

The Old Paths – April / June : 2017 – № 14

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These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; ...

(Acts 17:11,12)



From the Editor’s Desk

“With one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel” (Philippians 1:27)

In Philippians chapter 1, we read of THE FELLOWSHIP, THE FURTHERANCE and THE FAITH of the Gospel.

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now” (Phil. 1:3-5). Paul was writing from prison. “Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Philem. v1). “The prisoner of (in) the Lord” (Eph. 4:1). He was not a prisoner of Caesar. When he was brought to court at Rome, it would soon be evident to the authorities that Paul was there as a Christian, not a criminal. He was a witness not a defendant. He sought prayer, not for release but for boldness to preach faithfully in this unique opportunity for outreach

in the Gospel. “So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace” (Phil. 1:13).

This was the Praetorian, the elite imperial guard attached to Caesar’s household. “That utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds” (Eph. 6:19-20). In this situation he appreciated the lasting FELLOWSHIP, partnership, participation of the saints, in their common bond together in this exercise. “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:12).

Restraint in bonds was seen by Paul as working out in the FURTHERANCE of the Gospel. His imprisonment was no hindrance. Prison doors to Paul were doors of opportunity. He regarded himself not as a prisoner but a pioneer, to forge ahead with the message of the Gospel. In recent Papers in this magazine, we have considered the work of the ambassador for Christ. Mr McKee’s Papers on the book of Acts have shown that persecution in early New Testament days was no hindrance to the Gospel but rather spread the message to other regions.

In this diligent work of preaching the Gospel we seek to encourage our fellow labourers, especially in India, who have been horrendously beaten, apprehended and some imprisoned for the faith of the Gospel. That we, “May hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the FAITH of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:27).

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THE FLOOD (4)

In this present article we will examine whether the Flood was a truly *global* or just a *local* event, and then look at conditions on the Earth *before* and *after* the Flood.

The Flood – Global or Local? If we examine God’s Word (the Bible) thoughtfully, prayerfully, literally and without pre-disposed ideas, then everything points to a truly *global* Flood event!

A Global Flood – Biblical Evidence.

- The actual wording of Gen. 7:17-24 could not be improved upon if the intention was to describe a *universal* flood : if the intention was to describe some *local* flood, then the wording is exaggerated and misleading. Gen. 7:19 is most specific – “*all* the high hills, that were under the *whole* heaven” were inundated, so the Ark could freely pass over them all, which obviously included the mountains of Ararat (17,000ft.high) – some *local* flood!!
- Again, Gen. 7:21 indicates that “*all flesh died that moved upon the earth*”; in a local flood most animals and humans *escape* by moving to other areas – impossible in a global flood.
- The Hebrew word “*mabbul*” (lit. “deluge”) is used here to describe *this* flood – elsewhere in the O.T. the ordinary Hebrew words for flood are used in describing local events.

A Global Flood – Geographical Surveyance.

- If the Flood only affected parts of the Middle East, then why did Noah have to build an Ark? Migration would have been a far better solution to the problem.
- Even *if* migration was impossible for some reason, the Ark would be grossly over-sized for some *local* event.
- No local flood continues unabated for such a long period of time.

- In Gen. 6:7, God had pronounced judgement upon mankind on “the face of the earth”, yet by this time there had been a great spacial expansion of the human population so that no local flood could have made God’s pronouncement effective.
- To remain in the Ark for over a year seems absurd for a local flood; even with the waters decreasing for 4 months, the dove still could not find suitable ground (Gen. 8:9) – this really cannot fit into a local flood scenario.

A Global Flood – Spiritual Significance.

