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Who Is Wise Among You?

"Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you?" - James 3:13

Many persons possess considerable knowledge but display little wisdom. Knowledge is important: but only insofar as it develops wisdom-sound judgment and pure sentiment. This is the object of God's revelation. The wisdom that comes thus, through the channel of divine truth, the Apostle describes *"But the wisdom that is from above"* as being *"first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy"* (James 3:17).

Such a character results from the transforming influence of divine truth. God's revelation is a mirror of his character in which we see reflected his purity, love, and goodness. As we trace the lines of his character our hearts should yearn to admire and love him: to be like him. A responsive, sincere heart which accepts God's plan and its provisions for blessing and salvation conforms itself to God's character by putting away sin and by entering into the peace and love of God. Accompanying such an effort on the part of a human comes peace and love from God which enter the heart, take possession thereof, and assume the rulership over it. Cleansed and inhabited, the heart brings forth righteous fruit: gentleness, mercy, goodness, and pure and holy friendship with all who are likeminded.

There is a wisdom which is contrasted to that from heaven. James describes it as earthly, sensual, and devilish. It is a cunningness that is prompted by envy and strife: producing confusion and every evil work. This wisdom does not descend from above. It is earthly, sensual, devilish. *"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work"* (James 3:16). Pride and selfishness inspire such "wisdom" just as they did in Satan; therefore let everyone who names the name of Christ keep themselves humble. To harbor feelings of malice or roots of envy while professing to have the spirit of truth *is to lie against the truth* (James 3:14).

We need to carefully guard our hearts against pride, worldly *ambition*, and against the tendencies toward envy and bitterness that surround us. Thousands of incidents each day arise in which we can fall prey to the bondage of this world. Only by vigilantly watching over our attitude can we

prevail against such influences. Temptations and trials seldom give us warning: the Christian's armor must be ready, adjusted and securely buckled on:

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul;
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole.

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." We will be judged by our conduct, not our professions. If a person possesses heavenly wisdom it will show itself in their conduct: in meekness, humility, peace, purity, gentleness, compassion, and sincerity.

Putting On-Putting Off

May the Lord grant his sons an abundance of heavenly wisdom and the rewards of grace and peace that accompany it. Put away the affairs of the world: malice, envy, hatred, selfish ambitions, and put on the fruits of the *spirit!* *"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"* (Rom. 8:9). He in whom such graces are not cultivated will lose them, being choked with the selfish and ignoble spirit of the world.

Some children of this world cultivate gentleness and benevolence for policy's sake. And then there are some of God's children who are naturally selfish and mean. We must not look at outward appearances but look upon the heart. This world may never change inwardly, man's beautiful traits remaining throughout life only a thin veneer upon an unregenerate heart. But those who are lead of the spirit will progress (gradually though it be) towards the inward image of Christ: gradually demonstrating that change to themselves and others.

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Rom. 8:11).

Here, then is a contrast. Earthly wisdom is based upon selfishness. Heavenly wisdom is based upon service to others. Whoever is wise will choose the heavenly the end of which is life in Christ. Which will you choose?

The Lord's Supper in Historical Perspective

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" - Matthew 26:26-28, (NIV)

For centuries, Christians have pondered and debated the meaning of Jesus' words. In particular, attention has focused on his expression, *"This is my body"* and *"This is my blood."* Did Jesus intend his followers to accept this in a literal sense, or was this an example of symbolic use of language?

Another fundamental difference of view centers on the ritual itself: Was the Eucharist (the word "Eucharist" means "to give thanks") designed to be a fresh sacrifice of Christ on behalf of sinful men each time it was observed or was it merely a commemoration of the sacrifice he was to make on Calvary? To what extent is Jesus himself actually present during the celebration of the Lord's Supper? Is there intrinsic sacramental value in the service, such that all who partake are blessed with special grace and merit?

These and related issues lead to diverse views that historically have divided Christians. Three major understandings have developed, which crystallized at the time of the Reformation. These have been termed transubstantiation, consubstantiation, and symbolic commemoration.

Briefly, we will look into these areas, comparing these views with what we consider to be the true understanding and import of Jesus' words. We need not know all the technicalities of theological interpretations and philosophical beliefs that have developed in this area, but it is helpful to be informed of these viewpoints.

Simple Basis of Service

When we confine ourselves to the Scriptures, it seems evident what Jesus intended in initiating the ceremony of the Lord's Supper. His words are simple and brief:

"He took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19,20).

Plainly, he was asking his disciples, and subsequent believers, to participate in this simple, unique ritual primarily as a memorial of him and of his costly sacrifice.

This was not the first time that Jesus had employed symbols such as bread and blood, so these were not strange to his disciples. Earlier he had said,

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

And again,

"Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:53,54).

Since drinking blood was strictly forbidden under the Law, and punishable by death, it is evident that a literal meaning of these words was not intended. Lev. 17:11 tells us that *"the life of the flesh is in the blood."* When Jesus' blood was shed, his life was being poured out; his soul, his very being, was being offered, as he said, *'for many, for the remission of sins.'*

John 6:35 throws light on Jesus' symbolic use of "eating" and "drinking." This text explains the context of his atoning sacrifice and Jesus himself explains: *"I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."* If "coming" ends the hunger, then it is the "coming to Jesus" that is the eating; and if "believing" ends the thirst, then it is the "believing in Jesus" that is the drinking. It is the coming to him and the believing in him as the crucified one whose death provided the ransom for all that we believe is symbolized in "eating his flesh" and "drinking his blood."

In the Lord's Supper, we believe symbols are borrowed from the earlier ministry of Jesus. Primarily, the bread symbolizes his flesh, his body which was to be broken in sacrifice. The fruit of the vine symbolizes his life, epitomized in the blood, surrendered on the cross. To eat of this bread and to drink of this cup means to embrace what Jesus has done for us. By faith we appropriate to ourselves the value, the benefit, the merit which his sacrifice has purchased for us. That "merit" is Jesus' righteousness and it is freely available to all believers.

Paul's contribution

The Apostle Paul, in commenting on the primary aspect of the Lord's Supper, confirms that it was meant to be a memorial of our Lord's sacrifice. His discussion of the matter is recorded in 1 Cor. 11:23-26. First he quotes the exact words of Jesus: In reference to the bread, *"Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me."* And regarding the cup, *"This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft -- as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."* We note that Jesus reiterated after each emblem that it was to be partaken as a remembrancer of him.

In 1 Cor. 11:26, Paul confirms his point, *"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."* The word "shew" here is from a Greek word meaning to announce or proclaim. In this instance, it is a silent witness, carried out symbolically, that acknowledges the special role of our Lord as the suffering servant of prophecy, the precious lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world as our ransom price.

Scriptural Summary

When we confine ourselves to the Scriptures themselves, the teaching on the Lord's Supper is simple and clear. It was a unique and solemn ceremony that was to be observed by believers in Christ, primarily for the purpose of remembering his costly sacrifice for them and for the whole world. We believe this is how the early followers of the Master observed the occasion. Instead of keeping the Passover feast once each year, *"as a memorial throughout your generations"* as enjoined upon the Israelites, believers in Christ heeded Jesus' words, *"This do ye in remembrance of me."* That is, participation in the new Christian ritual was understood to replace the old.

