

YE THAT ARE CHRIST'S:
A CONVERSATION WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS
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PREFACE

This book has been written for believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the author wishes to greet all such in the name of Christ. A wonderful bond exists among believers everywhere. They are all one in Christ Jesus, members of Christ, and one day shall share His glory. Then, the divisions which exist among believers in outward testimony will cease. How perfect we shall be when we see Him, "whom not having seen, we love"! The thought of what we shall be, should surely cause us exercise of heart to show, even now, the oneness which is dear to the Lord (Jn.17:21). This manifest oneness in testimony can only result from a seeking to God and to the word of His grace. We must treasure in our hearts the truth of God as it is revealed to us.

In this book it is the desire of the author, so to present the word of Christ that He will be magnified, and that those who are His will be helped through the knowledge of the truth to grow up into Him who is the Head, even Christ (Eph.4:15). The truth of God is not easily found; it must be sought and searched for; and what is perhaps the most difficult of all, we must subject ourselves to it when we find it. By nature we seem to be prejudiced and disobedient, but the love of Christ, which first drew us to Himself for salvation, will continue to draw us and make us willing if only we yield ourselves to it.

The Lord Himself realised the effect which His word had upon those who believed on Him, and He defines for us three classes of believers (Lk.11:45). Some are like the seed falling on the stony ground, which had little earth; this took root but soon

withered away. Some again are like the seed falling among thorns, which grew with it a choked it. But others — and how it gladdened the Lord's heart to think of them — were like the seed falling on the good ground. These, the Lord said, "are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast and bring forth fruit with patience." May author and reader alike be of the last kind!

The Christian does not need to be clever to follow his Lord, but he does need an honest and good heart. To make progress in the things of God he must love the truth, and he must love it so much that he will buy it, whatever the cost (Prov.23:23). The Lord's disciple must find his doctrines in the Word of God, and he must see that the doctrines that he holds are the doctrines of the Lord, as taught by the Lord and His apostles (Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor.14:37). It is well to remember that the Spirit of God has come to guide us into all the truth (Jn.16:13). As we read prayerfully, He will take the things of Christ, and reveal them unto us.

It is only natural that in youth we should be influenced and directed by our parents or guardians but having come to years of responsibility we must ourselves seek to find, from the Word of God, the truth of God. In this search an honest and good heart is essential, for God will reveal His will to all who seek Him (Matt.7:7). It is His will that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim.2:4). Wrong doctrines abound and are even taught by some who seem to urge the supreme value of the Bible. However, those who love the Lord are not easily led astray. It is the attitude to the Person and the Word of Christ which is always the test. "What think ye of Christ?" (Matt.22:42) is still the greatest question asked of hu-

man hearts. Fellow-Christian, let us go to the Word of God and to prayer. We are coming to the close of this dispensation and very soon the Master is coming. May we so love and serve Him, that when He comes we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE WORD OF GOD

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet. And light unto my path” (Ps.119:105).

The Scriptures are God-breathed (2 Tim.3:16). Men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet.1:21). The Bible therefore is unlike all other books; though written by men, it has come from God. In the Bible the Christian finds the spiritual food which alone can satisfy the new nature within him. To the Bible he turns on all occasions for edification, correction and comfort. It has been given that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (2 Tim.3:17).

The disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ will not accept the edicts of any church as being of the same value as the Scriptures; nor will he accept the supposed visions of any man or woman as being additional to God's word. The Word of God, and that alone, is his guide in things spiritual. This Book delivers him from the errors of the Church of Rome, as well as the “visions” of the Christian Scientists, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Swedenborgians, and all who add to, or take from, the Word. The Book is complete. Not only is it complete but it is perfect. “The words of the Lord are pure words” (Ps.12:6).

It is assailed by some who profess to love it; by the teachers in some theological seminaries. Such men undermine the faith of younger men in the Sacred Writings. Failing to understand the Scriptures themselves, they therefore infer and teach that the Scriptures cannot be entirely true. Their writings, which demon-

strate their own ignorance of the Scriptures, upset the faith of many who are seeking more light. While professing to revere the person of Christ, they deny His words.

He bore witness to the story of creation as in the book of Genesis (Matt.19:4-5); to the story of the flood (Matt.24:37); and to the experience of Jonah (Matt.12:40), yet all these and much more they deny. They do not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures; they preach another gospel, which is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a gospel that man's salvation depends chiefly upon himself.

We thank God for many faithful men who do believe the Bible to be inspired of God, and who teach that it is so. We are thankful too for many upon whose heart God has put the desire to spread the Scriptures. It is now published in more than one thousand different languages, and in almost every part of the world men can read these life-giving words in their own language. Christian, let us hold to the faithful word (Titus 1:9) As we peruse its pages in succeeding chapters, let it be pre-eminent in our counsels, correcting our errors, and leading us on to do the will of our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory both now and for ever. Amen.

“Whence but from heaven, could men unskilled in arts,

In several ages born, in several parts,

Weave such agreeing truths? Or how or why

Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?

Unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,

Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.

Then for the style, majestic and divine!

It speaks no less than God in every line;

Commanding words whose force is still the same;

As the first fiat that produced our frame."

(Dryden)

CHAPTER TWO: THE NEW BIRTH

Marvel not that I said unto thee. Ye must be born anew.” (Jn.3:7).

Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away behold, they are become new.” (2 Cor.5:17).

All true Christians have been born of God, and because they have been born of God they are now children of God. It is impossible to become a child of God except by being born of God. A person who has once been born of God cannot cease to be a child of God, although he may fail to glorify God as he ought. This new birth, of which the Lord spoke in John 3, takes place through the power of the Spirit of God, in the heart of everyone who believes the Word of God concerning the Son of God. In this way they are born of water and the Spirit”. That the water is not literal water is made clear by the Scripture in Ephesians 5:25-26: “Christ also loved the Church - having cleansed it by the *washing of water with the Word*”.

Very wonderful is the experience of a person who is born of God when he becomes a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Jn.1:12). Only a personal faith in Christ and His work avails in the mighty change which brings a sinner from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18). Realising that we are sinners lost and on our way to hell, we look by faith to the Cross, and see the Saviour bearing our sins in His own body

on the tree. Gazing there by faith, the believer is born again. The Son of God, the Prince of life, gave His life for us, the Just suffering for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Not only did He die for our offences, but He was raised for our justification (Rom.4:25). The Christian can sing: "My chains are snapped, The bonds of sin are broken, And I am free."

Personal faith in the Son of God is necessary to make this change. In this way, and in this alone, is a person born of God. No amount of doing good can avail; we are sinners every one, for God has declared, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom.3:10). Not until we realise that we are perishing will we look by faith to the great Sin-Bearer. Even though our parents were Christians, this in no way makes us Christians; though they may instruct us in the Scriptures which are able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim.3:15). Only at that moment when "By faith we see Him on the tree, Hear His still small whisper, 'Tis for thee —", only then are we born again. Neither baptism nor sprinkling, nor yet confirmation, can avail to make us children of God. Again, we must assert that faith - personal faith in the Son of God - is necessary to the new birth. In this way is a person born of God. What a change from being a child of wrath, to be a child of God; from darkness to light; and from the power of Satan unto God. "In Christ - a new creature"; the old things passed away; such is the Christian. No wonder he sings:

"I stand upon His merit,

I know no safer stand,

Not e'en where glory dwelleth,

In Immanuel's land."

The Bible becomes a new book to him; in it he can now find spiritual food, for the new man within him must be fed. The things that once thrilled him: dancing, gambling, novel reading and all that belongs to the old life, he now takes no delight in. Once he was dead through his trespasses and sins (Eph.2:1); now he is alive unto God in Christ Jesus. The pulse of divine life is within him. As the believer lives by faith on the promises of God, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet.1:4). Such then is the Christian, the person who knows that he has passed from death unto life, and who knows that, come good or ill here, he is bound for heaven, and it is well with his soul. While others think and hope — he knows, for he is the possessor of eternal life. Now he is bound to Christ by eternal union. The character of this life, and the walk and work of the Christian, will be the subject of succeeding chapters.

"And can it be, that I should gain

An interest in the Saviour's blood?

Died He for me, who caused Him pain?

For me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! How can it be

That Thou, my Lord, shouldst die for me!"

CHAPTER THREE: OUR THREE-FOLD SALVATION

“By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Eph.2:8).

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil.2:12).

“Now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed” (Rom.13:11).

It is evident that these three scriptures deal with salvation in different aspects, for the Christian is a person who has been saved, who is being saved, and who will yet be saved. This three-fold salvation has been spoken of as salvation from the penalty, and the power, and the presence of sin. We must be careful to distinguish between the three aspects if we are to understand the meaning of the Scriptures. We shall consider them separately.

