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Christian Leadership

Paul's Example

by: T.M. Thomassen

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they should follow his example, just as he followed the example of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1).

If first century Christians were exhorted to follow Paul, then it would behoove twentieth century Christians to do likewise. If we seriously try to follow Paul's example we need to know Paul's approach to his way, his motivation and why he succeeded in his ministry. Then we need to apply those lessons by conforming our life to Paul's, and ultimately to our Master's, the Lord Jesus Christ.

How did Paul spread the gospel, the good news, of the Kingdom? First of all, he spoke sincerely. Paul told the Corinthians "we are not as many, which corrupt* the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:17).

1. The word used here and translated as "corrupt" means "to adulterate." The Greek word *kapelos* [which occurs once in the Septuagint], meant a huckster or tavern -- keeper. The verb came to mean "to adulterate." In Isa. 1:22, the Septuagint reads: "thy wine sellers mix the wine with water" [Companion Bible note, pg. 17311.

The NIV uses the word "peddlers" in 2 Cor. 2:17. These peddlers, corrupters, or adulterators refer to false teachers who had infiltrated the Corinthian church. Such insincere, self -- sufficient, and boastful persons cleverly presented themselves in a persuasive manner. However, their chief interest was to take money from gullible church members. Does this have a familiar ring in today's religious circles?

Paul preached the gospel sincerely and free of charge, taking care not to be a financial burden on the Corinthian believers.

When Paul went to Corinth, his message and preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but with the sincerity of knowing nothing among them but "Christ and him crucified" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5). The Apostle came to Corinth as an ambassador of Christ. He was not there to show off his knowledge but to make Christ the sole subject of his teaching and preaching. Paul had a brilliant

mind, but he did not rest on oratorical ability, as did Greek orators. He went on to say that he was with them,

"...in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (RSV).

Nor was Paul seeking to be pleasing to others (Gal. 1:10). He told the Galatians that if he were still trying to please men, he would not be a servant of Christ. Once he wore the yoke of slavery (Gal. 5:1), but having been set free from sin by the redemption that is in Christ he became a slave of righteousness, a slave of God. In Christ, Paul found the only right slavery; he was now Christ's property, subject to his will and engaged in his service.

During his ministry, Paul exerted himself tirelessly, traveling at least five thousand miles on sea and land, enduring much but without complaint (2 Cor. 11:23-29). Paul knew that zealotry and patient endurance were not the most important things in the Christian estimate of worth. Paul always kept the glorious prize of immortal life before him. All his suffering he viewed as nothing in comparison with the glory to be received as a reward for faithfulness: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us," he said to the Romans (Rom. 8:18).

The Apostle severely disciplined his body in serving Christ. Being imperfect, he experienced a continual conflict between his mind and the sinful flesh. He did not give up. He said, "No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Cor. 9:27, NIV). He knew that he must serve the Lord with rigor and fight the good fight of faith.

As an inspired apostle, Paul had authority to give commands, which he did (1 Cor. 14:37; 16:1; Col. 4:10; 1 Thess. 4:2,11); however, he preferred to appeal to the brethren on the basis of love, entreating them by "the compassions of God" and by the "mildness and kindness of the Christ" (Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 6:11-13; 2 Cor. 8:8; 2 Cor. 10:1; Philemon 8,9).

Verses 8 and 9 of Philemon are interesting in this regard. There Paul wrote "Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you. I, Paul, an ambassador and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus" (RSV).

In the early church, an apostle was regarded as the very envoy of Christ and his word was virtually law. So, Paul could almost have exacted obedience, but he laid aside authority and pleaded only the love made known in Christ.

Paul was gentle and expressed tender affection for the brethren, exhorting and consoling them as would a father (1 Thess. 2:7,8,11,12). He took on the role of training his spiritual children. Three verbs summarize his ministry:

- 1) he exhorted -- meaning to call to decisive action;
- 2) he comforted -- he was appreciative of their hard lot;
- 3) he charged -- reminding them of the solemn nature of their duty in Christ.

Twentieth century pupils in the school of Christ also need to be exhorted, comforted, and charged.

While Paul was entitled to receive material support from the brethren, he chose to work with his hands in order to avoid being a burden (Acts 20:33-35; 1 Cor. 9:18; 1 Thess. 2:6,9). As a result, a close bond of brotherly affection existed between Paul and those to whom he ministered. The leaders of the Ephesus congregation were greatly pained and moved to tears upon learning that they might see his face no more (Acts 20:37, 38).

Paul was deeply concerned about the spiritual welfare of fellow believers. He wanted to do what he could to assist them in making their calling and election sure (Rom. 1:11; 15:15,16; Col. 2:1,2). He remembered them in his prayers (Rom. 1:8,9; 2 Cor. 13:7; Eph. 3:14-19; Phil. 1:3-5, 9-11; Col. 1:3, 9-12; 1 Thess. 1:2,3; 2 Thess. 1:3), and he requested that they pray for him (Rom. 15:30-32; 2 Cor. 1:11).

Paul drew encouragement from the faith of fellow Christians (Rom. 1:12). He was firm for what was right, not hesitating to correct even a fellow apostle when necessary for the advancement of the gospel (1 Cor. 5:1-13; Gal. 2:11-14). Paul was a beloved brother, not just a faithful minister. Such a combination of qualities is rare. A faithful minister may pick out our faults accurately, but we might not call him a "beloved" brother.

After Paul and Barnabas separated from each other (Acts 15:39), Paul took Silas with him, "being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord." They went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches Paul had started there (Acts 15:41). He was interested in how the brethren were doing since he had last seen them. He saw the necessity for continued contact, and this is a companion to witnessing and preaching.

Paul's selection of Timothy as a traveling companion was significant. In 1 Timothy 4:12-13 he advised Timothy not to let anyone despise his youth but rather to "set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching." Paul accepted Timothy upon the recommendation of the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. He considered his Christian maturity rather than his chronological age and trusted the judgment of his brethren.

Paul followed the leading of the Spirit. When doors were closed to the East (Asia), he did not give up. When doors were closed to the North (Bithynia), he did not quit. Instead, he went Westward. Paul followed the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19), going wherever it led and doing whatever the Lord had for him to do. His flexibility in not being too set on pursuing a pre-established course is an excellent example and calls to mind a story about two ships that met one night at sea. One captain saw what looked to him to be the lights of another ship dead ahead. His signalman was instructed to send this message: "Change your course ten degrees south."

The captain was surprised when a reply came back "Change *your* course ten degrees north." He answered: "I'm a Captain -- change your course south!" The reply came back: "I'm a seaman -- change your course north!" By this time, the captain became upset and angry and sent back "I *said* change your course south -- *I'm on a battleship.*" The reply was, "I'm a lighthouse."

Sometimes we face a lighthouse, and it is smarter to change course than to take on a lighthouse. We just alter the course and may accomplish the same goal by a different way.

Paul used sound reasoning to accomplish his mission. In Thessalonica, Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue and was very successful, especially with prominent persons.

