belongs to! He would make specific provision for lambs as well as sheep. The shepherd will feed the word of God to the flock of God in an intelligent, specific way in order to meet the need of the saints.

In a healthy local assembly there will always be babes in Christ, requiring the simple foundational truths of the word of God, 'the sincere (unadulterated) milk of the word', 1 Pet. 2. 2. At the same time there will be mature believers who, although enjoying hearing the basic teaching of scripture, will be looking for food for their own souls. The shepherd will provide teaching for these, bearing in mind that, 'strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age', Heb. 5. 14.

Shepherds who watch over the flock know the needs of the flock and are best placed to provide appropriate spiritual food to ensure its spiritual well-being.

Shepherding the Flock

Shepherding is general. It has to

do with the ways of God. The word translated 'feed' can also have a more general idea than specific feeding.⁹

In John chapter 21 verses 15 -17 we note that the prime requirement for shepherding is love for Christ. Three times the Saviour challenged Peter, 'Lovest thou me?' Love for Christ, and love for His people, His flock, is essential to the shepherd or else he will soon become embittered and disillusioned in this arduous work. The saints will respond positively to the man that they know loves the Lord and loves them too.

Shepherding will involve general spiritual care for the flock. There is a lovely expression in 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 5, 'Take care of the church of God'. We see what this means in the parable of the good Samaritan, Luke 10. 30-35. The good Samaritan 'took care' of the dying man. This involved coming alongside the man, he 'came to where he was'. It involved compassion, 'he had compassion on him'. It provided immediate care, he 'bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine'. And ongoing care, he 'set him on his own beast', took him to an innkeeper and provided for his future care, 'take care of him'.

The shepherd will care for individual members of the flock, seeking to meet their specific needs, instructing the young who may be contemplating baptism, fellowship, marriage, etc., encouraging young parents in raising their families, those who are older and some who may be housebound.

He will be given to hospitality, and the saints will be free to visit him and discuss their problems and seek advice. He will not forget those who have gone astray.

Leading the Flock

The words 'them that have the rule over you', found three times in Hebrews chapter 13, would perhaps be better expressed, 'them that guide you', or 'lead you'. The idea is leadership, not rule.

The Eastern shepherd always led his flock, generally over paths familiar to himself, although not necessarily to his flock. David spoke of the Lord, his shepherd, leading him in green pastures and by still waters.

The saints are constantly looking for guidance in every aspect of their lives and shepherds are there to lead and guide them. A leader is one who is one step ahead spiritually. He calls the saints to follow where he has already trodden. In this light, Peter calls elders to be examples to the flock, 1 Pet. 5. 3.

Our Response

If God has blessed us with shepherds like these, we should be very thankful to our God, knowing that there are few like this today.

We should do all we can to encourage them in their labour for God. We should 'obey them' and 'salute (greet) them'. Heb. 13. 17, 24. We should 'honour' them and support them financially, if necessary, 1 Tim. 5. 17-18. And we should pray for them in their service for God amongst us, and that God will continue to raise up such men among us for the continued well-being of the little flock until the Lord returns.

References

- 1 John 10. 11.
- 2 Heb. 13. 20.
- 3 In an Old Testament context, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way', Isa. 53. 6.
- 4 1 Pet. 5. 4.
- 5 1 Tim. 3. 1; Acts 20. 28.
- 6 Distraction from their calling would have diluted their ministry. This passage shows that their prayer life would have been curtailed. Their ministry of the word would have lacked power. The work of God would not have prospered as it should.
- 7 Acts 20. 29-31.
- 8 The writer to the Hebrews reminded them that their leaders 'watch for your souls, as they that must give account', Heb. 13. 17.
- 9 Examples of this are seen in the following verses: 'Feed (shepherd) my sheep', John 21. 17; 'Feed (shepherd) the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood', Acts 20. 28. 'Feed (shepherd) the flock of God which is among you', 1 Pet. 5. 2.

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In this short series of articles we shall look at ten recorded occasions when the glory of the Lord was seen by men on earth.

The Glory of the

In Exodus chapter 16 the children of Israel had been delivered from Egypt by blood and by power. Their feet were now on the other side of the Red Sea, but hardly had the song of redemption left their lips, when they 'murmured against Moses and Aaron and against the Lord', v. 2. They even said, 'Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the flesh pots and when we did eat bread to the full, for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger', v. 3, seemingly forgetting the slavery that went with it! Could not God, who had so miraculously brought them out of Egypt be trusted to supply their need? Then, as they looked toward the wilderness, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The Lord then said to Moses, 'I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: Speak unto them, saying, at even ye shall eat flesh and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread, and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God', v. 12. So God graciously supplied their need for the whole of the wilderness journey.

According to John chapter 6 the manna was an unmistakable type of Christ. He said, 'As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me', John 6. 57. May the Lord help us to feed on Him daily!

In Exodus chapter 24 verse 16 God had called Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, together with seventy of the elders of Israel to worship afar off. Only Moses was to come near the Lord to receive the tables of stone and the law and commandments for the people. To ratify the conditional covenant, Moses built an altar, took blood and sprinkled half of it on the altar, representing God's part in the covenant. The other half he sprinkled on the people, signifying their determination to keep their

part of the agreement. The people had said, 'All the words which the Lord hath said will we do', v. 3, little realizing their powerlessness to do so. When Moses went up again into the mount, the cloud appeared and the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai. The sight of that glory was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the sight of the children of Israel.

What a blessed time to come for Israel, when the Lord says, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts . . . and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more', Heb. 8. 10-11.

The third recorded occasion of the appearance of the glory of the Lord is found in Leviticus chapter 9 verse 23. The chapter begins with the mention of 'the eighth day'. For seven days following his consecration, Aaron was shut up in the tabernacle, then he came forth to begin his service. He is seen for the first time as an offering priest. Most, if not all, of the offerings offered were as 'the Lord commanded'. Each animal sacrifice typified an aspect of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. When all was accomplished according to the divine requirements, Aaron and Moses, went into the tabernacle then came out and blessed the people and the glory of the Lord appeared. Fire then came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat. When the people saw it, they shouted 'and fell on their faces', v. 24.

We might remember the words of Paul in Corinthians, 'If anyone think himself to be a prophet, or

spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandments of the Lord', 1 Cor. 14. 37. Whilst we do not expect a visual appearance of the glory of God as Israel did, yet through obedience to His word we can enjoy a real sense of the Lord's presence as we gather, Matt. 18. 20.



Numbers chapter 14, the fourth recorded occasion at which the glory of the Lord appeared, marks a turning point in Israel's wilderness experience. Whereas the journey, thus far, had taken about thirty days, they were now to wander for about forty years. They were so near to the Promised Land, yet so far. Why was this? The Epistle to the Hebrews states it was because of that soul-destroying element – unbelief. God had told Moses to send twelve men, one from each tribe, to search out the land of Canaan. Ten returned with a bad report of the conditions there. Two were confident that God was able to bring them there in spite of the difficulties. The ten looked only at the problems, the two looked to





Lord

[1]

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they did and, as they approached the tabernacle, the glory of the Lord appeared.

As the congregation were told to separate themselves from the rebels, God dealt with them in a dreadful way, the earth opened up and swallowed them – never to be seen again. As for the 250 others, fire came out from the Lord and consumed them. The Epistle of Jude comments on this incident as a warning to last day scoffers.

Evidently they were unchanged after witnessing such awful judgement. 'The whole congregation gathered against Moses and Aaron', as they looked towards the tabernacle. 'Behold the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared', v. 42. The Lord then said to Moses, 'Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment', v. 45. What was Moses to do in such an emergency? He immediately thought of atonement. He told Aaron to take a censer, with fire from the altar, to go quickly and make an atonement for them. Aaron did so and ran among the congregation. Then the plague, which the Lord had sent, stayed, but not before 14,700 had died.

But we end our meditations in this chapter on a happier note. In Numbers chapter 26, in the second numbering of the people, the incident of these judgements is recalled, with the added words, 'notwithstanding the children of Korah died not', v. 11. In wrath, God remembered mercy. God had service for them to do for in 1 Chronicles chapter 9 verse 19 they became the doorkeepers of the tabernacle and in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 verse 19, they were the leaders of the praise in the temple.

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their God. They said, 'If the Lord delight in us then he will bring us into this land', v. 8. The whole congregation rose up in rebellion and would have stoned them. It was then that the glory of the Lord appeared. If it had not been for the intercession of Moses, God would have destroyed them all. God said to the people, 'Ye shall not come into the land . . . but your little ones . . . will I bring in . . . as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness . . . ye shall know my breach of promise', vv. 30-34 .

The warning in Hebrews is, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God . . . Today if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts, as in the provocation', 3. 12, 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 10 reminds us, 'All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall', vv. 11-12.

In Numbers chapter 16, there are two instances of the appearance of the glory of the Lord. In this chapter we have the record of one of the most awful visitations of punishment seen upon the pages of scripture occasioned by the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They gained the support of 250 of the princes of the people – 'men of renown'. They challenged the leadership of Moses and Aaron, which was of God. When Moses heard it, he fell on his face. 'Tomorrow', he said, 'the Lord will shew who are his', v. 5. They certainly had time to think over the folly of their action. They were told to bring their censers and to see whom the Lord would choose. This

'Make me . . . a little cake first', 1 Kings 13. 17

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These words should be enshrined in every believer's heart. God's claim upon our lives has absolute priority over all else. Where this is done nothing but true blessing will ultimately be found.

Elijah speaks as God's representative at that time. What would have been a selfish, unreasonable demand became a *reasonable demand* and the key to all future blessing. The heart of God is to be ministered unto for His satisfaction and pleasure before all other considerations.

All the future blessing of this widow and her son hinged upon the response she made to this demand. Seeing she did not know fully the true identity of this stranger it showed a generous, unselfish attitude to give her last provisions to a demand in God's name, but in giving it she received abundantly more. The demand of God, which seemed so great, in fact robbed her of nothing, rather it appeared it might guarantee her supply. The interest paid out was manifold upon so small a capital laid out and all who follow this path of surrender prove it to be so.

The word 'first' implies a *reliable promise*. The word 'first' must, of course, require a second or more to follow. Having made first for God, there would be enough for her need secondly, as the prophet said, 'after make for thee and for thy son'. Faith believed that which the prophet spoke. It indicated that giving her all to God would open the hand of God in blessing. Her faith was put into action! Prove me now, says God. If God says 'first' is it not evident He has in mind a second also? And the second He guarantees from Himself has always been better and greater than the first He asked from us.

Here is also a *recognised principle*. This is a principle for life upon which it is always safe to act. None have ever come to grief following its precept, but many have failed in refusing its message. No circumstance can be imagined where it does not hold good. Personally, both in time and purpose, let us give Him first place – home, business, school, testimony, service, and fellowship. Give this Man place!

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Introduction

We have been blessed today in far better ways than previous generations in terms of good housing, a good diet, a good, free healthcare system, and wealth, probably way beyond that of previous generations. On the other hand, these temporal advantages have contributed to a weakening of moral standards, a loss of interest in the prospect of eternity, and a hardening of receptiveness to the gospel.

People are living longer, are more mobile in older age and stay fitter for longer. None of these comments are universally true, but they do apply to older believers as well as non-Christians. For many, however, as time marches on and the prospect of eternity grows ever closer and sweeter, and the passing of three score years and ten becomes a more distant memory, age starts to take its toll. A weakening of the body, illness, frailty, and, for some, a degree of dementia takes hold. The Lord's people are not immune to these things. They start to affect not only the outward abilities of our brothers and sisters, but their spiritual needs as well. Their needs change and the need for support on a day-to-day basis grows, particularly if there is either no family or they are located away from close family. There may come a time when, because of the ills of old age, the fellowship of the local assembly and the gathering together to remember the Lord becomes more difficult. Isolation and loneliness can be a terrible thing for the older believer, as can that loss of fellowship with fellow believers. Of course, we share something the world does not have or understand, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the closeness of our Lord and Saviour, Heb. 13. 5. Our older brothers and sisters do, however, have needs that can be met by family, the local assembly, fellow believers, and, when needs grow further, the loving care of Christian care providers and, in some cases, the state.

The value of older brothers and sisters

Most of our older saints have been saved for many years and have much experience of the Christian life, of serving the Lord faithfully, both in the local assembly and individually. They are experienced and knowledgeable in the things of the Lord and it is scriptural that we recognize that, 'Yet for love's

THE POSITION OF OLDER BROTHERS AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THEM

sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ', Philem. 9. They have much to teach the younger members of the local assembly, 'One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts', Ps. 145. 4. They should be encouraged to use their gifts and experience as long as it does not become a burden to them. They have a special place of service and those final days can bring much blessing, Luke 2. 25-38. What a testimony Simeon and Anna had! Indeed, older brothers and sisters have a responsibility to set an example to the young members of the assembly by demonstrating self-control, patience, and usefulness in the Lord's service. There should certainly be no giving way to grumbling or talking incessantly about the problems of life and the world today, 'So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom', Ps. 90. 12.

It is a great testimony to grace when an older, less mobile believer, uses their often lonely hours to pray – briefly when concentration starts to fail, and using a list if it helps. However, prayer is not their only service just because they are old, for we have the example of Daniel, who was in his 80s when cast into the lion's den! Whilst still able or until bodily limitations stop active service, they can remember what a privilege it is to grow old. A close relationship with God is a reality and should be for us all. Bodily limitations do not hinder that and then prayer can indeed be a continuing service of love. Those of us who are younger should also remember to join in prayer with our elderly brethren who are no longer able to get out so that sweet fellowship can continue.

We must all recognize that there does come a time when the younger brothers and sisters in the assembly must start to take more active responsibility for the work. Older believers must bring the younger ones on and should include them in the responsibility for the work so that their experience grows and

they are ready to take full responsibility when others are no longer able. There is a need to recognize that the time does come when responsibility has to be handed over.

The particular needs of our older brethren

By
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Older saints have particular needs that, to a degree, younger believers do not. We all share a 'sure and certain hope'; we are all looking forward to the

coming of the Lord to the air (it could be today!); we all would prefer to meet our Lord this way rather than be ushered into His presence through death despite knowing 'absent from the body, present with the Lord', 2 Cor. 5. 5-8. I was once told by an elderly believer that he had prepared for death, but no one had ever told him that he needed to prepare to be old!

Being more specific, what are these needs? We all need pastoral and spiritual care and that does not stop simply because one has become old! We have a responsibility to support and care for our older brothers and sisters.

Loss of fellowship

I am sure we can all think of an elderly brother or sister who has not been able to get out to the meetings and just gradually sees less and less of their fellow believers. That loss of fellowship is a dreadful loss that can't be made up with the help of unbelieving friends, neighbours or even family. We must remember they are still in fellowship even if they are not physically present at the meetings. They will always have the Lord, but where are we?

Going to the meetings

Scripture commands us to 'forsake not the assembling of ourselves together', Heb. 10. 25. Yes, we need to remember the Lord at the breaking of bread; we do it in fond remembrance of Him; we do it at His command, and it is entirely for Him. But it is a sweet time for us as well, something that is greatly missed if absent from our lives. We should



BELIEVERS IN THE ASSEMBLY TOWARDS THEM (1)

encourage and help the older saints to continue to come to the meetings. But, more than that, we need to be patient and understanding when the needs of their bodies or, in the case of dementia, the foibles of their mind start to lead to changes in their behaviour. What does it matter if they have to pop out to the toilet a few times? Maybe their personal hygiene is no longer what it once was; do we shun them because of that? Dementia can lead to odd and even disturbing behaviour; does that mean we should exclude them? God forbid!