SALVATION FROM THE PENALTY OF SIN

“By grace have ye been saved through faith”. The Christian is a saved person. A deep peace fills his heart; his sin has been atoned for and forgiven. The Christian is saved from the awful doom of the unforgiven sinner (Rev.21:8). He knows that his sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. He knows also that he has eternal life, and that he will never perish. His certainty of eternal life is based upon the word of God (John 10:28), and by the assurance of the Spirit of God within him (Rom.8:16). The Christian is saved by

grace not because of his own good life, but simply by the undeserved kindness of God. Oh, the wonder of it! He feels that "E'en eternity's too short, To utter all God's praise." His heart overflows in thanksgiving to God.

While millions of souls are rejecting the grace of God; or, not knowing God's way are striving to reach heaven by their good works or by their sufferings; the Christian knows that, but for Divine grace, he would have perished. The Christian is saved by grace through faith. The word of Christ came to him — the message of redeeming love; and through faith in the finished work of Christ, he was saved. Such then is salvation from the penalty of sin; it was by grace, through faith. Now he can sing:

"I have seen the Cross of Jesus,
Gazed upon the Crucified;
And my heart is won for ever,
I am saved and satisfied."

Many God-fearing persons are afraid to believe or say that they are saved, lest perhaps they are not among God's elect. The Scriptures in Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:1,2 show clearly that God's election to salvation is based upon His foreknowledge. Knowing us before times eternal, He chose us in Christ. In due time, we who were known and elect of God, heard the message and believed (Acts 13:48). Salvation is free to everyone, for God wills that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). No one need fear that they are not among

God's elect, if only they believe from the heart that Christ died for their sin and rose again (Romans 10:9).

SALVATION FROM THE POWER OF SIN

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure” (Phil.2:12,13).

Though the Christian is a person who has been forever saved from the penalty of sin, he soon discovers that he needs a daily salvation. Although he has within him a new nature, he learns that his old nature is also with him, and from its lusts and desires he must be saved. “If we say that we have no sin,” says the apostle John, “we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (Jn.1:8). The Christian needs salvation from the power of sin day by day. It is to this salvation that the scripture in Philippians refers. “Work out your own salvation.” Fellow-believer, here is the test of our fellowship with Christ. “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked” (1 Jn.2:6). We have been saved from the penalty of sin, but are we being saved from its power? Is sin having dominion over us? Here is our conflict, but we need not fall, for God is working in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Remember that we have, in God's presence, an advocate — Jesus Christ the Righteous (1 Jn.2:1); One who pleads for us with power divinely great. Yet, do not let us presume or be careless, for some mighty men have fallen. Let us hate sin, and hate the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude v.23). Many believers are over-

come because of some grudge against another, which is kept alive in their hearts. This is sin. Others fail to live victoriously because of a weakness or a wrong desire which is pandered to. If we confess these as sin, seeking forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn.1:7-9) and then yield ourselves and our members to God (Rom.6:13), we shall know the power of the Holy Spirit, and the sweetness of the love of Christ in our lives. Let us be diligent to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

It is asserted in the chapter on the New Birth, and again in this chapter, that a person who is truly born again can never be lost and lose the eternal life that was given as a free gift (Rom.6:23). The Scriptures which make this clear to us are John 10:27-29 and 1 Corinthians 3:13-15. The reader should ponder these carefully. Some believe that Hebrews 6:4-8 and 10:26-31 show that a believer can fall away and perish. But these portions of the Word show instead that a believer who does turn back, may never be restored again to the service of God, and may indeed come under the present judgement of God. There is a present judgement of God on our lives and service here, as well as the final judgement of our service at the Judgement Seat of Christ. So we read, "The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb.10:30,31). Let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

SALVATION FROM THE PRESENCE OF SIN

When will this take place? It will take place at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to the air for all those who believe on him (1 Thess.4:13-18). Concerning this I hope to write more fully in a later chapter. That glorious day is fast hastening on. "Now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed."

"How shall I meet those eyes?

Mine on Himself I'll cast,

And own myself the Saviour's prize;

Mercy from first to last."

Fellow-Christian, surely the very thought of that day should make us long to live more like Him: to love righteousness; to do His will more perfectly than hitherto. Can we ever lose the life which we have received as a free gift? Never! We have been saved from sin's penalty, by grace through faith, apart from works. Now and every day we need to know salvation from sin's power, through obedience to the Word of God; and soon, very soon, we shall know salvation from sin's presence at the Master's Coming.

"O Christ, Thou heavenly Lamb,

Joy of the Father's heart,

Now let Thy love my soul inflame

Fresh power to me impart.

Power to feel Thy love,
And all its depths to know:
Power to fix the heart above,
And die to all below.
Power to watch, and pray,
'Lord Jesus, quickly come';
Power to hail the happy day,
Destined to bear me home."

CHAPTER FOUR: BAPTISM

Baptism is referred to in the New Testament Scriptures in four different ways, and briefly I would like to consider these separately:

1. The baptism of John (Mk.1:4).
2. The baptism of Christ on the Cross (Lk.12:50).
3. The baptism of the believer in the Spirit into the Body of Christ (1 Cor.12:13).
4. The baptism of the believer in water (Acts 10:47,48).

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN

This baptism was in connection with the coming of the Messiah to Israel. It is well to note that it was associated with repentance and remission of sins. When the Messiah was rejected and finally crucified, the message to Israel, nationally, ceased in this dispensation. In Acts 18:24-28 we read concerning Apollos, a man mighty in the Scriptures, yet knowing only the baptism of John. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, however, they expounded unto him the way of God more carefully. The baptism of John had been superseded. Apollos is an example of a man with an honest and good heart. Though mighty in the Scriptures, yet he is willing to learn from disciples who were less gifted than himself. How many Christians there are whose progress is stunted, because they will not advance further in the truth than their fa-

thers, even though God has been showing more light from His Word.

In Acts 19:1-7 we find twelve disciples who had been baptized into John's baptism, but on hearing the word of the Lord, were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. The baptism of the believer in water today is not unto remission of sins; it has a different meaning.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

How solemn are these words of the Lord, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Lk.12:50). It was then that the deep waters of divine judgement upon sin swept over His soul. Fellow-believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, let us ponder well these words of the Saviour, and what it meant to Him that He might save us. Should not His claim upon our love and obedience be the first thing in our lives? We shall have little difficulty either in learning His will or in doing it, if we have a right appreciation of all that He passed through, when God made His soul to be an offering for sin (Is.53:10).

In Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 the believer is seen as baptized into Christ. He is united with Christ in His death, and because of this he should be buried with Him in baptism. How wrong therefore is the baptism or the sprinkling of infants, or the baptism of unbelievers!

BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT

“In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body ... and were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor.12:13).

Every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ has been baptized in the Spirit of God. This is done by the Lord Himself when we believe on Him (Mk.1:8). The baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place only once, and through that act the believer becomes a member of the Body of Christ. It is not correct to say that a believer should pray or wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for every believer is baptized into the Body (i.e. the Church which is the Body of Christ). That took place when we were born again. The believer should however, seek for the fulness of the Holy Spirit in his life (Eph.5:18).

Baptism in the Spirit does not deal with our service for Christ, but with our position in Christ. If we see clearly that we were baptized in the Holy Spirit when we were saved, and that we are now members of Christ, then we shall appreciate more fully that we can never perish. The Church which is the Body of Christ is composed of all believers, from all lands, since the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ to the air for His own. We shall deal with this truth more fully in our next chapter. Meantime we must be clear that every believer, who has been born again through faith in Jesus Christ, has been baptized in the Spirit of God.

BELIEVERS' BAPTISM IN WATER

“Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit?”
(Acts 10:47).

Despite this plain question, and command of the apostle Peter, some do forbid the water, and some say, “It is not needful.” The believer who has an honest and good heart, and who makes the Word of God his guide, will have no difficulty in regard to baptism; nor will he delay in this, the first step of obedience. He will not be influenced by the practice of different denominations. He will realise that unless a doctrine is upheld by the Word of God, then it is only one of the precepts of men, and as such it has no authority.

“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt.28:19).

“They then that received His word were baptized”
(Acts 2:41).

“When they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women
(Acts 8:12).

“He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:48).

“Many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8).

“We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (Rom.6:4).

“Having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him” (Col.2:12).

“Baptism — the inquiry (RV margin) of a good conscience toward God” (1 Pet.3:21).

Can anyone with an honest and good heart read these scriptures and be in doubt as to the meaning and practice of baptism? Believers, and believers only, were baptized. Such were dipped, for only dipping can be a figure of burial and resurrection. Whatever is different from this, is only according to the precepts of men, and from this the disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ must turn away. He must turn away but need not walk alone - he will walk in company with those who obey the Lord.

“Buried unto Christ in water,

In His grave ourselves we view;

Buried thus, our old life ended,

Raised to walk in life anew.”