Paul's words to Timothy characterize Paul especially well and provided for Timothy a charge and commission that we too should make our own: "You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings -- what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

"Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" (2 Tim 3:10,15).

Looking at Paul's legacy of example, we wonder why he was willing to give up his home, his "place in the world." What motivated him to travel so far, endure such humiliation and hardship?

A clue to his motivation has already been hinted at in his telling the Corinthians that "we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially... with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace" (2 Cor. 1:12).

Paul was defending his trustworthiness against the slander being spread about him. Paul appealed to the witness of his own conscience and to the firsthand knowledge the Corinthians had of his character. He had spent eighteen months with them when he first came to Corinth. They could not plead ignorance about his integrity (Acts 18:11).

One of the charges being made against Paul was that of insincerity: that he did not mean what he wrote, that his words could be interpreted with double meanings, that he used worldly wisdom, and that he was crafty and cunning in his arguments.

The charge of "insincerity" can damage a man's reputation and influence as nothing else can. It imputes base motives for good actions. It suggests that a man is seeking selfish ends while appearing to be concerned only for the good of others. This shakes confidence, undermines influence, and makes one's words and actions suspect. No leader or speaker can hope to keep his influence to help or lead if his motives are suspect. Proper human relations depend on mutual confidence: the assurance that words mean what they say, that promises will be kept. To kill confidence by innuendo or by direct charge is like poisoning a well.

Jesus too had this weapon used against him by his enemies. They could not deny his good deeds. So they tried to discredit his motives by suggesting that he was an emissary of the prince of darkness camouflaged as an angel of light, doing his miracles by the power of Satan. Of course, the charge was easily disproved (Mark 3:25). Christ recognized in this attempt to turn his good into evil the willful blindness to the truth, which is apostasy. Such blindness means that the light has gone out in that person's life.

Paul's motivation was to do God's will. To do God's will, other factors have a part in achieving the kind of success which was Paul's. We have noted already that the testimony of Paul's own conscience gave him confidence. He could look into his own heart without self reproach. Unless the Holy Spirit is working in a listener's heart, the wisdom and eloquence of the speaker are ineffective.

Paul's success was attributed to "a demonstration, of the Spirit's power." The Greek word for "demonstration" implies the same meaning as that of producing proofs in a court of law. Paul's preaching was marked by, the convincing demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. He was now Christ's property, subject to his will and engaged in his service. He did not take any credit to himself but gave all honor to God as the One responsible for growth (1 Cor. 3:5-9) and the One who had adequately qualified him for the ministry (2 Cor. 3:5,6).

Paul's spirit stood erect and firm, like a great tree amid drought and tempest because his confidence was rooted in Christ. He was supported continually by the God who came to him through Christ. He had no confidence in himself apart from God.

Paul highly valued his ministry, glorifying it and recognizing its possession to be an expression of God's mercy and that of his Son. When God calls and commissions his servants, he also supplies the strength necessary to persevere in the face of hardships and persecution.

How can today's Christians follow Paul's example? He worked zealously, giving his all to Christ's service. Wherever he was led, he went. Whatever was needed, he did. At times, he exchanged home and hearth for discomfort and humility.

One must be willing to be ever alert for weaknesses within himself: watching for pitfalls, doing honest self examination (even when it hurts), and drawing strength from the lessons given us in Paul's words and by his example.

Failure to realize the breadths of the Lord's work and the privilege of service has proven to be a temptation to some and has led to faultfinding, bickering, and discouragement. Instead, we should mutually encourage, sympathetically assist and increase in the joy of the Lord and in the spreading of His truth.

Every member of Christ, especially those of teaching ability, should seek the broadest possible view of the Lord's work and the most loving and appreciative view of every fellow -- servant's effort. This course leads to mutual encouragement, while any other tends toward coldness and leanness, if not to backbiting and devouring one another (Z' 09 - R4360).

We learn from Paul's example that ministers of the gospel are to be sincere, without mixed motives, seeking no personal gain. They should care only for the reputation of Christ. Such must be channels of truth, not exhibitionists who put themselves in the forefront...

Oh to be nothing, nothing,
Only as led by his hand;
A messenger at his gateway,
Only waiting for his command;
Only an instrument, ready
His praises to sound at his will;
Willing, should he not require me,
In silence to wait on him still.
Oh to be nothing, nothing,
Only to lie at his feet.
A broken and emptied vessel,
For the Master's use made meet.

The Christians' goal in life is to be unspotted by evil and beyond censure because of moral or spiritual failure.

Christ's ambassadors must carefully present the truth -- unadulterated by their own ideas, organizational bias, or its dictates. His ambassadors should appeal to their hearers' interest in the Kingdom of God and not to the self -- interest of those who listen.

A familiar Old Testament text tells us to "fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth" (Josh. 24:14). We are to trust, serve, and worship God, and God alone! Today, many people are too conscious of job, home, hobby, pleasure, organizations, and other things. Our Master should be Christ, and Christ alone!

Perfect sincerity is not easily achieved; our motives are apt to be mixed. A person may do good work out of a variety of motives: the love of good work, the desire to serve others, to earn a living and support his family, to succeed, to stand well with others. All these motives may operate in a person at one time or another. Some may be called selfish, but God knows the heart and can sift the gold from the dross. The purification of our motives is part of the process of sanctification. None of us has any right to impugn the motives of others or to question another's sincerity. We cannot see into their heart. It is not our place to judge another's motives.

Our sincerity with truth will deliver us from unworthy motives and from the self consciousness, timidity, doubt and discouragement that spring from self concern.

We work in the sight of God. If we are aware that our Heavenly Father sees us, we will be more careful not to handle the word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2). Choosing to do God's will reflects a whole attitude of life. A person sincerely set on doing God's will welcomes Jesus' teaching and believes in him. With such assistance and confidence, what need could there be for any deceit?

We must have confidence in the adequacy of God's message and faith in its power. Otherwise, we will be unable to withstand opposition from without and stand firm against doubts that arise from within. We can do everything through him who gives us strength (Phil. 4:13).

Our qualifications for Christ's ministry are all God given. Natural gifts are gratuities from Him, and the full use of them is possible only as we are enriched and directed by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12-13). The realization of one's own insufficiency is important. Whatever gifts we may possess, we must realize that they are not of our merit but of His grace.

We must also come to realize that it is not what we suffer but how we bear it and for what we suffer that makes our suffering honorable. Above all, it is the depth and quality of our love to men and to God which counts (1 Cor. 13:3). No one disputes the reality of the sufferings which we encounter. They are too real for anyone to dismiss them altogether, but we can rise to meet sufferings when we are sustained by a new assurance. We gain the necessary confidence when we see our sufferings in the proper perspective. For the followers of Christ, the glory that is to be revealed to us is just as real and of far greater significance.

Just as long training and self control are needed in the athletic area, if one is to win a race or match, similar discipline is required if excellence is to be achieved in the Christian way of life. Pleasures that make one soft or less sensitive to spiritual things are to be discarded or strictly curtailed. All the preaching we do to others will not get us into the Kingdom. Victory only belongs to those who overcome. "Therefore,... let us lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so

closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith..."(Heb. 12:1).