Dementia

Sadly, a growing number of older people are suffering from some form of dementia. The statistics are worrying and the Lord's people are not immune. This is not the place for a detailed thesis on the subject, but we must recognize that we will have older believers in assembly fellowship who will suffer some degree of dementia at the end of their lives. Praise the Lord, the deterioration of the mind due to dementia does not mean the deterioration or loss of salvation! It is often the case that the memory loss associated with dementia can rob the sufferer of most of their recollection but not the memory of their salvation. I meet older Christians who have very serious dementia; you are no longer able to have a conversation with them, but when you sing a well-loved hymn or quote a verse of scripture, they will sing it word perfectly and will say that verse of scripture right along with you! I heard of a brother who was seriously affected, he normally did not speak coherently but would stand in public prayer at the Lord's supper and praise the Lord without faltering or failing, 'How good is the God we adore'. They need the fellowship of the saints; they

need to continue to come to meetings; we need to ignore the inexplicable behaviour, the crying out, the occasional shout, the wandering! We accept such behaviour from the very young, don't we? So why not from those who are ill with dementia?

Daily personal time with the Lord

We all need to be in touch with the Lord regularly and frequently and aim for this to be daily; to read the scriptures, to pray, to meditate, and listen for the Lord's leading, guidance and reassurance. It is sometimes difficult when you have a very busy life, but imagine what it must be like if you can no longer read the scriptures

for whatever reason, find it difficult to focus, find that the helps you used to love are now incomprehensible? What is to be done? This is where we need to help, to read the scriptures when we visit, to spend a time in prayer. This is where it is so helpful if aged, frail or dementia-suffering believers are cared for by Christian family or in a Christian care home or, in their own home, where regular visits by members of the assembly or Christian friends are carried out. Keeping up the routine of time in the Lord's presence is both strengthening and reassuring and also leads to that filling by the Spirit day by day, 'As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore', Ps. 133. 3.

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Today it is popular to oversimplify difficult subjects in order to appeal to the masses, whom it is presumed do not want to engage in rigorous thinking. With its preoccupation with amusement, modern society largely rejects sustained meditation on challenging subjects in favour of shallow entertainment. That many churches in Christendom are infected with this mindset is evidenced by the progressively shorter, simpler sermons, as well as the dominance of shallow music and drama in their public gatherings. In contrast, Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 to 11 provide an excellent example of the connection between doctrine and Christian living. Theology is not restricted to the ivory tower precincts of theoreticians; rather, it is well-suited to the everyday problems that Christians regularly face. In overcoming preoccupation with themselves, believers must fix their minds on the selfless example of Christ.

Contrasting Verdicts Regarding the Death of Christ

The passage begins with 'Wherefore', carrying the reader's thoughts back to verses 5 to 8. *The New American Standard Bible* rightly captures the idea by rendering it 'for this reason'. There is a direct correlation between the voluntary humbling of the Lord Jesus and His subsequent promotion to universal glory. The same disciples who witnessed His crucifixion, observed His elevation to the heavens, Acts 1. 9. One expositor remarks, 'The historical, physical event of the ascension is a moral and spiritual comment on Jesus'.¹ It is God the Father's unequivocal declaration of His unsurpassed appreciation of His beloved Son.

The Father honoured the Son at His incarnation with angelic hosts hailing the blessed event, Luke 2. 9-14, as well as the star that subsequently led sages to where the young child resided, Matt. 2. 1-2. At Christ's baptism, the Father famously owned Him, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased', Matt. 3. 17. On the mount of transfiguration, He further acclaimed His Son before three intimate disciples, Matt. 17. 5. Late in the Lord Jesus'

Philippians: The Joy and Suffering

Chapter 2 verses 9-11: THE EXALTATION OF THE OBEDIENT

public ministry the Father again vocally acknowledged His appreciation of the Son, John 12. 28. Yet at Golgotha, the heavens were silent. When men reviled Jesus, there was no word of correction heard from the Father. The chief priests, scribes, and elders derisively dismissed His claims in strong terms, assuming that He was divinely accursed, Deut. 21. 23. They vehemently denied His deity and close relationship with the Father, saying, 'He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God', Matt. 27. 43. Instead, Christ's anguished cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' v. 46, revealed the extreme suffering of being made a propitiation for sin, 1 John 2. 2. As R. C.

CHAPMAN put it, 'In His spotless soul's distress, I perceive my guiltiness. Oh how vile my low estate, since my ransom was so great'. To unbelieving observers of the crucifixion it seemed that God cared nothing for Jesus of Nazareth. Nonetheless, Isaiah chapter 53 verse 5 describes the reality of the situation, 'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed', Isa. 53. 5.

God the Father has the Last Word

Man's erroneous verdict was repudiated three days later, when the Father vindicated His beloved Son by raising Him from the dead, Rom. 1. 4. Forty days after the resurrection He was further honoured by the Father exalting Him to His own right hand, declaring Him 'Lord and Christ', Acts 2. 33, 36. Another hymn captures the thought well, 'All the depths of thy heart's sorrow, told in answering glory now'. Still another says, 'Look ye saints the sight is glorious, see the man of sorrows now; from the fight returned victorious, every knee to him shall bow'. As one Greek scholar articulates, 'Nothing could be lower than the degradation of the cross, nothing higher than the mediatorial crown. Infinite condescension surely

merits highest glory'.²

The Glory that Should Follow

Because of these unprecedented sufferings, 'God hath highly exalted him', Phil. 2. 9. As one authority describes this phrase:

'Strictly speaking [*huperupsoo* is a comparative verb, meaning that God exalted Him more than before. In the New Testament there are more than forty [*huper*] compounds, most of which have an elative (intensive, e.g., 2 Thess. 1:3) or a superlative (e.g., 1 Thess. 5:13) sense. Most commentators give this verb a superlative translation, such as 'raise . . . to the loftiest height' . . . The One who died as the lowest malefactor has been raised to the greatest height'.³

W. E. VINE adds, 'The verb *huperupsoo* is used here only in the New Testament. It is in the aorist (or point) tense and refers to the definite act in the past in His resurrection followed by His ascension, viewed as one great historical event'.⁴ It is the same word used in the ancient Septuagint Greek translation of Isaiah chapter 52 verse 13, 'He shall be exalted'. Christ's resurrection and ascension are the beginning stages of the glorious advancement of Jehovah's Servant before the eyes of the nations, as foretold by Isaiah.

What's in a Name?

Christ's exaltation is described in terms of authority and homage. First, He is given 'the name that is above every name' NKJV. The Greek word for 'given' – *charizomai*, which the *Lexham English Bible* translates as '**graciously granted**' – is explained by VINE thus, 'to give freely, confer, here [it] signifies that God the Father bestowed the Name upon Him as a gift of supreme love and approval'.⁵ At this name every knee will one day do obeisance and every voice shall willingly or unwillingly acknowledge as supreme.

The 'name' itself is a matter of discussion among commentators, with

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Bringing the Furtherance of the Gospel Part Seven

SENT SERVANT

some suggesting that it is 'Lord' and others affirming that it is 'Jesus'. Of course, in one sense both terms refer to the same person: Jesus is Lord. The question is a matter of emphasis. Those holding to 'Lord' point out that He is Jehovah and therefore is sovereign over the universe. Those who prefer 'Jesus' see it as an elevation of the name of His earthly humiliation to a position of honour. As the hymn says, 'Jesus takes the highest station, oh what joy the sight affords'. In His humanity He took the lowest place; consequently, that same humanity is now elevated to the highest place. Those who once cursed and vilified Jesus, will one day proclaim His greatness, even if it is against their will. I am not dogmatic on the point, but lean to the view that the name is 'Lord', due to the quotation from Isaiah chapter 45 verses 22-23 putting forth the claims of Jehovah. Nevertheless, neither position is utterly foreign to this context, and, in the final analysis, both sides express truth about the once humiliated, but now glorified Man of Calvary. The name of the Lord Jesus will be acclaimed over every other name save that of the Father Himself.

Worthy of Homage and Praise

While it is understandable that angels and glorified saints in heaven will bow the knee to the Lord Jesus, people on earth, as well as lost humans and demons 'under the earth' (i.e., in hell) will also be compelled to do Him homage, v. 10. Furthermore, every

creature will confess Jesus as Lord to the Father's glory. Even in His moment of supreme triumph, the Son will still cast glory upon His beautiful Father. VINE elaborates, 'The glory of God the Father, the ultimate issue of everything, was the unremitting object of the whole course of the Son, as expressed in His affirmation, "I glorified thee on the earth" (John 17:4). His very exaltation, by which the Father glorified Him, had the glory of the Father as its end'.⁶

The word 'confess' itself carries the idea of 'saying the same thing', meaning that every sentient being will agree with what the Father and the Spirit have been saying about the Son all along. As one commentator points out, 'This confession will be an open declaration of Jesus Christ as Lord in agreement with that which the Father declares concerning the Son'.⁷

GORDON D. FEE provides an excellent summary of the argument of Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 11:

'In the final analysis, this passage stands at the heart of Paul's understanding of God. Christ serves as pattern, to be sure; but he does so as the One who most truly expresses God's nature. That this is what God is like is the underlying Pauline point; and since God is in the process of re-creating us in his image, this becomes the heart of the present appeal. Thus we are not

called upon simply to "imitate God" by what we do but to have his very mind, the mind of Christ, developed in us, so that we too bear God's image in our attitudes and relationships within the Christian community—and beyond'.⁸

Humbling oneself before the Lord pays off in the end. The way up in Christ's kingdom is first to go down; the path to greatness lies on the hard road of selfless service. The Lord Jesus who went lower than any man ever has or shall go, is on the inexorable road to ever increasing glory. In light of this principle, no act of service is beneath the believer, and the lowly mind of Christ is the one we must cultivate in our own thinking.

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When people read the above text from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, they often react in at least two different ways. Some accept that this is an accurate translation of the original Greek text even though the form of the receptor language is not modern English. Conversely, there are those who think that a later translation would be more helpful, because they find that the form of English in the KJV is somewhat obscure and difficult to understand in parts.

These differing views divide readers into two distinct camps, i.e., those who think that a literal or word-for-word translation of the Bible is more important than a translation that seeks to reproduce the meaning of the original text in idiomatic or more natural English. The main criticism of the KJV by many modern readers is that it contains archaic language and is outdated. But these objections are, surprisingly, nothing new. In fact, until BENJAMIN BLAYNEY modernized the English text of the KJV in 1769, this was the general complaint of most readers of the KJV at that time! The intention of this article is not, however, to weigh up the differences in translational approaches, but, as our title suggests, to demonstrate the linguistic heritage of the King James Bible. One point that should be made at the outset is to correct the notion that the KJV translation had a great influence on the writings of William Shakespeare. In fact, the Biblical texts that appear in his writings are, in the main, taken from the Geneva Bible, since he produced most of his literary work between 1589 and 1613.

C. S. LEWIS once said of the Bible, and he specifically meant the KJV, that those who have rejected its theological pretensions nevertheless continue to enjoy it as a treasure-house of English prose.² Why then should this version of the Bible have such an influence on the English language more than any other in history? Put another way, what made this translation so critical to the development and enrichment of our native tongue? The answer to this question is both simple and complex. Europe's *lingua franca* up to the middle of the sixteenth century was Latin, but the Reformation, and

'Understandest thou what thou readest?', Acts 8. 30b¹

The Linguistic Heritage of the King James Bible

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other political changes, provided an opportunity for countries to reassert their own unique national identities. An important part of this process was the standardization of the national language. In many countries, this led to the creation of national academies that were specifically tasked to establish and define the vernacular language of the nation. Providentially, this did not happen in England, where the development of English became dependent on printed literature, especially the KJV. In hindsight, this might be considered as a perfect example of how God plans in history, Gal. 4. 4. Thus, the KJV helped to create a standardized English language that excluded local dialects but, at the

same time, enabled the absorption of foreign words and phrases. English is particularly adept at borrowing words from other cultures – it has a certain elasticity of mind.

How far the Bible, and this translation in particular, has impacted on our lives can be seen by the vast number of references that are made to it on a daily basis. According to DAVID CRYSTAL, Biblical expressions are found in all contexts in which language is used, but the most popular domains are politics, economics, football, advertising, and the titles of books, films, pop songs, and works of art.³ So whether we like it or not, the KJV has thoroughly imbued the English language with its pentameters, and the cadences of its sentences. The text of the KJV flows like a river in flood, and is firmly imprinted on the English psyche, so much so that it caused F. W. FABER to write that it was part of the national mind and the anchor of the national seriousness. Without the influence of the KJV, the English language would be bereft of its beauty, its poetic greatness, and, ultimately, its power to communicate the gospel of Christ. May this influence long continue!

Perhaps the last word should be left to BRUCE METZGER who states that this version owes its authority and popularity not to royal favour or legal enactments, but – what is far better – to its intrinsic merit and the verdict of English readers in general.⁴

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THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SOME OF OUR LORD'S PARABLES

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(UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, ALL QUOTATIONS OF SCRIPTURE ARE FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION)

10

The Parable of the Unprofitable Servant Luke 17. 7-10.

The short story told by our Lord concerned the owner of a small farm. Seemingly, the man had only one servant (literally, 'slave'), who not only filled the roles of ploughman and of shepherd but who performed all the domestic duties in the house.¹

Justin Martyr, writing in the middle of the second century and born less than 40 miles from where the Lord was born, said of Him, 'He was deemed a carpenter, for He was in the habit of working as a carpenter when among men, making ploughs and yokes'.² It is more than likely that, when working as a carpenter at Nazareth, our Lord had come into contact with many such household slaves.

Though the slave was denied neither the opportunity nor the means of meeting his own needs eventually, he was allowed to do this only after the performance of all his duties. And so, returning from his day's heavy workload, he was required to prepare for his master's comfort before he was permitted to see to his own – which he did without question or complaint.

But what are we to make of this story? Does the Lord Jesus mean to portray *God* as some hard, inconsiderate and ungrateful taskmaster, indifferent to both the past labour and the present weariness of His servants, accepting their toil without any acknowledgement or gratitude?³ To ask the question is, of course, to answer it. No, our Lord certainly didn't want His apostles, and He doesn't want us, to get the blasphemous impression that God is some heartless and unfeeling slave-driver. Nor does He want us to walk away with the idea that God will fail to fully recompense *any* (still less *all*) faithful service rendered to Him.

We have only to listen to our Lord's clear and unambiguous teaching elsewhere. We have, for example, His words recorded in Mark chapter 9, 'whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, *he will by no means lose his reward*',⁴ and in chapter 6 of this very Gospel, 'Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and *your reward will be great*'.⁵ This teaching He later expanded through His apostles. For example, He taught through Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 that 'each one *will receive his own reward* according to his own labour . . . the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work . . . endures, *he will receive a reward*'.⁶

Are we, as many commentators,⁷ to reconcile such passages by saying that, although we really have no just or legitimate claim on any recompense from God, God in His grace will yet bestow rewards on us? No, that won't work, because the New Testament is very clear that God's people are to receive rewards for their faithful and sacrificial service, not as a matter of *grace*, but as a matter of *justice*.

Towards the close of his life, the apostle Paul wrote,

'there is laid up for me the crown of *righteousness*, which the Lord, the *righteous* Judge, will give to me on that day',⁸ and the writer to the Hebrews assures us that 'God is not *unrighteous* to forget your work and the love which you have showed toward His name'.⁹ We serve a glorious God indeed, who, on the one hand, says of His people, 'their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more',¹⁰ and, on the other hand, says that He will never forget their service and labour for Him. Make no mistake then – God keeps accurate records of every Christian's service. And He doesn't forget, even if we do!

Interestingly, the Saviour had earlier suggested that He Himself will one day do for His servants exactly what He says in our passage that no normal master would ever dream of doing. 'Blessed are those slaves', He said in chapter 12, 'whom the lord when he comes shall find watching. Truly I tell you, that he will gird himself and make them recline at table, and will come and serve them'.¹¹ That is, the extraordinary action of the Lord described in chapter 12 portrays *His* attitude to His servants, whereas the expectation of the master here in chapter 17 portrays the *normal* attitude of a master to his servant.

