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The Editors' Journal

It is sad to see how frequently sincere seekers after God are content to live below the privilege of true sonship and daughterhood offered them in Christ Jesus. This issue of the Herald will address a few pertinent parts of this only too frequent problem.

When people read that all men do not have faith (2 Thess. 3:2) it is easy to assume that those words were written about people who lived long ago. Surely, we who have the benefit of God's multiple revelations to men in the form of church reformers could not be considered in the same context. After all, haven't many of your Christian friends dedicated themselves to lives of service to God?

Is that dedication to a certain life -- style necessarily the faith that saves? In, *The Grace of God and Man's Salvation*, David Phillips takes up the most fundamental issue of our lives. The life that God offers to humanity, through the precious blood of his only begotten son, is a free gift. All that we have to do to receive that gift is to truly accept it: have faith in Jesus Christ, and to live according to our faith. Sometimes we don't want to accept God's free gift. We talk about grace, but practice works. No, *just* dedicating yourself to God's service is not the faith that moves mountains (Matt. 17:20).

Discipleship: passing on the wisdom takes a look at a mountain moving faith. Individually, we are incapable of making much of an impact upon this world, or even upon our own fellowship of believers. The only true impact we make is when we allow God to work *through us*, rather than just working *in us*. An elder with a gift for oratory is a blessing to many, but he who passes his gift on to others blesses even more. A sister who writes encouraging letters blesses some, but one who teaches others to care for the isolated or afflicted can bless even more. Think about the Bible's admonitions to discipleship with Mike Knapp as he challenges you with scriptures that are often ignored.

He Who Overcomes is another challenge from Andy Weeks. How easy it is to distrust the Word of God when our own personal experience with him is meager, or when our experience does not confirm what the Bible tells us. We may read Bible promises until we have them memorized, but

never experience their fulfillment. An overcoming faith doesn't arise from harder work for God, more study of the Bible, or attending more conferences. That faith arises from the relationship between the individual believer and their God. Only when we trust God more than we trust our own experience can we enter into the spirit filled life.

The Blessings of Pentecost continues the emphasis upon the holy Spirit's work in believers. We recall the miraculous events of that day so long ago when Jesus' promise was first fulfilled. Our Christian brothers and sisters received power from on high, the same power that now works in his children. Surely, there are differences in how the Spirit accomplishes its work today, but those differences dare not minimize the importance of the Spirit's indwelling. It is one of the most important promises Jesus gave. The gift of the holy Spirit changed the Christian church. It testified to the reality of Jesus' claims until the church was established. It provided spiritual meat to nourish a fledgling church. Today, the spirit is the assurance [Paul calls it the "earnest"] of a believer's future inheritance with Jesus. How tender is our Lord's love for us, and how wisely he understands our tendency to doubts and fears.

Having been reminded of various ways in which we can *and should* enter fully into the Christian life now, we take one final lesson before closing out this issue. Older brethren sometimes approach their final years with regret. That regret can be so strong that it spurs them to talk about their regrets, privately, with those far younger. Such conversations spurred the final discussion for this issue. Aging and our stewardship are sometimes thought of as taboo subjects, but if we can encourage just one believer with ways to use their declining abilities for lasting good then it ought not to be a taboo subject. *When Serving God Means Standing Aside* is a look at God's retirement plan for the Levitical priests. In that Mosaic arrangement God gave us strong lessons -- lessons Christian believers too often ignore. The spirit of those lessons still apply, but they must be applied at a certain time in our lives. So, we offer a practical, hard -- hitting list of suggestions about how to serve God faithfully while you can, and then how to prevent future regrets over actions not taken.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

The Grace of God and Man's Salvation

"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities... so great is his lovingkindness [hesed]."

- Psa. 103:10-11 New American Standard Bible [and all citations throughout]

In our theme text, *hesed*, the Hebrew word for "lovingkindness," is one of Jehovah God's outstanding characteristics. This word, is used to describe what we usually call "grace." It is that grace, the grace of God, upon which we focus.

In the Greek scripture "*charis*" is the word from which we translate "grace." There, "*charis*" is defined as that which God does for mankind. Mankind does not deserve "charis," that is, grace. He cannot earn or ever merit it. It is God's unmerited favor.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

God planned our salvation. His love prompted it. He performed it through his power. As sinners we do not deserve to be saved, we cannot merit or earn salvation by works of law.

Grace In the Old Testament

We do not usually link "the grace of God" with the Old Testament. Christians prefer to magnify God's grace in Jesus Christ, and connect the Old Testament with works of law. *"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law"* (Rom. 3:28). *"For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace"* (Rom. 6:14). Yet, God's grace is found in Hebrew Scripture. *Hesed* is especially expressed as loyal love. It is described as "the attitude of love which contains mercy." Biblical scholars translate *hesed* as "kindness," "mercy," "unfailing love," "love," "steadfast love," and "the loyal love which [Jehovah] had for his people." *Hesed* is God's grace.

Grace and Abraham

Abraham was a recipient of God's grace or *hesed*. God chose Abram (Gen. 12:1). Why was Abram selected? Was it because Abram was outstandingly righteous or holy? No. It was merely because of God's grace.

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor (charis), but as what is due"(Romans 4:1-4).

God's grace did not end with Abraham, rather, his grace would be extended to Abraham's seed. *"And I will make you a great nation"* (Gen. 12:2) and finally even to "...all the families of the earth..." (vs. 3). What a blessing God sets before us today, and all by his grace.

Grace and the Law

Grace is also found in the "law of Moses." The "Law" is more than merely a list of rules and regulations. Walter C. Kaiser, in his book, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, p.63, writes:

"Far from being a legalistic code or a hypothetical means to earning one's salvation, the law was a means of maintaining fellowship with Yahweh -- not the grounds of establishing it. The same law that demanded a standard of holy living equal to the character of God Himself also made provision for failure under the law by forgiveness and atonement of sin. The context of every and any demand of the law was the atmosphere of grace."

Grace and the Individual

God's grace is especially evident towards us as sinners. Psalm 103 clearly teaches God's grace on behalf of such. Truly, our God "...is *compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness...He has not dealt with us according to our sins*" (Psa. 103:8,10). This was true of ancient Israel, and it is true of us today. We also deserve to die, but God is gracious.

'For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners...' (Rom. 5:19). Death is God's penalty for all who disobey him. *The wages sin pays is death* (Rom. 6:23). Being sinners, our situation without God's grace is hopeless: *"No man can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him ... that he should not under go decay"* (Psa. 49: 7, 9 margin). Man apart from God cannot escape this condition. Sinful man is unable to provide a substitute, a ransom; from this penalty of death. What man cannot do, God through grace can *and has* done. God provided our salvation.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus Christ's sacrificial death, was provided by God's love. Only our heavenly Father, in His grace, could provide the ransom necessary for man's salvation. Jesus Christ, paid sin's penalty in our place.

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). What love! What grace!