Jesus, the antitypical Lamb of God, fulfilled the Passover type by his death on the cross. Now, once each year as in the Passover type, Christian believers carry out this new ceremony, "*in remembrance of him.*"

Early Corruption

Nevertheless, as Paul wrote of his day, "*The mystery of iniquity doth already work.*" It was not destined that the Lord's Supper would be held very long as it was intended, in its purity and simplicity, as part of the faith once delivered to the saints. We come, historically, to a change of pace. We will see what happens when direct teaching of Scripture is ignored, and attention is focused rather on the wisdom and philosophy of men. Behind these corruptions, lurks the Adversary, blinding the minds of men and delighting to cause confusion in things pertaining to God. It has been, recognized by historians that the church of the 31st and 41st centuries was different from that of the Apostles and early Christians. A clergy class emerged which stressed form and organization, ceremonies took on pomp and splendor, and the Bible was superceded by dogma and creeds of bishops and councils. In the midst of this changing climate-some would say of development, we would say of corruption-it is understandable that the Lord's Supper would become a target for radical alteration.

Some scholars appropriately labeled these new teachings which emerged as hybrid forms, produced by crossing authentic Christianity with the Pagan philosophy of pre-Christian Rome. This blending of two faiths is nowhere more apparent than in the ceremony of the "Mass," as the Eucharist came to be called after the days of Constantine.

Doctrine of Mass

Let us now briefly examine the Mass and see how it relates to pagan custom. In the ceremony of the Mass, an officiating priest is a necessity. Only he has been empowered to supernaturally change the emblems of bread and wine into the actual flesh and blood of Jesus. This is called transubstantiation.

It is believed that the priest can then make a fresh sacrifice of Christ on behalf of those receiving the emblems or even to benefit the dead! In practice, the priest alone drinks of the cup, while the worshippers eat only the wafer. Yet it is believed that the wine and the wafer each in themselves have been transformed into the actual body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ.

Another way of expressing this is that Christ is thought to be truly physically present in the elements of the bread and wine, to the extent of actually supplanting the elements. Even though the bread and wine are still outwardly visible and tangible, in the miracle of the Mass they are supposed to have been changed into the real substance of the body and blood of Christ.

In most expressions of belief, an appeal is made to Scripture for support, and this is no exception. Reference is made to Jesus' words, "*This is my body,*" and "*This is my blood.*" (Mat. 26:26,28), in the belief that these expressions are meant to be taken literally. That is, that Jesus meant the emblems had been supernaturally transformed into his body and blood. However, in the study of the Greek language, it has been determined that such literal meanings are not necessarily intended.

(1) The verb "to be" which is in question here, according to Liddell & Scott (under the heading *Eimi bi*) sometimes means simply "to amount to, to signify, to import especially in the phrase

Tout' Esti ...the exact phrase used in the Greek for the expression 'this is my body' and 'this is my blood'."

(2) Hence, with this clarification of the Greek, we understand what Jesus really meant: he was actually saying, "this signifies (or represents) my body and my blood."

If we did not accept this conclusion, we would be forced into a literal interpretation of passages, like "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood*" (1 Cor. 11:25), or "*I am the vine,*" or "*I am the door,*" etc. In all of these cases a literal interpretation would be nonsensical.

As we evaluate the Mass, we realize that it insidiously contradicts fundamental teachings of the Bible. It implies that the redemptive sacrifice of Christ was somehow not entirely efficacious; that it was not sufficient, not good enough, to cover all of our sins and shortcomings. How does this square with Scripture, which repeatedly makes it clear that Jesus died but once, and by virtue of that one sacrifice accomplished man's redemption forever? Notice the contrast drawn for us in Hebrews:

"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (1 Cor. 10:11,12).

So that none should miss this point, the Apostle reiterates it in 1 Cor. 10:14, and 1 Cor. 10:10: "*For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*" "*By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*"

In summing up, the Apostle emphasizes the totality of Jesus' work by showing there will be no more need for any additional sacrifice: "*Where remission of these is* (speaking of the sins and iniquities of the people forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ) *there is no more offering for sin.*" (Heb. 10:18) In the Mass, thousands, yea millions of fresh sacrifices for sin are deemed needful, as the priest daily offers up the body of Jesus over and over again throughout the world. Yet the Scripture states plainly that, because of the once for all sacrifice, all believers have instant access to the heavenly throne of grace. There is no need for any sacramental manipulation or mystical power wielded by a clergy class. Note how this is brought out in Heb. 10:18-22:

"And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..." (NIV).

How have pagan beliefs been interwoven into the Mass, lending credence to the idea of its nature as a fresh sacrifice for sin? In areas of the world where polytheistic gods are worshiped and animal sacrifices are common, this was the usual procedure: Part of the victim's body was burnt on the altar, to appease the particular deity for whom the sacrifice was being made; the rest was eaten by those offering the sacrifice. This ritual eating was believed to constitute an act of communion between the deity and his devotees, and formed an important part of the practices associated with the cult of the so-called "mystery religions." It was believed in essence that the devotee actually partook of the deity by ingesting a morsel of the sacrificial victim.

By such ingesting, a part of the god was said to be infused into the devotee, in a transaction known as a *mysterion* -- the word that has given us the expression "mystery religion." This word *mysterion* was rendered *sacramentum* in the Latin--the direct antecedent of our word "sacrament."

Since every Roman citizen was perfectly familiar with what *a sacramentum* was, it was deemed a clever move for the established church to select this Latin word and use it to replace the memorial concept of the Lord's Supper. Any Roman needed merely to hear the word *sacramentum* and he knew that it referred to "tasting the sacrificial victim." It was not deemed important that this word rendered "sacrament" in the English was not even to be found in the Bible. The church was considered to be the Mother of the Bible and she knew what was best.

To bring the Lord's Supper more in line with pagan sacrifice, the concept of the table holding the emblems was changed to an altar for sacrifice. Enters the priest, the officiating minister now deemed vital to the performance of the sacramentum. His words, "*Hoc est enim corpus meum*" (for this is my body) transformed the elements of the meal into the flesh and blood of "the sacrificial victim." Only in this instance, it was not an animal, but our Lord Jesus Christ himself. To the common man of Medieval times, the language of the church was unintelligible; Latin was only for the educated classes. But he did know this much, that at the sound of the priest's words, "*Hoc est enim corpus meum*" something pretty mysterious was allegedly taking place. And yet, evidently it was not accepted without considerable suspicion. For when the priest's words were spoken rapidly, they sounded like "hocus-pocus." And thus the origin of this phrase, to depict any mysterious happening, a trick, a cheat, or just plain nonsense.

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 10 (1 Cor. 10), Paul shows that there is nothing wrong with the concept of sacrifice if it is done unto the true God. In all sacrificing, there is a certain fellowship

that is produced, whether with the true God or with fallen demons. In 1 Cor. 10:18, Paul uses the word "partakers" of the altar, referring to the Jewish system of sacrificing. In 1 Cor. 10:20, he says we are not to have fellowship with demons in pagan rites of sacrifice. Both expressions, "partakers of the altar" (1 Cor. 10:18) and "to have fellowship with" (1 Cor. 10:20) are from the same Greek word *koinonos* (Strong's # SG2844), and means "partnership" or "to have in common" (Vine).

True sacrifice for the Christian means to lay down his own life in the service of God and to follow in the steps of the Master. In the Memorial, there is a sense in which this is shown. Paul explains in his discussion in 1 Cor. 10:16: "*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*" The church memorializes its own participation with Christ in his sufferings and is represented in the same emblems in a secondary sense.

But such an understanding is entirely different from the erroneous view of the Lord's Supper as a sacrificial ceremony, in which the recreated Christ is offered again and again for the sins of the people. This is surely repulsive to the Heavenly Father, and runs counter to the Bible's plain teaching.