- If the Flood was just a *local* event then God’s promise to never send such a flood again (Gen. 8:21; 9:11-17) has been consistently broken over the history of time. The rainbow was set by God as a reminder of His covenant [promise] never to send such a flood again, yet local floods are commonplace today in India, China and Bangladesh. Actually they occur almost anywhere in the world. The U.K. has experienced many local floods recently, but God has *never* sent another *global* Flood that eliminated all life forms.
- In Matt. 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26-27 the Lord Jesus Christ Himself fully accepted the historicity and universal consequences of the Flood.
- 2Peter 3 compares the coming judgement by fire to the former judgement by water in Noah’s Flood. A *local* flood in Noah’s day, when people *not* living in the local flood area could escape it (a *partial* judgement), would therefore pre-figure a *partial* judgement to come – yet scripture clearly refers to a *universal* judgement to come!

The Earth *before* and *after* the Flood – Generally.

Before the Flood the Earth had been inhabited by millions of humans and animals, spread over a vast area, and with abundant lush vegetation of every kind. When Noah and his family stepped out of the Ark in present-day Armenia (Gen. 8:4 “mountains of Ararat”), there were just eight of them alighting on a desolate landscape, together with the animals that had been saved in the Ark. Noah had moved from a scene of *corruption* through a scene of *judgement* to a *new* world.

The Earth *before* and *after* the Flood – Climatically.

Prior to God’s judgement of the Flood, the Earth had been enclosed by a canopy of water-vapour (see article on “Creation: The Facts (5)” – Volume 2, Issue 1 – “The Old Paths”) which filtered – out ultra-violet radiations, cosmic rays and other destructive energies from without the Earth. These are known sources of both somatic and genetic mutations, so the presence of this canopy promoted good health and longevity. The canopy also controlled the movement of air below it, thus there would be no atmospheric air circulation, and consequently an equable climate with no extremes (ice-caps, deserts, etc.), just uniformity and constancy in climatic conditions. With no hydrological cycle there would be no rainfall.

With the “windows of heaven” (Gen. 7:11) being opened, this great canopy of water vapour was dissipated, creating temperature differentials and global air circulation and creating (amongst other things) the hydrological cycle (rainfall), which had never been experienced before. Now climatic extremes came in (too cold, too hot, too dry, etc), so limiting man’s habitation possibilities. The oceans were far more extensive than before because of all the extra water from *above* and *below* the Earth’s surface. These harmful ultra-violet radiations were *not* now being intercepted as before because of the loss of the vapour canopy, so now men’s ages dramatically *decreased* after the Flood. Before the Flood the average age of men was 912 years (Gen. 5), yet by Gen. 11:10-26 & 32, after the Flood, the average age was 388 years! In succeeding generations this average continued to fall until you come to Psalm 90:10 and there read of average life-spans of 70-80 years – not too dissimilar to today!

Old and New Worlds.

So Noah and his family emerged from the *old* world (2Peter 2:5) to leave behind that which had perished and to start anew on the *new* world (2Peter 3:6-7). These verses show us that present processes are not the

key to past events, but that the processes we experience today were put in place *after* the Flood! Not only that, but according to Gen. 8:22 these processes will remain with us as long as this present Earth is in existence, *despite* the effects of climate change, polar melting and sea-level rise! Let the present reader be assured that God is still in control!

Spiritual Application.

In the next few articles we will (D.V.) look at the spiritual lessons that we, as believers, can learn as we seek to live our lives for God's glory in the society in which we live.

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The Coming of the Lord in 1Corinthians

When the Old Testament speaks of the second coming of the Lord, it speaks of His coming to judge the world and to reign over Israel and the other nations. For example: "The LORD (Jehovah) ... He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness" (Psalm 96:13; 98:9). In the teaching of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, we find the same thing – His coming, as Son of Man, to judge and to reign (see, for example, Matthew chapters 24 and 25).

However, in John's Gospel we encounter another idea: His coming to receive "His own". We can imagine that the Lord Himself would have needed comfort on the eve of His sufferings, but He was more concerned with the troubled hearts of His disciples: "Let not your heart be troubled ... if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). He gives them the hope, not just of His coming to reign over the earth, but rather to be taken by Him to heaven, to His Father's house.