We grow in grace as we give ourselves to study, to meditation, to prayer, to fellowship, and to Christian service. Every aspect of life must be governed and permeated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Paul was concerned about a certain slackness in these respects in Corinth. We, today, should also take note if we see these things happening in our own lives or in the lives of our brethren.

Through his many experiences, Paul learned humility, trust, and patience. These qualities are no less important in Christ's followers now. We are to exhibit love to all brethren, even those who separate themselves from us, for whatever reason. When a door is closed, are we so set in our ways that we tell the Lord what we should do, instead of asking him for his leading?

Paul reasoned with the Jews; we also should exhibit sound reasoning in witnessing.

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool" (Isaiah 1:18,19).

We know the teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings of Paul, our example of Christian leadership. May we continue in what we have learned and in that of which we have been convinced. Let us follow the example of Paul as he followed Christ. Paul's first century pattern presents a high and worthy standard for us today.

Fellowship implies a joint interest. Communion implies a common possession.

There is nothing so kingly as kindness and nothing so royal as truth.

-- Anon

It is the laden bough that hangs low, and the most fruitful Christian who is the most humble.

-- Anon

O! How sweet it will be in that beautiful land,
So free from all sorrow and pain,
His songs on our lips, and his work in our hands,
To meet one another again.

The Question Box

Does the Bible indicate that ALL who have lived will be raised to life again?

If ALL who have lived are not raised to life again, this would deny the ransom, the heart of our belief. The following Scriptures in Isaiah show that all except the unclean will be alive at the end of the Millennial Age and rejoice with songs of gladness in their hearts with no more sorrows:

And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:8-10).

Matthew (Matt. 20:28) and Mark (Mark 10:45) speak to this question in this way: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for [the] many." And in 1 Timothy 2:6, Paul says Christ "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits (plural); afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:12, 27).

-- Francis L. Earl

Guidance

Selected

Should not God's Word satisfy every truly inquiring mind's need for guidance through life?

God has said in the Bible:

"Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he shall direct thy paths" - Proverbs 3:6.

"The Lord will guide thee continually" - Psalm 11:58.

"He will be our guide, even unto death" - Psalm 73:24.

"The meek will he guide in judgment" - Psalm 25:9.

His judicial guidance is acquired through his Word, and it is a process. As we honor him, we learn to obey him. As we obey, we learn to submit ourselves to his spirit. Submission to his spirit results in keener ears to hear his further instruction to follow the only leader he has given to man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Following Jesus affords us a clear example to follow all our life.

How shall I know the voice I hear as God's voice?

One might as well ask how they know the voice of their intimate friend. Intimacy with a person makes their voice as well known to you as your own. So it is with God. Cultivate intimacy with God. Walk with him. Talk with him hour by hour. Converse with him with that same freedom you use with a close personal friend. Living in close companionship with God, you will recognize God's voice when he speaks. Because you habitually speak to God and learn to prefer his will over yours, there will be no great test in laying aside your own preference or plans so that you can converse with your loving friend. In this way you will hear him when he speaks to you.

Also, with your soul baptized in love -- the love of Jesus -- you will live in such assurance of God's love that you will not question his response to your search for his will. You will learn to rest in his will. You will be assured that he will not fail to direct you anymore than he would forget to give you daily bread. Live his love. You will be as sure of his guidance and his salvation, for both are full and complete.

How can I recognize God's voice amid the many spirits in this world?

John tells us to try the spirits, whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). What confession emanates from God's spirit? It is the exaltation of Christ! When you discern this spirit, you can know it to be the voice of God. God speaks by his Spirit and by his Word, the Bible. His testimony is single minded, and if you are set upon doing his will, it is revealed as his voice when the spirit of God enlightens the words of Scripture in the mind of man.

If you yearn for God's guidance, he will enlighten your heart as you investigate his instructions in the Bible. The illuminating power (the enlightenment) is not your intelligence! The power to understand the Scripture is given by the power of God. If we are singleminded in desiring God's glory then he will purify your vision and the scales of blindness will fall from your eyes.

If you take everything to God in prayer it will have a marvelous effect. By acknowledging your needs and acknowledging his ability to care, you will become susceptible to his slightest, whispered instruction. This is like the barely audible conversation between Adam and God as they walked and talked together during the cool of the evening in the Garden of Eden. It is the sound of good friends whose spirit is one and for whom words are scarcely needed. How will you recognize his whisper? Today we don't hear voices, instead you recognize, in biblical instructions, the application to your life that previously you had not seen. As you find the Bible unfolding to you, you will find yourself more attuned to it so that future understanding comes easier.

If you are a novice, and uncertain about whether such things work, try this. Read the eighth and tenth verses of the 143rd Psalm. With those words on your lips, take the question you need answered to God. Ask him to guide you. Ask him with *no will* of your own and *no preference* as to his answer. Trust *everything* to God, and *wait* for his voice. As God is true he will show you his will. You will understand it just as if you were living in ancient days and he said to you, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Moreover, as you begin doing his will all opposition will disappear, for the voice of God's providence is united with that *of* his Spirit and *of* his word. They speak together, in one voice.

Questions to our Readers

Who are the "Scoffers" referred to in 2 Peter 3:3? What are their characteristics?

The apostle proposes to recall for the reader certain things already known by them (2 Pet. 3:1, cf. NEB, TCNT, WEYMOUTH). How would readers benefit by recalling these things written by the prophets and apostles? In the last days scoffers would arise. So what? Peter says that this recall would help them withstand the "scoffing" which would accompany the rise of the scoffers.

Why was it necessary *to* fortify the body -- members against scoffers to come? Because mockery, derision, and doubt have an insidious effect upon the mind, and Peter did not shun to declare to them the entire counsel of God. Rather than merely protect the reader from eloquent attacks of reason and logic, the apostle assures us that those who followed after him would also be protected from the less reasonable but equally dangerous faces of unbelief.

The scoffers would be ruled by their passions (Wey, Gdspd) and ignore relevant information (NEB, RSV). Such "*passions*" (referring to the meaning of the original words) can be, not only sinful longings, but also disproportionate desires. Any living to excess is therefore suspect as we explore Peter's meaning and intent. Excesses can be found not only in, "food and drink" but also in chronology, prophecy, and study. The first danger to Peter's brethren (and to ourselves) lay within the heart of the scoffer. To what would they cling? The good and wholesome? Or would they overemphasize somethings and disregard others? Peter here warns us all of these dangers. The fact that the scoffers would willingly ignore certain things is important. Such persons are not seekers of truth, whatever they might claim. Who would wish to oppose the truth of creation and God? Seemingly, no one. Yet, that was what the Jewish nation repeatedly did when prophets were sent unto them by God. We cannot forget that they were the Chosen People of God at the time; today's Christians are not beyond falling by the same pattern.