Protestant Views

The most notable attack on the established church's view of transubstantiation was that launched by Martin Luther during the Reformation. In scathing terms Luther charged the church with teaching a magical and superstitious view of the Lord's Supper. But he was unable to free himself from the notion that the presence of Christ was shown in the emblems of the ceremony. Instead of the bread and wine supernaturally changing into the substance of Christ, he thought that both Christ and the emblems were actually present together. He taught that Christ's substance was "in, under, and through" the elements, so that Christ may be received sacramentally by those who

observe the ordinance. This view was dubbed, "consubstantiation," to distinguish it from the medieval "transubstantiation."

However, John Calvin, one of the Reformers, could not accept either of these concepts. He saw in Luther's view a confusion of the two natures of Christ. Calvin explained that Christ was truly present only as touching his divine nature as manifested in the Holy Spirit, but not in his human nature. Luther argued back that this amounted to an improper separation of the two natures of Christ. And so these issues have continued unresolved into our day. In retrospect, neither Luther nor Calvin grasped the concept of natures separate and distinct, considered a fundamental teaching in the twentieth century.

It is clear that in his earthly ministry, Jesus was wholly human; in his resurrected state, wholly divine. *"The bread that I will give," said Jesus, "is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."* (John 6:51) This constituted the ransom price, and was accepted of the Father; it can never be taken back, nor would there be any need for Jesus to retain his humanity. Notice also the underlying error of both Luther and Calvin.

While recognizing the falsity of the transubstantiation concept, neither could escape the error of the so-called "real presence." Somehow, they felt that the real substance of Christ, whether human or divine, had to be shown in the emblems. It is reported that Ulrich Zwingli, the noted Swiss Reformer, recognized and taught that the presence of Christ should be thought of primarily as being in the memory of the believer. This shifted the Lord's Supper to its proper role of a memorial of our Lord's death as the great ransom price, rather than a mystical sacrament in which he is made to reappear every time it is held.

Current Developments

In recent years, the ecumenical movement has again picked up steam and the most recent gains have come in unexpected quarters. Heretofore, it was not expected that much agreement could ever be found in the area of doctrine, but now all that is changing. In 1982 a statement of belief sponsored by the World Council of Churches was worked out and approved by 100 theologians from virtually every branch of the Christian faith. It set forth a common understanding of baptism, Eucharist, and the Christian ministry that culminates decades of effort along these lines. Though not yet approved by individual church groups, the document is hailed as the greatest advance in doctrinal unity since the Reformation.

The statement on the Lord's Supper (or Eucharist) is of particular interest because it seeks a common denominator among strongly opposing views. It seems to have largely succeeded in doing this. This is evident by the fact that the Vatican sent copies of the statement to all Catholic bishops worldwide, asking them to study and comment on it. Rev. Jean Tillard, a French Dominican priest who helped prepare the text, was quoted as saying, "This is the first time in the history of the Roman Catholic Church that Catholic bishops have been asked to accept a doctrinal document that did not originate with Rome." Equally surprising, a joint communion service of historic proportions has already been held at the final meeting of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, Canada in August of 1983. At that time, the Archbishop of Canterbury led a Eucharist ceremony before 3,500 Christian leaders from all denominations, including Catholic priests and Orthodox bishops. Just a short time ago these diverse factions would never have attended such a service. As Bible Students, we welcome the cooperative spirit that is emerging in the churches, but we must take a careful look at both the overall developments and any doctrinal basis for unity that is offered.

According to the Bible, we understand that the symbolic truths represented by the wheat vs. the tares, and the chaste virgin vs. the harlot woman of Revelation, can never be reconciled. The true church must remain separate from the false, and in the harvest of the age is urged to *"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."* (Rev. 18:4) Any scheme of unity that is based merely upon convenience, necessity, organizational advantage, or doctrinal compromise of truth cannot be acceptable. It must square with the Bible, the word of God, in order for it to satisfy us. Any other unity, no matter how appealing, amounts to chaos and confusion, not truth. Unfortunately, this is abundantly evident in the new World Council of Churches statement of belief, which seeks to harmonize diverse views in the area of baptism, Eucharist, and the ministry. In the area of the Lord's Supper, it attempts to skirt around the mystical medieval doctrine of transubstantiation without condemning or exposing the practice. It merely enlarges the concept of the so-called "real presence of Christ" in the bread and wine by allowing that the Holy Spirit and the word of Christ can bring it about as well as through the sacramental power of the priest.

We have seen how far removed this concept is from the truth and the correct symbolic commemoration of our Lord's death. Hence, the World Council of Churches statement of belief may soften some of the strongly entrenched differences among the churches and contribute to the ecumenical drive for unity. But it does not throw any light on the correct celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Conclusions

We observe that the Lord has reserved the true understanding of the Lord's Supper for His own people, and for them alone. As with the other fundamental doctrines of truth, there was a great falling away from this in the early church, which persisted through the period of the Dark Ages. During the Reformation there was a partial recovery and many truths were again brought to light. Included in this was a realization of the importance of the great Sacrifice of Calvary and that in some way the Lord's Supper was a memorial of that historic occasion.

It seems evident that only the footstep followers of the Master, the consecrated Little Flock of believers, have retained the full significance of this ceremony and been blessed accordingly. How well this fits our Lord's words, *"Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God"* and *"blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear."* (Mark 4:11, Mat. 13:16) Brethren, remember our Lord's invitation to drink of his Memorial cup. Remember Paul's disclosure of the depth of meaning this entails for us. The privilege of identifying ourselves with Christ in his consecration, his suffering, and his death remains. Let us all drink of his cup, let us faithfully endure the experiences represented therein, let nothing thereof remain. For *"It is a faithful saying: If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him."* (2 Tim. 2:11,12)

- C. Redeker

Christ Liveth

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." - 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, NAS

When the sacrifice on Calvary was completed the story of the earthly ministry of our Lord quickly ended. Few details remain of the days which immediately followed. But every one of those details brings joy to the Christian heart.

The brevity of the account lends strength to the truthfulness of the story. What impostor would not have built an apparently strong story by supplying abundant details of every act or word? Simplicity too would have been lacking in their accounts. Would not their imaginations have run rampant over details of the resurrection and the triumphant entry into heaven. Yet, of these, the Bible offers no comment. While silent on these subjects, it speaks clearly of life given to an undeserving world! The darkness of that hour was followed by the coldness of the tomb, its sealed door, and the chilling indifference of the Roman guards.

The floodlights of faith soon illuminated these grim circumstances and manifested the love of our heavenly Father. The tomb had been hewn out of the rock and was made inaccessible by Roman precautions, but indisputable evidence was provided for history and for us in spite of the efforts by Jewish leaders who feared that Jesus' body might be stolen by his followers. They took precautions that guaranteed that the removal of Jesus' body was as undeniably a proof of his resurrection as the spear-point provided of his death. There were disciples who did not believe because of their joy (Luke 24:41). There were priests and Pharisees who refused to believe because of their hate. And this, even though an angel from heaven appeared to roll away the stone.

