

# **Bible Studies**

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A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17: 11)

**A STUDY OF COLOSSIANS  
PHILEMON AND TITUS**

**VOLUME 50**

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A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

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Paul's prison journey and arrival in Rome illustrate the truth of 2 Cor. 2: 14-16. Although a Roman citizen and not, therefore, a public spectacle, like many a captive in a Roman triumph his life would be regarded as lost by his fellows. But to God, the opposite was true. Indeed, "bearing fruit and increasing" (Col. 1: 6) is as much a description of his life in Rome as it was of the life of the church of God in Colossae. News of his coming travelled swiftly ahead of him and within a few days of arrival he had penetrated, with profit, to the heart of Jewish society with his message. Although his movements were restricted his presence strengthened the assembly and galvanized its evangelization. So powerfully was his presence felt that even assembly malcontents were provoked into action, albeit for the wrong reason (Phil. 1: 12-17). His enforced restriction of movement perhaps led to greater blessing because it led to a written ministry which bore fruit not only in his own day, but in the succeeding centuries.

On a much lesser scale, we may find ourselves in similar circumstances. Having given up the world's best opportunities, lives spent in the things of God appear to be wasted to the men of this world. But they give pleasure to God. There can be no doubting, too, the sacrifice of time and effort required in writing for God. Often, however, the enforced idleness of youth or of retirement presents the opportunity to do so. By the sum of their efforts, contributors to *Bible Studies* in past years have provided written teaching that has been a blessing to the present generation as well as their own. In the grace of God, yet another volume of *Bible Studies* opens and contributors may be assured that their toil, unnoticed perhaps by others, is known to God. It will bring blessing to themselves, their fellows and in the will of God, to a generation to come.

*I. E. P.*

Brethren under the age of twenty-one are invited to write articles of 500 words or less entitled "Aspects of the Church of God in Rome". Depending on the response these will be published (D. V. ) in the August issue. Contributions, suitably endorsed by a local overseer, should be sent to Mr. P. L. Hickling by 30 April, 1982.

*Editors.*

## THE ORDER OF EVENTS IN THE UPPER ROOM AND AFTERWARDS

It is often assumed, as, for example, in the title of our 1981 syllabus, that the Lord's ministry and prayer as recorded in John 14-17 took place in the upper room. A comparison of the gospel accounts throws doubt on this assumption. It is not suggested that the place where the Lord spoke the words is of paramount importance; it is the words themselves that matter. Nevertheless it is of interest to compare the different accounts and in so doing, one is led to the view that it seems possible that the ministry and prayer of John 14-17 was spoken not in the upper room but enroute to Gethsemane.

The key verses would seem to be Matt. 26: 30 and Mark 14: 26. "And when they had sung a hymn they went out unto the mount of Olives". When was this hymn sung? A straight reading of the Matthew and Mark accounts implies the singing of the hymn followed immediately the keeping of the passover during which the breaking of the bread was instituted. Secular history records, for what it is worth, that in the last days of the Herodian temple the keeping of the passover was *accompanied* by the singing of the Hallel, i. e. Psalms 113-118 and it is very likely this is the hymn to which Matthew and Mark refer. Psalms 115-118 were sung after the third cup and therefore closely associated in time with the partaking of the passover.

If we take the accounts of Matthew and Mark as being presented chronologically and accept that the singing of the hymn followed soon after the institution of the breaking of the bread, then a comparison of the accounts (see chart) shows that the Lord's ministry and prayer did not take place in the upper room. Matthew and Mark show that the Lord foretold Peter's denial after they had left the upper room and John records the foretelling before the ministry of chapters 14-16 and the prayer of chapter 17.

The obvious alternative is to consider Matt. 26: 30 and Mark 14: 26 as out of chronological order, but there seems no reason to think this, and note Matt. 26: 31, "*Then* said Jesus". This implies the words following were said after leaving.

The order of events as recorded by Luke is somewhat different. The declaration of the betrayal is recorded as having been made after the institution of the Remembrance and we might think Judas was present when the Lord instituted the feast. This point has been discussed before and it seems certain that Luke does not follow a chronological order. For further comments on this point readers are referred to *Bible Studies*, 1968, page 21, and *Bible Readings on the Gospels*, pages 147, 8.

The following extracts from the *Young Men's Corner* volume of 1925 may also be of interest. A paper from Barrow reads 'This is my body... this is my blood. Here would seem a fitting place for the words of comfort

we find in John 14. "And when they had sung a hymn.... " This was the last time the Blessed Master passed outside of Jerusalem a free man.... On His way to Gethsemane the Lord continues His discourse, John 15 - 17, culminating in the true Lord's prayer for His own." A paper signed "Clydebank Camper" reads "They sang a hymn... The Lord and His disciples now leave the upper room and the Lord speaks to His own, John 14, 15, 16 & 17. It is evident that these are spoken on the way to Gethsemane. John records that when He had spoken these words He crossed over the brook Kidron and entered into the garden."

Commenting on these two papers, R. T. H. writes, "Comparing the papers from Clydebank and Barrow in October issue a rather interesting difference of opinion appears with regard to the time and place in which the words recorded in John 14 were spoken. Barrow suggests they were spoken before the singing of the hymn in the upper room. Clydebank state in reference to John 14 "It is evident these were spoken on the way to Gethsemane."

Do not the closing words of John 14, \* Arise let us go hence' mark the time at which the Lord and His disciples left the upper room? Peter's declaration at the close of John 13 that he would die rather than deny his Lord, raises perhaps a difficulty, for according to Matt. 26: 31-35 and Mark 14: 27-31, Peter spoke these words after leaving the upper room, whereas John records it as having taken place in the room. Luke 22: 39 appears to state definitely that the Lord came out and went to the Mount of Olives after the words recorded in the previous verses from 33 had been spoken. This would agree with John. Matthew and Mark's accounts differ from Luke and John in including all the disciples in the declaration made, whereas the last two named mention Peter only. Is it possible that there were two statements made by Peter in the second of which all the disciples joined?"

In *Bible Readings on the Gospels* Dr. Luxmoore writes (page 155), "Matthew and Mark show that the Lord left the upper room after the hymn, which appears to have immediately followed the loaf and cup, and that it was after this that He foretold Peter's denial. It may be mere fancy ..., but we are disposed to associate Peter's words, 'Whither goest Thou?' John 13: 36, with the Lord's rising and leading them from the room as well as with His actual words as to His going. Then the contents of chapters 14, 15 16 and 17 of John take their place naturally between verses 35 and 36 of Matthew 26., between verses 31 and 32 of Mark 14, between verses 39 and 40 of Luke 22, that is this conversation was on the Mount of Olives before they reached Gethsemane."

Referring to the comments by R. T. H. quoted above the difficulty in accepting that the words of John 14 were spoken in **the upper** room centres

upon the foretelling by the Lord of Peter's denial.

According to Matthew and Mark this was made after the disciples had left the upper room. R. T. H. comments that "John records it as having taken place in the room". But is this so? If we share Dr. Luxmoore's view as quoted above about John 13: 36, then John's record agrees with Matthew and Mark. It would follow that the words of John 14 were spoken after leaving the upper room.

The following table sets out the various occurrences recorded in the four gospels from the time of the preparation of the passover in the upper room to the time when the Lord entered Gethsemane.

It is based on the sequence of events as recorded by Matthew and Mark and compares their accounts with those of Luke and John.

EVENT	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1. <b>The Passover</b>	26: 17-19	14: 12-17	22: 7-18	<b>13: 2, 4(a)</b>
2. Washing <b>the disciples* feet with</b> related discourse	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	13: 4-20 (c)
3. Declaration of <b>betrayal</b>	26: 20-25	14: 18-21	22: 21-23(b)	13: 21-29
4. Departure of <b>Judas</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>		13: 30
5. <b>Institution of breaking of bread</b>	<b>26: 26-29</b>	14: 22-25	22: 19-20	<b>NR</b>
6. Contention as to <b>greatest</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>22: 24-30</b>	<b>NR</b>
7. <b>Ministry by the Lord</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	13: 31-35(d)
8. <b>Singing of the hymn and going out</b>	<b>26: 30</b>	14: 26	<b>NR</b>	NR(g)
9. "Whither goest thou?"	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>13: 36</b>
10. <b>Peter told Satan</b> desired to <b>have him</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>22: 31-32</b>	<b>NR</b>
11. Lord's word <b>re smiting</b> of the Shepherd	26: 31-32	<b>14: 27-28</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>
12. <b>Peter says he will not be</b> stumbled	<b>26: 33</b>	<b>14: 29</b>	<b>22: 33 (e)</b>	<b>13: 37 (h)</b>
13. The Lord foretells the denial	<b>26: 34</b>	<b>14: 30</b>	<b>22: 34 (e)</b>	<b>13: 38</b>
14. <b>Peter (and others) again say they will not deny Him</b>	<b>26: 35</b>	14: 31	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>
15. Lord's <b>remarks re purse and sword</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>22: 35-38 (e)</b>	<b>NR</b>
16. Lord's <b>ministry as recorded in John</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	14, <b>15, 16</b>
17. <b>The prayer of the Lord</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>17</b>
18. " <b>He came out, and went,</b> ... unto <b>the</b> mount of Olives"	<b>NR</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>22: 39</b>	<b>NR</b>
19. <b>Arrival at Gethsemane</b>	<b>26: 36</b>	<b>14: 32</b>	<b>22: 40 (0)</b>	<b>18: 1</b>

NR = No Reference

### Notes relating to the table

- This is said to be "before the feast of the passover" and the reference is to "supper". Is this the same?
- Placed by Luke after the institution of the breaking of the bread,
- The washing of the feet took place "during supper", John 13: 2.

- d) This ministry was given in the upper room; "when therefore he (Judas) was gone out" indicates the others were still within.
- e) If we consider Luke 22: 39 "he came out" to refer to the leaving of the upper room, then Luke shows all the events marked e) as taking place in the upper room. If so, there may have been two declarations by Peter. If, on the other hand, we accept Matt. 26: 30 and Mark 14: 26 as being in chronological order, then these events took place they left the room. The words "he came out" do not necessarily refer to the coming out from the room.
- 0 Assuming "the place" refers to Gethsemane.
- g) Although not recorded by John in these words we can compare John 13: 36 (see line 9 on the table) and John 14: 31.
- h) This could be a separate declaration made by Peter in or just on leaving the upper room, see extract in article.

*R. Hickling*

In the *Young Men's Corner* volume of 1928 page 141 Mr. J. Miller made the following comment in relation to John 14: 31:

The words, "Arise, let us go hence" should be read in the light of verse 30, "I will no more speak *much* with you." He did not intend to break off at verse 13; He had something more to say to them. Note also the words, "He went forth with His disciples over the brook Kidron." "He went forth" — from what? The city merely? I rather think this refers to their going forth from the upper room. It may be that the Lord and His disciples arose from the table at which they had been seated, and He continued His words standing in the upper room. I cannot conceive that the Lord spoke what is given in chapters 15 and 16 and prayed, as given in chapter 17, while walking along the streets of Jerusalem which probably were crowded at this time of the passover feast.

In response to a suggestion made in the same volume page 149 that from Matthew 26: 30 it would seem that the prayer of John 17 might have been uttered on the Mount of Olives Mr. Miller commented, "John 18: 1 makes such a suggestion impossible".

These further comments should also be considered when reviewing the difficulties associated with determining the order of events.

*J. K. D. J.*

### **PAUL IN ROME [Acts 28: 11-31]**

**From Birmingham:** Paul's journey to Rome actually began when, in order to protect himself from being taken by the Jews, he made an appeal to Festus to appear before Caesar (see Acts 25:11-12). Neither Festus nor

Agrippa, having heard Paul's defence, found in him anything "worthy of death or of bonds", and had he not appealed to Caesar he "might have been set at liberty" (Acts 25: 25-27; Acts 26: 30-32).

All this was in perfect accordance with the will of God, in that the Lord Jesus himself had said "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9: 15).

Paul had been "elected" for the purpose of being "An Apostle of Gentiles" (Rom. 11: 13), and "a Teacher of the Gentiles" (1 Tim. 2: 7). He had been "Intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the Circumcision" (Gal. 2: 7). Although he gloried in this ministry (Rom. 11: 13) his love and desire for the salvation of his fellow Jew, his "Kinsmen according to the flesh", remained strong throughout his ministry (Rom. 9: 1-3; Rom. 10: 1-2).

Wherever he went in his ministry he took every opportunity to proclaim Christ to the Jew as well as to the Gentile. Thus the first thing Paul did upon entering Rome, after three days, was to call together "Those that were the chief of the Jews" (v. 17). Intreating them to see and speak with him, he expounded and testified concerning "The kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus... from morning till evening" (vv. 20, 23).

In v. 17 he addresses them as "Brethren" that is, his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9: 3), and so in v. 21, but who were the brethren that Paul found at Puteoli (vv. 13, 14) and also the brethren who came from Rome to meet them (vv. 14, 15)? Were they, respectively, brethren "in Christ", Gentiles who had been reached with the gospel as a result of the scattering of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8: 4) and the brethren "In the Lord" from the church that was at Rome (Rom. 1: 7)? In each of these verses (14, 15, 17 and 21) the Greek word for brethren is *adelphoi*, which is used of "People of the same nationality (Acts 3: 17)... and the disciples, and so by implication, all believers (Matt. 28: 10; John 20: 17)" (Vine) (Comment 1)

*J. Watts*

**From Birkenhead:** The narrative in this portion of the Acts sets the scene for the writing of the Colossian epistle. The contents should be viewed in the light of Paul's circumstances whilst writing. This lends poignancy to many of the statements he makes to the saints at Colossae.

The few words of v. 16 record what must have been a very trying time for the apostle. Prayer must have played a great part in the life of Paul at this time and, obviously strengthened, he called the leaders of the Jews together to explain his position to them and protest his innocence of any

possible crimes of which he may have been accused. His hearers knew of no adverse reports and subsequently a date was set for Paul to explain "this sect... that everywhere it is spoken against", (v. 22).

That the meeting and investigation were of great interest was evidenced by the great number of people that attended. Paul, however, did not conduct a defence of himself or his beliefs, rather he restated his teaching, expounding and testifying on such matters as the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus. In his persuasive speaking he used both the law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets to support his reasoning with them. His meeting lasted all day and resulted in a divergence of view amongst his listeners, some believing the message.

Recorded within this passage is a portion from Isaiah which, under the guidance of the Spirit, Paul felt worthy of quotation during his address. This highlights the failure of God's chosen people to recognize His Son and the fact that salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ was available to the Gentiles (Comment 2).

No verdict either for or against Paul is recorded and it is possible that no decision was reached for some time, since those in authority would know of the strength of the support for "this sect" and would hesitate to promote trouble (Comment 3). The result was that Paul was detained in Rome where he continued to preach the Lord Jesus freely for two years whilst under house arrest.

During this time letters were written and thus Colossians and Philemon are preserved in scripture for edification. Paul conferred with many, amongst whom were Luke, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Tychicus and Onesimus. Paul's daily concern was ever the welfare of all the churches (2 Cor. 11: 28).

*R. D. Williams, R. C. Halpin*

**From Cowdenbeath:** It is clear that there was a church of God in Rome long before Paul reached the great city. Some time before his arrival (probably about three years) he had written a letter telling them of his longing to see them (Rom. 1: 11). Such a longing may well have been reciprocated by many of the brethren and sisters there for, as Romans 16 shows, he knew quite a number of them. It may have been that like Priscilla and Aquila, such had been compelled to leave Rome (Acts 18: 2) and had met the apostle in one of the big cities where he laboured. The ban being lifted, they were able to return to what was at that time the imperial city from which the world was governed.

When Paul disembarked at Puteoli he met some brethren. The fact that it reads, "we found brethren", may imply that he searched for them knowing that they were there. His meeting and stay with them must have

been a **happy** experience for him **as** was also **the meeting** with **the** brethren from Rome, who, having heard of **his** coming, travelled forty or **fifty** miles to **meet** him. Some of **the faces** may have **been** familiar. **What** a great uplift for Paul to **see them!** **He** thanked God for **it** and felt greatly encouraged. Perhaps **he** may have **been** feeling distressed **because** of physical strain, plus **his** daily **anxiety** for all **the** churches (2 Cor. 11: 28) **and** **the** prospect of arriving in Rome **as** a prisoner with **its** uncertain consequences.

His main purpose in **desiring** to **meet** with **the** Jewish leaders in **the** city was to bear witness regarding "**the** Hope of Israel". Of necessity **he** had to explain why **they** were seeing **him** as a prisoner in chains. Some thought **that** Paul **had** **expected** **that** **they** would have received some sort of communication regarding himself from Jerusalem. **The** **fact** **that** **they** **said** **that** **they** **had** not received **any** letters is **by** some of **us** considered not to be sufficient proof for believing **that** letters **had** indeed **been** sent **but** **had** failed to arrive. Paul was sent to Rome **by** **Festus** who was under obligation to send a letter to **the** emperor regarding Paul (**Acts** 25: 26-27). The Jews in Jerusalem were not under **such** an obligation. The Jewish leaders observed **that** Paul **had** matters to **speak** about. They were prepared to hear what **his** mind or thinking was and when given **the** opportunity later **he** expounded (*ektithemi* - *Gk.* ) i. e. **set** out. **As** a great expositor Paul skilfully **set** it all out before **them** in a way **that** **they** could follow and **as** **he** **did** so **he** testified, **that** is **he** bore witness to **his** own firm **belief** in what **he** was expounding regarding **the** new **phase** of **the** kingdom of God. **The** **acceptance** of Christ **by** **faith** or **the** experience of **the** new birth **is** **the** prerequisite to entering **this** kingdom, (**John** 3: 5). Thus **he** persuaded **them** (*peitho* - *Gk* is to convince by argument) (Strong). Some were persuaded **and** some were not. The word translated believed (v. 24) **is** also *peitho*.

The words of **the** quotation **as** **they** are found in **Isaiah** 6 **and** also **as** **they** are quoted in **John** 12 **state** very clearly **that** **it** **is** God who hardened their hearts and blinded their **eyes** whereas in Paul's **use** of **the** **passage** **he** charges **them** with having done so of their own volition. Both are true **because** **the** Scriptures **say** so. A parallel to **this** **is** **the** case of Pharaoh of whom God **said**, "**I** will harden **his** heart" (**Exod.** 4: 21). **In** **Exodus** 8: 15, 32 **it** **is** **stated** **that** Pharaoh hardened **his** own heart (Comment 2).

**It** was thought **that** "**his** own hired dwelling" (v. 30) **might** **have** **been** a different place of abode to "**his** lodging" (v. 23). Lodging (*Gk.* - *xenia*) carries **the** thought of hospitality or entertainment (**Vine**) **and** would imply **that** Paul was staying in someone else's home whereas **the** abode of v. 30 was rented premises.

The book of **the** **Acts** closes **as** **it** **began**. In **Acts** 1: 3 **the** Lord **is** **speaking** to **His** disciples **the** things concerning **the** kingdom of God **and** in **chapter**

28 Paul is preaching those very same truths to those who came to listen. Between chapters 1 and 28 we read of the history of this new phase of the kingdom of God as expressed by believers in the churches of God of those days.

We know also that Paul spent some time writing, for besides those who came to hear him there were those of his friends who came with news concerning some of the churches, which news impelled him to write as he did to Philemon, the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. His preaching and teaching was not only concerning the kingdom but also concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. These go together. Only by being in the kingdom can a believer fully recognize Christ as Lord.

*J. Bowman*

**From Derby:** The manner of Paul's journey to Rome was not what he wished and expressed in Rom. 15: 23-29. After delays following his arrest in Jerusalem he did arrive in Italy where he was met by brethren (Acts 28: 14). There is no certainty that they were Christian brethren for in 28: 17 Paul addresses the Jews as brethren. However, the letter to the Romans cannot have been written after Paul's imprisonment in Rome and so there must have been Christians in Rome when Paul arrived (see Comment 1 and Question 1).

The conditions of Paul's captivity in Rome were varied. The account in Acts 28 shows opposition from the Jews, but verses 30, 31 show that so far as the Roman authorities were concerned he started with much liberty within the constraints of house arrest.

He was clearly held prisoner for a long time and eventually his circumstances involved hardship. This can be seen from the second letter to Timothy. In 2 Tim. 1: 8 Paul describes himself as the Lord's prisoner and the circumstances of this are shown in 2 Tim. 1: 15-18 where some brethren were turning away from him because of his being in chains. By contrast Onesiphorus is commended for his diligent visiting. Others, faithful and unfaithful, are mentioned in 2 Tim. 4: 9-18, but ultimately all his friends failed him at his first defence.

From the New Testament one cannot discover how Paul died, but it can be inferred from 2 Tim. 4: 6-9 that he expected to die in captivity. Nevertheless he was still hoping that he might be able to see Timothy once more.

*TV. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From Hayes:** After the hazardous voyage, Paul landed in Puteoli and spent a week with the brethren there. Soon he was on the Appian Way to Rome. Did Paul walk or obtain the use of a donkey or mule? We do not know, but think it likely that he would be provided with a steed, for

although a prisoner, he seemed to have the privileges of a Roman citizen. At the Market of Appius he was met by brethren from Rome, who, having heard of his coming, had made the journey of about forty to fifty miles to meet him and Paul "thanked God, and took courage". It is evident from the Acts and from his letters how much Paul valued the affection and support of his brethren and sisters in Christ.

The Acts does not tell us about the origin of the church of God in Rome. The letter to the Romans, with its many closing greetings, shows us a large church, mainly Gentile and probably including some people of note. It also indicates the many ties between Paul and the church, even though he had not visited the city.

It would appear that the leading men in the Jewish community did not know about the Christian company in the city. The Jewish leaders probably kept themselves clear of the Gentiles. They said "concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against. " Christians can always expect to be spoken against, often for the strangest reasons. Amongst the dissolute and disorderly dwellers in Rome, the Christians must have stood out as good citizens. Perhaps an ignorant fear of them because they were different and because of the absurd rumours which may have circulated they had a bad name. In the case of the Jewish leaders, the offence would be that this "sect" proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah (Comment 4). From morning till evening on a certain day, Paul explained and declared to the Jewish leaders the kingdom of God and showed how the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus. What a wonderful privilege was theirs! But they disagreed among themselves and went away, after Paul had given them a solemn warning, in the words of the prophet Isaiah.

The Acts opens with Pentecost, where everyone present was a Jew or a proselyte, but ends with the words, "This salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles: they will also hear. "

*C. R. Stoner*

**From Liverpool:** *All Prison Letters'* Colossians and Philemon are stated to have been written from prison (Col. 4: 3, 10, 18 and Phil. 1: 23) whereas there is no evidence of this in Titus. Titus 3:12 and 2 Tim 4:16 suggest that it was written after Paul's first imprisonment as he was clearly not a prisoner then.

*Paul's Release!* Luke doesn't tell us what happened to Paul after the two years were ended. Tradition tells us that he was released after two years, possibly in AD 60 or 61 during the clemency of Nero; and this seems to be supported from 2 Tim. 4: 16 "At my first defence..." Certainly from Philemon 22 and Phil. 2: 24 it would seem that Paul was expecting

to be released whereas in 2 Timothy he seems to be expecting his imminent death, written perhaps during a second imprisonment (Comment 5).

*Under House Arrest.* Several points emerge about Paul's ever active way of life:

1. He wasted no time in witnessing — after 3 days!
2. He followed his usual pattern of preaching to the Jews first then to the Gentiles.
3. Even the soldiers who guarded him were told of the gospel (Phil. 1: 13).
4. His letters, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon contain a lot about prayer, showing that Paul spent a lot of his time in prayer.
5. From Paul's writings of this period great truths about Christ are revealed to us (e. g. Phil. 2: 5-11, Col. 1: 12-23) showing the central position of Christ in Paul's life.
6. Paul, who wrote "All things work together for good" (Rom. 8: 8) knew the overruling hand of God in his travels to Rome and saw his sufferings accordingly.

*P. Seddon, D. J. Webster*

**From Melbourne:** We do not know when the Gospel first reached Rome, but we learn from Acts 28 that there were those in Rome who had heard and believed; being known as brethren at Puteoli, and apparently also at Rome, when Paul arrived as "an ambassador in chains" (Eph. 6: 20), and a prisoner of Rome.

Those disciples to whom Paul is subsequently introduced may have been those to whom he had written, "Beloved of God, called to be saints", and he bestows his benediction upon them, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1: 6-7). Many of these called ones in Rome had aforesaid been idolaters, and he reminded them that their faith and obedience to the Word of God had been proclaimed throughout the whole inhabited earth. Travellers passing through Rome on their matters of business, would wonder at what they witnessed in these citizens of Rome, and would tell it again and again to passers-by, who in turn would pass on the news to others in distant lands. Thus even apart from apostolic messengers the tidings would be told afar. He makes no vain boast or assertion (Rom. 1: 9) that serving the Lord "in my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers". By his ministry and presence in Rome he would build them up in their most holy faith. Fellowship with one another, where there is a common loyalty to, and a living faith in Christ, is a source of joy, spiritual encouragement and strength, especially if there has been persecution for His Name's sake.

The servants of the Lord carry in their hearts a burden of responsibility

towards those who are His, and also towards those who are strangers to His grace. This is a burden of debt from which they can find no relief until they have in some degree discharged it (Rom. **1: 14**). Every servant of the Lord is such and let us not stop at "servants of the Lord".

The clearly revealed facts of the coming wrath of God against all sin and unrighteousness in men are for our consideration. We cannot sidestep our responsibilities for we also have debts to be discharged.

*D. Mawkinney, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Methil:** Even although Paul was constantly under surveillance by the Praetorian Guard he did not lose his zeal for Christ. It was noteworthy to see the welcome that Paul received from the saints in that region. Paul took courage from this and thanked God. He had for a long time longed to meet the saints in Rome and God had now granted him his desire.

After his arrival in Rome Paul called together the chief Jews to tell them of his plight, as he feared that a bad report might have reached Rome before him, but this had not been the case. Paul used the occasion to expound the kingdom of God to them, and many accepted what he set forth and some rejected it. Paul then quoted to them the words of Isaiah (Is. 6: 9, 10).

It was remarkable how God looked after Paul in Rome giving him a measure of freedom that he used to the full to further the spread of the Word. The two years seemed to be needed to unravel the legal proceedings before Paul could be freed, but he used the time to the full in preaching the whole counsel of God and in writing. Possibly around AD 62-65 Paul had freedom to visit Crete and parts around the Aegean sea (Titus 1: 5, 2 Tim. 4: 13-20) (see comment 5). The nature of Paul's ministry in that he received all who came unto him seemed to link him with the churches in Asia through such men as Epaphras and gave opportunity to write to the Colossians (Col. 1: 7, 8). We assume that during this period the letters to Philemon and Titus were also written (Phil. 1: 12-18; Philem. 23; Titus 1: 5).

*D. B. Reid*

**From Nottingham:** What a contrast there is between the first and last mention of the apostle Paul in the book of the Acts. In chapter 7 we find him minding the garments of those who stoned Stephen; in chapter 28 he is testifying to the kingdom of God and persuading both Jews and Gentiles concerning Jesus. So a great change has been wrought by the grace of God and the unfolding of the divine purpose in the chosen man.

Paul had longed to visit Rome and his heart must have been cheered when the saints from the city came as far as the market of Appius to meet him. Here was evidence of the power of the gospel so he thanked God and

took courage.

Paul had now reached the Imperial City; the centre of the world of the day and of political power and intrigue. Thus, in Paul's experience, he had been in Jerusalem, the seat of religion, in Athens, the seat of men's learning and philosophy and now in Rome, the seat of earthly power. In each place he testified to the One who is greater than all and it is instructive to note what we are told as to his methods in approaching the different types of people to whom he spoke.

No doubt the task of guarding prisoners would be irksome to many of the Roman soldiers, but those who guarded Paul were privileged men for who can doubt that the apostle would be faithful in testifying to the gospel before them. Truly they were men who had the opportunity to believe.

Paul spoke about the kingdom of God. He put before his hearers faithfully the whole spectrum of divine truth. His message was not merely to urge them to flee from the wrath to come but also to speak of the faith once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude v. 3), and compare with the principle of Exodus 18: 20. Our responsibility is to teach all the steps contained in the Lord's words of Matt. 28: 19, 20.

References made by Paul in certain of his letters to the churches indicate these were written from Rome, i. e. to the Ephesians (6: 20), the Philippians (1: 12-14; 4: 22), the Colossians (4: 3, 7-14), and to Philemon (v. 23). Then the 2nd epistle to Timothy was written from Rome, although at a later date, see chapter 1: 8 and cf. 4: 16-17.

To the casual reader the book of the Acts may appear to end abruptly. We are left with a picture of Paul under house arrest, living in his own hired dwelling and testifying to all who came to him. Of what happened afterwards the scriptures are silent except for a few indications of possibilities. An example of such is v. 22 of Philemon which shows that Paul hoped to be released to travel once again. Also, (Phil. 2: 24) the apostle express his hope to be able to visit them. These scriptures do not prove he did so; only that he wished and, perhaps, expected to do these things. It may be that Paul's reference to being "delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (2 Tim. 4: 17) relates to his being released after appearing before Nero and being allowed to travel again, but we cannot be certain. There is a considerable volume of tradition which supports this view and it is said by some that Paul's desire to visit Spain (Rom. **15: 24**) was realized. However, it must be stressed that tradition is not Scripture and we cannot build upon that which is not divinely inspired. The historical accuracy of these traditions is doubtful and the flights of fancy of men's imaginations can soon displace truth. Even the great historian Eusebius refers to these ideas using the words "is is said. "

There is a distinct symmetry between Acts 1 **and** 28. In the former we

are told that during the forty days the Lord went about speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God (v. 3). In the latter we have Paul, several years afterwards, still testifying to the same kingdom. Again, in Acts chapters 1 and 2 we have the kingdom expressed in the church of God in Jerusalem while in chapter 28 we see it expanded over many churches and continuing through the work of the disciples.

*R. Hickling*

## COMMENTS

**1. [Birmingham]:** Brethren are men both of the same parent. Paul called the Jews his brethren because both he and they were descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Believers on the Lord Jesus Christ are born of God and, therefore, call each other brethren or sisters. The relationship of the Jews to each other by birth is a figure of the relationship of believers to one another. In both cases birth is a prerequisite to being numbered with the people of God, but does not automatically confer that "nationality" upon the person. As to the position of Brethren at Puteoli, the seventy-day visit recalls Paul's stay at Troas (Acts 20: 6-12) and, embracing a Lord's day, suggests, but does not prove conclusively, that there was a church of God at Puteoli.

**2. [Birkenhead and Cowdenbeath]:** This is a matter of the greatest importance. Acts 28: 23-8 may be viewed as something of an epitaph of the Jewish people as far as the record of the Scriptures is concerned. The comparison, well made by friends in Cowdenbeath, shows that, despite all the divine grace and power shown towards Israel, they had regressed full circle. At the end of it all, they had reached the same miserable state as that which had brought down the wrath of God on their Egyptian captors. It may be then, that these verses hint at the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem. Jewish future glory, of course, depends on their repentance and turning to the Lord they so conspicuously rejected.

3. **[Birkenhead]:** Paul had appealed to Caesar which was a matter in which the Jews had no jurisdiction. His meetings were in no way judicial, but demonstrated Paul's expertise in evangelizing the highest strata of Jewish society.

4. [Hayes]: The attitude of the Jewish leaders is exactly similar to their counterparts in Jerusalem who dealt with the Lord Jesus. They would not come down (as they saw it) to His level. Both sets of leaders depended on third parties for their information and selected the facts that suited them. Their pharisaical self-justification therefore casts doubt on the truthfulness of their word concerning the church of God in Rome. Paul belonged to the same social class and was a Roman citizen of no mean city. Him they would hear.

5. **[Liverpool]:** The evidence of the Scriptures **is** not conclusive, as friends in Nottingham show, that Paul was released and imprisoned again.

*I. E. P.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**From Cowdenbeath:** Viewing v. 28 as being spoken to the Jews in Rome and not to the Jews nationally, would Paul's words imply that in Rome the gospel would now be preached to Gentiles? If so, would this mean that there were no Gentiles in the church of Rome up to this time?

The epistle to the Romans was written before Paul arrived in Rome and spoke to the Jewish leaders (Rom. 1:13-15). It makes specific reference to Gentiles (Rom. 11:13) who had, therefore, had the gospel preached to them. The local significance would be that, with their rejection of Paul's message, the Jews forfeited forever their privileged position to be first-hearers (See also Comment 2).

**From Liverpool:** Is there any evidence historically that Paul did appear before Caesar or Caesar's court?

2 Tim. 4:16-17 shows that Paul did appear before the Roman courts.

There is no record in the Scriptures of a personal appearance before Caesar. As to tradition, we share the view of friends in Nottingham.

*I. E. P.*

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# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8202

Through the care and overrule of God we today have the inspired writings the apostle Paul first addressed to the saints and faithful brethren at Colossae. We rest upon such verses as Col. 1:14, "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins". We identify with them, and for the moment losing sight of the Colossians, we ourselves experience the consciousness that our sins are forgiven and feel gratitude to Him who redeemed us. The word of God lives today as the Spirit of God brings it home to us.

The theme of thanksgiving and prayer links together two important activities of the disciple. Verses 9-11 of Col. 1 contain several expressions answering to verses 4-6, showing a close connection between the thanksgiving and the prayer or intercession. That both are necessary is evident from the example of Paul and Timothy in their thankfulness to God for the response of the Colossians to the gospel, and in their continuing prayer for their spiritual progress. They were not content simply to hear of such progress, but wished the Colossians to know of their thanksgiving to God and their further concern which found expression in prayer. Many practical lessons are brought out in the contributions on the opening part of this chapter.

*E. A.*

## **Editorial Changes**

In 1976 Brother **R.** Lindsay was added to the editorate of Bible Studies, being already an editor of **the** Fellowship's General Literature. Since then, he has proved a capable and perceptive editor and has served the magazine and its readers well. He has now been asked by the Overseers' Conference to take a more prominent role in dealing with General Literature and must relinquish his work with Bible Studies. We thank him for his work and ask the Lord's blessing on him in the expanding field of service on which he now concentrates.

The Conference which added Bro. Lindsay to our number also gave us Ian Penn as an assistant to work jointly with Eric Archibald. These two have contributed greatly to the magazine in the intervening years and they now become full editors, so that the editorate now comprises J. K. D. Johnston, P. L. Hickling, E. Archibald and I. E. Penn.

*Editors*

## **The Forsaking on the Cross**

A contribution on this subject from Brian Fullarton of Innerleithen was printed in B. S. 8111, with a footnote saying that his viewpoint was "at variance with the general mind of Editors", and promising that Editors might make a fuller statement in due course. We here return to the issue and endeavour to state more fully the reasons for our disagreement with the views expressed.

There is very much common ground. We all agree that Scripture teaches that the Son is eternally one of the three Persons of the Godhead, and that the Father has always stood in the same relation to the Son as He does now, since immutability is one of the attributes of God. We further agree that when the Lord Jesus became man, He had two natures which were united, not acting independently. The difference arises from what we see as a confusion between nature and attitude. A person's nature refers to what he is, whereas his attitude refers to what he wills and this is equally true of the Godhead. The sonship of the Lord could never change, but the

Father's attitude towards the Son could; and we consider that when the Son was "made to be sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5: 21) communion was broken and so He knew God's forsaking. He was made a curse (Gal. 3: 13) and the wrath of God against sin was directed against Him as the personification of sin in man.

The relationship between Father and Son, insofar as we can appreciate it, is that of persons. We cannot see how it is possible for a person, even a divine Person, simultaneously to forsake and to be with someone; the statement itself is a contradiction in terms. (Unless, of course one is used in a physical and the other in a metaphorical sense, which is not the case here). The Father did indeed take delight in the sacrifice of His Son (Is. 53: 10), but, nonetheless, He had to apply the penalty of sin, death, which is separation from God. To suggest otherwise is to imagine a dichotomy in the mind of the Father: on the one hand willing vengeance against the personification of sin, and on the other willing communion with that person.

Similarly, if we accept that the Lord Jesus, although both God and man, had a single personality, we must believe that He, the Person, was forsaken by God, the Father. It is not admissible to think of some part of the Lord's being as being forsaken by some part of God the Father, or to imagine an outward cry at variance with the inward emotions. There was no dichotomy in the incarnate Son; the cry He gave was expressive of His deepest emotions at that time.

In summary, our general mind is that the teaching of Scripture is that the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son did not alter in any way His essential deity, but that at the time when He was made an offering for sin, the Father's attitude towards Him changed, so that He was temporarily forsaken, as the Scripture predicted: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 13: 7). In this experience He glorified the Father, "wherefore also God highly exalted Him" (Phil. 2: 9).

*P. L. H.*

## **THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER [Col. 1: 1-14]**

**From Birkenhead:** From his detention in Rome, Paul writes to the saints in

Colossae, whom **he has** never met. **It is** not **unexpected**, therefore, **that he** should **identify** not only himself, **but** also his authority. **He** does this, clearly claiming **that** his apostleship **is the** will of God. **He** associates Timothy with his communication **by** including him in his opening statement.

Having established his authority, Paul addresses those to whom **he is** writing. **It is** worthy of note **that he** does not **use** individual **names**, **but** their attributes when addressing **them as** "**the saints and** faithful brethren in Christ which are **at** Colossae." The wording implies **that the** group of saints and faithful brethren are bound together **by** being in Christ. The fact **that they** were in Colossae was less of **a bond than** being in Christ. Paul links himself with **these** people when praying for **the** grace **and** peace of God "**our**" Father to **be** upon them.

The main body of **the** letter starts with thanksgiving to God for **the** faith of **these** saints which is traced through **the** following verses. Paul records **the** progress which is apparent to him. The "word of **the** truth of **the** gospel" is evident in their lives, **and** in their spiritual growth, and **he** reports **that** this is so in "all **the** world", **a fact** which **must** bring news and comfort to **the** saints.

The communication of news between Rome **and** Colossae would largely **be due** to **the** efforts **and** visits of Epaphras, who **had a** heavy responsibility for **the** establishment **and** care of this Church. **In** Philemon **23** **he** is referred to **as a** fellow-prisoner, while in Col. **1: 7** **he is a** fellow-servant. **We** could find no evidence **that** Epaphras was under arrest, **but** thought that perhaps in his devotion to Christ and service to Paul, **he** would become **a** voluntary prisoner in view of **the** time **he** would have **spent** with this fellow-worker.

From v. **9** **the** emphasis **changes** to **that** of petition on behalf of **the** church. Paul recognizes their enthusiasm **and** achievements **and** prays for knowledge of His will, spiritual wisdom **and** understanding. These would come with spiritual maturity **and** **the** evidence of this maturity would **be seen in** them walking worthily, bearing fruit **and** increasing in **the** knowledge of God. **In** following **Paul's** words we **can** learn **that** God's might **and** glory are available to lend strength to individual efforts **and** **the** success of **the** effort is to **be seen** in **the** ability to exercise **patience and** longsuffering with joy.

*R. C. Halpin, G. H. Roberts*

**From Birmingham:** It is generally accepted that Paul is the author, who wrote to the Colossians during his imprisonment in Rome in approximately 61 A. D. Paul is not thought to have visited Colossae (1: 4, 2: 1) up to the time of writing this epistle. The gospel probably reached Colossae while Paul was at Ephesus (Acts 19: 10), perhaps through Epaphras who was a Colossian (1: 7, 4: 12, 13).

Tychicus and Epaphras delivered the epistle along with Ephesians and Philemon and together they are referred to as the prison epistles. [Comment 9]

Paul had two reasons for writing. First, he was writing and sending a message to Philemon concerning his runaway and now converted slave Onesimus (4: 7-9), and, second, to countering false teaching which threatened the assembly.

It is not known exactly what this false teaching was, but several things would be inferred from Paul's words.

He refers to "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men" (2: 8), and in 2: 4 is concerned that "no one may delude you", for in Christ "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden". In 2: 16-23 reference is made to ordinances requiring self-effort and discipline: "Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed ... false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence" (v. 23 NIV). It seems that this false teaching placed great importance on outward observance of feasts (2: 16) which was presented proudly as the true way of self-discipline and the subjection of the flesh. They also boasted of possessing a higher philosophy (2: 4, 8, 18), and we may assume from Paul's frequent use of the terms "knowledge", "wisdom", "understanding" and "mystery" that he sought to counter this.

Paul answers these two errors respectively by directing the Colossians to Christ: to put on Christ as being the way of holiness (2: 20, 3: 1, 12), and to learn from what source true wisdom comes, the mystery of God even Christ (ch. 2: 2-3).

We noted that in the R. V. James, John, Peter and Jude invariably use the name and title Jesus Christ, because this was the order of their experience. As Jesus they knew him first, and as Messiah (Heb. equivalent of Christ, meaning "Anointed") in resurrection. Paul, on the other hand, came to know Him first in the glory of heaven, and so he often refers to our Lord as Christ Jesus. This name describes the exalted One who humbled Himself (Phil. 2: 5). Jesus Christ describes the despised and rejected One who was afterwards glorified (Phil. 2: 11). Christ Jesus

suggests His grace; Jesus Christ suggests His glory (see Vine, W. E., *Expository Dictionary of N. T. Words*, pp 190, 274). [Comment 8].

The title Christ, with the article "*the*", specifies the Lord Jesus as the Christ (i. e. Anointed, Heb. *Messiah*) and without the article stresses His character and relationship with believers, which is in keeping with v. 2, telling us of the relationship of the Colossians to Christ, and they are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) of Christ, having His character (Eph. 2:10).

Some of us felt Paul was writing to two groups of believers in the church, i. e. "saints and faithful brethren", whereas others of us saw this as reference to the same people [Comment 6]. Still another of us questioned if Paul was writing to a church of God at all, but after consideration of such terms "faithful brethren" and "the love of the Colossians to all the saints" we felt these words would be used by Paul only to those in churches of God and adhering to the truth (see ch. 2: 5).

Another verse which brought differing views was v. 13. Some saw the kingdom of the Son of His love as having links with the kingdom of God whereas others of us saw this term as being synonymous with the Church which is His body, a complete work of Christ who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love [Comment 1].

*R. Wood*

**From Cowdenbeath:** Paul had not seen the Colossians prior to his writing them a letter (Col. 2:1). He wrote from Rome where he **was in bonds** (ch. 4:18). Epaphras who was his fellow-prisoner (**Philemon 23**) **told him about** them. Some have supposed **that Epaphras planted the Church, but there** is insufficient proof to **support** this. Paul writes of **him as "one of you"** (ch. **4: 12**), i. e. **he was numbered with the Church in Colossae. Whether he came** to Rome specifically to report to **Paul of their state or was sent as a prisoner and so met him we are not told. The meeting gave rise to the writing of the epistle. Paul had anxiety for all the churches (2 Cor. 11: 28)** and not only for those **he had personally planted.**

He addresses them as "saints", for such they were, having **been** sanctified by faith in Christ, and as "faithful brethren", for such they had shown themselves to be. "Your faith in Christ" would include the initial act of faith and the manifestation of it in their lives. Love was much in evidence and it was due to the indwelling Spirit that they **had** shown it. "All the saints" goes beyond those in the local assembly. The love they showed was due to "the hope which is laid up for them in the heavens". Because they were going to heaven they loved all those who were travelling with them to receive an eternal inheritance. This truth was part of the gospel which was preached to them. The preaching of the gospel was probably much more widespread than the Scriptures record (vv. 6, 23). While not excluding the thought that fruitbearing (v. 6) could be in the sense of soul-winning, the fact that it reads, "*in you also*" and that it was "*since the day ye heard*", and also because they had "learned of Epaphras", suggests the meaning would be rather in reference to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22) as produced in their lives. This is also the meaning of fruitbearing in v. 10.

Having heard the good report, Paul and Timothy gave thanks to God and prayed for the Colossians. In addition to praying, they also made request (v. 9), the Greek word "*aiteo*" meaning "strictly to demand something due" (Dr. Strong). This meaning can be seen in the approach of Salome on behalf of James and John (Mat. 20: 20), "asking a certain thing of Him". She believed they deserved what she asked [Comment 2].

It is possible to be filled (Gk. *pleroo* - "filled to **the** full") with "the knowledge of God's will". This contrasts with "the knowledge of God" in which we may increase. A full knowledge of God is not possible for us.

The phrase "according to **the might** of His glory" we **find** difficult to understand. **Is** this power declared to **us** when God reveals **Himself** which, in turn, energizes us to live to please Him? [Comment 3]. **Patience and longsuffering should be** manifested with joy. This **is the** true hallmark of a Christ-like person.

Some thought **that "the saints in light"** could **have a present day** application in view of our **being described as "light in the Lord"**. Others thought **that the receiving of the inheritance is in the future in that city** which **has no need of the sun and where the Lamb is the light**.

*7. Bowman*

**From Derby:** Col. 4: 18 is probably the only part of the letter personally written by Paul. This verse also shows that it was written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

No doubt the whole letter is the work of Paul, but Timothy is included in the greeting and in the activities of the first part of the first chapter. This is seen from the use of "we" in vv. 3 and 9.