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CHURCH WHICH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST

“I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt.16:18).

“Christ also is the Head of the church, being Himself the Saviour of the Body” (Eph.5:23).

“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for it” (Eph.5:25).

The word “church” in the Scriptures means “a called-out company”. It never refers to the building in which such people meet, but always to the people who are called out and called together. We find in the Scriptures the following expressions.

1. The Church, which is the Body of Christ (Eph.1:22,23).
2. The church of God, the churches of God (1 Cor.1:2; 11:16).
3. The church of the Living God, the house of God (1 Tim.3:15).
4. The churches of Christ; the churches of the saints; the church at the house (Rom.16:5,16; 1 Cor.14:33).
5. The church of the firstborn (ones) (Heb.12:23).

In this chapter I wish to consider only the first of these expressions. When we see the difference between the Church which is

the Body of Christ, and the Church and Churches of God, the New Testament becomes much clearer to us.

We have seen that the meaning of the word 'church' is that of a called-out company of people. The place in which the word is used shows what company of persons is referred to. To what company then did Christ refer when He said, "My Church", and of what company is He the Head? It is the Church which is the Body of Christ. It is from Him that each individual member is sustained, we are members of His Body (Eph.5:30). From Him all the Body is fitly framed and knit together (Eph.4:16).

Who then are the members of His Body? All who have been saved, or born again, through faith in His Name (Jn.1:12,13). This membership of the Body is not dependent upon baptism in water, but upon baptism in the Spirit (1 Cor.12:13). "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom.8:9). From the day of Pentecost, the day on which the disciples were first baptized in the Holy Spirit, to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to the air for His own, the Church is being built.

This is the Church which He will yet present to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph.5:27). Very many of the members are with Christ (Phil.1:23). Having died, they are unclothed (2 Cor.5:4), and they await the day when they will be clothed upon with their habitation which is from heaven (2 Cor.5:2). The members who are alive, are found in every land, and, also in many different denominations, although the Lord would have them to be one (that is, one thing), as a visible unity, even as they are in one Body (Eph.4:1-6).

I trust that we shall see clearly that the Church which Christ termed “My Church” is not the people who are churchgoers, nor is it those who are baptized in water merely; but it is those whose names are written in heaven (Lk.10:20), those who have been baptized in the Spirit into one Body. These, and these only, form the Church which is the Body of Christ. It is quite wrong to speak of the Church as though it was composed of all who are churchgoers. Indeed, many of these have no assurance of salvation, nor do they show that they have life from above. We do not write disparagingly, but we must be clear on this point.

To the members of the Body, the risen Head has given many gifts. In the beginning, some were apostles and some prophets, and some were evangelists and some pastors and teachers, for the building up of the Body, the Church. It is perhaps needless to add that there are no apostles and no prophets today. Apostles were men who had seen the Lord personally (1 Cor.9:1), and prophets were men who gave original messages from God. Evangelists, pastors (i.e. overseers) and teachers there are today, for the same purpose as in the beginning, for the building up of the Body of Christ; so that, holding the truth in love, we all may grow up into Him, who is the Head, even Christ (Eph.4:11-15).

How important it is, fellow Christian, that we should hold the truth, and hold it in love. Should we be linked in church fellowship with unbelievers, with those who do not know Christ, with those who have not the Spirit? Surely not! Since believers are united in one Body, we can appreciate more fully the reality of the eternal security of the believer. A believer cannot be lost again, although he may fail to magnify Christ as he ought. He has been sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph.4:30).

What a glorious day it will be when the countless numbers of the Redeemer, the members of the Body, the Church, are presented without spot or wrinkle to Christ, having been sanctified (set apart) and cleansed, not with literal water, but by the washing of water with the Word (Eph.5:26). Having heard the word of Christ they believed it and passed out of death into life (Jn.5:24). Surely the thought of that day should make us long to grow up in all things into Him. Because we are members of His we are "in Christ", and He is in us "the hope of glory (Col.1:27).

I know no life divided,
O Lord of life, from Thee;
In Thee is life provided
For all Thy saints and me.
I know no death, Lord Jesus,
Because I live in Thee;
Thy death it is which frees us
From death eternally."

CHAPTER SIX: THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES OF GOD

In the previous chapter we have considered in some detail the subject of the Church which is the Body of Christ. In this, we shall seek to learn from the Scriptures the meaning of the expression “the church of God.” Many believers speak of the church of God as though it was composed of all the believers throughout the world. Others again confuse this with the Church which is the Body of Christ. These however are vitally different as we shall see clearly when we read the scriptures concerning them.

The church of God is referred to eight times in the Scriptures, and in each occasion it is evident that the local assembly of believers is referred to. The churches of God are referred to three times. The fact that there were many churches of God is one outstanding difference from the Church which is the Body of Christ, of which we read that there is “one body” (Eph.4:4). Let us read the scriptures concerning the churches of God:

“Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops (or overseers), to feed the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Here Paul is speaking to the elders of the Church in Ephesus. These men were called to feed the church of God. Obviously, their responsibility was a local one, and the church here was the church in Ephesus.

“Paul ... unto the church of God which is at Corinth”
(1 Cor.1:1,2).

Here it is obvious that the local company of believers is referred to. Paul writes of those “within” and of those who are “without” (1 Cor.5:12,13), and of one man who must be put away because of sin. Though he was put away from the church of God in Corinth (and later received back), he was not, however, put out of the Church which is the Body of Christ.

“Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God” (1 Cor.10:32).

The church here is the same as in the previous reference, i.e. the local assembly of disciples in Corinth.

“What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not?” (1 Cor.11:22).

Paul is here referring to the wrong conduct of some of the believers when the church was gathered together for the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here again the local assembly is referred to.

“I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor.15:9).

“I persecuted the church of God and made havoc of it” (Gal.1:13).

From Acts 8:1 we learn that the church which Paul persecuted was the church in Jerusalem. That is, the believers who were together of God. These, Paul terms the church of God.

“If a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how may he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim.3:5).

In every church, elders were appointed to care for the believers (Acts 14:23). No man is fitted to care for the believers in a church of God, unless he can rule his own house well. That the church of God here is the local assembly is evident, for no man can care for believers unless they are joined together and meet together in one place.

Now it is clear from a consideration of these scriptures that the church of God is a local company of believers who are together in a town; thus we read of the church of God in Corinth. It is true that those who comprised the church of God in Corinth were also members of the Body of Christ, and so Paul wrote, “Ye are (the) body of Christ” (1 Cor.12:27); or more correctly, “Ye are body of Christ”. They were that in character. Individually they were part of that great company of believing ones who form the Church which we considered in our last chapter.

We should note carefully that being a member of the Body of Christ is not the same as being a disciple in a church of God. The church of God in a town is composed of disciples, that is, those who are learners and followers, those who are obedient to the word of the Lord. Because of sin, a person may be put away from the church of God (1 Cor.5:13; Titus 3:10); but no believer can

be put away from the Church which is the Body of Christ. To the church of God in any town, a disciple should be added after being baptized in water (Acts 2:41,42), but into the Church which is the Body of Christ, the Lord alone baptizes in the Holy Spirit those who believe on Him.

If the reader will give careful attention to these points, very many difficulties in regard to the unity and disunity of Christians will be cleared away from his mind, and the wonderful purpose of God for a united testimony of believers will become apparent to him. In this, as in every part of the truth of God, an honest and good heart is essential to a clear understanding of God's will.

Now let us consider the question of what is the church of God in any one town, and who comprise it? The church of God in a town is that company of disciples who have been brought together by God. It is "of God". The first church of God was the church in Jerusalem; the church which Saul of Tarsus persecuted. Of whom was it composed? It was composed first of a company of faithful disciples in number about one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15), whom the Lord left when he ascended on high. To this company about three thousand were added on the day of Pentecost. Note carefully please, the divinely appointed steps of their being together as the church of God in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41,42):

1. They received the word.
2. They were baptized in water.
3. They were added to those already together.

When they were added together, forming the church of God in Jerusalem, they continued steadfastly in:

1. The apostles' teaching.
2. The Fellowship.
3. The breaking of bread, that is, the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Lord's supper.
4. The prayers, that is, the united prayers of the assembly.

As it was in the beginning, so must it be today. If we are to know the privilege of being together in churches of God, then we must do as they did. Note what is written in Acts 2:47: "The Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved." The work of the Lord which began in Jerusalem, spread even to Rome, and many churches of God were planted. Consider the following scriptures:

"If any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (1 Cor.11:16).

"For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess.2:14).

"We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions" (2 Thess.1:4).

It is very evident that as the church of God in a town is one, so it is linked together with every other church of God wherever

found. They were one in doctrine and practice, because all were subject to the apostles' doctrine, which was the doctrine of the Lord (Acts 16:4,5).