The Structure of Faith

"For if the dead are not raised, it follows that Christ was not raised; and if Christ was not raised your faith has nothing in it and you are still in your old state of sin" (1 Cor. 15:17, NEB). It was important that we have indisputable evidence of Jesus' resurrection, and it is just such testimony we have. What other historical claims are supported by over five hundred witnesses in full agreement as to that fact? There may seem to be some disagreement among them as to details, but there is no disagreement as to the fact that Jesus lives. Of that not one is uncertain! Additional weight is given to these testimonies because the most prominent of them state that their first inclination was to disbelieve the fact. So great a hold did the risen Lord have upon these brethren that *"numbers of men and women were added to their ranks as believers in the Lord" (Acts 5:14, NEB).*

John the Revelator tells us that believers are to *"follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Rev. 14:4, NEB).* It is important then that all consecrated "followers" be able to say, *"I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20, NEB).* *"But God forbid that I should boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world is crucified to me and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).* Just as Christ was buried in a hewn tomb our burial is in the Rock. And provision has been made that there be no claim of fraud in the matter of our sacrificial death any more than in his. A "seal" has been set upon those who are his own which is beyond repeal. When the body was presented to God as an acceptable sacrifice it was from that point as far as all human hopes were concerned-

dead. Our figurative resurrection 'in Christ' is to newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Jesus pointed to an indisputable proof of this newness of life: *"I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples"* (John 13:34, 35, NEB). Only those who are dead to their own interest can love another so fervently. He demonstrated the degree of his love by giving up his own life.

And if in our lives there are rightful claims of fraud-as the Jews of Jesus' day feared-then they must be found in our living unto the flesh rather than to the spirit. Some may proclaim their human lives dead but will refuse to live according to the leadings of God. And to this the Apostle addresses himself, saying, *"And you ...hath he quickened together with him"* (Col. 2:13), therefore *"let us walk honestly, as in the day..."* (Rom. 13:13). We must walk by faith. And faith must know that he who is our life lives. The mysteries and unanswered questions that life ,throws at us must not be allowed to cast doubt upon that which we do know!

Even the ablest artist could not do justice to the scene of our Master's resurrection. The four Gospels provide details, yet no one has been commissioned to render the main feature of this picture. Attempts have been made to "harmonize" various of these details in writing, and all have differed. From the claiming of the body of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea (assisted by Nicodemus) enough uncertainty accompanies the accounts to provide room for human speculation. However, our faith is not in the order of events. Our faith is in the fact, not the process, of the resurrection.

Women at the Tomb

The last to appear at the tomb on the day of burial were Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Matt. 28:1). It was dark and day only beginning to dawn when they returned on the third day to complete the embalming of Jesus. We find it interesting to note the prominence of women in the events which marked the beginning of a new era in God's plan. Previously they had been in the background, almost as though they feared to pollute those sacred scenes by their presence. Now, their eyes are the first to greet their risen Lord, their hands are the first outstretched toward him, their ears the first to hear his loving welcome, and they are the first to fall, adoring, at his feet. We suggest that they are not given any preeminence in these acts, but merely that they are God's way of demonstrating that in Christ Jesus the distinctions between male and female pass away (Gal. 3:28). Did they have greater faith? We think not, the women as well as the men had lost faith. They were not drawn to the tomb by the risen Lord! They had come to anoint a dead body, and in their hands were spices, not palm branches to proclaim their Messiah.

Why did Jesus appear first to a woman? She could do nothing to convince the doubting world that he lived. And her testimony would only be called to account when compared with more "acceptable" worldly witnesses. When we compare the Sacred Record with what hoaxsters might have done, we can well imagine them painting a fraudulent picture of his appearance in the Praetorium or at the high priest's palace. We quote a well known author on this point:

"The meekness, the true perception of the actual sorrows and want of men, the sense for spiritual need, the utter disregard of worldly powers and glory characterize him now as before. The sense of need is what always appeals to him. The heart that truly recognizes the value and longs for the fellowship and possession of Christ's purity, devotion to God, superiority to worldly aims and interests always wins his regard."

"When a man prays for these things not with his lips but with his life's effort and his heart's craving, his prayer is answered. To seek Christ is to feel as Mary felt, to see with practical

constraining clearness as she saw, that he is the most precious of all possessions, that to be like him is the greatest of all attainments; it is to see his character with clearness and to be persuaded that if the world gives us opportunity of becoming like him and actually makes us like him it has done for us all that is vital and permanently important."

"As the heart overburdened with grief is often unconscious of the presence of Christ, refusing to be comforted because it cannot see him for its own sorrow, so Mary through the veil of her tears can see only a human form and turn away again, unconscious that he for whom she seeks is with her. As she turns, one word wipes the tears from her eyes and penetrates her heart with sudden joy."

"The utterance of her name was enough to tell her it was someone who knew her that spoke to her; but there was a responsive thrill and an awakening of old memories, a vibration of her being under the tone of that voice which told her whose voice alone it could be. The voice seemed a second time to command a calm within her and turn her whole soul to himself only. Once before that voice had banished the foul spirits from her heart; she had awakened from their spell beneath the smile of Christ and now the same voice brought her out of darkness into light. From being the most disconsolate, Mary became at a word the happiest creature in the world."

Did Mary think that the "little while" of his departure was over? It was not! She must learn to live without the physical touch; her seeing and the hearing must be by faith. The truer fidelity that serves an absent Lord must be learned. His words, *"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father"* (John 20:18), were not a chilling reprimand, but a commission to perform a more valuable service, *"...go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."* It is as though he says to them, I am now more to you than just Rabboni. We have one Father. We are brethren. But heaven is awaiting my return, there to prepare a place for my brethren who, believing, may enter into my joy.

Restored Faith

The same process by which the faith of the first disciples was restored is suitable for those who, after them, would believe on him through their word (John 17:20). Therefore, instead of attempting an impossible task (of revealing to human minds the mystery of the life given to the resurrected Jesus) the evangelists contented themselves with relating those things that both revealed their own loss of faith and also worked to restore it.

Hurrying from the tomb and their angelic vision,

"The women were Mary of Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and they, with the other women, told the apostles. But the story appeared to them to be nonsense, and they would not believe them: (Luke 24:10-12, NEB).

This was the day that others also met the Lord. The two on the way to Emmaus saw him in another form (Luke 14:16). They told him that they had trusted Jesus was the one who should have redeemed Israel (Luke 24:24). *"How dull you are!" he answered. 'How slow to believe all that the prophets said'"* (Luke 24:25)! They knew the story the women told. They had heard the angelic message recounted:

"Why search among the dead for one who lives? Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee, about the Son of Man: *how* he must be given up into the power of sinful men and be crucified, and must rise again on the third day" (Luke 24:5-6, NEB).

Evidently the two on the road to Emmaus did not know of Mary Magdalene's subsequent experience. It had been she out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils (Luke 8:2). She had been to the tomb a second time and turning away from the empty sepulcher with disappointment she had been approached by someone who appeared to her like a gardener. Why do you cry? she was asked, And whom do you seek? Still thinking him a gardener, she asked, Sir, if you have removed him please tell me and I will take the body away. Jesus said, "Mary" (John 20:16). Just one word, familiar by its tone and inflexion, and she turned to him to say, "*Rabboni*" (which is to say "master" ["Rab," master; "*Rabbi*," my master; "*Rabboni*," my great master]).

Patiently, and beginning at the first of the prophets (Moses) and continuing through all the sacred writings he explained to the two on the Jericho road the things written in the Scriptures concerning himself. But it was while they were sitting down to eat that he took bread and blessed it and gave it to them to eat. Recognizing his familiar manner their understanding was opened and they knew him to be the Master. And immediately he disappeared.