The second part of v. 2 is a blessing - wishing for the Colossians the unmerited favour and peace of mind which come from God as their Father.

Verse 3 introduces the theme of the present study, namely thanksgiving and prayer, and both are addressed to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The difference in phraseology is significant in the same way as the words of the Lord Jesus to Mary Magdalene at the tomb, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20: 17). These words express different relationships to God in the cases of Mary and the Lord Jesus.

Sometimes the word "prayer" is used to cover all the expressions of the human mind towards God, but here in v. 3 are clearly shown two activities. These are that of thanking God and that of a request for something for someone else. Here both the thanksgiving and the prayer spring from Paul's knowledge of their faith in Christ Jesus and the outward expression of that faith in love.

The punctuation in the R. V. causes the whole of vv. 3-8 to constitute a single sentence! The statements in the verses taken individually are fairly easy to apprehend, but the linkage between the verses is more difficult to follow. If one ends v. 5 with a full stop, then one can see the love in v. 4 arising from the hope which comes from the gospel. Thereafter one can start v. 6 with "this" instead of "which". Next v. 7 can be started with "this" in place of "even as", and the passage Col. 1: 3-8 reads with simple expression [Comment 4].

Resuming the reading at v. 9 one finds no full stop until v. 17. However, the behaviour of the Colossians as expressed in vv. 3-8 has led Paul and Timothy to pray for the Colossians to have knowledge of God's will, to have spiritual ability to make judgements, and to understand the knowledge which they have received. Verses 10 and 11 are still part of the prayer of Paul and Timothy and express the desire that God may strengthen them in the Christian life. Outstanding qualities in that life are patience and longsuffering. These are respectively the ability to wait for the completion of purposes and the ability to show continued tolerance in the face of unkindness.

Vv. **12-14** are a straightforward expression **of thanksgiving for God's**

**From Hayes:** The Colossians had not been reached by Paul (1: 7-8) nor had he seen many of them (1: 3 & 2: 1), yet there is a great depth to his feeling for these people [Comment 10]. Similar references to his prayers, found in other letters, suggest either that other churches were held in similar close affection in the period that culminated in a letter that was sent to them, or, more likely, that Paul's mind was sufficiently uncluttered to be able simultaneously to keep the concerns of many churches as close to him as we read here of the Colossians. This shows a great single-mindedness in his life and the close link between his attitudes and prayers.

What form did these prayers take and how was this continual prayer (v. 9) expressed? The distinction between Paul and Timothy repeatedly mentioning the Colossians in their prayer times together, or a prayerful disposition which often expressed itself, may not have been apparent in prison. But it is important if we are to know whether we can practise such continual prayer.

In favour of "a prayerful disposition" was quoted: "Prayer is.... uttered or unexpressed..." (P. H. S. S. 466). "The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Rom. 8: 26 NIV). "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long" (Prov. 23:17).

But prayer then becomes defined as an attitude, and formalised prayer only a discipline which helps us to formulate the attitude as if there were no power in the expression, but only in the attitude it formulates. And so against this view was set the assertion that prayer must be an expression, maybe inwardly, of structured thoughts such as Paul sets out in the passage concerning the Colossians. Epaphras, a praying man, but also a working man, would not be able to pray continuously in this latter manner, and so it is said of him "always remembering you earnestly in his

prayers" (4: 12). We submit this dilemma as a question. [Comments 5 and 11].

*P. Stoner*

**From Liverpool:** *Background.* Paul did not know the people of Colossae personally (cf. 2: 1), and it was Epaphras who evangelized the cities of the Lycus Valley and founded the three churches at Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea (see 1: 17), possibly during the two years that Paul was at Ephesus (see Acts 19: 10) [Comment 10]. The NIV gives a clearer understanding of v. 2, "To the holy and faithful brothers", whereas the R. V. could give the misleading impression of two groups: (1) the saints and (2) faithful brethren [Comment 6].

*Thanksgiving.* Paul introduces the deity of Jesus Christ in v. 3, paving the way for later teaching. The hope (v. 5), although associated with the coming again of the Lord Jesus (Titus 2: 13 & 1 John 3: 2-3), is everything that the Christian can look forward to, everything he has in Christ.

*Prayer.* Paul's prayer has tremendous scope, presenting a fully mature Christian. What a tremendous thing it is to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, but wisdom and understanding are also required to handle this knowledge correctly.

Paul prays that they might all have this knowledge. This would counteract the teaching (see 2: 18) that knowledge was the prerogative of a few.

The inheritance (v. 12) is both present and future, consisting of all the blessings that belong to those who have come to know the Lord Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 1: 5). (See answer to Question 1).

*P. Seddon, D. J. Webster*

**From Melbourne:** In this letter written by Paul and Timothy to the saints at Colossae, we have references to principles and practices which are needful of continual repetition by all saints of God, and were a vital part of the service of the apostle and his child in the faith, Timothy. In Psalm 116, the Psalmist asks, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? ", and here the two fellow-workers were rendering thanks to God the Father for the great joy which had been theirs as they had heard from Epaphras, whom they call their beloved fellow-servant, how the Colossians had first heard and believed the message of the Gospel. It had also caused much thanksgiving that the word had borne much fruit in their midst, and continual prayer arose from the labourers that they might continue to increase in the knowledge of His will, and having commenced well, that they might continue to walk worthily of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work. The proclamation of, and reception of, the word of the Lord does not end the work of the true evangelist and teacher, for he knows that there are adversaries abroad, sent forth by the great deceiver of men and the enemy of God, whose business is to bring to nought that which has been accomplished by God's servants. Thanksgivings must be fortified by the prayers of the original workers and others of God's saints, lest their work be hindered and come to nought. It is the will of God that those who believe should be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord, bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God.

They had not been called to a life of ease, but to the enduring of trial and hardship for His Name's sake. This would demand longsuffering and patience, but there is grace provided, even in the midst of suffering and trial, enabling saints to give thanks to the Father. It is with a view to enabling them to enjoy and appreciate more fully the inheritance into which they shall enter at the appearing of their Lord and Saviour.

*W. H. Fullerton, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Methil:** Paul and Timothy together had a great care and love for the Church of God at Colossae, though there is no record of their either planting or visiting this church. However they were well informed about its

condition **because** Epaphras, a fellow-servant and a faithful minister of Christ, **had given them** a first-hand report. **It is evident that there had been false teaching** undermining the authority of the Lord Jesus. Paul writes **this** epistle largely to correct **such error and to teach the saints to give the Lord His** proper place. **He emphasizes again and again the power, the dominion, the greatness of the One who is pre-eminent and who is all and in all.** He writes **in love using gentle terms, addressing them as saints,** which they were **by calling, and faithful** brethren, which they were **by their attitude and actions.** His approach is **peaceful and he commends them** when he **says that he has heard of their faith which is in Christ Jesus and of the love which they had to all, not some, of the saints.**

There was no doubt **they had embraced the Gospel and it** was bearing fruit **in their lives as it** was throughout the world. **Paul and Timothy thanked God for these saints and not only prayed consistently for them, but let the saints know that they were being prayed for.** Of course the apostle **had a constant care and concern for all the churches. Paul's and Timothy's prayer and special request was that the saints at Colossae would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that they would walk worthily of the Lord and would please the Lord in all aspects of their lives, bearing fruit in every good work.** They would **be strengthened in all power by the One who is the source of all power, authority and dominion.** So the apostle is **gradually channelling their thoughts, and ours also, step by step to realize the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he enlarges their minds by giving them a vision of the immense power and majesty of the One who is the image of the invisible God.**

**In v. 6 he speaks about the progress of the Gospel showing that it is worldwide, that it bears fruit and that it increases.** Those who are **saved** are responsible to preach **the glad tidings to others and these in turn** are to repeat the process, a process of replication, **and so the Gospel bears fruit in the lives of disciples and spreads through their testimony. It began at Jerusalem, spread to Judea and Samaria and ultimately to the uttermost parts of the earth.**

The purpose of the Gospel is to **save souls, and those so saved** should thereafter walk worthily of the Lord, **giving Him pleasure as they carry out His will and as they accept His authority in everything.** The apostle wrote **in such a way that no one could have taken offence. He rightly recognizes their Christ-like qualities, yet is determined to establish in their hearts and minds that "in all things He might have the preeminence."**

*N. Coomer*

**From Nottingham:** The letter begins with much to say about "faithful brethren in Christ". Some of them are the saints in Colossae (1: 2-6), another was from there and was now with Paul, namely Epaphras (1: 7, 8; Philemon 23). Paul had heard of their "faith in Christ Jesus\*" (1: 4). Faith in anything is only as good as the object we have our faith in. Faith in Christ must be the best for "He abideth faithful" (2 Tim. 2: 13). Paul had also heard of their love for the saints - the mark of disciples (John 13: 34, 35). When they heard and received the gospel of truth, then they heard also what would be laid up for them in heaven. They had both heard and understood (fully known) the grace of God. Epaphras seems to have been instrumental in teaching them and his faithfulness is commended.

Paul's prayer for them is a great insight into what was on his heart for the Colossians. But first we see his constancy in prayer. In 1 Thes. 1: 2 he speaks of how he constantly mentions the Thessalonians in prayer. He was not to pray for impossibilities, but for practical, possible things. He prayed that they would fully know God's will. This spiritual wisdom and understanding concerning God's way would be closely linked with the renewing of the mind of a dedicated disciple of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 12: 1, 2. See also Col. 3). The request that Paul asks for them is that they should walk worthily and be fully pleasing to Him, fruitful and getting to know Him better. This is only possible because of the empowering of *His* glorious might. Thankfulness was always associated with prayer in Paul's mind. In 1: 3 and 1: 12 he speaks of it as he does in his exhortation to freedom from anxiety in Phil. 4: 6, 7.

The use of the phrase "the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light" (RSV) expresses the meaning of the original very well [Comment 7]. Our part in this is passive and the result of the grace of God. In 1 Pet. 1: 3, 4 (RSV) we read, "By His (God's) mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you". What an uplifting thought, especially if times of difficulty come. Also for our peace of mind and soul is the knowledge that we are no longer under Satan's authority, but have been transported or transferred to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ the beloved Son of God the Father. Nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8: 39). Our redemption is complete because it was accomplished with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1: 19) and our sins are forgiven, removed as far as **the east** is from **the west** (Ps. 103: 12). Praise the Lord.

*D. G. Rafferty*

## COMMENTS

1. **[Birmingham]:** The late Bro. J. Miller in his Notes on Colossians (1: 13) stated that, "Every believer is translated into this kingdom at the time of regeneration. This is not the kingdom of God. To enter and maintain one's position in the kingdom of God requires subjection to the Lord's authority as revealed in the Faith once for all delivered to the saints, but translation into the kingdom of the Son of God's love is an act done once for all".
2. **Cowdenbeath:** The Lord is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Eph. 3: 20 is another place where Paul uses the Middle Voice of the verb "*aiteo*".
3. **[Cowdenbeath]:** See Birkenhead paper.
4. **[Derby]:** The "even as" in v. 5 indicates a likeness between the effect of the "hope" in all the world and its effect locally.
5. [Hayes]: The words "do not cease to pray" (v. 9) could scarcely mean that the expression of the prayer was uninterrupted. Looking back from the time Paul was writing, there was no point at which it could be said that he no longer prayed for the Colossians.
6. **[Liverpool]:** Prof. R. P. Martin admits that *hagioi* could be understood as an adjective resulting in the translation, "to the holy and faithful brethren". But he prefers the translation, "to the holy people of God at Colossae, who are faithful brethren in Christ". Thus he says in the New Century Bible Commentary (1974), "To take the Greek word *hagioi* as a separate noun here is preferable to regarding it as an adjective agreeing with brethren". E. Lohse also comments, "Since in the salutations of the letters the Greek word *hagioi* is never used as an adjective, but always appears as a noun '*tois hagiois*' in the address of Col. is clearly meant to be a noun: to the saints". They are clear, however, that the saints addressed here were the faithful brethren in Christ.
7. **[Nottingham]:** The same verb which in the R. V. (Col. 1: 12) is translated "made us meet", is found in 2 Cor. 3: 6 where it is translated, "made us sufficient."

E. A.

8. **[Birmingham]:** A little caution needs to be used in attributing significance to the word order "Christ Jesus" or "Jesus Christ". Paul uses the latter more than the former, and when the former is used it is not always clear that there is any special reference to the Lord's glory. The study is complicated by the fact that RV translators themselves have not been completely consistent in reproducing the order; e. g. Rom. 1: 1 and 2: 16 both have "Christ Jesus" in the Nestle Greek text.

9. **[Birmingham]:** Chapter 4: 7-9 shows that it was Onesimus who travelled with Tychicus, and one might surmise that he carried the letter to his master Philemon.

*P. L. H.*

10. **[Hayes]:** Acts 19: 10 shows that the Colossians had been reached by Paul, and Philemon 1, 2 shows a degree of intimacy with the household of Philemon. Epaphras, a Colossian, played a key role in the building up of the church, but it appears to be going beyond the Scriptures to say that he laid its foundation, let alone that of Loadicea or elsewhere. The "Lycus valley" is not a scriptural expression, and in view of the importance of the association of churches of God with scripturally designated areas, may be an unhelpful term.

11. **[Hayes]:** Continually does not mean continuously. The disciples were continually in the temple (Luke 24: 53), but they were not there all the time (Acts 1: 12-14). Prayer cannot by definition be continuous for it should be preceded by judgement, discernment, and self-examination. These should lead to confession, thanksgiving, and ordered communication. It may be too that prayer should be followed by appropriate actions, not the least of which is watching for an answer. It may be that friends in Hayes have in mind, as the first of their alternatives, that meditation which is prior and essential to prayer, but is not prayer itself.

*I. E. P.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### 1. **From Birkenhead:** Verse 12 - Is this a present or future inheritance?

The Israelites were appointed an inheritance in the promised land, and there is a sense in which we must seek to lay claim to a spiritual inheritance here and now, dispossessing evil tendencies which would otherwise struggle for supremacy. In the future we look forward to a much greater capacity to appreciate His marvellous light. But before He "shined in our hearts" we could have no portion in this light whether now or hereafter. There may be an application to the present, as Cowdenbeath friends suggest, but I would think that the context strongly indicates the future inheritance that *all* believers will share in.

*J. K. D. J.*

### 2. **From Liverpool:** In what way do faith and love spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven (v. 5)?

The hope of v. 5 is the hope of the gospel (v. 23) which will be more fully realised "when Christ, who is our life shall be manifested" (3: 4). It is this hope which enables disciples to be steadfast in faith and to exercise love toward all the saints.

### 3. **From Liverpool:** What is love *in* the Spirit?

The words "**in** the Spirit" (v. 8) express **the means by which the** "love" is given its strength. **It is** not simply natural affection; **the fruit of** the Spirit is love (Gal. 5: 22). Its outworking was noticeable **to** Epaphras.

*E. A.*

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# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

## EDITORIAL

8203

It has been said that the doctrine of the person of Christ is stated with greater precision and fulness in the Colossian epistle than in any other epistle written by Paul. It was essential that the heretical teaching that was being propagated should be effectively combated by a positive presentation of the absolute supremacy of Christ in relation to all things. Paul deals first of all with the essential deity of the Son, then with His pre-eminence in relation to all created things by virtue of being the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He also presents Him as the pre-eminent One in relation to the "new creation", the "head of the Body, the Church", which has been brought into being through His incarnation and death.

The tremendous scope of the work of reconciliation made possible by the death of Christ is also dealt with. Lightfoot says, "The false teachers aimed at effecting a partial reconciliation between God and man through the interposition of angelic mediators". The apostle clearly shows that the reconciliation that has been effected by Christ is total and complete and that such a vast work could only have been accomplished by One having all the attributes of deity.

*J. K. D. J.*

## CORRESPONDENCE

### **Romans 8: 29-30**

The apparent conflict in Scripture between Man's freewill and divine foreordination is altogether beyond the human intellect to encompass. There can be no conflict, of course, between the various strands of the divine purpose, but this problem, in common with others which concern the Godhead, cannot be resolved by the application of human reasoning. Therefore we should be careful not to over-simplify the subject by stressing one side at the expense of the other, for in so doing we may draw conclusions which are at variance with what is plainly taught in Scripture.

There are many scriptures which indicate that foreordination is not merely the result of God's foreknowledge of those who will accept His salvation. The sovereign will of Deity also enters into it. Please give careful consideration to the following scriptures for example: - Isa. 46: 9, 10; John 1: 13; 6: 44, 45; 17: 2; Acts 16: 14; 1 Cor. 2: 14; Eph. 1: 4, 5; Phil 1: 29.

*L. Burrows*

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL

In B. S. 8108 (p. 114, line 3) P. L. H. rightly states that as a consequence of Adam's act of disobedience "death of two sorts followed - physical and spiritual". "Spiritual death" is not a term used in Scripture to describe the state in which unregenerate men are found. "Dead in trespasses and sins" is (Eph. 2: 1).

Death, as mentioned in Rom. 5: 12-21 should, I suggest, be understood to be spiritual. Certain statements, however, can also apply to physical death. Death in 1 Cor. 15 should be understood to be physical.

Spiritual death was Adam's experience as the immediate consequence of his sin. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2: 17). Therefore it was spiritual death which entered the world through sin in the first instance; physical death followed later. That being so then it was spiritual death which passed unto all men and did so for (or because) all men (thereafter) sinned. Do not vv. 13 & 14 teach that this is so? Men died because they sinned. If we hold that death in this verse is physical, then are we not saying that during the period mentioned men died for this reason? Surely it is not taught that each man's death is brought about by his own personal sin. Physical death is a consequence of the fall as stated in 1 Cor. 15: 21, 22 which teaches that as men die physically because of Adam so surely shall they be resurrected because of and through Christ.

The meaning, therefore, that we might attach to v. 14 is that although there was no law to identify sin as such, yet sin was in the world; and men, who lived in the period between Adam and Moses, in sinning did not do so against a spoken commandment as Adam did, but against their own consciences. Nevertheless death reigned over them, i. e. they had the same experience as Adam in that when they sinned they died. If the words "death reigned" apply to physical death, what then is the significance of the mention of the period of time during which there was no law? Does it have any significance at all if the evidence of death's reign was that men died during that period? The coming of the law is in prospect for some reason.

In Rom. 7 the Holy Spirit causes Paul to write to tell what happened in his experiences. Up until a certain time in his life he was alive, but when, for the first time, he consciously sinned against the law of God he died. He became dead through his own sin. Is not Paul being used to explain what happens in everyone's experience? Paul need not necessarily have been aware of this happening if he was speaking by revelation. He, of course, was a Jew with the law of God, but men without law sin and do so against their own consciences (Rom. 2: 14, 15) as the men did who lived in days previous to the law and as some men do today. Eph. 2: 1 states very clearly that we

are dead through our trespasses and sins. Viewing things in this way then, men become dead through their own sin.

Our being born with a fallen sinful nature is another matter. When Adam sinned he came to have something in him, now to become part of him, with which he was not created. Paul describes this as "sin which dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7: 17, 20). The changed Adam, now with a fallen sinful nature, begat children and transmitted to them this nature. With this we are all born. We are first of all sinners by nature (we are made such by Adam's disobedience Rom. 5: 19) and then sinners by practice. Sin does not show itself immediately in the life of children. It is seen to be active in adults. Therefore there must be a time reached when it begins its activity.

If it is held that we are all become dead spiritually through our having sinned in Adam, then are we not saying in effect that we begin life (physically) in a state of being dead (spiritually)? Life always precedes death. It is so physically and I suggest spiritually also. We must live before we die.

Although v. 15 reads "by the trespass of the one the many died", this need not mean that the many died along with Adam, but as a result of his trespass.

If we describe the state in which the unregenerate are found as being "spiritually dead", then we are in danger of having to describe the state previous to their becoming so as being "spiritually alive".

Paul does not say "I was spiritually alive once", but "I was alive apart from the law".

*J. Bowman*

## **COMMENT ON J. BOWMAN'S DISCUSSION OF "CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL"**

Spiritual and physical death can never be completely separated, for the second is a necessary corollary of the first. Spiritual life comes from union with God, and sin prevents that union. Similarly, physical life cannot continue indefinitely while estranged from the Author of life. Hence the death which "passed unto all men" was both spiritual and physical.

I cannot accept Bro. Bowman's interpolation of "thereafter" in Rom. 5: 12. Verses 13 to 17 of Romans 5 form a parenthesis which deals with two difficulties, and the main argument passes from v. 12 to v. 18. Following the statement "through one man sin entered... so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned", the argument continues "as through one trespass the judgement came to all men to condemnation; even so through the one act of righteousness... justification of life". Verses 18 and 19 contrast the deeds of

**Adam and Christ, showing that as Adam brought sin, condemnation and death, so Christ (the last Adam - 1 Cor. 15: 45) brought righteousness, justification and life. It is quite clear that the results of Christ's work do not depend on the personal acts of those who are "in Christ", and the parallel would be completely destroyed if the acts of individuals were referred to in the case of Adam's posterity. Adam and Christ are the heads of their respective races (Adam is a "figure" (*typos*) of Christ (v. 14), and in both cases all are taken as acting in the one. God can justly accept the atonement made by Christ for sin on behalf of believers because they are united with Him and share in His death (Rom. 6: 8, *et seq.* ). Since sin is a personal attitude to God and not merely a trading debt, satisfaction for sin cannot simply be transferred from one to another; the soul that sins must die. Only therefore, by the concept of corporate solidarity with Christ can the Atonement be understood. The Atonement, therefore, reverses (and indeed far exceeds, as vv. 15-17 point out) the results of our corporate solidarity with Adam, which brought death to all those united with him.**

**Verses 13 and 14 reinforce the statement of v. 12 by referring to the situation before the giving of the Law. It is a general principle of justice that there can be no condemnation where there is no given law; if it were otherwise the whole idea of responsibility for contravention of the law would be vitiated, and an individual could be condemned arbitrarily. Yet men still died (physically) before the giving of the law. Why was this? The reason was that they had sinned in Adam. He, acting for them as their head and originator, had sinned by transgressing against the given commandment, and death, as the consequence and penalty of sin, had passed to them as well as to him.**

**I find it difficult to accept that men become dead through their own sins. Eph. 2: 3 says that we "were by nature children of wrath". Bro. Bowman's article agrees that all are born with a fallen sinful nature. Does not Scripture teach that this nature itself attracts the wrath of God, quite apart from the actions which the individual subsequently takes? Life does indeed precede death, but I suggest that in the spiritual sense the preceding life was the life of Adam. I cannot see how a person tainted with sin at birth can be joined to God, in whom alone is life, while remaining sinful, and hence I cannot see how a man can be born with spiritual life. However, Rom. 7: 9 must be considered; was Paul the possessor of spiritual life at one time? In view of his possession of a sinful nature, I do not think that this can be the case, and another explanation must be looked for. I suggest that he lived without consciousness of sin, not knowing that the penalty of death had been passed upon him. When he understood the law of God, it pointed out to him his**

sinful desires and impulses, and showed him to be condemned.

*P. L. Hickling*

The above discussion and comments are published for the benefit of our contributors, and also to give opportunity for further contributions relating to the points discussed.

*Editors*

### **PRE-EMINENT ONE AND RECONCILER [Col. 1: 15-23]**

**From Birkenhead:** The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, means that while no man has seen the Father, the Son perfectly mirrors the Father. [Comment 1], Paul then expands and emphasizes the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ to the creation of His hand. He is supreme in all creation, and the repetition of the words "all things" serves to underline that nothing is excluded from this comparison. He is creator of all, having been in existence before all, and He upholds all by His power. The eternal nature of the Son is clearly affirmed in this passage. Verse 18 changes the emphasis from the material to the spiritual. We considered how the beginnings of Genesis and of John's Gospel reveal the Lord as the first in both physical and spiritual life. His place as Head of the Church the Body of Christ is reaffirmed and stressed in a similar way to His priority over all creation. The Lord was "the firstborn from the dead" when He rose from the grave and "led captivity captive". He was the first through His own work upon the cross. The Lord's total supremacy in "all things" comes over clearly and is an amplification of those things revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Gospels.

The result of the work of the supreme Son is outlined in vv. 19-23. First the Father, knowing His premiership, desires that all should recognize that every aspect and attribute of Deity is intrinsic in the Son. By His work of salvation, referred to as "the blood of His cross", He will reconcile all things to Himself. The reconciliation refers to things on the earth and in the heavens and was therefore thought to exclude those things which might be referred to as under the earth. (These would perhaps include those who have rebelled against God, and with regard to humans, it would also exclude those who deliberately reject the Gospel). Our view of this reconciliation was clear with regard to those who had placed faith in the Lord Jesus, but we could only suggest that the remainder of "all things" would be the restoration of that harmony which was disturbed by the entry of sin into the world. The presentation of v. 22 was thought to be still in the future.

The closing verse points to the universal preaching of the Gospel of Christ

unto all creation. We had difficulty in understanding how this could be so in apostolic times. [Comment 2].

*R. C. Halpin, A. Hyland*

**From Cowdenbeath:** In reporting to Paul regarding the condition of the church in Colossae, Epaphras told him of a danger to which they were exposed because of a certain philosophy which was being propounded. Before alerting them to this danger Paul, in his wisdom, chose first of all to give to them the remarkable presentation of Christ contained in vv. 14-23. We may rightly deduce that this false teaching assailed, among other things, the truth of his deity. Christ is the antidote to false teaching.

The gaze of the Colossians is directed to the Son of God's love, the One who died for them - their Redeemer. Side by side and in sharp contrast to this picture of Him as the Man of Calvary he directs them to look at Him in the greatness of His Being. He is God's Image in substance and nature and in His becoming flesh the invisible God has become visible. Firstborn is a title of honour. Israel (Ex. 4: 22) and David (Ps. 89: 27) are each so called. Christ is rightfully called the Firstborn of all creation because (for) all things were created in Him. As Firstborn He is prior to (as to time) and superior to (as to status) all creation, for He is the Creator of all. "In **Him**" as the source of all life (John 1: 4) they were created, "through Him", as the agent, the One who brought it all about, and "Unto Him" as the One who has all power and authority and to whom all shall yet be seen to be in subjection. Such is His power that what He has created is completely under His control and is held together by Him.

Not only is He pre-eminent (i. e. the One who is first) in regard to the great original plan of creation, but He is first also in connection with God's purposes for men. Although His being Head of the Body may be viewed as an outcome of His death, nevertheless the truth of the Church is called, "The mystery of Christ", which has from all ages been hid in God (Eph. 3: 4, 9). It is also called "the purpose of the ages" (Eph. 3: 11, RVM) which He (God) purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. So far as God's purpose is concerned Christ is the Head of the Body even before He, as the One who is the Beginning, brought about the work of creation. Looked at in this way a chronological sequence may be seen in the order in which the three statements of v. 18 are given. Christ shares priority with no one. In all things He is first and that because the fulness of Deity dwells in Him. The words of v. 19 do not imply that such fulness was ever given to Him; it is inherent in Him. Only One who is God in the absolute sense could be the Creator, could in incarnation die to redeem men and build them together into a church of

which He is the Head. Only such a One could enter into the domain of death of His own volition, and emerge again as a victor - "the firstborn from the dead".

Verse 20 shows that the work of reconciliation goes beyond the work of reconciling sinful men. It will be seen to include things or persons in the heavens as well as on the earth. The very far-reaching effects of the death of Christ are indicated here. Reconciliation as it affects men is a changing from a state of enmity to one of friendship. Such were we (Rom. 5: 10) and such were the Colossians (v. 21). God has no need to be reconciled to men. The need is man's because He is God's enemy. On the ground of Christ's having died to bear the judgement due to sin, sinful man is invited to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5: 20). By changing his attitude and accepting God's promise the sinner can be forgiven.

The purpose of our being reconciled is that Christ, the One through whose death it has been accomplished, may, in a coming day, present to His Father those who, in appreciation of their being reconciled, have lived their lives unto Him. The words "if so be that ye continue" (v. 23) indicate that such a presentation is conditional upon our being holy, without blemish and un-reproveable in our lives. We are exhorted to be holy (1 Pet. 1: 15) and to be without blemish (Phil. 2: 15), and it is required of an overseer that he be blameless (same word as un-reproveable) (Titus 1: 6). This shows that the Lord places a very high value upon a truly sanctified life and will Himself honour those who so live. He will present each with great pleasure ("exceeding joy", Jude 24). If the Colossians should give heed to false teaching and so be moved away from what they had believed they would forfeit this great honour.

*J. Bowman*

**From Derby:** The subject is two-fold. With pre-eminence in mind one can profitably look back to Col. 1: 13 for the phrase "the kingdom of the Son of His love". The Lord, before Pilate in John 18: 36 said, "My kingdom is not of this world". He claimed kingship in a spiritual realm. The Sonship of the Lord and its character were declared by revelation at His baptism when a voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son". These two scriptures lead to consideration of Col. 1: 15 with the Lord as the image of God.

In John 14: 5 Thomas did not know the way and the Lord's answer included the statement, "If ye had known Me ye would have known my Father also". This led to Philip's questioning and brought out the Lord's outstanding claim, namely, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (v. 9). The Lord Jesus is the express image of the invisible God. This is, of

course, in a **spiritual sense** - not a bodily one. Now in Col. 1: 15 comes the phrase "**the Firstborn of all creation**". This expresses the relationship of the Lord Jesus to the created world. It has nothing to do with His birth; instead it reveals Him as the head over all the created world. This relationship, expressed differently, is found in John 1: 3 where it is stated that all things were made by Him. One would think that this verse refers to material things; but it is developed further in v. 4 with the words "In Him was life". This includes both **physical and spiritual** life.

Paul in Col. 1: 16 claims all this, but goes further. He includes things invisible. This can be readily apprehended in many respects.

The truths of Col. 1: 18, though sublime, are simpler to grasp. The church as a building was introduced by the Lord Jesus to the disciples in Matt. 16: 18, but the church seen as a body with members is a truth perceived by the apostle Paul [Comment 3]. He develops the truth further in other epistles. Again there is the Firstborn. This time it is from the dead. The Lord was not the first in time to rise from the dead. He is, however, the pre-eminent One in this, as in other relationships [Comment 4].

Now that which is still really pre-eminence is described in v. 19 as all fulness. This fulness is seen as complete reconciliation. Surely there are some things in the life of the world which are irreconcilable; but the giving of His life by the Lord Jesus on the cross has brought about a full reconciliation between God and man.

The Colossians in the past, not being of Israel, were aliens. Additionally they were enemies of God in mind. The removal of the enemy attitude was reconciliation, and it left the way open for their ceasing to be aliens.

The work of the Lord Jesus, through His incarnation and death, has made it possible for the believer to be faultlessly holy and above reproach (v 22). It is based on the faith and steadfastness therein (v. 23).

The Gospel is forward-looking, and so, awaiting its fulness, there has to be the exercise of hope.

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway.*

**From Edinburgh:** In introducing this portion we noted the recurrence of the word "all" - it is used eight times in vv. 15-20 alone. We then examined the verses one by one and noted that the word "firstborn" in v. 15 does not mean one born first, but speaks of pre-eminence, thus showing forth His Godhead. We read "by Him", "through Him" now "in Him". In this setting it is the Alpha and the Omega which is seen. The present tense is used in "is before all" (not was) showing the Eternal One, who past, present or future always lives in the eternal present. He is the Head of the Body. He

is the beginning: again **the present tense is used**. The beginning of **all things** cannot **be limited** to **the present** testimony. **He is the** firstborn from **(all) the dead** (ones). **This appears to be** different from **Rev. 1** firstborn of **the dead**. **This would be the** firstfruits of **the Church the Body that He might be the** pre-eminent One, **and** so it was **the good pleasure** of **the Father so** to honour **the Son**.

Note **the scope of the reconciliation**. **Heaven had to be** reconciled for sin **had been** there. [See Question 2], Earth **had to be** reconciled for sin was there. **But** hell could not **be** reconciled, for **it is** reserved for **the devil and his** angels **and** all those who reject **the Peace** through **His** blood.

Paul now **uses the** personal pronoun **"ye"** **and the purpose that He might** present holy, unproveable, without **blemish - that is the** fulness of **the** reconciliation; **but the condition is** "if so **be that ye** continue **in the faith"**, grounded, **stedfast** not moved away from this hope. **Paul was a** preacher to **this** end.

*T. Hope*

**From Leeds:**

1) *Questions arising:* **He is "the image of the invisible God" (v. 15)**. We wondered **in** what way **this could be** possible. **Is it in the sense that the Lord Jesus showed us the nature and** character of God **rather than the** bodily image of God, or **is there** more involved here **and in other similar scriptures?** (e. g. John 14: 9) [Comment 5].

**"In Him all things** hold together" (v. 17 RVM). How can we reconcile **this** to the fact that creation is **disintegrating under the influence** of sin and Satan? [Comment 4].

"Through **Him** to reconcile **all things** unto **Himself"** (v. 20). **In** what way are **all things** reconciled? **Is this, in fact, a potential** reconciliation **dependent** on our availing ourselves of God's offer? [Comment 6].

2) *Action to be taken:* **"He is the Head of the Body, the Church" (v. 18)**. Therefore we **must give the Lord Jesus the pre-eminent place in our lives -** everyday.

"Reconciled... to present you **holy"** (vv. 21-22). **All sin must be** confessed **and** forsaken.

"**Living in the hope of the gospel"** (v. 23). We have something to look forward to (Col. 2: 6-10).

3. *Facts to challenge and encourage us:* **"In Him all things hold together"** (v. 17 RVM), and so we can trust **Him in every** moment of our lives, **whatever happens**. (Compare Rom. 8: 28).

We are reconciled - **"free from accusation"** (v. 22). (Compare Rom. 8: 1, 33).

"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the Lord makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring and prolong His days and the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand" (Is. 53: 10 NIV).

"For God was pleased to have all His fulness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things... by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1: 19-20 NIV).

A. W. J. Terrell

From Liverpool:

*The Image of the Invisible God.* An image is an impress, an exact impression. As Hebrews 1: 3 has it, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being" (NIV). The incarnation is a mind-baffling concept: the uncontainable going into the containable. The Lord Jesus is described elsewhere as "The Word"; by looking at Jesus we can see God.

*Firstborn over all creation.* Firstborn means Chief and has nothing to do with His birth at Bethlehem. He is the pre-eminent One who has supremacy far above all else.

*By Him all things were created.* The Lord Jesus exercised the creational power of God. (See John 1: 3, Heb. 1: 2).

*Through Him to reconcile to Himself all things.* We can understand the need for our reconciliation to God. God, of course, does not need to be reconciled to us. It is more difficult to imagine "things" being reconciled. Even more difficult was the thought of things in heaven needing to be reconciled. Perhaps the answer is to be found in Rom. 8: 19-21. Is the whole creation tainted by man's sin, including the plants, animals and even heaven itself? [See Comment 4].

*Attitude of mind and transformation* (v. 21-23). This passage reveals the need for reconciliation. The transformation is such that not only are we declared "Not Guilty" at the trial, but we are "free from accusation" (NIV). God sees us as though we had never sinned [Comment 6].

D. J. Webster

**From Melbourne:** In the eyes and esteem of men there have been in the records of history those who have been pre-eminent above their fellows. Perhaps rightly so, because of something accomplished in their day and generation which has given them a name and place of priority among the great ones of the earth. In the Bible too there are names also in prominence, and some of them marked out by name when in resurrection bodies of immortality will again be honoured to serve the God whom they trusted and

served while in mortal bodies. But none can compare with the One whose Name and titles of honour will proclaim the fact that He is above all others. Here is One who has rightly been given a Name which is above all other names, to which every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is rightfully Lord of all. It is said of Him, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom". (Heb. 1: 8), and "Thou Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands, they shall perish, but Thou continuest" (Heb. 1: 10, 11), and again, "His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace" (Is. 9: 6 RVM). Kings shall fall down before Him and all nations shall serve Him. It is profitable for believers to remember always that the Name given to Him before His birth by the angelic messenger, that of Jesus and all that it conveys to the human mind, is the Name which is above all others [Comment 8].

Not only has He been given the Name which is above all others, but His has been a work above all others, the work of reconciling "all things" to Himself. Through the shed blood of a Perfect Sacrifice He has made peace for sinful man, peace with the God from whom man has been alienated. How far beyond sinful man the term "all things" extends we do not know. We do know, however, that the fallen being "Satan" and his hosts do not come within its orbit. The apostle in the epistle to the Romans makes the statement, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now" (Rom. 8: 22). This is a fact of which we should be continually conscious. We do not understand it, but the whole creation has been affected by sin at the fall of man. The savage instincts of the brute creation were unleashed; all creation became involved; the earth brought forth thorns and thistles; pain and sin and death afflicted man. All creation awaits a Deliverer, including through Him a restoration of a pristine condition of all things. That such will be restored is evident from the statements of the inspired prophets (Is. 11: 6-9).

*W. Sneddon, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Methil:** These verses firmly establish the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ and His superiority and authority over all created things. We noted the use of the phrases, "in Him", "through Him", "unto Him". It is simple yet majestic language that firmly focusses our attention on Christ. As the Creator He stands outside the realm of all created things. The firstborn of all creation is the only begotten Son of the Father; the invisible God is clearly seen in the visible Son of God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the

Father", said the Lord to Philip; the one is the counterpart of the other. Every characteristic of the invisible God is seen in the visible Son.

Not only does the Lord precede all things, but His also is the great work of maintenance. All things continue in their allotted role and place because of that continuous aspect of the Lord's work described in the words, "in Him all things consist".

As the Lord is the pre-eminent One with regard to created things, so also is He the Head of the Church which is His Body. He stands supreme in this great spiritual realm, all the members drawing their salvation, succour and preservation from Him.

He is the great reconciler of men to God and the great changer of their nature. Men who were alienated and enemies in evil works can be presented to God holy, without blemish and unproveable.

The Lord, by His work at Calvary, has brought peace and stability into the realm of spiritual and eternal things. Sin entered the old creation and marred the work of God in things and in men. This will never happen in the new creation as the work of Christ has secured and brought into eternal stability the peace of God and of men.

*M Dyer*

**From Nottingham:** It is evident from the passage that the apostle Paul is trying to emphasize the relationships that the Lord Jesus has: with God (v. 15), with creation (v. 16), with the Church the Body (v. 18), and with "all things" (v. 20). The reason for this was that gnostic teaching had presumably found a place among the saints, some of whom were in danger of being beguiled (2: 8). This teaching apparently gave the Lord Jesus a subordinate role along with angels, and so Paul's exhortations here were especially suitable. We know that some have used v. 15 to promote such a view, but we discovered that the inference here is that the Lord Jesus actually produced creation and that the title "firstborn" is used similarly in Ex. 4: 22 as a title of honour.

We found in our discussion that v. 16 presented a problem that we did not find easy to resolve. Vine describes "thrones", "dominions", "principalities" and "powers" as being various grades of angelic beings, but we found this difficult to understand. If they are indeed supernatural powers then what are their different roles? [Comment 10].

We felt that although in v. 17 Paul was plumbing some profound depths of our relationship with God, it was not just an interesting theory, but something of the most practical importance to each one of us today. We know that we owe our salvation to the Lord Jesus, but the very bodies that

we move about in and the very world that we live in are held together by His will.

It is interesting to note the two uses of the word "firstborn" in the passage, both of which give the Lord Jesus total authority: over all the creation in v. 15 because He was before it, and over death in v. 18 because He conquered it.

Some questions occurred to us that we were not able to answer satisfactorily: in v. 20, how are "all things" in the heavens reconciled through the blood of the cross as well as things upon the earth? [See Question 2]. Also, is the presentation that we read about in v. 22 a daily occurrence as we come before the Lord in our quiet times, or is it a single event that is to take place in the future? [See Question 3].

*C. Edis*

## COMMENTS

1. **[Birkenhead]:** It can be a little misleading to use the word "mirrors" of the Son. He does not simply reflect the glory of God, as we can (2 Cor. 3:18), but expresses the nature of the Godhead, radiating the glory of a divine Person. Heb. 1:3 describes the Son as the "effulgence" of God's glory.

*P. L. H.*

2. **[Birkenhead]:** It may be that the significance of v. 23 is that the gospel had been set out as a proclamation to every creature. That is to say, the verse describes the scope of the gospel rather than that its preaching had actually reached every part of creation.

*P. L. H.*

3. **[Derby]:** I would suggest that it is inappropriate to speak of the church the Body primarily as a building. The Lord Jesus certainly said, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16), but a similar expression is used in regard to the creation of Eve. "And the rib... made He a woman (Heb. builded He into) (Gen. 2:22 RVM). In retrospect we see in Eve a clear type of this church.

*J. K. D. J.*

The use of the word "perceived" by friends in Derby in parallel with their reference to the Lord's revelation of Matt. 16 is open to the interpretation that Paul similarly introduced the matter of this church being likened to a body. It is true that the Scriptural presentation of this aspect of the doctrine is largely to be found in the writings of Paul. But the teaching that Paul received directly from the Lord was first of all ratified by leading men in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:17-18), and was clearly practised before that by the church

of God there (Acts 2: 44-46; 4: 32-35).

*I. E. P.*

4. [Derby]: Certainly there were others raised prior to Christ's resurrection, but they all died again. The Lord was the first to rise to die no more, and He is therefore the first-fruits of the great company of the redeemed who will be raised to die no more. He is, of course, also the "firstborn of the dead" (Rev. 1: 5), being pre-eminent in every sphere and context.

*J. K. D. J.*

5. [Leeds]: The word "image" (Gk *eikon*) implies the existence of an archetype of which it is a copy. The word also involves the two ideas of representation and manifestation. W. E. Vine gives this helpful note: "In Col. 1: 15, 'the image of the invisible God' gives the additional thought suggested by the word 'invisible', that Christ is the visible representation and manifestation of God to created beings; the likeness expressed in this manifestation is involved in the essential relations in the Godhead, and is therefore unique and perfect". The thought of "bodily image" is inappropriate as our friends indicate.

*J. K. D. J.*

6. [Leeds]: The role of the Creator and the effects resulting from the entrance of sin into the creation are dealt with in quite a number of scriptures. It is important to know that God brought the curse upon both man and his dominion because of man's rebellion against Him. (See Gen. 3: 17; Rom. 8: 20-22 and Ps. 102: 26). He, not Satan, imposed it. But His son, by His death, will reconcile all unto Him.

*J. K. D. J.*

7. [Liverpool]: It is true that we are made perfect in Christ by His cross-work, but I judge that vv. 22, 23 are primarily dealing with the objective set before the believer of living a sanctified life (see also Question 3).

*J. K. D. J.*

8. [Melbourne]: Is the name Jesus the name above every name? I think not (see Rev. 3: 12).

*J. K. D. J.*

9. [Several Contributors]: Some papers have pointed out, and rightly so I judge, that there are certain specific exclusions from the reconciliation. The two spheres included are, "things upon the earth", and, "things in the heavens". I would agree with the following comment found in W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary, "It is the divine purpose, on the ground of the work of Christ accomplished on the cross, to bring the whole universe, except rebellious angels and unbelieving man, into full accord with the mind of God (Eph. 1: 10). Things 'under the earth', (Phil. 2: 10) are subdued not

reconciled".

*J. K. D. J.*

**10. [Nottingham]:** There is little information available on this point in the Scriptures, but there is sufficient, I think, to show that an ordered system of government is in existence among the angelic hosts (see Eph. 1: 21; 3: 10; Col. 1: 16; Rev. 4: 4). Christ is "the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2: 10).

*J. K. D. J.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**From Cowdenbeath:** 1. Do "things" (Col. 1: 20) mean persons?

In vv. 16, 17, 18 and 20 the references are to "all things" (Gk. *ta panta*, the all things). M. R. Vincent says the article gives the collective sense. Without the article it would be all things severally.

*J. K. D. J.*

The word *panta* is in the neuter gender, which is why it has been translated "all things". The word simply means "all", but if this were used alone, one would normally supply "people", which would be misleading. I take it that the whole creation, inanimate as well as animate, is intended here.

*P. L. H.*

2. Why should things or persons in the heavens need to be reconciled?

This is a matter of difficulty that has been raised by several contributors and perhaps we can only write suggestively. The relationship between God and heavenly beings has apparently been affected by the work of Christ. To them there has been revealed through the church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3: 10), and they sing a new song because of the Cross (Rev. 5: 9). While unfallen angels have ever been in harmony with the mind of God they have now been given a new appreciation of the character of God and of Christ their Creator. Perhaps the underlying thought is that of the restoration of harmony between heaven and earth. The work of Christ will ensure that eventually the will of God will be done on earth even as it is in heaven (Matt. 6: 10; Eph. 1: 10).

*J. K. D. J.*

"The heavens" does not necessarily refer to the spiritual realm, but can also apply to the physical universe. We have no means of knowing how much sin has affected this, but Romans 8 reveals that there has been an effect [See Comment 9].

*P. L. H.*

**From Liverpool:** "To present you holy... before Him" (v. 22): is this now or in the future?

In my understanding the presentation referred to is in the future and is conditional as verse 23 shows. It is distinct from the presentation by Christ of the church to Himself. That

is unconditional and future. This subject is dealt with at some length in the final paragraph of the Cowdenbeath paper.