Do *you* appreciate God's grace? If so, how do you manifest it in *your* life? The answer is "believe." Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe in God's grace, and accept salvation through faith. Salvation becomes a reality when *you*, the sinner meet this simple requirement. *"Of Him [Jesus] all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins"* (Acts 10:43).

God, through Jesus Christ, graciously provides the price of our salvation. If we accept, God receives the glory. Works do not save us: whether repentance, the exercise of faith, or baptism. Salvation originates in God. We only need to accept it, wholeheartedly, without reservation. Have *you* accepted the gracious gift of salvation offered in the shed blood of Jesus Christ our Lord? If not, we invite you to do so. If you have, then *live* your life in the grace of God, a life transformed by the renewing power of the spirit.

"To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith and power; in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:11,12)

Amen

The Lame Man Shall Leap As An Hart

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing ... And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy." - Isaiah 35:5, 6, 10

by: Elaine R. Redeker

In forests of Europe and Asia
The agile Red Deer make their home.
At evening they feed in the meadows and fields;
In groups they may quietly roam.

The hart is the male in adulthood,
With antlers elaborate and strong.
In swimming and jumping, he's noted for skill,
With leaps up to forty feet long.

While holding these thoughts as a backdrop
So none of the details depart,
Let's focus our minds on the promise of God:
"The lame man shall leap as an hart."

No braces, no crutches, no wheelchairs.
No struggles with weakness and pain.
Prosthetics will then be a thing of the past,
And none will need walker or cane.

Restored to God's image and likeness,
Unblemished and whole they will be;
Surpassing the athlete in fitness and skill;
From physical problems set free.

Will man bring to pass such achievement
Through medical knowledge and skill?
Not so -- for the scope of the promise is such
That none but our God can fulfill!

Man's fall from perfection in Eden
Brought sickness and sorrow and pain.
But mental and moral and physical health
Will soon be man's portion again.

"The eyes of the blind shall be opened,"
The tongue of the "dumb": it will sing,
And hearing shall come to the ears of the "deaf."
These blessings God's kingdom will bring.

"The ransomed" (the whole race of Adam)
"With joy" from the grave "shall return."
With Satan and all his deceptions removed,
God's truth they will speedily learn.

For those who respond in obedience,
Rich blessings will never depart.
Oh, fervently pray for God's kingdom -- for then
"The lame man shall leap as an hart."

Discipleship: passing on the wisdom...

"And he said to them, Follow me." - Matt. 4:19

by: M. J. Knapp

Discipleship is rarely discussed today and even more rarely practiced -- in spite of rampant evil around us. Many people stray from God and from righteousness because they refuse to learn from other people. Discipleship is a way to take responsibility for each other. It is also taking responsibility before our Lord and Master.

Old Testament Examples

Moses and Joshua were quite a team. God took forty years to train Moses. Moses, in turn, patiently passed on his wisdom to young Joshua. How often does that happen today? Do you see very many eighty year olds who want to deal with a rambunctious twenty year old? Moses saw in Joshua another vessel God could use to lead His people. Moses willingly invested his time and energy in Joshua. He gave that future leader all the help he possibly could.

God selected Bezalel and Oholiab to manufacture the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. He told them to teach other workers the technical skills they would need as assisting artisans. People as gifted as they must have found teaching others of lesser skill to be a frustrating job. That did not stop them, however. They did not think that they were so skilled that only they *could* do the work, or that only they *should* do the work (Ex. 35:30-35).

Elijah and Elisha are an interesting pair to consider. Elijah was a loner. He did not want to disciple Elisha. God told him to do it. God had selected Elisha as a future prophet. Whether Elijah wanted to do so or not, he obeyed the Lord (1 Kings 19: 15-21). Elijah was honest about how difficult' this discipling relationship made his work. Yet, his effort turned Elisha into a prophet who out performed his master (2 Kings 2-13).

Later, Elisha invested his talent in a similar way. He founded the school of prophets. There he disciplined men who worked mightily for God in Israel.

In the New Testament

John the Baptist had disciples too. These men wanted to follow and know God's will better. They wisely associated themselves with a servant of God to learn this. John shows us a characteristic of all godly teachers. Discipleship is *always* a teacher / pupil relationship. They point their disciples to God. True discipleship never draws attention to the teacher. It is a relationship that aims to do God's will in men for God's own glory. John showed this spirit when he pointed his followers to, *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29). Anyone who teaches others about God today should live by this spirit. Only this spirit will teach us greater dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus, too, teaches discipleship. *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"* (Matt. 16:24).

Who Makes a Good Disciple?

Jesus called upon those who believed in him to become active followers.

There is a very important point in that simple statement. Only believers can become disciples. The point is not as obvious as it appears. God is a God of order, and men must abide by God's order. We cannot go about things in our own way, thinking that they will be acceptable. We must do things in the way God has ordained. Do not disciple someone who has not accepted Jesus as their Savior. Discipleship is not a relationship among equals. A person has to accept the position of learner for themselves. Only then can the Master have his will in the disciple for the disciple's own good.

Jesus told his followers and believers to count the costs of discipleship. To whom was he speaking? Those people were *already* following him. They believed in him and had a relationship with him, but this was not discipleship, and he taught them that. Discipleship demanded more. Builders estimate the cost of a construction project. Generals plot out a battle plan, including mortalities. Believers, too, need to take stock of themselves. Is discipleship to Jesus something they truly want (Luke 14: 28-33)? Are they willing to bear the cost of serving their Master?

Jesus is very blunt about these costs. Families will fall apart; friends will forsake you. At times, life will really seem rotten. (Matt. 8:20; 10:25-28, 34-36; Heb. 12:5-9; 2 Tim. 2:4; 3:11).

He is also straight forward about the reward. Wonderful things await his disciples. They will be one with Jesus. They will reign with Jesus in glory. Jesus will acknowledge them in God's holy presence. Obedience is an insignificant cost compared to the blessings we now enjoy in his presence, and that does not even consider the future reward promised (Matt. 10:29-32, 39-42; c.f., Heb. 12:7-13; 1 Pet. 5:4; Phil. 3:8).

Discipleship means following, and Jesus tells us specifically we have to "follow." The steps are simple. Deny yourself, for him. Take up the cross Jesus gives you. Bearing that cross, follow him. This he *requires*. There are *no* exceptions. There are *no* shortcuts.

That is well and good to know, but it is quite another thing to do these things. Wouldn't it be helpful if we could get some practical tips about how to do these things? Other believers might have techniques that help them obey more fully. If we did the same, we might not sin as often, and might please him more. This is not to say that there are "special" cases that the Bible does not cover. Yet, experienced believers have blessings and benefits to share with others. More than that, they have a responsibility to share those blessings.

Jesus is not walking the earth today as he did then. We cannot follow him the way the Twelve did. How do we follow the unseen? It is not easy. Here discipleship can help greatly.

Elders Should Disciple their Flock.