Many believers will realise that this is the pattern of the churches of the New Testament, and even long for such divine unity today, yet they may not see how this is possible now. Their questions are: Well, we can see what is set forth in the Scriptures, but how can it be practised today when believers are scattered in so many denominations? Would it not be presumption to assume the name of the church and churches of God, when so many are outside of such a fellowship? The questions are reasonable, and the answers are simple. It is never presumption to stand upon God's Word: it is faith that does. Presumption dares to affirm when it has no word from God.

Let us answer the questions asked. Try the teachings of every denomination: test them by the Word of God, and if they do not fit the pattern of the first church of God, and of the churches of God that were joined with it, then these denominations are not churches of God. Were any of the following practices found in the churches of God in the beginning:

1. Was there sprinkling or baptism of infants? No! Only believers were baptized. (Acts 18:8).
2. Was there one-man ministry of clergymen? No! All were at liberty to take part as they were led by the Spirit of God. (1 Cor.14:31).
3. Did any take the title "Reverend"? No! This title is used concerning God's name in Psalm 111:9.
4. Did women preach or teach in the church? No!

According to the commandment of the Lord, the women were silent (1 Cor.14:34,35; 1 Tim.2:8-12).

5. Did any have communion in the breaking of the bread who were unsaved or unbaptized? No! All had previously been saved, baptized and added to the church. (Acts 2:41,42).

Many such like questions might be asked. The reader must ponder these things himself and compare present practice with the apostles' teaching, and the practice of the early churches of God. Another question may arise in the mind of the reader as he considers these things and acknowledges the truth. But is it possible to find anything today that answers to the pattern of the churches of God in the past? It will only be possible if God has been working today as He wrought in the past. Only God can bring together believers in churches of God. Has He done so? Yes, fellow-Christians, God has done so, and today according to the divine pattern, there are churches of God joined together in one Community where:

1. All are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, having been baptized in water.
2. All have been added: that is, where occasional fellowship is unknown.
3. The apostles' doctrine finds its place, and where the disciples are found continuing in the Fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers.

How then did these churches of God come together, the reader may ask. When was this truth revealed? To understand this we

must go back and trace the regaining of the truth of God over many years. From the days of the Reformation onward, God revealed the truth of justification by faith in Christ alone. Later, the truth of the baptism of believers, and the error of clerisy (or one-man ministry), for "all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted" (1 Cor.14:31). Then the truth of the breaking of bread on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Later still the difference between the Church which is the Body of Christ, and the church and churches of God. God has shown the truth of one visible unity of believers in the churches of God.

"'Tis precious too, O God,
Thine eye should look upon
Thy scattered children here
United into one.
Lord, may Thy word for ever be
Our guide to perfect unity."

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE HOUSE OF GOD

“That thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim.3:15).

“Christ as a Son, over His house [that is God's house]; whose house are we, if we hold fast” (Heb.3:6).

“Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet.2:5).

Of all the subjects which we are considering, perhaps this one concerning the house of God, is the least understood by Christians. What is the house of God today? Most, if not all, are aware that God had a dwelling place among the people of Israel in the wilderness. At that time He dwelt in the Tabernacle which had been made according to His instructions (Ex.39:42,43). Earlier still, Jacob spoke of the place where he saw the vision as the house of God, and so He named it Bethel, house of God (Gen.28:10-22). Even though there was no building there, it was the place of God's choice, and there He erected a stone for a pillar, and to Bethel God commanded Jacob to return and dwell (Gen.35:1).

God's house must be built in the place of God's choice. In Deuteronomy 12:5, Moses commanded the people of Israel thus: “Unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose

out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come." When the people of Israel came into the land of Canaan, God chose Shiloh and there the Tabernacle was erected. Later, He rejected Shiloh and chose Jerusalem, and there the house of God was built (Psalm 78:67,68). In this there is an important lesson for believers today. It is not right to worship and serve God in all denominations. We should seek the place where the will of God is done. God has a house in the New Testament, a spiritual house, composed of living stones, that is disciples who are built together in churches of God (1 Pet.2:5). To this place all disciples should seek.

Many years ago, David longed to build a house for God (1 Chron.17:1), and though he was not permitted to build it, yet he was permitted to prepare for it, and he received from God, the pattern of the house which he gave to Solomon his son. In his love for God, and for the house of God, David gave a hundred thousand talents of gold and a million talents of silver. In his *affliction* he prepared for the house (1 Chron.22:14), and in his *affection* he gave his all (1 Chron.29:3). What a wonderful example of a heart touched by God. His love for God caused him to set his affection to the house of God. David's love for God's house is wonderfully portrayed in the Psalms:

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever (length of days)" (Ps.23:6).

"LORD, I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth" (Ps.26:8).

“One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple” (Ps.27:4).

To Solomon was given the privilege of building the house of God, yet he realised that heaven and the heaven of heavens, could not contain God, and much less the house which he had built (2 Chron.6:18). This house, although so magnificent, was later destroyed because of the departure of Israel in heart from God. The presence of God with His people was, and is, conditional upon their obedience. Later, God's house was rebuilt, and God took pleasure in it, because the hearts of His people had been turned back to Him. It was a house that lacked the grandeur of Solomon's temple; it was a small remnant that built it, but it was God's house, the Divine dwelling place (Hag.1:8: Ezra 6:15-16).

In Old Testament times God's house was a material house: its altar was a material altar; and its sacrifices, material sacrifices. Instrumental music formed part of the services of God's house in the past. In Hebrews 9 the service and sanctuary of the Old Covenant is contrasted with the New. There, the sanctuary of the Old is called “a sanctuary of this world.” It was a shadow and copy of things in the heavens.

The student of Scripture will do well to stop and ponder over the contrast between the Old and New Covenants. If we are to understand the difference between God's house then and now, we must realise that the material has given way to the spiritual. For this reason we do not read in the New Testament of instrumen-

tal music, of a material altar, or a material building. The disciple of the Lord does not speak of a religious building as God's house, nor will he bow before a material altar; nor yet will he think that God is praised in the assembly of His saints by instrumental music. The sacrifice of praise is now "the fruit of lips which make confession to His Name" (Heb.13:15).

We shall now consider the portions in the New Testament which speak of God's house. You will note that in the first scripture quoted (i.e. 1 Tim.3:15) the house of God is termed the church (or assembly) of the living God, and that is called the pillar and ground of the truth. The house of God is composed of believers who have been gathered together by God. As the apostle Peter wrote, it is composed of living stones who are built up a spiritual house. Just as a heap of stones do not make a house unless they have been built together, so a number of Christians do not compose God's house unless they have been gathered together by God and built according to the pattern given in the New Testament.

The house of God is a place where the truth of God must be upheld; it is "the pillar and ground of the truth". Some Christians may agree to unite on the ground that they are "all one in Christ Jesus", and by dropping all doctrinal difference - and perhaps giving up baptism and the breaking of the bread. But it cannot be so with those who are together of God. They must uphold the truth of God. The house of God then is composed of the saints of God who are together, having been gathered together by Him. "Whose house are we," said the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, "if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end". As in the Old Testament, so also in the New;

the presence of God among His people collectively is conditional.

Here it will be seen to be entirely so, the condition being — “if we hold fast”, which plainly implies that we can let go. We must hold fast the boldness and the glorying of our hope, which is Christ in the presence of God for those who are in God's house. He who is both Son and Great Priest over the house of God (Heb.3:6; 10:21). To some believers the teaching that a number of disciples together can form God's house may seem strange. But is it so? Is this not apparent from the scriptures we have cited? Let us not appeal to prevailing thought among professing Christians, but to God's word. An honest and good heart is one that hears the word of God and holds it fast.

To any reader who will urge the value of instrumental music, it must be pointed out that he will search the New Testament in vain for any reference to its use in the service of God. It is the fruit of lips which God desires among His people in His house. What the believer may have in his own house is another matter, but no provision is made for instrumental music in God's house.

In 1 Peter 2:5, the house of God is seen as composed of believers, who are called living stones, being built up a spiritual house. In Ephesians 2:21,22 the house of God is seen as composed of churches of God (the Revised Version margin is correct): “Every building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.”

This chapter on the house of God is only a brief introduction to the subject. Do not fear, fellow-Christian, to search the Scriptures, and if the truth of God should separate you from others who do not follow it, you will find that it has separated many others, with whom you can walk in fellowship.

“Grant that more perfectly

Thy will may be expressed,

That gathered saints may show

The way of truth is best.

So mid this discord men may see

Divinely ordered unity.”

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

“Appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

“... when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

“He (Paul) abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness” (Acts 28:30,31).