*J. K. D. J.*

**From Edinburgh:** What is the scope of the expression "in the faith" as used in v. 23?

I judge it to be a reference to the body of teaching which has been termed "the Faith". They had become obedient to it and were to continue in it.

*J. K. D. J.*

The expression "the faith" is frequently used in Scripture to denote the whole body of doctrine which formed the "apostles teaching", and which was given to them by the Lord. Examples of this usage are Acts 6: 7; 13: 8; 14: 22; 16: 5. Faith in Christ as Saviour is of course, included in "the faith", but while the results of this are irreversible, "the faith" must be maintained and contended for by each individual (1 Cor. 16: 13; Jude 3). Man can fall away from the faith (1 Tim 4: 1), and each person must try himself, to see whether he is in the faith (2 Cor. 13: 5). One who holds to sound doctrine and practice can say at the end of his life, "I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4: 7).

*P. L. H.*

The faith is the New Covenant counterpart of the Law of Moses. The latter contained the blue-print for the building of the house of God as well as being the law which governed the behaviour of the people who were to do service there. Similarly the faith is the blue-print for the present-day house of God as well as being the written commandments governing the behaviour of the people of God who are to do service there. Today, however, the believer has the additional benefit of having this law written in his heart (Heb. 10: 15-18) so that His commandments are not grievous, and obeying them is the natural response of the new man's love to Christ (John 14: 15). It is thus that continuance in the faith will produce the Christ-like character of Colossians 1: 22. It is a matter of great wonder that it is this attainment of the unity of the faith by the believer (Eph. 4: 13) that is placed at the climax of a portion of the Scriptures which contains one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the worth and work of Christ.

*I. E. P.*

## **ERRATA**

**Bible Studies** 8201 p. 14 line 9: for **both** read **born**  
p. 14 line 16: for **seventy** read **seven**

*Editors*

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# Bible tu

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

## EDITORIAL

8204

It is no exaggeration to say that the building of the Church, the body of Christ is the paramount purpose of God on the earth. The sin of man broke his original communion with God, and individuals' communion throughout the ages was fitful and intermittent. Then the great mystery was revealed; God was to make possible not merely communion, but union. In one body sinners were to be reconciled to God through the atoning work of Christ (Eph. 2: 16) and to be sharers of His resurrected life (Col. 3: 1-4). Redeemed men were to be treated in every way as Christ Himself, having been adopted as sons to God. Thus the damage caused by the fall was more than reversed, men having been raised by the grace of God to a place infinitely greater than that from which their ancestor had fallen.

It is no wonder that the apostle refers to "the riches of the glory of this mystery" (Col. 1: 27), because he, above all, recognised the magnificence of the gospel he was commissioned to preach. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (v. 27) he proclaimed, and his hearers, Jew and Gentile, rejoiced in the inward witness of the Spirit.

The other facet of the same truth of the Body is "in Christ", and Paul's hearers, knowing that they were chosen in Christ (Eph. 1: 4) rejoiced again in the security of their union with Him. Because of all this, the apostle was encouraged to strive for the disciples in Colossae and Laodicea in prayer, and to rejoice in their faith.

We follow in his steps, having the same Saviour, and joined in the same body. May we too know his dedication and loyalty to the Lord.

*P. L. H.*

## CORRESPONDENCE

I was interested to read the article on "The order of events in the Upper Room and afterwards" in issue 8201. The detailed chronology of the events has been studied by various writers before, such as Morrison in "Who Moved the Stone", and all have found difficulties in integrating the gospel accounts, particularly the Synoptics with John.

For what it is worth, I generally agree with the order set out in the table by R. Hickling. I would add the following comments:

1. Quotation from "Bible Readings on the Gospels" - bottom of p. 3.

Since the site of Gethsemane, just across the Kidron brook, is well authenticated, it would need a very circuitous route to the south to travel first by the Mount of Olives.

2. Editorial reply quoting JM

It would be more natural for "He went forth" to refer to the city rather than the Upper Room. From the traditional site of the Upper Room to Gethsemane would take at least half an hour to walk, without stopping, and I would doubt if the Lord would keep silent for all that time, in view of the state of mind of the disciples. Even if the Upper Room were elsewhere it would not be near the eastern side of the city, so a long walk would be necessary. I would disagree with the view that the streets would be crowded. The time about 8. 30 on the Passover evening, would be used for "watching and remembrance". Further, it was not necessary for Him to go through the populous lower city. I think that it is more likely that they went via the Temple court, as this could explain His reference in John 15 to the *true* (real) vine, when they passed the Temple gates, which were decorated with vines to symbolize Israel. Then would follow the prayer of John 17 in one of the Temple porches before they would leave the city by one of the Temple gates, and turn northwards before heading down the Kidron valley and across the brook to Gethsemane.

A further interesting, but again not important point, is which route the arrest party would take in returning to the High Priest's house. They would presumably not want to attract attention, but at the later time, say midnight, that would not be too difficult.

*D. McCubbin*

## **THE OFFERINGS - SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

When considering the spiritual significance of the offerings, it is helpful to note some of the practical implications of what the scriptures say. The notes below examine some of these practical aspects.

### **The Paschal Lamb**

This was to be a male of the first year, without blemish. The practical point to note here is that a lamb reaches a state of full growth in its first year. Therefore, a lamb in its prime is used to typify Christ in His perfection. This requirement in relation to sacrifice is repeated many times.

### **The wood of the offerings**

In the instructions for the offering of the burnt offering and peace offering an important place was given to the wood. It was to be laid upon the fire and the pieces of the sacrifice were to be placed upon the wood. This

was a practical necessity for the burning of the flesh of the sacrifice. When the High Priest came to the altar each morning (Lev. 6: 8-13) his first duty was to remove the ashes to which the burnt offering placed upon the altar the evening before had been reduced, and having done so he had to put wood on the fire, which was never to be allowed to go out. The embers could not themselves have been sufficient to devour a freshly killed morning sacrifice. A fire of some intensity was needed to burn the new flesh of the animal, with its legs and inwards wet, having been washed with water. It is stated that the wood was to be laid *in order* upon the fire (Lev. 1: 7). The word for wood is a plural word, and that, combined with the fact that it was to be laid in order, would suggest not simply a quantity of wood thrown on to burn, but many pieces built in pillar-like fashion. To burn the carcass of a bullock a large amount of wood would be needed, which certain men were appointed to supply (Josh. 9: 27).

There must be some spiritual significance in wood being so used. It is generally accepted that wood as used in the furniture of the Tabernacle speaks of that which is human. The acacia wood of the ark, the golden altar and the table of Shewbread speaks of the humanity of the Lord, whereas the boards of the Tabernacle, similarly covered with gold, speak of men standing together to form a habitation for God to dwell in. The wood and the sacrifice burned together, their separate fragrances combining to make a smell which was acceptable to God. This would suggest that the wood was an integral part of the burnt offering, which speaks of Christ; it was a practical necessity for the consumption of the sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christ could not have been possible apart from His humanity, for He could not, apart from descending to become flesh, have offered Himself to God.

### **The fat**

In the instructions regarding the peace offering we read of the following:

- (i) the fat that covers the inwards,
- (ii) *all* the fat that is upon the inwards,
- (iii) the fat that is on the kidneys. (See Lev. 3: 3, 4)

With a knowledge of the method employed in the disembowelling of a slaughtered animal one can readily distinguish and understand the three separate statements. In the disembowelling process the order stated is the order in which the different pieces of fat (literally suet) are extracted from the carcass., When the carcass is cut open the fat that covers the inwards is the first thing to be seen. It is sometimes described as "web suet" and it covers the bowels in a blanket-like fashion.

In the case of a lamb, in particular, this fat is easily removable by hand without the use of a knife. The bowels then being exposed are extracted *in*

*toto*, and they are skilfully separated from the fat that is on them. The bowels are like a long hollow tube which is attached along one side to what is literally a flat piece of fat. This arrangement is to prevent the many yards of intestine from becoming entangled. In the case of a bullock the separating process requires the skilful use of a knife; in other words it takes time and skill to procure this fat for sacrifice. God asked for *all* of this fat; therefore no carelessness could be allowed. Not until the bowels are removed can the fat that is on the kidneys be seen, though not the kidneys themselves. They are enclosed in fat, and were to be placed on the altar in this way. Leviticus 7: 30 shows that the offerer was required to bring in "his own hands" the fat to be burned to the priest who was at the altar.

What, then, is the spiritual significance of the fat, its removal, and its being taken to the altar? The process described above might, I suggest, show that:

- (a) God gets a rich portion (fat) from the thanksgivings of those who consider the inward beauties of Christ,
- (b) the thanksgiving of those who spend time in diligent study and deep meditation upon the word, considering Christ, is surely very acceptable to God, and
- (c) no human mind, however spiritually enlightened, can fully comprehend the beauties of the Son. Only God can do this. He alone can evaluate and see what is hidden and inmost. The kidneys, unseen by human eye, and enclosed in fat (which is the richest in practical terms of the three kinds mentioned), must speak of what is exclusively God's portion.

*J. Bowman*

## **LABOURS AND STRIVINGS [Col. 1: 24 - 2: 7]**

**From Birkenhead:** This segment of Paul's letter, which is intended for instruction to the saints at Colossae and Laodicea and possibly other areas of Asia, deals with Paul's concern for those gathered in the two churches. His efforts on their behalf are both practical, as evidenced by his letter to them, and spiritual, as shown by his own words regarding prayer on their behalf.

Paul commences by expressing his joy in the difficulties and sufferings he has borne for their sakes. Reference to Christ's suffering is not to his vicarious suffering on the cross, but to the daily afflictions which beset His life. Paul recognizes that any disciple of Christ must be similarly afflicted and states that he has a wish positively to bear his share of such sufferings.

The apostle clearly states that he has been given a particular responsibility by God in respect to the Church the Body of Christ. He develops this,

stating that Christ has been revealed and that this revelation is to those who have accepted Him as Saviour, involving their realization that they are now indwelt by Christ and therefore have a sure hope of glory.

With this knowledge as a backcloth, and with the will of God working mightily within him, Paul strives to proclaim Christ, thereby admonishing and teaching every man in all wisdom. We discussed the purpose of these activities, described as "that we may present every man perfect in Christ". It was obviously the goal of Paul and Timothy to benefit the individual saints and to present a complete work in their own lives to their Saviour in a coming day.

Despite the fact that Paul had never visited the Colossian saints, he was striving for them in prayer to the end that they might be united in love as a result of knowing Christ, who is the mystery of God.

Emphasis is laid upon the fact that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. There were those who would suggest otherwise, and Paul stresses that Christ is the source of all spiritual wisdom and knowledge, and delights in their unity around this fact.

The final exhortation is to remind them that they should walk in Christ worthily, remembering the teaching they had received and the response evoked by the placing of trust in the Lord Jesus at the time of their salvation.

*R. C. Halpin, A. E. Sands*

**From Birmingham:** Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossians, which we took to mean his sufferings in the spreading of the gospel which was eventually brought to the Colossians, probably by Epaphras, but may also have had reference to his striving in prayer for them (2: 1).

In his sufferings, Paul complemented or added to those "afflictions of Christ" which were lacking in his flesh, which he suffered for the church His body, in fully preaching the word of God (1: 24; comp. Rom. 15: 19 and mg.).

What does this verse mean? There are various interpretations:

1. That Paul saw his sufferings as "lacking" or "falling behind" those suffered by Christ in the flesh, during His ministry and witness, and that he had a responsibility to attain to them.
2. That those "afflictions of Christ" are those which he (Christ) suffers in His members (Acts 9: 4) and particularly in Paul.
3. That Christ's sufferings, although fully satisfactory on behalf of our sins, leaves us a debt of honour, as it were, to repay them by sufferings of our own [Comment 1].

Whatever the exact meaning, Paul nevertheless rejoiced to suffer, I judge, on at least two counts:

1. In the privilege of suffering for the gospel's sake.
2. Knowing that his sufferings added to those afflictions of Christ lacking in his flesh.

In preaching fully the word of God to the Gentiles, Paul disclosed the marvellous mystery hidden from all ages, until now: "Christ in you, the hope of glory", that glorious church His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, which is to the praise of the glory of His grace. Paul may well have expounded this truth to the Colossians to counter the error attacking the church which placed great emphasis on human effort (2: 8, 16-23).

Paul, along with those who taught and admonished, laboured and struggled to present every man perfect in Christ (i. e. fully grown and mature), and this he did in all His (Christ's) energy (NIV). This seems a contradiction in terms. Why labour in Christ's energy? But as we are aware, it is often as we ourselves labour in His work that we know of His energy through us.

Paul tells the Colossians of his striving (AV, "conflict") for them. The Greek word is *agon* from which another Greek word comes, *agonizomai*, from which our English word "agonize" comes. This helps us to understand the intensity of his strivings for them. In what way did he strive or have conflict and why? It seems that it was in prayer.

The word *agon* signifies:

1. A place of assembly, especially the place where the Greeks assembled for the Olympic games.
2. A contest of athletes

and thus implies a contest against spiritual foes as well as human adversaries (Vine).

Demonic opposition was directed against the Colossians and God's truth in the form of what may have been what we call Gnosticism, which attacked Christ's position in creation and attached much importance to self effort and to human philosophy [Comment 2]. Paul vigorously opposed this in prayer, to the end that God's people at Colossae and Laodicea might be encouraged in heart and have the full riches of complete understanding to know "the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden".

So Paul's labours and strivings were that the Colossians might be protected from error and have a full knowledge of Christ, being rooted and built up in Him. The error to which they were exposed seemed to propound a way of

salvation in self effort and a philosophy of man which was said to be superior. Paul opposed it by the manifestation of the truth of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" and showed them that true wisdom lies not in men but in the knowledge of Christ.

*R. Wood*

**From Cowdenbeath:** Paul's part in God's working begins at v. 23 and continues to ch. 2: 5. He reminds the saints in v. 23 that he "was made a minister". This was not so of teachers of error who were self-appointed.

His apostolic ministry was not something comfortable. It demanded suffering, but such was the godly wisdom of Paul that he did not merely accept suffering as inevitable but rejoiced in it (v. 24) because it was for the sake of the body of Christ. Of course the afflictions of Christ's own are felt by Him and are referred to as His in v. 24. We were reminded in this respect of the words of the Lord Jesus to Saul of Tarsus, "Why persecutest thou Me?".

Verse 24 is interesting in conveying many precious truths. The sufferings Paul endured were manifold. There was the pressure of circumstances, antagonism from those who were opposed to the teaching he brought, yet he regarded his sufferings as helping to complete that tale of suffering still to be endured by followers of Christ for the sake of the body.

We noticed interesting couplets in the portion of our study. The words, "made a minister", which we have commented on above, occur in vv, 23 and 25. Thereafter we have:

Sufferings and afflictions	(v. 24)
manifested and made known	(v. 26-27)
admonishing and teaching	(v. 28)
labour and striving	(v. 29)
wisdom and knowledge	(ch. 2: 3)

Paul has written regarding his ministry and its purpose, but adds that it is not easily achieved. The athlete in training and in contest provides a fitting metaphor in that steady toil and intense concentration are both necessary. These are aided by the inner working of the Holy Spirit, giving enabling power.

As Paul was in his preaching so also was he in his prayer life. The dangers to which the churches at Laodicea and Colossae were exposed caused intense concern which manifested itself in his prayer life. As the arena was traditionally the scene of powerful struggles, it was an apt metaphor to describe his earnest intercession for the saints. It was his great desire that the people of

God, whether from those churches of which **he had** close personal knowledge or from others with which **he had not been** so closely involved, should **be built up**. Inner strengthening **is** always necessary where there are winds of error, **and** Paul's desire for **the saints at Colossae is that they may reach the point of full assurance in** their spiritual understanding. **When understanding is controlled by the Spirit of God it is led to a full assurance concerning the truth of God and to a deep knowledge of Christ.**

In Christ all **the** treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. This demonstrates **the** emptiness of any other claim. Wisdom appears before knowledge in other portions of **the** Word (Rom. 11: 33 & 1 Cor. 12: 8), suggesting **that** wisdom **is** a comprehensive view of **the** truth of God given **by the Spirit** whereas knowledge is **the** understanding of particular truths.

The Colossian saints evidently **had a keen** desire to serve **the** Lord according to **His** Word, **and**, although **the** apostle was not present with **them, such had been the clear and** comforting report delivered to **him that he** felt close to **them**, rejoicing in their order and **steadfastness - a state** of spiritual attainment to **be** desired among **the** churches today.

*R. I. Shaw*

**From Derby:** In v. 24 we thought of joy and suffering going **hand in hand**. In Rom. 5: 3 we **see** we are able to rejoice in our tribulations. This was very different from **the attitude** of **the** Stoics who suffered with a long face. **We are** told to rejoice **in** suffering **because it is** for **the sake** of Christ **and His** Church. **We cannot take any** part in **the** sufferings which Christ endured on **the** cross, **but** while we are working and suffering for **Him**, Christ is also suffering in our flesh (1 Pet. 4: 13). Affliction **means** hard and galling pressure, **and** we **get this** when we **take up the** cross which Christ told **us to take up** when we follow Him.

Paul was given **the** will of God for this present dispensation, and **he** was able to **make** it known. The mystery **that** all men [i. e. all believers - Eds. ] would **be** fellow members of **the** Body **has** been revealed to **His** saints **as they** alone are able to appreciate **it**. **As a** result Christ indwells **each** believer.

Paul wishes to present "every **man**", not **just a** chosen few, perfect **in** Christ. **He** stresses **it by** saying **it** three **times**. To this **end** Paul is labouring with **the** utmost zeal and with **the** grace which God **has** given him.

In v. 29 Paul **passes** from **the** plural to **the** singular. **He** is preparing **them** for what **he is** about to say. Even though Paul **has** never **seen these saints**, **he** agonizes for **them in** prayer. **He** wants **them to be** bound together with brotherly love. **If they** love well **they** will want to search out **the** fulness of intelligence and know **the** mystery which **is** "Christ **in** you" [Comment 3].

Those who know and believe in Christ are spiritually wealthy. Paul emphasizes this in 1: 27, 2: 2, 3. Christ is unique in that all knowledge is hidden in Him. We can acquire the knowledge which is begun in faith and perfected in love.

The saints had to beware that they were not reasoned into error by persuasion. Paul does not mention false practice. He rejoices in their readiness for spiritual battle. When they received Christ they were only at the beginning of the road. They then had to learn to live and grow in Him. There would be an overflow of thanksgiving as a result of their hearts being full of faith and love.

*G. W. Conway*

**From Hayes:** It was typical of Paul that he could rejoice in sufferings, not of course that he endured sufferings for their own sake, but only as they assisted the work of Christ.

There can surely be no suggestion that Christ has not suffered to the full for us. None of us can in any way add to His sacrificial work, but we should be prepared to suffer for His sake so that the Gospel may be spread and the Church built up. He has left us here to do what He cannot do. Is it in this sense that we make up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions? [See comment 1].

The word mystery is used in the sense of "secret". Is this secret the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles or does it refer to the very heart of the Gospel message itself? Or both? [Comment 1].

Paul's afflictions were sustained as he built up the Church, admonishing and teaching so that the members might become more mature and complete Christians (not perfect in the sense of sinless). Paul would not be satisfied with less.

Paul's labour was the product of divine energy. He had to work, the power within him was so strong (and directed towards people whom he had never seen). Is this power in all Christians in equal measure (and often thwarted), or does it only come in full measure upon those who are "fit" vessels? [Comment 5].

Part of Paul's struggle was that they might know the only place where true wisdom and understanding are to be found — in Christ.

Verses 4 and 8 suggest that there were some who were influencing them in wrong directions with subtle arguments (revealing other mysteries perhaps). But so far they were standing up well.

"Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ...." (NIV) Why "hidden"? Is the hiding God's work or ours? Or is Paul

still using the metaphor of "secrets" which are by their very nature "hidden"? [Comment 6].

*J. Stoner*

**From Liverpool:** *Rejoicing in Suffering.* Paul realistically reminds the Colossians of his sufferings to encourage them in similar experiences. The Lord Jesus forewarned His disciples of this (John 15: 18-21) and Paul is not complaining! Paul could not have any part in the vicarious sufferings of the Lord Jesus on our behalf. Rather he had his share of the sufferings that follow the sufferings of Christ — i. e. over and above those suffered by the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is still suffering today as the members of His body suffer for Him (cf. Phil. 3: 10).

*The Mystery.* Defined by Paul as "Christ in you the hope of glory", the mystery could be:

1. The indwelling Holy Spirit
2. Our Salvation
3. The fact that God is now the God of all mankind and not just to the Jews.

It is obvious that it is the third suggestion in the parallel passage in Ephesians 3, but we were not convinced that it is necessarily the same here [Comment 7]. However, it is a reference to the Church which is Christ's Body; and in 2: 2 the mystery is plainly Christ. It seems unlikely that Paul would refer to salvation as having been "kept hidden for ages and generations", for it was plainly prophesied. Whichever of the possibilities, God has revealed Himself to the Gentiles, and in this we rejoice.

*Perfect in Christ.* Each Christian is already perfect in Christ. What Paul has in mind is the striving to be, or to assist others to be, fully mature Christians which is a very high standard. The way to become mature is laid down in 2: 6, 7. Roots going down and being built upwards result in an immovable position of strength.

*D. J. Webster*

**From Melbourne:** The divine call of Paul the apostle on the Damascus road brought to him a knowledge of hitherto unknown truth regarding the church which is Christ's body, a mystery hidden from previous ages, although referred to by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 16, and also seen in type and prophecy in the writing of the Old Testament [Comment 8]. It was not revealed to the prophets, nor to the apostles whom the Lord sent forth. Paul was the chosen vessel and deacon of the Gospel to proclaim among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. With the revelation of this

mystery, and his call as a minister thereof, came inevitable departure from his homeland of Israel to somewhere in the deserts of Arabia. He was there to receive the further needful instruction from the Lord Himself, alone in the desert for three years with the Lord the Spirit, so that he might be fully equipped in all the will of God, and for the labours and strivings which were to be his lot in the ministration of the Gospel in the years that were to follow. That which he had learned at the feet of Gamaliel had given him the necessary instruction in the calling and future of Israel and God's purpose concerning the nation and their land, but now associated with the mystery of Christ were truths known only to God, which must be imparted to him by revelation ere he could go forth to the work for which he had been called. It would be his work henceforth to go forth as led by the Spirit, ministering to both Jew and Gentile "The unsearchable riches of Christ". There would be no life of ease. His lot would be one of labouring and striving with men of many lands; the message which he carried would be one of "foolishness" as he proclaimed a Saviour, the Son of God crucified at the hands of men, but now raised from the dead and ascended into the heavens, with the rightful claim to the title of "King of kings and Lord of lords" and claiming the allegiance of those who would believe.

His work would be one of laborious toil as he travelled by land or sea, to wherever the Spirit led him. Weariness of body would be an everyday experience, yet that labour would bear eternal fruit. He would contend with wicked and evil men stirred up by the god of this age. He would bear witness to his Master before kings and rulers of the Roman Empire, some of whom would judge him to be mad, but his great ambition would be henceforth to see Jew and Gentile placing a saving faith in the Christ whom he proclaimed, yielding allegiance to Him, to be found in churches of God, both knit together in love through the knowledge of God revealed in Christ, which had lifted them above all earthly national relationship, and had placed them in one wondrous eternal relationship in the body of Christ. In his striving to this end, well might he summarize his experience in 2 Cor. 11 as he writes, "Five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned" and then to the end of the chapter itemizes some of the further sorrows which his stewardship had brought him. But he rejoices in it all, and without any vain boasting tells the readers of his second letter to Timothy, "I have fought... I have finished... I have kept ... henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give to me at that day, and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4: 7, 8).

*T. W. Fullerton, D. Mawkinney*

**From Methil:** Paul, in his service for the Lord, and in his concern for the saints of God, had passed through many sufferings, yet the remarkable thing was that he could write to the saints in Colossae and tell them that he rejoiced in his sufferings for their sake. These were the sufferings that were associated with the spread of the testimony with the proclamation of the Gospel. As he told out Christ so also he received bonds, persecutions, afflictions, sufferings, but it was all for the sake of the church which is His body.

The apostle Paul was a special minister according to the dispensation of God, and his stewardship was particularly towards the Gentiles. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and responsible for telling out the mystery of the truth of the church which is Christ's body. The church the Body, the Bride, the wife of the Lamb was no new idea, but was in the mind of the Holy Spirit and was portrayed in types and shadows in many brides and wives in the Old Testament writings, although it was hidden from the Patriarchs and Israel of old [Comment 9].

How did Paul labour and strive to present the Colossians perfect in Christ? He gave himself wholly to the work and he was empowered by God to write and to teach the saints there, and to pray for them constantly, and yet, like the Laodiceans, he had never met them personally (Col. 1: 9 & 2: 1).

The object of all Godly teaching and admonition is that we may be presented perfect in Christ to God, and so Paul's labours and strivings for the Colossians should still bear fruit in our lives today.

What a high goal Paul set before the Colossians - that they be knit together in love and that they have all the riches of the full assurance of understanding and that they might know the mystery of God even Christ. What a wealth there is in Christ, for all saints, to be gleaned from all the Scriptures. As we know more of Christ so also we develop spiritually, "line upon line, precept upon precept", for in Christ all the riches of wisdom and knowledge are hidden, yet they are available for those who diligently search them out. This makes excellent armour against being deluded by eloquent falsehood.

Evidently Paul had heard very good reports of the saints at Colossae and so was able to commend them as he beheld their orderly array and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ. He had never personally met them, but he knew so much about them and cared so much for them that he could truly say he was with them in the Spirit. As they had trusted in Christ to save them, so also they must trust him also for each day's problems. It was essential that they go on growing in the Lord and that their lives should overflow with joy and thanksgiving for all that He had done.

*N. Coomer*

**From Nottingham:** The church in Colossae lay about 100 miles east of Ephesus and had been founded by Epaphras, one of Paul's disciples, in the campaign that evangelized so much of the country round Ephesus during the three years that Paul lived there. Paul had never even visited the town and so when he wrote the letter to the Colossians, he was writing to people he had never seen.

Paul says he rejoices in his sufferings for the fruit of the Gospel (the saints) so that they may be citizens of Heaven. He then says, "I... fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church". He lacked the sufferings of Christ (during His earthly ministry) in his flesh, and was trying to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings in the form of affliction in his own life.

In other letters Paul says, "Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. " "... I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor" (2 Tim. 2: 3, 9).

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3: 10).

These examples show how Paul suffered afflictions in his own life. If we, as Christians, are not suffering afflictions of one kind or another, then there must be something wrong.

Paul then tells of his position as a minister or servant, in the dispensation from Pentecost to the second coming. This was to reveal the hidden mystery which has now been manifested to the saints, that is God, revealed through His Son, the Lord Jesus [see Comment 4 and 7]. He goes on to tell of the Gentiles who were previously excluded from the hope of glory, but now have a part in it. In the last two verses of the chapter, Paul gives the reason for all the hard work and effort that he and Timothy have put into the admonition and teaching of men. It is that they may present every man perfect (or mature) in Christ.

At the beginning of the next chapter, Paul is trying to let the Colossians and Laodiceans know how much he is striving for people he has never seen. This striving must have taken place in the form of prayer, as verse 12 of chapter 4 shows.

In the next verse, Paul tells of ways to protect the saints from evil-doers trying to split up the church. They should be bound together in love, that their hearts may be comforted and encouraged, knowing the mystery of God, that is Christ, and all the riches of the full assurance of understanding. The hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge can be found by any believer who is prepared to look for them, by studying the word and praying over it that the Spirit might reveal them. These are the riches of full assurance and

understanding in verse 2.

Paul then warns the saints against being deluded by fine sounding arguments and persuasive speech. In the next verse, Paul says that although he cannot be with these disciples in the flesh, he is thinking and praying for them all the time and he hears good reports of their love and steadfast faith from his disciple Epaphras. Paul goes on to say that as they received the Lord Jesus Christ in faith so also they should walk a life of faith, being firmly rooted and remaining in Him and being continually builded up in Him. As they were confirmed in their faith and in their obedience to the teaching they would abound in praise and thanksgiving.

*T. Elson*

## COMMENTS

1. **(Birmingham):** The Lord had said of Paul, "I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake", (Acts 9: 16), and it appears from this and other scriptures (Acts 20: 23; 21: 4, 11; 1 Thess. 3: 3, 4) that Paul had a special revelation of the extent to which he would suffer for Christ. The "afflictions of Christ" were the sufferings that he would bear because he preached the name of Christ. I suggest that he knew that these still had *to* be completed, and was able to rejoice that he was so doing.

2. **(Birmingham):** The term Gnostic is rather a broad and imprecise one, used to describe a group of teachings of the same general tendency, and so we need to be a little cautious in its use. The full development of the Gnostic systems did not take place until rather later than the time of Paul's writings, but some of the elements condemned by the apostle were certainly prominent in them. The Gnostic keyword was "knowledge" (Gk. *gnosis*) which was seen as the possession of secrets only available to a few initiates. Matter was regarded as evil, and God would only come into contact with human beings, who are material, by a hierarchy of angelic intermediaries. Men had to strive to be liberated from the constraints of the material body, to find salvation in purification of themselves. It can be seen that these teachings struck at the place of Christ, His incarnation, the Atonement and the Resurrection. Paul refuted them by showing that in Christ, in bodily form (Col. 2: 9) all the wisdom of God was revealed and the work of salvation completed.

3. **(Derby):** Although "intelligence" is one possible translation of Gk. *synesis*, the modern use of the word relates to an innate human ability, whereas what is referred to here is a spiritually obtained discernment or understanding.

4. **(Hayes):** Eph. 3: 3-11 makes it clear that "the mystery of Christ" which had been revealed to Paul, and which he preached to others, was "that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel". The Jews had the prophecies of Messiah, but it was hidden even from them that those who believed on Him would be united with Him in an indissoluble unity, the Church. Both Jew and Gentile were to be members of one body, and this Church was to represent the demonstration of the wisdom of God before created beings in heaven and on earth. Christ in us, and we in Christ: as friends from Hayes say, this is the very heart of the Gospel message. Every blessing we have flows ultimately from our union with Christ.

5. **(Hayes):** The same Holy Spirit, of course, is in all believers, but His work is not the same in all. We may "quench" **the** Spirit (1 Thess. 5: 19), or "**be** filled" by Him (Eph. 5: 18), but even when wholly directed by Him, not all His gifts are obvious, as 1 Cor. 12 makes plain. I would think that the Spirit works most powerfully through those who most yield themselves to Him, but I would not expect this work always to be manifest in teaching or preaching.

6. **(Hayes):** I suggest that here Paul was turning the terminology of the false teachers back upon them. They were teaching that wisdom and knowledge could be gained by delving into arcane mysteries; he replies that Christ is the source of all wisdom, and only by knowing Him could they attain deep spiritual knowledge.

7. **(Liverpool):** This is an over-simplification of Eph. 3, whose main point is not that God is the God of all mankind, but that all men who believe are brought together in the church, the Body of Christ. It is this which is the revealed mystery. See also Comment 4.

8. **(Melbourne):** I would not think that there is any prophecy in the Old Testament about the Church, the body of Christ, as Scripture tells us that "in other generations (it) was not made known unto the sons of men" (Eph. 3:5).

9. **(Methil):** It is true **that** Israel was often portrayed as the wife of Jehovah, **but** surely **the idea** of **the Church as the** body of Christ was new. **May I suggest**, with some trepidation, **that** we should **make** a distinction between Old Testament **passages** which **can be** applied retrospectively as illustrations of New Testament truths, **and** those which were intended to teach

those truths; that is, from which the teachings could be discerned before they were otherwise revealed.

P. L. H.

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**1. From Birkenhead:** Col. 1: 25 refers to Paul's being made a minister of the Church, the body of Christ. Are there such ministers today?

The word *diakonos*, here translated "minister" means "servant", and is also used to denote a deacon, who has a particular office in the service of a local church. However, it is not the office of deacon which is in view here, but service to all the members of the Church, Christ's body, to "present every man perfect in Christ". Eph. 4: 11, 12 explains that Christ "gave some to be... evangelists... pastors and teachers;... unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ". This "building up" refers to the edification of the members of the Body - their increase in the knowledge of the Son. The work is carried on, in the divine pattern, within the framework of churches of God; it continues today, and will continue until the Lord appears for His Church.

P. L. H.

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# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17: 11)

EDITORIAL

8205

One of the marvels of the Bible is its small size. In what is nowadays a slim volume the reader may find all he needs to know to please God. It is his only source of knowledge of the Lord Jesus in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. It is an inexhaustible supply of spiritual food for the born-again man. Like the widow's barrel of meal (1 Kings 17: 14-16), the more he dips into it and takes out of it, the more there is left. But the believer of this dispensation is blessed yet more, for he has the Spirit of God within him to guide him into all the truth and to bring what is written to mind when the disciple may have thought that he had long forgotten it.

An undoubted benefit of modern times, unknown to the lovers of the Word who people its pages, was the invention of printing. Because of it the reader may carry the entire Word of God about with him wherever he may be. Few nowadays need to travel to public libraries to read the Word as those of the Lord's days had to do. Then only the rich could afford copies of the precious word (Acts 8: 27-28) and perhaps only a portion of it at that. In contrast, today the Bible may be read in all sorts of places other than the quietness of the disciple's inner sanctum. It may be read in jungles and deserts, on mountain tops or on desert islands, on the sea or in the air, in fields or in quarries, in offices, factories or mines, in buses or on trains. In every place the disciple may have it as his constant companion wherever men are free to do so.

Such a thing is possible because of that advance in human knowledge associated with the invention and development of the printing industry. It is a clear example to us of a point brought out this month by friends in Derby. Advances in human knowledge are not necessarily bad in themselves. Col. 2: 17 docs not mean that the disciple is to be as a Philistine or a Barbarian, despising learning or knowledge that does not emanate from the pages of the Scriptures. A man may memorize the entire contents of the Scriptures and be none the wiser as to how to print a book. We are certain that the Lord Jesus, in the days of His flesh, made tables and chairs in the carpenter's shop, the quality of which had never been seen in Nazareth before. We are equally certain that He never learned to do so from His constant reading of the Scriptures. What the disciple is called upon to do is to discriminate as to the source, content and end of such knowledge or wisdom with which he is confronted. He is to set it against what is written in the word. He is to

measure it against the eternal weight and worth of the word. He is to make a calculated decision in the fear of the Lord as to how far, if at all, he has to proceed with the matter. He is to determine exactly where it fits into the divine pattern of his pilgrim journey. He has to decide if it will further his quest for the winning of the gold, silver and precious stones at the judgement seat of Christ.

Well-endowed though the modern disciple may be in possessing such an asset as a Bible that may be his constant companion, the closing verses of the study passage (Col. 2: 19) when considered along with a companion passage (Eph. 4: 11-16) bring before us an equally important and balancing matter. The study of the word of God and the spiritual growth that derives from it cannot properly be done without the help of other disciples. God has deliberately arranged things in this way. The believer is not to develop in isolation from other believers. He is to be intimately connected to them to learn from them and they from him. He and they are to grow together like the parts of the human body. Growth is to be controlled by the Head and promoted by the body's other components else the individual will grow into a spiritual monstrosity. It is here that churches of God come into their own. Here there are shepherds and sheep, spiritual fathers and mothers, sons and daughters. Here there is on earth a visible expression of divine unity so that a disciple who lives in a particular place may learn to hold fast the Head and may receive appropriate spiritual nourishment that he may be a useful member. Such a thing cannot, by definition, be done in isolation.

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, was engaged in just such activity (Col. 1: 28, cf. Eph. 4: 11-16). He was about the building up of the body of Christ. To that end he strove "according to His working which worketh in me mightily" (Col. 1: 29). Yet he had never visited Colossae. It is likely, however, that there were those there who are eternally grateful to Paul, a man whom they had never seen. Bible Studies is a magazine produced by those in churches of God with that same end in view. Contributors will know exactly the feelings described by the apostle. Labouring and striving are essential to the work of building up the body of Christ. But, at the end of the day, contributors can be assured that they have played their parts in their own small way every bit as much as the apostle Paul played his part so long ago.

*LE. P.*

## **TYOLOGY - ITS PRINCIPLES AND LIMITATIONS**

### *Typology and Prophecy*

God's purposes, like Himself, are eternal. They looked forward to the

time when He would send His beloved Son down to earth to die upon the cross. This great event was central to the realization of all God's purposes and in accordance with His determinate counsel and foreknowledge (Acts 2: 23). It was ever in His mind, and when men came to live upon the earth He conveyed His purpose to them in prophecy. The revelation given in prophetic utterances was progressive and became more specific as time went on.

Words of prophecy were spoken to men who lived prior to the Cross to engender hope, filling their minds and hearts with expectation regarding the coming One. But for those who were to live after the Cross He caused that His dealings with men, and the record of the lives of certain of them, should be types or shadows of His purposes and of Him around whom those purposes centred, our Lord Jesus Christ. Much more is revealed in type than in prophecy. It awaited a future time of revelation. It was hid in God (Eph. 3: 9), but in retrospect it can be seen in type.

#### *Approved Methods of Study and Interpretation*

There are a number of scriptures in the New Testament which clearly show that certain Old Testament men should be viewed as types of Christ and that certain happenings or things illustrate New Testament truths. The following list provides examples:

- Rom. 5: 14 Adam - a figure of Him that was to come
- Matt. 12: 40 Jonah - who prefigures Christ in resurrection
- Heb. 7 Melchizidek - who was made like unto the Son of God
- Heb. 8: 5 to 10: 14 The law - with its tabernacle priesthood and offerings - a parable for the time now present
- 1 Pet. 3: 21 The waters of the flood - baptism

These, of course, do not constitute a complete list, but serve to show that the Holy Spirit, having indicated to us that important New Testament truths may be better understood as prefigured in the Old Testament in these examples, thereby commends to us as students the method of study to deepen our knowledge and understanding of God's word, particularly with reference to the Person of Christ. Thus a large field of study is presented to us into which we may venture depending upon the Spirit for guidance. He has not specifically indicated every type, but, being the Author of the Old Testament, He will assuredly, in keeping with our Lord's promise, guide into all the truth those into whose hearts He has come to dwell.

#### *The Need for Care in Interpretation*

A type helps us to understand the direct teaching of the Scriptures and the details are therefore often of very great significance. When we find the type and its details difficult to interpret it is wise to avoid fanciful interpre-

tations. Teaching from the types must be in accord with New Testament principles. Consistency of interpretation is essential. It is sometimes helpful if we are able to understand what is written in a practical way before attempting to extract teaching from it. The interpretation of the types requires study and careful thought and dependence upon the Holy Spirit for enlightenment. It is wise when studying scriptural types to view them in the light of what we already know, and in seeking to add to that knowledge to receive only what is in harmony with what we already know.

### *The Importance of Historical Sequence*

It is worthwhile to note the timing of events or instructions, the circumstances and their relation to what may have gone before or may follow after. We may illustrate this by reference to the shedding of blood. Firstly, we think of the blood shed in Egypt. The simple teaching is, of course, that it was shed to redeem the firstborn. The application of the blood to the lintel and sideposts of the door prefigures the sinner's act of faith in believing that Christ's blood was shed for his sake. The people of Israel were redeemed through their firstborn.

Secondly, some three months later, having crossed the Red Sea, which speaks of baptism, they arrived at Sinai and there again blood was shed, but not for the same reason as in Egypt. (Heb. 9: 19 informs us that the kind of animals which were slain then were "calves and goats". This is in contradistinction to Heb. 9: 13, which speaks of "bulls and goats", a reference surely to Lev. 16 - the day of atonement). Already redeemed and baptized they became the people of God by agreeing to accept and obey the covenant on the basis of blood having been shed. After Moses had read from the book of the covenant he sprinkled the blood on the people and on the book, thus identifying them with the covenant. Christ has died not only to redeem us from our sins, but also to make us a people for His own possession. In acknowledgement of this purpose of His death we pledge ourselves to be obedient.

Thirdly, when we come to Lev. 1, the people of Israel were still at Sinai, but the tabernacle had been built. God had taken up residence in the sanctuary that He had told them to make for Him. The evidence of His presence was seen in that the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and the cloud covered the tent of meeting. From His sanctuary God called unto Moses and gave him instructions for His people individually and collectively as to how they should approach Him with sacrifice. Here was an altar and a High Priest. Blood was shed at the altar for various reasons, as shown in the different offerings. No one offering could typify Christ completely. The basis of the approach to God of His people whether in worship (burnt offer-

ing), communion (peace offering), or because of failure or sin (sin offering) is blood.

### *The Offerings as Types*

When our Lord talked to the two men on the road to Emmaus, "He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24: 27). As it states that He did so from Moses as well as the prophets, the suggestion is that He not only showed how the words of the prophets had been fulfilled, but also how, among other things, He was typified in the Levitical offerings. There are also numerous references to the offerings in the book of Hebrews to show that they should be viewed as types. The offerings are rich in teaching concerning Christ and His Crosswork. It is an area of study in which many students of God's Word in many generations have been guided by the Holy Spirit. They have found this study rewarding to themselves and a veritable storehouse of spiritual food for the feeding of God's people. Such a study will also lead to a deeper apprehension of the attributes of God and what is proper to offer unto Him who is a God of Infinite holiness. It will enrich the mind of anyone who devotes himself to it and will enable him to gain a deeper appreciation of the Person of Christ and His Crosswork, and so the better equip him to lead the assembly in the giving of thanks at the Remembrance.

*J. Bowman*

*(To be continued).*

### **SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE [Colossians 2: 8-19]**

**From Birkenhead:** Having assured them of his continued effort in work and prayer on their behalf, Paul now changes tack and writes to the Colossian saints of the responsibilities which they must bear and the consideration they must make when attempting to follow the pathway of discipleship.

Paul had been made aware of false teaching which had been laid before the churches in this area. There were those (we think perhaps within the Church in Colossae) who were leading the saints astray with wrong teaching. Paul emphasizes the only basis for Christian living which, he states, is the life and teaching of Christ. To reinforce this he considers man's attempts to build a philosophy upon his own thoughts and points out how easily man can err because of his pride. Paul weighs this against the certainty, already referred to earlier in the letter (1: 16-18), that Christ is supreme in all things. Not only does He control mankind's efforts, but He is the source of them and indeed of existence itself.

Developing the idea, Paul reassures them that their standing in Christ is complete and needs nothing adding to it. He reminds them that Christ is in-

trinsically God and that He ever was so. His teaching develops with the assertion that before they believed in their Saviour, they were servants of the flesh, but their position has been changed and they have become servants of Christ. Paul reminds them of the significance of the baptism which was a public proclamation of this very fact.

It would seem that the wrong teaching, which was being perpetrated, involved the suggestion that the law, which had been delivered to God's people in Old Testament times, was still applicable. To deal with this Paul positively affirms that God nailed such written instructions to the cross when Christ gave Himself to be crucified. At that time the law was set aside and the Lord Jesus Christ became the One to whom they would give future service based on His past example and the words of scripture delivered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. None should therefore feel that he or she could be criticised for non-adherence to the Law. The essence of the message to the Colossian saints was that such former things were but a shadow (pointer or type) of that which was to come and which would permanently replace them, i. e. the substance of which the shadow was the herald.

It was made clear that by believing such heresies as were suggested, the saints could lose their heavenly reward. Again human philosophy had led to the teaching of angel worship and Paul implies within this passage that Christ is supreme over these beings also. They are due no worship - this is due only to God.

We were undecided regarding the meaning of v. 15 as to whether this referred to angels or the evil powers of this world [Comment 1].

*R. C. Halpin, R. D. Williams*

**From Cowdenbeath:** The title given to our study this month is seen in v. 17 where we have the words *skia* (shadow) and *soma* (substance). A shadow has no permanence apart from the substance which projects it. In this respect the law's significance was that it pointed to Christ.

The view was expressed that within the passage lies a catalogue of error against which Paul warns the Colossians. This includes teaching which called into question the all-sufficiency of Christ (vv. 9-10) and claimed the need for circumcision (v. 11). Although the general mind was that error had crept in among the disciples, the view was expressed that the error was outside the Church. In support of this latter view it was held that verses 2-5 demonstrated a high spiritual tone [Comment 2]. Vigilance was necessary so as not to be led astray by a philosophy which was deceitful in that, although it had neither truth nor hope nor power, it had an attractive presentation. All truth is rooted in revelation from God and not in human reason.

The indwelling fulness of v. 9 reposes within the incarnate Christ, not, as we might suppose, when He was here on earth, but now, in heaven, the fulness of deity dwells in Him. So far as the believer is concerned, therefore, there can be no question of attempting to attain to some kind of fulness. That is already our portion in Christ.

Circumcision signified the removal of that which was unclean, but it had an inward significance. The true circumcision is a matter of the heart. The circumcision which the Colossians knew was not of man (not made with hands), but was a spiritual act in Christ.