Too often, today's pastors or elders offer only intellectual leadership (1 Peter 5:1-5). They lead studies. They preach. Where is the teaching or the leadership that Jesus gave to his twelve? Where is the daily contact? This is a lot to expect in a busy world, but men and women who live in Christ can fulfill the need for Christian leadership. It must be filled, and it must be filled in his power and might. True leadership has been absent for too long in too many places!

Paul called himself the father of some of the early churches. (1 Cor. 4:14-16). He was a father, at least in the sense he used the term. He trained the children God gave him. He was faithful and diligent. He taught new believers to follow his example, at least as far as they saw him following Christ. Was that presumptuous? No, it was not! Any claim you or I could make to life is presumptuous! Our only claim to life is God's grace! We do not deserve life, but God grants us life in Christ. Christians have a kind of "natural" reaction to this grace, and that is to admit that we do not deserve it. This is a good sign that we are not presuming that we deserve it. If this is the example we give, then we are on safe ground and can claim with Paul, follow us as we follow Christ. Outside Christ, we are dead; in him we are alive forevermore.

You may remember how John Mark had failed Paul and how Paul put him aside. Well, Barnabas disciplined the young believer. Paul had others to work with then, and he didn't see Mark as a good investment. Barnabas, however, saw something of value in Mark, and he took time to work with him. His foresight paid off. Some time later, a wiser and more capable Mark helped Paul in the ministry. He also helped Peter, and he wrote the gospel of Mark. (Acts 15:36-41; 2 Tim. 4:11).

Then, there is the wonderful relationship between Paul and Timothy. They were father and son in relation to their Christian walk. Paul described one of the choice fruits Timothy bore under his discipleship. When did he do this? When he told the Philippian church that he was sending Timothy to be his emissary:

"I have no man like -- minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel" (Phil. 2:20-22).

What sobering words these are! This is the same Timothy who followed Paul's advice even at cost to himself. An adult, Timothy was circumcised. Why? He didn't want to offend immature new believers whom Paul was teaching. He left his family and home to travel with Paul. He gave of himself to meet Paul's needs. (Acts 16:1-5). Surely, many of Timothy's long time friends thought that Timothy was following a foolish course. History says otherwise.

Those people in the examples cited found it hard to learn these lessons. Applying godly principles is no easier today. They doubted while they counted the costs, just as we do. Some of these individuals [spiritual giants to us] were the undesirable fanatics of their day. How, then, do we enter into a discipling relationship today?

The first step in all spiritual matters is prayer. *Prayer* begins the process of seeking a discipling relationship and is repeated throughout the relationship. Ask God to show you someone, within your spiritual circle of friends, who can help you to follow God better. Ask God to open your understanding and to find such a person. Do not rely on your own wisdom to evaluate who best can direct you. You will probably choose poorly. God judges the heart. Likewise, our friends may also think that we have not picked the best mentor we might have. Yet, what matters is whether the choice is Lord's (Matt. 18:20).

Discipleship is not a one way street. Ask God to show you someone you can disciple. Have you believed for a while already? Then you have something to share with others. Discipleship is a fluid relationship. It does not always last a long time with one individual. Remember all the mentors Mark went through. Think of the pairs Jesus sent out. Discipleship can be horizontal as well as vertical. Pray about the changing circumstances of your own discipleship experience. Its purpose is to increase your devotion to God. If that purpose is absent in your relationship, find another. Always give God the first place in your discipling experience.

"I can do it myself, I don't need anybody else," is a worldly attitude. It does not belong in the Lord's body.

Are there dangers in such close relationships? Of course. However, this is the Lord's arrangement. If you are his disciple, who are you to argue with your Master?

Look to the Lord for guidance. Look to Him for blessings that will flow from this form of obedience. Expect the church around you to grow, truly, spiritually, responsibly.

Helping one another in this narrow way will result in growth.

Ask God to show you, specifically, who you can learn from in this close spiritual relationship.

Look for God's providential answers to your requests -- and follow them. Monitor your progress in prayer with your mentor and alone with the Lord.

Look for learning on both sides.

Ask the Lord to show you someone you could help the same way. Nobody is above, or below, this type of spiritual relationship.

Expect fruitage. *"You will know them by their fruits."* (Matt. 7:16). The fruits must match what the Spirit teaches you in the holy Word.

Praise the Lord for what he does. Share your blessings with others. Pass it on.

He Who Overcomes

"He that overcomes will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, as I overcame..." - Revelation 3:21
by: Andy Weeks

"Overcoming" has been a captivating topic for Christians since the Gospel Age began. Discussions concerning it often center on the "world," "the flesh," and "the devil." Such discussions usually continue with testimonies about how contemptible these three influences are. Defeat is always the theme, and victories are seldom mentioned. This, unfortunately, reflects how little we know about biblical teachings concerning victory in Christ. Without understanding the role *he* plays in *our* overcoming, we are hopeless and defeated. Knowing Christ will start us on the victorious path.

Triumphant living is not a common practice among God's children. If we knew and believed his word, we would regularly act with power and sustained joy in the narrow way (Matt. 7:14).

Overcoming the Flesh

What happens when we fail to conquer? We are believing our past experience before we believe what God has told us is possible. Some people have experienced failure as Christians for such a long time that they believe that failure is normal. Haven't you heard excuses like the following? "Well, that is just the way I am," or "I'm thankful that the Apostle Paul struggled so greatly as he points out in Romans."

Both of these statements fall short of true Christian belief. One ignores what God said through the Prophets and the Apostles. The other ignores the context of Paul's remarks, which actually are an encouragement for Christians to overcome. If your experience differs from what the Bible promises then the time has come to examine your faith and your knowledge of Jesus Christ. You need to know more about how he intercedes for his people.

"Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). In order to overcome we must comprehend, meditate, and pray about what the scriptures say about overcoming.

"For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but am doing the very thing I hate ... For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me but the doing of the good is not..." (Rom. 7:14-15).

"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ... There is therefore no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 7:24-8:2).

The seventh and eighth chapters of Romans are repeatedly quoted, and yet remain one of the most misunderstood passages of scripture. The verses are often quoted out of context to justify a person's ineffectual relationship with God. If we understand how these passages were written, we will better understand the context.

While many people know that the New Testament is largely a collection of letters written to churches and individuals, many people do not study it in that way. If I send you a letter you wouldn't pick out bits and pieces to read. No. You would look at large sections of it as total thoughts. Therefore, if you take twelve verses out of Paul's letter and interpret it without regard to what he said overall, it would

be as inaccurate as if you read a few sentences from a friend's letter and tried to determine his entire state of mind.

In chapter seven Paul tells how he tries to fulfill a spiritual law in his flesh (Rom. 7:14). In this context, notice how he uses the expression "in the flesh." He is not describing his flesh and blood, but rather his "mind" and "strength." He uses the word "I" twenty two times in this section, without ever mentioning God, the holy Spirit, or Jesus Christ.