We must never think that in the Epistles we have just the apostles' ideas. The first verse of Acts shows that the Gospels were written concerning "all that Jesus **began** both to do and teach". The Lord continued to teach by means of His apostles, and we have the results of this in the inspired epistles which they wrote. Therefore, when Paul writes about the same blessed hope of the receiving up of the church, he states, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord" (1Thessalonians 4:15). The Lord Jesus is really the Author of all the apostolic writings. From His throne in heaven He still instructs us in Acts, in the Epistles and in the book of Revelation.

In this article we will endeavour to study some references to His coming in 1Corinthians, and to this end we shall ask three questions.

1) What will Precede the coming of the Lord to receive the church?

This question may be a surprise to many who have studied prophecy. For it is generally understood that there is nothing to be fulfilled before the coming of the Lord to receive His church. In fact, as far as the prophetic program is concerned, the writer of this article is convinced that there is no prophecy to be fulfilled before the rapture. Prophecy has to do with Israel and the nations, and not with the church. Once the church is in heaven with Christ, the prophecies concerning Israel and the nations will begin to have their fulfilment in the Great Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. Also there is no condition to be fulfilled before the rapture, because the receiving of the church, being the consummation of our redemption by grace (1Peter 1:13), is, therefore, unconditional.

However, there is something which **ought** to precede the rapture. Sadly, we have to use the word "ought". We cannot just say "which precedes", because it is something which is often lacking. It is the godliness and good testimony of the church. Enoch walked with God on earth and was raptured to be with God in heaven.

We ought to know how to please the Lord, walking in holiness, love and honesty, until He comes (1Thessalonians 4).

1Corinthians emphasises two things which ought to continue until He comes: the **reliance** on His provision (1:7), and the **remembrance** of His love (11:26).

Reliance on His Provision

“So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming (or revelation) of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:7). This does not mean that we have all the gifts that exist, or that existed in the days of the apostles, but rather that we have all the gifts we need in order to serve and be a testimony while we wait for His manifestation to us at His coming. All Christians have received spiritual gifts to be used in the life and witness of the local assembly, but it is necessary to develop our gifts by means of prayer and the study of God’s word.

The Remembrance of His love

“As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till He come” (11:26). This is the Lord’s will for every assembly of His people. Just a few hours before His crucifixion the Lord chose these two emblems from among the things on the table at the Passover feast. Within hours the very hands which took and broke the bread would be pierced by the nails, and the blood symbolised by the wine would be shed in the agony and anguish of His death. Broken like bread in His death (although, of course, “not a bone” was broken), He gives us life eternal. Having drained the bitter cup of the wrath of God, He gives us everlasting peace and joy. Such love is incomparable! The only thing better than the remembrance of His love is the reality of our meeting with Him at His coming, when we shall see the glorious face of our Beloved and be with Him for ever!

2) What will Follow the Coming of the Lord to Receive the Church?

In 1Corinthians 1:7 the word “coming” is literally “revelation” or “manifestation”. In this context it is not His manifestation to the world as Judge and King of kings, but rather, to us as the Lord and Bridegroom of His own. It will not be just a momentary appearance, it will be a manifestation without end. Once we are in His presence we will be in His presence for ever. However, the Lord’s coming will not only be His manifestation to us, but we also will be manifested in His presence.

This wonderful manifestation of the Lord will have three results in us:

- (i) We shall be like Him.
- (ii) We shall be manifested before Him.
- (iii) We shall be manifested with Him.

(i) **We shall be like Him** – as children of God. We must avoid using our imagination with respect to this future state, for the apostle John states, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be”. However, the apostle also says, “But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1John 3:2). Those who sincerely have this hope in Him will already be seeking to be pure, just as He is pure. In that moment, when we see Him face to face, a complete and permanent transformation will take place. Even our bodies will be transformed to be like His body of glory.