They gathered their things and returned to Jerusalem. Finding the eleven gathered together and others with them the men explained that the Lord was indeed risen from the dead and how he had appeared to Simon. They told of the things that had been done with them in the way, and how he had been recognized by them in the breaking of bread. And while they were speaking Jesus himself appeared in their midst [Thomas being absent]. Jesus said to them, Peace be to you. They were scared and supposed that they had seen an apparition (cf. Luke 24:33-37).

Imagine the pity which must have whelmed within him. Even in the presence of four witnesses they doubted! So he showed them his wounds and still they "*believed not for joy*" (Luke 24:41). He ate in their presence, and from Luke's account, it seems that in the act of eating they finally recognized that this was the Master. Then again he reminded them of the Scriptures which had to be fulfilled: of his suffering, his death, and the resurrection of Christ, and of the preaching of repentance and remission of sins among all nations. He commissioned them as his witnesses for this work. Furthermore, he assured them of power to come upon them after a short period of waiting in Jerusalem.

"Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and blessed them with uplifted hands; and in the act of blessing he parted from them. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and spent all their time in the temple praising God" (Luke 24:50-53, NEB).

Luke ends his Gospel here. He skips over the second appearance to the assembled disciples (John 20:26-29) at which time Thomas was present. He also skips the appearance to seven by the Sea of Tiberias (21:14), and the appearance to the disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16; Mark 16:7). This latter may have been the occasion on which he was seen by more than five hundred at one time (1 Cor. 15:6, *Diaglott*). It would be difficult to suppose that the eleven could travel from Jerusalem to that mountain in Galilee without many of the Jerusalem brethren and others along the way finding out about the promised meeting. Note that the seventeenth verse states that some doubted. Evidently these were not from among the Twelve, for all of the Twelve (even Thomas) had by that time seen the Lord and believed. There were two others to whom he manifested himself and of whom Paul tells us: "*Then he appeared to James, and afterwards to all the apostles. In the end he appeared even to me. It was like an abnormal birth...*" (1 Cor. 15:7,8, NEB). Yes, he was the last of the Twelve to join that little company who burned incense at the door of the empty tomb.

There is a similar certainty to the proof of his resurrection offered by thousands who have experienced the truth of his promise to them.

"The man who has received my commands and obeys them-he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father; and I will love him and disclose myself to him" (John 14:21, NEB).

"For through the law I died to law -to live for God. I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20-21, NEB).

Years would pass before another of the apostles was to see the risen Lord. This time he was walking in the midst of the golden lamp-stands, which are the seven churches. He was clothed with a floor length garment and girded with a golden girdle. His head and hair were as white as wool, as white as snow. His eyes were as a flame of fire. His feet as polished brass-like that which is refined in a furnace. And his voice was the voice of many waters (cf. Rev. 1:13-16).

"In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and his face shone like the sun in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, and I am the living one; for I was dead and now I am alive for evermore, and I hold the keys of death and death's domain" (Rev. 1:17-18, NEB).

"Amen! Amen! our hearts respond; for in his resurrection we see the glorious outcome of the plan of God; accomplished through the power of the resurrected One who holds the keys of hell and death. In due time he will release all the prisoners of death, now referred to as the "prisoners of hope" (Zech. 9:12). Death was the penalty upon all men and he "died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3) and also for the "sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

"The sea gave up its dead, and death and hades gave up the dead in their keeping; they were judged, each man on the record of his deeds. Then death and hades were flung into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death" (Rev. 21:13-15).

After death and the grave shall have been destroyed in the lake of fire (a symbol of eternal destruction) there shall be no more death (Rev. 21:4). Our resurrected Lord's work of restoration for all the willing and obedient will have been completed. He can then turn the kingdom over to the Father, a perfect earth, filled with children in his image and likeness, the result of a thousand years of rising (not only out of the grave but) out of death and all that this horrible curse has meant to the human family in terms of suffering, sickness, and every evil thing.

"Praise God, we have a hope of the resurrection of the dead. A resurrection which includes not only the just, but also the unjust" (Acts 24:15).

... Something I Can Do

"There just has to be something I can do, has to be..." The thoughts run over and over in my mind. Looking again at his lifeless body, and remembering the person who used to live there, the frustration rises higher. The faces surrounding me are full of grief, a sense of hopelessness floods the room. Inside me, I want to tell them the message, the gospel. I know that it is good news and I know that it can bring joy. Yet, I also know it cannot remove the grief, pain, or agonies that come with death.

We have a wonderful message to tell the world! It is one of joy, peace, and comfort. But what of the real battle? What about the root of the problem-sin and its wages? This is the reality upon which we must focus at all times. When the fruit of sin, which is death, forces us to face this battle head-on, then we must focus all the more upon our real quest.

Complete surrender is the only answer. We need to enter into total victory in Christ. The remedy of all our woes awaits those that God has called and chosen to fully give up-in total submission-to his will in his son. That is what every grieving heart you see really needs. That is what we must renew ourselves to when Satan throws his darts at us. That is what all creation needs-and we must never lose sight of it.

- M. Knapp

Let not those who are looking for the millennium instead of Christ paint a future for the church of unmitigated brightness; let not those who are looking for Antichrist instead of Christ paint a future of unmitigated blackness: for neither representation is true to prophecy. "*Watchman, what of the night? The Watchman said, 'The morning cometh and also the night. '*"

-A.J. Gordon

To Timothy, My Dearly Beloved Son

2 Timothy 1:2

I greet you with Psalm 4:6-8:

There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. (Psa. 4:6-8).

We meet in big or small groups at various times, yet one thing never changes: The Bible, which is our hope, encouragement, and the source of strength and prophecy. This book joins us. It permits the impossible to happen in our contemporary world. It allows us to understand ourselves. To it we will always be called, and by it we examine our character.

We are about to quote from this book. The section chosen is not a deep analysis of a text nor a dissertation on a biblical truth. The section chosen is a testament-the words, thoughts, and opinions-of a man who knows the end of his earthly pilgrimage is near.

Let the title of our consideration be both a discussion and at the same time one of the first sentences of a letter from the great apostle to the gentiles, our apostle.

To Timothy, My Dearly Beloved Son

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an orthodox Pharisee, a blasphemer, a persecutor, slanderer, homeless, friendless, without daily affection, but not alone! Not deserted and not deprived of the love of another being. And Timothy, a young bishop of frail health, a disciple, a beloved son in the faith-a friend. Joined by a sympathy for each other and a will to serve in the fight together for the "faith once made known by the holy Spirit."

A short time had elapsed between an unexpected separation with Barnabas and the point where God gave new direction in the strange and difficult life of Paul. A second person, an inconspicuous disciple, soon became the apostle's mainstay because Paul needed support.

Paul fought all his consecrated life. He never had a moment for himself, never had what we call a private life. He divided himself between the tens and hundreds surrounding him, and the thousands of his followers of future centuries. His words resound with determination.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not in distress; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. So then death worketh in us, but life in you (2 Cor. 4:7,10,12).

Paul needs support. He writes to Timothy, *"I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand"* (2 Tim. 4:6). A crown of righteousness laid up for him is near (2 Tim. 4:8). Yet many things remain to do; so many matters have been started, many remain unfinished. On the table are letters waiting to be answered. There is uneasiness about the ecclesia at Ephesus, unstable Corinth... and still the biggest experience, that nothing would be left of the sufferings of

his master: *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge"* (2 Tim. 4:16).

Of his close and faithful friends only Luke was with him. The others, perhaps feeling that the end was near, had left. Visits became rare and cooler. There was increasing doubt and emptiness in the rented apartment at Rome.