Only in the last verse of chapter seven does Paul offer the authentic solution. *"But thanks be to God though Jesus Christ our Lord... For there is no condemnation for those who walk by the spirit" (Rom. 7:25-Rom. 8:1).*

Many people will say we are "in the flesh," but when they do so they define the expression differently than Paul did (c.f., Rom. 8:9). Believers, true believers of God, must never rationalize what we experience -- because the weakness of our experience can contradict what God has testified in his word -- and then whom do we believe?

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:38-39). Notice that Paul says we *are* conquerors. He doesn't say that we will be, but *are*. He explains what he means earlier in the eighth chapter (Rom. 8:2). When you do not conquer, pray for wisdom and revelation, and God will open your eyes to joy and victory in Christ Jesus. God is faithful to show the *"...riches of the wisdom that are hidden in Christ."* Then you will know what Paul means when he writes *"He [Jesus] is the sum of all spiritual things."*

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world you have tribulation: but be of good cheer,, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus gives us the simple, yet hard, answer to overcoming. The key to this door is accepting *him* as your peace. He already overcame the world; he is now free to dwell in us. We are able to overcome the world if we abide in him.

Jesus illustrates how to overcome in the parable of "the vine and the branches." *"if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it shall be done unto you."* If you rest from your own works you are then free to lean upon Jesus.

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his might power" (Eph. 1:17-20).

If we lack the faith to overcome the world then we must ask for wisdom and revelation in God's knowledge. Most of us believe that we have this knowledge because we know something about his plans and purposes. This is not the knowledge that Paul is talking about. He is here praying for believers to receive personal instruction about what God's power is toward us. Paul longs that the brethren would know the investment God has in his people. He has given us power to overcome and to satisfy his inheritance in the saints.

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We are completely in God's care. We are *his* workmanship. If we fail, know that he is faithful even if you are not. Ask for faith and for understanding and he will gladly give them.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). John assures us that overcoming the world is a fact, but that our

faith is the deciding factor. When we stand in faith we cannot help but overcome -- because Christ is faithful. The choice is yours. Will you believe that God is greater than your sin?

Doing Good Works

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks... who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son" (Col. 1:9-13).

Paul and the brethren with him prayed regularly for the Colossians. They asked on their behalf for wisdom and spiritual understanding. Many other times Paul wished that Christians would be filled with these things. Why do we not pray and desire more as did Paul? One reason is that we don't see the need for such intervening prayers. So, when you pray, ask diligently for greater understanding just like Paul prayed -- both for yourself and for others.

Even though Christians want to walk worthy of their Lord, there is none worthy or able to do so. The Lamb of God is our only holiness! Throw yourself on the Worthy One's mercy and fix your eyes upon him. Use his strength. Then you will be fruitful to every good work. These are not words for the "great" among God's people. No. They are for the common, everyday believer. We are all children, the offspring of God Almighty. He is our Father. Christ is our Brother and our Lord! How can we fail, unless we disbelieve?

We *have been* transferred from one place to another. Many incorrectly think that they still dwell in darkness. Jesus Christ was raised in order to translate us *into* the kingdom of heaven. We may not have spiritual bodies, but we do have the power of heaven (the kingdom, his light) working in us, for us, and through us. Do not close your eyes to the greatness of his power.

Peter & Paul's Practical Example

The Bible shows us practical overcoming. Paul confesses his weakness in order to demonstrate the holy Spirit's power working in him:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I am determined to know nothing among you except Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power (1 Cor. 2:1-3).

Like Paul, we are weak. Thank God that he is strong and that our weakness glorifies him. Don't be discouraged when you succumb to trials. Consider it Christ's opportunity to demonstrate his power in you to God's glory. When you struggle with continuing sin, let him assert himself by working in you. When you don't preach as you should, He eagerly waits to reveal his power through you. When Satan assails you in trial, he will ordain his power for you.

Peter's example is more powerful yet. Before the spirit came upon him, Peter always rushed into things before thinking or praying. He often burdened himself with his failing, but in the Book of Acts we see in Peter a different, a more godly man.

The Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:1-21) reveals how much Peter had learned to rely upon the spirit of God. How telling are those words: "...and after *there had been much debate, Peter stood up and*

said to them..."Peter had so often been the first one to say anything, but on this occasion he had been listening for a long while. Only then did he stand up to speak. The scriptures add another detail which expands upon the beauty of the spirit's effect upon Peter. When he was done talking the people "kept silent," giving Paul and Barnabas a chance to speak. Some people talk for hours (or seemingly so) and never get across their point. When guided by the spirit of God, Peter's few words were more convincing than volumes spoken by another man.

Relevant Scriptures on the Subject of Overcoming:

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of ourselves" (2 Cor. 4:7).

"Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9).

"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

"Whereunto I labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col. 1:29).

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7).

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20).

If you are a Christian, show your good works. Your *best skills* and your *deepest wisdom* is only deserving to be buried -- when we compare it to the wisdom of God and what he can accomplish in you by his Spirit.

There are no Christians better than you -- and none worse either. Overcoming is solely a matter of God working in you through Christ Jesus.

What you were before Christ has no bearing on doing good works. Christ is the way to success -- the only way. Don't believe yourself when you are tempted to think that you don't have any basis on which to please God. Remember, he has *"blessed you with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"* (Eph. 1:3). His spirit is available for your use in his service. Christ has been made your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). Do what God would have you do. He is greater than the world, greater than Satan, and greater than your own flesh. Christ is the warrior before whom all enemies melt.

You will encounter resistance. Go to God and confess your sin, or the situation, so that he can deal with it. He gives you the ability to overcome at the beginning of your discipleship, not at the end. Take Jesus' yoke upon you. It is easy and light. Conquer joyfully the enemies of God!

Ten Questions to ask yourself if you find your spirituality lagging:

- 1.) Are my expectations unrealistic?
- 2.) Is there any sin that I need to confess to God & to turn from?
- 3.) Am I engaged in practices that dull my spiritual sensitivity?
- 4.) Am I consistent in spiritual discipline?
- 5.) What conditions surrounded my best times with the Lord?
- 6.) Have I fallen into a spiritual rut?
- 7.) Is poor health or fatigue a factor?
- 8.) Am I praying for God's blessing on my life and enlisting the prayers of others?
- 9.) What person or group might stimulate my life in Christ?
- 10.) Have I asked God what he is trying to teach me?

The Blessings of Pentecost

"...And they were all filled with the holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." - Acts 2:4, New American Standard Version

Three times the Scriptures specifically explain how God demonstrated his approval by pouring out his holy Spirit. The first manifestation showed God's approval of Jesus when he was baptized in Jordan. The third instance marked the admission of gentiles into the Christian church (Acts 10:44-48). Pentecost occurred between these two. Jewish believers were astonished when the holy Spirit entered Cornelius and his associates at their baptism, as St. Luke describes.