(ii) **We shall be manifested before Him** – as servants of God. In that day, all our service will be put to the test by the fire of the Lord’s presence. All that we have done according to our own will, in our own strength and wisdom, and for our own glory, will be, like wood, hay and stubble, reduced to ashes. All that according to His will, in dependence on His strength and wisdom, and for His glory, will be, like gold, silver and precious stones, approved by the Lord and will receive a reward. Just as gold, silver and precious stones reflect the light, so also faithful service reflects the glory of the Lord, and this ought to be the motivation of each of His servants (1Corinthians 3 and 4:1-5).

(iii) **We shall be manifested with Him** – as kings and priests. After the great tribulation, when He comes in glory to judge the ungodly and establish His kingdom, He will not come alone: all His saints and angels shall

be with Him. It will be enough here to quote some of the many references which speak of this: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:4); “When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2Thessalonians 1:10); “... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4).

3) Who will Participate in the Coming of the Lord to Receive His Church?

Two more references in 1Corinthians will give us the answer to this question.

Those who belong to Him (15:23): “They that are Christ’s at His coming”. When He comes in glory, the Lord will be accompanied by “all His saints” (1Thessalonians 3:13), “all them that believe” (2Thessalonians 1:10). They will all be manifested with Him because they will all have been caught up to meet Him before the tribulation (with the exception, of course, of those who were martyred during the tribulation). Here in 1Corinthians 15 he shows that the only qualification necessary to participate in the rapture is to be “Christ’s”, that is, to belong to Him, purchased with the incalculable price of His precious blood. Of course, Paul had not forgotten the believers who would not yet have died, for he adds, “the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (v. 52). We were saved by grace, and we shall be glorified by His grace, in spite of our failings.

Those who prove by their love that they belong to Him (16:22): “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha” while all true saved ones will be caught up to meet Christ in the air, we can be sure that no false Christian will go with them. Love is the basic and essential sign of the new birth. In the first place, it is love for Christ: “We love Him, because He first loved us” (1John 4:19). “Faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6) and the absence of love is symptomatic of the absence of faith.

It seems that some at Corinth did not have the reality of salvation and were ever sowing doubts and discord among the brethren. The test is: do they really love the Lord Jesus Christ? If they did not pass this test and continued in an unregenerate state, Paul would pronounce upon them the severest curse (anathema – devoted to destruction). “Maranatha” means, in Aramaic, “the Lord is coming”. All the false ones will be left behind in that moment, and afterwards it will be too late to be saved. If we really love the Lord and long for His coming, we will also love all who belong to Him, and it will give us great joy to know that we shall spend all eternity together in the presence of our Lord.

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The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 4:23-37

Praise, prayer and power following release (v.23-31)

When they were released, Peter and John “went to their own company”, that is to all the disciples: those whom the Holy Spirit had gathered to the name of a Risen Christ. There is no such thing as having an independent attitude in the things of God. The Apostles and all the believers were a separate company, known to each other and accountable to each other; all under the Lordship of Christ. It is self-evident that people choose their company according to what they are essentially. Therefore, it is always a matter of concern to the guides among the flock, as well as to other believers, when any person professing faith in Christ becomes careless in desiring the company of fellow believers. But that was not the case here.

When the assembly heard the report of Peter and John “they lifted up their voice to God with one accord.” Unity and agreement in prayer are only achievable in the power of the Holy Spirit. The report of the Sanhedrin’s deliberation and command did not discourage them. Rather there was oneness of mind both of the need to pray and what to pray about. Those who were bold in their Gospel witness are also bold in their prayer to God.

Their prayer is to God, recognising Him as Sovereign Lord, a ruler of unchallengeable power and, therefore, a higher authority than that of the Sanhedrin. Solid convictions concerning God give courage and stability in testing times. His power is absolute; He is **the God of creation**.