The scoffers should have been convinced by certain facts (2 Pet. 3:5). The sort of fact to which he points us (2 Pet. 3:5-7) are not facts that would be conclusive to unbelievers, but they are facts that would be conclusive to believers. Note for example one instance. The world at large isn't concerned with how God destroyed the "*world that was.*" The man of faith is interested, however, and Peter's words are of great importance to him. The other accusations follow similar lines: to the world of no great merit, but to those trying to live by faith they are matters of elemental belief.

One must conclude, therefore, that these scoffers would be professing Christians who are unmoved by the evidences of Holy Writ and who deride others for their belief. To such, just like the people of Jesus' day who wanted a sign (John 6:30), no sign would be sufficient. Their hard hearts stood between them and the Word of God.

Peter notes this characteristic in the words of derision which they would *employ*: "*for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were.*" These scoffers are unable or unwilling to recognize what lay beyond obvious facts. When the trees around them were bent over by the blast of the spirit of God these scoffers would still be asking whether the wind was blowing! How' did the Apostle know this would be the *case*? He knew by the abundance of scriptural testimony. The prophets suffered the same derision, a derision arising from the same spirit of unbelief! That is one way in which the prophets provide us an example of suffering for righteousness sake. It is to the prophets that the apostle refers us.

His argument concludes later in the letter: if we know that these conditions will prevail at the end of the age, "*what manner of persons ought ye to be*"? Eloquently, he shows us what the prophets suffered; he tells us why they suffered; he warns us that we would suffer in a similar manner. He offers the reader the most compelling of reasons to bring their life into accord with their profession.

Yet, our original question remains: Who are the "scoffers," and what are their characteristics?

- Peter J Pazucha

God Our Great Caretaker

"The Lord is my shepherd." - Psalm 23:1 by: I.I. Margeson

The 23rd Psalm beautifully illustrates the Lord's care for his children. This psalm praises Jehovah as the Shepherd and Host of his own. It also breathes a spirit of the calmest and most assured trust in God. It speaks of a peace so deep and profound that even thoughts of death are not troublous. Here is an absence of doubt, misgiving, fear, and anxiety.

How beautiful a description of rest, safety, and trust is pictured *by* sheep lying down in the deep, rich, meadow grass, beside a living stream, under the care of their tender and watchful shepherd. This confidence is expressed in three different ways. "I cannot want"; "I will fear no evil"; "I will dwell in the house of Jehovah forever." God's care for the Christian is expressed in a twofold image: Jehovah is the true Shepherd, and he is the bountiful Host.

The essence of this psalm is that God would provide for him, that he would never be left to want. This thought opens the psalm. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." The idea carries through to the end of the psalm in two ways. First, God was David's shepherd, and he always showed David that care which a shepherd takes with his flock. Secondly, God prepared for David a table in the presence of his enemies when they sought to destroy him. Through this double witness David had God's assurance that he would never be abandoned.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures" -- pastures of tender grass. How apt a description of the places where flocks lie down. Here the flock is resting; this is a flock whose needs have been supplied. They lie amid abundance. Applied to the children of God, what better picture can we imagine of the abundance which God provides for his own? In the Lord are all our needs met and satisfied. His own know that their needs will always be satisfied.

"He leadeth me beside the still waters." How calm and peaceable is the repose of him whose heart is at peace with God and in whose heart rules the peace of God.

"He restoreth my soul" -- he quickens me. God strengthens the spirit when exhausted, weary, or sad. The great Shepherd reanimates, brings back its vigor, encourages to new effort, and fills it with joy.

"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake," -- he leads me in right paths. He does not suffer me to wander in ways that would lead to ruin. As the shepherd in the East always precedes the flock, so our Shepherd goes ahead -- leads us. He leads us in these paths for his own sake, or so that his name would be glorified.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death..." We do not believe that this verse applies merely to death. The thought embraces death, but in its fullness more is implied. The human family has walked through the valley of the shadow of death for 6000 years. Although this has been

the case, the Lord's children are assured that they will be guided and lead by the great Shepherd. They have nothing to fear in this dark valley, "for thou art with me."

"Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me..." The rod seems to symbolize the shepherd's defending power. It is the weapon by which he strikes down our adversaries. This suggests the protecting care of our Shepherd who is ever alert to ward off threatening ills. The staff might also be called the shepherd's crook. Under it, each sheep must pass on its way into the sheep -- fold and be numbered. By his staff, the shepherd restrains the wayward sheep, restraining them from wandering away from him. He also uses his staff to rescue them from the holes into which they fall. So, God's rod and staff do comfort us. They impart confidence that he will not leave us alone, and that he will defend us.

"Thou preparest a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies." It is helpful to think of ourselves as being sheep and of God as our Shepherd, but in this verse the psalmist says, "I am more than Jehovah's sheep, I am Jehovah's guest." To sit with a man at his table is a sign of intimacy. It is not only a means of satisfying hunger but of intimacy and affectionate love. The Christian can think of himself as sitting at God's banquet table feasting on things prepared for him by God. God prepares this table of spiritual food showing that he has anticipated our needs. It is necessary that we continue to eat the food which the Father prepares, food which he prepares in spite of our enemies. Enemies cannot cut off the supplies that continually come from above.

"Thou anointest my head with oil." At an Eastern feast, every invited guest is anointed with oil upon his arrival in the home. Thus they express how welcome the visitors are. Were this custom to be omitted, the failure would be noticed. We recall the words of our Master: "My head with oil thou didst not anoint." How blessed it is that we too can say with the psalmist, "Thou anointest my head with oil." This oil seems to indicate joy and gladness. So, we have been anointed with the "oil of gladness." "My cup runneth over" -- showing how abundantly the Lord provides for his children. The Lord gives liberally, more than we can use for ourselves. So brethren, let us see that the overflowing of our cup does not run to waste.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." We who have Jehovah as our great Shepherd have the promise of his continual care. We shall always have the two God -- sent messengers: goodness and mercy. Goodness supplies our every need. Mercy forgives our every sin. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us because he has set his love upon us.

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." We may always find our dwelling place in God, under the shadow of his wing. He is our refuge, our fortress, our strong tower.

May we realize the possibility of living in the house of the Lord hourly. There care cannot invade. There the good Shepherd leads his flock into green pastures where they cannot hunger. There he provides them waters still and cool so that they cannot thirst. There they are sheltered in cool glens so that the sun cannot harm them. If we prove faithful we know that we shall finally dwell in the "house of the Lord forever" in the truest and highest sense. Heaven itself, where God dwells, will be our eternal home.

It is also our privilege to dwell in the house of the Lord. Here we may be together with Christ in heavenly places; dwelling in the secret place of the Most High; risen with Christ. Full of joy and gratitude every child of God may confidently say, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Paul's preaching usually ended in a riot or a revival.

- Orin Phillip Gifford

It is our duty to obey God's commands, not to direct his counsels.

There is no shadow where there is no Sun
Wilt thou accuse the Sun that he makes shadows then?
Nay! But his light which passeth all things pure,
Is stayed by mists of earth and minds of men.