God's Acceptance Manifest

Pentecost is important to Christians because it marks the beginning of the Christian Dispensation. The outpouring of the spirit is so important that the period since is also called the Spirit Dispensation. As part of the Mosaic types and shadows, Pentecost reminded Israel of their bondage in Egypt and of their birth as a nation. The spiritual children of Israel, those who have the kind of faith Paul describes in Galatians (Gal. 3:29), reflect upon Pentecost for similar reasons. It followed the Lord's ascension into heaven, and the Gospel Age church sees it as the commencement of their "holy nation."

"But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9,10, ASV).

When God poured out his spirit on that company he showed his acceptance of the sin offering which was finished at Calvary. Jesus' faithful followers had been waiting at Jerusalem for some sign. *"And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1).* God begat these dear souls by his spirit to show that Jesus had presented his offering to God, and that God had accepted it. From this time forward, whoever met God's conditions could say,

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

A few days prior, Jesus had promised them that they would receive power when the holy Spirit came upon them. Jesus still fulfills his promise today. Anyone who possesses such a faith in the work of the Redeemer that it is manifested by experience and who has also obediently surrendered his life to God can attest to this continuing fulfillment.

The Spirit's Power in Human Lives

The holy Spirit has actively worked in the lives of all who have truly accepted Christ since Pentecost. An extraordinary power this, it has been described as follows: "[An] unearthly beauty, whose native home is in a higher world, yet which tarries among men ... since the Son of God left us his example, and gave us his spirit. It is nothing else than his spiritual presence, mantling upon his servants." They live in him. They are absorbed into a higher life by being transformed into his likeness. His will blends with theirs. His eyes enlighten their own with their penetrating

sweetness. He decides their course of action by the power of his hand. His heart communicates a godly love to their life which by nature is so much more narrow and stagnant than his own. Their thoughts, feelings, and determination are bolstered by his own. *If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14: 23). "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. 10:20).* The scriptures point out to us a group of people who are entirely absorbed into a godly life. They love the Lord with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. They also love their neighbors as themselves. These, the scriptures say, become the dwelling place of God and his Son. When they speak it is not they who speak but God who speaks in and through them. Such believers become instruments in God's hand to demonstrate his power. God's spirit inspires their thoughts, words, and acts. In the sight of God they are without guile and he finds no fault in them.

Jewish tradition says that Pentecost was celebrated on the anniversary of the Law Covenant's inception at Mt. Sinai. It was also at the harvest; two loaves of fine white flour made from newly gathered wheat being waved in the holy place. What an appropriate time for God to approve him who fulfilled its highest requirements. That was the measure of a perfect man's ability, not just the laws and ordinances which they understood in the thundering and lightning which marked that Sinai experience.

The Letter and Spirit of the Law Contrasted

We no longer look to written ordinances, but to the spirit behind them. This is the Christian law, a law of grace, given by God. What works does this law require? None, except as the spirit moves them to act.

Men of vision no longer try to please God by obeying a law which they cannot obey absolutely. Those who are lost by their natural birth into sin can never live up to the Law's requirements. Instead, their goal is to press -- forward for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14). What does that mean? It is Christlikeness; summarize it in a single word: "love." God expects all who name the name of Jesus to become like him.

From the moment of their begetting by the holy Spirit, a transformation should take place. They should grow in the love that characterizes God and which was demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a matter of growth. First, they may only see love as a thing of duty. By that, they may just be trying to obey the scripture: *"Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect"* (Matt. 5:48).

What a love that is! God's love even includes his enemies. What does that mean for you? In loving your enemies you will no longer be,

"...merely tolerating them, abstaining from injuring them, while thinking evil of them. Far beyond this, [Godly love] signifies the purging of anger, malice, hatred, envy and strife not only from our actions but also from our words, thoughts and sentiments. It means such a complete triumph of love in our hearts as loves God supremely and delights to sacrifice in his service from a love of the principles that characterize him. That love branches out to the brethren, making us careful of their feelings and interests, and ready to sacrifice our lives for their sake. It is a love that find ways to deliver them from evil and to avoid stumbling them. It is an abounding love, so completely assimilated that we love all creatures and delight to help all men, to serve them as opportunity allows, and especially the household of faith" (R1901, pg. 9).

Those are amazing principles, but how do we implement them in our lives? Note that there are different kinds of love. People should not love all men as they love God. Love for God must come first, and he must be foremost in our affections. Believers should love fellow body members of Christ with the love of their Master. He, in the last hours of his life, spent time alone with them to prepare them for the trials they would endure. He admonished them to love each other with the same love that he had shown them. What a marvelous love that was!

Jesus loved differently than any other human. He loved absolutely, and his love didn't falter even when it led him to die for others. Yes, he laid down his life a ransom price for humanity. The world does not yet understand how monumental his sacrifice was, but there is mounting evidence that this shall soon be made apparent. How? Through the manifestation of the Sons of God for which the world is waiting and will soon take place (Rom. 8:19,23).

On that first Whitsunday, the Apostles and "his own" were gathered together in Jerusalem. Jesus had instructed them *"that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me"* (Acts 1:4). So,

"...during the course of the day of Pentecost they were all together, when suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a violent blast of wind, which filled the whole house where they were seated. They saw tongues like flames distributing themselves, one resting on the head of each, and they were all filled with the holy Spirit -- they began to speak in foreign tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to express themselves" (Acts 2:1-4, Moffatt).

Visible Demonstration Necessary

It is easy to imagine the scene, the believers eagerly waiting as Jesus commanded. Up until now they had done what he had told them, and now it was as though they were waiting for further instructions. The risen Lord would show them what he next wanted them to do. Only the Eleven saw him in the upper room. Seven only saw him by the Sea of Galilee. The Apostles were like foundation stones for a new social order that the Lord was building. In the Lord's time, he added Paul to their number. Ten days of anxious waiting passed between the Master's ascension and Pentecost. Might it not have been that this was time needed by his followers? In their uncertainty and hope, prayer must have been a sweet solace. God prepared them, through their meditation upon him, for what was soon to occur.

Why did God act so miraculously? Most likely so that the world might realize that God had accepted our Master's atonement. He accomplished all that God required of him. The next phase of God's plan of salvation could now begin.

"Behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath overcome to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Rev. 5:5). Here, in the Revelator's word picture, we glimpse the marvelous rejoicing in heaven over the sacrificial death of Jesus. In the midst of the elders stands a lamb, as if it had been slain. When he takes a book in his hand the four beasts and the twenty -- four elders fall down before him to worship. Each of these has a harp and a golden vial filled with the prayers of the saints. Listen to the song they sing:

"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10).

Heaven and earth rejoiced greatly as the Apostle John looked forward in time to the day when every created being shall praise and glorify God and the Lamb. Then God's eternal purpose shall have been accomplished and paradise will have been restored. Then it will be true that:

"...there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads... These sayings are faithful and true" (Rev. 22:3-6).