They then employ a quotation from the Septuagint Greek translation of Psalm 2:1-3. It is interesting to note that they do not quote the verses from the end of that Psalm about vengeance and earthly inheritance: that would not be in keeping with this current age of grace and Gospel offer. This teaches us the lesson that we, like those believers at Jerusalem, should be reading all of our Bibles and seeking to understand the text and context of the passages we read. Not only will that enrich our knowledge of God and His ways, but it should also enhance our prayer life and, for brothers, their expressions of public worship.

King David is the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit in writing Psalm 2. The God of creation is also **the God of revelation**: the God who speaks to man through His word. The praying assembly recognised that the attitude of the Sanhedrin paralleled this prophesied confederacy against the Lord Jesus Christ, "Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ." Herod and Pontius Pilate correspond with the 'kings of the earth' and 'rulers'; the Gentiles and people of Israel with 'the heathen' and 'the people' of Psalm 2.

"For of a truth against thy holy child [literally "servant"] Jesus" shows He is God's Holy Servant as well as God's Son. They understand the absolute impeccable sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ: not only that He did not sin; but that He could not sin! "Whom thou hast anointed" indicates that God is also **the God of history**. They believed in His Messiahship, One who had been publicly manifested to Israel with evidence that He is the Son of God.

Those opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ "were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." We need to be careful in our interpretation here: this verse is not saying that an unseen hand had forced men to act as they did against the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather God knew that men of murderous intent would arise and, when such arose in Palestine, He sent His Son. Men are responsible for their evil actions, even though through them God works out His purpose. Accomplishing the will of God is not what Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas or Annas had planned, but the believers at Jerusalem are convinced of God's actual and definite governance and overruling in the affairs of men. They recognise that He is **the God of sovereignty**.

The requests in Acts 4:29,30 show the spirit suitable for prayer in this age of grace. **Request No.1** is that God would consider the threats of the Sanhedrin. Although they understood the dangers, that persecution was likely coming, they left the issue with God. They did not pray to have their circumstances changed, but asked God to empower them in the midst of the circumstances. **Request No.2** is that God would enable His servants to speak with great boldness. They did not ask for protection, but sought divine grace and enablement. **Request No.3** is that God would stretch out His hand to heal and to perform confirmatory signs, or miracles of mercy, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amazingly they asked for the continuation of the healing activity that resulted in the Sanhedrin's threatening. During the Saviour's ministry and in apostolic times healing was a sign to unbelievers confirming the word preached: but preaching always had the primacy.

Their prayer showed they were realistic about the forces opposing them and in relation to personal inadequacy. However they had a certain hope in an almighty God and claimed the spiritual resources that were available to them. This prayer was answered quickly and with attendant manifestations of divine power: "the place was shaken where they were assembled together." An earthquake is the physical phenomenon in which the greatest amount of energy and power is released; hence this symbol is used to demonstrate the magnitude of the power of God in the spiritual sphere. God's shaking in the physical realm made them all the more unshaken in the spiritual and answered to their conviction concerning the greatness of God.

The words "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" indicates that the Holy Spirit possessed by all of

these believers was allowed to take full possession of them. This is a special act on the part of God giving seasonal power. It is not a new Pentecost, but a new endowment, a new filling. This shows that our spiritual condition is not a continuous state, we need to seek divine enablement for service and for the trials we face. Their public testimony continues unabated, “and they spake the word of God with boldness.” Thus the command of God was much greater than that of the Sanhedrin. They were filled with a new consciousness of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

A review of the Jerusalem assembly (v.32-35)

This section is not a duplicate of 2:44-47, although our comments made on that passage should be referred to, but is necessary to introduce Barnabas and expose the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira in chapter 5. It shows how propertied Christians would contribute to meet the need of poor Christians. This singleness of heart can only apply in light of Pentecost and was only recorded in relation to the assembly at Jerusalem. They lived in the conviction that the spiritual was more important than the material and having “all things common” was a spontaneous and voluntary response: no compulsion was applied. The repetition of facts stated in Acts 2:44-47 shows that newer converts also adopted the characteristic practice of this Spirit-filled community. The first description of having “all things common” came after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, so it is important to note that this second description comes after their being filled with the Holy Spirit. Fellowship with God led to fellowship with each other. They did not look at what they had as their own when it was required to meet the basic needs of others. While we are not in ‘Jerusalem conditions’ today, we should take opportunity to meet the practical needs of believers. “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”, (Jas. 2:15-17).