Most saw a clear parallel between the open declaration of circumcision and baptism. Both demonstrated that the old man must be buried and that the new man must rise. The transformation was not due to human agency but through faith in the power of God who raised Jesus from the dead. In v. 13 Paul appears to emphasize to the Colossians personally ("and you") the fact of all the teaching brought before them, and they were to understand that the source of all spiritual renewal involved the forgiveness of sins.

There was no doubt that the bond written in ordinances referred to the law of God. It was against us in that it stated our guilt and was contrary to us in that it required the penalty. The indictment was erased. It was also taken out of the way - it was removed as an obstacle to fellowship with God. At Calvary we see both Christ and the bond nailed to the cross. The cross which meant the death of Christ meant also the death of the law. Verse 15 has been the subject of debate over many years, but our judgment favoured the thought that the cross was both the death of the law and the conquest of evil powers. Paul appears to use the figure of the victor who has stripped his enemies, leading them in a victory procession. God has stripped from the evil powers their dominance over men's lives and openly exhibits them as utterly defeated. This He has accomplished through the death of Christ.

In view of the foregoing Paul warns the Colossians against binding themselves up with legalistic demands. The Christian has been delivered from a set of rules. Now the law is to be regarded, not as a set of rules that bind them, but as shadows, the substance of which is Christ Himself.

Furthermore they were to beware of false teachers with false humility, exalted because their teaching is mere human invention. True revelation makes a man really humble. In contrast to the divisive error of men Paul brings before us the beautiful imagery of the body of which Christ as Head is the source of life and unity.

*R. I. Shaw*

**From Derby:** The portion for study deals with the believer's attitude to the influence of secular ideas on the spiritual life. Each of the two paragraphs

starts with an imperative. The first is to be on guard against the influence of purely human reasoning. Paul had encountered this in Athens (Acts 17:16-33).

At Athens there was such a medley of ideas that Paul was able to decry the confusion and present his understanding of divine things. Philosophy means love of knowledge; and in its right sphere it is good. The reason for its being bad in the present connotation is that the philosophers whom Paul encountered thought that the human mind could achieve unaided a knowledge of the fundamentals of existence. Paul did claim some insight; but he saw it as a revelation from God in a spiritual realm. In this he was in tune with the prophets of the Old Testament and, more importantly, with the Lord Jesus who told Peter that his understanding of the personality of the Lord was a matter of revelation from God the Father. Paul sets out this claim for himself in Gal. 1:11-17.

The humble believer of the present time has something of this experience in his consciousness of God. Paul in Col. 2: 8 is warning against the approach to the fundamentals of life by unaided human reason, and describes those who suggest it as being vain deceivers. This verse therefore ends by indicating the Lord Jesus as the source of knowledge and leads naturally to the truth about the Lord in v. 9. This verse is written in the present tense and so suggests the Lord's being now in a resurrection body with all the fulness of His deity.

The believer now has a fulness of association with the risen Lord (v. 10). The ritual of circumcision was given to Abraham (Gen. 17:1-14) to denote a covenant of privilege for Abraham and his descendants - particularly the Israel nation. Paul, in Col. 2:11, is claiming that there is something, which is spiritual, to correspond to Abraham's position of privilege. Just as Abraham started a new character of life with the covenant of Gen. 17, so the believer, in his baptism, enters on a new state of covenant and, as shown in v. 13, embarks on a new character of life also [Comment 3].

Verses 14 and 15 show how the cross of the Lord Jesus is in fact the point of victory for Him and of blessing to the believer. Now in v. 16 comes the other imperative. "Let no man therefore judge you". The rules relating to eating, drinking, the observance of months and even of the sabbath are not fundamentals. The Lord Jesus broke the sabbath for that which was good, but we may be confident that He kept it in its proper place [Comment 4]. These things are of passing value. Indeed, imposed observation of these things can be a source of loss (v. 18). That which is fundamental is a holding fast to the Lord in the expression of one body - the body of Christ.

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From Leeds:** What was the heresy that threatened the stability of the disciples at Colossae and Laodicea? It has been said that it was a doctrine about God and of salvation that cast a cloud over the glory of Jesus Christ; it put Jesus Christ into the background. Paul sought to counteract this by exposing the emptiness of the shadows and the fulness of the substance.

*A Shadow is unprofitable compared to the substance*

For example (v. 11), circumcision of the flesh under the old covenant was not, of itself, any profit to the Jew, for, "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly... but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and the circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter" (Rom. 2: 28-29).

Again (v. 16) eating and drinking certain foods and observing special days cannot bring righteousness (See 1 Chron. 23: 31 and Gal. 2: 21). In His perfect life and in His death upon the cross the Lord Jesus fulfilled the law and paid its penalty. He did away with the old, and wrote a New Covenant in His blood. This is the solid reality upon which our faith is built.

*Some shadows point forward to Christ.*

For example, Heb. 10 deals with the failure of the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins, but the law, "having a shadow of the good things to come", pointed forward to the perfect offering (the substance). "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10: 14).

Again, Heb. 10 deals with the "new and living way". We remember that the Lord Jesus taught the woman (John 4: 23) that "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth...." Therefore the arrangements in the temple in Jerusalem were only a shadow pointing forward to the substance, "the new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh". (Heb. 10: 20).

Compared to the emptiness of the shadows and the futility of angel worship (v. 18) the true centre of Christian life and service in the house of God is the Lord Jesus Christ "from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God" (Col. 2: 19 RSV).

*G. Grierson*

**From Liverpool:** *Warning* (v. 8). The philosophy to be avoided is the product of the human mind. In contrast to these traditions of man, in Christ "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden". Even so we must always be careful to test what we hold against the Word of God, for traditions can also creep into the churches of God.

*Fulness in Christ* (vv. 9-10). In a wonderful sense all Christ's attributes have been imparted to us as believers, filling our empty lives with the complete-

ness that union with Christ brings.

*Some illustrations (vv. 11-15).* That Paul should use the example of circumcision when writing to a mainly Gentile church seems strange. However, it is to counter the influence of Jewish thinking which was bothering the church that Paul makes the point. Physical circumcision, as demanded by the Judaizers, is not necessary, believers having been spiritually circumcised at salvation "In the putting off of the body of the flesh" (v. 11). He lends strength to this with the illustration of burial and resurrection from baptism, which, he insists, is only so "through faith in the working of God" (v. 12). Symbolism is based on something that has already happened. "It could become real only when a man believed intensely in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It could only happen when a man believed in the effective working of God which had raised Jesus Christ from the dead and could do the same for him". (William Barclay). [Comment 5].

Having defended salvation by faith Paul's next illustration is to show that the legal code which the Jews sought to impose "was against us"... "was contrary to us" (v. 14) and is no longer valid. As the charges that brought about his death were pinned to the criminal's cross for all to see, so the law which brought death to mankind was nailed to Christ's cross. When Christ was on the cross God's divine requirements were no longer demanded from the law, but were fulfilled in Him. So believers need no longer try to keep that code, but rest by faith in Christ.

*Practical Considerations (vv. 16-19).* It is a sad thing to be freed and return again to slavery. Paul reminds the Colossians that having freed the Jewish people from these observances, God does not require Gentile Christians to take them on. That was the shadow. The reality is Christ. True humility is one of the graces shown by the Lord Jesus. For believers to manifest this involves a work of the Holy Spirit. Here men were doing it of their own will and so it was false. A further illustration makes the point. As a human body cannot function without the head, so these believers were failing to function properly because they failed to maintain that contact which is essential. We must keep hold of Christ and not get mixed up in any of these human ideas.

*D. J. Webster*

**From Methil:** In his epistle to the Colossians Paul introduces a note of caution, a warning bell to the saints, that they might beware at all costs of the ways of men. We believe that within the pathway of every believer comes the hour of caution. The apostle brings before the saints the matter of the philosophy, or ways of men. How easy it is for the Christian to be caught up with the ways of men. Men's philosophies are all contrary to the ways of

God and are a complete denial of His ways and His purposes.

The evidence of a Christian's being made spoil of would be seen in his turning his thoughts away from Christ and becoming involved in following after earthly things. To avoid becoming involved in the philosophies of men, we should ever seek to be in such a condition that we are completely filled with Christ, allowing no place for the rudiments of the world and the traditions of men.

A Christian who allows himself to be made spoil of is one who has lost his joy in the Lord, and is like a completely conquered city robbed of all its values, and its people perhaps sold to slavery. We must therefore ensure that we do not become enslaved to the thoughts and minds of men.

In considering the phrase "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily", we believe this simply indicates to us that all that could be said of God is clearly seen in the person of Christ, bringing out the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All attributes seen in God the Spirit are channelled to the person of Christ.

"In Him ye are made full". We are made full in Christ. He satisfied our every requirement. We are complete in Him, lacking in nothing, filled and satisfied. He is like the vine giving sustenance to its branches, each one dependent on Him. The circumcision of v. 11 we viewed as spiritual, seen in evidence in our putting off the flesh and putting on Christ, and showing by faith our appreciation of the truth of baptism. The understanding of baptism, we believe, is seen in its spiritual significance, and it is this that Paul seeks to bring before the saints in Colossae.

In our quickening together with Him, we see the complete removal of all relating to the law of Moses in the Lord's crucifixion. See Eph. 2: 15-16, Heb. 2: 14-15.

The bond, with all its requirements pledging us to the Law, He publicly removed through His death on the cross.

We are exhorted to allow no man to judge us in our eating or drinking, for they are but a shadow of the Law, and it is from the Lord, the head, that we the body receive sustenance to grow according to his designs.

*A. R. Smith*

**From Nottingham:** There is a link between verses 7 and 8 of Colossians 2. In the first place the apostle is telling the saints of what can be gained in Christ, and then takes the matter further by warning them of the dangers of philosophy, vain deceit and the traditions of men. This included all rudimentary knowledge whether of Jewish, Gnostic or heathen origin, all being apart from Christ. A fundamental doctrine of which the apostle writes

is the one where he shows that Christ displayed the fulness of the Godhead in His body. "I and the Father are one" (John 10: 30) and "... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father..." (John 14: 9) are two verses spoken by the Lord confirming what Paul has written. The Lord's life was not a passing season of splendour, but the fulness of the Godhead dwells in His body.

Being such we should be aware of our completion in Him; we lack nothing, or need nothing from those sources mentioned in v. 8. His being Head of all" principality and power (v. 9) would show that the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted to the highest conceivable dignity and honour (compare Eph. 1: 21, Phil. 2: 9). He was not merely above them as an officer in any form of rank, but was infinitely exalted over them (John 19:11). They are heavenly and earthly bodies, rather than those of v. 15 where the scripture shows clearly that the Lord conquered the principalities and powers of the world which are the formidable enemies that have held man in subjection and prevented his service to God.

"In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands..." (v. 11). Rather than being a fleshly thing, a mere cutting back of the flesh, it would seem to be a spiritual matter, not made with hands. There were two views expressed over this v. 11, one being that the circumcision in our case was at the time of salvation, and the other that it referred to the time of baptism in the putting-off of the body of flesh [Comment 6].

The old laws were discarded when Christ died on the cross. These laws were difficult to attain to because they were contrary to us (v. 14), but there is a new and better relationship with Him.

The question arises as to the degree in which we are released from these laws. It would seem that the ordinances to which reference is being made are those connected with the ritual of service rather than the moral law. The latter was upheld and confirmed by the Lord Himself in His life and in the New Testament Scriptures. Many of the laws were a shadow, only a dim outline of future things, not the reality itself or the substance. All that they signified is of and in Christ and is fulfilled in Him. We are warned so that we may not be robbed of our reward, which will be established at the judgement seat, by those teaching false humility and saying that it is not possible for us to be joined directly to God through Christ, but that there needs to be a series of angels invoked to make the link. Such thoughts are of a fleshly mind. If a man firmly holds to the Head he is holding to the Head of the Church the Body. If one holds not he will be severed from Christ (Gal. 5: 4) in the sense of loss of communion, but not in the sense of loss of eternal salvation. If communion is broken there is no growth, and, therefore, no fruit-bearing.

*K. Hickling*

**From Vancouver:** One of the meanings of "philosopher" is lover of wisdom. In Col. 2: 8, the Spirit of God is warning against man's wisdom that it is contrary to the wisdom of God. Christ gave knowledge of simple facts, simple but profound. He referred to the "glory" of the flower and the manner in which the birds are fed. He gave man a true and accurate explanation behind the flowers and the birds, that God made and care for them and us. The revelation of God in the Scriptures is an accurate presentation of Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God. Any deviation from God's rational explanation of things, or of things concerning Himself is to be avoided by those who know and love the truth. There is everything that is needed by us in the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, for our complete salvation; so great is He and able to save to the uttermost.

The pre-eminence of Christ is magnified in that in Christ dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily. With Christ and in Him is all God's power which was needed to effect our great salvation. And, blessed be God, we are made full in Christ; everything that we need and shall need is given and will be given to us. There is nothing lacking; we have all in Christ. Rejoice! The shadow of glorious things is fulfilled in glorious substance. No other wisdom but the wisdom of God will suffice.

The Spirit of God reveals a nailing to the cross, which was not seen by the on-lookers at that event. The "bond written in ordinances" which was both against us and contrary to us was nailed to the cross. "Ye have heard that it was said... But I say unto you" (Matt. 5: 43, 44), expresses the awesome power of the Word, the eternal Word of God, who became flesh, in order to die on the cross that all that "was against us should be defeated and will be defeated".

All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Him, our Head.

*H. McLeman*

## COMMENTS

**1. (Birkenhead):** Friends in Cowdenbeath give what is perhaps the traditional explanation of this verse. An alternative view is that the principalities and powers refer to the estate of the angels through whom the law was given (Heb. 2: 2, Acts 7: 53). Although the meaning of the verse may at present be a matter of unresolved controversy, its significance in the context of Col. 2 is clear. The death of Christ, because of His person, has raised the status of the believer to a plane higher than any commanded by angelic hosts.

2. **(Cowdenbeath):** Col. 2: 19 shows that the false teachers were members of the church which is His body and verse 20 shows that saints in Colossae were practising their false doctrines. The Colossians were strong in collective obedience as indicated (v. 5) by their order (*taxis*) and steadfastness (*Stereoma*) which are terms which have been said to have military undertones. It was the apostle's fear that such exemplary obedience to truth might be misapplied with the result that the assembly would be marched away captive or made spoil (*sulagogeo* v. 8) to false doctrines. Thus, although it is impossible to be definite, there is an implication that the false teachers were restricted to the assembly at Colossae since that assembly and its leaders were closely linked with their counterparts in Laodicea and perhaps others in their district.

3. **(Derby):** The believer enters on his new life when he is born again and immediately enters into New Covenant blessings. When that new man began, his old man died. But all this is an unseen, spiritual transaction. When the believer is baptized these facts are made open and become public knowledge.

4. **(Derby):** In the Lord's day the leaders of Israel had almost entirely got away from the word of God. They had replaced it with codes of practice and traditions of their own which had become an end in themselves and were every bit as much traditions of men as were those traditions of men that Paul condemned in his letter (Col. 2: 8, 20). They were an absolute burden and misery to the people. It was these man-made regulations that the Lord broke and not the commandments of His Father given through Moses concerning the Sabbath.

5. **(Liverpool):** The meaning of this quotation and its preceding sentence is unclear. It is not true to say that symbolism is based on something that has already happened. Symbols are things such as the loaf of bread and cup of wine which the Lord took at the institution of the remembrance. These were clearly chosen prior to the giving up of the body and the shedding of the blood of which they spoke. It is not clear how "symbolism" in the matter of baptism can "become real". As it is presented here the quotation is open to the explanation that it is an apology for the so-called baptism of infants prior to adult conversion. Such a doctrine of baptism is a counterfeit of

divine truth. The force of Col. 2: 12 is that the burial and resurrection association with baptism have no reality without the prior faith in the working of God in the death and resurrection of Christ and the believer's like portion in it.

6. (Nottingham): Baptism does not put off the body of the flesh. Men who are dead through their trespasses are the spiritual counterparts of the uncircumcised. Men who are saved are the counterparts of the circumcised. Baptism is a thing done by men, being the answer to a good conscience (1 Pet. 3: 21) that the body of the flesh has been removed in a circumcision not made with hands, i. e. made by God (Col. 2: 11). At baptism, believers are not raised in newness of life. They are raised to walk in newness of life. It is the outward evidence of an inner, spiritual reality.

*LE. P.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **From Leeds:** Did the disciples at Laodicea let go of the Head (Rev. 3: 15)?

Yes, as friends in Nottingham point out, "holding fast the head" (Col. 2: 19) is a matter of communion not union. Communion was exactly the remedy proposed for Laodicea (Rev. 3: 20).

2. **From Leeds:** What is the difference between a testament and a covenant?

A testament is a covenant involving the death of the testator (Heb. 9: 16). A covenant need not involve such death (e. g. Gen. 21: 27). This distinction between testament and covenant is not made in the original languages used in the Old and New Testament Scriptures and the reader has to decide if the context merits such distinction.

*I. E. P.*

The Greek word which represents both covenant and testament in the Septuagint and in the New Testament is the word *diatheke*. It derives from a verb *diatithemi*, which means to arrange according to one's own will or to make a disposition. The derivation of the word emphasizes the unilateral nature of God's covenants; they are declarations of intent, rather than mutual agreements. The translators of the Authorised Version were not consistent in the use of the two English words and used "testament" in places such as Matt. 26: 28 where "covenant" would be more appropriate if the distinction in the comment above were to be maintained.

The Revised Version always uses "covenant", except in Heb. 9: 16, 17, but it is arguable that the word *diatheke* should be translated "covenant" even here. The reference may be to the offering of a sacrifice as a sign of the sealing of a covenant as in Gen. 15: 10. In that case the one who made the covenant did so at the cost of a life, and this could be the interpretation of Heb. 9: 16, 17 rather than that of a last will. See the discussion of the subject under the word "testator" in W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

*P. L. H.*

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# Bible Studies

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EDITORIAL

8206

As it is with those in Churches of God today, so it must have been with the saints and faithful brethren at Colossae, that **the** death of Christ on **the** cross was laid to their hearts by the Spirit of God when **they** first believed; so also was the resurrection of Christ, which established **their** faith. **If** it were not for the resurrection of Christ we would be yet in our sins and our hope would be confined to this life alone. No wonder **the** Scriptures enjoin that we should be thankful, in view of the grace of God made known to us in Christ Jesus.

Following their confession of Christ as Lord the Colossian disciples were baptized into His death. In this they acknowledged that His death alone could bring eternal life; precepts and doctrines of men were of no avail to remove the burden of sin. They stood clothed in His righteousness, and no longer in the filthy rags of their own fabrication.

The things of the past had therefore to be regarded as buried and having no longer any authority to direct their lives. As those who were raised together with Christ their life was henceforth bound up with the One seated at the right hand of God.

Although they had put off the old man with his doings and had put on the new man, they were still encumbered with earthly bodies. To walk worthily of the Lord was dependent on their knowledge of and subjection to His will. This involved the removal of those characteristics which were contrary to the will of the Lord, and the putting on of characteristics contrary to the will of the natural man.

The word of Christ indwelling, the peace of Christ ruling, and the love of Christ constraining must lead to harmony among brethren and resultant blessing. For those who are conformed to the divine image communion with God is restored in His beloved Son, the One in whom God can rest.

Of old when the Lord "brought forth His people with joy, and **His** chosen with singing, " (Ps. 105: 43) it could be said of them, "Thy raiment

waxed not old upon thee" (Deut. 8: 4). By allowing the Holy Spirit to direct us, we can experience that continual renewing (Col. 3: 10), and prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12: 1, 2).

Living above is made possible by the death of Christ.

Precious, precious blood of Jesus,  
Shed on Calvary,  
Shed for rebels and for sinners,  
Shed for me.

E. A.

## **TYOLOGY — ITS PRINCIPLES AND LIMITATIONS**

(continued from issue 8205 p. 69)

### **Identification with the Sacrifice**

This was done in the case of each of the offerings by the laying on of a hand or hands.

In the case of the goat for dismissal on the day of atonement Aaron laid both his hands upon the head of the animal and confessed over it the iniquities of the people. Thus there was a transfer of guilt from those who had sinned to the innocent victim. This, of course, speaks of Christ as the sin bearer, the One on whom God laid the iniquities of us all (Isa. 53: 6).

In the case of the burnt offering we must look for a different reason for the laying on of the hand of the offerer. He is not coming as one who has committed a sin, although he is by nature a sinner and cannot on his own merit approach a holy God. He finds acceptance with God through the sacrifice which makes atonement for him, not for his sin; therefore, we see a transfer of worth from the sacrifice to the man.

### **Men as types of Christ**

Adam, the first man, is a type of Christ. He has transmitted to all his posterity the consequences of his act of disobedience and they are brought under the dominion of sin and death, whereas Christ by His obedience transmits to those who are united with Him by faith His perfect righteousness. Adam is a type by contrast rather than by comparison. This is how, in some cases, the teaching is derived.

A number of men through certain incidents or features in their lives are types: Isaac in his going to Mount Moriah with his father Abraham; Moses

as a leader, a mediator and an intercessor; Aaron as a High Priest; David as a king in rejection; Solomon as king in glory. The man who most fully typifies Christ is Joseph. The scripture records flaws in the lives of all of those mentioned except Joseph. So far as he is presented not one word of failure is recorded. He speaks of Christ in His purity. Christ is set forth in so many ways in the life of Joseph. He was the beloved son who was sent by his father to seek his brethren who hated him to such a degree that they would have murdered him. He was sold by them. He was condemned though innocent. He suffered at the hands of his brethren and also of the Gentiles (Egyptians), but he was exalted to the throne and became the saviour of the world. His brethren who set him at nought and sold him not only bowed the knee before him, but did so with great mourning. It is a story rich in gospel truth.

### **Types of Christ as Priest**

Two men are used to typify Christ in this way. They are very different from each other and in their priesthoods. Both are required to give us a true understanding of our High Priest, who is Jesus, the Son of God.

Melchizedek shows Christ as a priest who gives help. He did so to Abraham, and by his timely meeting with him Abraham was able to withstand the offer of the King of Sodom. Christ gives help to the seed of Abraham, that is, those who are such by faith (Heb. 2:16). The words "take hold" are more correctly rendered "giveth help" (American R. V. ). [This is an interpretation, rather than a more correct rendering - Eds. ]

Aaron sets forth Christ as a High Priest through whom God's people offer spiritual sacrifices and through whom they enter into the Holies. Christ has been made a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, but His service in many things is carried out after the typical teaching seen in Aaron in the past, in association with the Tabernacle and its offering.

### **Women as types of the Church**

Christ's church is His bride and the relationship of certain women with their husbands give us different foreshadowings of this great truth.

*Adam and Eve:* Eve was part of Adam even before she existed. God built her out of a rib taken from Adam's side. A picture of our eternal association with Christ as those who were chosen in Him from before times eternal.

*Isaac and Rebekah:* Rebekah became Isaac's wife, having been won over by the report given by Abraham's servant. She loved a man she had never seen and agreed to become his wife.

*Jacob and Rachel:* Jacob served Laban 7 years to get her because of the deep love he had for her. He bore the heat of the day and the frost by night.

*Joseph and Asenath:* She was not with him in the dungeon, but she became his bride and was with him in the time of his exaltation and glory.

### **Some Things or Events as Types**

*The Circumstances of the Flood,* the ark and its occupants present a type of baptism and its teaching. Noah and the others were saved by the ark from the waters of judgement and from a corrupt world to be raised to Mount Ararat to walk thereafter in newness of life.

*The Crossing of the Red Sea by Israel.* The two congealed walls of water with the overshadowing cloud formed a watery grave through which Israel passed to emerge on the other side freed from Pharaoh's bondage and committed to Moses their new leader. They were "baptised into Moses" and this should be compared with "baptised into Christ" (Rom. 6: 3, Gal. 3: 27).

*The Smitten Rock.* Israel did not witness the smiting of the rock, but they saw and drank of the water that flowed to them as a result. This tells of the smiting, unseen by human eyes, that Christ endured and the bountiful life-giving waters He, by His death, has provided. They drank of a spiritual Rock which followed them and the Rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10: 4).

*The Manna.* This is a type of Christ as the Bread of God which came down out of heaven. At least seven times in John 6 the Lord speaks of Himself as having "come down out of heaven". The manna was given to sustain life. Christ as the Bread of Life (v. 48) or the Living Bread (v. 51) gives life—eternal life. The details regarding the manna are interesting and instructive, setting forth by its smallness — His humility; by its colour (white)—His purity, by its taste — His sweetness.

### **Limitations**

A type, unlike an image, is not an exact likeness or imprint. The offerings set forth in their details many wonderful truths, but they have their limitations.

Although we read in Lev. 16: 21, 22 that Aaron put "the iniquities of the Children of Israel" upon the head of the goat and "the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land", yet Heb. 10: 4 reads that "It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats (offered on the day of atonement) should take away sins". The seeming discrepancy between these two statements is explained in Rom. 3: 25, which states that God passed over (i. e. suspended judgment of) the sins done aforetime in Divine forbearance, not because He disregarded them, but in order to show His righteousness, and because of this Christ died for those very sins. In keeping with this Heb. 9: 15 states that a death, the death of Christ, has taken place for "the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant". Thus though the people concerned considered that they had been forgiven (see Lev. 4: 26, 31, 35 "and he shall be forgiven"), God's claim was not met by the sacrifices which were offered.

Such sacrifices could not make perfect. They could not impart anything to the offerer. Christ, who is perfect, has by offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice, perfected forever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10: 14).

Because of the inadequate character of these sacrifices, Christ came into the world, taking unto Himself the body that God had prepared for Him in order that He might do God's will in the offering up of His body once for all (Heb. 10: 5, 10).

The men who typify Christ can only do so in a limited way also. Isaac, whom Abraham in obedience to God's instruction would have slain, was spared and a ram was taken instead. It needed the ram to typify Christ in death.

Joseph's experiences in being put down the pit by his brethren and in the dungeon by Potiphar are only types of Christ's death. Joseph did not actually die. He received such treatment even although he was innocent. Christ was not simply an innocent man who was made to suffer undeservedly; He was sinless. The innocence of Joseph is the nearest the type can come to portrayal of a sinless Christ. We do not look to the Cross to consider an innocent man suffering, but a sinless Man dying—dying for us.

*J. Bowman*

### **LIVING ABOVE (Colossians 2: 20 - 3: 17)**

**From** Birkenhead: Paul concludes his teaching with regard to the application of the law to the lives of those who have died with Christ by

restating forcefully the view that the saints in Colossae are no longer bound by the law. It has no place in the life of a disciple of Christ, and although it may appear to those outside of Christ that there is a wisdom in its use, Paul is quite categorical in his assertion as shown in Col. 2: 22, 23. [Comment 1].

The positive side of his teaching commences in ch. 3 where his\* concise use of words in v. 2 shows how the Spirit instructs the saints to direct their minds. There is a reminder that they are identified with Christ, having been raised with Him, and a reminder also that Christ has a position of authority and honour at the right hand of God the Father. Not only is there an identification of each saint with his Saviour, but there is a close personal and private relationship, which is with Christ in God and not evident to those outside the Body of Christ.

The setting of one's mind upon spiritual matters which are above, will have a dual purpose. Not only will it benefit by building a closer bond with Christ, but it will also defeat the adversary when the fleshly temptations outlined in v. 5 are ranged by him against the disciple. Verse 8 lists a number of vices which, although of a different character, are nevertheless to be "put away" or "put to death". These were characteristic of the old man, but having put on the new man they should now be anathema.

The new man must progress and be built up and fortified, and this will come when knowledge is actively sought with a view of learning more of, and emulating the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The traits of such a character are outlined in the passage, starting with a reminder that in following Christ they have been chosen by Him. The principal of these is love, which characterized all the Lord's actions, and they are told to "put on love". Gratitude for their calling was to be evident, and this, together with the peace of Christ ruling in their hearts, would result in worthy disciples.

Paul recognizes the difficulties, however, by giving instruction on how failure among those in the church was to be regarded. Forbearance and forgiveness were the key words.

Paul concludes with a summarizing statement which reminded them that as followers of Christ, all words and actions should be in His name, who

empowers them, and that this should **be** a source of thanksgiving and gratitude to the Father.

*R. C. Halpin, R. C. M. Bolt*

**From Birmingham:** We discussed the words "you died" (2: 20, 3: 3) and **the** similar words in Eph. 2: 1, "ye were dead". Eph. 2: 1, however, speaks of an unregenerate state and position before God, to whom we felt we could not respond while in that state. This contrasts with our present position of alive to God and dead to sin (Rom. 6: 2). Yet in actual experience we can respond very much to sin. Therefore, in what sense are we dead?

[Comment 2]

It is to be noted that the verbs in Colossians are in the Greek aorist, which means an action or event rounded off and complete in itself. The event is in the past tense, and, therefore, speaks of something **that** has already happened, is complete, and the effect of which continues. Knowing of our susceptibility to sin, this, therefore, must be a work of God in us, which is precisely parallel to "died to sin" (Rom. 6: 2) and our "old man crucified with Him" (v. 6), which again are in the aorist tense and could mean either or both of the following:

1. A part of us now cannot sin.
2. Sin's power to enslave us is now broken and we now have the potential not to sin.

The tense of the terms "you died" and "who died" seems to tell us that part of us now cannot sin. This is supported by 1 John 3: 9: "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin because his seed abideth in him: **and he** cannot sin because he is begotten of God."

Sin's power over us is also broken at salvation and the potential not to sin is ours, "For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (Rom. 6: 6, NIV).

At salvation it seems we benefit from both 1), the new man is created who cannot sin, and 2), simultaneously we have the potential not to sin, which we realize in our daily experience as we convert into actual experience by faith what we know to be our position in Christ; "even so *reckon* ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God".

It seems from Paul's comments on the false teaching of asceticism, "they lack any value in restraining the sensual desires of the flesh" (NIV), that they saw their asceticism as a way to self-control and holiness, which

professed to control the very thing on which it was based, the rudiments of the world or the first elements of man's inner motives, vanity and philosophy (Col. 2: 8).

Now because the Colossians had died there was no need for them to subject themselves to human rules for self-control and holiness. They were to seek continuously and earnestly for, and to set or exercise their deepest affection and interest on the things above; for only in knowing their "death to sin" position in Christ, and that their life was hid with Christ, and that Christ was their life, could they realize their potential to victorious and holy living and thereby "make dead" whatever belonged to their earthly nature (Col. 3: 5).

The Colossians were dead with Christ and therefore did not need to subject themselves to the "basic principles of this world" (2: 20-23 NIV). Conversely they had "been raised together with Christ" and therefore could go on to living above experientially, by minds exercised to heaven and faith that enabled them to continue putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Like Paul they could say, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2: 20).

*R. Wood*

**From Cowdenbeath:** Dying with Christ involves deliverance from the religious sphere of the world with its rules and observances. The pointlessness of such things is demonstrated by the fact that they are transitory — they are part of the corruptible order of the world. These things spring from the instructions of men and are not of God. Yet they have an appearance of wisdom. The devotion, however, is self-imposed and only serves to indulge human pride and the old sinful nature.

Paul, in chapter 3, explains that the radical change which has taken place in the believer should be reflected in his Christian conduct and way of life. Human ambition serves only the world, but those who have been raised with Christ are to aim for the things that belong to the glorified Man at the right hand of God. Surely these things encompass holiness of life and spiritual power. It is important, therefore, that our minds be set on things of abiding value.

The new life in Christ is hidden from man's view. This can lead to scorn as far as the believer is concerned, but one day soon Christ, who is now

rejected, will be revealed in all His glory, and when this takes place the life of the Christian will be seen as something of real and abiding value. The temporary things will be destroyed.

Some confined the reference of chapter 3 v. 1 to the experience of baptism, referring back to ch. 2 v. 12. Others saw a parallel to Ephesians 2: 6 recognizing, of course, the relevance of the truth of baptism, expressing the fact that we have died with Christ and should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6). [Comment 3]

The word "therefore" in v. 5 indicates that because Christ is our life we have to live in the power of our glorified Lord. There has to be a determined refusal to yield to the appeal of the flesh. The first catalogue is of sins in one's own body; the second catalogue is in relation to others. The believer has ceased to be what he once was; hence those things which were normal to him as a sinner are now unnatural. The new man is continually being renewed, aimed at a growth in spiritual knowledge. The divisions which belong to the natural sphere (v. 11) now no longer exist.

The counterpart of the "putting off" of v. 9 is the decisive "putting on" of v. 12. The virtues mentioned are grouped to deal first of all with Christian behaviour to others, the absence of self-esteem and the attitude to treatment by others. The act of "putting on" clothes comes to a climax in the note to put on love. This is not as an additional garment. It is that which knits all the other virtues together to give completeness. The peace that Christ gives will display a proper attitude of mind to others and toward God.

In all things we are to live and act as those who bear the Name of the Lord Jesus—high calling indeed.

*R. I. Shaw*

**From Derby:** The nature of the Christian's life in the world is seen in the teaching of the Lord Jesus in chapters 15, 16 and 17 of John's gospel. There He teaches that the disciple is to remain in the world, but with a sense of separation from it. This teaching is continued by Paul in the scripture given for the present study. He claims a separation from the world which is virtually a death in association with the Lord Jesus.

The world ascetic sees virtue in severity to both mind and body. The restriction in respect of food is of little value because of the perishable nature of the food. It is transient. This was taught by the Lord Jesus and is

recorded in Mark 7: 15-23. Asceticism is inadequate to deal with man's defiled nature.

In Col. 3: 1 the apostle turns to the more positive aspect of the Christian's life. It is a resurrection life with the Lord Jesus. The Lord Himself is actually in heaven with God the Father and the disciple is to live on earth as though raised with Him [Which he is - Eds]. This demands a mind in tune with the heavenly realm. The intrinsic nature of this life is hidden from those who are of the world; but Paul cheers himself and the believer by the fact that the Lord Jesus will one day appear in glory and the disciples will be revealed with Him, sharing His glory.

Next, in Col. 3: 5-7 the apostle returns to consider the hard reality of the believer's dual nature. The things enumerated in v. 5 can be eliminated—that is mortified—in the Christian's life. Verse 7 shows that they belonged to a previous way of life, and verses 8 and 9 are an appeal for the mastery of the milder, though still unacceptable characteristics. This done, the expression of the new life can be realized in good personal relationships between those who naturally would not be acceptable to each other (v. 11).

Verses 12 to 14 start as an instruction consciously to develop virtue, particularly in connection with human relationships. This exercise can help in a realization of the peace which the Lord Jesus gives—different from anything that the world may give.

The remaining verses deal with the day by day experience of Christian living, and contain the important proviso that all that is done should be in accord with the will of the Lord Jesus. It is only when one feels confident that this condition is satisfied that one should invoke the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway.*

**From Edinburgh:** This section is a bridge between two parts of the epistle. Prior to these verses Paul has written about the nature of Christian character. Subsequently, he applies his teaching to specific human relationships. In this study passage he establishes positive principles prior to application. The passage includes two themes in four sections: the old man in 2: 20-23, 3: 5-9; and the new man in 3: 1-4, 3: 10-17.

He expands his previous teaching of 2: 8 and 2: 18 with remarks about the dangers of the world in 2: 20-23. Then, returning to this theme in 3: 5 he mentions behaviour which is characteristic of their pre-Christian life, and,

finally, sins of speech (3: 8-9). When Paul describes the old **man** he mentions specific behaviour, but is more general when commending upright behaviour to the disciples. Both these warning passages are followed immediately with encouragement about putting on the new man. The "if" of argument is followed by the "therefore" of consequence.

Paul's positive teaching centres on his expression "with Christ". In these few verses we read the fullest exposition in the New Testament of what it means to be "with Christ". These words occur four times within eight verses (2: 20, 3: 1, 3: 3, 3: 4). This expression is linked to the life, death, resurrection and return of Christ and applied to the life of the Christian. The historical becomes personal. "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (3: 3) expresses both doctrine and practice. Firstly, various aspects of Christian character, such as eternal life, cannot be seen, but are kept and hid with Christ. Secondly, many of Christ's good deeds and His relationship with His Father were not observed by men. Similarly, the Christian life of prayer and good deeds may be known only to Christ, and, therefore, **hid** with Him.

Now that Paul has taught how each Christian is in special relationship with Christ, he teaches the doctrine of the unity of all Christians in the body of Christ in 3: 11 [Comment 4]. In the last section of the study passage he describes how the unity with Christ can be expressed among those in the local church and refers to the peace of Christ, the word of Christ and the importance of love as well as worship (3: 12-17). Throughout the chapter Paul weaves his teaching about the body of Christ (2: 17, 2: 19, 3: 11, 3: 15) and also refers to God's elect in this context (3: 12).

Finally, it is worth noting some contrasts in the passage. In 3: 2 "**the** things that are upon the earth" are contrasted with "the things that are above". "The doctrines of men" have "a *show* of wisdom" but "your life is *hid* with Christ in God" (3: 2). Furthermore, there are two kinds of humility as seen in 2: 18, 23 and 3: 12. Also, at present our life is "**hid**", but soon "shall be manifested" (3: 3-4).

*P. Merchant*

**From Liverpool:** *A New Basis For Living.* Everything that is needed for the spiritual well-being of a believer is found in Christ. Paul, therefore, questions their continuing conformity to the world. He tells them clearly that their minds should be set on Christ and that there is no value or gain in keeping of tradition whether Jewish or Gnostic. There is now a new relationship—between them and Christ rather than between them and the world.

*The Positive Approach.* There are practices positively to put away and there are others to cultivate. Such living is great for inter-personal relationships and makes for happy assemblies. If we are producing the fruit of the Spirit then the negative things will not be found in our lives. The gateway to the heart is through the mind, a fact of which Satan is well aware and he uses the media to captivate and influence people to his way of thinking. The antidote to this is "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (v. 16).

Love binds all these virtues together (v. 14), and the motivation is spelt out in v. 17. This is a test of everything that we do, At the judgment seat of Christ all will be laid bare. We may successfully deceive our brothers and sisters, but we cannot deceive the Lord.

*K. T. Jones, D. J. Webster*

**From Vancouver:** One has said, "The mind is the standard of the man". We who accepted Christ as Saviour have a choice to make, as most of us were taken up with the things of the world. Our adversary, the god of this age, will do all in his power to fill our minds with things that displease the Lord. The worlds of sport and entertainment are so powerful that we must look to the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide our minds lest we be filled with such pleasures. Col. 3: 5 states that we must put to death our members which are upon the earth. In view of what Christ has done for us we should make this a once and for all act. Col. 3: 1, "Ye were raised together with Christ... seek the things that are above, where Christ is". May we clothe ourselves with the new man and put on our spiritual apparel.

The two lists of sins in verses 5 and 9 are an outline of the sins of the old man. We can know the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to put off the old man and put on the new man. How beautiful the list of characteristics of the new man (vv. 12-16). May we memorize them all and fill our thoughts and minds that we may not sin against the Lord nor against one another. Paul exhorts the saints in Rome, "Be not fashioned according to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12: 2). No doubt, we all have a battle as to who will have control of our minds. We are Christ's and we should put on the whole armour of God. No soldier becomes entangled in the affairs of this life. May we know the guidance of the Holy Spirit that at the close of our days we can say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4: 7).

Our topic is "Living Above", but we must serve our Lord until He calls us above. The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not. But we are the Lord's and the Holy Spirit's desire is that He may have full possession of the minds of all the Lord's people. May the Lord help us that we may not quench the Holy Spirit, but we may please Him and know His guidance to enable us to bring every thought into captivity. Until the Lord returns to take us home to heaven our challenge is that we must have our minds and our thoughts focused on heavenly things and not governed by a fleshly mind. Often we hear the words used "We should not be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly use". **But** we can be heavenly minded and seek to serve the Lord with all our heart, at the same time.

*J. Bell.*

## COMMENTS

**1. (Birkenhead):** Without losing sight of the valuable teaching which can be derived from the Law in its types and shadows of Christ, **the** apostle makes it clear that disciples of Christ should not be bound to a literal fulfillment of the Law.

*E. A.*

Paul's main points regarding believers in Christ being made free from the Law are made in vv. 14, 17. Verse 18 would appear to refer to man-made traditions and philosophies that were being propounded by false teachers at that time. It is against all these things that Paul warns in vv. 22, 23.

*J. K. D. J.*

Verse 22 refers to "the precepts and doctrines of men", pointing to ascetic practices by which men imagined that they might become more holy, rather than to the observance of the Law of the Old Covenant. The idea that "severity to the body" has spiritual merit seems to have a perennial appeal to men's minds, and has had its advocates from the apostle's day until now. The Rules of the great mediaeval monastic orders and the cultivation of discomfort as a penance are among the examples one could cite, yet Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says quite firmly that these things are "not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh". Why is this? Such things direct the individual's attention to himself and what he is doing, rather than to Christ and what He has done. Holiness comes from the imitation of Christ rather than from observance of arbitrary rules. This is not to deny, of course, that effort is required to put away wrong actions and put on positive virtues, as chapter three teaches.

*P. L. H.*

**2. (Birmingham):** When a believer puts faith in Christ, he is united with Him, becoming a member of His body in an indissoluble union. Previously, as a member of the race of which Adam is the head, he had shared in the sin of Adam, receiving the penalty of sin, which is death. Now, becoming a member of that new race of which Christ, the last Adam, is the head, he shares in the righteousness of Christ, through His act of obedience (Rom. 5: 17-19). Thus God sees each believer "in Christ", sharing with Him in death, burial and resurrection. However, while we remain on earth this is a matter of legal status before God; we still need to reckon ourselves dead to sin (Rom. 6: 11), because sin still remains in our bodily nature. This agrees with the comments made by Birmingham friends.

*P. L. H.*

**3. (Cowdenbeath):** I would agree that Paul's exhortation to "seek the things that are above" is made in view of the fact that we are seen by God as raised and seated with Christ, as Eph. 2: 6 teaches. Baptism, of course indicates a recognition of this fact.

*J. K. D. J.*

**4. (Edinburgh):** Would that there was also unity of doctrine seen in practice among all believers in Christ.

*E. A.*

The unity of **the Church the Body that** our friends **have** previously referred to **is**, of course, an invisible unity. This is **tacitly implied by their** further reference to **an** expression of **that** unity in "**the local church**". This would **be a** visible expression of unity demonstrated in **a** church of God. Believers who are together in **a** church of God display, or should **display**, the characteristics of **the** Body (see 1 Cor. 12: 27).

*J. K. D. J.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**From Liverpool;** It has been said **that a** person **may** become so heavenly-minded that he is of no earthly use. **It it** possible for us to **be** too **far** out of touch with reality?

A person whether rightly or wrongly **may** appear to us to **be** so absorbed in spiritual matters as to overlook practical considerations. **What is** required of **us** ourselves **is** clear. Firstly, setting our **minds** on **things that** are above we are to **be** no longer bound **by** materialism or **by** living according to **the** flesh. Secondly, **the mind** of Christ **is set** before **us as an example** (Phil. 2: 5). **He** knew heaven, and **yet in selfless** devotion **He came** to **seek and** to **save** that which was lost.

*E. A.*

Doubtless it is possible for us to get out of touch with reality, but that is certainly not what the apostle had in mind in his exhortation.

The Lord Jesus was the perfect example of a heavenly minded man, but in the days of His flesh He was very much in touch with the realities of everyday life. Paul, like his Master, put his teaching into practice in his life. A careful perusal of the book of the Acts and of what he reveals of himself in his own letters shows that he was not out of touch with reality. He was very much alive to the problems of his times both as they affected men in general, and as they affected those in the churches of God at that time. The verses that follow provide just one example of wholesome practical instruction relating to the relationships of everyday life.

The hymn writer hinted at what is needed when he wrote of, "A mind to blend with outward life while keeping at Thy side".

*J. K. D. J.*

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# Bible Studies

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## EDITORIAL

8207

"The Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (**Jude 3**) contains teaching that touches upon every aspect of our lives and includes instruction on what are proper God-glorifying attitudes in all the personal relationships that are part of everyday living. By putting into practice the teaching that Paul gives in this portion, which is similar to that given in the closing portion of the Ephesian epistle, we shall be endeavouring to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2: 10).

Our contributors have rightly pointed out that the husband-wife and parent-child relationships are here viewed in the context of the persons referred to being in the Fellowship and all subject to the Lord's authority. In such circumstances the mutual responsibilities laid upon the respective parties should be readily complied with. The exhortation, however, given to servants (slaves) would apply also to Christian slaves who served pagan masters. The concept of service envisaged in v. 23 elevated the service they rendered to a higher plane and assured them that faithful service would not go unrewarded. Their earthly masters might not recompense them for the service they rendered, but their heavenly Master would. The attitude of Christian masters to their servants should be moderated by the realization that they too have a Master in heaven.

The insight that these practical precepts gives into the social order of that day also makes it plain that the primary objective of Christian teaching was not aimed at changing the social order, but rather at bringing about a right relationship between the individual and God. If that basic relationship is right other relationships will fall into place.

*J. K. D. J.*

## ERRATUM

In the last paragraph on page 34, Bible Studies 8203, in the correspondence item "Consequences of the Fall" the word "experiences" in the second line should be "experience". The writer is referring to a point in time in the early life of Paul.