Those who took part in that Pentecost will have a part in accomplishing these things, and they shall praise his holy name. So also shall those who have believed on Jesus through their word. *"I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them"* (John 17:26). So may it be!

He had charged them to wait in Jerusalem for God's promise, but they seemed to have little sense about the higher plane to which they were soon to enter. He showed them humility by washing their feet. He reminded them that they should be his witnesses because they had been with him from the beginning. He gave them new commandments. He reassured them and warned them not to fear. He even gave them a glimpse into the future, describing the dwelling place he was going to prepare for them because he wanted them to be with him forever. In their presence he uttered that most eloquent of prayers, often called his "high priestly prayer" (John 17).

All these things in mind, their last question was whether he would then establish the kingdom to Israel. Yes, they could not reach beyond the mind of the flesh. Their highest thought carried them only to temporal cares. They did not discern spiritual things because they had not yet been begotten by the holy Spirit. God's spirit did not yet witness to their spirit that they were God's sons.

Illuminating and Transforming Power

The method by which the holy Spirit was manifested was important. It came with sound. Men heard a rushing wind that filled the house. They saw tongues like (or "of") flame that distributed themselves upon the head of each person present. Most importantly, the holy Spirit filled them all, and they suddenly spoke in various languages so that the crowd heard every man in his own language. They heard, they saw, and they realized a great change within themselves.

Old things passed away for them, and all things became new to them and within them. They were now new creatures in Christ Jesus. There is no record that any of them fell short of their ultimate capacity to serve the God whom they loved and whom they now understood more perfectly. They recalled his sayings, and they were no longer obscure. His beautiful teaching held them steadfast as each feature took on added depth of meaning. Their minds had been transformed, and as they emptied themselves of their old ways of understanding, the holy Spirit had ever more influence upon them. They became more like the Lord and Master whom they served.

On an earlier occasion, they remembered how Nicodemus had discussed various subjects with Jesus. They remembered Jesus' words:

"The wind bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:8, 6).

Jesus may have been referring to the soft evening zephyr which whispered among the leaves of the olive trees as the Master led this cautious Jewish authority to understand the truths for which he stood. This is how the holy Spirit works in those who seek God and who accept his leading even when it costs them personally. These are the people that the Scripture spoke about: *"I will guide them with mine eye" (Psa. 32:8)*. God's spirit can come in various ways. Like the soft smooth evening zephyr, or like the sudden storm:

"When he uttereth his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasuries" (Jer. 51:16).

If you want to be one of Christ's, the spirit must possess you wholly or else you are none of his. *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9).*

Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit

Every Christian must possess the holy Spirit. However, possession alone is not enough. The Christian must be filled with this spirit. Remember the Pentecost description: *"And they were all filled with the holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance."* How can you be filled with the spirit? What do you have to do? Jesus himself answers:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you... [for] If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:9-13).

If you want God's spirit to fill you, you are not far from your desire. There is a caveat, however. To want it alone is not enough. You have to want it *earnestly*, sincerely, above all other things. Why? God's spirit cannot fill you if you have not first been emptied of your own spirit!

What was the evidence that those believers were Spirit -- filled? They began to speak in other languages. This was the immediate effect of the filling and it was a part of the evidence of that filling.

Fleshly minded men have made a great deal of speaking in tongues, to the point that they neglect the significance of the occasion. The gift of tongues was temporary. Historically, we find that it was given only to a few individuals and that it passed from the scene after the first generation or so of believers. Tongue speaking was not the only gift that passed away in this manner. The power to perform miracles also ceased.

Wind pictorially symbolizes power. Fiery tongues aptly pictured inspired speech. The Gospel testimony teaches and directs all believers. There was no need to continue miraculous gifts. They served their purpose at the inauguration of the new dispensation and disappeared when the early church entered their graves.

But the Spirit's visitation has permanent results. This effect is deeper and affects the church all the way down through the Gospel Age. Those then present were transformed. Their characters were changed in addition to receiving power to heal miraculously. They saw that there was a more important work than temporarily healing people. Their eyes were opened to see that their chief mission was to open human eyes of understanding. In this mission, the work of Jesus and his example took on greater meaning.

What was once mysterious they now saw clearly. The cross had new meaning to them, as did the resurrection.

They no longer saw the kingdom of God as earthly. They understood the spiritual dominion of God which would bring about changes they had not imagined. Those changes were only understood by the power of God's spirit. God's spirit was witnessing to their spirit. They no longer cared about wealth and power. Their station in life lost its hold upon them, and they looked forward to a kingdom that was not of this world. They saw the light of the "Sun of Righteousness," and they warmed themselves with the fire of his zeal. The spirit purged their hearts of the leaven of malice and wickedness. They fed upon the "bread" of sincerity and truth. After three and a half years with him, they were prepared for the climax of their experience: to witness to Jesus throughout the earth.

Does the holy Spirit still fill human hearts like it did in those early days? Can it still transform consecrated lives like it did then? Only individual experience can answer this question. May each believer be able to say with this voice from history:

"Communion with God through Christ in the holy Spirit is not a theory or a dogma. It is a fact of personal knowledge to tens of thousands of living Christians who can testify that it is the most certain of actualities."

Look to the Source of all good with confidence. The holy Spirit will witness to the truth in all who fully submit themselves to God.

When Serving God Means Standing Aside

Numbers 4:3; 23, 30, 35, 39, 43; Numbers 8:24-25

by: P.J. Pazucha

A servant is expected to obey his master. The master may authorize the servant to use great latitude in performing his duties, or he may authorize none. The master's free choice should not matter to the servant. What should matter is that the Master is happy. If we are servants of the Most High God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should be more concerned about doing Their will than having our own way.

*For whatsoever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4)**

1. Scripture citations in this article are taken from the NASB

"Now these things happened unto them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have some" (1 Cor. 10:11).

These citations are frequently cited as authority to apply symbolic lessons from the ancient Hebrew people to Christian believers. This is specially true of those who profess to conform their lives to Romans 12:1. Such "types" and "shadows" are most commonly applied to doctrinal teachings. That is a limitation of the principal of Romans 7:6:

"But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

By applying the two former citations only to doctrine, neglecting their application to Christian living, we avoid a great many practical lessons. The Word of God should cut a broad swath through our life, showing us how we can be more like our Savior. Only by struggling to bring our life into harmony with the revealed will of God can we ever hear his "well done, good and faithful servant."

Our regular correspondence brings to our attention frequent sentiments of regret over lost opportunities for service. None of us can halt the process of aging, and time inevitably has its effect upon our mind and body. Once we could give the Lord our strength and our attention. In later years we find more weakness than strength and more forgetfulness than memory. Why does this happen? What are we to do about it? How can we face our own declining years with joy and comfort rather than with -- discouragement and regret? One range of answers to such questions lies in the Law of Moses and the "newness of the Spirit" which we find in them.