In his previous letter the hope of their soon meeting still survived: *"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly..."* he writes because *"if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God"* (1 Tim. 3:14,15).

When Paul writes his second letter there is no such hope. He writes a testament: *"Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me"* (2 Tim. 4:9). He desires to see Timothy and is conscious of his tears (2 Tim. 1:4,5). Some believers he had sent to work; others departed. With pain he adds yet another sentence: *"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world"* (2 Tim. 4:10).

When the parchment reaches Timothy, Paul's tears have dried. Only a friend could perceive the call for help: "Come quickly!"

Between the lines, as if struck haphazardly, is one more request: *"The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus ...bring with thee."* It is cool in Rome and getting colder. And bring *"...the books, especially the parchments"* (2 Tim. 4:13).

Paul loved books. They were his strength when he tried to destroy the church of God and also later when he purged and built it. From youth he had been fond of books. As a pupil of Gamaliel, he forged his own "sword" which he so perfectly mastered during his life. These books were God's word, his guideposts. Now, at the end of his life, came the answer to doubts that were always there as he served Christ.

Paul Writes About Faith

From words directed to a friend flows a lesson to all generations of his followers. These are not energetic discourses, requests, and commands. By the calm, serious tone of his last letter it is difficult to resist being touched by an apostle writing a testimony to his valiant expectation of a martyr's death. He has fulfilled his responsibility and knows the certainty of Christ's awarding him the prize. These words are a lesson for us all. Let us all learn them!

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine [Timothy, there is still time ... there is still time.] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Somewhere in the recesses of our minds remains our own oft stifled question. How we fear an honest answer. How difficult it is to escape Paul's gaze as he reminds us:

"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath ,not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his

prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:6-8).

He says this so that you will stir up the fire anew. Look! Your lamp is going out!

What is the purpose of reading and consideration? Why do we travel so many miles to attend a convention of so few days? For a handshake? A smile? To grow in Christ? To learn about the Bible? Of course not! It is to stir up the gifts of God. It is to drag ourselves from a comfortable armchair, to pull ourselves away from everyday business and to stand again in full armor, to again take strength. It is to encourage each other to apply God's word in action, and in the end, to strengthen ourselves in faith.

Satan inquires about this in the words found in Job: *"Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side"* (2 Tim. 1:9,10)? This is a classic biblical example showing the problem of Christianity in a contemporary world. Do we love God because he is good and loving? Do we trust him because he is our heavenly Father? Do we believe because we want to be saved? Do we rejoice in Jesus Christ because he is the only light guiding us to the Father, our only joy? If we serve God because everything is going well, because we expect that he will defend us from all the evil of this age and shower us with health, joy, and friends -- if such is the case, our faith is not true.

Satan proposes a test: *"Turn away from him ... put forth thine hand and touch him and see if he will curse"* (2 Tim. 1:11, paraphrase). This is a truly satanic test. Yet faith and love -- two of the most positive powers guiding our way -- share one attribute: they work in spite of everything. Do we believe and love in spite of everything?

Our Faith Must Be Strong

Many people attend church when it is comfortable. Some give money to the church and support its activities. After the service they may greet each other and congratulate the preacher upon his sermon. Such people may use a religious vocabulary and quote memorized scriptures. But have they ever experienced the meaning of their words? The relationship of many persons to religion is, in a certain sense, indifferent. They pray to God in their difficulties but in daily life they care little about God.

No Scripture says you can be a Christian and lead whatever kind of life you like. When Christ enters a human heart, he insists on being Lord and Master. He requires total surrender and demands watchfulness over intellectual development. He requires that your flesh be given to him, and him alone. He demands your talents and abilities and that all your activity and work be accomplished in his name. He demands trust.

This is faith! But we are not like this. Of course we know how to explain our endeavors. However, the fact remains that we are not like this. We know perfectly well how much of our life is really consecrated and exactly how much progress we are making. We know perfectly well, and this disturbs us.

The acceptance of Christ should not be treated as an experiment. It must be an intelligent decision followed by full devotion. As a good soldier serves for the defense of his country and is unafraid of the threat of danger, we must go forward, never looking back. A soldier of God bums all bridges behind him and follows a way so carefully that life's misfortunes and changes do not

divert him. Jesus said, *"No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"* (Luke 9:62).

It was a blinded Paul who arose from his knees on the Damascus road. When the glory of Jesus dragged him from his horse his entire life was cut down. Educated, wise, informed about the writings of the law, he had made a frightening mistake. He read, commented, taught but did not see the Messiah of whom so many prophecies spoke-him who was so distinctly longed for.

The Paul of the Damascus road is an example of conversion to us. Christ arbitrarily eradicates our present life, when as blind we look for a hand that can pull us from our knees. In his experience the apostle precedes us. Broken down, he changes completely. He does not look around. Nor does he try to save that which is behind him. He changes everything.

It is not difficult to understand his love for Timothy when we read his last words: *"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience"* (2 Tim. 3:10). Does Paul also write to us? Or have we succumbed to the idea that we cannot give more of ourselves? Thus we pray, "Lord God, forgive, forgive," with even a lack of words to justify ourselves. And God? He continually forgives, understands, pardons, even when we desert him in anger, regret, and indifference. He waits. He waits many years, often an entire lifetime almost as he did for a Pharisee named Saul.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). This text is from one of Christ's most moving parables. We know it as the parable of the prodigal son, but the son is not the main character, the father is. This father did not forget, did not curse, did not stretch out his hand to be kissed, and did not set conditions for forgiveness. He *"ran and fell on his neck. . .and kissed him."*

A writer once told a story about a young man he had met on a train, someone who looked worried and nervous. In the beginning he was not eager to talk. But after a while, he shared his problems with the writer. He had led a careless and riotous life adding to his parents anxiety and, in the end, causing their heartbreak.

After attempts by his parents to encourage him to change his way of life the man left them in a tide of anger, vowing never again to cross the threshold of his family home.

He lived as a prodigal for many years. He satisfied his dreams, taking advantage of many pleasures. But as in the biblical parable, hard and lonely times came. He thought about returning home and his then elderly parents. Frequently, he thought of starting a new life. He dreamed of a large meadow, trees, pathways, and two sad wrinkled faces. These dreams tormented and accused him. And the most difficult of questions continually recurred: How to go back? He had treated his parents harshly, they might not want him back.

He wrote a letter to his parents telling them everything. At the end he said that he would return if they agreed, even though he was not sure they wanted to see him again. He told his parents on which train he would arrive on, a train that passed by their house. Then he bought a ticket to the next station.

Because the family home stood near the railroad tracks, he asked his parents to tie handkerchiefs to the branches of the trees between their house and the tracks. He would be able to see these from the train window. The handkerchiefs were to be a sign that they were expecting him. If he saw no handkerchief he would understand and continue traveling. The man finished telling this

story to the writer as the train neared the town. The man realized that when they passed the next curve he would be able to see his house. Squeezing the writer's hand, he said, "Please, sir, please look for me. I can't. Please look and tell me what you see." The writer looked through the window. "Young man, I see a house like the one you described. I also see two elderly people standing on the steps. They are looking this way."

"Well, do you see handkerchiefs?"

The writer took him by the shoulders and turned him in the direction of the window. On the tree thousands of handkerchiefs were hanging, several from each branch. From afar it seemed the tree had bloomed with strange, exotic flowers. The young man cried.

Faith is not enough

Return in your mind to the elderly Paul, bending over his letter and reflecting upon his life. The most valuable lesson, that which he had achieved after so many experiences, he reveals for his son: *"Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart"* (2 Tim. 2:22).