And we note that, in our Lord's story here in Luke chapter 17, the servant received no thanks¹² – not one word of approval or praise – for all his strenuous service, whereas we are assured by the apostle Paul that, when 'the Lord shall come . . . then shall each have his praise from God'.¹³

So, we may well wonder, what *does* our Lord's parable mean?

But we need to delve into the preceding context before attempting to answer that question. Indeed, the conjunction '*But*' with which the parable opens¹⁴ indicates that the parable is connected in some way with what passed between Jesus and the apostles in the previous section; namely in verses 1 to 6.

'It is impossible that no offences ('causes of stumbling') should come', Jesus said. It is a sad fact of life. At the beginning of chapter 15 we were told that the Pharisees and scribes had treated the tax-collectors and sinners who crowded around Jesus with disdain, and in the latter section of chapter 16 the Lord spoke of a rich man who had treated destitute Lazarus similarly. By means of such an attitude, great spiritual harm can be done to those who were poor, weak and despised – to 'these little ones', as the Lord tenderly described them.

Jesus warned His disciples against committing a similar sin; that is, not to cause the outcasts who had come to Him for refuge to stumble. For though, in the present world, it is inevitable that, at times, such vulnerable people are going to be tripped up, woe to the person who places the stumbling block in their way.

And the Saviour made His point very graphically, affirming that the fate of the man who causes spiritual harm and ruin to one of His defenceless 'little ones'



will be so grim that he would be better off if he was hurled into the sea with his head poking through the centre hole of a 'millstone'. And the word which Jesus used refers, not to a hand-mill, but to the much heavier stone pulled around by a donkey or ox. That is, to have a huge *stone* hung around his neck to ensure his drowning out in the open sea is, the Lord was saying, too good a punishment for the man who places a *stone* of stumbling in the path of one of His 'little ones'.

Clearly, a stone 'necklace' of that great size and weight would rule out any possibility of the body rising again to the surface and of being given a decent burial by friends or family, a consideration which, to our Lord's disciples, would have increased the horror of such a death. And I understand that a similar method of execution had actually been employed by the Emperor Augustus.¹⁵

Our Lord then advanced from (i) warning His disciples against leading others into sin, to (ii) warning them against neglecting to assist those who sin against them. The disciple's responsibility in such cases, He made clear, is twofold: first, the admonition and rebuke of the offender, and, second, the generous forgiveness of the repentant person. For in the Christian life there is not only the danger of offending others; there is also the danger of harbouring grudges and of refusing to forgive when the offending person apologizes.¹⁶

Our Lord's 'seven times in a day' is not, of course, to be understood as a literal limit; the Lord Jesus was teaching absolute and unlimited forgiveness. Nor is the offended party, He made clear, in a position to judge the genuineness of the offender's repentance. If someone sins against me seven times in a day, asking me to forgive him each time, I may well question whether his professed repentance is really sincere. But the Saviour commands me to accept the word of the offender and to continue to forgive him.

Reeling under the impact of this double requirement (namely, on the one hand, to avoid causing others to stumble, and, on the other, to be always ready to forgive), the apostles appealed to the Lord, 'Increase ('add to', literally) our faith'. 'Lord', they gasped out in effect, 'we are going to need a special "faith supplement" to give us sufficient spiritual strength if we are to avoid offending others and to always forgive the repentant!'

'No, you don't', Jesus replied, 'The active exercise and use of the faith you already have is more than adequate to meet any need you face . . . If you have faith as a mustard seed, you would say to this sycamine tree (at which point He perhaps gestured towards some nearby tree), "Be uprooted and be planted in the sea", and it would obey you'.

As is well known, the mustard seed is proverbially small, about the size of a pin head.¹⁷ It was, as Jesus said elsewhere, 'the least of all seeds',¹⁸ in all likelihood meaning that it was the smallest cultivated seed in the land of Israel.¹⁹

By way of contrast, the 'sycamine' tree (that is, the mulberry tree²⁰) was large, growing to a height of 30 foot, with dense, spreading branches often reaching wider than its height. And the roots of the mulberry tree were reckoned to be exceptionally strong, on account

of which it was thought by many Jews of Jesus' day that the tree could stand for 600 years.²¹

And we should note that Jesus spoke in terms, not of the mulberry tree merely being *thrown* into the sea (as the millstone-carrying person who caused someone else to stumble), but of actually being *planted* in the sea. He spoke, that is, of the further miracle that this large tree would stand firm and erect above the sea with its entire root system held in place by nothing more than the flowing waters.

Not, of course, that our Lord expected His apostles to understand His words literally. He was, as often, using a hyperbole, a deliberate overstatement to make a point. But there is a whole world of difference between not taking a statement *literally* and not taking it *seriously*. And the smallest amount of real faith, the Saviour wanted His disciples to know, can accomplish mighty tasks; always assuming, of course, that this small amount of faith is directed to almighty God.

In the context here, the Lord may well have been teaching the disciples that a small measure of real faith was sufficient to give them all the power they needed to gain (the humanly impossible) victory over their deep-rooted natural selfishness and unforgiving spirit, against which His earlier commands had been directed.

And then comes the parable, introduced, as we noted above, by the word 'But'.²² For faith, the Lord was saying, wasn't the only thing which mattered. And He now drew their attention to the issues of obedience and humility.

So what *does* the parable mean? I suggest that the key lies in the nature of a parable. It is important to note that in several of the other parables in the surrounding context the Lord drew just one main lesson from His story, and that the other details of the parable were not meant to be applied. Indeed, the other details often stood in deliberate contrast to the application which He made of the story.

For example, the point of the parable about the friend at midnight at the beginning of chapter 11²³ was that, in praying, when we ask we are given, when we seek we find, and when we knock the door is opened, and *not* that God is in any way a selfish and reluctant benefactor as was the man in bed at midnight who needed to be pestered and cajoled into giving the much needed loaves.

Again, the point of the parable about the dishonest steward at the beginning of chapter 16 was that we should imitate the steward's shrewdness and wisdom in making diligent use of resources (which really belonged to his lord and were at his disposal for a short time only) to secure some long-term benefit for himself when the inevitable day of reckoning came, and *not* that we should imitate his dishonesty and the fraud he practised.

And again, the point of the parable about the godless and unjust judge at the beginning of chapter 18 is that, just as he eventually vindicated and avenged the widow who had been wronged, so God will assuredly vindicate and avenge His chosen ones, and *not* that God needs, like that judge, to be worn down and exhausted by somebody's persistent nagging before doing so. And here, in chapter 17, the Lord Jesus made the point and



purpose of His parable very clear. It is that, if and when we have done all that is commanded us, we must yet regard ourselves as 'unprofitable servants', having done only what we ought to have done.

Our parable tells us nothing either (i) about the view which *God* takes of our service, or, for that matter, (ii) about the motive out of which we should perform our service – which ought to be with alacrity, in a spirit of love and gratitude, and not, as was the case with the slave, because we have no choice in the matter. The application of the parable centres exclusively on the view which *we*, as God's bondservants, must take of ourselves and our service, highlighting the humble spirit in which we should serve the Lord and banishing all thought of self-satisfaction or self-congratulation.

That is, the parable is not meant to illustrate the proper attitude of *the servant's master*, but to exhort us to adopt the proper attitude of *the servant*. The Lord Jesus isn't suggesting for one moment that God is ungrateful for His people's obedience. Rather He is forbidding us to pat ourselves on the back because of what we have done and achieved.

And it is important therefore that we note the change in focus, from (i) the attitude of the master in the parable itself, to (ii) the attitude of the servant in our Lord's application of the parable . . . that we note the change in focus, from (i) the 'which of *you*, *having a servant* ploughing or tending sheep' of verse 7, to (ii) the 'so likewise *you*, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants"' of verse 10.

The spotlight, that is, falls *not* on *the master's* attitude (taking his servant's constant and faithful service for granted, without so much as one word of thanks²⁴), but on *the servant's* attitude when he has wholly performed his work.

And we must ever remember that we are simply stewards, for a time, of the abilities and opportunities which the Lord gives to us, whose duty and privilege it is to work ceaselessly²⁵ for our Master. And 'privilege' it most certainly is. There is no higher service.

In the days of Ezra, Tattenai, the governor of the region beyond the River, and the other civil authorities asked the elders of the Jews who had given them authority to build the Temple and the walls at Jerusalem, they specifically asked them for their names.²⁶ I note that the elders simply responded, 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth'.²⁷ To these good men, that was all that mattered and that was how they wanted to be known.

I note also, that, when James and Jude, who were 'the Lord's brothers' according to the flesh,²⁸ wrote their epistles, they each introduced themselves as 'the bondservant' (the 'slave') of the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁹ Clearly to them also there was nothing higher. And it is *our* privilege, as well as our delight, to work for the same Master.

It isn't then that we do God some great favour by serving Him, but that *He* most certainly shows us great favour in permitting (and, indeed, enabling) us to do just that. And how grateful we should be for such an immense privilege.

But what are we to understand by the servants' description of themselves as 'unprofitable'?

The word which the Lord Jesus used normally carries the meaning 'useless' and 'good for nothing',³⁰ which is certainly its meaning in the only other place where it occurs in the New Testament. In the parable of the talents, speaking of the 'wicked and lazy servant' who hid his talent in the ground and put it to no use, his master says, 'cast the *unprofitable* servant into the outer darkness'.³¹ That is, this slave was 'unprofitable' in that he had brought no gain to his master. And this may well be the sense in which Jesus used the word here. For, even if we do everything required of us, we do no more than we ought. We give to God only what He is owed.³²

There may also be the idea that God gains nothing from us, because, in the end, He doesn't need our service and is in no way dependent upon us. And I note that some scholars have suggested that the word is to be understood here, not so much as 'unprofitable', but as 'expendable'.³³

Painful as the discovery is, we must face the fact that God can equally well use others as He can use us. Consider the confidence which Mordecai the Jew expressed to Queen Esther when he, she and all the Jews through the 127 provinces of the Persian empire were effectively under sentence of death; 'if *you* remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews *from another place*, but *you* and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?'³⁴

For, although we unquestionably need *Him*, *God* doesn't need *us*. And we can only respond in amazement and gratitude that He ever deigns to use us.

And the Lord is still looking for the man or woman who will say, 'Though I may be (and, indeed, I am) an unprofitable servant, I am determined to do that which is my duty'. As the decisive Battle of Trafalgar between the British and the French was about to commence, with the nearest enemy ships less than two miles away, Admiral Lord Nelson hung out his motto to the breeze, 'England expects every man to do his duty'.³⁵ The following naval engagement was one of the most significant naval battles in history, eliminating any possibility of a French invasion of the British Isles.

This year is the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Version (KJV). One of the major influences on the language of the KJV was the earlier translation work done by WILLIAM TYNDALE (1494-1536), who, on a charge of 'heresy', was strangled and burned at the stake.³⁶

In the prologue of one of his works,³⁷ Tyndale noted that some people asked him why he had bothered writing the book since his Roman Catholic opponents would burn it, seeing they had very recently burnt a significant quantity of New Testaments. Tyndale's response was characteristic of the man: 'In burning the New Testament they did none other thing than that I looked for: no more shall they do, if they burn me also, if it be God's will it shall so be. Nevertheless, in translating the New Testament I did my duty'.³⁸

'England expects every man to do *his duty*', Nelson



said. 'I did *my duty*', said Tyndale. And God expects no less of us! But, as our Lord made clear, He also expects that, if, with His help, we succeed in doing it, we then acknowledge that *that is all* we have done – *our duty* – and that we are therefore no more than 'unprofitable slaves'!

I was struck many years ago by the words of JUAN ORTIZ, 'Can you say you have done everything the Lord told you to do? If so, we can have a graduation ceremony for you. We will give you a diploma which reads, '. . . unworthy slave'!³⁹ And, whether I like it or not, that is my honorary title.

With his eyes (i) on the servant in our parable who *did* what was commanded him, and (ii) on the servant in the parable of the talents who *did not do* what was commanded him,⁴⁰ JOHN WESLEY wrote, 'Happy is he who judges *himself* an unprofitable servant: *miserable* is he whom God pronounces such'.⁴¹ Well said, Mr Wesley!

References

- 1 'He was responsible for farming, shepherding, and cooking', WARREN WIERSBE, *Be Courageous*, page 52.
- 2 JUSTIN MARTYR, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter LXXXVIII. Justin was born in modern-day Nablus, ancient Shechem.
- 3 Compare *The Pulpit Commentary, The Gospel according to St. Luke*, volume 2, page 99.
- 4 Mark 9. 41.
- 5 Luke 6. 35.
- 6 1 Cor. 3. 8, 13-14. See too Rom. 14. 10-11; 2 Cor. 5. 9-10; Heb. 11. 26.
- 7 For example: R. C. H. LENSKE, 'when He so rewards, this is altogether and absolutely due to His abounding grace and generosity. It is because of Himself and not because of us and our work'; A. BARNES, 'If He rewards us, it will be a matter of unmerited favour'; N. GELDENHUYS, 'What God does indeed give in the way of "rewards" He gives purely out of grace'; WARREN WIERSBE, 'The fact that Jesus will reward His servants is wholly a matter of God's grace'.
- 8 2 Tim. 4. 7-8.
- 9 Heb. 6. 10 literally.
- 10 Heb. 10. 17, where 'remember' means 'remember against them'.
- 11 Luke 12. 37 literally.
- 12 The interrogative particle $\mu\eta$ implies a negative answer.
- 13 1 Cor. 4. 5 JND.
- 14 The NKJV renders this 'And', although it would be better translated 'But'.
- 15 T. H. HORNE, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, page 68.
- 16 For further comments on verses 3 and 4, see the notes on our Lord's similar teaching in Matthew 18. 15-22 in my articles on 'The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant' in *Precious Seed International*, Volume 64, Numbers 3 and 4.
- 17 The mustard seed measures about 1/20th of an inch.
- 18 Matt. 13. 32.
- 19 'The expression, "small as a mustard-seed", had become proverbial, and was used, not only by our Lord, but frequently by the Rabbis, to indicate the smallest amount, such as the least drop of blood, the least defilement, or the smallest remnant of sun-glow in the sky', ALFRED EDERSHEIM, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book 3, Chapter 23. Speaking universally, the orchids of the tropical rain forest produce the world's smallest seeds. Each weighs 35 millionths of an ounce, much smaller than a mustard seed.
- 20 'Luke distinguishes between this and $\sigma\upsilon\chi\omicron\mu\omicron\rho\epsilon\acute{\alpha}$, the fig-mulberry (Luke 19. 4). The names were sometimes confused, but a physician would readily make the distinction, as both were used medicinally', M. R.

VINCENT, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, volume 1, page 401.