Editors welcome correspondence on scriptural topics, as one of the objectives of the magazine is to provide a forum for the exchange of thoughts on points of difficulty.

## PRECEPTS FOR GODLY CONDUCT (Col. 3: 18 - 4: 6)

**From Birkenhead:** Having pointed out in earlier verses the qualities which should characterize the lives of the saints who were God's elect, Paul addresses to them remarks which, although still directed to the church, are to be observed by those in the appropriate capacity, wives, husbands, children. The principal purpose of this teaching is to instruct them in behaviour befitting those in the churches, but later in the passage the importance of his concern for witness for Christ becomes evident. Having been God-breathed, these instructions become imperatives.

The portion regards them as "in the Lord", and as those who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, this behaviour is fitting. Wives, while in subjection, are not inferior, and adopt a place in accord with God's will. Husbands have a full responsibility towards their wives as summed up in the word "love". Children must render complete obedience to parents, but again "in the Lord", which must rank above worldly considerations. Wisdom in fathers is counselled, bearing in mind the more limited abilities of the children for whom they are responsible.

Outside the family circle the servant must be totally trustworthy towards his master, not only under supervision, but equally so when working on trust. The guidance regarding this instruction is complete when they are told to work "heartily, as unto the Lord". There is a reminder in this passage of the coming reward for service and of the recompense for wrong doing. This will be in a coming day, but we thought also of the possibility of the husbandman dealing with the non-fruitbearer during his lifetime. [Comment 3]

A similar encouragement is given to masters to be fair towards those whom they employ, for in a very real sense they themselves are employed by a heavenly Master.

The key to this behaviour is the knowledge they had of being chosen by God, and of reflecting the love of their Saviour in their own lives. The continual necessity for prayer will provide both a stimulus and a support for the actions, and they were reminded to thank God for His goodness to them.

In their prayers they must remember Paul and Timothy, that they might be given opportunities to preach the gospel despite their bonds and the limitations of their surroundings. Paul uses this as a reminder of their re-

sponsibility to speak of their Saviour in a positive way, but equally to remember in all conversation that they should speak in a manner which is faithful to their Master, and that their words and conduct should be beyond reproach when viewed by those outside the churches.

*R. C. Halpin, R. D. Williams*

**From Birmingham:** Wives are to be in subjection (A. V. submit) to their husbands because the husband is the head of the wife (1 Cor. 11: 3). Headship, which has to do with supremacy, is implied in subjection and subjection has the primary thought of position within, as it were, the hierarchy of God; i. e. God, Christ, man and woman (1 Cor. 11: 3), rather than of commands and obedience, which are implied, for example, in Lordship, although a proper attitude to subjection will be manifest in obedience. The thought of position (rather than of obedience) is implied in the meaning of the original word for submit *hupotasso* (*hupo* under, and *tasso* to arrange in an orderly manner, i. e. assign to a certain position).

To be in subjection, therefore, is to acknowledge our position of being <sup>4</sup>"under" our head, and he as having supremacy over us; in the man's case—Christ (1 Cor. 11: 3), the wife's—her husband (Eph. 5: 23), the sister—the brother (1 Cor. 11: 3), the woman—the man (Gen. 3: 16), which order, we commented, is not generally upheld in society today, and is further exacerbated by law with women being given equal rights in employment under "the equal opportunities law". [Comment 7] Further help is given in understanding the emphasis on position when reference is made to such scriptures as 1 Chron, 29: 11: "thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all", and in Col. 1: 18, "He is the head of the Body, the Church... that in all things He might have the pre-eminence" (be first). Paul writing to Titus (Titus 3: 1) makes a distinction between subjection and obedience, for they not only were to be subject to rulers but obedient too.

Subjection does not mean that there is inferiority in essence or nature. The wife or sister is not inferior and the husband should not lord it over his wife or be "bossy", but he must love his wife as Christ loved the Church, and not be bitter, sharp, or irritate his wife, but be kind and obliging in all things.

Children are to obey their parents in all things, which, although written to Christians, is a principle which should apply in the lives of all children whether saved or not. We thought in the case of a saved child whose parents

were not saved, and who forbade baptism, that it would be permissible with God for the child to be subject until he or she reached the age of independence (Luke 2: 51). [Comment 1]

Fathers are not to take advantage of their children's obligation to obey them, and are not to provoke, that is to excite or stir up their children, so that they become discouraged.

Paul then moves on to guiding principles for slaves in work for their masters, which we can take to ourselves in our various employments. It is not just spiritual service that will be rewarded, but also service well done to our earthly employer if done as unto the Lord. We are not to obey with eye-service, working diligently only when seen by our masters and negligently in their absence, but rather we are to serve with singleness of heart, with sincerity and with no thought of self-seeking, for our work if not rewarded now is noted by God and will be rewarded by Him. Conversely should we wrong or defraud our earthly masters then we can expect to receive again for the wrong done, now or later. The employer also must not take advantage of his employee's obligation to work for him heartily as unto the Lord, but must give or pay what is just and equitable; "the labourer is worthy of his hire".

If our conduct is to be godly then we must persevere in prayer (4: 2), and knowing His commands we walk in wisdom to them without, making the most of every opportunity to do so. Our speech should always be with grace and seasoned with salt which seems to have reference to our speech style or content. It should not be insipid (NEB), i. e. wanting in flavour, lifeless, but should have an "edge of liveliness" which is said to be the ancient expression for conversation which was not dull or insipid. Mr. John Miller says that it is the Word in our conversation by which our speech is wise and pertinent and we know how to answer each one.

*R. Wood*

**From Cowdenbeath:** As in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 so also in Colossians 3, the appeal for holy living is given against the background of the setting forth of profound truth. The instructions given in vv. 3:18 to 4:1 are to those who are "in the Lord". This phrase describes the standing of believers who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ and who have been called into that community of saints which belongs unto Him, the Fellowship of His (God's) Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The use of the words "in the Lord" as found in

1 Cor. 7: 39, 1 Cor. 9: 1, 2, 1 Thes. 5: 12, Phil 2: 29 and Col. 4: 7 clearly show that this is their implied meaning. To such, therefore, the word of the Lord is given to be obeyed in every aspect of their lives.

Each family relationship should be governed by it. Spoken as it is to each one individually it places mutual responsibilities upon those in each relationship. In this day of the lowering of standards the Lord's instructions to husbands and wives remain as stated by Paul. He who created man and woman knows best how they may live harmoniously together. His pattern cannot be improved upon. It is a delight to Him to see in the churches of God women living in subjection to their husbands, to see husbands who on their part love their wives and to see children being obedient to kind considerate parents who discipline wisely. The fact that the children are addressed by Paul (v. 20) indicates that such were in the assembly.

The conditions laid down for slaves and masters apply to employees and employers today. The instructions to the servant apply whether or not his master is a believer. The Christian should be a good, conscientious worker doing his job as if he is working for the Lord from whom, in addition to present remuneration from his earthly master, he shall receive future recompense. Such recompense will be given for service in the present inheritance (Acts 20: 32; 26: 18). On the other hand service of an unrighteous or dishonest nature will meet with due punishment from the Lord, if not now then surely in that future day. [Comment 4]

The word translated masters and master 4: 1 is *kurios*, which is translated "Lord" in previous verses. Although themselves men with authority they must acknowledge the authority of their Lord and so treat their servants with justice and equity.

Prayer is a very important matter in our lives whether in the home or at work or in our dealings with others not numbered with us, whether believers or unbelievers. Paul asked for a place in their prayers. He valued such on his behalf unto the progress of the gospel.

Our speech is a matter of great importance in our witness before the world. Like our Master who always spoke so graciously giving due prominence to the word of God in what he said so also should we strive to be able to speak. It would be better for us all if we gave more thought to our choice of words before speaking and so comply with the advice of

Scripture which says "Be slow to speak" (James 19).

*J. Bowman*

**From Derby:** The portion for study deals with the behaviour of the Colossians, and, by implication, with that of Christians today. There are, however, differences of emphasis between Paul's day and the present time.

The portion divides readily into three sections. From ch. 3: 18 to 21 the subject is private behaviour in the home; from v. 22 to ch. 4:1 public behaviour is considered; from ch. 4: 2-6 spiritual attitudes are pre-eminent.

In the first two sections each relationship is two-sided. It is not simply that there are two groups of people in each case, but in each of the groups the attitude and responsibility of one side to the other differ in character. For example, wives are to display subjection. That is, the husbands are to take the lead in decisions, but they are to regulate their behaviour in love without its opposite bitterness.

Similarly, children are to obey parents. Obedience seems to demand more surrender of self-will than does subjection. Conversely, parents are to use their authority wisely so as to avoid provocation.

Finally, the two-sided relationship of servants and masters makes a much greater demand on Christian restraint in behaviour than do the previous relationships. In our day the relationship of employer and employee is essentially different from that of absolute master and bondservant. Nevertheless, with Christian employers and employees today there is need for each to respect the other and mutually to deal fairly.

In all the above statements of relationship there is the matter of the Lordship of Christ. He is deeply concerned about the behaviour of His disciples. Their day by day behaviour in relation to each other is subject to His approval or disapproval and He does not respect personal position. He certainly is our Master in heaven.

Next, in ch. 4: 2 to 6 there is the instruction for the expression of spiritual life. This is firstly in prayer-life for the blessing it brings to the one who prays and to those for whom he prays.

The final exhortation is to walk in wisdom and grace. Wisdom is the

ability to make good judgements while grace is the expression of an attitude which is acceptable to others who are not like-minded.

*L. E. Foster, N. Bramfitt*

**From Leeds:** The church of God in Colossae were those who **had** been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. They were linked with all those who call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in every place (as 1 Cor. 1: 2). It is such who serve the Lord Christ (Col. 3: 24).

In this section of the epistle we note that the Lordship of Christ is emphasized to those who are in the Lord (v. 18) and to those who would be well-pleasing in the Lord (v. 20), doing whatever they do, "heartily", as unto the Lord (v. 23), "for your labour is not in vain in the Lord", (1 Cor. 15: 58).

Many precepts within the Scriptures of truth have been taken up and used by many people in the world, many of whom have incorporated these precepts into their laws and rules of government. Such precepts provide good basic ground-rules for those who would seek to live lives of godliness and honesty. Although these precepts should apply to all in their daily situations, socially and also domestically, they must apply principally to those who are in the Lord, and in the Fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul writes expressly to those who are (1) wives, (2) husbands, (3) children, (4) fathers, (5) servants and (6) masters, and what he writes to these directly in Colossae he writes similarly to those in the church of God in Ephesus (Eph. 5: 22-25; 6: 1, 4, 5, 9). The subjection of wives to husbands should be viewed as subjection unto the Lord, to the doing of His will (Eph. 5: 22-24), acknowledging the supreme headship and lordship of Christ (1 Cor. 11: 3). Husbands should love their wives remembering that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for *her* (His Bride) (Eph. 5: 25). Children who obey their parents in all things are those who are well-pleasing unto the Lord and such obedience should readily be evidenced by families, parents and children who are in the Lord. Fathers (no instruction is given to mothers) must not be too harsh with their children or expect too much of them, so provoking them to rebellion. [Comment 5]

The word for servants implies those who are bondservants, not just hired servants. As the word of God spread, servants of masters and masters of servants were saved, baptised and added to churches of God. Their relation-

ship to each other in the church would be difficult to relate to that of their domestic situation. Obedience, faithfulness, and a willingness to work should characterize bondservants and not only when their master is watching over them. Of Moses it was said that he was "faithful in all God's house as a servant" (Heb. 3: 5) RVM. Masters should always be just and fair to those who serve them, remembering that they too have a Master in heaven.

Paul had been in prison many times (2 Cor. 11: 23)—he was in prison now. Often he must have longed that the door of his cell would be opened and that he might be set free. He longed that, so being free, he might have liberty to preach the gospel, the gospel that sets free those who are enslaved and bound by sin.

Time is running out for everyone; we must buy up our opportunities of service before our Lord returns.

*H. R. Dodge*

### **From Liverpool:**

#### *Reciprocal Obligations (3: 18-4: 1)*

The ancient world expected wives to be in subjection and children and slaves to be obedient. The novelty in the Lord's teaching is (i) that there are also obligations on husbands, parents and masters and (ii) that those relationships are in themselves a sphere of service to the Lord. Primarily these injunctions apply to those together in churches of God (cf. "in the Lord" and "unto the Lord") who are subject to the Lordship of Christ. The passage is a guide to happy and loving relationships within the Christian family.

God is not a God of disorder, and subjection is part of the divine arrangement. Christ is equal to God, yet subject; the Church is an integral part of Christ as His Body, yet subject; the husband and wife are one in marriage, yet the wife is to be subject. In none of these cases is one inferior to the other.

Strictly the master/slave relationship happily does not apply to us today. However, there are principles to carry over to an employer/employee relationship—(a) faithfulness, (b) industry, (c) honesty and (d) fairness, and we are warned about departing from these principles.

*Speaking to God and Men (4: 2-6)*

There are three principles of prayer here:

- (i) Mutual prayer support: Paul, who always prayed for others, now requested prayer for himself (cf. Eph. 6: 18).
- (ii) Being watchful: When we ask in faith we should also look for the answer and not be like the unstable man of James 1: 6-8.
- (iii) Being thankful: It is sad when we receive our answers from God and neglect to give thanks to Him for them.

What we say is a part of how we behave and how we behave can open up opportunities (see Heb. 13: 2)—we should never "kill" time waiting for opportunities. Our words must be true, not harsh and hurtful. Salt, the seasoning, is the word of God and has two uses.

- (i) To make our speech more palatable - i. e. the tone,
- (ii) To preserve and cleanse - i. e. the content.

*K. T. Jones, D. J. Webster*

**From Melbourne:** This portion, dealing with human relationships, is used to emphasize and illustrate relations which are becoming between members of His Body while still on earth. The believer in Christ, although living on earth, has learned that his citizenship is in heaven, and that judicially he has died with Christ and risen again to walk in newness of life as part of a new creation. Although there is no marriage in heaven, the marriage relationship of God's appointment on earth teaches the fact of the wondrous relationship between Christ and His Church, which He purchased with His blood, and Christ the Head, lover and preserver of His purchase. As Christ is the eternal lover of His Body, He leaves a pattern of that which should exist between husband and wife while on earth in Churches of God. In the marriage union, no bitterness should be seen or exist between husband and wife, and the husband, as head, is responsible to see that none develops between them.

In verses 20-21 we have emphasized the normal relationship which should be seen in a Christian home, even the loving and voluntary obedience of children, first in those early and formative years. In the later years training of children should be seen in the exercise of firmness of love, which will beget respect for parental control in the home, but some times this is

apparent by its absence, and later brings parental sorrow and reproach from them that are without. Parents should not reveal weakness in proper correction, or if needed in chastening, neither should they show harshness and severity in the home.

In verse 22 we have the injunction to servants to obey in all things them that are their masters. This is not the service which is intended for the eye of man, but the obedience towards their Master who is in heaven, and reveals what a master should see in a believing servant and which so often has won masters to Christ—the Master in heaven. This is truly service to the Lord, as from the heart. Steadfastness in prayer indicates a living faith in the God whom we serve; faith in a hearing and omniscient, omnipotent God, knowing that what He has promised He is able to perform. The pattern is this: "Father all things are possible unto thee", and "Father... not My will, but Thine, be done". The apostles believed in the efficacy of prayer. Thanksgiving indicates that if it be His will, the answer is as good as given. It is good to remember that prayer travels faster than light. It can reach the ear of God without delay and can also open what appears to be closed doors, whether the keepers be men or demons. The message can only enter through doors which have been opened through the agency of the Holy Spirit. To the Colossians he gives the exhortations to work heartily as unto the Lord and not to man, and that their conversation and behaviour should commend them to those without, whoever they may be, even to those who have never heard of Him before.

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt". There are those who find it difficult to speak gently, who have been accustomed to speak rather harshly, but if this manner of speaking be heard by persons seeking to know the will of God it is unlikely that those whom we seek to reach will be won. We ought to cultivate gentleness in our speech in daily living, otherwise much of our effort, however earnest, may be lost on those whom we seek to win. Our approach should be in some degree like unto the words of Him who in all His ways was seen to be "meek and lowly in heart".

*D. Mawkinney, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Methil:** In Colossians 3 from verse 18 onwards the apostle Paul gives guidance to the saints in the church of God at Colossae regarding the domestic situation—how their lives should be lived before God and men. He deals with wives, husbands, children and servants and shows them God's

standard for everyday living.

In those days women had no rights and were looked on more or less as chattels, but here Paul shows the husband how he should treat his wife. However, there is no thought of equality of the sexes or of women's liberation, for wives are divinely taught to be in subjection to their husbands, "as is fitting in the Lord". There is, of course, no suggestion that the beautiful spirit of subjection in any way implies inferiority. The Lord Jesus Himself was subject to His Father while He was on earth, and in a future day will again subject Himself to His God and Father.

Subjection makes for order and godly rule. God's order prevents broken homes. Husbands are to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the Church" (Eph. 5: 25). Children are to obey their parents in all things, knowing that this is well-pleasing in the Lord. We agreed that these children are in the house of God. They are to be obedient to their parents in all things, many felt, so long as the parents' demands on them do not contravene the known will of God. Children will be discouraged if a father is over-strict, and so fathers should be sensitive to the needs of their offspring, although today there is a greater tendency to too much leniency. A word of praise or encouragement from a godly father to his children can help in the matter of obedience.

Servants are to be obedient to their earthly masters—in today's terms employees are to obey employers. They are expected to serve in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord, realizing that as they diligently serve their employers they are, in fact, serving the Lord Christ, and as a result of this will, in due course, receive the recompense. If, on the other hand, they fail to do this they will receive again for the wrong that they have done. God is no respecter of persons, and so we cannot live as we like and expect to get away with it. Masters too are responsible to be scrupulously fair in all their dealings, knowing that the Lord sees and knows all things and He is their heavenly Master.

"The Lord" is mentioned six times in these nine verses showing how closely the Lord's will should regulate the daily lives of those in churches of God and that we have a responsibility to God and to each other. These precepts are moral rules for those who are "in the Lord". When we do everything "as unto the Lord", the daily round is no drudgery. It is good when we do things that are "fitting in the Lord" (v. 18), "well pleasing in

the Lord", (v. 20), "fearing the Lord", (v. 22), "as unto the Lord", (v. 23), knowing that we serve the Lord Christ.

Wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants and masters, all are to continue steadfastly in prayer. We are to keep alert and pray. Paul requested prayer for himself and others that God would open unto them a door for the preaching of the gospel, and that they would be given wisdom to preach as they ought to preach. Each one is to redeem the time—how precious is each moment that God gives us to use wisely.

*N. Coomer*

**From Nottingham:** As the apostle reaches the end of his letter he presents to the saints, in common with other epistles, various practical instructions for daily living. Those contained in chapter 3:18 to 4:1 may have particular reference to the domestic sphere, but clearly the principles involved apply too to assembly life.

It is difficult to understand why those who divided the Scriptures into chapters should place the division between chapters 3 and 4 where it is. Verse 1 of chapter 4 closely relates to the last verse of chapter 3. The division would have been more appropriate at either verse 2 or verse 7 of chapter 4. The apostle's letters would be read as a whole and in our reading and study we need to avoid being tied to chapters, but concentrate on the theme of passages as led by the Spirit.

The precepts contained in chapter 3:18 to 4:1 are well balanced. We have wives mentioned, then husbands; children, then fathers; bondservants, then masters. Thus we have presented the truth of mutual responsibility, or, as one has put it, reciprocal responsibility. It is important to remember that there is a corresponding attitude to the submission of a wife, that is, the love of a husband. Similarly we have not only the obedience of children, but also the wise handling of them by their father. There is the same balance in respect of the bondservant and the master.

If we consider the background of world custom at the time when the epistle was written, we shall realize something of the impact these injunctions would have upon the saints. In the Grecian empire, the effect of which was still felt at that time, wives were given a very inferior place. While husbands could live as loosely as they liked, wives were expected to give complete servitude and chastity. The menfolk thought of their wives as nothing more

than those who were to minister to **their needs**, meet their **desires and bring up** their children. The men were virtual dictators. This was not **the type** of subjection for which **the** apostle calls **in his** exhortation. The common **attitude** was a one-sided affair; Christian subjection was complemented with **the** love of **the husband** and a lack of bitterness on his part. **Such** a situation would **be** a new concept to most wives of **the** time.

There was **much the same** situation with children. Under Roman law a father could do **as he** liked with his children, even to selling **them** into slavery or condemning **his** child to **death**. How different was to **be the** parent - child relationship of those who knew **the** Saviour and acknowledged Him as Lord! The phrase "in **the** Lord" is repeated. Worldly or national customs **must** give place to **the** will of **the** Lord. Bondservants were to work for their masters, not as men-pleasers, **but as** unto **the** Lord. Masters were to render to **them that** which was **just** and equal. The word here means with **equity** or fairness. They were still masters and **the** others bondservants, **but they** were no longer to **be** considered **as** things or tools to **be** ill-treated **at** will and discarded at any time.

The bondservants were to obey their masters according to **the** flesh in all things, and **the** question arises **as** to what **attitude they** should **take** if called upon to **say** or do something displeasing to **the** Lord. This arises, too, in **the** case of **the** obedience of children to parents. **It** is thought **that** under **such** circumstances **the** principle of **Acts 5: 29** would have to **be applied**, although with **much** wisdom.

The apostle exhorts **the** saints to continue in watchful prayer **and the passage** closes with a reference to **speech**. This **is** a wonderful faculty **given** to mankind; **it is the** vehicle **by** which we express **the** thoughts of our minds. **But** what **damage** can **be** done through thoughtless or **unkind** words! Our speech **is** to **be** seasoned with salt. Salt can **be used** **as** a preservative and some of our **speech** should **be** of **the** quality which will help to **stem the tide** of lawlessness **that** abounds. Our talk should **be** of a refining, not a degrading, nature. Salt seasons food and our **speech**, too, should **be that** which **has** a savouring effect. **If** it is **based** on **the** word of God **it** will contain **that** which will **be** profitable and upbuilding to men.

*R. Hickling*

**From Vancouver:** As Paul draws near to **the** close of his letter to **the** saints in Colossae, **he** diverts **his message** to family life and **seeks** to **give** guidance.

**We note that he gives the same message in Eph. 5: 22 and 1 Peter 3: 1 and commences with guidance to the wives. The prime topic is subjection to their husbands. The trend in the present day is that women claim equal rights with men. [Comment 8] The fact that Paul emphasizes subjection may indicate that there were problems in that day as well. Paul exhorts the husbands to love their wives and be not bitter against them. The words in Eph. 5: 28, 29 "that husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies" and "He that loveth his own wife and loveth himself", are very powerful. The message to the children to obey their parents is also greatly needed in this present day. It seems that fathers were very hard on their children, so much so that they were discouraged.**

**As for servants and masters, we note Paul is referring to slaves and their lords. In the western world today circumstances are the very opposite and most employees are well protected. [Comment 9] We who are the Lord's need to be very faithful and obedient to earthly masters. We note that verse 25 is related to the servants of verse 22. [Comment 6] If we as Christians do what is wrong and know forgiveness we will not receive the wrong again. However, if we do what is wrong and do not know forgiveness we may meet the wrong at the Judgement Seat.**

**When the letter to Colossae was written Paul was in prison in Rome, but his heart's desire was that nothing would happen that would prevent the gospel from being preached and he exhorted the saints to pray earnestly. In Rev. 3: 8 we note that the assembly in Philadelphia had a door opened which none could shut. No doubt this would also be Paul's prayer.**

**Regarding Paul's being in prison, we learn from 2 Tim. 4:16 that no one took his part at his first trial and all forsook him. But the Lord stood by him. It indicates that Paul was free for a short time before he was put to death. [Comment 2].**

*7. Bell*

## COMMENTS

1. (Birmingham): **The issue is perhaps** more complex than our **friends suggest**. In circumstances **in** which a conflict of loyalties **emerges** the principle of subjection to **the higher** authority applies (Acts 5: 29). This point **is** touched upon **in the** Nottingham and Methil papers. Wisdom **must** be exercised, however, **in putting this** principle into practice. **There are** lessons to be learned from the **wise way in** which Daniel secured a dispensation **in** respect of the **king's** provision for himself and his companions (Dan. 1: 8-16).
  2. (Vancouver): **There are** difficulties **in** accounting for **the** apostle **Paul's** movements **after his** arrival **in** Rome, **as** recorded **in the** book of **the** Acts. **It is** a widely held **view**, however, **that the** two-years house imprisonment referred to **at the** close of **the** record **given in the** book of **the** Acts (Acts 28: 30) ended **with** Paul's acquittal and release. **Thereafter it is** thought that **he** continued **his** labours for **a few** years before **he was** again **arrested** and subsequently imprisoned in Rome. **The** little scriptural evidence **that we have** for **this** theory **is** provided by **the** historical facts mentioned **in the** epistles to Timothy **and** Titus. These references cannot be satisfactorily correlated **with any** portion of **his** life before or **during his** first imprisonment **in** Rome. **This** second imprisonment, which **was** more rigorous **than the** first, ended **with his** martyrdom. **The** reference **in 2 Tim** 4:16 would presumably relate to **the** first stage of **his** trial during **that** second imprisonment.
  3. (Birkenhead): **The** principal thought **here is**, of course, **that** of **reward** or loss of **reward** **at the** Judgement Seat of Christ — **a** future experience. **The** **servant/master** relationship **is** therefore most appropriate **in this** context **as** Colossians **4: 1** indicates. **It is** also **true that, in the** present, God deals **with us "as with** sons" and **may** chasten **us** for our ultimate good and blessing (Heb. 12: 5-11).
  4. (Cowdenbeath): One wonders **if it is** appropriate to **speak** of "**Punishment**" **in** relation to **the** Judgement Seat of Christ. **The** scriptural references **speak** of "reward" or "loss", "praise" and, presumably, lack of praise (1 Cor. 3: 14, **15**; 4: 5).
  5. (Leeds): **The** omission noted **is in** keeping with **the** principle **that the** man **is the** head **in the** home and primarily responsible for **maintaining** godly rule and discipline **in the** family circle.
  6. (Several Papers): Contributors **have** rightly made **the** point **that** subjection does not, necessarily, imply inferiority on **the** part of **the** subject one, and **they have** also pointed out that **a** distinction should be **made** between subjection **and** obedience. **These are** points **that** could be expanded to profit.
- J. K. D. J.*
7. (Birmingham): Proverbs 31:10-31 and Acts 16:14-15 show **that** women **have** an acceptable place **in the** world of commerce. **As** such **the** principles of **equity** embodied **in** such Scriptures **as** Col. **3: 22** -4: 1 and Ephes. **6: 5-9** are equally applicable **whether** women **are** employees or employers. **There** can be little doubt **that** women **have been** exploited over **the** years by **the** failure to follow **the** guidance of **these** principles. Furthermore, **in the** United Kingdom (and **in** other countries, too) **it is** now illegal to discriminate **against** women **in the** matter of employment. Therefore for **a** disciple to do so would **be** a transgression of **the** Lord's command **as given in** Romans 13: 1-7.

8. (**Vancouver**): It is worth pointing out that this sentence of friends in Vancouver is in the context of marriage. It is, of course, wrong to imply that women should not possess equal rights in anything. A woman is to be subject to her own husband, but not to everybody else's. It has been well said "the headship of the man and the subjection of the woman does not imply any inferiority on the part of the woman. She is equal to the man in essence and nature. She is also equal in Christ Jesus, in whom there can be neither male nor female (Gal. 3: 28). But both in God's assembly and in the domestic sphere the man (*Aner*, a man, a male person of full age and stature, as opposed to a child or female) is the head of the woman and the husband of the wife. The Head of every man (*Aner*) is Christ, and the Head of Christ is God" (*Bible Studies* 1961, vol. 29, p. 147)

9. (Vancouver): It is true that slavery has been abolished, in name at least, in most countries of the world. It is a moot point, however, that in the western world today most employees are well protected. It would appear, for example, that female labour is not and it is a matter of common observation that mistrust to a large extent governs employer and employee relationships in the United Kingdom at least. It is not our place to take sides in such matters, but the Scriptures under consideration have some bearing on these things in a way that is not often noticed. Friends in Nottingham have brought out the point of mutual or reciprocal responsibility and balance in the divine instructions governing the various bonded relationships of husbands and wives, fathers and children, bondservants and masters or Lords. It is worth pointing out that, in addition to this, God requires a higher standard of the more privileged person in the bond. Thus it is a higher requirement, indeed the highest, for a husband to love his wife "as Christ loved the Church" than it is for a wife to be in subjection to her husband. Again, it is a higher standard (see Matt. 7: 11) that is required of the father in discerning the heart and the limits of the self-control of his child than it is for the child to be obedient. Again, it would be a brave employer who would claim that he treats his employees as well as the Lord in Heaven (Col. 4: 1) treats His servants. Here is the highest of standards and much harder to fulfil than that required of the obedient servant. We have here a practical application of the Lord's teaching which culminated in the words "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12: 48).

*I. E. P.*

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# Bible Studies

A magazine for (he exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17:11])

EDITORIAL

8208

The portion of Scripture which study groups have examined for this month's issue is one which we might be inclined to regard as rather light-weight. We study with interest scriptures which expound the great doctrines of the Faith and enjoy their clarification and systematization in our minds. By contrast, a list of greetings and commendations seems to contain little of principle; yet there must be a purpose in the inclusion of such things in the inspired writings. They would naturally be included in a letter to a church, but there are also general spiritual lessons to be drawn from them, quite apart from knowledge about the individual men.

The individuals mentioned came from a wide variety of backgrounds; Tychicus, Onesimus and Epaphras from Asia, Aristarchus from Macedonia, Luke probably from Antioch, Mark from Jerusalem; some were Jews, some Gentiles; their social status ranged from doctor to slave; yet they all combined together in the service of Christ, their differences submerged by the common cause. This is an abiding example for us. This issue contains contributions from Canada, Australia and the British Isles, and the Fellowship of churches in which it circulates extends to India, Burma, Nigeria, the United States and New Zealand as well. We can sometimes see national characteristics quite clearly in the points of view which are expressed, but they must never be allowed to injure the essential unity of the work. One of the functions of this magazine is to be a forum in which we can learn from each other and so promote unity of teaching.

Contrasted with, yet arising from, the unity of the work is the duty of each individual. Those mentioned in Col. 4 each worked for the "building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12) in his own individual way; Tychicus travelling far and wide, Epaphras striving in prayer, Luke looking after Paul. Archippus was not employing his gift to the full and needed to be exhorted to use it. Scripture tells us that "to each one is given a manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal" (1 Cor. 12:7), and we each have a responsibility to discern our gift (or let others do so) and to use it to the glory of God. No believer is without some spiritual gift and if it is permitted to be dormant the work of God is diminished.

*P. L. H.*

## THE WORLD AND THE BELIEVER (Part 1)

Perhaps one of the most insistent images that the biblical writers give us of the normal Christian life is that of a struggle, a fight. The opposition is described bluntly as "the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6: 12). Believing this and being conscious of its relevance to our everyday lives are often, however, two different things.

Perhaps the essence of our humanity lies in our power to choose. Our choices, moreover, are never made in a moral vacuum. Whether we are conscious of it or not, each of us is continually being exposed to all sorts of (often subtle) moral and spiritual influences both in and around us, whether for good or for ill. This is the reality of spiritual conflict — a reality that escapes no-one, but which for the Christian is particularly sharply defined (cf. Rom. 7: 18-23). *The world* is a term commonly used in the Scriptures to describe just one of the influences that contribute to this conflict and which act to draw us away from God.

It is a familiar term that has traditionally formed part and parcel of every Christian's vocabulary, but what does it really mean? Of the several Greek words that are translated as "the world" in New Testament usage, that most commonly found, *kosmos*, is used in at least three very distinct senses. As a result it is not always straight-forward to determine the primary inference from the context.

*Kosmos* essentially describes an ordered system or arrangement. At its simplest it is used to describe the material world—the divinely ordered system of Creation (Rom. 1: 20). At an individual level it is sometimes used to denote the extent of a man's possessions. Hence the Lord's words — "What shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world (*Gk. kosmos*), yet forfeit his soul?" (Mat. 16: 26 RVM). In the second place, as a natural extension of this, it is used of the inhabitants of the material world—the human race. This is surely the force behind the familiar text of John 3: 16. "God so loved the world (*Gk. kosmos*), that He gave his only begotten Son...." Finally, it is used to denote the corporate expression of man's rebellious and self-seeking nature—a *kosmos* whose creatures are at odds with their Creator and is so "fallen" (cf. Rom. 1: 21). All systems of belief, structures of government, and standards of conduct that are established in defiance of God's will are collectively viewed as "the kingdom of the world" (Rev. 11. 15). It is only really in this latter usage that the word *kosmos* begins clearly to assume a moral content.

In many passages (such as John 17 for example) these distinctions are found together, especially that between the human race and the state of human affairs in opposition to God, since the two are so obviously closely identified. A contrast of usage may be further found in the Apostle John's writings. John 3: 16 gives a picture of the Messiah who assures men that the extent of God's love for *the world* is seen in the sending of His own Son. And yet John's First Epistle is second to none in its vigorous condemnation of love for "the world" or "things in the world". "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2: 15). Are we then not to love what God loved so much? Clearly the Apostle understood *the world* to refer in these instances to two very distinct entities.

It is interesting to note the Apostle's dual condemnation not only of "the world", but also of "things in the world". To what does he refer? One might at first suppose that these are material things—food, clothing, possessions perhaps. But his qualification in the following verse seems to indicate differently:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 John 2: 16)

The object of John's condemnation appears to be the abuse and misuse of material things rather than the things themselves. This spirit of abuse comes from the world and thus exemplifies an attitude of worldliness.

Behind every system of human affairs there lies an "ethic", an inherent philosophy, if you will. The world's ethic is variously described in the New Testament as "the spirit of the world" (1 Cor. 2: 12), "the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor. 1: 20), "the rudiments of the world" (Gal. 4: 3; Col. 2: 28). Worldliness is thus essentially a spiritual reality—one which is rooted in our attitudes and beliefs. It is, quite simply, an anti-God state of mind. It is vital that we understand this if we are to be at all effective in keeping ourselves "unspotted by the world" (James 1: 27). Whatever else this may involve, *this is first and foremost a battle for the mind* [Comment 1].

Perhaps one of the most insidious forms of worldliness is that of falling into the trap of judging both ourselves and others by external appearances—of simply equating spirituality with being seen to be saintly. We must face the fact that we are just as vulnerable to thinking in wordly terms when engaged in overtly "Christian" activities as at any other time. Indeed, perhaps even more so. This conscious rejection of the world's priorities and values is thus as necessary in our church life as it is in our

family **life**, work life, **and** leisure time.

**In conclusion, it is important to recognize the distinction between morally neutral usage, as in the case of the physical world or the human race, and the "bad" sense of the word as it is used of the embodiment of all that is opposed to the purposes of God. It is true of course that the physical world is under a curse (Gen. 3: 17) and in bondage of corruption (Rom. 8: 21), but it is also true that the character of God is still abundantly evident in His handiwork (cf. Ps. 8, Ps. 19: 1-6) and we as God's children ought to have a greater appreciation of this than anyone. It is God Himself who gives us "richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6: 17) [Comment 2]. That this embraces both physical and spiritual enrichment is surely self-evident. "That every man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labour, is the gift of God" (Eccles. 3: 13). It remains to point out, however, that this legitimacy of the many God-given pleasures that the physical world has to offer us is tempered by the reminder that we are to "use the world as not abusing it" (1 Cor. 7: 31).**

*G. Elson*

**Comment 1: "Worldliness" is simply being like the world. It is not necessarily a state of mind. It is a habit. It may, for example, be acquired through copying without thought the behaviour of sinners. Since worldliness afflicts believers it would not be accurate to call it an "anti-God state of mind". It might be better to say that worldliness stems from an anti-cross of Christ state of mind (Phil. 3: 17-20).**

**Comment 2: The point of 1 Tim. 6: 17 is not that God has given all things for our enjoyment. It is that all the things which God has given for our enjoyment He has given richly or in abundance.**

*I. E. P.*

## **FELLOW-WORKERS (Col. 4: 7-18)**

**From Birkenhead:** As Paul draws to a close this letter to the saints in Colossae he is at pains to assure them of the concern of all his associates for them. Some will be the means by which the church learns of Paul's thoughts and concern for them.

There seems to be a dual purpose in the recitation of names by Paul. He firstly wishes to remind them that they are not isolated, but are the subject of prayerful concern by others. Additionally Paul would have realized how the Colossian saints would have a concern for him. By this means, therefore, he is able to give assurance both that he is cared for and that the work of God is continuing, despite his own imprisonment.

Paul has something different to say about each. Tychicus is faithful to the Lord, beloved of Paul and a fellow-servant with the Colossians; he with Onesimus will bring news and comfort. Others include men who have failed God in the past and their failure has been recorded in Scripture, but Paul does not allude to this but praises them showing forgiveness and the desire for unity among the saints. As if to underline his concern for unity he mentions the fact that some of his brethren are Jews.

Epaphras, who evidently came from Colossae, had an ever present concern for this church, striving for them in prayer that they might aspire to the worthy estate of standing perfect and fully assured in all the will of God, a delicate reminder of the direction their lives should take. The mention of "beloved" Luke's profession suggests that he may have been caring for Paul's medical needs during his imprisonment. We noted the absence of comment by Paul on Demas and it may be that those faults which are mentioned in the letter to Timothy were clearly becoming apparent in his life.

The importance of common striving and teaching is apparent from the instruction regarding the interchange of these letters between churches, the implication being that all are subject to the same Lord and the same spiritual government.

A word of greeting to the church in Laodicea and the company meeting in the house of Nymphas, and of help and encouragement to Archippus to fulfil responsibility which he had given to, bring the letter to a close.

Paul's final words, "Remember my bonds", must be designed to alert the

Colossians to the danger from the world, as well as to remind them of the necessity for prayer which he exercises towards them in his closing salutation.

*R. C. Halpin, G. H. Roberts*

**From Cowdenbeath:** Paul held in very high esteem the men with whom he was associated in the service of his Master. He loved those brethren (vv. 7, 9, 14). Verses 7-9 are really a letter of commendation regarding Tychicus and Onesimus whom Paul sent to Colossae presumably with his letter to the church. A possible future visit by Mark is also anticipated (v. 10). An alternative meaning to the words "if he come unto you" could perhaps be, that, at the time of writing, it had not been decided whether or not Mark would accompany the other two brethren.

To receive such a letter from the great apostle with his own salutation appended in his own handwriting was surely something to be valued, but to have had it brought to them by a man of such standing as Tychicus was an additional blessing. He would be able not only to report to them regarding Paul's welfare, but would be available to explain to them those parts of his letter they found difficult to understand. Tychicus is described as a faithful minister (*Gk. diakonos*) and as a fellow-servant (*Gk. syndoulos*). The former describes the man in relation to his work and the latter in relation to his Master (Vine).

The eight brethren whose names are mentioned may be viewed as being in three groups. Firstly, Tychicus and Onesimus who were sent to Colossae. Of the remaining six, three (Aristarchus, Mark and Justus) were Jews and the other three (Epaphras, Luke and Demas) were Gentiles. The distinction of being "these only" would refer to the three circumcised brethren as being the only Jews in Rome who were fellow-workers with Paul unto the kingdom. He pays those brethren the high tribute of having been a comfort

to him. This is the only occurrence of the word *paregoria*. It denotes a soothing, a solace. A verbal form of the word signifies medicines which allay irritation (Vine). How pertinent in Paul's case!

Of both Epaphras and Onesimus it is stated "who is one of you". Epaphras belonged to the church in Colossae and had gone to Rome. Onesimus was brought to Christ as a result of meeting Paul in Rome. In all likelihood he would be received into the church in Rome and did not become one of the Colossian church until he arrived and the letter was read. In his case the letter would be one of transfer as well as commendation.

This epistle, like others which Paul wrote, although initially for the benefit of the Colossians, was not to be considered their exclusive possession. What he wrote to certain churches became available to all and was recognized by Peter and the churches as "scriptures" (2 Pet. 3: 15, 16). This was the divinely appointed way in which the truths the apostles taught were not only disseminated throughout the churches of those early days, but the way also by which they were to be preserved in their purity for future generations.

*J. Bowman*

**From Derby:** The portion for study is an epilogue to **the** letter **and** is personal as distinct from doctrinal. The long list of friends **and** fellow-workers can be augmented from the other epistles. This is seen very clearly in Rom. 16: 1-23.

People are described as fellows when they have a similarity in character and are associated with each other in a common interest. There are three uses of the word "fellow" in the scripture considered. Tychicus is **described** as a fellow-servant in the Lord. He is more. He is beloved and faithful **and**

is the bearer of the letter from Rome to Colossae. He is associated with Onesimus who, again faithful and beloved, shares in that task. Next there are fellow-prisoners. Only Aristarchus is so described in this epilogue; but in Philem. 23, Epaphras is also so described. The third use of the word "fellow" is in Col. 4: 11 where Mark the cousin of Barnabas and Jesus called Justus are described as fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. Barnabas is only indirectly mentioned here, but he was unquestionably a fellow-worker with Paul and almost certainly his first fellow-worker [Comment 1].

Barnabas met the converted Paul in Jerusalem and sponsored him when others were uncertain (Acts 9: 27). Later he sought Paul at Tarsus and brought him to Antioch (Acts 11: 25, 26). They were fellow-workers there for a year and those who received the teaching were the first to be called Christians. After this they were jointly commissioned as missionaries. They had John as their attendant (Acts 13: 5). At this time John had not the strength for the task and he left them and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13: 13). They completed their first missionary journey and later (Acts 15: 36-39) were to start a new journey, but there was sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas over John (also called Mark).

Paul was the writer of 1 Cor. 13, but he could not bend where principle was involved. There was division. This was unfortunate, but Paul with Silas and Barnabas with Mark worked for the establishment of the kingdom of God.

Return now to Col. 4 and Paul is a prisoner in Rome where Aristarchus is a fellow-prisoner. How Aristarchus became a prisoner is not revealed, but he was with Paul before they were in Rome. Acts 16: 9 tells of Paul's vision of a man of Macedonia, and Acts 27: 2 shows Aristarchus, a Macedonian, with Paul on the ship on the journey towards Rome. There were many prisoners besides Paul on that ship and Aristarchus may have been already a prisoner.

In Rome, but not as a prisoner, is Mark (Col. 4: 10). This verse reveals that there had already been communication between Paul and the Colossians about Mark. These were in the nature of commandments and perhaps they were not favourable to Mark. However, there is now a clear instruction that Mark is to be received. Paul has forgiven Mark in respect of his earlier shortcomings. He is linked with Aristarchus and Jesus Justus as a source of comfort to Paul.

The message to Archippus (v. 17) is a blend of gentle rebuke and encouragement which has its value for today.

Finally, v. 18 appears to be the only part of the letter in Paul's own handwriting. It has only two points. He wants their thoughtfulness for him in his trying circumstances and he wishes for them the gracious dealing of God.

TV. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway

**From Liverpool:** *Descriptions:* Paul, who was never guilty of giving false impressions of those he described, begins to list his fellow-workers in Rome. Tychicus was a brother because they both belonged to Christ and is described as a faithful minister, which would be true of one who was a messenger (Acts 20: 4) and a fellow-servant. Onesimus, who had fled from his master Philemon and had come to Rome and, through Paul's influence, to Christ (Philem. 10), was another one whom Paul highly recommends (see Philem. 13). These two whom Paul would have longed to keep with him he sends back to Colossae to report on events in Rome. Just as Paul is paving the way for Onesimus' acceptance, so he also clears Mark's name and instructs that he should be made welcome. This shows the importance of not labelling someone for life because of a past failing (see Acts 15: 38). The contrast in the way Paul speaks of Luke and Demas is significant; the former having, perhaps, given up a lucrative career to tend to Paul and his needs, the latter heading towards spiritual bankruptcy (see 2 Tim. 4: 10). All these people were prepared to identify themselves with Paul, a prisoner, which was a dangerous thing to do!

*Paul's attitude:* Paul was not despondent, having learned to be content in all situations (Phil. 4: 12-13). His was an active acceptance of the will of God for him, and so he pursued his course in his present position.

*Epaphras's prayer life:* Epaphras was perhaps a **full-time ministering** brother from Colossae/Hierapolis/Laodicea. His prayer life is an **example** to us all. "Wrestling" (NIV) emphasizes his concern for his own people. His was no "God bless the Colossians" type prayer—but rather he is asking for their growth to full spiritual maturity. We assumed that he came **and** spent time with Paul engaged in earnest prayer.

*Paul's need of fellowship:* Paul who had a great intellect, was one of the most gifted of the apostles and deeply bound to Christ, loved and needed the fellowship of brothers and sisters. There is a lesson here for us who are less gifted!

*The Laodicean letter:* There is no letter to Laodicea in the New Testament. It has been suggested that the letter in question is actually Ephesians, the words "in Ephesus" in Eph. 1:1 being omitted from some versions, and that it was a circular letter which was by now due to leave Laodicea and reach Colossae. We did not discount the possibility of a separate letter to Laodicea which has not been preserved.