Thou standest 'twixt the Sun and thine own shadow,
The shadow is thy thought of empty vapors spun.
No man may see the Sun and shadow both
Turn from the shadow and behold the Sun.

Thy Kingdom Come

Watchman, tell us of the night
What its signs of promise are.
Traveler, o'er yon mountain's height,
See that glory -- beaming star!
Watchman, does its beauteous ray
Aught of hope or joy foretell?
Traveler, yes, it brings the day
Promised day of Israel.

Watchman, tell us of the night
Higher yet that star ascends.
Traveler, blessedness and light,
Peace and truth its course portends
Watchman, will its beams alone
Gild the spot that gave them birth?
Traveler, ages are its own;
See, its glory fills the earth.

Watchman, tell us, does the morning
Of fair Zion's glory dawn?
Have the signs that mark its coming
Yet upon thy pathway shone?
Traveler, yes: arise! look round thee!
Light is breaking in the skies!
Gird thy bridal robes around thee!
Morning dawns! Arise! Arise!

Dispensations and Ages

'By faith we understand that the worlds [aion, "ages"] were prepared by the command of God.'

Hebrews 11:3 by: P. J. Pazucha

If you were God, communicating with man, how would you explain to your creation the plans that you had in store for them? In spite of this question's factious appearance, its substance has fascinated men of God for centuries. The answer divides Christianity into two camps. Let us take an overview of the situation.

In treating this subject, we wish to carefully avoid a common trap. Whenever a person holds a view, they do so because they think it the right viewpoint. There is then the tendency to think that others who differ are either inferior or are dishonest. In this short historical view, we wish to do neither. Full credit must be given to all who have sincerely sought to know God and to do so by the power of his spirit. We acknowledge this is the only way, ever, to know God. God must first reveal himself before man can ever perceive God.

In the search for the one true God, even the large scenario of Christianity has followed a rather organized pattern of discovery. Men did not begin by trying to explain all the prophecies. No, there were many basic questions needing explanation before even the most diligent students dared undertake such complicated subjects. Looking at the progress of Christian literature through the Gospel age we find that they have developed their teachings' in a very orderly manner. First came the apologetics, giving answer to unbelievers for their belief in what seems a nearly unbelievable occurrence: that a man should be resurrected from the dead. After the apologetics came the development of "theology" proper. After theology, attention turned to the study of man (anthropology), then the study of Christ and his role in God's plan (Christology), followed by the teaching of how salvation is brought about (Soteriology), and, eventually, got around to prophecy and latter time events (Eschatology)

Having said that much by way of viewing the sincere attempts of those in previous ages, let us look directly at the subject.

The most common view is frequently called Covenant Theology. It holds what appears to be the simplest answer. God, it says, has chosen two ways to deal with man and they are summarized in two great covenants. God made a covenant with Adam, they say. It promised life to Adam in exchange for perfect obedience, and included death as the penalty for failure. This they term the Covenant of Works.

When Adam failed to keep the first covenant a second was necessitated. God thus brought into being the Covenant of Grace. Berkhoff, a noted Covenant Theologian, explains this covenant thusly: "This covenant of redemption is supposed to be the 'agreement between the Father, giving the son as head and redeemer of the elect, and the son, voluntarily taking the place of those whom the father had given him. *

* Louis Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941)

Covenant theology sometimes recognizes that there are periods of time in God's plan when he has chosen a new arrangement by which to deal with man, but it minimizes their relationship to God's overall purpose.

The second view will come as no surprise to most of our readers. They are, though they may not term themselves such, generally dispensationalists. That is a broad definition, however, and not intended as a statement of doctrinal belief. I speak only with regard to the teaching that God has chosen to use *various* economies during the course of human experience. These economies determine specific differences in how God deals with man, they form an ongoing revelation of God, and they provide a continuing learning experience for the family of man.

Ages and Dispensations

Through the writings of C. T. Russell, many have come to appreciate an overall plan instituted by God for man's salvation. ** This plan has been divided, as he taught, into a series of worlds [from the Greek, *kosmos*, meaning the "order of things" and referring to the administration of the society of man, not the physical earth, and ages]. The *world* before the flood consisted of one age during which God's methods of dealing with man did not change.

** Charles Taze Russell, *The Divine Plan of the Ages* (Pastoral Bible Institute).

After the flood, a period called the Patriarchal Age ensued. During this time God, restricted his dealings with men to Abraham and his extended family. Following the Patriarchal Age, as Abraham's family grew into a nation through the children of Jacob, another age came into operation, being called the Jewish Age. All during this time the nation of Israel (Jacob's other name, given him by God) held exclusive favor from God. The Jewish Age was followed by the Gospel Age, beginning at the First Advent of Christ.

The Gospel Age continues until the end of the Second World, the world that now is. Resorting to Bible descriptions, the world to come, wherein righteousness shall dwell is composed of a first age: the Millennial Age, which is synonymous with the time when Christ Jesus is to establish his kingdom upon earth. After the Millennial age, the Bible speaks only of "*ages to come*," and so no further definitions are suggested.

The Bible student who is familiar with scriptural expressions will recognize in this short thumb -- sketch how basic biblical teachings were summarized into a scheme or blueprint to which God has stuck for the entire history of man. Where did these ideas originate?

The first prophetic conference in America was held in 1878. At that time, the burning issues among Christian teachers and believers were basic. Modernism and the social gospel ravaged the faith of many. The conference was called to address these issues as well as to focus on

- (1) a more literal interpretation of Scripture
- (2) the imminency of the coming of Christ,
- (3) an emphasis on evangelism and missions, and
- (4) a firm stand against postmillennialism and its teaching about world conversion.

Dispensationalists at this time faced another problem, the need to emphasize the difference between Israel and the Church in Bible teaching which Covenant theology had tended to spiritualize, applying O.T. teachings about Israel to the Church.

So, when Russell wrote what became the first of six volumes entitled the *Studies in the Scriptures* in 1881, he was writing at a time when Christendom was more excited and alive than it had been in decades. It should also be noted that one of the major themes to arise out of those conferences was the teaching of an apostate church. Borrowing from scriptural ideas (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Rev. 17), time became ripe for a separatist movement.

Dispensational ideas had already existed for a long time. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), a leader of the Plymouth Brethren had already fully described a complete scheme of God's ages and dispensations. Darby, whose 40 volume, six hundred page per volume life's work, as well as an independent translation of the New and Old Testaments was a vigorous student. He had already detailed a scheme of ages as follows:

- 1.) Paradisiacal state to the Flood
- 2.) Noah
- 3.) Abraham
- 4.) Israel
 - Under the Law
 - Under the Priesthood
 - Under the Kings
- 5.) Gentiles
- 6.) The Spirit
- 7.) The Millennium

Even so, Darby did not originate the dispensational idea. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), best known for his hymns, also contributed to the idea. He also wrote six large volumes on Scripture and in a forty -- page essay entitled *The Harmony of all the Religions Which God Ever Prescribed to Men and all His Dispensations Towards Them*, he explains his view of the ages and dispensations:

- 1.) The dispensation of innocency, or the Religion of Adam,
- 2.) The Adamic dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, or the Religion of Adam after his fall,
- 3.) Noah's dispensation, or the Religion of Noah,
- 4.) Abraham's dispensation, or the Religion of Abraham,
- 5.) Moses' dispensation, or the Jewish Religion,
- 6.) The Christian dispensation.