- 21 'The rootage of the sycamine was reckoned to be particularly strong; it was thought that the tree could stand 600 years in the earth', H. L. STRACK and P. BILLERBECK *Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Midrash*, volume II, page 234, quoted in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume III, page 811, footnote 2.
- 22 See note 14 above.
- 23 The parable in Luke 11. 5-8 opens with the same construction ('Which of you' introducing a rhetorical question) as does this parable; see also Luke 12. 25; 14. 5, 28, and compare 15. 4.
- 24 The master does not 'have thanks' (literally) to the slave, v. 9; cp. the same Greek construction in 1 Tim. 1. 12 and 2 Tim. 1. 3.
- 25 We should not grow slack in our service. Paul stressed this twice in his earliest letters: 'let us *not grow weary* while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart', Gal. 6. 9, and 'do *not grow weary* in doing good', 2 Thess. 3. 13. 'It was the "fool" who said, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry", and it is the fool still', *The Speaker's Bible* on Luke 17. 7-10.
- 26 Ezra 5. 3, 9-10.
- 27 Ezra 5. 11.
- 28 See Mark 6. 3; 1 Cor. 9. 5-6; Gal. 1. 19
- 29 Jas. 1. 1; Jude 1.
- 30 This word differs from that translated 'unprofitable' in Philemon 11. The word here indicates 'useless', as opposed to 'unserviceable', which is the meaning of the word in Philemon. In the Septuagint, the word found here occurs only in 2 Sam. 6. 22, translated as 'vile' by Sir L. C. L. BRENTON.
- 31 Matt. 25. 30.
- 32 That is, the word signifies, not so much someone who does what he ought not, but someone who does no more than he ought. In the same spirit, the Jewish Mishnah records that 'Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai', who 'received the Torah from Hillel and from Shammai . . . used to say: If you have learnt much Torah do not claim for yourself moral excellence, for to this end you were created', *Pirke Aboth* 2:9 (available at <http://www.shechem.org/torah/avot.html>).
- 33 'Expendable' in WILLIAM F. ARNDT and F. WILBUR GINGRICH, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, page 369, and 'not needed' in E. W. BULLINGER, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*, page 833.
- 34 Esther 4. 14.
- 35 See ROBERT SOUTHEY, *The Life of Horatio Lord Nelson*, chapter 9. This classic life of Lord Nelson is available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/947/947-h/947-h.htm>.
- 36 Scholars estimate that (in the KJV) Tyndale's wording accounts for 84% of the New Testament and for 75.8% of the Old Testament books that he translated, and that as much as one third of the KJV text comes word for word from Tyndale's translations. See the section 'Legacy' at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyndale_Bible, and the section 'Impact on the English Bible' at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Tyndale.
- 37 *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, published in 1528.
- 38 *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. HENRY WALTER, pages 43-44.
- 39 JUAN CARLOS ORTIZ, *Disciple*, page 39.
- 40 Matt. 25. 30.
- 41 JOHN WESLEY, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, on Luke 17. 10. To him who confesses himself to be an 'unprofitable servant', the Lord Himself will declare, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'.



100 YEARS OF TESTIMONY FROM YORK STREET GOSPEL HALL, LEICESTER

On Saturday 30 April 2011 the saints at York Street Gospel Hall were joined by visitors from near and far, as they celebrated one hundred years of testimony in the present Gospel Hall. Thanksgiving for the Lord's faithfulness included a summary of the history of the assembly from Peter Chinnery, the preaching of the gospel by Paul Bannister and ministry on Psalm 100 by David E. West.

Although little is known of the early days of assembly testimony in Leicester, believers - about eight in number - first gathered to the Name of the Lord in rented accommodation in April 1889. By 1911 numbers had risen to eighty prompting the believers to seek accommodation that was larger and more permanent. A nearby Baptist chapel was vacant, and the main hall of the present building was purchased in April 1911. The assembly has occupied this accommodation ever since.

March 1912 saw the first baptisms when seventeen believers were obedient to the Lord, and in 1914 a horse drawn caravan or 'Gospel Car' was purchased for use in the open air in the villages of Leicestershire and in the market place in the city centre. This continued up to the Second World War.

In July 1921 pressure on space led to the acquisition of two cottages adjacent to the hall. One of these became known as the 'Mission Room' and was dedicated to children's work and Bible class activities. These activities soon outgrew this accommodation and, in 1936, it was decided to demolish the two cottages and build the present classrooms.

The years of the depression in the 1930s saw a surge in assembly testimony. By 1932 there were 201 believers in fellowship at York Street and outreach continued to be a priority. In January 1930 a Sunday School outreach was started in the home of one of the believers in

the Braunstone district of Leicester. In June 1934 forty believers from York Street moved to establish a new testimony and the Braunstone Avenue Gospel Hall was opened. In 1934 an outreach work commenced in Syston with believers from York Street supporting Sunday School and gospel activities. On 25 July 1936 the Broadway Gospel Hall, Syston, was opened and, on 12 June 1938, ten believers gathered to remember the Lord for the first time. After the start of the work at Braunstone and Syston there remained about 180 believers at York Street.

The believers at York Street were active throughout the Second World War. Only once did enemy action interrupt the meetings when a young women's class had to spend the night in an air raid shelter. The gatherings on the Lord's Day continued without a break and, as the war continued, outreach increased. Sunday afternoon tea was provided for soldiers and airmen, and then, later, for German prisoners of war. Special gospel meetings were held in German.

In 1949 a summer camp was commenced during the August bank holiday for boys from the Sunday School; this was later extended to a second week for girls in 1962. God

has blessed this outreach with many boys and girls being saved, baptized and the assembly was encouraged as a result.

Further expansion of assembly testimony took place in the 1950s. In the summer of 1950 a Sunday School work commenced on the newly built Evington/Goodwood estates which in turn led to the opening of the Goodwood Gospel Hall on 19 November 1955. Twenty-five believers from York Street formed the new assembly at Goodwood which left 125 in fellowship at York Street at the end of 1955. By the end of 1958 the number had risen to 140.

With the surge in re-housing in the 1950s people moved out of the vicinity of York Street and as a result Sunday School attendance dropped. From this time onwards children have had to be transported from further afield.

There are now some 70 believers in fellowship and the outreach today is still busy with open-air meetings around the Clock Tower in the summer and a regular tract stall in the Town Hall Square.

The Lord has been very good to us over the years and we praise Him for His continued help and blessing in the work for over 100 years.

Sunday School Outing





This article will list some of the features of churches in New Testament times, with the conviction that every effort should be made to imitate the biblical model. In prayerfully reading and checking the inspired scriptures, we should seek out a company of believers who endeavour to follow the New Testament pattern and associate with them.

In the New Testament, buildings were never called churches. Buildings accommodated churches, so the building itself was not the church. Similarly, today there are denominations with various titles, such as 'Church of England'. In Bible times there were no such 'national churches'. When the New Testament refers to the church in a country or region, the word 'church' is always plural.¹ For example, we read of the churches of Galatia, and not the church of Galatia, Gal. 1. 2. There were independent churches scattered throughout the region, and no equivalent of the modern day national ecclesiastical organization. Thus, a church in a locality was the group of believers who gathered for worship, prayer, teaching, and service. The word 'assembly' would better express the sense of the Greek word *ekklesia*, normally translated 'church' in the King James Version.

Consider some of the features of these New Testament assemblies.

New Testament churches had no sectarian title

Normally, each denomination in Christendom bears a title to distinguish it. Some, like Wesleyans, take their name from a founder. Others, such as Presbyterians and Episcopalians, are identified by their form of church government. Some are known by a doctrine that they hold, and so there are Baptists and Pentecostals. To willingly take any name is the sectarianism that is condemned in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 10-16. New Testament assemblies did not gather under the patronage of any denomination, but they did gather in association with the name of the Lord Jesus. Said the Saviour, 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them', Matt. 18. 20.

At least two things are suggested by the phrase 'gathered in (or unto)

WHICH CHURCH SHOULD

my name'. First, identification with the Lord Jesus. That is, the believer abandons all man-made ecclesiastical systems, and identifies with the rejected Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews urges this upon us all, 'Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach', 13. 13. 'The camp' in that day was Judaism, and its modern equivalent is Christendom into which many of the features of Judaism have been absorbed. We have to reject sectarianism and be associated alone with Him who is 'outside the camp'. Second, subjection to Christ. When the Saviour is seen in relation to the local church, the name most frequently used by the Holy Spirit is that of the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly in 1 Corinthians which relates to assembly matters. So, gathering to His Name implies acknowledging His authority as the Lord Jesus. His lordship affects every department of life, and this includes our church life. We should gather to His Name, owning no authority but His and no other rule-book but His word.

New Testament churches had no earthly headquarters

Most modern denominations consist of a central authority with numerous congregations responsible to that central office, a concept alien to the word of God. New Testament churches were churches of God, 1 Cor. 1. 2, and thus responsible to God alone. This is demonstrated in the letters to the churches in Asia, Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

Autonomy is a safeguard against false teaching. Error affecting one assembly need not corrupt another. If the devil infiltrates a central authority, false doctrine will then be pushed out to every congregation in the group to become the compulsory creed for all.

New Testament churches were restricted to Christian membership

Many Christians are connected to religious systems in which believers and unbelievers are linked. That was never the norm in New Testament times. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse

2, Paul described the composition of the assembly at Corinth as, 'them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints'; every member was a genuine believer. Assemblies were 'churches of the saints', 1 Cor. 14. 33.

Believers who are members of a mixed religious society argue that if they withdraw their light the darkness will be all the greater. They see unsaved fellow members as a mission field. In actual fact, the Bible shows that light and darkness are incompatible, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . .

Come out from among them, and be ye separate', 2 Cor. 6. 14-18.

New Testament churches were guided by overseers

Responsibility for leadership in assemblies is devolved to overseers, (often translated 'bishops'). They were also described as elders, men of spiritual experience, 1 Tim. 3. 1-7. They were not elected, but appointed by the Holy Spirit.² Qualifications had to be met, and these are outlined in 1 Timothy chapter 3, and Titus chapter 1. Their responsibilities were varied, but were summarized by both Peter and Paul.³ Overseers have to attend to every spiritual need of the flock. That is why the metaphor of a shepherd is used to describe them.⁴ The word translated 'pastor' is the normal Greek word for 'shepherd'. The concept of one 'pastor' caring for the flock has no biblical warrant. There was always a number of overseers in one church,⁵ and not one bishop over a number of churches.

New Testament churches were instructed by various preachers

Christendom has developed the clerical system in which one man has almost the sole responsibility for preaching weekly. That is not based on Bible teaching for, in New Testament times, various men ministered to God's people. Indeed, every believer had some part to play, for the assembly is likened to a human body with each member contributing. Everyone has a spiritual gift that has to be employed for the good of the whole body. To pay one man to have exclusive

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COULD I JOIN AND WHY?

responsibility for helping God's people is to deny the 'body of Christ' aspect of the local church, 1 Cor. 12. 27.

The word 'minister'⁶ is a translation of the Greek word *diakonos*. Elsewhere it is rendered 'deacon', an anglicized form of the Greek word. It simply means a 'servant'. Some of these men preached the gospel, Col. 1. 23, and others taught the believers, 1 Tim. 4. 6, but there was always a number of them in each local church.⁷ There is no suggestion that they wore distinctive clerical attire. That practice is an import from Judaism in which the priesthood was a distinct class. Now, every believer forms part of the priesthood.⁸ As far as the teaching and preaching were concerned, a number of appropriately gifted men shared that responsibility. They had no formal college training for the task, but simply used the spiritual gift that they had.

New Testament churches had no audible female participation

The New Testament shows that women played a crucial part in God's work, but they did not contribute audibly in the gatherings. That may sound strange in an age of equal opportunities but it is the clear teaching of scripture. The general statement is, 'Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak', 1 Cor. 14. 34. The context shows that the prohibition extends even to asking a question in a public gathering. Elsewhere, it takes in public praying, for only the men (Greek word meaning males) should pray.⁹ It excludes public teaching by the sisters.¹⁰

The difference between the genders should also be seen in appearance. 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verses 2-16 shows that in the gatherings, men, with short hair, should have their heads uncovered, and that women, with long hair, should have their heads covered. These are visible tokens of the man acknowledging Christ's headship, and the woman acknowledging the God appointed headship of the man.

New Testament churches celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly

The Lord's Supper was instituted by

the Lord before He died, and He commanded His disciples to perpetuate this ordinance to remember Him. The book of Acts gives guidance regarding the 'breaking of bread'. Chapter 2 reveals that the participants were people who had been saved by responding to Peter's preaching. Subsequently, they were baptized and, among other things, they continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread, v. 42. That scriptural sequence should not be disturbed. The Lord commanded baptism for His disciples, Matt. 28. 19, and there are constant references in the Acts to baptisms immediately after conversion. They were baptized as believers and not as infants; there is no precedent for infant baptism in the Bible. They were baptized by immersion in water. The Greek word *baptizo* means 'to dip'.¹¹ So, then, the converts of Acts 2, having been saved and baptized, shared the fellowship of the local church, of which the Lord's Supper was a part.

In Acts chapter 20 verse 7, guidance is given regarding when the breaking of bread should be, 'upon the first day of the week'. Paul deliberately waited at Troas to be with the disciples to break bread that day. The word 'often' implies a frequent remembrance of Christ.¹²

New Testament churches met for prayer

Prayer was an important function of the early churches, and should still be a priority for every assembly.¹³

We are told how to pray, blending supplications, intercessions, and thanksgivings. We are told for whom to pray, and why, and, really, the command to pray for 'all men' provides wide scope for public prayers. As noted earlier, verse 8 indicates the public participants, men.

New Testament churches preached the gospel

It was said of the Thessalonian assembly, 'From you sounded out the word of the Lord', 1 Thess. 1. 8. The continued existence of every assembly depends on an energetic gospel outreach. This is the primary method by which sinners are saved and

added to the company. In scripture, the assembly is likened to a golden lampstand, Rev. 1-3. The illustration indicates that the witness of every local church should be such that the light of the gospel penetrates the moral and spiritual darkness that pervades our communities. New Testament churches comprised people who were burdened to reach others with the life-changing gospel.

Conclusion

If these are the distinctive features of New Testament churches, we all have to ask, 'Does the group I am linked with match this pattern?' If not, we have a responsibility to respond to the teaching of scripture and to meet with believers whose principles of gathering correspond to that biblical pattern.

References

- 1 Some see Acts 9. 31 as an exception. The singular, adopted by RV, NIV, ASV and ESV, is well supported in some critical texts and is preferred by WUEST, ROBERTSON AND VINCENT. However, as Vincent comments, the term embraces 'all the different churches throughout the three provinces of Palestine' but does not suggest any central ecclesiastical authority. NKJV, JND and YLT do not concur with this change and retain the plural. [Editor's footnote].
- 2 Acts 20. 28.
- 3 'Feed (shepherd) the church of God', Acts 20. 28; 'feed the flock of God', 1 Pet. 5. 2.
- 4 Eph. 4. 11.
- 5 Acts 20. 17, 28; Phil. 1. 1.
- 6 E.g., Col. 1. 7 KJV.
- 7 Phil. 1. 1. At Antioch there were five preachers, Acts 13. 1, increasing to 'many', Acts 15. 35.
- 8 1 Pet. 2. 5, 9; Rev. 1. 5-6.
- 9 1 Tim. 2. 8.
- 10 1 Tim. 2. 12.
- 11 Acts 8. 38-39. Both Philip and the Ethiopian went down into the water, showing that this was the mode of baptism. The symbolism of baptism, that is, burial and resurrection, serves to emphasize the point, Rom. 6. 1-11.
- 12 1 Cor. 11. 25-26.
- 13 Acts 2. 42; 4. 23-24; 12. 5. Regulations for the prayer meeting are found in 1 Timothy chapter 2.

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When Paul asked the Lord what He would have him to do, he meant it, and thereafter his life was totally committed to Him. The Lord Jesus Christ was his abiding passion. He would say, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'. The love of Christ constrained him. Not his love for Him, but his personal awareness of the Saviour's love for himself and all mankind. With all his heart he wanted to serve the Lord, and was determined that the glorious gospel of Christ, committed to him, who had been before a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious ('an insulter' NEWBERRY) would be in every sense, his gospel. His life had been completely changed; now, he counted 'all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus'.¹

Paul's letter to the Philippians deals with the thoughts and behaviour of Christians, their inward motivation and the character of their faith being manifested to others. We are called to be worthy of our Saviour. Sometimes we allow ourselves to be guided by purely human reasoning, and are unaware of the impression of ourselves we give to others. The problem with the church at Corinth was that so many were 'yet carnal and walked as men'. We are called to work out our own salvation, that good work which the Saviour began in us when we were saved. The Lord Jesus wants us to abide in Him, and produce the fruit of that relationship with Himself. We are to be like Him, 'as he is in the world', and 'walk even as he walked'.²

Paul surely shames us by his own example of total commitment to Christ. How can we show our love for Him? We are called to 'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ', 2 Pet. 3. 18.