From the first chapter to the last of the Acts of the Apostles we have the history of the furtherance of the kingdom of God. In chapter one we find the Lord Jesus appearing

to His disciples for a period of forty days, and the theme of His ministry was the things concerning the kingdom of God. In the last chapter we find the apostle Paul, now a prisoner in Rome, no longer at liberty to go about and preach the word but receiving all who went in unto him. What was the subject of his preaching? It was the same as the Master's at the beginning — the kingdom of God.

How important then this subject must be to the Lord, when His last forty days on earth were spent speaking of it, and when it was a theme of the apostles' preaching! What a wonderful theme the Gospel is, the good news of God, the message of redeeming love! But is that God's only interest in men? Is it only that they should enjoy the blessing of His saving power and of His Fatherly care? Is that the only reason for which Christ died? Indeed, no! Yet many believers get no further than this. They seem to be satisfied to receive from God and fail to realise that God claims something from them in return. He claims obedience to His word. "If a man love Me", the Lord Jesus said, "he will keep My word ... He that loveth Me not keepeth not My words" (Jn.14:23,24). His words have been given to us in the Gospels, and also through His apostles. The words of the apostles are to us the words of the Lord, and if we love Him we shall keep them.

The kingdom of God — what is it? Is it heaven? No! It is the subjection of His people to the will of God here on earth. For forty days the Lord instructed His disciples as to the character of this kingdom, in the way that men and women could show their love for, and subjection to Him: for He is both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). First of all, we must be clear that no person can enter, or even see the kingdom of God apart from the new birth (Jn.3:3-5), about which we wrote in chapter two. An unconverted person cannot understand anything of the kingdom of God. Life from God is essential before the kingdom of God can be understood or entered into.

Is the new birth the only essential to being in the kingdom of God? Oh no! It is only then that we can see it or have the privilege of entering into it. Being in the kingdom of God is depen-

dent upon our subjection to the Lord, and the first step of subjection to Him is baptism in water. So it is written, "When they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized". They were not sprinkled, they were baptized, and baptism is being immersed or dipped in water; it is a figure of burial and resurrection (Rom.6:4,5).

No one who refuses to obey the Lord in the matter of baptism is in the kingdom of God, for the kingdom of God is composed not merely of saved persons, but of obedient ones. There are privileges and also responsibilities in any kingdom. A person who enjoys the protection of any country must also be subject to the laws of that country; he must acknowledge one sovereign state and obey its laws. So we find that that in the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples who obeyed the Lord through the word of the apostles were in one community, though scattered in many lands. This community is termed in Scripture, "the Fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor.1:9). This was the expression of the kingdom of God — disciples who acknowledged the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Need I remind my reader that these disciples were all of them in churches of God? Though in many different towns, some far apart, they had one Lord and master, and one faith which they were to keep (Jude v.3).

The reader may be pardoned if he is bewildered at the many denominations which today base their teaching on the Bible; and he may ask, which of them, or do all of them, represent the kingdom of God? Three things stand out clearly from the Scriptures.

Firstly, believers standing alone, “unattached,” cannot form the kingdom of God - such a kingdom involves a people “together” doing the will of God. Secondly, various denominations separate from each other cannot form the kingdom of God, for as there is one Lord, there is one faith for all; just as every sovereign earthly state is one, one remnant, one law for the people. Thirdly — the kingdom of God implies obedience to the will of the Lord as found in all the Scriptures. The kingdom of God is seen expressed in the churches of God; as it was in the times of the apostles, so it is today, for the word of the Lord has not changed. Salvation, then baptism, then adding to those who are obedience to the word of the Lord; followed by continuance in the apostles' doctrine and in the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers (Acts 2:41,42). are still as essential to being in the kingdom of God as in the days of the apostles.

Independency, either in one believer or in a company of believers, is foreign to the rule of the Lord, as seen in the kingdom of God. To be undenominational may sound well, yet it often springs from a desire for one's own way. “He that separateth himself seeketh his own desire” (Prov.18:1).

The kingdom of God is not the same as the Church which is the Body of Christ, nor yet is it the aggregate of all the denominations, but it is seen in the submission of heart of believers in the churches of God to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would have His disciples to be one (i.e. in one thing) and only thus can they express the kingdom of God. In order that there might be rule and government among those who were together of God there were elders appointed in every church (Acts

14:23). To these elders who bore rule among them, the disciples were exhorted to be subject (Heb.13:17; 1 Thess.5:12,13).

The work of the elders is to tend the flock of God, not lording it over the charge allotted to them, but making themselves ensamples to the flock. A spirit of subjection, the younger to the elder, should characterise the elders (1 Pet.5:1-11). It is worthy of note that there were elders or pastors appointed in every church. It is not “the elder” or “the pastor”, but elders, always more than one.

In the kingdom of God there is liberty for all to use the gift which God has given them, whether it be as evangelists, as pastors or elders, or as teachers. The ministry of one man only in the church, as seen in “the pastor” or “the clergyman” was unknown in the churches of the New Testament. In the kingdom of God there is responsibility and subjection (as there is in every sovereign state), and over all there is one Lord, Jesus Christ.

Does your heart respond to this, dear reader? Or do you love the “freedom” of undenominationalism which is opposed to divine rule and government? Remember that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His promise of righteousness, all other needful things will be added to us (Matt.6:33). Again, the kingdom of God is “... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom.14:17). Subjection to the word of Christ will work in us righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. May we be counted worthy of the kingdom of God (2 Thess.1:5).

“Soon shall Thy feet in triumph stand

Again on Olive's brow,

When men and kings of every land
At Thy great name shall bow.
Meanwhile, O Lord, Thy sceptre wield
Among Thy loyal few
Till, as in heaven, all earth shall yield
To Thee Thy royal due.”

CHAPTER NINE: THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

“And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the apostles with him. And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood, even that which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:14-20).

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come” (1 Cor.11:26).

“And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread” (Acts 20:7).

No occasion is dearer to the Lord's disciple than this, when he is gathered with others to keep the Lord's Remembrance. How touching were the Lord's words, as He sat down with His own for the last time before His death! “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” (Lk.22:15). It was then, after keeping the passover, that He gave to His disciples the Remembrance in the broken bread and poured-out wine. “This do,” He said, “in remembrance of Me.”

It is evident from 1 Corinthians 11:20, 23 that this Remembrance should only be kept when the church (i.e. the church of God) is assembled together, although when the apostle wrote

to the Corinthians, the church there was in an unfit condition to remember the Lord, and He wrote to correct this condition. The Remembrance should not be at any time and anywhere, but when the disciples are together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). It is evident that the disciples kept the remembrance of the Lord Jesus every Lord's day. The Lord's disciples today follow this example.

It was when the disciples had been baptized and added that they continued steadfastly in the breaking of the bread (Acts 2:41,42). Some believers may urge that it is wrong to keep any from the Table who are truly children of God, but this Remembrance was given to disciples of the Lord, not merely to the children of God. It is not the Father's Table, but the Table of the Lord, and that implies obedience. If the truth that it is the Lord who adds believers to the churches of God (Acts 2:47; 11:24) is grasped by the reader, he will have no difficulty in seeing that only believers who have been baptized and added should be found breaking the bread in remembrance of the Lord.

There is no such thing in the Scriptures as "occasional fellowship," a believer coming merely to break the bread. Paul wrote to the church of God in Corinth, "Do not ye judge them that are within, whereas them that are without God judgeth?" (1 Cor.5:12, 13). A believer is either within or without the church of God, and it is only those who are within who are privileged to keep the Lord's Remembrance. They are also responsible to obey him, for privilege and responsibility go together. A disciple is within when He is added, and it is the Lord who adds.

The practice of “carrying the emblems” to the home of a believer, or of keeping the Remembrance on any day of the week, is foreign to the Scriptures. It is true that some do these things with a desire to show their love to Christ, and so as to comfort those who are believers; but it is not the Lord’s way, and the Lord’s disciple will seek His way. The Remembrance of the Lord in the broken bread and out-poured wine has been given only to disciples who are gathered in obedience to His word, and only on the Lord’s day should this Remembrance be kept. The believer on the Lord Jesus Christ who loves Him will seek the disciples as Paul did (Acts 9:26) so that he may be joined with them, and with them keep His Remembrance.

What dignity, yet what simplicity there is in the Divine arrangement, “They then that received his word were baptized ... added ... continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:41,42). As the bread and wine are taken each Lord’s day, simple, yet precious emblems of His body and of His blood, the hearts of those who love Him are drawn out afresh in love and gratitude. We need that Remembrance. We need to be drawn afresh each Lord’s day to consider Him. Not only so, but from the consideration of His work, and of His glorious worth, there should rise from our redeemed hearts worship and praise to God His Father. When God saves us and bring us together with others, He does it for His praise, so that we can offer to Him those spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet.2:5), that is the sacrifice of praise (Heb.13:15).