*K. T. Jones, D. J. Webster*

**From Melbourne:** The circumstances under which this epistle was **written** were very restricted as has been the case with many servants of the Lord in many lands and at many times, but raised up to encourage them have been those who have rightly been called "fellow-servants" and "fellow-workers". Had Paul looked upon his immediate surroundings of a Roman prison, there was little to encourage, but the apostle looked upon all circumstances as opportunities under which the Gospel could be proclaimed and the kingdom of God extended. His limbs they hurt with fetters, but his tongue and pen were active in proclaiming "the unsearchable riches of Christ" **and** the claims of Him whom God had made both Lord and Christ. In such circumstances as he found himself, were found opportunities to tell forth

that which had been committed unto him. He rejoiced that he was sharing in the sufferings of Christ "for His body's sake, which is the Church"; and with him also were men who had heard and believed the message which he had proclaimed, and now as fellow-workers, whether in or out of prison, were engaged in giving him comfort, as they too spoke to others of Christ. In such fellow-workers he rejoiced, even although some of them were prisoners by the authority of the Roman State. He rejoiced not only in the bonds which bound together all who through grace had been made one in Christ and in the Lord, but also in the physical bonds which they wore for Christ's sake; such were friends indeed, and he rejoiced that he could call them "fellow-workers".

It is interesting to note some of the persons named. "Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you". From Acts 19: 29 we learn that Aristarchus and Gaius were arrested in Ephesus [Comment 2], but what prayer and thanksgiving, even if not audibly, would have ascended from that Roman prison. It is encouraging, too, to read of Mark, whom we judge is the one of whom the writer of the Acts had to say "who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work" at a time when Paul and Barnabas had need of a "fellow-worker". But it would appear that he had regained the confidence of Paul. It is generally believed that he was the writer of the Gospel bearing his name? [yes-Eds. ] The mention of Justus, who was evidently of Jewish origin is a reminder of the triumphs of grace among some of the people of Israel. Epaphras was evidently a man who gave himself to prayer, and the word used in this portion is one that conveys the thought of "striving or wrestling" with God on behalf of the Colossians. How much do we "wrestle" with God on behalf of others? How much do servants of the Lord owe to saints who are exercised thus; and how much do servants of the Lord owe to saints who are exercised thus; and how much do we, either individually or collectively, owe to others who have thus upheld us before God? How much depends upon our reaching the ear of the Eternal God? Those who spend time in prayer are indeed "fellow-workers", whether they are seen or not. To be on the knees in private, or on the knees and feet in public, or whether to be unable to do neither because of infirmity, a saint of God can be encouraged by the fact that he or she has access to the ear of God in intercession through the One who bare our guilt and shame. Let us be reminded and encouraged that thus we can be "fellow-workers" with those who labour publicly in proclaiming the word of God, even when "languor and decay invade this house of clay". Luke the physician had doubtless been using his medical knowledge among the saints.

"Demas saluteth you". We would be interested to have the opinion of others as to whether it can be said that a little later Paul was disappointed in Demas (2 Tim. 4: 10) [Comment 3].

We note the desire that is revealed in Nymphas by the offering of the home for gatherings of the saints. Archippus is exhorted to "take heed to the ministry which thou has received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it". Some have been entrusted with a "gift of the Spirit" and are responsible to use it. What the gift was which was given to Archippus we are not told, but we do know that whether it be one or five, what we are given we are responsible to use. It is "use it or lose it"; see the parable of the talent in Matthew 25 and of the pound in Luke 17.

*A. E. Edwards, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Nottingham:** In this, the last part of Colossians, Paul finally greets and sends messages to some of his fellow-workers for the kingdom of God. He starts with Tychicus who remained with Paul to almost the end of his ministry, and was faithful and highly commended. He was previously sent to Ephesus, but was now in Colossae, sent to inform the Colossians of Paul's circumstances in Rome and to encourage their hearts. With him was the reformed Onesimus who was the runaway slave of Philemon, but since meeting Paul in prison his character had changed and he is described as the faithful and beloved brother and "one of you" [Comment 4]. The two together would inform the church in Colossae of the happenings in Rome.

Aristarchus is next mentioned, who was a fellow-prisoner of Paul in Rome, and he sent his greetings to the Colossians with Mark, generally presumed to be John Mark, who was taken away by his cousin Barnabas to Cyprus, but whose past life was now forgotten. It is interesting to see the similarities between himself and Onesimus. They were both forgiven their past deeds, although we see instructions from Paul that Mark is to be well treated should he visit Colossae, as if they still remembered and held a

grudge against him. The mentioning of Justus completes the group of circumcised Jewish Christians and Paul commends them because many Jewish Christians were opposed to his teachings, but as Paul said, they "have been a comfort to me" (Col. 4: 11).

Epaphras, who was the faithful minister on behalf of Paul in Colossae, sent his greetings to the Colossians and remembered, even wrestled for them, in his prayers that they might stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. This is a similar thought to ch. 1: 28 "that we may present every man perfect (mature) in Christ".

The group of churches (Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis) must have been very close and Paul says that Epaphras laboured for them. This word laboured is used to describe a type of labour connected with warfare (Num. 8:24), and could possibly have been used to describe the way in which Epaphras prayed in the presence of God for those away from him. This is seeking the face of God inside the sanctuary for those outside (Numbers 8: 19).

There is a great difference in character between the next two mentioned—Luke the doctor and Demas: Luke who looked after Paul until the end and Demas who deserted Paul because of his love of the world (2 Tim. 4: 10, 11).

Greetings are given to the brothers in Laodicea and to Nympha(s) and the church which met in her (his) house, and then a note is given by Paul to ensure that the letter would be exchanged with his letter to Laodicea. Although we are not sure what this letter was, it does show that letters were exchanged between churches and that there must have been an amount of universal teaching in the Churches even then [Comment 5].

Archippus is to be told to fulfil the ministry which he received in the Lord. This would seem to be some sort of specific duty rather than a general work which he received from the Lord [Comment 6].

Finally, Paul signs the letter in his own writing which presumably showed signs of his fetters, which he mentions next, not for sympathy, but that the Colossians would remember the reason for them (the mystery of Christ, Col. 4: 3). He ends with his customary greeting, "Grace be with you".

*T. Elson*

**From Vancouver:** Paul was in prison in Rome when both the letters to Philemon and Colossae were written. Paul mentions Epaphras in verse 12, whom he refers to as "one of you". It has been stated that he was instrumental in the planting of the assembly in Colossae. We note in chapter 2: 1 Paul states that many in the assembly had never seen Paul face to face. How significant that Paul and Epaphras are now in prison together. Truly fellow-servants for the Lord.

From verse 7 we gather that it was Tychicus that carried the letter to Colossae and he would be able to give them first-hand information as to the condition Paul was in. Verse 9 states that Tychicus was not alone, for Onesimus was with him carrying Paul's letter to Philemon.

It would seem from Acts 19: 29; 20: 4 that Aristarchus was from Macedonia. We gather that Mark, Barnabas and Justus were Jews who had been a comfort to Paul. It was Mark who turned back from Paul and Barnabas. Here we find that Mark was a fellow-worker with Paul. Many of us make mistakes and lose confidence, but by the grace of God we can be restored. This was true of Mark. However, we read of Demas, who when things were difficult (2 Tim 4: 10) forsook Paul. May this be a voice to us all and may we stand firm for the Lord. As we have said, Mark was restored but not Demas.

The words "Only Luke is with me" indicate it may be that Luke, being a doctor, would be the only one allowed in the prison to care for Paul.

**7. Bell**

## COMMENTS

**1. (Derby):** It is interesting to note that in each of these cases there is no separate word for "fellow" in the Greek, but a compound word is formed by the addition of the preposition *syn* as a prefix to the relevant noun or verb. Used by itself, the word means "with" or "together with", and as a prefix it similarly implies joint status or action. Used with a noun it can be

translated joint—e. g. Rom. 8: 17—"joint heirs with Christ", or fellow—as in Colossians. With a verb, the translation is sometimes "together", e. g. Eph. 2: 5, or simply "with", e. g. Rom. 8: 17.

**2. (Melbourne):** The Roman imprisonment of Aristarchus was not, of course, a direct consequence of the Ephesian one, since Acts **20: 4** shows him to be free again after the Ephesian imprisonment.

**3. (Melbourne):** It seems certain that the second letter to Timothy was written after the letter to the Colossians, and hence the defection of Demas would occur after the latter was written. Paul would certainly be disappointed to see a fellow-worker go back to the world, as Demas did.

**4. (Nottingham):** I suggest that the phrase "one of you", used in relation to Epaphras and Onesimus, refers to their town of origin, rather than to their being numbered with the church. Onesimus had not yet returned to Colossae to be received into the church there.

**5. (Nottingham):** Consistency of teaching throughout the community of churches was a cardinal principle of the apostolic faith. Paul could write "so ordain I in all the churches" (1 Cor. 7: 17), and following the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) Paul and Timothy "as they went on their way through the cities... delivered them the decrees for to keep, which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem". As our contributor points out, one of the means by which this consistency was ensured was the

circulation of apostolic letters.

6. (**Nottingham**): Everyone has a specific duty, and everyone has the responsibility to find what it is and carry it out. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2: 10).

*P. L. H.*

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# Bible tu

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8209

The human voice can be very hard to disguise (Gen. 27: 22). The disciples of the Lord Jesus spoke in a very distinctive fashion (Mat. 26: 73, Mark 14: 70). Peter's voice may have been especially so, for Rhoda knew him from the far side of the door without having seen him. It would seem that it was the sound of his voice rather than what he said that identified him to her (Acts 12: 14). All of us know her feelings to a greater or lesser degree, for the sound of a familiar or loved voice, especially if unheard for a long time, enters and finds response in the human heart very directly and quickly. It may be the vehicle by which the heart is prepared to receive what it said. It is well known that sheep too, though they cannot understand human speech, respond to the human voice. This fact was used in illustration by the Lord Himself of the way in which born-again ones respond to Him (John 10: 1-18). They love Him because God is their Father and therefore they love His voice and hear His word (John 8: 42-3). So it is that the disciple grows in faith.

The effect of the voice in reaching the heart is very difficult to convey in writing, as Paul recognized in pleading with the Galatians (Gal. 4: 20). It has been well said, however, that print is the voice of the written word. Many who read newspapers will be familiar with the large print-size of headlines which blare out their message and with the more restrained effect the same words have when printed in smaller letters. This was a device known to the apostle Paul and used by him in his letter to Philemon. He could not visit his friend and speak face-to-face with him, yet what he had to say required the force of his personality. Departing from his custom of employing a co-worker to write his letters for him, Paul the aged took the pen himself (Philemon v. 19) and wrote, we imagine, in the large and spidery hand with which such men write. If that were so, can we doubt that the shakiness of the script matched the tremor in the heart of his friend Philemon as he read and re-read this remarkable appeal, written in such a personal fashion from such a great statesman of the kingdom of God? Yet this is but one feature, the personal touch, which emphasizes the apostle's mastery of ministering the practical application of the teaching of the Lord Jesus. There are many other features of Paul's technique which we commend to fellow-students. Notable among these is his carefully weighted sense of humour involved in, for example, the play of words on the name of Onesimus (Philemon v. 11, v. 20

RVM). Here he displays his confidence in the personality of Philemon and in the place that he, Paul, has in his heart.

But for contributors to *Bible Studies* the letter to Philemon is of interest in a unique way. As translated in our Revised Version Bibles it is around **450** words in length. That is to say, it is just shorter than the average Bible Studies paper. We venture to suggest that were we to model our efforts on it our writing for God would be so much the better. It is simple, precise, correct, concise. It has a beginning, a middle and an end. The two central paragraphs balance each other. The first deals with Philemon and brings out his particular virtue, namely his love towards the saints. The second deals with much grace and some wit with the thorny problem of the rogue slave Onesimus. Since love towards the saints is Philemon's strong point, the apostle's wisdom in dealing with this first of all is apparent. How can such a man then not deal in love with Onesimus who has been saved and brought into the church of God in Rome? And yet there is a difference. The subject matter of *Bible Studies* is not one of personal, private appeal. It is the presentation of what has been won from the gold-mine of the Scriptures in such a way as to edify. Who a person is or how strong or charming his personality is of little account here, although, of course, the personalities of contributors may be readily apparent. "What saith the Scripture?" is our watchword. Our ambition is to cause one another to handle the Scriptures as carefully and exactly as did the Lord himself. Our goal is to have men in the Fellowship who are "mighty in the Scriptures".

*I. E. P.*

## **THE WORLD AND THE BELIEVER [PART 2]**

But this scripture (1 Cor. 7: 31) raises some important questions. What, for example, is the point of tension between our evident need for relaxation and recreation and "redeeming the time" (Col. 4: 5, Eph. 5: 16) for the sake of our Christian witness? Equally, vitally, what is involved in being "in the world" (John 17: 11) but not "of the world" (John **17: 14**), at peace with our

fellow **men and women and yet** unpolluted **by the** world's unspirituality **and** godlessness? Most **difficult** of all, how are we to **decide** whether a particular **activity is** "wordly" or not?

**It is** important to recognize **that** over questions of personal social morality the apostle **Paul's** approach was not to draw **up a** long list of do's **and** don'ts (Col. **2: 20-23**) [Comment 1]. **Instead, he** explained **the** principles **that** should **guide us as believers**. These principles should enable **us** to formulate **tests** to help **us weigh up** something **that we are** contemplating doing.

*1) "All things are lawful for me; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6: 12). "All things are lawful; but all things edify not" (1 Cor. 10: 23).*

"All **things** are lawful" does not of course **mean that the** commandments of God are not **binding** or **that there** are no longer **any** moral absolutes. Indeed, Paul's Epistles are full of examples both of re-affirmations of universal principles **and specific** applications of principle (1 Cor. **7: 10, Eph. 4: 25-8**). Clearly, Paul **is** referring here to **the** very **many** activities which **are** of themselves morally neutral **and as such** neither expressly forbidden nor **yet** commended **by** Scripture. There are innumerable pastimes, possessions **and** practices current today which pose twentieth-century problems and call for twentieth century solutions. While there could have **been** no possible conception of **these at the** time of **Paul's** writing, **the** principles **that he** expounded **in** response still prove invaluable. Two principles in particular emerge here. First, **that** while a particular **activity may be** quite harmless **in** itself **and** perfectly lawful, it becomes wrong for **us** **if its** attraction **is such** **that** we are enslaved to it. Obsessive pre-occupations, **habits** over which we have no control, possessions which become idols, are all harmful to **us**, both spiritually **and** emotionally. Second, not all things **edify**, not everything **is** **constructive**. Whatever we are doing, **no** matter how innocuous **it might seem**, we **must** try to ensure **that** it does not **have a** negative **destructive** influence on **us that** gradually **eats away at the** fabric of our **faith**, our day-to-day dependence on God.

*2) "For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4: 4-5).*

Genuine thankfulness to God **is** perhaps one of **the** clearest evidences of

true spirituality. **Each of us has a conscience to be educated by the word of God and illuminated by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 9:1). If with a good conscience (1 Tim. 1: 5, 19) we feel that we can be genuinely thankful to God for some opportunity afforded to us, that, it is possible that is a powerful indication that it is right for us. On the other hand, if we feel ashamed or simply unable to say "thank you", it is perhaps wise, at the very least, to suspend judgement for a while and hold back from whatever course of action is under review.**

- 3) *"Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling. I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.... Let not then your good be evil spoken of.. let us follow after... things whereby we may edify one another" (Rom. 14: 13-19).*

Although the context of this passage is a dispute about eating habits that relates to a time and a culture very different from most readers, the principle that Paul outlined in response to the problem is an important one. We are each answerable to God for our conduct not only as it relates to our own relationship with Him, but also as it affects our relationship with our fellow believers. Paul's teaching about the strong in faith voluntarily subjecting themselves to those with a "weak conscience" in matters of this kind (Rom. 15: 1, 1 Cor. 8: 9) is a radical one and part of the fundamental paradox of the Christian gospel itself, namely that the ultimate victory lies in not insisting on legitimate freedoms and "rights", but in apparent weakness and vulnerability (Rom. 15: 3, Mat. 5: 5, 1 Cor. 1: 27-9).

Having said that, it is important, however, to remember that the principle of subjection is a mutual one; "subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ" (Eph. 5: 21). Whatever else this may involve, it is not intended that this principle of "the strong" deferring to "the weak" should give a right to veto on which the weaker brother or sister may justifiably insist. Clearly the practical implications of this principle are by no means always straightforward and give rise to a host of related questions. Nevertheless, however difficult it may be to apply in practice, the principle of avoiding giving offence is one that Scripture gives us no warrant to ignore.

- 4) *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"<sup>9</sup> (Phil. 4: 8).*

This is a lofty ideal by any man's measure. But it is an ideal that as Christians we are called to practise and uphold. Not least, it is to be the yardstick of our recreational pursuits. This is an area in which, perhaps more than any other, the question of what is "worldly" has been most keenly debated and in some cases rules laid down. While it has to be admitted that for young Christians especially, black-and-white guidelines are often helpful, we must remember that "we have been discharged from the law... so that we serve in newness of the Spirit, and not in oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7: 6). God's highest purpose for each one of us is that we should "grow up" into Christian maturity, "no longer children", but "may attain... unto the measure of stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13-15). The essence of responsible freedom is not merely that we should learn to choose what is right, but at the same time to understand why and commit ourselves wholeheartedly to the implications of that understanding (Heb. 8: 10-11). That means, as it were, learning to think God's thoughts after him, allowing Him the freedom to work in us *"both to will and to work"*, for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2: 13).

Seen in this light there can be no sweeping lists of "rights" and "wrongs" and no shirking of our individual responsibility to think matters through for ourselves. It is for this reason that the principles explored in the course of this article are intensely practical. They enable us to formulate tests against which to measure our day-to-day decisions in a way that presents us with a considerable challenge and with the path to spiritual maturity.

*G. Elson*

### **MY SON ONESIMUS (Philemon)**

**From Birkenhead:** The letter is dated by Paul's first imprisonment and is addressed to Philemon with greetings to Apphia, thought to be Philemon's wife, and Archippus, who may well be the son of this couple; also to the company of saints which meet in their house at Colossae (see Col. 4: 7-9). [Comment 6].

Paul has Philemon always in mind, making mention of him in prayer. Paul is encouraged by Philemon's love and faith which he has both to the Lord Jesus and towards all the saints, this being expressed in practical out<sup>1</sup> working.

After committing his misdemeanour against Philemon, Onesimus runs away and makes his way to Rome where he comes into contact with Paul, the prisoner. There he receives the Saviour and becomes a disciple. Paul is now able to present Onesimus to Philemon as "a brother beloved". Comment was made on the gracious tone of Paul's letter. He appeals to Philemon rather than ordering him to receive Onesimus. Paul would far rather have kept Onesimus with him to act as his personal helper, but realizes that Philemon has first claim on him and so Onesimus is sent back to his master with this letter.

Paul's concern is that Philemon should show no hostility towards Onesimus for his wrongs. Such is Paul's concern for the situation that he wants Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would Paul himself, and hold Paul responsible for anything owing. He adds the reminder of Philemon's indebtedness to him and his confidence that, because of this, Philemon will not only do as he is asked, thereby rejoicing Paul's heart, but will do all that is within his capability to forward the work of the Lord.

It is difficult to imagine how Paul could put this repayment into practice, situated as he was in prison, but he is obviously confident that through prayer he will be released and will join the Colossian saints before long, as he asks for lodging to be prepared against his coming.

*J. Johnson, R. D. Williams*

**From Cowdenbeath:** This is the only one of the many private letters Paul must have written which has been preserved for posterity. It is written in a very warm-hearted and tactful style. Although he had not been to Colossae, it seems that Paul knew Philemon well (v. 6) and, as verse 19 would infer, had met him. He had also heard (v. 5) further about him, probably from

Epaphras. He was a man who loved the Lord and the Lord's people. Because of this he refreshed their hearts. He achieved this by what he did rather than by what he said. He was evidently a highly esteemed and influential brother.

Although Apphia and Archippus get special mention in the opening salutation there is nothing to indicate that they were blood relations of Philemon. Before coming to the real purpose of his letter Paul tells Philemon that he had been speaking to God about him in thanksgiving (v. 5) and in prayer (v. 6). He had asked that he might have the fellowship of Philemon so that they could act in agreement regarding Onesimus. Herein we see the tactfulness of Paul.

As a slave Onesimus was a man who had no rights and to whom no one considered he had any duty, but Paul had a heart of compassion like his Master. Through Paul's interest in him he got saved and he on his part sought to repay the apostle by his affectionate, faithful, personal attendance upon him. Paul felt for him all the affection of a father.

Of necessity Paul wrote a letter to Colossae. He might have asked Tychicus, the bearer of the letter, to report to Philemon regarding Onesimus, or he might have sent him a personal letter to explain matters, but instead Paul chose to send Onesimus in person probably as the bearer of his own letter. Because he belonged to Philemon he ought to be restored to his master. As the result of the conversion of Onesimus and his reception into the church of God in Rome a new relationship existed. They had become brothers in the Lord. They were, however, estranged and ought to be reconciled. The repentance of Onesimus and the forgiveness of Philemon, if granted, were not sufficient if the two men remained at a distance from each other. A face-to-face meeting was essential to full reconciliation. This, we feel, was what Paul had in mind. He wrote that Philemon might receive him (v. 17), and do so as if he were receiving Paul himself.

Some brethren believe that Onesimus was not a brother in the flesh to Philemon in the sense that they were born of the same parents, but as would be understood from Deut. 15: 12—"thy brother, an Hebrew man".

It is interesting to note that the word translated partner (v. 17) (*koinonos*) is akin to the word fellowship (v. 6) (*koinonia*). In effect Paul is saying "let it be as I have prayed". The word translated joy (**RVM help**) (*oninemi*) is the word from which the name Onesimus is derived. It would seem that he is asking Philemon to be to him as Onesimus had been, i. e. helpful or profitable.

As **Paul did not** enjoin **it** upon Philemon to do **as he wished, the** obedience (v. 21) could not **be** unto **Paul but** unto **the** Lord.

Perhaps it was that when v. 18 had been written Paul took the pen from his amanuensis to write, "I will repay it"—a proof of his sincerity [Comment 2]. Whether or not Paul ever visited Colossae we are not told, but at least it would seem that he was released from prison and visited various places.

*7. Bowman*

**From Derby:** Although there are ten persons named by Paul in this epistle it is basically a private letter from Paul to Philemon about Onesimus. There is really nothing concerning doctrine or teaching. It does, however, touch on the relationship between brethren, including masters and slaves.

Onesimus is mentioned only twice in Paul's letters, namely in Philemon v. 10 and Colossians 4: 9. In the latter he is linked with Tychicus as the bearer of the Colossians letter and described as "one of you". It can, therefore, be reasonably inferred that Tychicus, Onesimus and so Philemon also were Colossians. This being accepted\* v. 2 reveals that Philemon's house was the meeting place of the church in Colossae [Comment 3].

After the greeting of vv. 1-3 comes thanksgiving for the person of Philemon in vv. 4-7. Paul appreciated the character of Philemon. The reason for this was the reports he had received (v. 5), but it is possible that Paul had met Philemon at some time, since he refers to indebtedness in v. 19.

Next in vv. 8-21 comes the matter of Onesimus. He was one of Paul's converts in Rome (v. 10) and there had been formed a very close bond between the aged Paul and Onesimus.

Onesimus had been the slave of Philemon (v. 16). He had been unprofitable (v. 11) and one can infer that he had escaped as far as Rome. There was a dilemma for Paul. He valued Onesimus as though part of himself (v. 12), but he respected the law of those times. Philemon had had Onesimus as a possession, and if Paul were to keep him it could only be if Philemon would agree. He was, therefore, sent back with Tychicus and the two letters.

**Paul put some pressure on Philemon. Onesimus is to be received as though related to Paul (v. 17) [Comment 7]. Paul is willing to make financial reparation to Philemon (v. 18), but Philemon has some indebtedness to Paul (v. 19). It looks as though Paul had had some contact with Philemon, though there is no mention of it elsewhere.**

**Paul is confident that Philemon will do rightly (v. 21), and he has a hope that he may be freed and visit Colossae (v. 22).**

Reverting to vv. 15, 16 one sees that Paul felt that it was possible, even in that day, for there to be a proper relationship between the master and his slave, both being Christians.

The letter ends with a blessing: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (v. 25).

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From Liverpool: We learn much from this prison epistle about the character of the apostle Paul. We can see the very high value placed by Paul on spiritual relationships, and his appreciation of the grace of God growing in his brethren and sisters. We are shown something of the hospitality and love of a godly household; but Paul does not take Philemon's goodness for granted, but is careful and considerate in his dealing with the matter of Onesimus. Some thought was given to the question of whether v. 16 implies that the two men were real brothers, but, with the backing of the NIV, this was generally doubted [Comment 4]. The overriding and guiding of God was placed before us again in this passage. It was He who guided the wayward Onesimus to the apostle under whose care the great change took place, with the useless becoming useful to both God and man.**

**That Paul was on such close terms with his erstwhile master must have come as something of a shock to Onesimus; indeed many have since been brought to repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus through just such an astonishing long-distance work of God.**

*A. G. Davies*

**From Melbourne:** As we read through and think over this short epistle, which arises out of the workings of grace in the conversion of an absconding bondservant who becomes a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, our hearts are touched as we become aware of the evidences of such grace manifest in those intimately concerned. As words of grace and kindness flow from the pen of Paul, and the meekness and gentleness of Christ are in a faint degree revealed, we thank God for such men, and women too. In other of his writings he frequently writes as one who has divine and apostolic authority, but here he is simply "a prisoner of Christ Jesus". He writes as a tender-hearted father would write to his children. His heart seems overflowing **with** both joy and compassion, that in and from a Roman prison, and in bonds, he has been used by the gracious Holy Spirit to lead an escaped slave to experience the knowledge of the love of God in Christ. He is also thankful that the one-time master or owner of the absconding servant is numbered among the disciples of the Lord in the Fellowship of God's Son.

With Paul in prison here would appear to be Timothy and Epaphras, the latter of whom we read (Col. 1: 7) had been a "faithful minister of Christ". Paul is a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and for His sake confined to a Roman prison, but in the goodness of God many of his friends **have** access to **him** and the privilege of ministering to him; to whom he once ministered in the Gospel.

Although he is in bonds, his access into **the presence** of God is not restricted. **He may not be able to enter in** collective worship, **but that** does not hinder his drawing **near in** spirit beyond **and above the walls which** surround him. These walls **have** not restrained **him** from royal priesthood service, which has **enabled him** to continue to show forth **the excellencies** of Him who had called him out of **darkness** into **His** marvellous light. God **has** given him the joy **and** honour of **leading** others to Christ, **and** among **them** the one whom he **calls Onesimus**, who **had been a legal servant** or bondman of Philemon, **but eventually** absconded. **In** some way of **divine** sovereignty and through divine mercy **and grace he had been** brought into contact **with** Paul.

**After** his conversion to Christ through **belief** of **the Gospel heard** through the ministry of **Paul**, **the latter had** brought before **him the claims** of Christ. These called him to **be subject** to **every** ordinance of **man** for **the Lord's** sake. **Paul would fain have kept him with him to minister** to his own needs, **but** he recognizes **the claims** of **the Roman State**; **and gently advises him to return** to his former **master**, Philemon, **thus** foregoing **his present** liberty. The **advice** of **Paul** to both **master and servant is given in grace**. He advises Philemon **that he bear** no rancour towards his servant of **unregenerate days**,

but gives thanks that the wondrous workings of divine grace have **reunited** them. He advises Onesimus, that so long as their legal relationship shall last, it may be one where the service of divine love will characterize service to his former master to whom he has now been reunited.

*T. W. Fullerton, T. L. Fullerton*

**From Methil:** In considering the story of Onesimus we must look at the background of slavery prevalent in that day. Some were sold by their parents into slavery that they might be freed from the responsibility for them. There were those who became slaves through poverty and sold themselves. There were debtors who were made slaves and many other categories. There was also the fact that blood relatives were sold into slavery and this would appear to be the case with Onesimus who may have wronged Philemon and so was doomed to slavery [see Comment 4]. He had fled from this some one thousand miles to Rome.

We cannot say how he came into contact with Paul and his subsequent acceptance of Christ and his new profitability. Both had met on common ground. Paul in bonds and Onesimus bound as a fugitive slave. Both knew Philemon and now both are in Christ and later Onesimus was added to the church in Rome and now we have them both in the Lord. God's mercy and grace had extended over that vast distance of one thousand miles and now Onesimus was being sent back with a letter of commendation from Paul to Philemon concerning himself in order that Philemon would receive him now both as a brother in the flesh and in the Lord and now no longer as a servant but a partner.

Paul also reminded Philemon that if Onesimus owed him anything to put it to his account, also without his mind he would do nothing and that it was to be done freely. This is a principle that we today must observe in that we be ever careful to consult with our brethren and sisters whenever their interests are involved and take no action until their judgement or mind on the matter is carefully considered.

Paul also reminds Philemon of a debt that he was unlikely ever to pay (v. 19) "that thou owest to me even thine own self besides". Onesimus had given much joy and pleasure to Paul as a prisoner and Paul would have loved to have kept this child (v. 10) "whom I have begotten in my bonds". He has become profitable to Paul and he was hoping that he could now become profitable to Philemon. Philemon's reception of Onesimus, we speculate, must have been one of great joy and gladness in the knowledge of his repentance and now as a partner he must receive him as such. The letter of commendation he carried from Paul was his passport to the church in Colossae. This again is a principle that we must observe today in churches of God as we move around from one church to another in order that we may each be received as a partner in the Fellowship of today.

This epistle of Paul to Philemon has shown to us how God can act in intervention in domestic affairs and heal deep wounds if only we have the faith to accept it. We are also shown that Onesimus (whose name meant one who gave pleasure, or gave advantage or one who was profitable), having become unprofitable, or of no use, by God's mercy and goodness had become completely useful or profitable. This usefulness suggests that he was either profitable or unprofitable to his fellow-men and that no man liveth unto himself. This means that a man's value is not that of his own personal perfection, but of his usefulness to others. We too were once unprofitable, but the Lord took hold of our worthless condition and changed it to a completely useful one. Our relationship to God creates our values to our fellow men.

*D. B. Reid*

**From Nottingham:** Although our knowledge of Onesimus is almost entirely limited to this letter, it was impressive to see the framework of his story built up in our study.

The main points of his life can be listed as follows:

a) In taking leave of Philemon he appears to have incurred a debt either, as

is often thought, **by theft** or **by** simply depriving **his** master of **his** services (v. 18) [Comment 5].

- b) The intimate "**my child**" **suggests** salvation occurred during his **meeting** with **Paul** in Rome (v. 10).
- c) Having **been** saved **he came** into **the** church of God **in** Rome **as** indicated **by the** term "in **the** Lord" (v. 16).
- d) Additionally, **he** found service **as a** personal minister to Paul (vv. 12-13). The relationship between Paul and Philemon was considered and some practical lessons for ourselves were found.

We considered whether or not Paul and Philemon **had ever** actually **met** as Paul **had** never visited Colossae. **It** appears though **that** Philemon owed **his** salvation to Paul's evangelism (v. 19), possibly through **a visit** to **Ephesus**. **V. 13** also **suggests that** Philemon could **have** been with Paul **in** Rome. **In** any **case the** subject of **the** letter was very delicate **as** Philemon could **find** himself in **a** difficult position on **the** return of Onesimus. Could **he** **treat him** **as** though nothing **had happened**? **If** so what **effect** would **that** **have on his** other slaves? **Vv. 18-19** **suggest that** Paul was aware of **this problem** and was **in effect** writing **a** "bill of purchase" for Onesimus.

**Paul's** typical humility **is seen** in v. 14 when **in fact** **he** could, **in** Christ, "enjoin **thee that** which **is befitting**" (v. 8). Surely **this is a** lesson for **us** when **it** comes to **the** matter of **respecting and** regarding our **brethren's** views, however **difficult that may** some **times seem** to be.

**Perhaps** Philemon was **having** some **difficulty in understanding just why** the problem with Onesimus **had been** allowed to happen. **As Paul** says (v. 15) both to Philemon **and** ourselves, **there was a** reason for **it**. **The writer to** the Hebrews (12: 11) touches on **a similar theme** and one, of course, **that** should **be** continually before **us**.

Verse 18 was thought to carry **a** particularly important lesson for **all** of us. **In spite of the fact that the** sins of Onesimus **had been** washed away at salvation, **the effect** of those **sins** could still **be** widespread among other people. **When in** confession before **the** Lord **it is** important to **remember too** with regard to fellow **saints the** principle **that** we should "destroy not... **him** for whom Christ **died**" (Rom. 14: 15) **by** our **sins towards** them.

*C. Edis*

## COMMENTS

1. **(The World and the Believer):** It is not clear what the expression "personal social morality" means. A broad canvas is stretched out in this paper, yet only a small part of it is painted in. It is that part of the believer's experience which deals mainly with the interrogation of a good conscience toward God. Contributors may like to seize the opportunity afforded to detail the rest of the picture. Dealing with worldliness includes such things as seeking first the kingdom of God; being daily crucified with Christ; being imitators of elders and of Christ, and so on.

2. (Cowdenbeath): This very personal approach by Paul in using his own handwriting is more usually taken to refer to the writing of the entire letter. Paul thus lends his personal touch and weight to the entire circumstance of Onesimus and not just the matter of his debt.

3. (Derby): Individual churches of God are always associated with a particular town or city. Therefore the church in Colossae, of which friends in Derby speak, was the church of God in Colossae. But the church of Philemon 2 is associated not with a town, but with a part of a town, namely the house of Philemon. The church in his house was therefore a part of the church of God in Colossae.

4. **(Liverpool):** The expression "in the flesh" has been taken by friends in Methil to mean that Philemon was a blood-relative of Onesimus. Friends in Cowdenbeath suggest, citing Deut. 15: 12, that the expression refers to their common Jewish ancestry. The NIV translates the expression "as a man" meaning that both Philemon and Onesimus were members of the human race. The original words are *en sarki, en kurioi* whence it is clear that the NIV is not a translation but an interpretation. The scripture does not say a "brother in the flesh". It says that Onesimus was and would be a brother

beloved. He was especially so to Paul and would be especially so to Philemon both by virtue of his body's position (in nearness to Paul or Philemon, ministering in natural things, the things of the flesh) and his spiritual position, being in the same Fellowship. But he would be more so to Philemon because, in addition to rendering service in natural things, his actual flesh, his body, was of a value to Philemon in a way that it was not to Paul. The reason for this was that Onesimus was owned as a natural, physical or fleshly possession by Philemon, the slave-owner or master. In a special kind of way he was his brother's keeper. We would say suggestively that this is yet another example in this letter of the wit of Paul. In a carefully constructed sentence he brings out the matter of Onesimus being a good or chattel of Philemon in such a way as to bring a smile to Philemon's face. When a person has touched your heart with humour it is that much harder to deny him his request.

5. (**Nottingham**): Not only was Philemon deprived of the work of his slave, but the absence of Onesimus meant also that Philemon's estate was diminished in value by the price that Onesimus was worth in the slave-market.

*I. E. P.*

6. (**Birkenhead**): It is frequently suggested that these people were related in the manner described by our contributor, but this cannot be substantiated, as other papers point out.

*J. K. D. J.*

7. (**Derby**): The apostle is asking that Philemon should give Onesimus the same welcome as he would **Paul** himself.

**8. (Methil):** There is no suggestion in **Scripture that Onesimus was in bonds**. Paul would not have **had** the **power** to send **him back himself if he had been imprisoned**.

*P. L. H.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. *From Liverpool:* Does v. 5 refer to faith in the saints or faith towards **the** saints cf. Eph. 1: 15?

The preposition in both verses is *eis* meaning into. Denoting direction, it would appear that it is helpfully translated "towards".

2. **From Methil:** Why in your title theme **did** you choose to use "Son" instead of "child" as v. 10 suggests?

Editors made a mistake. The original word is *teknon* and is faithfully translated "child" in the RV, whereas the AV and other versions use **the** incorrect term "son".

*I. E. P.*

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# ble studies

A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

EDITORIAL

8210

Paul begins his epistle to Titus by reminding him that the significance of the revelation of God with which the apostle was entrusted stretched far beyond the confines of time. Its source was before time began and its purpose was eternal life. The faith of the elect laying hold of the hope held out to them by divine promise enabled them to realize the grace and counsel of God in their own case when they received salvation.

Titus himself, though a Gentile, had been reached by Paul with the message of salvation. The conversion of Paul had taken place in very striking circumstances, yet he addressed Titus as his true child after a common faith, a faith which was as real for both of them.

The greeting which Paul sent to Titus was one of grace and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus, whom Paul had come to know as Lord and Saviour; grace which abounded where the law condemned and peace extended to those who, like Titus, were far off as well as to them that were near.

Paul had taken Titus with him from Antioch when he visited Jerusalem a second time (Gal. 2:1) on the occasion of the question about the circumcision (Acts 15: 4), perhaps to demonstrate the grace of God already evident in an uncircumcised Gentile.

Paul trusted Titus enough to send him to Corinth when the church there was passing through a difficult time, as is seen in the second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:16). Now he had been left by Paul in Crete and assigned the charge of setting in order the things that were wanting there and appointing elders in every city.

Titus had to ensure the silencing of vain talkers by conviction of the truth and by the exercise of the authority delegated to him. Sharp reproof was necessary to prevent a relapse into the natural tendencies of the Cretans. The

aim before him was the healthful effect of establishing their soundness in the faith, and the appointment of elders who would hold to the faithful word and be not only able to exhort in the sound doctrine, but also convict any gainsayers. The qualities given in vv. 6-9 for his guidance were not a mere ideal, but a requirement in those entrusted with the care of the churches.

Titus was to await the arrival of Artemas or Tychicus before meeting Paul in Nicopolis (Titus 3: 12), where the apostle intended to spend the winter. This may be the Nicopolis in Epirus, if the Nicopolis in Thrace was founded by Trajan.

*E. A.*

## **PAUL, HIS MINISTRY AND HIS ASSOCIATES**

The first directive that the Lord gave to Saul of Tarsus when He apprehended him on the road to Damascus was, "Rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9: 6). The first Christian to make contact with Saul in Damascus and greet him as a brother was Ananias, who had been specifically commissioned by the Lord for this purpose, and to whom Saul had been described as "A chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9: 15). The succeeding years revealed the remarkable way in which divine purposes were furthered largely through the instrumentality of this man Saul. It is significant that in this early indication of the scope of his work prominence should be given to the work among the Gentiles, for he was to become pre-eminently, "an apostle of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11: 13), expanding the work among the Gentiles in a unique way.

It has pleased God to give us a written revelation of Himself and of His will in the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures. For this purpose the Spirit of God used men as His instruments as Peter tells us, "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" ( 2 Pet. 1: 21). Saul, who is also called Paul, was much used in this way. His natural abilities and training, when sanctified and dedicated to the service of God, made him an eminently suitable channel through which New Testament truths could be given in both oral and written form. With this objective in view Paul was made the recipient of direct divine revelation (Acts 22: 14; Gal. 1: 11, 12, 16, 17; 1 Cor. 11; 23). Of the twenty seven books that comprise the New Testament thirteen claim to be written by Paul (or at his dictation), and some would in addition favour the view that the epistle to the Hebrews, which gives no direct internal evidence as to the identity of the writer was also given through Paul. It is

also worthy of note **that the** writings of Paul are **integrated** with **his ministry** among **the** churches. They were occasioned **by** circumstances **that** arose in **the** course of **his** service, **and the** Holy Spirit moved **him** to deal with **these** situations through **the medium** of those **inspired** letters. **As a** result not only **did** those to whom **they** were written in **the** first instance **have the benefit** of **the** instruction contained in **them, but they have thus** been **preserved** for **the** instruction of succeeding generations to **set out the** Faith once for all delivered unto **the** saints (**Jude 3**). Peter readily acknowledged **these** writings of Paul **as** an integral part of holy Scripture (**2 Pet. 3: 15, 16**).

Although Paul was **used** in a remarkable way **and** was so richly endowed with spiritual **gifts, he did** not work independently of other workers unto **the** kingdom of God; **he** was too **much** in tune with **the** mind of God to do so. There is **much** helpful instruction to **be** found in a consideration of **Paul's** relationships with **his** brethren, particularly those with whom **he** was closely linked in his service for **the** Lord.

Some three years after **his** conversion, with his experiences in **Damascus** and in Arabia behind **him, Paul** went **up** to Jerusalem (**Gal. 1: 8; Acts 9: 26-29**). There **he** was viewed with suspicion **by the** disciples, **but** Barnabas befriended him, brought him to **the** apostles, **and** vouched for **his** sincerity. Apparently **the** apostles **that** Paul conferred with **at that time** were Peter **and** James, **the** Lord's brother. The visit was a brief one, **but the** hostility shown to **him by the** Jews there and **the** direct word **he** received from **the** Lord while in Jerusalem convinced **him that** his work was to **be** predominantly among **the** Gentiles, **and** so **he** returned to his native Tarsus. The Scripture **is** silent about his activities and experiences in Tarsus **at** this period in **his** life.

The early encounter with Barnabas in Jerusalem was to lead to a close association between **these** two men **that** was to last for **many** years **and** prove valuable for **the** furtherance of **the** work among **the** Gentiles. Barnabas was a man of some standing in **the** church in Jerusalem, having **the** confidence of **the** apostles and **the** elders in Jerusalem. So **he** was **sent by them** to Antioch in Syria when a work among **the** Gentiles developed there to link **the** work with **that in** Jerusalem. **The** evidence of **the** Lord's working in Antioch gladdened **the** heart of Barnabas **and** during **his** ministry there "**much** people was **added** unto **the** Lord" (**Acts 11: 24**). The magnitude of **the** work in Antioch was **such that** Barnabas felt **the** need of a **gifted** teacher **and** co-worker **and, having** no doubts **as** to who was eminently **suited** for **such a** task, **he** went to Tarsus to **seek** for Saul.

For the space of a year Barnabas and Saul laboured and taught in Antioch. It was a period of consolidation and upbuilding. Churches of God should be teaching institutions in which disciples are taught and grow spiritually; the church in Antioch was such a place. The consolidation of the base at Antioch in due course gave opportunity for outreach to areas further afield. The Holy Spirit, possibly through one of the prophets in the church, marked out Saul and Barnabas as chosen apostles for work in a wider sphere of service.

The first missionary journey took them to Cyprus and then on to Asia Minor. When they set out, John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, accompanied them as an attendant, but he withdrew from them at the commencement of the work in Asia Minor. When the party set out, and while they were in Cyprus, Barnabas was apparently taking the lead in the partnership, but when the visit to Asia Minor was embarked upon the initiative in the leadership apparently passed to Paul and remained with him for the rest of their time together as co-workers. This change in emphasis is highlighted by the reference in Acts 13:13 to "Paul and his company". The change of name is also significant. It would appear that Saul's Roman name, Paul, was more appropriate to the sphere in which he would henceforth operate than his Jewish name was. This first missionary journey, which was not accomplished without persecution and much suffering, particularly on Paul's part, resulted in the establishing of churches of God in Asia Minor. These churches were then revisited by Paul and Barnabas on the return journey to Antioch in Syria.

Following their return to Antioch, Jewish teaching seriously affected the church there, and indeed threatened to jeopardize the whole work among the Gentiles and so Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem as appointed representatives from Antioch to have the matters of difficulty resolved by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Paul also tells us that he went up "by revelation" (Gal. 2: 2) to present the Gospel he preached among the Gentiles before the Apostles James, Peter and John, the reputed pillars. This was done at a private meeting at which the role of Paul and Barnabas as apostles of the Gentiles was readily accepted. At the conference of the apostles and elders convened to discuss the issues that affected the work among the Gentiles, agreement was also reached and put in a written statement addressed to the Gentile brethren in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. Two men, Judas and Silas, were chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas and carry the letter to Antioch. These two appointees from Jerusalem were described as

"Chief men among the brethren" (Acts 15: 22), and when they fulfilled their mission they returned to Jerusalem. These events take us to a point some fourteen years after Paul's conversion (Gal. 2: 1).

The close association between Paul and Barnabas that had lasted many years regretfully ended because of a disagreement they had over the suitability of Mark as a fellow-worker at this point in time. Paul proposed that they should re-visit the cities in which churches had been established on their previous journey, but did not think it wise to take Mark with them. Barnabas, therefore, took Mark and sailed away to his native Cyprus. It is sad to read of men of God being parted in this way; yet such incidents occur in life's experiences. Although Paul and Barnabas did not work together again, as far as we know, there is a gracious reference to him in the first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9: 6). In contrast there is an appreciative reference to a later association in service with Mark in the final phases of Paul's service.