Keep together

All divisions among us are the results of merely thinking as men and are inconsistent with our Lord's will for us. He prayed that we might be 'one' and the early church emphasized and illustrated this. The Philippians were to 'stand fast in one spirit and one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel'. They were to 'do all things without murmurings

The Missing Passion

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and disputings'. The petty squabble involving Euodias and Syntyche was to be dealt with. These women had laboured with Paul and others in the gospel, but had evidently fallen out, and their own testimonies and the spiritual well-being of the church were being adversely affected. Sometimes men will stoop so low even as to use the preaching of the gospel to attack someone. Paul says, 'they preach Christ even of envy and strife'. They are 'contentious' and 'insincere'.³

The visible unity of the Lord's people is a very precious thing. We should not go contrary to His will, nor do anything to defile or corrupt the church. Paul prayed for all the Philippians. They were called to be a light for the Lord in a dark world, so there were to be no disagreements amongst them. Very often the issues that cause trouble between the Lord's people are due to mere differences of opinion. The Lord never takes sides over these matters, but He expects us to deal with the problems ourselves. He refused to arbitrate between two brothers who disagreed over an earthly inheritance.⁴

Put others first

Even Christians can be accused of seeking 'their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's', and we are exhorted to 'look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others'. This is the mind of Christ. He 'made himself of no reputation' and humbled Himself for us, and all mankind. The cross was an agonizing, bitter thing, but 'he gave himself for our sins'. He told His disciples, 'For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many'. Like Paul, every one of us can say, 'The Son of God . . . loved me, and gave himself for me'.⁵

The Saviour is our supreme example as to how we may be of service to others, and Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus show they had hearts akin to His.

Paul is willing to be 'offered upon the sacrifice and service' of the Philippians' faith, that is, he is prepared to spend himself for them and their service, literally to be poured out as a drink offering, a subsidiary but important part of the ritual of the offerings. The Philippians were in his heart, as he was in theirs. Let theirs be the service that shines out to others, and Paul is willing to keep to the background. He is prepared to play second fiddle to their lead.

Timothy is another example. He was so like Paul in his ways and teaching that he says of him, 'I have no man likeminded, who will naturally (or 'sincerely' NEWBERRY) care for your state'. There were often others who served for less open and charitable reasons, but Timothy was different. He would always do that which was best for others, and genuinely cared for them. Timothy was a man who could be trusted.

Epaphroditus had been the church's representative in visiting Paul in prison, bringing a love gift from the church at Philippi. He devoted himself completely to Paul's needs, and so committed was he to the task given to him by the Philippians, he worked himself to the absolute limit, and made himself ill. Paul says of him, 'He was nigh unto death, not regarding his life' to do what needed to be done. Thus, Paul sends him back to Philippi, 'a brother, and companion in labour, and a fellow-soldier' and with this wonderful ringing endorsement: 'Hold such in reputation', Phil. 2. 17, 20-30.





'FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST', PHIL. 1. 21

Do not go back

Paul resolutely cut himself off from his past life when he became the Lord's. He explains to the Philippians those things in which once he had satisfaction, 'but what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ'. The knowledge of Christ consumed him, and made the things of earth less attractive. Now he wanted to know Christ. He knew he had a long way to go, but 'one thing' only now captivated all his thinking as he pressed onward. People heard about it, 'He which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed'. After he was saved, Paul spent his whole life following Christ, reaching after Him, stretching himself as a runner with his eye on the prize.

Going after Christ in our devotional life is important. In the Song of Solomon, the bride is waiting for her Lord, and she longs to be with Him. 'Draw me', she says, and then, in fellowship with others, 'we will run after thee'. His presence is real to her, although He is absent. She hears His words, she tells others of His perfections, she opens the door of her heart, she sits under His shadow with great delight, and in the secret places of the stairs, she has communion with Him. At first He is her Beloved; then she says they belong to each other, but finally she understands, 'I am my Beloved's'. She will keep herself for Him, as a fragrant, enclosed garden, is kept for the one to whom it belongs. It is a mystery, says Paul, concerning the bond of marriage, and he refers it to 'Christ and the church'. This is a common theme in the Old Testament, the love between the Lord and His people. How sad to read in this context of those who by their conduct are 'the enemies of the cross of Christ', and who 'mind earthly things'. To be an enemy of the cross of Christ is to behave unworthily of the gospel, not to render it our full allegiance, and forgetting the Saviour whose gospel it is. 'Our conversation is in heaven;

from whence also we look for the Saviour'. Let us not have cause to be 'ashamed before him at His coming'.⁶

Nothing is impossible

We are to 'rejoice in the Lord alway', be noted for our moderation in relations with others, and be anxious for nothing. We have a sure and complete resource in prayer for everything that concerns us. Let the peace of God keep our hearts and minds. Let us turn away from the grubby things of the world and the unworthy thoughts of men, to embrace all that is true, just, pure, lovely, of good report, of virtue and praise. Our newspapers and other things will push unwholesome things into our minds, but if the things are of God what we hold onto we will be strengthened, so we may overcome in every adverse circumstance of life. Paul's own life was a disciplined one. He had learnt many lessons. He was able to cope with every condition, and he is 'able to do all things through Christ'. All the pressures, the anxieties must have been enormous, but he knows the Lord will never let him down.⁷



When he wrote this letter, Paul was in bonds and imprisoned, and the outcome of his appeal to the emperor was still uncertain, but he is still singing in his prison. He is there for 'the defence and confirmation of the gospel'. Not his personal defence here, when he would have to stand before the emperor, but he was there to defend the gospel of Christ from its detractors and enemies. Paul knew the wiles of the adversary, and the absurdity of wicked men with no faith, but he will bear his testimony to the end bravely. Even where he was the Lord was with him, and blessed his testimony. He is able to send greetings from the brethren with him, 'and all the saints salute you, chiefly they who are of Caesar's household'. The Lord has turned his seeming adversities into blessings, and there were those saved even in the imperial household.⁸

We may be unable to attain to Paul's level of devotion to the Saviour ourselves, but we can honour the Saviour by keeping 'the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace', by putting others first, by being determined to go on, and by believing with all our hearts that nothing is impossible. We can do all things through Christ. Let God reveal His mind to us, whatever the level of our attainment, and give us the grace we need to go on for Him.

References

- 1 2 Cor. 5. 14; Gal. 2. 20; Phil. 3. 8; 1 Tim. 1. 11-14.
- 2 John 15. 3-6; 17. 14-16; 1 Cor. 3. 3; Phil. 1. 6; 2. 12; 1 John 2. 6, 29; 4. 17.
- 3 John 17. 22; Phil. 1. 15, 16, 27; 2. 2, 14; 4. 2, 3.
- 4 Ps. 133. 1-3; Luke 12. 14; Phil. 1. 4, 21, 25; 2. 14.
- 5 Mark 10. 45; Gal. 1. 4; 2. 20; Phil. 2. 4-9, 20; Titus 2. 14.
- 6 S. of S. 1. 4; 2. 3, 14, 16; 5. 16; 6. 3; Isa. 54. 4-8; 61. 10; 62. 4-5; Phil. 3. 8-20; 1 John 2. 28-29.
- 7 Acts 20. 22-24; 21. 13; 2 Cor. 11. 23-29; Phil. 4. 13.
- 8 Phil. 1. 7, 12-14; 4. 21-22; 2 Thess. 3. 2-3.

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5. 'With Joy Unspeakable'

This is the victorious outlook of the persecuted Christian. The apostle Peter in his First Epistle says much concerning the subject of Christian suffering, especially undeserved suffering at the hands of persecuting authorities in the world around us. God allows His people to endure unjust suffering as a kind of discipline which, under His sovereign overruling hand, curbs the workings of our old nature, the flesh. And Peter says that, if judgement first begins with His people, the house of God, so that they are only saved with difficulty, then whatever will be the fate of those who are openly ungodly!

Some believers suffer for practising righteousness, according to 1 Peter chapter 3, while others suffer just because they confess that they are Christians, according to chapter 4. All are only following the steps of their blessed Lord and Saviour, who, according to chapter 2 did no wrong, neither was guile found in His mouth, yet He suffered the death of the cross. He is our supreme example of innocent suffering. Because He, our Lord and Master, suffered unjustly, then we, His disciples, cannot expect different treatment at the hands of the world which first hated and crucified Him. Christians are identified in every way with Christ. But, in 1 Peter chapter 1, the apostle exclaims

FACING THE

that persecuted Christians can rise victoriously above their sufferings in their pilgrimage through this hostile world, and even turn them to good account in terms of spiritual growth.

Our present sufferings are really intended by God to be a trial, that is, a testing of our faith, which should produce Christian character in us. In the crucible of our suffering, He makes us more like His Son by refining away the dross and impurities of our old nature. This will bring us greater reward when we meet our Lord at His second coming in glory to reign. And, even now, we shall experience an inexpressible joy in Christ while we are enduring suffering for Him. This enables us to continue to live triumphant and victorious lives for Him, as we think not of our present painful sufferings, but of the coming eternal glory which will soon be ours when we enter heaven with Him.

6. 'Looking for that Blessed Hope'

This is the practical Christian's constant outlook. For there is nothing quite like the blessed hope of our Lord's imminent second coming to stimulate us to personal holiness, the continual practice of good works, and to engage in vigorous evangelism.

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All three of these beneficial effects are emphasized in various passages which refer to the coming of the Lord. If we are really expecting Christ to come back for us at any moment, as we profess that we are, then will we not be constantly concerned to rid our lives of all unworthy thoughts, words, and actions which would displease Him? Above all other aspirations in life, we will wish to become more like Him in every way. Also, will we not desire to identify and pursue all kinds of good works which will benefit those around us, both fellow-believers and also unbelievers? Truly, we will not only love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, but also love our neighbours as ourselves, thus fulfilling the righteous requirement of the law, the law of Christ Himself. How urgently, too, we will seek by every legitimate means available to us to warn the unsaved folk who live all around us of the coming wrath of God, which will soon be poured upon this rebellious world! Yes, the doctrine of the second coming of Christ, rightly held, is anything but purely academic, impractical, and irrelevant to our lives. The anticipation of Christ as 'the Vision Glorious', whom we most earnestly and certainly hope to see in the near future, will motivate us all, like nothing else, to greater heights of spiritual experience and endeavours for His Name's sake in this world.

7. In the Light of Fulfilled Scripture

Finally, this is the prophetic student's deeply interested outlook as he sees in the circumstances and events in the world around him various unmistakeable indications that the scriptures concerning the end-times are probably soon to be fulfilled. Coming prophesied events do cast their shadows before them. Today, as never before, Christian believers are witnessing trends and movements in the world at large which point to the fact of the Lord's coming. Even a century ago, believers confessed that they were not seeing these expected





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indications, although they had read concerning them in the scriptures and believed that they would one day happen. But, since about 1945, the end of the Second World War, more pointers to end-time events have arisen than ever before. These may be summarized as follows:-

(i) Israel

This is perhaps the most significant pointer to the imminence of end-time events. The early assembly writers of the mid-nineteenth century taught from scripture that Israel would be re-established in their land. Towards the end of that century, secular Zionism began to campaign for a Jewish homeland, though not necessarily in Palestine. The First World War led to the issuing of the Balfour Declaration by Britain in 1917, which promised the Jews their desire. Then, the dreadful Jewish Holocaust at the hands of Hitler during the Second World War led directly to the creation of the modern state of Israel in their Promised Land in 1948. Ever since then, Israel has been the target of the enmity of their Arab neighbours, part of whose territory was granted to them. Against overwhelming odds, the Israelis have won four major wars designed to drive them out of the region, in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973, clearly with divine help, and have strengthened their hold upon the region. The Arab-Israeli conflict has been the most intractable international problem in world politics ever since 1948, thus fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah chapter 12 verse 3 that Jerusalem would become a 'burdensome stone' to all nations right up to the second coming of Christ.

The stage has certainly been set for the commencement of the prophesied end-time events, which necessitate the presence of Israel in their land, largely in unbelief, as has happened. It remains only for the Man of Sin to enter the scene and set the whole programme in motion by making his seven-year covenant with Israel in accordance with Daniel chapter 9 verse 27. Since this will not happen before the rapture of the one true church to heaven, how very near

must that event be now? Surely, only God's great longsuffering towards mankind, which is permitting a prolonged period of world evangelism to save as many people as possible from the coming awful judgements, and the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit in the church upon the full development of the mystery of lawlessness can be holding back the tide of events to come. Seeing these things around us, Christians can say with ever-increasing fervour, 'Maran-atha!' The Lord is coming!

(ii) Significant Contemporary World Power-Blocks

Another pointer to the probable imminence of the end-times is the gradual emergence during the past century of world power-blocks very similar to those envisaged in the many biblical prophecies of the Day of the Lord. Consider, especially, the growth of the European Union of nations in the West from small beginnings in 1957, when the Treaty of Rome was signed, even to the present day. How easily it could develop with some realignment of national boundaries into the ten-kingdom empire of the coming world dictator, the Man of Sin, the first beast of Revelation chapter 13. Consider, too, the now independent Arab nations in the Middle East surrounding Israel and constantly threatening her, probably the precursors of the end-time 'Kings of the North and the South'. They are backed by the great northern confederacy of Russia, who is also to feature in end-time events, since Russia is probably the far northern power referred to as 'Gog and Magog' in Ezekiel chapters 38-39. Finally, the Far Eastern nations, such as China, India, and Japan, have recently developed rapidly both in population and influence

on world affairs in a way reminiscent of the 'kings of the east' spoken of in the Book of Revelation chapter 16. Yes, God appears to be overruling the development of the world powers which will feature prominently in the events of the Day of the Lord.

(iii) The World now a 'Global Village'

Increasingly, through the past century, and with accelerating speed in the past few decades, the world has by means of vastly improved communications technology been artificially shrunk to a small 'global village', which is completely interdependent. It began with colonialism, which led to two world wars, and continued with the development of television, computer technology, and the internet. Now a would-be world dictator could easily take over and misuse this situation to gain absolute worldwide power for his own evil ends, as scripture says the Man of Sin will. How long will it be, therefore, before he does emerge from the nations? Surely, not very long!

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Personalities in the Pastoral Epistles (5)

Those who were a delight to Paul (continued)



Luke

(meaning: 'light', 'bright', 'white')

Luke was a Gentile physician who joined Paul's party in Troas, the major sea port on the western coast of Asia Minor. For long periods of time afterwards, he was with Paul and, given Paul's state of health, he would have been well able to minister to his medical needs, cp., Gal. 6. 17. Certainly, Paul was to write of him later as 'the beloved physician', Col. 4. 14. We can work out some of Luke's later movements with Paul from the book of Acts (of which he was the author) by noting the four so-called 'we' passages, where he introduced himself into the story. From Troas, Luke travelled with Paul to Philippi in Macedonia and apparently continued there, possibly for some years after Paul had left. The second 'we' passage in Acts suggests that, years later, Luke met Paul again at Philippi where Paul stopped off on his way to delivering the proceeds of his relief fund for the poor saints at Jerusalem, Acts 20. 6. The sea voyage is described in some detail.

Luke disappeared from view during Paul's imprisonment at Jerusalem and Caesarea, and we wonder if he was collecting material for his Gospel from first-hand witnesses in Palestine, Luke 1. 2. The next we hear of Luke being with Paul is in Acts chapter 27 verses 1-28, when he set off with Paul under arrest to go to Rome. This sea voyage is again described in detail, once more showing Luke's special knowledge of the sea.

During his first imprisonment at Rome, Paul wrote to the assembly at Colosse and a personal letter to Philemon, a member of that assembly. Luke was possibly known personally in Colosse, being mentioned as sending his greetings in these epistles, Col. 4. 14 JND, and Philem. 24. Here, we read of Luke being 'the beloved physician' and Paul's fellow labourer.

Luke was also with the apostle Paul during his second imprisonment in Rome. Indeed, when Paul wrote his

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Second Epistle to Timothy, he had to say 'only Luke is with me', 2 Tim. 4. 11, with most of his other companions having gone to do the Lord's work elsewhere.