Watts was not the first either. Preceding him, John Edwards (1639-1716) had written and published in 1699 a two volume, 790 page treatise entitled *A Compleat History or Survey of All the Dispensations*. He believed in a millennium, but taught that its reign was to be spiritual. "I conceive, he may personally appear above, though he will not reign personally on earth." His dispensations looked like this:

- 1.) Innocence and felicity: Adam created upright,
- 2.) Sin and misery: Adam fallen,
- 3.) Reconciliation; Adam recovered (from Adam's redemption to the end of the world)
 - A. Patriarchal economy
 - Adamic, before the flood
 - Noahic
 - Abrahamic
 - B. Mosaic
 - C. Gentile (concurrent with A and B)
 - D. Christian or Evangelical
 - Infancy, primitive period past
 - Childhood, present
 - Manhood, future (millennial)
 - Old age; from the loosing of Satan to the conflagration.

Even he was not the first to truly elucidate the general idea of a plan of the ages. Pierre Poiret (1646-1719) had preceded him. Writing in 1687, Poiret had published his great work *L'Oeconomie Divine*. Poiret had intended it as a defense of Predestination, but in writing it the six volume English translation provided a systematic theology. He viewed the ages in much the same way:

- 1.) Infancy -- to the deluge
- 2.) Childhood -- to Moses
- 3.) Adolescence -- To the prophets (approximately dated to Solomon's time)
- 4.) Youth -- to the coming of Christ
- 5.) Manhood -- "Some time after that"
- 6.) Old Age -- "The time of man's decay"
- 7.) Renovation of all things -- the millennium

Even at this point, we find that the idea had roots far earlier. One must honestly acknowledge the contributions of such as Justin Martyr (110-165) who taught the differing programs of God; Irenaeus (130-200) who paralleled the dispensations with the four Gospels. Clement of Alexandria (150-220) taught three patriarchal dispensations: Adam, Noah, Abraham. Samuel Hanson Coxe (1793-1880) used Clement's threefold scheme to back up his own sevenfold explanation, and Augustine, whose oft quoted words have seemed to epitomize the dispensational teaching said, "distinguish the times, and the Scripture is in harmony with itself."

The more we learn about the history of man and his pursuit of God the more we come to appreciate the enduring care God has taken in bringing man from ignorance about his own Creator to an ever brightening illumination of himself.

The words of the prophet, that understanding could only come line upon line, and precept upon precept, have not only been true of each man individually, but they also speak of man collectively. When the prophet went on to say that the word came "here a little and there a little" he described the unfolding of God to man like the petals of the fragrant flower.

Brethren, when we look at human history let us look at the longsuffering of God. He has revealed as much to man as man is capable of dealing with, and even then we have watched as man has ignored and avoided responsibility for his own knowledge. Imagine how patient God has been with man, teaching him over centuries about himself. Can we not be patient with our brethren over a few years, while we *all* are being taught the same lessons by the same God? God help us so to do.

The Question Box

Is it incorrect to call a Catholic priest "Father"?

Yes. This title stems from the erroneous doctrine of the Mass, through which it is claimed that the priest can forgive personal sin and reinstate the confessor to a living relationship with God, just as Jesus did when he died on the cross for original sin.

The word "call" in Matthew 23:9,10 means "to name." As the words of verse nine say, we are to name no one your father on earth; for one is your Father which is in heaven.

Jesus was not referring to our earthly father in verse nine. The word "father" means live -- giver. Our earthly father is our life -- giver because he passed the spark of life on to us through the process of birth. Therefore, he is automatically our "father" and does not need to be named as such. This is not the case with the Catholic priest -- contrary to scriptures -- he is so named after completing his studies for the priesthood.

Members of the body of Christ have been begotten to a new life by God, the heavenly Father (1 Peter 1:3; John 1:12-13). Therefore, Jesus is saying that God is our Father in Matthew 23:9, and that no one on earth should be given that name.

-- Mitchell Blicharz

Yes. We have direct instructions from Jesus in Matthew 23:9. Jesus refers in the context of this scripture to the spiritual relationship. In verse eight we have the admonition that there is only one teacher, one Rabbi, one Master. Jesus then says that we are all brethren.

The situation is altogether different with scriptures that tell us to "*honor thy father and mother.*" These refer to material, human, natural beings (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Matt. 15:4; Mark 7:10; Luke 18:20; Eph. 6:20). In both natural and spiritual matters guidance during childhood is dependent upon one's natural parents.

-- Chester A. Czohara

Which Day Is Sabbath?

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." - Mark 2:27 condensed from: C. T. Russell

That the Bible teaches some important lesson respecting the Sabbath is undisputed. What that lesson is, is much disputed. The fourth commandment of the Decalogue refers to the seventh day and requires its observance as a day of rest, and no more. The Ten Commandments as a whole were the basis of the Law Covenant, compulsory upon every Jew. The Jew keeping all of those commandments was promised everlasting life. Failure to keep them condemned him afresh. There can be no doubt upon this point. However, in the Lord's time, Jewish religionists had become, to a considerable degree, formalists. Greater stress was laid upon the literal commandments than on their spirit. Jesus reproved this on several occasions.

Jesus gave no commandment to the church respecting the Sabbath. Neither did his Apostles. The early church observed the Jewish seventh day in many places, and in some places the first of the week, the anniversary of our Lord's resurrection. Sometimes they observed both of these days. Their observance was not that of law or command, for the Apostle wrote, "Ye are not under Law, but under grace."

So with us today. We are glad that one day in the week is so generally observed as a day of rest, a Sabbath ("sabbath day" means "rest day"). We are glad that the day so generally set apart is the first day of the week, because it so beautifully commemorates the Christians' hopes, attested by our Lord's resurrection from the dead.

To every Christian, every day is Sabbath. Every day should be used as holy to the Lord, and nothing should ever be done contrary to God's will or the principles of God's government. Jesus declared that he was the Lord of the Sabbath, and he reminds us of St. Paul's declaration that God rested from his own work on the seventh day. He left this work entirely for Jesus to perform. The seventh day of Jehovah's rest was one of the great "days" of the creative "week." Six of these days have passed and man's creation was in the end of the sixth.

Having established his human son in Eden as the "god" or ruler of the earth, Jehovah rested or ceased from his work during the seventh day, or seventh period. Six thousand years have already passed and Jehovah God has rested, ceased from his labors. He has not interfered to assist man or to lift man out of sin and degradation. Another thousand years remains during which God will not actively intervene in man's rescue. Why not? Because it is part of God's plan for the ages to leave sinful man and his rescue entirely in the hands of Jesus. He is Lord of the great Seventh Day.