Young Timothy has more temptations and trials ahead of him, he has experienced little of life's deceits and deceptions. Paul gives Timothy a simple, effective, procedure to follow. Paul describes a demanding course for character development: *"Flee from youthful lusts"*! Do not evade, do not consider, do not stop. Flee! Only when you cut yourself off from lusts which cause you to stumble can you win. Every other way leads to calamity: first a little deviation, then a bigger one. *"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."* Timothy, you have to be firm and hard. We all must be firm and hard on ourselves, and only on ourselves.

Earlier in this letter the apostle speaks of gentleness, patience, and humility.

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of all truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil" (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

We must grow in love of others. We must learn to forgive others. Because we live in a world where people wrong and injure us, we are confronted with a daily decision: Do we have to forgive someone who has sinned against us? If we obey God, we will forgive them no matter what they have done. Imitating God means following his example of forgiveness.

God is forgiving, full of sympathy and mercy. He forgave us our sins when we did not deserve his mercy (Heb. 8:12). Our opposition did not keep him from working to our advantage and exercising forgiveness. He asks the same of us. *"Be thou therefore merciful as your father also is merciful"* (Luke 6:36), ring the words of the Gospel. And Paul adds, *"Lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"* (Heb. 12:15).

If we permit a lack of forgiveness to remain in us, the "root of bitterness" will grow. When it is just a root, it may appear harmless. But if we permit it to grow it will become a great tree of hatred and injury that will be difficult to uproot. This will affect the one who feeds this feeling and those around him.

Therefore, let us have more forgiveness, love, and humility. These are features which often appear in the later years of life only after the sieve of life and experiences demonstrate the right proportions, when moments of unnecessary agitation, anger, and aggression reveal themselves in their true light.

Such is the spirit of Paul's last letter. It is alive with vigorous wisdom largely supported by the holy Spirit. Since the majority of our conflicts, injuries, and offenses are trifling, the apostle did not forget to write about these as well:

"Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:14,15).

We battle over words. We may not extend our hand in greeting because of words. We are able to fight to the death about things which we alone have defined, laid out, and considered. We do not perceive anyone else's life, anyone else's consecration, anyone else's character development. Even in a study we sometimes manage to miss all the beauty of the gospel because our life is made up more of words rather than works.

Suppose, for example, I decided to prepare an article on the subject of joy. I open a concordance to the word "joy." I list the citations from the Bible on a notepad. With a sense of responsibility I chose texts that are, in my opinion, the most suitable and convincing. I then check a Greek dictionary to obtain a wider definition of the word. One might also consult a Hebrew-Chaldee dictionary, lexicon, etc. The form and content of this study begin to expand. To make the remarks more attractive, I might determine what Luther had to say on the subject and what others in the literary world had to say. Finally I decide it is enough.

The meeting begins and I speak: 'Brethren, the word 'joy' in the original Greek language means much more than we understand it to mean in our language ... Concerning joy Abraham said ... Jesus said ... The Apostle Paul said ... Luther said ... Amen!'

Some at that meeting might have a problem with one or more of my thoughts. Undoubtedly most would receive satisfaction from a study of God's word. A few might even comment upon the depth of my analysis. However, it is probable that no one has increased their joy-which was the point of all the biblical citations.

Jesus did not come to uncover a new conception of life for the world. Instead he came to offer his own life. His message was life, not a narrative about life. Therefore in our discourses, witness work, and discussions we should by our godly life inspire those with whom we come in contact, that our words provide food for spiritual development, that they lead to the application of God's word in action. This is not an easy task.

Some people are born to sustain others in spirit. The Apostle Paul calls them "strong." He stresses that they should bear the imperfections of the weak. This does not, however, excuse the weak since no one is exempt from the responsibility of serving. With joy Paul writes to Timothy:

The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

The phrase "a cup of cold water" appears in the Gospels (Matt. 10:42). It is a phrase that lies at the root of several parables, including the difficult parable of the sheep and the goats. Lord, when did *we* see you thirsty? When were you hungry? When did you come looking for a place *to* spend the night? We never saw you thus, we who are lukewarm, indifferent, without eyes, ears, hands, or even hearts.

It was this state which most concerned Paul =not death or suffering. He feared for the lukewarm of heart, that they be not shallow. Paul had learned his concern not only from divine revelation but also through watching the results of his own sowing. He knew that the great enthusiasm he inspired during his visits would not last long in his absence. Emotion cools. The seed that falls on the wayside dies away fruitless and often brings about hostility for the gospel itself. Paul shares this great concern with Timothy, "*This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes*" (2 Tim. 1:15).

These were not words of information. "This thou knowest" applies to Timothy. These words mean more. This sentence reveals great pain, a pain which always accompanies saying good-bye to those whom one had brought to Christ, who were already close, who had already touched the future kingdom.

Timothy, you know what has happened? I cannot understand. I can not be reconciled. Paul feels as though his hands have been cut off. This would result in the collapse of the church, the body of his Master. He could not accept that all of his sowing would not be glorified by Christ. Notwithstanding that he teaches this, he additionally introduces apostasy as one of the signs of the proximity of the kingdom. However, the pain remains after those who "left their first love."

Sit down at the table with Paul. Try again to effect a change in your own heart. Try to believe that the gospel is not a story about remote people and events.

"I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:13,14).

I give thee charge!

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1).

The life of a Christian should be godly and dignified. The world fights for human dignity. In many places in the world it is still unattainable. In a Christian, dignity has to be a result of godliness. We have the most high God and his law in our hearts. Notwithstanding that our body is weak and of little value, it does, however, preserve a treasure. This treasure is ours if we do not allow the forces of the world to take it away from us and that we cultivate it with our own godly dignity. Paul advises us to pray, to ask for help, so that by following the divine law we may live our lives in peace and quiet. Human laws do not reflect the will of God. God's law makes it impossible for one person to be subservient *to* another, nor does it allow one to exploit and debase another. We know we will not be popular. Others will not put us on a pedestal. Even if they do, they will eventually stab us in the back in the name of some other entirely different dignity. The fact that we were right, the apostle was right, that even Christ was right, will not convince anyone in this age.

Sit down together with the great apostle. Listen and watch. Try not to lose any of his last words. Allow them to possess your heart so you lose desire for anything that is not of Christ, so you may become citizens of his kingdom. And perhaps even we will dare to draw out the deep standard that is hidden and unfold it before the world by saying aloud and clearly, Yes Christ!

Then the words from the apostle's testament will become our words:

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2 Tim. 4:18).

- Michal Targosz, POLAND

Before a man can do things there must be things he will not do.

- Mencius

The Question Box

If one should "provide not for his own," he has "denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). Does this "provide not for his own" refer to material or spiritual needs or to both?

Wilson's Diaglott indicates that the Apostle Paul was specific in adding the word "relative" to the quoted scripture, rendering it, "If one should provide not for his own relative," he has, "denied the faith and is worse than an infidel [unbeliever]." But based on the context, it would appear that Paul is saying to "heed" or "pay attention" to his instructions so that both material and spiritual needs would be cared for. How and by whom? Giving such care is based upon loving (*phileo*); "love thy neighbor as thyself," as Moses told all the congregation to do in Leviticus 19:18.