As well as showing care for each other, these believers also demonstrated a positive witness toward the unsaved: “with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection.” Thus they ignored the Sanhedrin’s command, with their Gospel witness being made powerful by the spirituality of the life of the believers. As well as the filling with the Holy Spirit, the fact of the resurrection was the spur to this witness.

The condition of the saints is also described in the words “and great grace was upon them all.” There was a beauty being manifested in their character, which supported the apostolic testimony to the resurrection. This grace is not so much a demonstration of what these saints had freely received from God, but of their response in showing grace to others. “Neither was there any among them that lacked” shows there was no needy person among the believers due to the practical action taken. This provides a striking testimony to what grace had achieved in the Christian community, something far in advance of the care imposed on the Jewish community under the law.

The resources to meet the practical needs of deprived believers came from the voluntary sale of property. They did not sell up everything at once, but from time to time in response to emerging needs. The money realised from these sales was then brought to the Apostles for distribution proportionate to genuine need. Thus the giving and the distribution were intelligent.

Introduction of a new person (v.36,37)

We now meet Barnabas, the only person named in Scripture of all those who sold property for redistribution to needy saints. The name Barnabas is descriptive of his character: “son of consolation.” Let us learn the practical lesson: not everyone can be like Peter and John – there are no Apostles now – but all can be like Barnabas – an encourager, a supporter, one exercised to meet the needs of others.

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THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY

Paper 6 (i) – PROGRESS

“Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The subject of the book of Acts is the triumph of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit in His apostles as the Gospel conquered Jewish prejudices, heathen superstition and paganism through the Roman world. The subject of this Paper is the Progress of the Gospel and the formation of assemblies in early days.

ORIGIN

“Being assembled together with them” (Acts 1:4). In the Old Testament God appointed a place to which the people came. The pattern set in Acts is of a people “assembled” and the Lord came to them. “Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). He comes to His own as they are gathered together.

“Commanded (charged) them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.” It is significant that we are first introduced to the company waiting. “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, unto ye be endued (clothed) with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). The lesson of waiting is vital. We wait upon the Lord for direction, (Psa. 27:14); we wait upon the Spirit for power, (Acts 4:33) and we are waiting for His Son from heaven (1Thess. 1:10).

“Ye shall be baptised with (in) the Holy Ghost” (Acts 1:5). This happened by one act, once and for all at Pentecost. As water was the element of John’s baptism, so they were immersed, engulfed in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is to be observed that the Risen Head, not the spirit carries out this baptism; the disciples were not praying for the Spirit but they were waiting for the promise to be fulfilled; this was unique and never repeated as linked with the death and resurrection of Christ. Baptism in the spirit is to be distinguished from being filled by the Spirit (Acts 4:31). The salvation of the soul is the blessing of Calvary. The baptism of the Spirit is the blessing of the one event of Pentecost. We do not experience any mini Pentecost’s.

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come” (Acts 2:1). This day is as unrepeatable as Calvary. The Spirit was received by the Samaritan believers, (Acts 8:17); the Gentile believers, (Acts 10:44) and the Proselytes, (Acts 19:6). These were special occasions to demonstrate the unity of the work.

There was a SOUND, (Acts 2:2); “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind”. It was sudden, secret and sovereign. It “filled all the house”. There was no room for anything else.

There was a SIGHT, (Acts 2:3) “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire”. The commission of the risen Lord was, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). This is a ministry of the tongue. “It sat upon each of them”. From the commencement there was no thought of the selective ministry provided by Bible Schools or trained pastor.