Luke's view of the life of the Lord (as the perfect Man), in the Gospel that bears his name, was coloured – under the influence of the Holy Spirit – by his medical background. How many 'beloved physicians' have followed, brethren and sisters have used their professional and medical skills in the service of the gospel on the mission field. He was an accurate historian, but one who shunned the limelight himself, never mentioning his own name. However, in his Gospel he very much touches on human things, as well as spiritual need, hence the themes he often chooses are normal life, poverty and wealth, women, children, sickness, in addition to sin, grace, prayer, salvation and forgiveness.

Onesiphorus

(meaning: 'bringing profit')

Whereas, in general, the believers from Asia, but presently in Rome, had turned away from Paul, 2 Tim. 1. 15, he highlights the great exception – Onesiphorus. He told Timothy about Onesiphorus's kindness and care for him; first he reminded him of his previous actions, i.e., 'how much service he rendered at Ephesus', which Timothy already knew very

well, v. 18 JND. Then he described his more recent behaviour 'when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me', v. 17. Obviously locating Paul was no easy matter, given his present confinement, and doing so exposed such a person to danger, but Onesiphorus was 'not ashamed of my chain', v. 16. This resulted in the apostle being often refreshed by him at difficult moments. Obviously, Onesiphorus's home was in Ephesus, the capital of Asia, and Paul asked for the Lord's mercy for all his household (family) there, v. 16. Perhaps Onesiphorus was not expected to be at home when Paul thought his letter to Timothy would arrive, so he sends his greetings to his family, 4. 19. Paul prays that the Lord would 'grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day', 1. 18, that is to say that Onesiphorus would receive his due reward at the judgement seat, to 'find' mercy in the same way as he 'found' Paul. Onesiphorus was very thankful for Paul's work at Ephesus and was only too willing to express it, first at Ephesus, but now especially during Paul's second imprisonment, even at great cost to himself.

References

- 1 Acts 16. 10-17; 20. 5-15; 21. 1-18; and 27. 1 - 28. 16.
- 2 See 'The Medical Language of St. Luke: A Proof From Internal Evidence', HOBART WILLIAM KIRK, Hodges, Dublin, 1882, with various modern reprints.

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THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH

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'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds (lit., ages) were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear', Heb. 11. 1-3.

This great chapter of Hebrews 11 has been variously called 'God's Honour Roll of Old Testament Saints' and 'God's Hall of Fame of Faith'. In Hebrews chapter 10 verses 22-25, believers are exhorted toward faith, hope, and love, while in chapters 11, 12 and 13 these virtues are enlarged on. Chapter 11 is an expansion of chapter 10 verses 38 and 39. The great danger for these Jewish believers to whom Hebrews was written was the temptation to live by sight, not by faith, cf., 2 Cor. 5. 7. This same great danger faces all true believers today.

Referring to Hebrews chapter 11, HERSCHEL H. HOBBS has written, 'The author showed how others of God's people had found faith a source of strength to enable them to fulfil their God-given purpose in their lives. And upon this basis he exhorted his readers to be faithful in their part in God's plan and purpose'.¹

In our study of this brief introduction to this classic chapter, we want to focus on three things regarding faith:

Its Description, v. 1

The Greek verb for faith in Hebrews, *pisteuo*, is found only in chapter 4 verse 3 and chapter 11 verse 6, but the noun, *pistis*, is used thirty-two times, twenty-four of them in chapter 11. It is important to remember that faith in Hebrews 11 is not the faith by which one lays hold of salvation, but 'faith by which to live a full and effective life in the will of God'.

It seems that the writer of this letter is not so much defining faith in his introduction, but describing something of faith's characteristics and effects. It is the foundation of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen. Faith's foundation is the word of God. An anonymous writer has rendered the

statement of verse 1 as follows, 'Faith means we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see'. In certain papyri unearthed in Egypt many years ago, the Greek word translated 'substance' is found in the technical sense of 'title deed', the root idea being that they 'stand under' the claim to the property to support its validity.

It is readily seen throughout Hebrews chapter 11 that faith is active, not passive, virtually all of the illustrations centring on 'things hoped for' or 'things not seen'.

HOBBS has helpfully pointed out that 'faith is basic in every area of life. It is the support which stabilizes every element of society. Even scientific research begins with faith that truth not yet known can be discovered. Certainly faith is a vital element in one's spiritual life. When reason falters, faith can lead one on to great achievements. It can bridge the chasm between what is and what can be. The readers of this epistle, then and now, need this title-deed and conviction'.²

GEORGE MÜLLER said, 'Difficulties are food for faith to feed on'. Another has anonymously written:

Faith, mighty faith the promise sees,
And looks to God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities
And cries, 'It shall be done'.

OSWALD SANDERS stated, 'Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen'.

Its Demonstration, v. 2

'Elders' in this verse refers to all the Old Testament faithful who had preceded the readers of Hebrews. The term has the sense of 'fathers', or forefathers who had gone before and had received God's approval. The balance of the chapter is an illustration of how God has borne witness to them.

W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS³ asserted that the 'elders' of verse 2 are the 'cloud of witnesses' in chapter 12 verse 1, some of whom are mentioned in detail in chapter 11 with reference to their faith. Illustrations are like windows – they let in light. Thus, the illustrations of Hebrews chapter 11 instructively

flesh out the reality of living faith.

Its Discernment, v. 3.

The world says, 'Seeing is believing'; God says, 'Believing is seeing', John 11. 40. By faith Christians understand that the 'worlds', 'ages', were created by God. He spoke and by the word of His power matter and the universe came into existence, and this by His Son who holds all things together, cf., Gen. 1. 1-3; John 1. 1-3; Col. 1. 16; Heb. 1. 2. The writer of Hebrews clearly denies the eternity of matter.

The term 'age', *aion*, refers to both the physical creation and the time factor. Of this word GRIFFITH THOMAS has stated that, 'it seems to refer to what may be called time-worlds, the idea being that the various ages or dispensations were planned by God with reference to a goal, toward which all are moving. Perhaps, therefore, the verse suggests both creation and providence, especially as the word "framed" means adjusted. This verse is thought to give the secret of the faith of the elders, v. 2, who did not judge by appearances but understood that the dispensations were prepared by God, and consequently they believed He would overrule everything for the accomplishment of His purposes'.⁴

In defining faith, WARREN W. WIERSBE has helpfully stated that, 'According to the Bible, true faith is obeying God in spite of feelings, circumstances, or consequences. All of the men and women whose names are listed in "The Hall of Fame of Faith" had to deal with their emotions (did you ever walk through a sea?), their circumstances (did you ever fight an army?), and the consequences of their decisions (did you ever say no to a powerful ruler?). They did not deny their feelings; they could not change their circumstances; they could not predict the consequences. But they trusted God, and He saw them through'.⁵

References

- 1 HERSCHEL H. HOBBS, *Hebrews*, pg. 110.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pg. 110.
- 3 W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS, *Let us go on*, pg. 141.
- 4 HOBBS, *op. cit.*, pg. 111.
- 5 WARREN W. WIERSBE, *Run with the Winners*, pg. 14.

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THE MINISTRY FOR EUROPE TRUST

The work of 'The Ministry for Europe Trust' began in 1991 as a result of reports given by Mr. Bill Grunbaum, missionary to Eastern Europe, and Mr. Ronnie Cunningham, missionary to Tanzania, at a missionary conference in the Killeen Gospel Hall, Armagh, Northern Ireland. Brother Thomas Jennings from Castlereagh Gospel Hall, Belfast, was in the audience and he had been exercised for some time about the work in Eastern Europe, where he had worked for a number of years. The reports given not only heightened his interest in the work in Eastern Europe, but provided the challenge which resulted in some positive action, namely the creation of the 'Ministry for Europe Trust' ('MET').

Early funding for the work was provided as a result of an opportunity graciously offered by Mr. Eric Davis, missionary in Southern Ireland, who asked Thomas to allow some of his late father's unique ministry to be transcribed and made available for the saints. This was agreed and the decision was made that all proceeds should be directed into the work of the Lord in Europe. Since then, a number of books, by Mr. Rowan Jennings, Belfast, and others, have been produced.

The main objective of the MET is, 'to help and encourage those labouring for the Lord in Europe' and, especially, those lonely, pioneers of the gospel, who are not known in the West and, thus, are neither prayed for nor supported in any way.

MET's initial work was focused in the former East Germany, where assistance and encouragement was given to the local believers who were reaching out to their own country-men and women. This eventually progressed to a major Gospel Campaign, where, over a five-night period, some 15,000 people came to hear the gospel, while thousands saw the billboards advertising the meetings, with the message, 'Jesus is the only Way'. This work of evangelizing the German people continues, unabated, until today. The work then progressed into Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Armenia, Kosovo and Macedonia and, as the Lord blessed, assemblies

were planted in Serbia, Armenia and Macedonia. Indeed, over the last twenty years an estimated one million souls have been reached with the gospel across Europe through the endeavours of the MET.

As is well documented, the whole Balkan peninsula suffered greatly as a result of the ethnic wars, during the early part of the 2000s. Through earlier connections made by Brother Jennings, the MET was able to provide much needed aid to thousands of refugees flowing into Macedonia. Just prior to this, the Lord had been working in the lives of a number of the Macedonian believers.

For example, one 'secret disciple' (due to fear of the communist regime) felt the need to translate the scriptures into his own language and MET was highly privileged to finance the importing of the first ever Macedonian Bibles/ New Testaments and, to date, some 110,000 have been delivered into that land.

A more recent development of the work of MET, in partnership with the Loukas Foundation, Netherlands, has been the creation of 'City Bibles', where the 'steps of salvation' are clearly shown in the introduction. However, the unique point of the 'City Bible', is the cover, which shows a well-known local landmark and is, thereby, directed to the people of the targeted area or city. This has proved to be a major 'evangelical tool' in the spread of the gospel across the Balkans.

The MET and Loukas Foundation are presently working with a number of the Israeli assemblies, with a view to creating a 'City Bible' there.

An early decision of the MET was to pro-actively assist in the education of children, as this would not only have long-term personal and social benefits, but it would also give the local saints direct contact with thousands of children and their families. This has been done to great effect in Armenia and to an even greater extent in Macedonia, where MET has been nationally recognized for their endeavours of building schools and

specialized facilities for children with 'learning difficulties'.

This work has allowed MET to distribute Bibles to children, teachers, families and even to the local mayors.

So, the work continues to flourish in many lands across Europe.

The MET leadership, however, felt the need to focus also on areas nearer home and so a door-to-door work was commenced in Northern Ireland and the Shetland Islands, where every home has been visited with specially-designed gospel folders, showing the dignity of

the gospel of grace. The result of this exercise has been that areas, even in our beloved United Kingdom, which have reportedly not been approached with the gospel for over 100 years, have been presented with the message of forgiveness for sins.

Over these twenty years, the work has seen many changes. However, two things remain: (a) the poverty in Eastern Europe is still 'social enemy number one' to both the individual saints and the effectiveness in their work for the Lord; and (b) the resolve of the MET team to continue, as the Lord may lead, to encourage these pioneers to spread the gospel in their own cultures.

MET has determined not to take ownership of any aspect of the work in any of the sixteen countries in which the Lord has allowed them to assist, but to trust in the knowledge and faithfulness of the saints in the local assemblies.

Thomas and Dietburg, as well as the whole MET team, want to take this opportunity to thank the Lord's people for their continued prayers and for giving them the privilege to serve the Lord in this way. The MET team is also happy to give further information of the Lord's work in Eastern Europe, by report, by prayer letter, by email or by telephone. Please feel free to contact: thomas.jennings@metrust.eu or 028 9042 6483/028 9042 4776/07795 549720.





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GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Compiled by SANDY JACK



ENGLAND

Lincolnshire

The small assembly at Bethesda, Kitty Briggs Lane, **Grantham**, commenced an outreach work through a literature stall in the town centre street market. Although the weather was inclement at the start of the day it brightened up later and provided an excellent opportunity for the believers to speak to people from the town and surrounding villages.



The believers were very encouraged by the overall response and literature was given out to a variety of age groups – the 'Test your IQ' tract proving particularly popular. Quite a few invitations to the assembly's children's work were also taken and prayer is requested that some might respond and attend the meetings.

As the market drew to its close there was also an opportunity to speak to other market traders and some were prepared to accept literature. It is planned to continue this work on the first Saturday of each month and the believers pray that the seed sown might bear fruit.

A man who engaged in conversation at the stall came to the Breaking of Bread meeting the following Sunday and after the meeting he expressed his thanks for the kindness and politeness shown because when he 'spoke to some priests they had no time for him.' He has so many things going on in his mind, but he has been given an invitation to discuss Christ/Christianity

and his response is awaited.

Merseyside

Stephen and Carole Baker spent the first two months of this year focusing on gospel outreach in Community Halls in the area where they live: Stockbridge Village, Deysbrook Village and Newsham Park. The first two may sound very rural but they certainly are not. The plan was to use the halls on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to introduce people in the community to the gospel. A number of contacts were made and they would appreciate your prayers for Josie, Christine, Peter and Sharon, Elsie, Charlie, Samantha, John, Peter, Yvonne, Jo, Maureen, Sue and Joanne. They are currently continuing in Stockbridge on Wednesdays and Newsham on Thursdays.

Surrey

The assembly at Canon Court, **Fetcham**, recently celebrated the 75th Anniversary of its founding and a day of fellowship was arranged. At two meetings many believers from surrounding assemblies attended together with a number of those who had fellowshiped there before moving from the district. There were reports of the history of the assembly and ministry of the word at two sessions was by Roy Hill. The work there continues to prosper and on Sunday evenings around fifty and sometimes as many as seventy gather to hear the gospel.

Sussex

The **Eastbourne Bible Readings** have been held every year since 1949 to encourage serious study of the scriptures and teaching of New Testament truth. Most of those attending the studies stay at the hotel in which the meetings are held and also take the opportunity to enjoy times of fellowship. Most of the meetings take the form of conversational Bible Readings. This year the studies, conducted by John Riddle and David West were in Matthew's Gospel.

The assembly at Marine Hall, **Eastbourne**, held two weeks of gospel meetings in June, with Blair Martin. It was an encouraging time.

Having felt the deep need for being dependent on the Lord, a number of Saturday morning prayer meetings were convened prior to the series. As they were praying for the Lord to save souls, they had the joy of hearing of two souls that had professed Christ, one of whom, it seems had been saved two years previously in meetings held by Blair. Every night there were visitors in and they are seeing an interest from some in baptism. Please pray the Lord will continue to work.

Gloucestershire

The Conference held at Bethany, **Cheltenham**, this year was another source of information for prayer, really interesting contacts made and enlightening reports from John Frost of Tottenham and Ken Cowell of Japan about his work among the Japanese in Milton Keynes. John Scarsbrook closed the conference with ministry of a high standard, challenging all to total commitment in our service for the Master, in body, mind and heart.



SCOTLAND

Ayrshire

For the fourth year the assembly at Bethany Hall, Glenburn, **Prestwick**, held a holiday club for children in the area, during the first week in April. The response was terrific and over seventy-five children came each day. There was great help from the younger people in the assembly and others who came to give support. A local brother, Colin Cairnie, was responsible to give lessons on the life of Moses each day and teach the children the ten commandments. Great attention was given during the story time, and some parents also sat in during the week. On the Friday morning about eighteen or so parents and grandparents also came for coffee and heard the word of God. Pray that God will bless in salvation.

Lanarkshire

Joe Baxter spent two weeks visiting



homes around High Parks Gospel Hall, **Hamilton**, in June and had a number of interesting conversations, and although no one came into the gospel meetings as a result, the Lord knows the value and results of sowing the seed.