*(to be continued)*

*J. K. D. J.*

## **GREETINGS AND ASSIGNMENT [Titus 1]**

**From Birkenhead:** Titus is the recipient of this letter of instruction from Paul. They knew each other from times past, and Paul had been the means by which Titus came to know the truth of the gospel. He had accompanied Paul on previous journeys, although these are not mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. Undoubtedly Paul trusted Titus and had formed an opinion of him which would have guided him, under the Holy Spirit, in this letter. In 2 Cor. 8: 16, he is described as being earnest, and no doubt Paul felt he could trust Titus' judgement in the task set before him.

As a part of Paul's responsibility of spreading the gospel and the "doctrine of God our Saviour" among the Gentiles, it was often necessary for Paul to re-visit, or send an emissary, to those whom he had heard needed help, or those for whom his previous associations had led him to be concerned. The island people of Crete must have come into such a category since his instruction to Titus includes a reference to their lying, evil, idle and gluttonous nature. Accordingly he guides Titus, whom he has chosen, in the way in which he should approach this task [Comment 10].

The salutation is not uncommon in Paul's letters, and involves the restating of his authority and commitment. It binds Titus to him in the common faith which they share, and it restates the perfection of God, and the security of both His promise and their standing on it.

The task assigned to this disciple was two-fold — to set in order those things that were wanting, and to appoint elders in every city. This work would merge, since Titus must rectify wrongs, thus showing the true way forward, and must also seek out those who could be trusted as elders to adhere to this teaching in their lives. Guidance is given as to the characteristics to be seen in these men, and indeed through their families, who should reflect the fathers' teaching, guidance and care.

Great stress is laid upon the necessity for them to be "holding to the faithful word", so that they might not only encourage and urge others to the same end, but that they might be equipped to withstand the enemy's attack through those who teach falsely. Just as the elders should influence their own household favourably, these gainsayers are able to turn households against the truth. Their motives are not even misguided principles, but simply for personal gain. In their false teaching, many of the deceptions of the Jewish faith might be brought before the Cretan saints, but being aware of this danger, they should also be prepared for it.

In his search, Titus would determine their character by observing their works, and should accordingly rebuke and "reprove them sharply" with the intent of drawing them again after the true doctrine.

*R. C. Halpin, A. Hyland*

**From Cowdenbeath:** Once again, as in Galatians and Colossians, Paul refers to his apostleship in vv. 1 and 3 as evidence of the authority by which he counsels Titus in respect of those things which were to be put in order in the Cretan churches. The letter, which Titus no doubt carried with him, would provide the evidence, if this were required, of that authority.

Evidently, Paul had been to Crete. The text suggests this, although some thought it possible that the words could convey the thought that he was in the area when he left Titus there. He certainly had knowledge of the churches and of the custom and practice of the islanders (vv. 12, 13). Paul therefore underlines the unimpeachable truth of God's word, as distinct from the traditional attitudes of Cretans, in writing at v. 2.

Titus was Paul's true child and he had strong confidence in him, although we shall see at a later stage that he emphasizes the need for determination in his mission despite the difficulties which may emerge (ch. 2: 15).

His mission, of course, was a spiritual one, but it had strong practical undertones. It was necessary to appoint elders in every church. The fact that the word "city" is mentioned stresses the right order of things—one city, one church of God. Furthermore, elders were to be appointed who were indigenous to the city. It is weakness today which demands from time to time that elders from other churches should share in the care of an Assembly. Undoubtedly, such practice over long periods of time must cause us great searching of heart.

The words, "elder" and "bishop" are both mentioned, the former in respect of maturity in spiritual matters and the latter in respect of his work. Some characteristics are in the negative (v. 7), and others are positive. As regards those qualities we deduced that, in the transitional years, it was possible for there to be some in the churches who had more than one wife [Comment 11]. Such was not God's pattern and those who were called to be ensamples to the flock must be fully in accord with the will of God in this important matter. In regard to the children, we understood the statement to mean that those with believing children were to be careful that in family life such were well behaved and of good conduct.

Ability in the word is a clear qualification in oversight work, as seen in v. 9, but this is to be weighed alongside those lovely graces of v. 8. As we shall see in later study, goodness and good works feature prominently in the epistle.

Ability in the word would enable the overseer to teach the sound doctrine and to confound and disprove, the words of opposition which, it would appear, were a formidable force in Crete. Sharp words were necessary to project the truth of God (v. 13) and we were reminded that the word of the Lord is indeed sharper than any two-edged sword.

It is evident that some had quickly fallen a long way from early teaching. The catalogue listed in vv. 15, 16 is proof of this. Only the pure word of God could succeed in bringing soundness. The fact that many today are making money out of spurious doctrine is evidently not a new thing. It was

happening, even from within, in Crete (v. 11).

*R. I. Shaw*

**From Derby:** Titus was clearly an assistant to Paul. There are several references to him in Paul's other epistles, though there is no detail in respect of his activities. It is seen from Gal. 2: 3 that he was a Greek.

The greeting of vv. 1-5 touches, by revelation, on the mind of God in a past eternity in respect of eternal life for those then uncreated. Paul had a consciousness of God's purpose for himself, this being expressed\* in v. 3. The blessing in v. 4 of grace and peace links God the Father with Christ Jesus our Saviour and may be linked with Titus 2: 13 where the deity of the Lord Jesus is expressed directly.

Paul was one who realized his own authority, and in much of the remainder of the epistle he delegates this authority to Titus. This is clearly expressed in 1: 5. Indeed, not only does Paul delegate authority to Titus, but Titus is to delegate also to elders of his appointing in every city. Such appointed men are to be of good character. Although no one can be blameless in God's sight, it is possible to be blameless in the judgement of one's fellow men. This was to be the criterion for elders in the church. All the qualifications expressed in vv. 6-9 are readily understood. Paul, himself, was not married, and so v. 6 simply means that polygamy was forbidden for an elder. It would, therefore, be unacceptable generally in the churches whatever may have been common in Crete [Comment 11]. It does seem from these verses that the office of elderhood has to be linked with a sound family relationship.

Titus was being appointed to a very difficult task. This is seen from vv. 10-13. The Cretans, even in the churches, were in many cases of bad character and Titus had to ensure their control by sheer dominance (v. 11). There was, however, hope for them—this can be inferred from v. 13.

A different kind of error—Jewish fables—is indicated in v. 14. The word fable has two meanings. The usual one in everyday non-scriptural use concerns a story in which animal or even vegetable subjects have human characteristics imputed to them. There is such a story in Judges 9: 8-15, but it has no relevance here. The other meaning of fable is that of an unjustified assumption, and it is probable that this is the sense in which Paul is using the word [Comment 9]. This fits in with the attitude of the Lord Jesus to the

traditions of men as seen in Mat. 15: 1-9.

The first statement of v. 15, taking its direct meaning, is surely not true. Not all things are pure! The apostle clearly means that one can discern and associate only with that which is pure. The defiled unbeliever cannot do this. His behaviour reveals his lack of knowledge of God [Comment 12].

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From Liverpool:** *Introduction* (vv. 1-4). Paul begins his letter by stating his credentials. He must have felt the need to defend his position as a "servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (NIV). Perhaps there were those who would have easily disregarded the truths he was presenting had he not done so. We noted that in giving the great commission the Lord Jesus did likewise, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go...." (Mat. 28: 18-19, NIV)

We were unable to understand the meaning of "according to" (v. 1 RV), which gives the impression that his apostleship was dependent upon, or was derived from, the faith of God's elect, and we preferred the NIV "for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness" [Comment 1]. The purpose of his apostleship was to bring God's elect to faith in the Lord Jesus.

We also wondered what is the value of a promise made by God before the beginning of time (v. 2) when, presumably, there was nobody there to witness such a promise, and concluded that this is really just a metaphorical way of saying that God was not caught out by events [Comment 2], In the purposes of God salvation was to be made available (see 2 Tim. 1: 9) just as the Lord Jesus who was actually put to death in c. 33 A. D. [Comment 3] is described as having been slain "from the creation of the world" (Rev. 13: 8, NIV).

The "faith of God's elect" is the faith each believer put in Christ, and is the same as the "common faith" of verse 4.

*Overseers* (vv. 5-9). This passage shows that churches of God can be founded without overseers [Comment 4], and 1 Tim. 3: 6 reinforces this by teaching that an overseer must not be a recent convert. Each one in the church at its foundation would be a baby in the Faith. However, as they matured some would begin to show the characteristics required for this

work. An elder and overseer are one and the same, the former signifying his status as a mature brother and the latter his job in the church. These qualifications are over and above those required of ordinary believers [Comment 5], and are things that can be seen by the church and outsiders. An overseer must be (1) blameless in his home-life, (2) blameless in his personal life, and (3) true to the word of God.

While it is obvious why an overseer is required to supervise his children properly before being entrusted with church supervision, we were puzzled as to the requirements that his children should believe. Surely an overseer cannot make his children believe! We decided that it did not mean that a man's children must be born again before he can be brought into oversight, but we did not have an explanation either! [Comment 6], We noted, however, the importance of a proper Christian upbringing, for there is no more chance of children of believers becoming believers than children of unbelievers, showing us that the convicting work of the Holy Spirit is not done on a random basis.

*The Deceivers* (vv. 10-16). Both Jewish believers within the church and Jewish teachers outside caused problems to the believers which the overseers had to contend with. Verse 13 seems to suggest that it is Jewish believers that he has in mind, for he writes "so that they will be sound in the faith..." [Comment 7]. They were not denying that they knew Christ, but they were denying him, by saying "No" to some of His commands. In what way are all things pure to the pure? Surely Paul is not saying that an impure act becomes pure just because it is done by a pure person! Perhaps he means that anything a pure person does will be pure despite sometimes looking impure to others [Comment 8]. The Lord Jesus often had wrong motives ascribed to His actions and wrong connotations put on his words. A true disciple of the Lord Jesus is pure and this will be seen by his life and actions.

*D. J. Webster*

**From Melbourne:** Paul looked upon himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ who had been bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ. He had been called an apostle (or sent one) and a custodian of the revelation of the purposes of the eternal God concerning the elect of this age, the objects of His grace, who had been called and chosen in Christ from eternity past, although as yet uncreated. This had not been revealed to intelligences

and powers of **the past**, but awaited **the appearance** of **the** eternal Son. **The** apostle wonders **that** it was. to him **that these** purposes **had been** revealed by **the** commandment of God our Saviour. They concerned **the** eternal life promised by **the** God who cannot lie, which will **be the** possession of **these** objects of His grace.

**We** have little knowledge of **the** planting and progress of churches of God **in the** island of Crete, **but the** apostle **had a** responsibility towards **the** people of God **and had a** care for their welfare; **he** was heavily burdened in spirit. Until **the** time of writing **the** epistle, **it is** evident **that** no elders **had** been appointed to care for **the** flock of God. From what **he** knew of **the** inhabitants of Crete, which **he** reveals **in the last eight** verses, **it is** clear **that the** men of Crete were to a great degree devoid of common knowledge regarding morals **and** generally proper behaviour, **and the** atmosphere was a source of spiritual danger to **the** welfare of **saints** in **the** apparently newly-planted churches of God. There was a pressing **need** of godly men to watch over **the** flock of God. Undoubtedly **guided by** prayer regarding **the** matter and his knowledge of **the** one whom **he** calls "**my true child after a common faith**", **he has** left Titus on **the** island, giving **him** instructions regarding **the** rule and behaviour **in the** churches of God; their constitution **and the need** of elders to care for, instruct and nourish those who were found therein. **He** then summarizes **the** necessary qualifications of **an** overseer for **the** guidance of Titus. The word "blameless" does not indicate sinlessness, **but that** among other qualifications no charge or accusation **can be** laid against him. Contrary to **the** custom and practice of **many** Gentiles who practised polygamy, an elder **must be the** husband of one wife [see Comment 11]. **If he had** believing children, **they must** not have **had** any charges laid **against them** of riot or unruliness, **thus** reflecting **the** God-fearing atmosphere created in **the** home through **the** instruction **and** ensample of their parent or parents. An elder **must not be** self-willed (**the** latter word denoting one who is dominated **by** self-interest and inconsiderate of others, **and is the** opposite of gentle), nor soon or **quick to get** angry. **He must be** no "brawler", which is often associated with excessive drinking of wine, causing **him to be** quarrelsome; no "striker", or one who will not **hesitate to use his hands** or fists to **strike** another in anger. "**He must not be** greedy of filthy lucre", a man who will stop **at** nothing in order to obtain monetary **gain**. Hospitality **is** one of **the** required characteristics, which indicates a possession of kindness to others, **by** inviting **them** to his home **in** order to share food **and** shelter **if and** when occasion required. **He should be** well **balanced in** judgement and self-controlled, **the** faithful word of God being **his** rule of life; **and**

by his knowledge of the word able to teach and influence others.

As the Cretans were habitually and characteristically men who lacked principles of right behaviour, the overseer must be alert and able to control and rule such manifestations of Cretan behaviour if and when they became manifest among the saints.

In conclusion since we have read over and studied the needful qualifications of an overseer, we have felt the convicting power of the word (firstly to overseers for whose instruction and benefit it was primarily written, but also to deacons and saints), having realized how easily we can give way to the weaknesses of our carnal minds and nature. How often we are made to feel like Peter, who so boldly and confidently said, "If all deny Thee, yet will I never deny Thee", and at the slightest provocation or temptation we fall.

*D. Mawkinney, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Nottingham:** Titus was a Greek whose circumcision was resisted by Paul (Gal. 2: 3). He would probably be one of Paul's converts. The greeting of "my true son" (Titus 1: 4 NIV) underlines this. Paul obviously had a good opinion of Titus, as this would not have been the first time in which he had been left to handle a difficult situation. We see him at Paul's side in Jerusalem when Paul was mistrusted (Gal. 2:1), in Corinth when the problems were most critical (cf. 2 Cor. 8:16), and now in Crete. Paul knew that Titus would work in the same spirit (2 Cor. 12:18), and also live up to the required standards (Titus 2: 7).

The nucleus of Cretan saints was probably converted at Pentecost, but the follow-up work may well have been done by one of the apostles. However, there is no mention of this and the only reference to Crete is in Acts 27. Paul's visit with Titus would seem to be on a different occasion from this.

Titus had been left in Crete but whether Paul had left there by force or whether it was because he was needed elsewhere we do not know. His responsibility was to appoint elders and to correct the wrong teachings which had crept in. It would appear to be the Jews that were teaching the wrong doctrines. This was probably because they were jealous of the Gentiles' spiritual freedom. Yet Paul says that they must be silenced, not physically but through sound doctrine. In our study some felt that the elders were already chosen before Paul left and that Titus would only have had to

appoint them, rather than his having the responsibility to do both. In his letter Paul clearly states his advice in order of priority starting with his and their relationship to God, thus acknowledging His supremacy. Then he deals with the quality of elders, and lastly he makes reference to the saints in general.

Paul shows great concern that elders are appointed quickly in each place (Acts 14: 23), to prevent situations occurring similar to the one in Crete.

With reference to verse 5 we thought that it was not necessary for a brother's children to be believers before he could be recognized as an overseer, but rather that if the overseer has children who were believers and following on as disciples that they must not be unruly and disobedient. Paul emphasizes the importance of the teaching in the home, as an overseer's position and work would be an extension of this as he engaged in being a father of the flock.

*K. Hickling.*

## COMMENTS

- 1. (Liverpool):** Although Paul was an apostle he did not lay claim to a faith different from that of the rest of God's elect, nor to a superior sort of knowledge. Such a claim would be anathema to the apostle (Gal. 1: 8). Therefore he writes, "according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness".
- 2. (Liverpool):** The promise of God is undiminished in its value by being made before the beginning of time. At the appropriate moment the Spirit caused the record of this promise to be carried in the written word.
- 3. (Liverpool):** The date of the crucifixion is reckoned to be around 29-30 A. D. by those who believe that the birth of Christ took place in 4 B. C. The popular reckoning in which the commencement of the Common Era coincides with the birth of Christ is said to have resulted from the confusion by a monk of two different enrolments of Augustus Caesar.

**4. (Liverpool):** The initial lack of overseers from among themselves was being remedied as soon as men fitted by God, and exercised, were recognized in this capacity by Titus in fellowship with the apostle Paul, themselves overseers who had the care of these churches at heart.

*E. A.*

Search of the New Testament Scriptures will show that churches of God were always planted by those already in churches of God and by overseers at that. This is the point of Paul's journeys recounted in the Acts of the Apostles. Apart from historical fact it will be seen that from a doctrinal point of view it is impossible for a church of God to come into existence separately from already existing churches of God. There cannot be on earth at one time two houses of God functioning independently. It follows, therefore, that the churches of God in Crete were planted by overseers from other churches of God, and that it is not true to say that churches of God can be founded without overseers. The Scriptures do not make it plain who planted the churches in Crete. It may have been Paul and his formidable team of Titus, Apollos and Zenas. In which case these men tended the flock until indigenous overseeing men emerged to be appointed by Titus. On the other hand, if these churches were of long-standing when Paul and his companions visited them it may have been that the disorderly state of affairs included defections from oversight which Paul's visit and its consequences remedied.

*I. E. P.*

**5. (Liverpool):** It is not here implied that believers are ordinary. The purpose of gifts is the perfecting of the saints, "till we all attain unto the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13).

**6. (Liverpool):** See last paragraph of Nottingham paper.

**7. (Liverpool):** Cretan converts were in danger of reverting to the inclinations acknowledged to be characteristic of the Cretan people, and needed to be reprov'd sharply, if they were to be sound in the faith. They were liable to be led astray by fables of the type current among those "of the circumcision", and the more so if they were Jewish converts.

**8. (Liverpool):** The commandments of men included involved regulations in external matters of cleansing and abstention from certain foods. Those who

sought to impose these commandments were at the same time turning away from the truth. They were not dealing with the evil which proceeded from their own hearts. Love of gain was their motive.

Plain and pure words are frequently distorted by the evil mind, which by importing its own evil associations into the words misinterprets them, whether deliberately or not. It is the same with other things; the defiled mind sees in them impure associations which it seeks out and chooses. By contrast, the pure reject what is impure and receive only that which is pure in any circumstances. It is in this sense perhaps that all things are pure for them.

*E. A.*

9. **(Derby):** It may be that both meanings of "fable" given by friends in Derby are not independent. The point about a fable is that it is a man-made or fictional story. As such it may be useful as an illustration of truth. It cannot, therefore, be used as a factual basis from which truth may be derived. Since God has chosen to present divine truth in the forms of parables, types and shadows, it is easy to see how unscrupulous men may substitute what is man-made, or a fable, in order to mislead the unwary into thinking that there is some basis outside of themselves for their man-made doctrines.

*I. E. P.*

10. **(Birkenhead):** The reference in v. 12 is to the Epimenides paradox. Epimenides was a Cretan who made the statement "Cretans always lie", producing an example of a statement which is neither true nor false. Paul must have known of the philosopher's statement, and have taken it up, rather tongue in cheek, to reinforce his instructions.

11. **(Cowdenbeath and Derby):** There are several possible explanations of the phrase "husband of one wife":

1. That it refers to polygamous marriage, and requires the overseer to be monogamous. However, polygamy was not generally practised in the Greek and Roman spheres of influence, although it was, and is, prevalent in the Near East.

2. That it refers to men who had divorced one wife, and married another. Divorce was permitted by Roman, Greek and Jewish laws, and was quite common at the time.

3. That it refers to the man's faithfulness to his wife. The Greek gives no distinction between "man" and "husband" or "woman" and "wife",

leaving **the meaning to be determined by the** context. **The phrase could therefore be translated literally "man of one woman", meaning that there must be no marital infidelity.**

Whichever of **these is taken, it must be recognized that the statement is made in the** context of appointing elders from among **the men who are in the church. The** characteristics given are those which **make a man** eligible for appointment to **the** elderhood, not those which **are** essential for church fellowship. **It is true, of course, that** others should follow their **example, but it cannot be said that** what is essential for elders **is essential for all.** For there to **be any** point in Paul's instruction, there **must have been some in the churches** who might otherwise **have** been considered by **Titus as** possible elders who were not "husband of one wife". For this reason, **I** would reject **the** third explanation above, since surely a habitual adulterer would not **be** allowed to remain in **the** church. Rather more tentatively rejecting **the** first, on **the** grounds **that** polygamy was not very **likely** in Crete, **I am** inclined to regard **the** second **as the** correct explanation: **that** there were some **in the** church who **had** divorced **and** remarried, **and** although **they** were **permitted** to enter **the** church, **they** were not to **be** among **its** leaders. There is an extensive discussion of this point in **J. Miller's "Notes" on 1 Tim. 3: 2.**

**12. (Derby): A person's life is the** expression of his **heart.** Christians are sometimes regarded **as naive by** men of **the** world **because they seek** out **the** good in other things **and** people, **and** do not discern **the base** motives **and** corrupting innuendos **the** cynic finds so **easily.** Perhaps **it is the simple life** of faith **that** is referred to here [see Comment 8].

*P. L. H.*

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# bl studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17:11]

## EDITORIAL

8211

In this portion Paul counsels Titus regarding his ministry in the churches in Crete. In the advice given, account is taken of the pleasing blend of young and old that was to be found in the churches. It is good to find a balanced representation of each group—aged men, aged women, young men and young women. Assembly life is like an extension of family life with each section having a distinctive contribution to make for the well-being of the whole. Titus was exhorted to give sound helpful teaching that would set out clearly to old and young alike the conduct and deportment that was in conformity to the sound doctrine in respect of each group. Titus was also reminded of the vital importance of putting into practice in his own life the things he taught. He was to be an ensample (Gk. *tupos*) or pattern man worthy of emulation.

The word translated "purloining" (Gk. *nosphizo*) occurs twice in the New Testament, here in v. 10 and in Acts 5: 2, 3, where it is used to describe the action of Ananias and Sapphira when they appropriated for their own use part of the selling price of their possession, while pretending to lay it all at the apostles' feet. Christian slaves were to be exhorted not to pilfer; this was a temptation to which the slave was particularly exposed. Those who showed themselves to be trustworthy servants adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour by their conduct, although they occupied a lowly station in life.

The Cretan disciples lived, as we also do, in the morally polluted environment of this world, but the grace of God teaches us how to live temperately, righteously, godly and in expectation of the Lord's return.

When Paul wrote about "the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ", he was referring to *one* person and *one* event. The grammatical construction permits no other interpretation. The latter expression in the quotation bears witness to the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the great purposes of the death of Christ is highlighted in v. 14. He died to redeem a people for His own possession, zealous of good works.

J. K. D. J.

## PAUL, HIS MINISTRY AND HIS ASSOCIATES

*(Continued)*

The partnership with Barnabas having ended, Paul had to seek out a new co-worker. He chose Silas, a man of proven reliability who was acknowledged to be one of the chief men among the brethren (Acts 15: 22). Paul, doubtless, had made a personal assessment of the fitness of Silas and of his suitability as a co-worker during the association he had with him at Jerusalem and Antioch, when they were linked together in the conveying of the findings of the Jerusalem conference to the Gentile believers in Antioch. His involvement in Paul's second missionary journey would permit him to extend the scope of the initial assignment in delivering the decrees ordained of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to the Gentile churches they visited. Silas had another qualification in common with Paul that would be advantageous in the work among the Gentiles: he was a Roman citizen (Acts 16: 37). Sometimes he is referred to by his Roman name of Silvanus (1 Thes. 1: 1). It was with the full fellowship of the brethren in Antioch that Paul and Silas set out to take the land-route through Syria and Cilicia and then on to Derbe, Lystra and Iconium in Galatia. At this stage of the journey the objective was to confirm and strengthen the disciples in the Faith (Acts 15: 41).

At Lystra, however, Paul was so impressed by the spiritual potential and gift of a young man named Timothy that he enlisted him as a co-worker with the concurrence and approval of the elders at Lystra and Iconium (1 Tim. 4: 14). This marked the beginning of a very precious father and son relationship that continued throughout Paul's life of service bringing blessing, comfort and joy to both men. It was a partnership that was to make a valuable contribution to the spiritual state and well-being of the assemblies in the second half of the first century AD (Phil. 2: 22, 23).

There is a division of minds on whether Timothy came from Lystra or Derbe. Some think he came from the latter place. This view is apparently based on a particular rendering of Acts 20: 4. The weight of opinion and evidence, however, favours the view that it was Lystra. Timothy had been saved during Paul's earlier visit, and the teaching, example and suffering of Paul at that time had made a deep impression on the young man (2 Tim. 3: 10, 11). Timothy was the child of a mixed marriage, his mother being a Jewess and his father a Greek. Mixed marriages were not unknown among the Jews of the dispersion. Timothy's upbringing had been Jewish and he had been well instructed in the Old Testament Scriptures from his earliest years although he had not been circumcised (2 Tim. 3: 15). Paul took the unusual step of circum-

cising Timothy before **they set** out together as co-workers. **This action might seem** inconsistent conduct on **the** part of one who **was** carrying **the decrees** of **the apostles and** elders, documents which did not require **this** rite to **be** carried out on Gentile believers. **It was,** however, a matter of prudence, not one of necessity, **and** it removed possible restrictions on Timothy's ministry to **the** Jews. Furthermore **he** was half **a Jew by** birth **and** wholly one **by** training.

The **passage** of years **strengthened the** bonds **between Paul and Timothy and** in his letter to **the** Philippians Paul **says,** "**But I** hope in **the** Lord **Jesus** to **send** Timothy shortly unto you, **that I** also **may be** of good comfort, when **I** know your **state**" (Phil. 2: 19). Although there **was a** hiatus **between the ages** of **the** two **men,** their common interest in **the** things of God bound **them** together, **and such a** bond still unites young **and** old. Apparently there was a certain timidity of character on **the** part of Timothy **that** was likely to inhibit him in his service, particularly in assignments in which **he was** unaccompanied **by** other co-workers (1 Cor. 16: 10, 11; 2 Tim. **1: 6, 7**). Paul was fully aware of **these** traits in Timothy's character, **yet he had** full confidence in him **and** did not shrink from entrusting him with important assignments of a difficult nature. The difficulties **that** Timothy **had** to contend with **at Ephesus at a** later time **must** have presented him with a very severe challenge indeed **even** though fortified **by Paul's** letter **and the** instructions **and** encouragement it contained.

As **Paul and his** company moved on to open **up fresh areas they were** responsive to **the** leading **and** guidance of **the** Holy Spirit. Their experiences show **us that the** Spirit leads **men** to labour in specific areas **at** specific times. Having **been** restrained from working in Asia **and** Bithynia **at that** particular time **they** moved on to Troas, where **they** received positive indication **that** Macedonia should **be** their **next** sphere of **service.** **It was also at** Troas **that** another co-worker, **Luke,** joined **the** company. **It** would appear **that Luke** travelled with **the** party to Philippi **and** remained there after **Paul and** Silas left. **Luke** is not found numbered among Paul's company **again** until **Paul** returned to Philippi on his third missionary journey (**Acts 20: 5**). **He then** accompanied **Paul** on his journey to Jerusalem (**Acts 21: 17**). **He** travelled with him on **the** voyage to Rome, **sharing** in all **the** vicissitudes of **that** **eventful** journey (**Acts 27: 1, 28: 14**), **and** remaining **with** him **during** his period of imprisonment **as** references in **the** letters Paul wrote **at that time** show (**Philem. v. 24; Col. 4: 14**). **He was again by Paul's side as his** sole companion **during** **that** final imprisonment **as the** life of **the** great apostle of **the** Gentiles was drawing to **its** close (2 Tim. 4: 11). The presence **and** ministrations of **the** "**beloved physician**" **gave** great comfort **and** solace to **the** lonely apostle.

We are indebted to **Luke** not only for **the support he gave** to Paul **and** for his ministry **in the churches, but also for the** invaluable literary contribution **he made to the** New Testament writings. The Gospel addressed to Theophilus **and the** other historical book similarly **addressed, known to us as the Acts of the Apostles, came from his** pen. These are carefully researched accounts written in a **fine** literary style. They are, of course, inspired books, **but the** Holy Spirit **uses men in such a way that they leave the stamp** of their own personality on **the work they** do under His influence. **It has been** rightly said **that the Acts is a "pivotal" book. It provides us with a link between the life and ministry of Christ and the work of the apostles as they fulfilled the commission given to them by their risen Lord. It also relates to us how Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, was brought in to further divine purposes in his day in relation to the Gentiles. The narrative (or historical) books of the New Testament, the four Gospels and the book of Acts, are vitally important books to all believers of the post-apostolic period, for they show that what we believe has a firm basis in historical fact.**

**Luke** was a first class historian, **and he gives us** in his writings valuable correlations between **the events he is describing and** contemporary history. **He** was a **man** of science with a well-trained orderly mind, **yet he** was also a **human** self-effacing **man. He keeps** himself in **the** background of **the** narrative in **the** book of **Acts** indicating his **presence only by use of the** pronoun "we" where **this** is appropriate.

**Luke** was not only a historian **but as an** associate of **Paul** in his **travels he** was well fitted to **be his** biographer. Our knowledge of **Paul** is derived firstly from **the** narrative given in **the Acts and then** from **the** epistles **that Paul** wrote. **It is** perhaps fitting **that** this information should come to **us** from **the pen of the** only Gentile writer in **the** new Testament.

The fierce hostility of **the** Jews in Macedonia, which was directed particularly against Paul, prevented him from tarrying there **as long as he** would **have** wished for **the** upbuilding of **the** young churches **that had been** established there. The follow-up work **had to be** undertaken largely **by** his co-workers, who continued in Macedonia while **Paul went** on alone to **Athens and then** on to Corinth. Although hindered from returning to **the** Thessalonian saints **at an early date he** wrote to **them** while in Corinth linking **the names** of Silvanus **and** Timothy with his own in **the letters he** sent. The Thessalonian epistles are **the** first inspired epistles to come from **the pen of Paul, and are** probably among **the** first New Testament manuscripts to **be** penned. **We,** however, benefit from **the fact that Paul's** follow-up ministry **had to be** in

written form, for **these** letters preserve for **all** believers **the** comforting and illuminating exposition of **the** manner of **the** Lord's coming for His own and our meeting with Him in **the** air, as given in **the** first epistle, and **the** treatment of prophetic matters given in **the** second epistle.

The commitment of Silas and Timothy to the work in Macedonia meant that Paul was labouring alone in Corinth for a little while. It was at this point in time, however, that he met Aquila and Priscilla and that meeting marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship that was highly prized by Paul and had wide repercussions for good that affected many churches (Rom. 16: 3, 4). When Paul was joined in Corinth by his co-workers, Silas and Timothy, the work was given a new impetus, not only because of their presence but also because of the good report they brought of the Macedonian disciples and, particularly, of the steadfastness of the Thessalonian saints under trial. Little information is given of the part played by Silas and Timothy at Corinth, but Paul refers to it in his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1: 19). We do not read of Silas having any further association with Paul, but he may well have been the Silvanus who conveyed Peter's first epistle to Asia Minor (1 Pet. 5: 12).

*(To be continued)*

*J. K. D. J.*

#### TITUS 1: 6-8 TRACED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

An elder's believing children were to be such that they were not accused of riot or unruly behaviour. "Riot" (Gr. *asotia*) here indicates selfish extravagance of the sort pursued by the lost son of the parable (Luke 15: 13). The same word appears in the Septuagint version of Prov. 28: 7: "Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son; But he that is a companion of gluttonous men shameth his father". In translating the expression "is a companion of gluttonous men" the Septuagint used the words "cherishes riotousness". The word to "cherish" is *poimaino*, which elsewhere means to "shepherd". Thus it is not envisaged that an elder who tends the flock of God should have children cherishing or shepherding riotousness.

The Hebrew word representing *asotia* in Prov. 28: 7 is from the root *zalal*, which appears again in the passage concerning the stubborn and rebellious son (Deut. 21: 20), where it is translated "riotous liver". Other English words used to render the same Hebrew root are "gluttonous eater" (Prov. 23: 20) and "vile" (Jer. 15: 19; Lam. 1: 11).

The other word in Titus 1: 6 "unruly" (Gr. *anupotaktos*) is used in an O. T.

Greek version for "sons of Belial" in 1 Sam. 2: 12. **It** is derived from "**an-**" meaning "not" **and** the verb "*hupotasso*" "**I subject**", **which** appears in Ps. **37: 7**, "**Rest** in the Lord, **and** wait patiently for Him", literally "*Be obedient* to the Lord". The Hebrew here signifies "*ft silent* to the Lord".

The remaining two verses (vv. **7-8**) **may be** divided into seven. Titus was advised to have regard to seven qualities to **be** found in **an** overseer. The first of **these** is **that he** is to **be** found blameless.

1. **In the** Old Testament **as such** (Septuagint version) there **seems** to **be** no instance of **the** Greek word *anengkletos* ("blameless"). **It** is of interest, however, **that P.** Delitzsch when translating **the** New Testament into Hebrew, represented this Greek word **by the** Hebrew word *tarn* (Comp. Gen. **6: 9**, RVM. ), a description applied to Jacob (Gen. **25: 27**) **as being a "plain man"**, **and** to Job (Job **1: 1**) **as being "perfect"**. David wrote, "Mark **the** perfect man, **and** behold **the** upright: For **the** latter **end** of **that man** is **peace**" (Ps. **37: 37**).

There follow in Titus **1: 7** five qualities in **respect** of which **an** overseer is to **be** blameless.

(a) Self-willed (Gr. *authades*) was **the** description of Simeon **and** Levi in their anger (Gen. 49: 7, Septuagint), represented in English there **by the** word "fierce". **It** is a quality associated with pride born of a disregard for others. **Such** was **the** haughty man of Prov. **22: 24**, "The proud **and** haughty man, scorner is his **name**, **He** worketh in the arrogance of pride".

(b) The words "soon angry" (Gr. *orgilos*) describe **the** wrathful man of Prov. 29: 22, who "aboundeth in transgression". Prov. **22: 24** says, "With a wrathful man thou **shalt** not go", where **the** Septuagint **has** "thou **shalt** not **encamp**" (i. e. in **the** warfare).

(c) "Brawler" (Titus **1: 7**) is *paroinos*. Prov. **21: 17** says, "**He** that loveth wine (Gr. *oinos*) **and** oil **shall** not **be** rich '. **Instead** of **being** a sober person from whom one could **expect** spiritual enrichment, **the** brawler is **as** irresponsible **as** if **he** were drunken.

(d) The word "striker" (Gr. *plektes*) appears in **an** Old Testament Greek version **as** "**objects**" in Ps. 35: 15. Conduct like theirs would **be** inconsistent with **the** **example** of our Lord, **and** would give occasion to **the** adversary, whether **the** word is understood of **the** "fist of wickedness" (Is. **58: 4**) or of damaging words.

(e) The expression "greedy of filthy lucre" (Gr. *aischrokerdes*) does not appear in this form in **the** O. T., **but** it is said of Samuel's sons **that** they "**turned** **aside** after lucre, **and** took bribes, **and** perverted **judgement**" (1 Sam. 8: 3). Moses hearkened to **the** advice of his father-in-law in choosing **as** rulers "**able**

men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain" (Ex. 18: 21, 24). Thus the Psalmist says, "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, And not to covetousness" (Ps. 119: 36).

As stated before, blamelessness in these five respects is the first of seven qualities which Paul advised Titus to look for in an overseer.

2. Next comes the description "given to hospitality" (Gr. *philoxenos*). In this and the following two qualities the connection with the Old Testament is being traced through the Hebrew New Testament, since the Greek words in Titus for these qualities have no counterpart in the Septuagint Version. In each instance the Hebrew word through which the compiler of the Hebrew New Testament established a connection will be indicated in the Old Testament quotation. The example of the old man from the hill country of Ephraim (Jud. 19: 11 - 21) was in utter contrast to the conduct of the men of Gibeah among whom he sojourned; for after a full day's work in the field the old man exerted himself to accommodate and entertain the wayfarer (Heb. *'oreach*) whom the Benjamites at first neglected, then sought to harm.

*(To be continued)*

E. A.

## SOUND DOCTRINE [Titus 2]

**From Birkenhead:** From instructing Titus in general terms, Paul moves onto more specific teaching, which he expects Titus to deliver to the Cretans. Certain categories in the church were in need of particular attention and Paul writes accordingly.

Moderation in all things would be the collective title which could be used to cover those matters where excess is often evident. The elderly men were to be of a serious nature, moderate and sedate, dignified and not given to excess. Their faith, love and patience were to be obvious and constant. The elderly women were to be respectful in their manner and sober in behaviour. Their responsibility was to train the younger women in love and care of their families. The social structure would have been much different in those days, and the husband may have been away for much time, thus giving greater responsibility for the family to the young mother. However, burdens placed upon the Christian mother today are no less onerous with her responsibilities of care, support and training of children.

The one word "soberminded" is used in instructing the young men, and as this appears throughout the passage, it would seem that this was a particular

failing of these island people.

The importance of Titus' own behaviour is not forgotten as Paul seeks to impress upon his friend the necessity to demonstrate his faith and beliefs by his actions. His teaching and conversation were to be measured and thoughtful, giving no one the opportunity to contradict, and thus causing opponents to give thought to their own position.

The possibility of Christian slaves feeling equal in worldly matters to their masters is also envisaged. Rather should their knowledge of Christ be the means of humble and faithful service, and honest dealing for their heavenly Master's sake. By so doing, they would commend, to those who observed them, the value of the "doctrine of God our Saviour".

Again Paul is conscious of the unsaved, when he states that salvation is available to all, but not all have accepted, and there is need for constant witness. To those who know Christ as Saviour, there is the reminder that they have a glorious hope in view—the return of the Lord to the air for His people, when His glory will be made apparent to those who have placed their faith in Him.

There is that valuable teaching in v. 14, which not only serves to remind Titus and the Cretans, but also the reader, that redemption covers all iniquity and beyond this there is the knowledge that our Saviour desires a people of His own, dedicated in service to Him and identified by their earnest desire to be witnesses through their good works.

The final verse is a reminder to Titus of the authority and majesty of His Saviour. Being despised should have no effect upon him, and he is authorised by that same Saviour to make such teaching known in a forceful way among these people.

*R. D. Williams, R. C. Halpin*

**From Cowdenbeath:** Paul has emphasized the importance of the apostles' teaching. These are the God-breathed principles upon which the testimony of the Lord in Crete, as in every other place, is founded. Chapter 1: 9 refers to "the faithful word", "the teaching", "in sound doctrine". Paul has been careful to pass on the pure word of God. Now he exhorts Titus to speak to the saints only that which is in keeping with it. The ministry of sound doctrine to open and honest hearts will produce spiritual maturity. How careful we must be in our ministry!

As the saints in Crete looked to Titus for **guidance and** counsel (v. 7), so it was important **that** younger **saints** were able to look to older ones. This **placed** heavy responsibility upon them. Older men were to show **the** commendable graces **and steadfastness** mentioned in v. 2 for **the** encouragement of **the** younger men. How **sad** and **damaging** to **the** testimony of **the** Lord **it** is when older **men** waver and fall.

The important work of elder sisters was to show to younger women, **by** their godly example **and** teaching, their sphere of service in accordance with **the** Word of God. **We** noted **that the example** precedes **the teaching and** commented on **the** importance of **such** ministry in modern times.

There are certain matters in **the** epistle to which relatively frequent reference is made. Sobermindedness **is** one of **these** (ch. 1: 8, 2: 2, 5, 6, 12) **and it has** to characterize brethren and sisters alike. Indeed, our spiritual health will largely derive from what we allow into our minds and **the appeal** of **the** apostle **is that** our minds should **be kept** free from **the** flippant **and idle things** of life **that** we **may feed** upon **the** pure Word of God.

As **the** light of **the** Word always dispels **evil**, wholesome **speech that** cannot **be** condemned will **shame** opponents of **the** pure Word **since there will be** nothing with which to discredit **the** true disciple.

Once again, **as in** other epistles, Paul **has** counsel for servants. **It** would **seem that the** majority of saints **in the** Fellowship **in** early **times, as** now, were ordinary working people. The standard of their behaviour **in** service was to **be high, in keeping** with **the** Word **by** which **they** lived. **The phrase** "their own masters"\* **suggests** loyalty, **and they** were to conduct **themselves and** their **duties in such** a way **as** to give their masters pleasure. **They** were to **be** completely trustworthy. **The doctrine** of God would **not** adorn **them**. **They** were to adorn **the** doctrine **such that** others looking on **would see by** virtue of their conduct **the** glory of **the** truth of God. Precious witness!

**We** saw **the** grace of God **first in** salvation **and then in the** teaching of **such** **as had** received **His** salvation. **The** core of **this** instruction **is that we must live in the** light of **the** return of **the** Saviour. Mr. J. Miller, **in his** notes on vv. 12, 13, **states that the** phrase "soberly, righteously **and** godly" **has** to do with ourselves, our neighbours **and** our God.

**Friends** unanimously **agreed that** v. 13 referred to **the** coming **again** of **the**

Lord to the air at which time redeemed ones shall see His glory [Comment 1].

These instructions to Titus were the Word of the Lord. Titus had to regard them as such and therefore to discharge his ministry by way of commandment. No one was to depreciate Titus or his message. He was the servant of God.

*R. I. Shaw*

**From Derby:** The first ten verses of the chapter deal with teaching in respect of behaviour. The character of Christian behaviour can show differences between the old and the young. There are, however, points common to all. One such characteristic is sobermindedness. Paul indicates this for Titus to teach in vv. 2, 5, 6 and 12. The aged men are to be grave; they should feel the weight of responsibility. The aged women are to be reverent in demeanour; this is almost the same as being grave. The chapter does not mention teaching of the young men by the old men. It does show that within family relationships the aged women have an important part to play [Comment 6]. Titus is not left out in the exhortation. In vv. 7 and 8 he is told to make sure that no one can reproach the churches because of his behaviour or teaching.

The exhortation to servants made greater demands at the time when the epistle was written than it does today; but the principles still hold. Purloining is petty stealing and its avoidance today is as important as it was then. Faithfulness towards men can adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Now comes the effect of the grace of God. It brings salvation within the reach of all men. Unfortunately some reject this salvation deliberately, and the penalty is dreadful. However, the grace of God, when received, instructs and leads to the avoidance of worldly lusts and the attainment of a sober and righteous life in an evil world. This is a present salvation.

While this life is being lived out one looks for the appearing of the Lord Jesus who is here described as our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In v. 14 it is seen that this redemption is from iniquity to becoming part of a zealous, serving people of God.

The chapter finished with a repeat—in effect—of the instruction in Titus 1: 11. Titus must maintain his authority and defeat any spiteful criticism.

*N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From Liverpool: Contrast** (v. 1). The sound doctrine of **this** chapter **stands in** contrast to **the myths**, corruption and disobedience spoken of in 1: 14-16. **As Paul** gives directions to **the** various groups **it is obvious that in each case a** Christian should **stand** out among **his** fellows **as far as his life is** concerned.

**The old** (vv. 2-5). From **the** older folk **a high standard is expected: the** Christian life **is a** life of **faith** and **the** mature Christian **must be** "healthy" in faith to withstand **the** various crises of life. The men are to **be** "worthy of respect" (NIV) which is preferable to "grave" (RV), not ruling out **the** possibility of **a** sense of humour **but being** dignified [Comment 2]. The women are to **teach**, though not publicly, **and** have **a** lot of responsibility in training **the** young and in **the** very important domestic **sphere** of service. **We** ought, perhaps, to **be** careful **that** we do not restrict **the** service of older sisters to **that** of buttering bread for conferences and mopping **the** hall floor! Paul **is** concerned for **the** soundness of **the** old—if **the** more mature go wrong **and set a bad** example **the** younger folk will **be** led astray also.

**The young** (vv. 4-8). **We assumed** Titus was **a** young man [Comment 3]. Paul does not **ask** from **the** young what **he expects** of **the** older ones, **but they** are to **be** self-controlled, **and** Titus is to **be** an example to them. Doing good involves positive action **and** is not **just a case** of keeping out of **mischief!** **We** should **put** our **best** into everything we do. **It is easy** to understand **the need** for young wives to **be taught** to love their **husbands**, especially in **a** society of **arranged** marriages, **but** we found it difficult to understand **the** point in their having to **be taught** to love their children. Surely **that** is natural; or **is this a** cultural problem relating to **the** Cretans [Comment 4]?

**Others** (vv. 9-10). **It is an** extremely important **thing** to "**make the** teaching about God our Saviour attractive" (v. 10 NIV). **If an** outsider **does not see that** our beliefs **affect us** positively **then** there will **be** nothing to recommend **them** to **them**. **It would be a** serious condemnation of **us** if somebody was **put off** by seeing **us** **and** finding our way of life unattractive **and** uninviting.

**Our Salvation** (vv. 11-15). Paul is not preaching **a** universal salvation, **but** is rather showing **that** this salvation provided **by** God **is** within **the** reach of **all;** **in a** similar way **the** Lord **Jesus** said, "**But I... will draw all men to Myself**" (John 12: 3) [Comment 5]. The grace of God **has** appeared **because Jesus has** appeared, **and he has** brought salvation. **In v. 14 we have:**

salvation —"to redeem **us** from **all** wickedness"

sanctification —"to purify for **Himself a** people **that** are **His very own**"

**From Melbourne:** The term "sound doctrine" covers many of the practical things of life, in addition to church and evangelical truth given by the Lord and His apostles. It is here emphasized that it is a becoming thing that aged men be self-controlled in their speech and actions, not quick tempered or given to undue levity or jocularity in their conversation. We do well to remember the words of the Lord Jesus that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement". This we believe is true, whether it be applied to the Judgement Seat of Christ or to the Great White Throne. It has been said concerning the former — "If tears be shed at all, they will be the last, and the most bitter", but then we shall have the mind of Christ, and will see everything from His standpoint and say Amen to all His decisions. In the light of the solemn issues of that scene we should let our speech and actions be governed thereby. The Holy Spirit, through the Word, can instruct us aright in the control of our tongues, in our speakings with others and in our use of the Word of God. We shall meet our words again in His presence, how solemn the thought!