It will cost us something to obey the Lord, but it will cost us infinitely more not to obey Him. It will cost us more in the lack

of fellowship with the Lord now, and of His approval in the day when our life-work is received by Him at His coming.

“How solemn is the broken bread!

Sign of His holy body, dead,

Who suffered in our room and stead;

Jesus, our Lord.

The cup of wine poured out we see;

This speaks of pardon full and free,

But tells of His deep agony —

Jesus, our Lord.”

CHAPTER TEN: THE COMFORTER - THE HOLY SPIRIT

“I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you” (Jn.16:7).

“When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: ... He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you” (Jn.16:13,14).

That the Holy Spirit is a person, and not merely an influence, is evident from these verses. Although the Lord was soon to leave His disciples He would not leave them without a Guide. It was necessary that He should leave them, for when He was gone He would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would never leave them. On the day of Pentecost He came, in fulfilment of the Master's promise.

“He came in tongues of living flame

To teach, convince, subdue;

All powerful as the wind He came,

As viewless too.”

What a change was wrought in the apostles when He came!
What power was in their words when the Holy Spirit Was speak-

ing through them! Let us search the Scriptures to learn more of this wondrous Divine Person. He is called in the Scriptures:

- The Comforter (Jn.14:16)
- The Spirit of Truth (Jn.14:17)
- The Holy Spirit (Jn.14:26)
- The Spirit of God (Rom.8:9)
- The Spirit of Christ (Rom.8:9)
- The Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor.3:17)
- The Lord the Spirit (2 Cor.3:18)

These and other names define His character and His work. There are many scriptures which speak of His work in association with the Father and with the Son, such as:

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all” (1 Cor.12:4-6).

“According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet.1:2).

These scriptures show the Spirit's oneness with the Father and with the Son in their counsels and actions. Let us rejoice that this gracious heavenly Guest has come to dwell with us, and in us. His work in us is to guide us into all the truth, and to glorify Christ. How important it is that we should be quick to obey.

It is evident from Acts 10:44 and Acts 11:17 that the Holy Spirit is given to each person who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell within the believer is termed in the Scriptures:

- Baptism in the Spirit (1 Cor.12:13)
- Sealing with the Spirit (Eph.1:13)
- The Anointing of the Spirit (1 Jn.2:27)
- The Earnest of the Spirit (2 Cor.1:11)

It is *baptism* in the Spirit, because we are baptized in the Spirit into the Body of Christ. It is the *sealing* of the Spirit, because we are sealed in Him, unto the day of redemption, that is, unto the coming of the Lord. It is the *anointing* of the Spirit, because He has come to teach us as disciples. It is the *earnest* of the Spirit, because He is the foretaste to us of the coming glory. "He shall be with you forever!" the Lord Jesus said (Jn.14:16). This is ours through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. No person belongs to Christ unless he has the Spirit of Christ (Rom.8:9).

No reformation, no good deeds, no religious observances can make a person a Christian. Apart from the sealing of the Spirit of God, he is none of His. But this is ours, for we are Christ's. What then is our responsibility? Surely it is not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom we have been sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph.4:30). Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, railing - all these grieve Him. The Christian should not be a person given to bad-temper, or to bitterness of thought (such as holding a grudge against anyone), or even loud shouting (clamour). He should deal with others as God has dealt with him, in grace and patience; firm if need be, but always kind. He should walk

in love, as Christ has loved him. How often the unsaved must get a wrong impression of the character of God, because of the bad temper, or bitterness, or harshness of some who profess to know Christ. On the other hand, how fragrant our lives become as we are led by the Spirit.

We should hearken to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, because He will take of the things of Christ and reveal them to us (Jn.16:14). These things of course are found in the Scriptures. It is to the Scriptures we turn to hear the Spirit talking to us. As we search them, with prayer and lowliness of mind, the treasures of Christ — who is the Wisdom and the Power of God — will be opened to us. Then as we obey Him, what blessing will be ours, and all who see and hear us (Ps.119:74).

It is the will of the Lord that we should be filled with the Spirit (Eph.5:18). How can this be? How will the Spirit of God so possess us and fill us, that henceforth we speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and songs, singing and making melody with our heart to the Lord that we shall be giving thanks always for all things? Also, what is perhaps the most difficult of all, subjecting ourselves one to another in the fear of Christ? How comes the fulness of the Holy Spirit? It is by the yielding of ourselves to God, as we realise that we are not our own (1 Cor.6:19,20). So we are besought to yield ourselves unto God (Rom.6:13). The love of self no longer ruling us, the flesh with its passions crucified, we shall be filled with the Spirit. If we do not so yield ourselves, if we live unto ourselves, if the flesh with its passions and lusts is pandered to, then we shall remain stunted and impoverished spiritually — “alive and no more”. Concerning some, Paul

with tears, wrote that they “mind earthly things” (Phil.3:19). How different is the believer who is filled with the Spirit.

It is by the Spirit alone that we shall be able to mortify (or make to die) the deeds of the body (Rom.8:13). What Paul could not do in his own strength, as seen in Romans 7:19, he was abundantly able to do by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, as seen in Romans 8:11. It is the will of God for us, that we should serve Him in the fulness of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with His revealed will. We need not come short of this, for He has made full provision for us in the Sacred Writings, and by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

“He came sweet influence to impart,

A gracious, willing Guest,

Where He can find one humble heart

Wherein to rest.

And every virtue we possess,

And every victory won,

And every thought of holiness,

Are His alone.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE

“... ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory” (Col.3:3,4).

Christ is the hidden life of the believer, and because He is the life of the believer, therefore the believer ought to set his mind on the things that are above where Christ is. The believer is saved from the penalty of sin; God has quickened him together with Christ and seated him with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph.2:5,6). The Christian who believes this truth will be heavenly minded; he will set his mind on things that are above. The Christian who does not set his mind on things above will be earthly-minded; his heart will be set on earthly things. Hence, we find the strange spectacle of some believers, who, though they profess to be going to heaven are yet drinking deeply at the world's fountains.

They have little time for private prayer and little thirst for the Scriptures. They live and speak like the unsaved. They have little to say about Christ, because they do not keep company with Him. Oh, that they might hear the word, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee” (Eph.5:14). May the truth that we are already raised with Christ, and seated with Him in the heavenlies, so grip our hearts that every time we see this world we shall see it from above. When we look at it from the heights of the glory of Christ, we

shall see it as it really is, and we shall marvel that ever our hearts were set upon such things as the amusements of this world.

“I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasure there.”

What is the secret of the fruitful life? It is Christ. The Christian's life is not one of giving up, but of being tilled. He does not attend worldly amusements; He does not fill his heart with novels; and smoking does not grip him, because he is a heavenly man. Though living on earth, he draws his sustenance from heaven — from Christ. The man of the world does not understand the Christian, even though he realises that the Christian has a peace and joy to which he is a stranger. He does not know the source of the Christian's power. On the other hand, the worldly-minded believer is a great stumbling block to the unsaved. Professing to be saved by Christ, yet he seeks to find satisfaction in earthy things. To him, Christ saves but does not satisfy.

Let us ponder well those words of the Lord in John 15:4: “Abide in Me, and I in you”. Yes, it is one thing to be in Christ, to be saved; but it is another thing to be abiding in Him, and He in us. “He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from Me ye can do nothing.” Oh, to learn this lesson well! Many believers live fruitless lives, because they try to live somewhere between the world and Christ. If only the truth and blessing of abiding in Christ gripped their hearts, they

would blossom forth and bear much fruit; they would overflow with joy in the Lord. We are called upon to share in His rejection, and in His joy: "That My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full," He said. How could it be otherwise if His peace and His glory are ours? It is unbelief, it is little faith, which robs the Christian of his joy.

Some may be tempted to think that after all the world has some things which are not found in Christ. Knowledge for instance — science — that magic word which seems to carry so many off their feet. The Christian — the heavenly-minded Christian — the person who has an honest and good heart, will turn to the Scriptures to see if his Lord knew something of this. In Colossians 2:3, he will read, "Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." Whatever there is of true science it comes from Him in whom all things consist or hold together (Col.1:17), and who upholdeth all things by the word of His power (Heb.1:3).

Let us reverently bow the knee and heart to Him, at whose Name every knee shall yet bow (Phil.2:10). Let us never seek to satisfy the longing of our hearts at any other "fountain". Let us remember that we are partakers of a heavenly calling (Heb.3:1). We need not wait for the Lord's coming to enjoy our inheritance; we are raised with Him and seated with Him in the heavenlies now. When we view the things of this world, let us look down upon them. They will never grip our hearts from that viewpoint.

"O blessed Saviour, is Thy love

So vast, so full, so free?

Fain would we give our hearts, our minds,

Our lives, our all, to Thee.

O Lord, we treasure in our hearts

The memory of Thy love;

And ever may Thy name to us

A grateful odour prove.”