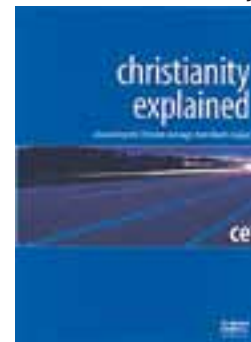
Over the past year the assembly in **Gorey** have been enjoying consecutive teaching through Mark's Gospel and have recently commenced studies in James. The Lord is blessing through the teaching each Lord's Day. The local brothers who share in this responsibility have continued to rise to the task and have been a blessing to many. Thursday night studies in Hebrews have grown in size and it has been heartening to see the consistent interest in the word. As the group grows there is an increasing variety of needs represented. Please pray that wisdom will be given as how best to meet these needs.

Over the past few months the saints have been thrilled at seeing new believers being used to lead others to Christ and how the Lord is working in families. In January it was noticed that Marina's husband, Eric, was attending meetings much more regularly than before. It transpired that he had trusted the Lord over the Christmas holidays. He is an obviously changed man, with a love for hearing the word preached, and has recently started to attend Bible Studies for the first time. Ian, who lost his business at the end of 2010 due to the recession, continues to mature in the Lord and loves reading the word and sharing the gospel. In a total change of direction, he now operates a mobile fast food trailer. He calls the trailer his 'outpost for the gospel' and is witnessing and distributing gospel CDs and literature to many customers. He does all this within a stone's throw from the house he grew up in - a remarkable witness. In March he was able to share the gospel over a number of weeks with one of his brothers, Kieran, who has since professed faith in Christ. Pray that Kieran will grow and use the opportunities for fellowship and Bible study. Continue to pray for the salvation of Ian's wife, Karen,

who has been remarkably supportive of his stand for the gospel in his new business. Another man from the assembly, Peter, has been used in bringing his brother, William, who lives in Dublin to the Lord. In May, Christine had her in-laws, from Italy, staying with her. Her 79-year-old mother-in-law believes in heaven and hell and that, as a sinner, she was going to hell because she did not attend the Catholic church, having been forbidden to do so by her Communist husband. As she heard the gospel for the first time, she sat with tears in her eyes, saying 'Bella, bella'. Pray for Michelene, her husband and Christine's immediate family. Pray for the assembly too - in the midst of these wonderful blessings they face ongoing struggles in establishing biblical patterns, maintaining unity, and in the nurturing of new believers towards spiritual maturity.

Evangelistic Bible studies have been perhaps the most encouraging aspect of the work in recent months. Having concluded a 'Bible for Beginners' course in December there was much enthusiasm among the believers who helped out, to start another course in the new year. So in January they did, and were pleased to have four new people join them. Two of the four were believers who simply enjoyed hearing the gospel laid out in clear biblical terms. Rachael, who had been on the previous course, came again and Noreen, a lady in her sixties, came as a result of seeing an ad in a local paper. Her husband had died in 2010 and she was seeking comfort and answers. She has expressed how much the study has helped her but she still seems to be unable to accept that salvation is fully dependant on Christ. The other new attendee is Liz B, who lives two doors away from Michael and Shirley McKillen. They have had little meaningful conversation with her over the years but when they returned home from a Christmas break she stopped Shirley outside the house and said how she had been waiting all holidays to talk. She called herself a 'lapsed Catholic' but that she wanted her youngest child to be taught the Bible (Corrie has since started coming to Seekers Club). When Shirley then invited her to the Bible study she replied, 'That is just what I am looking for'. She has been along every night and really seems to be grasping the truth. Please pray for her salvation.

The saints commenced a '*Christianity Explained*' course in May because all those who attended the aforementioned beginners course wanted to study further. Six new unbelieve rs (Glen, Damien, and Ruth, Lori, Liz and Mary) have also come along. Pray that God will gloriously save these people, some of whom come from very difficult backgrounds.



Some will remember Liz K, who began attending studies several years ago and has experienced much tragedy in life. She has been diagnosed with cancer and is currently undergoing treatment. Pray that she will know the reality of Christ in her life and that wisdom and compassion will be shown in caring for her.

In April, the saints in **Newcastle West**, held a Holiday Bible Club. Thirty children came along. This included five new children and one who hadn't been along since last year. On the last day a prize-giving was held and unsaved parents came and heard the gospel message.

The BSI seminars entitled '*Digging deeper*' have been going on the **Dublin** area for a number of years. There are four meetings per year each having three sessions on the Saturday. The day starts at 10.30 and finishes at 15.30 with a break for lunch. The format makes it possible for consecutive ministry and this is appreciated by the attendance of believers from not only the Dublin area but also from as far away as N. Ireland.

The four sessions for 2010-11 were studies on outstanding Bible Characters and the speakers were Danny Crookes, Mike Tardive, Keith Keyser and Roy Hill. The 2011-12 session is on the Book of Revelation and the speakers are David MacLeod (USA) on 24th September; Bill Steveley on 12th November; John Grant on 4th February; and Uel Crothers on 31st March.

The meetings are held in The High School, Rathgar, Dublin. There is a helpful website - www.diggingdeeper.info





Italy

In **Naples**, on Sunday 5th June four young believers obeyed the Lord in baptism. Just over a year ago, Emanuele, (mentioned in the last *PSI* issue) was an alcoholic and very aggressive. Never would the saints have dreamed that one day he would be baptized! How great is the Lord's power and love! Giulia (pronounced Julia) is a young lady from a broken home, a life of sorrow and lack of love, who came to immerse herself in the boundless love of the Lord. Enza is a young lady who was converted about ten years ago, but went away from the Lord due to going out with and eventually marrying a non-Christian. She came back to the Lord about a year ago, and is to be baptized although she is eight months pregnant! Brenda is a 16-year-old girl who trusted the Lord during the preaching at the last baptisms in February. Her mum has also started to come along, as has her younger sister on a few occasions.



Giulia



The seafront where the saints have open-air meetings

Please do pray for the assembly, that the Lord would bless it with His power and, for those baptized, that the Lord would bless and keep them.

The summer months give varied

opportunities for evangelism. Every Sunday evening open-air meetings are held on the sea front where thousands of passers-by have the opportunity to stop and hear the gospel. These really are wonderful opportunities. The young people are keen to go into the various housing estates and try to do some open-air children's meetings. If this goes ahead, it will be a tremendous challenge for them in many ways. The believers hope also to arrange varied evenings where they can spend time together over supper, when non-Christians are introduced to a Christian environment. They have found this aspect of pre-evangelism extremely useful in getting to know people and breaking down barriers.

Moldova

The assembly in **Roshu** is going on well and the saints are still looking for a place to meet in Cahul. The work with children and teenagers goes on and they have been encouraged to see some new faces at the meetings. Please pray for Misha as he takes a lot of responsibility in teaching them.

The work in the schools is more difficult at this time of year because the students have their exams, but even so there have been some good opportunities. In the Professional School for Boys about twenty are still glad to hear the gospel and ask questions. It is not the same at the SPP for girls. It is still closed to the gospel, but the saints do still hand out gospel tracts. Recently four brothers from Scotland helped deliver Seed Sowers around fifteen villages and there was a really good response. Some have started a Bible course. There are now 1200 doing the Bible course and the numbers are growing.

Ukraine

At **Lutsk**, the building of a hall is slowly continuing. The workforce has been reduced from six or seven to two to three working Monday to Friday from 08.00 to 19.00 and on Saturday 08.00 to 16.00. God willing before the conference in July the believers hope to have all the windows and roller shutters in place and all the outside



walls insulated and rough plastered. If the weather is nice in early autumn, they hope to fine plaster and paint the outside and before winter sets in, to buy a wood-burning boiler so that there is heat in the building to allow them to continue over the winter months.

In April 2012 the assembly will celebrate its 10th anniversary and a finished Gospel Hall will be a great asset to the work of the Lord.

Around one hundred children are fed every day after they get their Bible lesson and, whilst God has never failed to provide, what is more important is having a hundred young souls to preach the gospel to each day. Pray for their salvation. Over the years some have been saved and baptized as a result of this work and God can still save! Please also pray for forty special needs children who are provided for, twice a month.

Over the last eight years 218,000 gospel tracts have been printed, (18,000 were printed in April 2011), 120,000 Seed Sowers along with books, booklets, laminated A4 posters, bookmarks and invitations. At present the saints also have access to 150 titles including books by A. McShane, D. Gilliland, Michael Brown, John Ritchie, D. Newell and D. Hinton, W. McDonald, A. M. S. Gooding, D. Gooding, J. Heading and many more. Soon, John Ritchie's booklets *Focus On* in Ukrainian and five of Leslie Craig's latest gospel tracts in Ukrainian will be ready for the printers. Do continue to pray for the monthly billboard poster (2 sides) which is displayed in the centre of town.

Jabe Nicholson writes from **Mississippi**, 'Down in this neck of the woods, at least, you can have a serious conversation about spiritual things just about any time of the day. I had a gospel meeting in the middle of Wal-Mart on Friday with a group of employees.



I was collecting five buggy's full of relief supplies and so needed people to help me push my growing convoy. For twenty minutes they stood transfixed in the middle of the store as I told the gospel story. Down here "spiritual conversations" are usually about "my church" not about Christ.

I was up helping a couple near a village called Montpelier on Wednesday. Nancy, the wife, was thrown out the front door onto the grass by the tornado. Then the trailer was hurled over her head and smashed to pieces against a row of large trees thirty feet away. Almost everything was destroyed. I heard about her because she works at Lowes in Starkville. Among the things I bought her was a convection oven/toaster, since she lost both her toaster and her stove (and her beds, and chest of drawers, and kitchen table, etc.). She is living with her husband and son in a shed/garage at present. The oven/toaster seems to be a practical help for people trying to make do. They can make a medium-size pizza, cookies, etc., in it as well as heat up things. And they can keep it as a toaster after they get a stove.

When I delivered what she needed (along with laundry detergent, towels, dog food, etc., plus a kitchen table and matching chairs - she said she never had one with matching chairs before - she began to weep. "Why did you buy me new?" she asked. "Why didn't you get something from the Salvation Army?" My response: If I was looking for something for myself,

I might have shopped at the SA, but when I'm shopping for Jesus, He wants you to know how much He loves you. Some people haven't figured that out from the cross yet, that He loved them enough to die for their sins. So He keeps on giving till we get the point. Don't thank me for this stuff. It's from Jesus; it's just that He doesn't have a truck so He asked me to be the delivery boy".

For almost an hour, as we sat there surrounded by the ruins of her life, I shared with Nancy and her son Bob the story of the gospel. I'm welcome back there any time. They promised to listen carefully to the two CDs I gave them. I think one of the keys is not to give stuff as if it were "charity" in the bad sense of the word, handouts for the destitute, but love gifts from the Lord.

Although there are many piles of basics available at relief centres for these people who have lost everything, there are many specific things they need. We win a golden opportunity to share Christ with them if we are willing to spend a little time finding out what they need, hearing their story, sitting with them in the rubble, and giving them a hug or two. A table and chairs (matching) doesn't hurt either. They long to know that someone cares about THEM.

Egypt

In April three brothers from the assembly in Nazareth, Israel, made a visit to see how the believers were faring in Egypt. They took funds with them to help them rather than goods, which they believed might be confiscated. Here is a portion of their letter:

'I don't know where to start, but we were terribly shocked by what we saw. We went there with an amount of \$27,000 and we had to make calls from there to get more money for help. What we saw there is not easy to express in words but we know for sure that the Lord is the only comfort these people can have and need.

Most of our time was spent in the old cemeteries. The Egyptians usually build a large room so when they bury someone they can sit there to get protection from the sun. But now these rooms are occupied with families.

Each room is as big as a normal room, and in it live thirty people at least. No bathrooms, no showers, so you can just imagine what they have to go through, especially the families with small children.

We also went to one church that is still existing (a very old house), but we could not go inside because of the smell. People have diseases from not being able to eat for days and not showering for weeks. I could tell you so many things of what we saw, but I prefer to tell you better things.

We had fellowship with hundreds of these people, where they praised the Lord and prayed and sang. We went with some of them to markets and bought food, clothes, and medicine, as much as we could but it was not enough at all, so we will now make a bigger campaign for our brothers there so as to help them more. We also met brothers who ran away from Libya and are now with the brothers in Egypt'.

Singapore

The assemblies in **Ang Mo Kio** and **Depot Walk** together with other local assemblies have taken up a proposal from Trans World Radio to broadcast gospel messages in Singapore and regions around, including south Malaysia and Indonesia. Kenneth Wong will be the evangelist/teacher and the broadcast will be at prime time, 8-8:30pm, Monday to Friday, every week of the year commencing, DV, 3rd October 2011. Prayer is requested for this exciting opportunity

Of interest



A new website has been set up <http://www.goodnewstoolbox.com/> so that gospel outreach material can be publicized. The website offers six different CDs with gospel messages by William MacDonald and Jabe Nicholson. You can listen to the messages on the website and you will be able to see the quality of the packaging.

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A WORD FOR TODAY

(hillûlîm) praise offering, festival;

(hâlak) step, walk;

(h'likâ) walk, caravan procession.

In the twenty-first century, private and public transport makes a significant contribution to our modern way of life. It is often therefore difficult for us to appreciate that previous generations had little in the way of such facilities. Unless they were rich, most people walked everywhere, so walking, in effect, characterized an individual's way of life. This simple analogy captures some of the meaning of the Hebrew word *hâlak*, which can mean to walk or to conduct one's way of life (for good or ill). It is one of the most common terms used in the Old Testament to describe the process of life. Directly linked with this word is the Hebrew term *halakhah*, which forms part of the descriptive type of rabbinic interpretation of the first five books of Moses. *Halakhah* includes the 613 precepts or divine commandments (*mitzvot*), for identifying the 'way' of holiness for a Jew. It attempts to work out the meaning of Leviticus chapter 19 verse 2b – 'ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy' (LXX) – and apply it to both secular and spiritual life, cp. Mic. 6. 8. This form of practical application plays an important part in all Jewish life, because it helps to explain why they do certain things. This can be illustrated by reference to the dietary laws of Judaism, and specifically the large number of regulations that govern the separation of meat and milk products. We may be surprised to learn that all these regulations are based on the interpretation of just one Old Testament text, 'Thou shall not seethe a kid in his mother's milk', Exod. 23.19b! *Halakhah* is consequently seen as a very powerful directive for ethical conduct, because it encourages Jews to strive after holiness as reflected in God Himself. We will see later how this approach has influenced New Testament writers.

The verb *hâlak* is used in the Old Testament to refer to walking in general, e.g., Abram walked toward the Negeb, Gen. 12. 9, or the children of Israel walked on dry ground in the middle of the Red Sea, Exod. 15. 19. On other occasions, it refers to God Himself as He walked or dwelt amongst His people, Lev. 26. 12. It is frequently applied in a figurative way to the fellowship that is enjoyed with God, expressed as walking with God or Godly living. For example, it is recorded that Enoch walked with God, Gen. 5. 22, 24, and this is later interpreted by the writer of Hebrews as meaning that he pleased God, Heb. 11. 5b.¹ In other words, the way he lived his life brought pleasure to God. Similarly we could highlight Noah's life, Gen. 6. 9, or that of the psalmist, Ps. 1. 1, as exemplifying a godly walk. It was also indicative of many Old Testament kings whose lives were characterized by a desire to follow closely after God, 2 Chron. 17. 3-4, and at the same time, provide an example for others to follow, 2 Chron. 34. 2. EUGENE MERRILL states, 'To fear and obey God is to live life as God intended it – life compared to a walk along a road which, though dark at times, leads to a happy end for God's own people.'²

But just as the word *hâlak* had a positive meaning, so it could also have a negative one in that those who failed to

walk with God or regulate their lives in accordance with His word, brought themselves into condemnation with God, see Jer 32. 23. The history of Israel was catalogued by their failure to respond to the covenant that they had entered into with God on Sinai, Ps. 81.11-14. Their conquest of the Promised Land was predicated on them walking in accordance with God's precepts, Deut. 11. 22-25, but the extent of their disobedience is clearly evident from even a cursory glance at the book of Judges.