The Retirement of Levites

God chose the tribe of Levi as priests, just as he has now visited the gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. The Levite's was an honored service, but it was a service that came at a cost. The Levites were partially supported by the tribes of Israel so that they could devote their attention to administering the ordinances of the Law. They were generally excluded from an inheritance in the land (although special exceptions are noted in the Law).

Excluded from certain parts of *normal* Jewish life, they also found that God had set other limitations upon them. Their men could only serve in the tabernacle / temple between their 30th and 50th years. No man younger than thirty was allowed to serve in the tabernacle, neither was any man older than fifty. Only the High Priest was not obliged to obey this rule. He served for life, from the death of the previous High Priest.

Our own society is often thought of as advanced, yet people today don't live much longer than they did then. Why did God retire underpriests so young? What did underpriests do in their retirement? If we search our heart we will find that the spirit of these regulations lays out a blessed opportunity to the people of God's grace.

Before proceeding let us clearly point out that this article's purpose is NOT to tell older Christians to retire from the ministry at some arbitrary age. If this practice had been followed in the early church we would never have enjoyed much of the Apostle John's written record, including the Revelation.

What we hope to show is the orderliness of God. If God foresaw specific needs and acted to meet those needs, wouldn't it serve us well to submit to the spirit of his commands? He gave us a pattern to follow that benefitted the entire nation of Israel. If we apply the spiritual lessons this pattern supplies we may find that every year of advancing age provides us with wonderful new opportunities.

Orderly Transfer of Power

The young, strapping, underage youths could not serve in the tabernacle / temple no matter how much they wanted to. It was prohibited. Yet, they knew that their day was coming. They had reasons to be patient.

The difference between the Numbers 4 texts cited above and the Numbers 8 texts highlights this. In Numbers 4 the age span was rigidly set at 30 -- 50 years, but in Numbers 8 the lower age is set at 25. Why?

Most likely, this five year span was the time when the younger generation began training. When their apprenticeship had expired they began the actual service. There was no doubt about God's rules; there was no uncertainty whether they would be allowed to inherit their rightful job. They were interested in learning their future job, and God provided a set time span for them to do so.

Who Would Teach Them?

The men aged thirty to fifty served in the tabernacle / temple. They had their hands full. Read the Old Testament accounts of the volume of sacrifices, and you will realize just how busy these men were. They were just not generally available as teachers for the young.

The retired underpriests certainly weren't ready to curl up and die. Not at all. Furthermore, they had the combined experience and wisdom of twenty years of tabernacle / temple service. The young lads, on the other hand, knew that these men are around, available, and full of stories to share about how the work was carried out.

How simple a device God arranged for passing on information and wisdom. He arranged something else, too. He provided the means to knit younger and older generations together, instead of driving them apart.

The underpriests learned some good lessons at their retirement. The service of the holy things did not depend upon them. They were God's *servants*, nothing more. God would raise up successive generations to serve him, just as he had raised up their own generation. They were not allowed to serve until they could serve no more, so they had a vested interest in seeing things done correctly. God gave them the incentive to work with the young and to teach the young all that they were willing to learn.

The young learned lessons too. There were certain inflexible requirements (for example, age). They had to come up to God's standards. God's standard would not bend to fit them. They learned patience, waiting for God to use them, just as they would later have to exercise patience with the generation to follow them. They didn't fear the old priests. They probably even found it easier to take instruction from men the age of their grandparents than from their own parents. They knew that at a set time control of the Levitical system would pass to them in an orderly manner. God provided a time of service for them, just as he had provided for those who went before.

Those between 30 and 50 were serving and had their hands full. Yet, they were aware of the transfer of information from the generation ahead of them to the generation behind them. Thus they were assured of continuity. They were serving in a system larger than themselves. They needn't worry about who would take their place. They needn't worry about whether new priests would do what they should. They could attend upon the Lord God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. How much like the church's selection of elders and deacon. Elders could devote themselves to prayer, fasting, and ministrations. Deacons should free elders for such spiritual tasks.

Shouldn't we ask ourselves if we are learning from their example? What do we do about the orderly transfer of information and experience? How do we cope with our own aging and with those services that we know individual Bible study classes need? Perhaps most importantly, do we do it at a time when we can be effective for God; do we wait until he forces our hand; or do we resist until we can no longer to what he expects?

There are many ways of serving God. One way is the active service of ministers. Another is the service of passing on your experience to others. A third is the service of learning -- of soaking up the wisdom and counsel one's elders have to share.

It is shameful for the young to refuse to learn. Oh, the excuses are myriad: "times have changed," "that's your way," etc. But all the excuses are still excuses.

It is shameful if a person has the opportunity to minister to others and abuses that opportunity or isn't faithful to it. But, do not failure and abuse often result from poor training?

The worst shame of all, then, is to take one's life experience and wisdom to the grave with them -- without passing it on. It is like the parable of the talents. The man having one talent buried his. Did he do so because he thought he had nothing spare to put out for interest? Did he fear losing the only talent he had?

We can bury our talents too. We can do this either by conscious thought or by failing to think. Many professedly "consecrated" Christians die with skills and knowledge locked in their own hearts. Sometimes we think we don't have enough contact with others to pass our understanding on. Sometimes we don't want to pass it on. Sometimes society works against us. The reasons don't

matter, though, do they? What matters is that we have failed to be as effective for our Lord as we can.

It is doubtful that any of the Hebrew underpriests wanted to retire at age fifty. They had turned to a new page in their life, and they lived it as faithfully as they could. We need to trust God enough to do the same.

How can we learn from their experience? How can we be more effective for the body of Christ?

1.) Look for ways to benefit the entire body of believers. If we are part of the body of Christ our interest should be more for the welfare of the body than our own continuing position as teacher, secretary, pianist, etc. If the body depends upon you instead of Jesus isn't something wrong? Look for areas where others may depend upon you too much, and find ways to minimize that dependence -- through education or a discipling relationship. Those in positions of leadership among the flock are supposed to provide examples of dependency upon Christ and not upon men.

2.) Show, don't just teach. Spend enough time with those who want to learn so that they can observe *how* to study, meditate, disagree and serve. Let them *observe* you, in your strengths and weaknesses. Don't just tell them how to do things, show them how: be a one -- on -- one example.

3.) Don't let fear dominate your actions. If you don't trust the doctrinal background or character of the next generation, work with them. Share your views with them, and teach them. Then fear will be unnecessary.

4.) Accept nurturing the next generation as a challenge. You may find that your basis for believing an idea isn't convincing to a younger person. Don't let that frighten you. There *are* diverse manifestations of the spirit. Trust God! If you are questioned or disagreed with, give an answer for the hope that is in you -- and let the spirit of God work in the listener. You cannot convince him, but God's spirit can!