Man's Seventh Day

This period of seven thousand years which constitutes the great Seventh Day or Sabbath of God is divided with man into seven great days of a thousand years each, in six of which he has been under a reign of sin and death, toil and suffering. The final period of this great Seventh Day has been appointed for mankind's rescue. In that glorious seventh thousand year period Jesus is to be Lord. It will be the great antitypical Sabbath, the great antitypical Jubilee for man.

The Church's Sabbath

Paul clearly intimates that to the church, or New Creation, every day is Sabbath. God's consecrated people continually rest as God rests. They do so in faith, in hope, and in confidence that Jesus will eventually deliver them and bring them into a glorious Sabbath rest. Yet even now, as Paul says, "We who believe do enter into rest." Literally, we who believe have a perpetual Sabbath. Seven days a week, fifty -- two weeks a year, our hearts rest in the Lord. We are comforted by his promises found in his Word. We rest from feelings of responsibility and worry over the world's salvation, knowing that God rests in exactly the same way.

We, like the heavenly Father, have full confidence that the Redeemer will yet bless all the families of the earth. He will bring the willing and obedient into the great future rest, the thousand year long Messianic kingdom in which the world will be released from its bondage to sin and death.

The Apostles Paul & Matthias

by: W.A. Smith & G. Tosh, AUSTRALIA

The value of the Apostle Paul's ministry to the Christian cannot be questioned. Next to our Lord Jesus, Paul may have set the best example of Christian discipleship for those who would later believe. Yet, was he chosen to fill the place of Judas who defected from the original twelve, or was he a "specially" chosen apostle apart from the twelve?. Was Matthias accepted to fill Judas' place or not?

What Does Scripture Say?

The finding of the scriptural answer to any query is the most important aspect of inquiry. So, with reverent recourse to the Scriptures, we present these thoughts.

Was it improper to select Matthias to replace Judas (cf. Acts 1:12-26)? Did the disciples act too hastily? Should they have waited for the holy Spirit at Pentecost? The questions may be legitimate, but no Scripture verifies them.

The apostles and their companions were in a worshipful attitude at the time they selected Matthias (Acts 1:14). As far as we know, no scripture hints that Jehovah did not accept the arrangement.

Chapter two of Acts (Acts 2) gives no suggestion that Matthias was not present when the holy Spirit was poured out. In fact, verse fourteen intimates that he was -- Peter stood up with eleven others.

Did Matthias receive the gifts of the spirit with the other eleven? No scripture proves that he did not or that he ever used such gifts. The failure of scripture to specifically state that he did receive those gifts is not proof that he did not receive them. Peter and John are the only ones prominently mentioned in its use.

The eleven are mentioned immediately after Jesus' resurrection "But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them" (Matt. 28:16, ASV). "And afterward he was manifested unto the eleven themselves as they sat at meat..." (Mark 16:14, ASV). Acts 6:2 suggests that Matthias was recognized as part of "the Twelve" when the disciples were multiplying following Pentecost. "And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them..." Acts 6:2, ASV).

Paul's Conversion

Scripture identifies Paul as a vessel chosen by God to perform a special ministry (Acts 9:15,16). He probably endured more suffering for righteousness in fulfilling his ministry than the other apostles.

Paul's selection by God to minister to others was a difficult thing for the other apostles to accept (Acts 9:26-28). Barnabas was instrumental in persuading them. Acts 4:36,37 describes Barnabas' initial entry into the ministry. In Acts 13:2, Barnabas (not of the original twelve) was chosen by Paul to be his companion in his early ministry.

Paul and Barnabas were sent to the apostles and elders to settle a vexing question (Acts 15:6). When the matter was resolved, the church at Jerusalem sent their representatives with Paul and Barnabas to help convince the Church at Antioch of the correctness of the decision (Acts 15:22-27).

Paul cooperated with the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, but the tone of the account suggests that he did not consider himself one of their company (Acts 16:14). He seems always to have been an independent preacher of the gospel, taking his direction from God.

At the outset of his ministry, he contacted none of the other apostle for three years (Gal. 1:16-18). Afterwards, he thought it necessary to speak with Peter, remaining with him for fifteen days. The reason for his visit is not stated. Was it because Peter had been entrusted with the "key" to open the gospel to the gentiles? Since Paul was to be the special minister to them, he and Peter would have had much to discuss (Matt 16:19; Acts 9:15).

Paul was not interested in meeting the other apostles (Gal. 1:19). He met with James, but the account seems to show that it was Peter he intended to meet. He never seemed compelled to confer with the other apostles about his call to the work of God. Paul did not subject himself to the other apostle's opinion, not even to those who seemed to be "pillars" *in* the church (Gal. 2:6-9). His independence is highlighted in the Scriptures. Instead, Paul seems to have persuaded them as to the proper course to take. They extended the hand of fellowship not only to Paul but also to Barnabas. Apparently, they were convinced of Paul's authority to preach what, how, and where he had been -- ,and to continue without their prompting. In fact, we see that Paul censured Peter for his misleading conduct.

But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain men came from James, he ate with the gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Cephas before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the gentiles to live as do the Jews (Gal. 2:11-14)?

Paul did not seem to consider himself a replacement for Judas (1 Cor. 15:4-11). These verses refer to the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection. He was seen of Cephas, an appearance verified by Luke (Luke 24:34). Then he was seen of the twelve -- when and how? All at once or at more than one appearance? A casual glance at John 20:19 might suggest that all witnessed him then.

When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, "Peace be unto you."

John 20:24, however, shows that was not so: "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came."

Eight days later Thomas saw him, perhaps all the others were there too. It seems that all twelve saw Jesus after his resurrection. Was Matthias included? No scriptural evidence says he was not. How could there be twelve without him at that time?

The occasion mentioned by 1 Cor. 15:7 in which "all the apostles" are referred to, would seem to be Acts 1:3,4. During that forty days Matthias must have been among them, otherwise he could not have been considered by the others when the subject of a replacement for Judas arose (Acts 1:21,22).

The strongest text that shows Paul did not consider himself one of the twelve is 1 Cor 15:7-8. Paul says "and last of all he was seen of me also" -- undoubtedly referring to his exceptional experience on the Damascus road.

Other evidence suggests that Paul was not chosen to fill Judas' place but was a specially chosen vessel of the Lord to perform a work secondary only to our Lord. No other follower of Jesus is more written about in the New Testament. What about all that came from his pen? Where would the church of God have been without his help? Attempts have been made to discount some of Paul's teachings; some suggest that he is too austere, out of touch and understanding with the weaknesses of the flesh. Attempts have been made to "water down" his direct teachings. We think he should be seen as "nothing behind the very chiefest apostle" (2 Cor 12:11). Maybe he should be considered above them all?

One impediment to accepting Paul as distinct from the other apostles is a Revelation statement (Rev 21:10-19). Here the twelve apostles constitute foundations of the Holy City, that city which descends out of heaven to bless mankind during the Millennium. They are not the city's foundation but the foundation of the "wall of the city" (Rev. 21:12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19).