By

**BRIAN
CLATWORTHY**

Newton Abbot,
England

In the Greek Old Testament (LXX), a number of words are used to describe the cycle of life with *perpatêō* of major significance because of its emphasis on life being viewed as an ethical walk, see Prov. 8. 20. The English word peripatetic is derived from this Greek word, and the peripatetic teacher was a common feature of the Greco Roman world, e.g., Aristotle conducted his discussions with his students while walking around the Lyceum. Paul extrapolates the meaning of the word *perpatêō* as used in the LXX when he refers figuratively to the way in which Christians should conduct their lives before God.

Believers are encouraged to walk in step with God:

- By faith, not by sight, 2 Cor. 5. 7.
- As led by the Holy Spirit, Gal. 5. 25.
- In newness of life, Rom. 6. 4.
- To please Him, Col. 1. 10.
- To fulfil their Christian calling, 1 Thess. 2. 12; Eph. 4. 1.
- To reflect the moral characteristics of the age to come, Rom. 13. 13.

The Apostle John also contributes to this agenda by a negative and positive contrast. The belief that sin is unimportant for maintaining a right relationship with God is indicated by walking or living continuously in darkness (unrighteousness), 1 John 1. 6, whereas a godly lifestyle is evident by walking continuously in the light (righteousness), 1 John 1. 7.

In terms then, walking was figuratively synonymous with lifestyle. As STEPHEN RENN points out, 'The unique perspective of the New Testament demonstrates that in order to live in accordance with God's requirements and thereby please Him, one must express absolute devotion and obedience to Christ.' Our way of life should reflect the holiness of God. Why? Because God commands it, and it expresses His moral character, 1 Pet. 1. 15 -16. Walking suggests that practical holiness is a progressive matter. We need then to walk daily in the Spirit so that we do not gratify the desires of the flesh, Gal. 5. 16.

For further reading/study

Introductory

Scott, Julius J. Jr, *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*

Advanced

Fishbane, Michael, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*

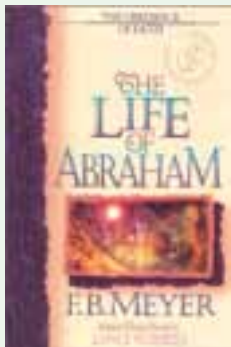
References

- 1 The Septuagint translates both verses as 'And Enoch was well-pleasing to God'.
- 2 NIDOTTE p. 1033
- 3 *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* p. 1024

F.B. MEYER

Frederick Brotherton Meyer was a Baptist minister in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Based in Liverpool, York, Leicester and finally London, he travelled widely and wrote prolifically. Wikipedia has a brief biography at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Brotherton_Meyer.

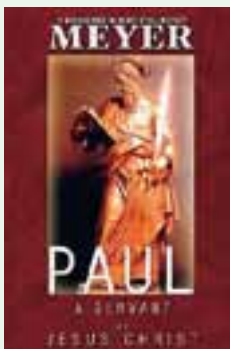
F. B. Meyer is one of my favourite authors. His writing style is often dramatic, at times imaginative, but always challenging and deeply devotional. Since F. B. Meyer died over 70 years ago, the copyright on his works has expired. This means they can be freely reprinted, uploaded to the internet, and even photocopied. For instance, I have a perfectly legible photocopy of his book *John the Baptist*.



Meyer's best-known books are probably his character studies on Bible giants from *Abraham: The Obedience of Faith*, to *Paul: A Servant of Jesus Christ*. He also has overview-style commentaries on many books of the Bible. His other major genres

include works on general Christian living, and various daily reading schemes. For this month's column, I set out to investigate how much F. B. Meyer material is available online.

If you own a Kindle or other ebook reader, Amazon (<http://www.amazon.co.uk>) has an F. B. Meyer section in its Kindle store. Only a handful of his books are available here, but they are reasonably priced: ranging from *The Secret of Guidance* for 70p to *Samuel* for £5. These may be cheaper than buying actual volumes second hand.



For web browsing, several online Christian library sites such as <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/meyer/> (featured before in this column) and <http://www.gotothebible.com/HTML/MeyerFB.html> have some of his character study books and other commentaries. His significant work on John's Gospel is available at http://www.preceptaustin.org/gospel_of_john-f_b_meyer-1.htm.



I also find Meyer's daily reading schemes most helpful. *Our Daily Walk* at http://www.preceptaustin.org/our_daily_walk_by_f_b_meyer_-jan.htm has a verse plus comment for every day of the year. *Our Daily Homily* (available at the above link on the www.gotothebible.com site) picks out a single verse from each chapter of the Bible. Even in the most obscure chapters, Meyer finds some delightful gems of encouragement.

If you are already a fan of F. B. Meyer, then you might find the online resources helpful for searching through his works. On the other hand, if you have not previously encountered him, I recommend browsing through one or two volumes. Admittedly, his vocabulary is, at times, flowery, but what he says strikes home to the heart time and again.



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Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

Christians take prejudice row to Strasbourg

In a significant legal development, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has requested that the British Government state whether they believe that the rights of Christians have been infringed in recent cases where individuals have been penalized for expressing their faith in the workplace. The request has come because legal action is being taken by four Christians who argue that their rights have been infringed.

The four Christians are Nadia Eweida, a British Airways employee who was prevented from wearing a cross; Gary McFarlane, a counsellor who was sacked by a counselling service for saying that he would not give sex therapy to homosexual couples; Shirley Chaplin, a nurse who was banned from working on hospital wards for wearing a cross around her neck; and Lillian Ladele, who was disciplined by Islington council for refusing to conduct civil partnership ceremonies for homosexual couples.

The cases have been viewed by the European Court as being of such importance that they merit further investigation. Once British Government ministers have responded the Court will decide whether to hold further hearings. Many will be watching these developments closely, as the number of Christian discrimination cases in the UK appears to be continuing to rise.

It is hoped that the consideration of these cases will provide greater clarity as to how freedom of conscience for Christians can be preserved when it comes into conflict with UK 'equality' laws. Earlier in the year, the ECHR ruled that crosses were allowed to be displayed on classroom walls after a case from Italy was heard. This decision appeared out of step with how British courts had ruled on the four cases, which were all lost on appeal.

Source: <http://www.christianlegalcentre.com/view.php?id=1289>



BBC is anti-Christian according to the Corporation's OWN survey

The BBC is anti-Christian and ageist – according to a survey it carried out itself. Viewers also felt that minority groups were over-represented by the Corporation. They expressed concerns over 'tokenism' and 'box-ticking' and warned the broadcaster against trying to 'manipulate' an equal society instead of reflecting reality.

The survey was conducted as part of the BBC's 'Diversity Strategy' and involved 4,500 people, including some BBC staff. Some viewers still believe the broadcaster has a Left-wing or 'liberal bias', the consultation found. Others said 'positive discrimination' was still a 'notable' problem with the BBC's recruitment process. According to viewers, Christians are badly treated with 'derogatory stereotypes' which portray them as 'weak' or 'bigoted'. It was suggested that there was a bias against Christianity and that other religions were better represented.

The consultation concluded: 'In terms of religion, there were many who perceived the BBC to be anti-Christian and as such misrepresenting Christianity.' It added, 'Christians are specifically mentioned as being badly treated, with a suggestion that more minority religions are better represented despite Christianity being the most widely observed religion within Britain.' One respondent said, 'As a Christian I find that the BBC's representation of Christianity is mainly inaccurate, portraying incorrect, often derogatory stereotypes'.

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1392947/BBC-anti-Christian-subs-elderly-finds-Corporations-OWN-survey.html#ixzz1P4BxbP>



Eritrean Christians facing 'unimaginable suffering' in Egypt

Eritrean Christians fleeing persecution in their homeland are facing imprisonment, torture, beatings and sexual assault in Egypt, reports *Barnabas Fund*. The charity estimates that hundreds of Eritrean Christian refugees have been subjected to terrible abuse after arriving in Egypt. In Eritrea, Christians and evangelicals in particular are viewed as a threat to national security because of their allegiance to God before the state and as a result, many of them are tortured and imprisoned for their faith in conditions described by Barnabas Fund as 'horrendous'. Persecution has intensified in recent months after an Eritrean governor ordered a purge against Christians at the end of 2010. The charity said hundreds of Eritrean Christians were risking their lives each month to enter Egypt, where they go in the hope of eventually being able to cross the border into Israel.

A Channel 4 documentary, 'Breaking into Israel', charted the harsh 900-mile journey made by Eritrean refugees, some of whom die before reaching their destination. Some are shot dead crossing the Egypt-Israel border and others are caught and returned to Eritrea where they face torture and even death.

According to Barnabas Fund, the majority of the Eritrean refugees are Christians and it warned that many of them were ending up in Egyptian prisons or being held hostage for \$20,000 ransoms in the deserts of Sinai by Bedouin Muslim nomads who work with human traffickers.

Source: <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/eritrean-christians-facing-unimaginable-suffering-in-egypt/11267.htm>



Bits & Bobs

Solar-Powered Hornets

Looking for some 'green' technology to cut your energy bills? Maybe you should check out the Oriental hornet. Unlike many other wasp species, the Oriental hornet (*Vespa orientalis*) becomes most active in the heat of the afternoon. In fact, the industrious insect digs its nest most intensely when exposed to the most extreme rays from the sun. This odd behaviour caught the attention of researchers at Tel Aviv University in Israel.

Using atomic force microscopy (which provides three-dimensional images down to an atomic scale), the team zoomed in on the brown and yellow stripes on the hornet's abdomen. Although the surface, or cuticle, appears smooth, it actually contains layers and layers of microstructures that appear to 'harvest parts of the solar radiation'. In other words, the hornet may be a flying solar panel.



Up close, the brown stripes reveal a ridge-like structure, somewhat similar to a terraced hill. As light rays pass through each layer, the structures split the light and trap extra energy for conversion into electric power. The yellow stripe also has many layers that trap light, although the structures are different.

The actual conversion to electricity is accomplished by the yellow pigment xanthopterin (which is also found in the wings of some butterflies). At this point, however, researchers are still investigating how the wasps use this harvested solar energy. We know that their active digging corresponds with increased absorption of the sun's rays. But we don't know whether this increased activity is simply a result of absorbing heat from the sun (as is common with many animals). Researchers suspect that something else lies beneath the surface. Does the electrical energy gained 'charge up' the wasp to do actual work (similar to how our bodies convert food into chemical energy, called ATP, which our cells use to do their work)? To test this idea, researchers placed this yellow chemical in a solar cell and found that it can indeed absorb sunlight and convert it into electric energy, similar to the silicon-based solar cells that humans have developed.

The researchers' attempt to copy the solar prowess of the hornet lacked the same spark, but they hope to refine their models in the future, perhaps as an economical alternative to silicon cells. Yet another technological marvel with potential application to human technology is the hornet's ability to remove all that extra heat. Like a modern refrigerator, this versatile vespine houses a sophisticated heat pump that keeps it from overheating! The researchers claim the hornet itself somehow 'solved' these design problems by evolving such complex and interdependent structures. Sadly, they remain in the dark about the One who cares for all His creatures — even those pesky hornets.

Source: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v6/n3/hornets>

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Front Cover illustration:

The printing press is generally considered to have been invented in around AD1440 by a German man called Johannes Gutenberg. Of course it was rather different from the modern printing presses of today being based on an existing screw press used for pressing grapes! The key invention that greatly helped with the printing press was Gutenberg's hand mould. This was a hand-held device that produced lead alloy letters in volume. These were then arranged and placed in the press, and at last, quality, repeatable printing could be achieved. It might have been crude, but it was the start of what has been perhaps the most influential invention over the last millennium. The invention and development of the printing press quickly brought about an affordable and quick way for the common man and woman to be able to own a book. Over the years by the grace of God the printing press has also been used to spread the word of God in the form of the printed Bible. In fact Gutenberg himself printed what is known as the 'Gutenberg Bible' in 1455. 400 years ago the King James version of the Bible was printed and published by Robert Barker the royal printer.

In later years both Oxford and Cambridge universities obtained licenses and utilized their printing presses to print subsequent revisions of the Authorised Version. The last revision was first printed by Dr. Benjamin Blayney at Oxford University in 1769 and today based on this revision, millions of King James Bibles are still printed every year! The KJV is a beloved version to many, acknowledged to be a good and accurate translation of the word of God and thanks to the printing press is available to all.



Question Time

Conducted by

RICHARD COLLINGS

Unless otherwise stated all
scripture quotations are
from the New King
James Version

QUESTION

Is it wrong for a woman to cut her hair?

ANSWER

When the woman responded to the serpent's temptation in the Garden of Eden, one of the mistakes she made was to add to the instruction that the Lord God had given. The specific directive was that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not to be eaten, but Eve in her reply added 'nor shall you touch it', Gen. 3. 3. Several thousand years later Israel's religious leaders were guilty of perpetuating precisely the same error. The spiritual hierarchy had introduced a framework of regulations which, despite being a man-made addition, gained equal status with the law of God, and the Pharisees were fastidious in their adherence to these traditions.

Two millennia later brings us to our day, but some things have not changed despite the passage of time. The same tendency that was evident in Eden, and at the time of Christ, has not gone away and the human inclination to interpolate our notions into the word of God continues. Many of these ideas might be praiseworthy and are the product of a sincere desire to honour the Lord. We would be ill advised to sweep them all aside as though they are of no value. However, there are two issues we must ever remember.

Firstly, no matter how saintly the person is who initiated these suggestions, nor how admirable their motives were, these instructions are not divine mandates and we are not being disobedient to the word of God if we decide to amend or move away from them. Secondly, we must examine all 'received wisdom' by the scriptures and not allow it to exert a powerful influence over our thinking just because it has been blended with Bible references and dignified by the passage of time.

One issue where additions have supplemented the specific teaching of scripture relates to the matter of a woman's hair. There are eighteen verses in the New Testament which refer to hair, and ten of them contain no direct reference to a woman. Of the remaining verses, four relate to incidents in the Lord's life when women wiped His feet with their hair, and one verse describes the hair of locusts that shall invade the earth during the second half of the Tribulation. This leaves three verses to give explicit teaching concerning a woman's hair.

Writing to Timothy, Paul states, 'In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair', 1 Tim. 2. 9. In his First Epistle to the persecuted and scattered believers of his day, Peter exhorts various sections of the Christian community, including the wives, and says, 'Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel', 1 Pet. 3. 3. These two prohibitions may not be identical, but they are similar, for both Paul and Peter are teaching the sisters that to be lavish and ostentatious is contrary to being modest and godly. However, in neither of these passages is there any comment as to the length of the woman's hair and neither of them infers any prohibition on the hair being cut.

Let's now consider the final verse that refers to a woman's hair for it is the only one that makes a definite comment on the length of her hair, 'But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering', 1 Cor. 11. 15. Paul establishes that a woman's hair is given her for a covering; the word in its primary meaning refers to a veil, a vesture, or a mantle. A closer examination will reveal that the phrase 'long hair' is the translation of one Greek word and the word is a verb not a noun. Therefore, where nature allows it a woman's hair should be long and she should be proactive in achieving this requirement. A woman who chooses to have hair so short that it looks like a man's hair is acting against the spirit of scripture. Thus, that which is a shame for a man in verse 14 is stated to be a glory for a woman in verse 15.

However, it must be remembered that not all women can grow their hair long. Consequently, we must guard against reaching a verdict based solely on appearance - the absence of long hair does not, by itself, indicate that a sister is being contrary to the scriptures. Greater harm will be caused by a legalistic and inaccurate judgement of their motives, than by their failure to grow their hair to a length some arbitrarily deem to be 'scriptural'.

Based on the foregoing there are two questions that need to be answered. Firstly, do the scriptures teach that a woman's hair should be long? The honest answer has to be yes, where this is physically possible, they do. Secondly, do they teach that a woman should not cut her hair? The honest answer has to be, no they don't. Therefore, let us ensure that we abide by what the word of God teaches, but do not fall into the age-old error of adding to it.