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE

“The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds” (2 Cor.10:4).

“Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph.6:12).

The disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is a man of peace; he is commanded to follow after peace with all men (Heb.12:14). But while he follows peace with men, he has a warfare to be waged against the powers of darkness; he is to be a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Tim 2:3). His wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against his adversary the devil who goes about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet.5:8). Against the implacable foe he is ever to stand on guard, to be watchful, vigilant, and to resist the devil and he will flee from him.

The Christian soldier's mission on earth is to be ready and swift to carry the gospel of peace to men; to bear the message of the blessed Man of Calvary, whose coming to earth was heralded by the Heavenly Host — “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Lk.2:14), who preached peace, and who made peace by the blood of His Cross (Col.1:20). The Christian, living in the world, has a responsibil-

ity to the country of which he is a national. He must pray for kings, and for all who are in high places (1 Tim.2:1,2). He realizes that those who govern hold office as God's servants for the maintenance of law and order (Rom.13:1-7). Therefore he must needs be in subjection to the Government, whatever party may be in power.

The Christian should be a good citizen of the country of which he is a national. If he realizes his heavenly calling, he will not take part in politics, for his citizenship (or political state) is in heaven, from whence also he waits for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil.3:20). The Christian should not take part in carnal warfare. Neither the Lord, nor any of His apostles, ever put any man to death. In obedience to his Lord the Christian must not take up the sword (Jn.18:36). The Lord Jesus came not to destroy men's lives but to save them (Lk.9:56 KJV). Therefore His disciples must not take life, nor assist in doing so, if they would walk as He walked (1 Jn.2:6).

The Christian is a man of peace. He is an internationalist in the sense that his brethren in Christ are found in every land. Some believers take up the sword and find their reason for this in the Old Testament; but they do this because they do not realise the heavenly calling of the believer today, compared with the earthly calling to Israel after the flesh. The Christian is called not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer on His behalf. In all things Christ has left him an example that he should follow His steps (1 Pet.2:21).

But the Christian is called to a warfare against "the world-rulers of this darkness — the spiritual hosts of wickedness" - Satan's

army. It is against these that the Christian *must* wage war. How can we possibly be victorious against these mighty unseen foes? We must realize the guile and strategy of these principalities and powers. They are the forces behind the "grip" which the false religions have upon their devotees. Many are the ways that they seek to turn men away from Christ, the only Saviour. They are the forces which so often draw away the Christian from Christ, the only Saviour. Do not let us presume, fellow-Christian; "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor.10:12). The devil is not always heard as a roaring lion (1 Pet.5:8); he is often seen as an angel of light, and his ministers as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor.11:14,15).

What do we know of this spiritual warfare? Can we hope to prevail against these subtle hosts? Yes, praise God! "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 Jn.4:4). Many believers do not seem to realize the cunning of the Adversary and of the powers of darkness. They do not engage in the spiritual warfare, nor seek God in prayer as they ought. Hence their weakness. Do please read about the armour that God has provided for us. That wonderful six-fold armour, which is made seven-fold by prayer (Eph.6:10-20). Let us view these seven parts.

1. "Having girded your loins with truth." This is the first part of the Christian's armour. We must love the truth. The Lord came that He might bear witness to the truth, and every one that is of the truth will hear His voice (Jn.18:37). We must be true in our thoughts and words and ways, if we would be His disciples. Let us buy the truth and treasure every word of God that is revealed to

us (Prov.23:23).

2. "Having put on the breastplate of righteousness." In a day when moral standards are being lowered, let us love righteousness — righteous living. How vital to the Christian is the breastplate of righteousness. We can hide some unrighteousness from our fellowmen, but we cannot hide from God. Nor can we hide from the Adversary; he knows us, and he is "the accuser of our brethren" (Rev.12:10). Remember that "all unrighteousness is sin" (1 Jn.5:17). "The LORD is righteous; He loveth righteousness: the upright shall behold His face" (Ps.11:7).
3. "Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." The Lord's equipped warrior will be ready to go where and when he is sent. The conflict against the world rulers of this darkness needs men with feet shod. "How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom.10:15). Let us realise that we cannot send ourselves: "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom.10:15). We need the preparation of the gospel of peace. Are we prepared? Are we ready to speak the word to them that sit in darkness, or are we indifferent? How shameful if it is so! If souls go on in the darkness because we were unprepared. How sad, if the Lord's call came, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? (Is.6:8), and no answer came from us because we were unprepared. Oh, may our feet be shod with "the preparation of the gospel of peace"! "Go with the name of Jesus to the dying, And speak that name in all its living power."

4. "Taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one." In His temptation, the Lord's answer to the tempter on each occasion was "It is written." Thus will the Christian answer, if he knows the Word of God. No fiery dart can penetrate the shield of faith. Count upon the faithfulness of God and your faith will grow. Very many have fallen through unbelief. Over six hundred thousand men of Israel perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. "They were not able to enter in because of unbelief" (Heb.3:19). By our faith in the Word of God we stand. Let us not be high-minded, but fear (Rom.11:20).
5. "Take the helmet of salvation." Here hope comes in, added to faith. Hope that makes the Christian to rejoice in tribulation. What a great defence hope is! How often has the Christian obtained the victory when the song of praise has risen to God. It was when Israel began to sing praise that God gave them the victory (2 Chron.2:22); and it was when Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns that the prison house was shaken, and every man's bands were loosed (Acts 16:25,26). Let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
6. "And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." How powerless the Christian is who does not know the Scriptures — the Old Testament as well as the New. They are given that the man of God may be complete. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," wrote the apostle Paul (Col.3:16). How shall it dwell in us? By reading it, meditating on it, and believing it. "Thou

shalt meditate therein day and night,” said the Lord to Joshua (Josh.1:8), that warrior of the Old Covenant. “I charge thee — preach the word,” wrote Paul to Timothy in the New Testament (2 Tim.4:1,2). Let us take the sword of the Spirit and use it.

7. “With all prayer.” How much there is in the verse! See Jacob “wrestling” with God for a blessing (Gen.32:28). Listen to Paul and his companions in their prison cell “striving” in prayer (Col.4:12). Think of the Master rising early and departing into a desert place to pray (Mk.1:35). Because of the exercise entailed, some do not give themselves to prayer. Yet what promises there are to those who pray (Matt.7:7). “Long as they live should Christians pray, For only as they pray they live.”

Praying and watching. Praying earnestly. Praying expectantly. Praying in the Holy Spirit. This is the path to victory. We war against mighty forces and we dare not presume to war in our own strength but “If God is for us, who is against us?” (Rom.8:31). “Wherefore take up the whole armour of God.”

“Who is on the Lord's side?

Who will serve the King?

Who will be His helpers,

Other lives to bring?

Who will leave the world's side?

Who will face the foe?

Who is on the Lord's side?

Who for Him will go?"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE LORD'S COMING

“The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess.4:16,17).

“At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess.1:7,8).

It is clearly taught in these verses that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming from heaven, and that He is coming personally. We need not discuss the certainty of His coming nor the fact that He will come Himself, nor yet the fact that many who are alive when He comes will be changed and caught up, never to see death (Jn.11:25,26). These things are so clearly taught in the scriptures, that we cannot understand how any who love the Lord and His Word can believe otherwise. It is evident that the scriptures we have read do not refer to the same occasion. His coming will be in two parts or stages.

The first part of His coming will be to the air for those who believe on Him; the second part of His coming will be to the earth,

when He comes to reign. There will be a short period of at least seven years between these appearings of the Lord (Dan.9:25). Concerning this we cannot now stay to write. Let us consider the two stages of His coming.

THE LORD'S COMING TO THE AIR

We cannot think of this without turning to John 14:3 to read the Master's words; "If I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also". Not merely to heaven will He receive us, but to Himself. Glorious day! when we shall hear the shout and feel the transforming power which will change our bodies like to His own glorious body. The believer who loves the Lord cannot contemplate that day without an intense longing for it; and not only so, but a deeper longing to serve Him more faithfully in the little while between. If the truth of the Lord's coming is truly believed by the Christian it will have a profound effect upon his life. The following scriptures show this:

- John 14:1-3 - it will bring him peace and joy.
- 1 Corinthians 11:26 - it will constrain him to remember the Lord with other disciples in the Breaking of the Bread the Remembrance.
- 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10 - it will cause him to serve patiently, waiting for the Son of God from heaven.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 - it will comfort him at the death of his loved ones, those who have died believing in Christ. It will also be his "calm pillow" if he himself is called to pass through death's dark valley, knowing that

the “dead in Christ shall rise first”.

- 1 John 3:2,3 - it will cause him to purify himself, even as Christ is pure. The Christian who looks for the coming of the Lord will hate the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude v.23). If he sins, he will be quick to repent and to confess his sin. What a purifying effect the Lord's coming should have upon our lives!
- Revelation 3:11 - it will cause him to hold fast, lest he lose his crown - his reward, if so be that he has served the Lord in faith and love.