Let your aged women likewise be reverent in demeanour; here too there is no place for levity, but under the control of the Spirit and the word of God "a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband"; she adorns his testimony while in this world, and she also adorns his testimony towards them that are without, as well as before those in an assembly of God. Her influence among the saints is incalculable, and the law of kindness is on her tongue. What an influence she can exert in everyday life, in the assembly and in the home. Younger women are influenced by her, and also many of a later generation, grandchildren and others. Her husband too will be blessed among men and in the churches of God.

Younger men, as they develop in spiritual stature, should leave behind them many of the tendencies and worldly habits which may have been clinging to them unrestrained, or partly so. Titus had the responsibility to be an ensample so that none could bring accusations against the testimony among men, whether in speech or behaviour, and especially so because of the low moral standards prevailing in Crete. There are those around who watch in order to criticize and to cast reproach upon the people of God and to bring accusations which dishonour the Name. The influence of young men is far reaching, both in this life and in that which is to come.

The accuser of men has won a victory if he succeeds in bringing a degree of dishonour on God's people through the indiscretions of youth. How much we can influence others for good or ill, and how much we ought to exercise ourselves (of whatever age) to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

The free and unmerited favour of God our Saviour has been manifested towards men — bringing salvation within their reach, saving those who believe with an eternal salvation, and apart from human merit. Although made free from the requirements of the law, and brought out from the prison-house, where we lay under sentence of death, it is the privilege of the redeemed to manifest a righteous manner of life, looking for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, a people for His own possession, zealous of good works.

These things were taught and emphasized with apostolic authority as essential to the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.

*W. H. Fullerton, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Nottingham:** The opening verses of the chapter **relate** to **the** apostle's remarks in vv. 10-16 of chapter 1, in which he writes about "vain talkers and deceivers". The word "thou" in chapter 2:1 is emphatic, and Paul is drawing a contrast between what was said by the vain talkers and that which Titus must teach. Some believers shy away from the word "doctrine", describing it as "cruel" and "harsh", but the meaning of the word so translated is teaching or instruction. The reference to teaching would impress upon us the importance which God places upon it. The pattern of sound words is precious to God and so should be to us and we should be prepared to hold and guard it (1 Tim. 1: 13).

Vv. 2-10 contain instructions from **the** apostle **regarding** the conduct of different sections of **a church** of God. **An** examination of **the words used** is helpful. **In** some **cases there is** only **a shade** of **difference in the meaning**, but clearly **the standard of conduct required from those in the assembly was high**, and would contrast **in a pronounced way** with their natural **character** as mentioned by **Paul in chapter 1: 12**. **In this** exhortation **the apostle presents a** balanced picture, **there being** both **a positive and a negative side**. The elder women **must be** reverent, not slanderers, not **enslaved to much wine**, but **the constructive work they could and should do was to help and train** younger sisters. **We wondered in what way they would train** younger women to love their **husbands**, or **why this should be necessary**, but **it may be that some were**

becoming involved in other interests to **the neglect of this** important responsibility. The reason for the **maintenance of the standards set is given; there** were always those outside who were **ready to use any failure as a means** of saying evil things or blaspheming against the Word of God.

The standard set for the bondservants is **a high one, and may well have** presented a severe challenge to many in this position. Some **believing slaves,** who had believing masters, **may have considered themselves on equal terms, but** the apostle makes it clear that they had a responsibility to **be** in subjection to their masters and to render a cheerful obedience. Purloining would **be,** no doubt, a common practice, but this must cease and their conduct must **be** in the light of the principle of Ephesians 6: 8.

There is some doubt as to the rendering of v. 11. **The** exact order of **the** words is, 'For there hath appeared the grace of God bringing salvation to all men'. Many scholars consider the RV rendering to be preferable to **the** AV. Young's literal translation has, 'For the saving grace of God was manifested to all men'. This relates to the incarnation, the work and resurrection of **the** Lord. The word "appeared" has the sense of "give light to". **The** saving grace of God has certainly been manifested in **the gift God gave, but not every** man has or will avail himself of this salvation. **In v. 13 we have the appearing** of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. This **refers to His coming to the air as** the absence of the definite article before "**appearing**" **makes it a reference** to one thing, the blessed hope and appearing.

The AV rendering of v. 13... "the glorious **appearing of the great** God and our Saviour Jesus Christ... " implies a **reference** to two **Beings, but** looking to the original, the RV rendering is found to **be** correct; "... **appearing of the** glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.... " Dr. Young has "... manifestation of the glory of our **great God and Saviour Jesus Christ....** " Thus we have established the deity of the Lord.

The reference to a collective people in v. **14** takes our thoughts **back to the** "sound doctrines" of v. **1**. **Sadly, many believers** do not **appreciate** God's desire for a peculiar, **separated** people or **misapply such scriptures as this to all** believers irrespective of their divisions into **sects and systems. Titus was to** teach God's way **and no man** was to **despise him. Such an attitude was** possible especially with any who did not **want to be instructed in God's way.** The words used in respect of Timothy in a similar context, "thy youth", **are** not used here and perhaps Titus was an older man.

*R. Hickling*

**From Vancouver B. C.:** It would **appear that the epistles of 1 Timothy and** Titus were written by **Paul** after he had **been tried and was acquitted. Paul** was concerned as to the spiritual conditions of the church in Ephesus and **the**

churches in Crete. From Titus 1: 5 we learn that Titus was to appoint elders in every city. Therefore, there would be more than one assembly on the island of Crete.

2 Cor. 11: 23-29 gives an outline of how much Paul suffered in his service for the Lord, and concludes with the words, "That which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches". Thus he could depend on Timothy and Titus to strengthen and establish the churches. They were to speak the things which befit the sound doctrine (Greek, "healthful teaching"). The topic before us is very fundamental. Those in Crete were saved, baptized and added and had accepted the Truth. But Titus was exhorted to teach them to live daily lives worthy of the people of God. If the teaching of these fundamental truths was necessary in Paul's day, it is very necessary in the days in which we live.

We note that Paul divides the saints into different categories; aged men, aged women, younger men and those who were bondservants. We note that Paul did not mention the younger sisters. The older sisters were to guide and teach the younger sisters. Could it be that Titus was a young brother, similar to Timothy who went to Ephesus? [Comment 3], The churches in Crete had not been long planted [Comment 7]. There were things still wanting and also regarding the appointing of overseers, the description of the men in Crete would make it very difficult to appoint reliable brethren. Chapter 1:10 mentions men of the circumcision, "whose mouths must be stopped". Apostles must have had much difficulty with Israelites that came into the churches (See Acts 11: 2, Acts 15 and Heb. 6: 4-6). They sought intermingling of Old Testament truths with the truth related to the churches of God.

*7. Bell*

## COMMENTS

**1. (Cowdenbeath):** I agree with this viewpoint which is also the one taken in the Nottingham paper.

Some relate the "appearing of the glory" to the Lord's coming as Son of Man and "the blessed hope" to His coming as Son of God", but the construction in the original Greek indicates that only one event is being referred to. There are two examples of this construction in this verse (see editorial). Another example is found in Eph. 4: 11 indicting that "pastor and teacher" is a description applicable to one person.

**2. (Liverpool):** In defining "grave" W. E. Vine quotes from Trench, "the word we want is one in which the sense of gravity and dignity is combined", and from Moule, "the word points to a seriousness of purpose and to self-respect in conduct".

**3. (Liverpool and Vancouver):** Titus, like Timothy, was a much younger man than Paul. Paul was a spiritual father to both these men (1 Tim. 1: 2; Phil.

2: 22; Titus 1: 4). Both had been associated with Paul in service for more than a decade prior to the writing of this letter. They had attained to spiritual maturity although relatively young and could be given difficult assignments. Writing to Timothy about the same time as he wrote to Titus, and in a similar vein (1 Tim. 4: 12), Paul referred to Timothy's youth, but he also described him as a "man of God" (1 Tim. 6: 11). The word to Titus does not make reference to his youth (a point made by friends in Nottingham), so perhaps Titus was a little older than Timothy.

*J. K. D. J.*

**4. (Liverpool):** Maternal affection is a natural instinct, yet it is possible for sin to deprave to such an extent that this is no longer in evidence. Obedience to the sound doctrine, however, would ensure that love towards husband and children would be manifestly seen in a Christian household and no cause would be given to any to malign the Word of God.

*J. K. D. J.*

The last verse of the old Testament Scriptures shows that the disaffection of parents and children is a sign of spiritual declension and contrariwise spiritual revival is marked by the revival of such natural affection. See also Romans 1: 31.

*I. E. P.*

**5. (Liverpool):** The verse certainly does not mean that the grace of God has brought salvation to all men, for that is not so. There seems to be agreement among such authorities as Young, Alford, Wuest and Vine that *soterios* (saving, bringing salvation) describes the Grace of God in Titus 2: 11. It is this saving grace that has been revealed to all.

I do not see a clear parallel with John 12: 32. All men are not drawn to Christ for salvation, but if the concept of drawing in grace and in judgement is permissible none is excluded, "for every knee shall bow" (Rom. 14: 11; Phil. 2: 10).

*J. K. D. J.*

**6. (Derby):** Titus 2: 3-4 deals with the instruction of young women by aged women within a church of God.

**7. (Vancouver):** There is no evidence that the churches of God in Crete had been newly planted at the time of Paul's epistle to Titus. Absence of elders may be due to defection as well as fledgling assembly growth.

*I. E. P.*

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# Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God [Acts 17: 11]

## EDITORIAL

8212

In concluding his letter to Titus, the last chapter of which we study this month, the apostle Paul returns to the great work of God on which all his exhortations to holy life are based: "according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit". The new life from God is a prerequisite for works which will please Him, as the Lord Jesus made clear to Nicodemus (John 3: 3, 5, 7).

It is one of the symptoms of the decline in knowledge of the scriptures in today's society that this doctrine is not understood, even by people who are intelligent and otherwise widely read. In reviewing a book on the Puritans, Marghanita Laski writes:

The Puritans' doctrine on good works I still do not understand, and I suppose it is not to be expected that I should. We all know... that it was not through good works that a man or woman could be justified, could achieve that assurance of salvation. But since... the Puritans believed that the justified man or woman could not but turn to good works, then good works were clearly worth turning to and were pleasing to God. So why not get on with some good works while awaiting assurance of salvation? (Country Life, Oct. 7, 1982).

This argument fails to appreciate that every aspect of the human personality is corrupted by sin, so that nothing done by a man in his natural state can be wholly acceptable to God. Such good works (although, of course, preferable to bad ones) can never bring anyone nearer to justification, since "the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt" (Rom. 4: 4). It is only when the inner canker is removed by the work of God that a man's works are fully acceptable to Him.

The part of the Holy Spirit in this work is a fundamental one. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2: 14), and the work of regeneration is a prerequisite for the reception of God's will. The Spirit, working through the agency of the word of God, received by faith, gives spiritual life through the new birth, and renews the whole being, so that what was formerly tainted now becomes acceptable to God.

Thus Paul could write **that** those "who **have** believed God **may be** careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3: 8). This **is** our **calling** too: we should bear **in mind that** all doctrinal **study** should yield practical consequences; **and** practical actions should **be based in** doctrine. **It is** clear **that the** teaching of **the** gospel is **needed** more **than** ever today; **and** it is equally clear **that** we cannot do this effectively without **the** constant work of **the** Holy Spirit, **because** only **He has the** power to lead **men** to Christ.

*P. L. H.*

### **TITUS 1: 6-8 TRACED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT [continued]**

3. The elder was also to **be a** "lover of good" (Gr. *philagathos*). The Lord's word to **the** house of Israel was, "**Hate the evil, and love the good** (Heb. *'ehbhū tobh*) **and** establish **judgement in the gate**" (Amos 5: 15). Micah declared, "**He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?**" (Micah 6: 8).

4. The "soberminded" **man** (Gr. *sophron*) is prudent **and** not impulsive, not ill-timed in his actions or going about things in **the** wrong way. **He has** a proper humility of thinking, realistically appraising **the** measure of **his** own faith. "**When** pride cometh, **then** cometh **shame: but** with **the** lowly (Heb. *tsenu'im*) is wisdom" (Prov. 11: 2; Rom. 12: 3).

5. The **next** characteristic is **that he** should **be "just"** (Gr. *dikaios* = *just*, righteous). **In** Is. 26: 7 we read, "The way of **the just** is uprightness: Thou **that** art upright dost direct **the pat** of **the just**". Then **it is that "the** righteous is a guide to his neighbour" (Prov. 12: 26). "The lips of **the** righteous **feed** (as a shepherd) **many**" (Prov. 10: 21). **In each** instance **the** word **used** in **the** Septuagint version is *dikaios*.

Ps. 92: 12-15 **takes up the theme** of **the** justice of **the** Lord borne out in His blessing of **the** righteous. "The Lord trieth **the** righteous" (Ps. 11: 5; Gen. 22: 1). Nevertheless "**the path** of **the** righteous is **as the** shining light, **that** shineth more and more unto **the** perfect **day**" (Prov. 4: 18).

6. The word "holy" (Gr. *hosios*) corresponds largely to **the** Hebrew word *chasid*, and signifies **the** response to God's lovingkindness in a purity of devotion to Him. **In the** Septuagint it represents "godly" in Ps. 4: 3, "Know **that the** lord **hath set** apart **him that** is godly for Himself". **It is** also found in Ps. 12: 1; 32: 6; 86: 2 in **the same** sense. This word **is** applied to **the** Lord our God, as being "*gracious* in **all** His works" (Ps. 145: 17).

7. "Temperate" (Gr. *engkrates*) **means** moderate **as the** result of having power over one's own inclinations or **appetites**. **The verbal** form (*engrateuomai*) **is used** of Joseph in Gen. 43: 31, Septuagint, "And he washed **his face, and** came out; **and he refrained himself, and** said, **Set on**

bread". The actual adjective, however, is **used** only **this** once in **the** New Testament, **and in** one of **the** versions of Num. **6 in** connection with **the** Nazirite.

*E. Archibald*

### **PAUL, HIS MINISTRY AND HIS ASSOCIATES [Continued]**

Paul paid a brief visit to **Ephesus** on **the** return journey to Antioch **at the** end of his second missionary journey. Priscilla **and** Aquila, who had travelled with him from Corinth, remained **at Ephesus and** Paul promised to return there at a later **date** to labour, God willing. **It** was there, during Paul's **absence** that this worthy couple **met the** learned **and** eloquent Apollos. Having **been** well-taught **by** Paul **they** were able to **take** Apollos aside and **in** their home **they** expounded unto him **the** way of God "more carefully". **It is** to Apollos' credit **that he** accepted **the** instruction that **he** was given, and, having his knowledge of God's will **thus updated, he in turn** was able to render valuable help **by** complementing Paul's work in Corinth with his **unique** style of ministry (**Acts 18: 27**). **It** is evident that Paul was appreciative of **the** work **that** Apollos was able to do **and** communicated with him **in** seeking to promote **the** spiritual well-being of **the churches** (1 Cor. 16: 12; Titus 3: 13; 1 Cor. 3: 6).

On his third missionary journey Paul returned to **Ephesus and** laboured there for **three years** (**Acts 20: 31**). The divine Spirit, who **had** turned **Paul** away from Asia **at an** earlier date, worked through him mightily during **this** ministry in Ephesus. **We are** not given detailed information about Paul's co-workers in Ephesus, **but** we do know **that** Timothy was with him part of **the** time **and** was **sent** with Erastus to Macedonia. Reference is also **made** to Gaius **and** Aristarchus, Paul's companions in travel (**Acts 19: 22, 29**). **It** was during his Ephesian ministry **that the** first epistle to Corinth was written. The epistle dealt with things **that** were wrong in Corinth **and** also gave teaching on specific difficulties on which **the** Corinthians **had** requested help (1 Cor. 16: 8, 9). The second **letter** was apparently written from Macedonia **after** Titus had reported on **the** reaction of **the** Corinthians to **the** first letter (2 Cor. **7: 5-7**). Paul gives **us** more information about himself in **the** second **letter** to **the** Corinthians **than** in any other Epistle **he** wrote.

Titus was another associate **and** co-worker whose relationship **with** Paul was similar to Timothy's. Titus **had** accompanied **Paul and** Barnabas to Jerusalem when **the** controversy regarding **what** should **be** required of Gentile believers was current. **He** provided a **test case** as **he** was a **Gentile, but he** was not required to **be** circumcised (Gal. 2: 3). **He** was a **man in** whom **Paul had** confidence **and** was entrusted with **difficult assignments in** Corinth **and** in Crete. **In the** closing **phase** of his ministry **Paul** wrote

epistles to both Timothy and Titus relating to the work that had been delegated to them. These epistles have come to be known as the pastoral epistles. Although there are similarities between Titus and Timothy in their associations with Paul we get the impression that Titus had a stronger personality than Timothy.

When Paul eventually left Ephesus he travelled through Macedonia and into Greece, where he spent three months. It was while he was at Corinth on this journey that he wrote the epistle to the Romans. The opening verses of chapter 16 of the epistle provide us with an example of a letter of commendation, written for Phoebe, a sister who was moving from Cenchreae to Rome and was presumably the bearer of the epistle (Rom. 16: 1, 2). The references in Romans 15: 25-28 give us definite pointers to the time of writing. This epistle, addressed to the saints in Rome, gives us a masterly exposition of the great truths of the Gospel and underlines for us again the great debt we owe to Paul for setting out for us so effectively the great truths of the Faith.

A major objective before Paul and his associates at this particular time was the completion of the collection from the Gentile churches for the benefit of those in need in Jerusalem. Paul's company on the return part of his third missionary journey was therefore augmented by the presence of the representatives of the churches making a contribution. Those travelling with him from Macedonia were Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus (Acts 20: 4). Luke joined the company at Philippi (Acts 20: 6). Some of these only travelled with Paul as far as Asia, but the rest accompanied him to Jerusalem.

While Paul and his companions were at Caesarea they were informed by the prophet, Agabus, of the consequences of Paul's visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21: 11), but Paul could not be persuaded to alter his plans. The message through Agabus did not instruct him not to go to Jerusalem; it only forewarned him of what would happen there. Such was Paul's devotion to his Lord that he was not deterred from following the pathway that he firmly believed to be the will of God for him whatever the cost might be (Acts 20: 22); finally his friends too accepted this to be the will of the Lord (Acts 21: 14). So Paul, like his Master, set his face to go to Jerusalem knowing the things that would befall him there.

Paul found on his arrival at Jerusalem a church that was numerically strong, comprising many thousands of Jews (Gk. *myriads*), but the majority of these Jewish disciples did not fully appreciate that the law had been superseded by the Faith. He was, therefore, willing to act on the advice given him by James and the elders in Jerusalem. While he was in the Temple, however, carrying out their advice, he was seized by a frenzied

Jewish mob from which **he** was rescued **by the** Roman garrison in Jerusalem.

**In the** period of imprisonment **that** followed **Paul's** arrest other **aspects** of the prophecy **made** to Ananias were fulfilled **as** Paul successively **made his defence** before **the** Jewish leaders, **the** Roman governors, Felix and Festus, **and** before **the** emperor's court in Rome. **Little** information is available to **us** about **the** two-year period of imprisonment in Caesarea. **We** are told **that** Paul was given certain privileges, **and** his friends were permitted to minister to him. Doubtless one of those who would **take advantage** of **these** concessions would **be** Luke. **We** have no definite information on **Luke's** movement **at** this period, **but it seems** likely **that he** was in **the** area of Caesarea **at** this time. **It** is also highly probable **that** during this period **he** collated **the** material from **authentic** sources **that he used** in the writing of **the** books of **Luke and Acts** (Luke 1: 1-4). **In** this connection his description of Mnason **as "an early disciple"** is significant. The Gospel of **Luke may** have **been** written during **Paul's** Caesarean imprisonment.

**When Paul set** sail for Rome **as a** prisoner, **Luke and** Aristarchus travelled with him, **and the** eventful voyage was **superbly** chronicled **by** Luke.

The overruling providence of God **that** secured for **Paul** some relaxation of **the** rigours of imprisonment in Caesarea secured for **him** further dispensations during **the** two-year period of house-arrest in Rome, **as the** closing portion of **the** book of **Acts** shows (**Acts** 28: 16, 30, 31). **We might** wonder why this outstanding servant of God should have **his** movements so restricted for **such a** period of time, **but the** record shows **that** this was not **a** fruitless period. **Paul** was **able** to carry on **a** ministry to **all** who **came** to visit him in his hired dwelling, **and** more importantly **he** was **able** to **engage** in **a** rich written ministry. Four priceless inspired **epistles, Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, emanated** from **the** Roman imprisonment, **a** further contribution to **the** canon of Scripture. The enforced confinement provided more time for prayer **and** meditation, **and made** possible too **the** rich outpouring of divine truth **that** is to **be** found in **these** prison epistles. The epistles **tell** too of **the** apostle's earnest prayers on **behalf** of those to whom **he** wrote (**Phil. 1: 3, 4; Eph. 1: 15-21; Col. 1: 9-12**), for **there** still pressed upon him daily, **"anxiety** for all **the** churches".

The salutations **and** other references contained in **the** prison epistles **give us** further information on Paul's close associates **and** on **their** movements **at that** point in time. **Paul** was increasingly relying on **them** to communicate with **the** various churches **and** to carry on **the** vital ministry **they** needed.

Of **the** ministry **and** movements of **the** apostle **subsequent** to **the** two-year imprisonment in Rome we have no certain knowledge. **The** four prison epistles contain **statements that indicate that Paul was anticipating** a period

of freedom (Philem. 22; Phil. 2: 24). It is generally thought that the epistles of 1 Timothy and Titus belong to this further period of freedom, travelling and counselling, while the second epistle of Timothy was written during a further final period of imprisonment in Rome. This epistle is the last to come from the pen of the beloved apostle. He wrote it in the certain knowledge that his end was near. For him earth was receding and heaven was drawing near. From the day of his conversion until the day of his death he had pressed on towards the goal (Phil. 3: 14). In retrospect he was able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the Faith" (2 Tim. 4: 7). What a tremendous debt we owe to the great apostle of the Gentiles who unswervingly in his own generation served the counsel of God.

*J. K. D. J.*

### ADMONITIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS: **Titus 3**

**From Birkenhead:** Bearing in mind the national traits of the Cretans which had become evident in their Christian lives Paul gives further instruction with regard to subjection. Their lives were to be characterized by their readiness to be responsive to the authority of those who had responsibility over them in matters of this world. Provided that there was no conflict with the will of God, they should not only obey, but their willingness to perform good works and voluntary acts which would witness well for their Saviour should be recognizable. Beyond this their manner of life was to be in keeping with that expected of Christian disciples. They were not to be guilty of those things mentioned in detail in verse 3, but he takes yet of their Master—meekness.

Paul reminds them that he teaches with the benefit of a full knowledge of the dangers, snares and sins of the unsaved. Both he and Titus had been guilty of those things mentioned in detail in verse 3, but he takes yet another opportunity to mention to them, through Titus, the wonderful change that has been wrought in their lives through the love and kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ [Comment 1]. It was not well-intentioned works which brought about this change, but the mercy of God. They were re-born having received from the word of God that cleansing which included forgiveness and justification. God's grace went beyond that, however, by pouring out upon them the Holy Spirit of God which would give them the power to live the lives which Paul was making known to them.

The Christian life is not without its reward, and this is pointed out in verse 7 when, becoming heirs, they are reminded of all that is involved in the words "eternal life".

The danger of false teaching and ideas being spread amongst the Cretans

is realized by Paul who instructs Titus with regard to the treatment which such people should receive. He points out that in perpetrating such teachings they are condemning themselves before others and before God. Their treatment for following such a course of action as laid down by Paul in this chapter forms part of the New Testament teaching regarding government of the churches of God.

Showing that he has a concern, and that they should have an equal thought for the material well-being of others, Paul instructs that there should be adequate consideration given to the welfare of each other, as evidenced by his instruction regarding Zenas and Apollos.

*R. C. Halpin, R. C. M. Bolt*

**From Cowdenbeath:** The backcloth to the chapter is God's kindness, love, mercy and grace. The exhortation has been given that "we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world".

Now Paul exhorts Titus so to encourage the saints that, as an outcome, it will be their mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient and so on. Rulers suggest those in power who exercise it according to their calling, and authorities suggest those who make and administer law. To both we are to be subject under the hand of God.

Once again the matter of good works emerges. The doing of them (v. 2) and the maintaining of them (v. 8) underline the fact that the disciple life is an exceedingly practical experience. As one has commented in the past, "we cannot be so heavenly-minded as to be no earthly good". The Lord's disciples are to be God's gentlemen, not lovers of argument or seekers of the last word.

What a change took place in our lives as a result of the kindness, love and mercy of God. We once were wicked and hateful but He saved us. The washing of regeneration expresses the result of the application of the word of God to our hearts. It brought change. We were born again and through the indwelling Spirit now live a life of triumph in Christ, justified by God's grace to be heirs of His blessings. Those who enjoy such blessings are to recognize those things which are of value (v. 8) and to avoid things of no value (v. 9) to the Christian life. We believe that the man referred to in verses 10 and 11 is envisaged as being in an Assembly and that the refusal implies excommunication. The doctrine of the Lord is not self-choosing (heresy), but has been once for all delivered unto the saints. Saints are gathered together acknowledging a common faith. To promulgate different doctrine is to be self-condemned.

As a parting instruction the apostle once again underlines the practice of good works. The RV margin states "profess honest occupations" which,

although including our daily employment, we believe to encompass all spheres of Christian life.

*R. I. Shaw*

From Derby: The instruction in this chapter is chiefly in respect to behaviour towards men. The first is a call for subjection to the civil authority.

There are occasions when the Christian has to choose between subjection to God's law and that of established authority. Peter and John in Acts 4: 19, 20 had to make the choice to disobey the rulers. Outside of such considerations the Christian is to accept such authority. This is seen as a good work and though it has no bearing on eternal salvation it is one of many works which have value in Christian testimony.

Evil speaking (v. 2) is that which is intended to injure and must be avoided at all times. Contention is different. Sometimes one has to contend for the Tightness of some matter. However, there are people whose nature is contentious. It is to such that the admonition of v. 2 applies. The opposite of such contention is meekness, which is commended by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 5: 5.

One cannot think that Paul includes himself in the "we" of v. 3, since he did claim before the chief priests and council (Acts 23: 1) that he had lived in all good conscience until that day. The "we" must be the unconverted generally [Comment 1].

The contrast comes in vv. 4-7 where the principle of salvation on the ground of grace alone is enunciated.

God's love towards man involves Him in acts of kindness whereas mercy (v. 5) suggests the thought of legitimate punishment's being laid aside. With this is opened up a new life through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. This is in keeping with the words of the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again".

Verse 8 indicates good works as a source of profit for all in contrast with the foolishness of certain questionings which bring strife and are useless and unprofitable.

With v. 10 comes once more the need for rule. Someone who will not accept established doctrine is a heretic. He has a choice. He may accept the rule; failing this he is to be refused and, presumably, excommunicated.

Verses 12-14 are personal and in them there is again the call to good works.

*TV. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

**From Leeds:** Summing up, Paul encourages Titus to be bold and to assert,

with confidence, those things of God which he was constantly to bring before the Cretans, "faithful sayings" which cannot be gainsaid. Concerning these matters Titus was to speak with absolute certainty in the authority of the truth, to the end that those who believed in God would receive things that were both good and profitable, and that they might so continue in making it their aim to maintain good works (v. 8).

Titus was to put them in mind of what manner of people true Christians should be: law-abiding, helpful, well-mannered, even-tempered and respectful, manifesting a gentle disposition towards all (v. 2).

Lawlessness abounds in the world today, and subjection, either to the law (of the flesh) or towards God (of the Spirit) is far from the thoughts and actions of natural man.

Believers are to *put themselves* under subjection to the obedience of doing God's will, *submitting themselves*, one to another, in the fear of God (Eph. 5: 21).

Paul says that we ourselves (believers now) were, at one time, like the rest, without understanding, rebellious, disobedient, habitual slaves to all manner of evil pursuits and pleasures; nasty, detestable, hating ourselves and one another (v. 3); but when God our saviour made manifest to us His loving-kindness, His mercy, His grace, we were brought into His light (2: 11). We, who were once darkness, are now light in the Lord (Eph. 5: 8; Col. 1: 12, 13).

Not by any works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us (v. 5), as Eph. 2: 8-10 having been washed (regenerated) (John 15: 3, 1 John 5: 1) and renewed of the Holy Spirit (John 3; 5-7).

We have been made heirs of eternal life (a present possession), to which we look forward in hope that soon we shall see Him who is the Author and Finisher of faith (Heb. 12: 2).

H. R. Dodge

**From Liverpool:** *Positive Subjection* (vv. 1-2). A strong character, nevertheless, can show the "true humility towards all men" (NIV) which Paul tells Titus to remind the people to show. It is not a negative, passive, lack-of-backbone idea which one would find distasteful, but rather it is a positive attitude of accepting what comes to us, and a readiness to meet the difficulties of life without rebelling. It is the opposite to that presented in v. 3.

*Positive Freedom* (vv. 3-5). It is Paul's contention that salvation brings freedom. Indulgence in "all kinds of passions and pleasures" is regarded by many as evidence of freedom, but to Paul those who are without salvation are enslaved to these things. Sin is lawlessness and there is an inherent

tendency within human beings to rebel, a tendency which seems particularly to have been true of the Cretans. Now they have experienced true freedom—which is the ability to do what we should do!

There is a snag, however. A Christian freed from enslavement to sin, superstition and fashionable trends finds himself up against the weak faith and narrow minds of his fellow-believers. Can he then exercise this true freedom which he has been granted? On the one hand as long as he is pleasing God it does not really matter what his brothers and sisters think of him. On the other hand Paul regarded himself as restricted by the folks who wrongfully took offence at his exercise of that God given freedom! (See Romans 14 and 1 Cor. 10). Is there no way out of this dilemma? [Comment 2].

*Salvation through Rebirth* (v. 5-7). Washing would indicate getting rid of the past ready for a new start described as a new birth. The washing (v. 5), pouring out of the Holy Spirit (v. 6), the justifying and having the hope of eternal life (v. 7) all took place simultaneously. In that context some thought the renewal (v. 5) also took place once for all, and that this refers to the involvement of the Holy Spirit in our salvation. Others, however, saw the renewal as a later day-to-day experience in a Christian's life as growth is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. Which view is correct? [Comment 3].

Pouring indicates a lavish giving without measure, the Holy Spirit being given to us in full measure at the time of this rebirth whatever the renewal may be. "Justified" describes us as being "not guilty", emphasizing the way God not only forgives sin, but forgets too. Being heirs we must have an inheritance. This is more fully described by Peter (1 Pet. 1: 3-9), but indicates a quality of life which is ours in the future, which we cannot fully understand, but which we know by faith is there for us!

*D. J. Webster*

**From Melbourne:** "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers". This is too often ignored by many Christians, and believers have been known to break the speed limit on the way home from an Assembly meeting. This would also apply to our masters at work. From 1 Tim. 6: 1, we are told that they are "worthy of all honour". As Christians our subjection applies to the government, save where its requirements conflict with the revealed will of God for disciples. How thankful we should be that we have been delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. We would recognize, however, that there are occasions when the disciple of the Lord must graciously ask to be relieved from the responsibility of unquestioning obedience. This is exemplified in the circumstances surrounding Acts

5: 28, 29, and the response of the apostles, "We must obey God rather than men". The appeal of disciples of the Lord to be granted exemption from military service, or from voting at Parliamentary or other elections, must also be a gracious one, and our reasons clearly stated, so that it is seen that our refusal is not one of rebellious disobedience, but the higher obligation of disciples of the Lord, that they are not of this world, neither have they the "liberty" to take part in politics or carnal warfare. If and when it comes to a conflict between loyalty to God or man, "We must obey God rather than men". This decision to obey a "higher power" might be applied also to other spheres where the disciple is called upon to make a decision, and where obedience to a human law might cause us to violate God's law for His people.

What mercy has been bestowed upon us in the fact that it has not been according to our works, but according to His mercy that He has saved us and justified us by His grace (His free and unmerited favour). It all springs from the love and kindness of God our Saviour towards man. Although justified by His grace and brought into the position of heirs of God with the sure and certain hope of eternal life, we have a witness to bear before man testifying to the fact that the grace of God is not fruitless, but brings forth fruit in the lives of those who are objects of His love, mercy and grace. The "good works" referred to are honest occupations (there are occupations that cannot be called "honest") and the income derived therefrom above and beyond our necessary needs should be used under the eyes of the Lord, being fully assured of His approval concerning what we do with our money.

A heretic is a self-opinionated man who is not prepared to take counsel from others and a teacher of wrong doctrine, thus causing contention and division in the churches of God. He is to be warned twice, and if he persists in refusing counsel he must be rejected by his brethren.

The word "salute" is not a military one but a form of a greeting; the expression "salute" is often used by our friends in Nigeria.

*L. McFarlane, D. Mawkinney, T. W. Fullerton*

**From Nottingham:** The chapter opens with instructions regarding the attitude of believers in a church of God to those in authority and to rulers. God raises up whomsoever He will to rule the nations of the earth and it is in His sovereign power to put them down also, cf. Daniel 4: 17. We are responsible to be law-abiding citizens unless the law of the land conflicts with the law of God and then the principle we must observe is clearly stated in Acts 4: 19 and 5: 29. The instruction to be subject to the law of the land would have particular significance to those in Crete because one historian

records **that** Cretans were "constantly involved in insurrections, murders and internecine wars". Although their **attitude** would alter as a result of their conversion **they** would still **be** inclined **this** way **by** nature.

**At the same time they, and** we, have a responsibility towards **the** powers **that be, as the** Lord Himself **taught** when **He said** "... **then** render unto Caesar **the** things **that** are Caesar's **and** unto God **the** things **that are** God's.... " (**Luke 20: 25**) Different **examples** in **the** Scriptures where legitimate opposition **has been made** to **the** earthly powers where their decrees or **attitudes** have been opposed to **the** will of God were considered **and** we think of **the** examples of Daniel (**Dan. 1: 5 and 8**) **and** Nicodemus (**John 7: 50**).

On **the** positive side **the** saints in **the** churches were to **be** ready to do every good work, cf. chapter **2: 14**. **Kindness and** a readiness to do good to all men should **be** characteristics of believers **and** some consideration of **this** point in **the** context of **the** need abounding in our present **day** world **is** an important exercise. They were to **be** careful in their **speech** and in **this** connection **Col. 4: 6** is opposite.

The apostle exhorts **them** not to **be** contentious. **This is** a translation of a Greek word which **means** "not a fighter". **This** does not **mean that a man** was not to stand **up** for right principles, **but he** was not to adopt **the** attitude of being self-opinionated or unreasonably argumentative. The Lord before Pilate was cited **as an** example of "standing-up" to **the** authorities without being contentious or fighting with them.

Verse **3** begins with **the** words, "For we also were aforetime foolish...." To whom is **the** writer referring? **It** was thought **the** reference was to unconverted Jews **and the** statement related to **that** in verse **1** where reference is **made** to "**them**", **that** is **the** Cretans. **Paul** has already described their characteristics **by** nature in chapter **1: 12 and 13** using **the** words of a prophet of their own **and** now **he** is **saying that the** unconverted Jews were really no better, for although outwardly religious **they** were, in many **cases**, inwardly corrupt. **In** our discussion some did not subscribe to this view concerning **the** words "we also", **and** thought **that** it referred to Paul **and** Titus or Paul **and** his fellow workers. **In** support it was observed **that the** absence of **these** sins would indicate a very high standard of godly living **such as** would **be** true of outstanding **ensamples** to **the** flock **such as** Paul. Believers could **be** guilty of **these** things [Comment 1].

**In** verse **4** we read of **the** "kindness" of God our Saviour. The word translated "kindness" is *philanthropia* which **is** used in only one other **place** in **the** New Testament (**Acts 28: 2**). **It** was a word **which had a special appeal** to **the** Greeks **and** indicated a good king's gracious **kindness** to his **subjects** or a good **man's** kindness to those **in** distress **and** particularly **the**

compassion which moved a man to ransom one who had fallen into captivity. Our thoughts turned to such scriptures as John 3: 16. In verse 5 we have the "washing of regeneration". The R. V. margin shows this to be the "laver" of regeneration. The word is a noun here, but the thought of bathing is contained in it. The laver is the word of God which is an instrument of spiritual cleansing, see Eph. 5: 26 [Comment 4].

We think of the Lord's words recorded in John 3: 5 and John 13: 10. Regeneration is the new birth in which the Holy Spirit and the word of God are both instrumental. Here is another case where a word used appears in only one other place in the New Testament, i. e. *palingenesia* translated "regeneration" in Titus 3: 5, the other occasion being Matthew 19: 28. At conversion we are renewed by the Holy Spirit, that is, the whole being is renewed. The Spirit has been "poured out upon us richly", and it was thought that this might indicate the extra blessings of the gifts of the Spirit in this dispensation. The "hope of eternal life" referred to in verse 7 we believe to be that hope which belongs to eternal life, and our thoughts turn to 1 Peter 1: 3 and 4.

Verse 8 presents another positive aspect of a believer's life, that is to maintain good works. The R. V. margin has "profess honest occupations". The exhortation was made to make believers realize that the trades or occupations they followed should be such as would bring no dishonour to the Name of the Lord. There seems to be a much wider application than this, however, in that they are being directed again to do good to all men and thus the verse relates to chapter 2: 14. In support of the view that something wider than honest occupations is here envisaged the teaching of Romans 6: 19, 20 was brought before us.

Verses 10 and 11 deal with those who are heretical. Such a man is a "party man"—one who, by his teaching, would seek to divide the church and so become a great danger to it and the Fellowship. It was thought that the type of person envisaged was one who persisted in this type of conduct with a view to creating factions and divisions. Such a person was to receive, through the elders, an admonition publicly before the church. If he persisted still then he was to receive a second such admonition. If, after this, he still acted in the same way then he was to be "refused" or they were to "avoid" him. The word translated "avoid" in verse 9 A. V. is not the same as the word "refuse" or "avoid" RVM in verse 10. The former means "to turn oneself about for the purpose of avoiding something" (Vine) while the latter means, literally "to ask aside" and indicates that the persistent offender, after two admonitions, must be excommunicated.

*R. Hickling*

## COMMENTS

1. **(Several contributors):** When Paul writes "we also" (v. 3) I think that he includes not only Titus and himself but all believers in Christ, in Crete and elsewhere. The Cretans might easily be provoked by the behaviour of those around them into aggressive behaviour, but Paul exhorts them "not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness towards all men" (v. 2). He reminds them that Christians had been in the past just the same as others were, but the grace of God had saved them and changed their lives. Paul would have no hesitation in including himself, for although he could claim to have lived in "all good conscience" (Acts 23:1) he knew all too clearly that his conscience had been inadequately instructed, and he called himself the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). The Cretans were not to regard themselves as better than their unconverted neighbours, and speak evil of them, but were rather to show themselves as examples through their good works.

2. **(Liverpool):** The two passages quoted make quite clear what the Christian's attitude should be; even if something is quite legitimate, he should refrain from it if another is hindered spiritually thereby. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves... for Christ also pleased not Himself" (Rom. 15: 1, 3). It is not a question of what others think of us, but whether they are made unhappy in their Christian lives by what we do, or are led by our example to do things that they cannot do with a clear conscience. There is perhaps a distinction, discerned with some difficulty, between those who are grieved by the overturning of some cherished idea or practice and those who are not weak at all, but use these scriptures to get their own way—"You must do as I say, or I will be offended". To such people Scripture says, "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another?" (Rom. 14: 4). In cases of doubt, it is better to concede what might properly be claimed, and thus in a practical way count another better than oneself (Phil. 2: 3).

3. **(Liverpool):** The context of the passage is that of the work of God which transformed those who were malicious and evil into heirs of God. Condensing the verses we have: God saved us... through regeneration and renewing... that, being justified we might be made heirs. The regeneration and renewing are the means by which we have come to a justified state, and are thus both completed actions.

4. **(Nottingham):** There is some controversy over the proper translation of Gk. *loutron* in this passage. It is true that it can mean a bath, in the sense of the physical object which one has in a bathroom; but it can also be used in the sense in which one takes a bath. The translation depends on the context, and in this case it is surely the act of washing rather than the

instrument of washing which is referred to. **If this is so, the RVM reading "laver" is misleading, as it leads one to think of the washing-bowl which stood in the court of the Tabernacle. It is interesting to note that the translators of the Septuagint did not use *loutron*, but the related word *louter* when referring to the laver in Ex. 30:18 et al. Contributors may care to consider whether any reference to the laver in the Old Testament is intended here. It has been suggested that the actions of Moses in washing Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8: 6) is the counterpart to the initial cleansing of regeneration, while the normal use of the laver corresponds to daily cleansing. The difficulty with this is that one is dealing with men who had already been saved out of Egypt and baptized unto Moses (1 Cor. 10: 2).**

*P. L. H.*

**It is true that in the typology of Scripture Israel is viewed as a redeemed, baptized and separated people. Some care is needed, however, in arguing from this premise. For example, we cannot use it to determine the spiritual standing of individuals in the nation. I would not have difficulty in the suggestion that the washing of Lev. 8: 6 sets out a once-for-all cleansing in contrast to the need for daily cleansing from defilement to ensure fitness for service. The Lord's words in John 13:10, spoken in the Upper Room at the time of the feet-washing, seem to give support to the spiritualization of the bathing of Lev. 8: 6 and the daily washing of the priests' hands and feet at the laver.**

*J. K. D. J.*

**If the foreshadowing, in the life of the children of Israel of the Lord's work in salvation, was limited to what happened prior to their passage through the Red Sea, then the Passover night would have been very busy indeed. It is not hard to find examples of the foreshadowing of events which nowadays accompany salvation in the life of Israel after their redemption from Egypt. Many of these are in connection with the house of God, and, of course, could not have been foreshadowed until the tabernacle had been built. For example, the fine linen in the hangings of the gate of the tabernacle foreshadows the fact that at salvation "Christ Jesus... was made unto us... righteousness" (1 Cor. 1: 30). The passage through that gate of the Old Covenant offerer foreshadows the fact that today's offerer cannot approach to offer without such imputed righteousness. The once-for-all bathing of the priest is a similar case. It foreshadows the once-for-all cleansing that occurs today at salvation, and shows that the purpose of that cleansing is to fit the believer for service in the house of God. Alas too many think that it only has to do with service in the next life. Such examples show that the law and its associated services were but**

imperfect shadows and not the actual image. This point was raised and answered in *Bible Studies* 1954, vol. 22 p. 46

I. E. P.

## POSTSCRIPT

In the past year editors have enjoyed reading and learning from the contributions of fellow-students. Our studies have considered a cross-section of the writings of one man, the apostle Paul. Their range in purpose and content is considerable. In the epistle to the Colossians he wrote to entire churches of God. He wrote to Philemon in a personal and private manner about a difficult and sensitive matter. He wrote to Titus in a direct and plain manner as one issuing instructions to a leader of God's people. He did not give his own advice to the varied problems that had presented themselves, but gave the appropriate application of the teaching of the Lord. Taken together the contents of the letters give an indication of the varied provision that the Lord has made for His saints. But the word needs ministers who both know it and know how to apply it. Our studies have shown what a master Paul was in the application of the word of God.

In this he was but an imitator of Christ. None has ever handled the word of God with greater skill than He, whether it be in dealing with the Devil (Matt. 4: 1-11), his agents (Matt. 22: 23-33) or ordinary men and women (Luke 4: 16-30). One such instance is His conversation with the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7: 24-30). He spoke to her in His unique, illustrative manner. She was a Gentile. She belonged in the outside place. She had no claim on the One who had come to the house of Israel. But she immediately penetrated the heart of the matter and answered Him in His own words. The Lord could not refuse. He specifically commended the words she used; her manner of speaking about spiritual things. Perhaps as strangers in a foreign land love to hear the sound of their own language He loved to hear her enter with such verve into His own manner of speaking. It is so with God. He loves us to speak (and to speak well) in the language of His own word especially concerning His own Son. Here is a certain way to make our words precious to God and of benefit to men (Prov. 3: 1-4).

In the forthcoming year we turn our attention (DV) to one of the greatest men who ever lived: one whose whole life is a parable for our times. It will be our part to enter into that parable and speak one to another and to God of what the Spirit has taught us of His Son and His purpose towards us who occupied an outside place but are now brought nigh.

I. E. P.

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