In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul seems to extend this concept to believers even further saying in chapter eleven, verse 16 (2 Cor. 11:16), "...teach by example, this will save both self and others who may hear you..." (or "observe you"). To support this he lists examples of such costs of service from his own experience (costs of service to others-sufferings for Christ's sake) enumerated in the earlier verses of Chapter eleven. Then in 2 Cor. 12:14-21 he seems to go further, saying not to let his service for others even appear to be a burden upon those being serviced. Further, by example, he seems to imply, "do not let others feel that you are indebted to them. Instead, provide for your own needs as he did" and as stated in verse fifteen, "though I be spent for other," and as he did for his "sons" and the brethren. But rather, "though the more abundantly I love you, the less I beloved," because, "for me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

- L. Petran

Can material and spiritual needs be separated to the glory of God? I think not if they are kept within the bounds of scriptural teaching.

- F. Earl

This refers primarily to material needs. The context in verses 3-9 is discussing whether family or the church should take care of the widows. The principle would evidently apply to all of our family, however. [The holier-than-thou Pharisees and the-legalistic scribes commonly violated this principle, as in the matter of Corban giving themselves to God (Mark 7:9-13).]

- J. B. Parkinson

This chapter is devoted to the spiritual and temporal care of ecclesia members. The word "honor" in 1 Tim. 5:3 appears in Matthew 15:4,5 and means "to support" or "to sustain," implying both spiritual and physical needs. The word appears again in verse 8 of 1 Timothy 5 (1 Tim. 5:8). Paul admonishes us to care especially for those in the ecclesia who have no family. However, those of our own family, or those ecclesia members who might reside with us as family, should have first demand on our time, our counsel, and our earthly means.

- L. Griehs

In this context (1 Tim. 1:1-16) we are told to give proper recognition to the widows. We are to honor and support them. The church in Ephesus seems to have maintained a list of widows supported by the church (1 Tim. 1:9). We are to honor and support all of the members of the Body of Christ (1 Tim. 1:1-2). In our text [Diaglott] it reads, *"if any one provide not for his own and especially for the household,"* the "household" would refer to all members of the Body of Christ, the household of faith. This is in harmony with our context, which tells us to honor and support all members of the church, especially the widows. Similarly, Galatians 6:10 says to do good to all, but especially to the household of faith. We are to provide temporal and spiritual needs for our immediate family, but especially for the household. In verse 16 it says that if any woman has widows in her family she should help them so that the church can help the widows who are really in need. Our obligation is not only to our own family but especially to other members of our church. Our Lord gave us an example of washing one another's feet. He said, *"If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet "* (John 13:14). One who does not serve and give to those in need has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. The son of man came not to be served but to serve. We deny the faith when we do not follow the example of our Lord Jesus.

- J. Karavas

At first glance and with fallen propensities, we would assume that people only need food, clothes, and shelter or material provisions. Our Creator given greater potential and our task as parents and fellow humans must be broad enough to include provision for learning of God's creation (mental), for understanding and expressing feelings (emotional), for training in proper behavior (moral), and especially for assistance in establishing and maintaining those vital relationships with our Creator and our Lord Jesus Christ (spiritual). When we provide for our own we give them full opportunity to be mature and beneficial to all with whom they meet.

- B. Kuehmichel

The Pastoral Letters were written about A. D. 63-65. St. Paul recognized by this time that the Lord's return was not imminent. He proceeded to set up a temporal and spiritual order in the church. In I Timothy 3 he makes eldership and deaconship offices. Chapter 5 refers to the temporal or material obligations the church has to its members.

- A. Jarmola

The entire context of 1 Timothy 5 relates to temporal distributions within the church, and therefore the answer to the question would be that this is what is emphasized.

It is undoubtedly true that Christians are to be spiritual providers as well: giving their spouses time for study and meditation and their children a well-rounded spiritual education. But, perhaps, having stronger spiritual interests, the greater danger may be in neglecting those things necessary for the maintenance of this life and the avoidance of becoming a burden on either Christians or society in general.

Addressing this same question, some strong, pertinent advice was given by Charles Taze Russell in his August 15, 1896 article, "The Lord Preserveth the Faithful":

If you have children, you brought them into the world and are responsible for them and to God accordingly: you owe them not only religious instruction but secular education and a business or trade preparation, to fit them for and start them in life. If unprepared or unwilling to give them this reasonable start, you should not have begotten them. Having begotten them, they are a first mortgage upon your time, influence, and means: and in providing for them you will be blest. Not even the gospel has a prior claim upon your time.

- C. Hagensick

Both! *"If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God"* (1 Tim. 3:5)? These chapters (1 Tim. 3-6) identify qualifications of good stewardship and how to care for others. Verse 8 concludes with the phrase *"he has denied the faith..."* associating physical (material) help along with practicing faith. In James 2:14-18 material giving and faith are also coupled: *"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone"* (James 2:17).

- T. A. Herz

"Provide not for his own" refers to material needs in 1 Timothy 5:8. There is a saying that "a text without a context becomes a pretext." Our context here is the Apostle Paul's discussion of everyday affairs of the church and how they relate to each other in their social interaction.

In Proverbs 22:6 we read, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* This may be considered as providing a spiritual need to one's own, but no one can provide spiritual needs for his own. Christian development is personal development. I can find no scriptures that support a view of providing spiritual characteristics for someone else. On the other hand, scriptures are replete for ones own development: Philippians 2:12-"... *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*"; Luke 17:5 -- "*increase our [or my] faith*"; Proverbs 9:12 -- "*If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself.*"

- C. A. Czohara

The word "provide" in this expression, from the Greek *pronoō*, is defined by W. E. Vine as "to take thought for," and by Young as "to know or think beforehand." The same word is also used in two other texts: Romans 12:17 and II Corinthians 8:21. The context in every instance seems to be referring to material needs. In First Timothy the concern is for supporting widows: in Romans, for aiming to do what is considered proper and honorable before all men; and in Second Corinthians it is for properly administering a love offering entrusted to Paul by the Macedonian brethren.

Nevertheless, it goes almost without saying that the responsible head of a family who is fully consecrated to the Lord will also make every reasonable effort to provide for the spiritual needs of his loved ones. It is vital that each family member be refreshed with the promises, the teachings, and the encouragements of God's Word and have regular opportunities for fellowship with others of the Lord's people -- thus being built up together in the most holy faith (Eph. 5:25-29; 6:4; 1 Tim. 3:4,5). To fail to provide for such spiritual needs would be a serious oversight indeed, and we think would also be reflected in the Apostle's sober words of condemnation (1 Tim. 5:8).

-C. F. Redeker

I refuse to believe my depressions; I choose to believe in God. If I break my leg I do not become less a person. My wife and children do not repudiate me. Neither when my faith fractures or my feelings bruise does God cast me off and reject me.

- E. Peterson

... to deviate from the truth for the sake of some prospect of hope of our own can never be wise, however slight that deviation may be. It is not our judgment of the situation which can show us what is wise, but only the truth of the Word of God. Here alone lies the promise of God's faithfulness and help. It will always be true that the wisest course for the disciple is always to abide solely by the word of God in all simplicity.

- D. Bonhoeffer

"When the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us... whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage" (Acts 28:15).

These dear saints who were an encouragement to Paul are now an example to us. It would have been much easier just to stay at home and pray for Paul, but they went out to meet and greet him in the name of the Lord. They have long since passed away, but the record of their loving welcome to the aged apostle lives on. Even a Paul needed encouragement on the Christian pathway.

- W. P. W. McVey

Entered Into Rest

J.T. Blankenburg, SOUTH AFRICA

W. Bohm, GERMANY

H. Gove, OR

A. Larson, WI

S. Maples, OH

D. Mirku, MI

A. Newel, IL

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