The Lord is coming and He is coming to the air. We shall rise to meet Him. Oh, may the thought of His coming have an effect upon our lives day by day!

THE LORD'S COMING TO REIGN

It seems evident from Zechariah 14:4 and Acts 1:11 that when the Lord comes to reign, He will come to the Mount of Olives, the place from which He left. The manner of His coming will be manifestly different from when He comes for His own. Then He will come with a shout, but when He comes to reign He will come “in flaming fire” (2 Thess.1:8). In a sky lit as by lightning (for the sun will have been darkened), He will come, and every eye shall see Him (Matt.24:27-31; Rev.1:7).

In Zechariah 12:10-14 we see how Israel will humble themselves when they see Him. From smitten hearts they will say: “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions” (Is.53:4,5). They will remember

Calvary, as we do. As we see the world drifting more and more into ungodliness, and the hearts of men hardening; as we see the return of the Jews to their own land, after 1900 years of exile, we must realise how near is the coming of the Lord. Though now the Jew has returned in unbelief and hardness of heart, the day is not far distant when they will see Him.

But Israel must first pass through a time of affliction and trial and purifying, "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer.30:7). If the time of His coming to Israel and to reign is near, then His coming to the air must be nearer still. Let us not sleep as do some but let us watch and be sober. Between His coming to the air for His own and His coming to reign upon the earth, there is the time of the great tribulation, "Such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be." So fearful is that time that "except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt.24:22). The awful happenings of those years are described for us in detail in the book of Revelation, chapter 6 to 20. The Old Testament prophets too spoke of those days (Joel 3).

What glorious days will follow in the peaceful reign of Immanuel, when, for one thousand years this earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Is.11:1-9; Hab.2:4). Then the nations will learn war no more" (Is.2:4). Let us remember that if we endure, we shall also reign with Him (2 Tim.2:12).

The reader will find profit in reading carefully the book, "The Finger of Prophecy," published by Hayes Press.

The Lord Himself shall come
And shout the quickening word;
Thousands shall answer from the tomb.

“For ever with the Lord”.

How shall I meet those eyes?

Mine on Himself I’ll cast,

And own myself the Saviour's prize;

Mercy from first to last.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

“We must all be made manifest before the judgement seat of Christ” (2 Cor.5:10).

The “all” here is not every person, it is every Christian, every “born again” person. These, and these alone, will appear at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Many Christians are under the impression that there will be one final day of judgement for everyone, but this is not so. God's judgements vary according to the dispensation and the knowledge of His will. The following brief summary shows the various judgements, which are yet future:

1. The Judgement Seat of Christ (2 Cor.5:10)
2. The judgement of Babylon the Great (Rev.17-18)
3. The judgement of the Man of Sin (2 Thess.2:8)
4. The judgement of Old Testament saints (Rev.11:18)
5. The Remnant of Israel judged (Mal.3:1-4)
6. The judgement of the nations (Matt.25:31-46)
7. Satan cast into the Pit (Rev.20:1-3)
8. Gog and Magog destroyed (Rev.20:8-9)
9. The Great White Throne (Rev.20:11-13)

The Judgement Seat of Christ will be the first, and the Great White Throne will be the last of the judgements. “As I live, saith the Lord, to Me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each one of us shall give account of himself of God” (Rom.14:11,12).

In 1 Corinthians 4:5 we see that the Judgement Seat of Christ will take place when the Lord comes to the air for His own. Then the counsels of our hearts will be revealed. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 shows that the fire will try our work, not as they appear to us, or to others, but to the Lord. How often we have done things for our own glory, or in our own way, or to please ourselves. How often too, we have simply “gone with the crowd” or sought to please others. The fire will try our works of what sort they are. Then we shall see our service as the Lord has seen it, and judgement will be according to the word which He has given us. “If a man love Me,” He said, “he will keep My word” (Jn.14:23). Not the sentiments of our hearts, but the word of the Lord will be the test. Again, 1 Corinthians 3:15 shows that even though the Christian's works are burned, he himself will be saved. It is not a question of life, but of reward at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Eternal life for the believer is secure: he has passed out of death into life (Jn.5:24).

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, as Paul looks forward to “that day”, he is running steadily, striving to attain, careful lest he should be rejected after he has encouraged others. Oh, the bitter sorrow of the Christians who have missed their opportunity of doing the will of God! Saved they will be, yet so as by fire. Saved - but, like Lot of old, with nothing. In heaven, but with no mark of Christ's approval. Fellow-Christian, in the light of that solemn, searching day, let us encourage each other to put the will of God first in our life. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8 Paul has finished his race, and now he is assured that in “that day” the Lord will give him the crown of righteousness. Glorious finish to his race!

Consider his triumphant words, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." The fight tells of the conflict against the spiritual hosts of wickedness. The course tells of the race run with patience. The faith is the doctrine of the Lord which he had kept. Now he is assured that in that day, the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give him the crown of righteousness; but not to him only: this crown is for all those who have loved the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, for all those who like him, have fought and finished and kept.

We cannot love the appearing of the Lord unless we have kept His word. We too must stand before Him in that day. How thankful we shall be, as we draw near to the end of the race if we can say, "I have fought - I have finished - I have kept." We cannot bring back the years that are past, nor the lost opportunities, but the present time is ours. May we seek grace to do the will of God, not making it our aim to please ourselves, or to please others, but to please Him, who for our sakes died and rose again.

"He sits exalted on the throne,
To us as mighty Saviour known,
Our one and only Lord;
He waits with keen, expectant gaze,
The coming of that day of days,
The day of His reward.
Before the holy judgement throne

We'll see, as we in awe bow down,
Our works in fire be tried.
In view of that devouring flame,
Be this our prayer, and this our aim
In Him may we abide.”

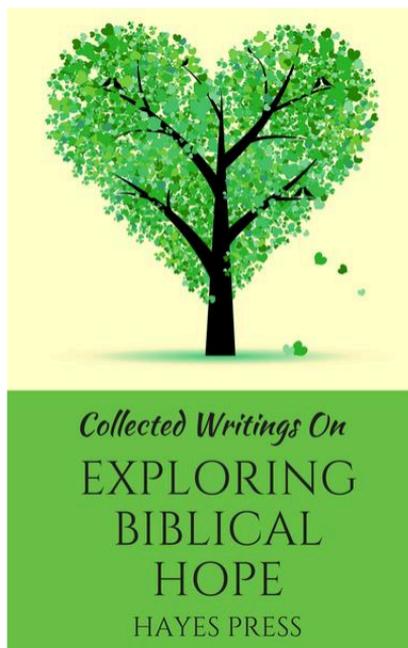
EPILOGUE

Now, my fellow-Christian, before I finish, may I write a parting word? We have as it were, conversed together as we have spoken of the things of Christ. May we realise He himself is with us by the Holy Spirit, hearing our conversation and trying our thoughts. It is true, that as we have discoursed on these things, we have referred only to the Scriptures. We have not accepted as authoritative the sayings of men, nor the doctrines of any denomination. The practices of the apostles, and of the early churches of God have been the guide for us.

How much, how very much, the Lord Jesus loved the men who not only believed on Him, but who also kept company with Him in the days of His flesh, who followed Him during the time of His temptations. May every honest and good heart, as they search the Scriptures to find if these things are true, as we are assured they are, go forth unto Him. We cannot now keep company with Him as in the days of His flesh, but we can truly love Him, and obey Him as the early disciples did. To us the word is "Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb.13:13). To be with Him entails leaving what is not according to His will.

We know not yet as we ought to know, but if we love God, we are known of Him (1 Cor.8:2,3). If He has the first place in our lives, not merely in an emotional way, but in obedience to His word, then indeed is the love of God perfected in us (1 Jn.2:3-5).

Did you love *Ye That Are Christ's*? Then you should read *Collected Writings On ... Exploring Biblical Hope* by Hayes Press!



This book explores hope from a Christian perspective.

CHAPTER ONE: THE HOPE OF THE RISEN LORD

CHAPTER TWO: CALLED TO POSSESS GOD'S
HOPE

CHAPTER THREE: A PERSEVERING HOPE

CHAPTER FOUR: THE HOPE OF THE RAPTURE

CHAPTER FIVE: HOPING AND QUIETLY WAIT-
ING

CHAPTER SIX: HOPING IN GOD

CHAPTER SEVEN: HOPE DEFERRED

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CHAPTER NINE: THE HOPE OF REWARD

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: THE HOPE OF ISRAEL - BEAUTY FOR ASHES

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CHAPTER NINETEEN: THE HOPE OF THE LIVING GOD

CHAPTER TWENTY: A PURIFYING HOPE

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