5.) Accept your role in training others as an important role to be filled. A willing servant of God can have too many opportunities to do justice to them all. You are free to struggle in yourself to prepare every lesson you are asked to prepare and to deliver every address. But if you do you will be as harried as Moses. Share your skills with others. Multiply yourself -- you may not be perfect, but God can work through you. Soon, twice as many people will be able to do what you can, then three times. Don't measure yourself by how many times you address God's people. You will be a greater service to God and to your brethren if you teach others to teach others. Pass some of your invitations to serve on to someone else. Recommend a younger brother or sister for a service you know them capable of handling.

Let them know your confidence in them. Don't be ashamed to be associated with them. Then, if they accept the challenge, monitor and nurture the younger one. Offer them help when they want it, and encourage them to grow strong in the power of God's spirit. Share with them what prayerful preparation is all about -- and what caring for the needs of others means.

6.) Assume that there are people who want to learn. You say you don't know who you can pass things on to? Look harder! The Lord's available choices may not meet your criteria, but they meet the Lord's! Look at the young with God's eyes, not with your own!

7.) Have you tried and have been rejected? Just because you are unsuccessful in one instance doesn't mean that everyone is unwilling to learn. You may not be talking on a level they can understand. You may be talking down to them and offending them. Try harder! It may be that your personalities are just too different; find another mature Christian who can work with that young one. Take rejection as a challenge to nourish each young one near you, even if it has to be at the hands of someone else.

8.) Stand Down Voluntarily. Nothing says that you have to accept every invitation to speak or to lead a study that is offered. If you know someone younger who could bless and be benefited by an apprentice opportunity for service, recommend them instead of yourself. Then work with the younger one so that they benefit from the experience.

9.) Act while you can. Remember that the time will come when you will no longer be able to teach, train, or react flexibly enough to meet the needs of other believers. Do what you can now. The longer you wait the harder it is. When you were young you might have found writing easy, now you may find it hard work. When you were young getting down on your knees wasn't any problem, but now it may take a major effort. Be a powerful example when you are able, because you will not always be able. You might be 60, working with a 30 year old, but you could just as easily be 25 working with a 17 year old. Become a fisher of men and give others an example to follow.

10.) Prayer: Make sure it is one of the things you DO together. There are more than enough books and lessons on prayer. What young Christians need to see is more examples of mature prayers. Let your example show others that prayer is important and effective. Don't forget that part of your example can be to engage in bended-knee-prayer. It's a mighty testimony to the work of the spirit when the young see that even the mature approach God with respect.

These are a few of the lessons to be drawn from the orderly transfer of power as God arranged it. Draw those additional lessons that fit you best. We are not recommending that you adopt a 30 / 50 year program, but use the Jewish experience as a positive teaching tool. Maybe we can find better ways of using those lessons in our own day and time. Don't be satisfied until you have done all you can for the strengthening of the body of Christ -- even if it means standing aside.

The Ministration of the Spirit and Prayer

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

Christ had just said, "Ask, and it shall be given" (11:9); God's giving is inseparably connected with our asking. He especially applies this principle to the holy Spirit. As surely as a father on earth gives bread to his child, so God gives the holy Spirit to them that ask Him. The ministration of the Spirit is ruled by the one great law: God must give, we must ask. When the holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost with a flow that never ceases, it was in answer to prayer. His inflow into the believer's heart and his outflow in rivers of living water always depend upon the law. "Ask, and it shall be given."

The measure of continued believing prayer will be the measure of the Spirit's working in the church.

- Andrew Murray

You Find What You Look For

"He that hath a froward heart findeth no good." Proverbs 17:20

Do you want to be happy? Make up your mind to see only good in others, to hunt for the beautiful things in their characters, and to ignore anything else. Look for harmony and avoid discord.

To hold the loving thought, as a mother does toward her children, develop a positive character. The flower of manhood or womanhood will never blossom in the chilly atmosphere of hatred, jealousy, envy or condemnation. People need the warm sun of love, of praise, of appreciation, of encouragement, to call out the beauty they can be and to produce the perfect flower of human-kind.

Never allow yourself to condemn or criticize others. Whatever they do, hold them perpetually in kindness. Determine to see only what is good and sweet and wholesome in them. Try to see the man or woman that God intended them to become, not the warped, twisted, or deformed one which a vicious life may have made. If you are successful, you will generally find what you are looking for.

You will never find the straight by looking for the crooked or by holding crooked thoughts. If you constantly find fault instead of praise or appreciation you will ruin your power to see the beautiful and the true, just as the habitual liar loses the power to distinguish the truth.

If you habitually hold the deformed thought, the ironical, the skeptical, the pessimistic, the depreciative thought, you will ruin your ability to see or appreciate what is good and true.

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc., is scheduled to be held (D.V.) on Saturday, June 13, 1992, at 10:00 a.m. It will be held at the Mission Evangelical Church in Wausau Wisconsin. The Board thanks the brethren at Wausau for their kind invitation to host our 1992 Annual meeting.

Only members of the Institute may vote (in person or by proxy), but all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ and his appearing are welcome to attend.

A report on the Institute's activities during the preceding year will be given and an election of directors to serve during the coming year will be conducted. Opportunity will be given for such other matters as may properly come before the meeting.

These are the brethren who have been nominated for directorship:

James M. Caudle Mesa, AZ
Chester A. Czohara Irvine, CA
Francis L. Earl Adelphi, MD
Alex Gonczewski West Suffield, CT
Loyal Petran Racine, WI
Timothy M. Thomassen Albuquerque, NM
James B. Webster Haverhill, MA
Charles F. Woodard Honolulu, HI

Brothers Jarmola and Pazucha have withdrawn their names from the ballot.

On Sunday, June 14th the brethren will worship together with the Wausau church. The schedule for the day will be as follows: 9:30-10:15, Sermon by Tim Thomassen; 10:45-11:10, Sermon by Alex Gonczewski. Lunch will be served by the church for all in attendance at 12:00.

Man is born with his hands clenched, but his hands are open in death, because on entering the world he desires to, grasp everything, but on leaving, he takes nothing away.

-- The Talmud

God never deceives; but man is deceived whenever he puts too much trust in himself. Man proposes, but God disposes.

-- Thomas a Kempis

Mammon is the largest slaveholder in the world.

-- Frederick Saunder;

You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving.

Steps in Christian Growth

Work • Give • Pray • Work • Give • Pray • Work • Give • Pray

Pray without ceasing 1 Thess. 5:17

Rejoice in the Lord alway Phil. 4:4

Add to your faith virtue 2 Peter 1:5

Ye have not, because ye ask not James 4:2

Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it John 2:5

Only fear the Lord, and serve him I Sam. 12:24

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus Acts 20:35

Keept himself pure 1 Tim. 5:22

Go ye and teach all nations Matt. 28:19

In all thy ways acknowledge him Prov. 3:6

Vow, and pay unto the Lord Psa. 76:11

Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ 2 Tim. 2:3

Work • Give • Pray • Work • Give • Pray • Work • Give • Pray

Entered Into Rest

Anthony Azzolina, WI
Harold Hartley, NM
Gladys Shull, TX
Raymond D. Wasko, IL