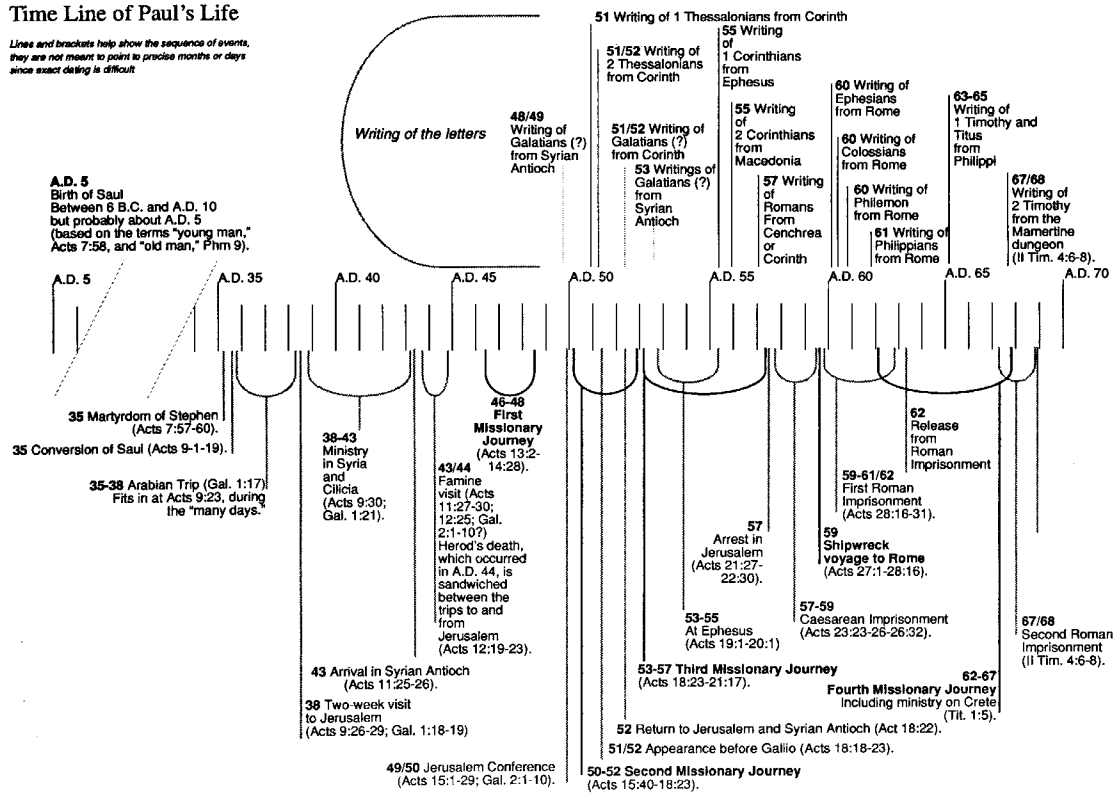
The symbology of Revelation compels carefulness that we not add to, nor take away from its teaching. The text seems to suggest that the "wall" is a protection or guard for the city. It is "high" (Rev. 21:12) -- apparently one could only enter at the "gates." The number twelve is prominent in Revelation: 12 tribes, 12 gates, 12 angels, 12 foundations. Some think the number symbolizes completeness.

Whatever it pictures, it induces the thought that the twelve apostles were not originally great men -- they were fishermen, tax collectors, etc. They were simple folk of lowly human status. Even after they were called and entered the way of discipleship, some of them are barely mentioned for any "works" they performed. Is it this fact, their lowly status, that constituted them a "foundation" upon which could be built the structures of God's Holy City? Upon such a foundation the power of God worked out his design. The lapses of Peter (Mark 14:66-72), Thomas' doubting (John 20:24,25), the improper seeking of preeminence by James and John (Mark 10:35, 45), and the discontentment of Peter (John 21:21) are profitable incidents. They are helpful to other simple, called ones in strengthening their characters. Paul, once he entered the way, did not look back: there was no thought of denying his Lord, no seeking for preeminence among men or brethren, no demurring at any given task.

We suggest that it was the simplicity and the smallness of their numbers that constituted the apostles a foundation which the power of God operated upon to raise up a wall for the City of God. Perhaps we could conclude that Paul was used more than anyone else, next to the Lord himself, to nurture its building. In the resurrection, we are told that star differs from star in glory (1 Cor 15:41). This being true, then Paul will shine according to the example he provided of us of how to follow Christ.

Time Line of Paul's Life

Lines and brackets help show the sequence of events, they are not meant to point to precise months or days since exact dating is difficult



God Chooseth

There are strong men who honorably desire to serve the Lord. These men fervently pray for his glory, yet the Lord does not seem to answer their prayers toward service. There are various reasons for this. Sometimes men are unfit for the Lord's service. They are not purged from their sins; they are not vessels unto honor, fitted for the Master's use. These he sets aside as unadaptable to his work. Some men wish to do great things but find themselves hindered, limited, or circumscribed. These often fall into two categories. Either these men are reserved for still greater works than those they imagined, or they are rejected of the Lord from service for reasons known only to God.

Moses longed to lead Israel into Canaan, but he was not permitted to enter the promised land. David would gladly have built the temple at Jerusalem, but the Lord would not accept that service at his hands. Paul was forbidden by the holy Spirit to preach the gospel in Asia. Even though he planned to enter Bithynia, the spirit did not allow his plans to come to completion.

We may find ourselves similarly hindered. We may have desires for usefulness to God in avenues which will never be granted. The Lord may see our inability to bear the exaltation and honor we seek. He knows better than we what is for our good. He is working in us to teach us contentment in his own will: not idle, but diligent; not careless, but watchful; not indifferent, but full of intense earnest longing to do the will of God. Yet, at the same time, we need to be patient under restraint, content to be neglected and forgotten. Remember that "they also serve who only stand and wait." The Lord, in his own well chosen hour, can lead us forth to fulfill his purposes of grace.

Purity of soul cannot be lost without consent.
-- St. Augustine: On Lying.

God's love for poor sinners is very wonderful, but God's patience with ill -- natured saints is a deeper mystery.
-- Henry Drummond

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the proneness of the human mind to take miracles as evidence, and to seek for miracles as evidence.
-- Matthew Arnold: Literature and Dogma, V

Religion is tending to degenerate into a decent formula wherewith to embellish a comfortable life.
-- Alfred North Whitehead: *Science and the Modern World*

Gladly we desire to make other men perfect but we will not amend our own fault.
-- Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

A true love to God must begin with a delight in his holiness, and not with a delight in any other attribute; for no other attribute is truly lovely without this.
-- Jonathan Edwards in *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections: Works (Vol. V)*.

There is no greater pride than in seeking to humiliate ourselves beyond measure! And sometimes there is no truer humility than to attempt great works for God.
-- Abbe de Saint -- Cyran

A contented spirit is the sweetness of existence.
-- Anon

Entered Into Rest

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