There was a SIGN, (Acts 2:4). “Began to speak with other tongues (languages, dialects), as the Spirit gave them utterance”. This was a sign to the unsaved and was a miracle of speaking and hearing. It is to be noted that the crowd was the occasion. Speaking in tongues was not used to attract the crowd as in modern charismatic meetings and was a temporary gift which has passed away.

The order in Acts Ch. 2 is to be observed:

2:1-13 – The Advent of the Spirit.

2:14-40 – The Announcement of the Gospel by Peter.

2:41-47 – The Assembling of the Church.

“The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” As yet, there was only one church at Jerusalem. The origin was not at Plymouth, Dublin, Lambeth or Rome.

ORDINANCES

Baptism and Breaking of Bread has been dealt with in recent Papers in this Magazine on Acts 2:41-42. The original gatherings were marked by simplicity. An assembly only has material need of a room (depending on climatic conditions), water (to baptise), the bread and the cup (as instituted by the Lord), (1Cor. 11:23-25). We do not require an ornate building, great swelling music or clerical vestments.

OPPORTUNITIES

“Being let go, they went to (came unto) their own company” (Acts 4:23). THE PEOPLE – Possibly the local assembly was already gathered together in prayer for Peter and John. In times of trial and suffering, how blessed is the fellowship of the Lord’s people in the assembly.

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together” (Acts 4:31). THE PRAYERS – This was the corporate prayers of the assembly. They prayed unitedly, intelligently, specifically and scripturally.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31). THE PREACHING – The religious authorities had charged them; “not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18). These threatenings continued, but they continued with power to preach the Gospel and to bear reproach for “the Name”.

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32). THE PARTNERSHIP – This is a lovely expression of the united sacrificial service of the assembly.

OUTREACH

“Then had the churches rest (peace) throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort (exhortation) of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied” (Acts 9:31). Amid opposition and persecution the Gospel spread, the saints were scattered to other regions and assemblies were planted. The Gospel triumphed over temple ritual, national prejudices, Jewish legalists, heathen religions even unto the pagan city of Rome. God’s mind is outreach, increase and advancement.

ORDER

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over (in) the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Everywhere the apostles sought to establish church order. Godly overseers are still one of the outstanding needs among the assemblies. We must have moral and doctrinal unity and order within the assembly if we are to advance in the blessing of the Gospel without in the locality.

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Altars, Wells and Pillars

- Why are we in dwindling numbers today?
- Why do we lack power in our testimony?
- What is lacking among the people of God?
- Why aren’t souls saved today?
- What are the possible reasons why future generations do not continue?

“By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Hebrews 11:8).

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (Hebrews 11:9).

Here is a family that was marked by distinct features of a godly home and legacy. The above verses suggest that Abraham lived to see Jacob and Esau until they were 15 years old. In fact Terah lived to see Isaac till he was 35 years old. The above verses give us a clue as to how this family enjoyed a godly legacy. They were people like us but each having been made distinct with:

Abraham – Altars – Blessing (“I will bless thee... and thou shalt be a blessing”)

Isaac – Wells – Prosperous

Jacob – Pillars

Joseph – Garments

ABRAHAM – ALTARS

Altar of Grace and Election (Gen. 12:7)

- Gen. 15:1 – “The Word of the LORD came unto Abram”
- Acts 7:2 – “The God of Glory appeared unto ... Abraham”
- Gen. 12:7 – “The LORD appeared unto Abram”
 - In all these verses we see that the Word of God, The Glory of God and the presence of God was revealed unto Abram.
 - While the Ur of the Chaldea was prosperous with their inventions and idolatry, Abram was called “out”. We read “Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him”.
 - Abram acted on the word of God and “obeyed” and “The LORD appeared unto him”, there he builded an altar unto the Lord.

Altar of Consecration (Gen. 12:8)

- Here was another move, but Abram builded an altar and called upon the name of the Lord.
- Marked by dependence on every step.

Altar of Vision and Dependence (Gen. 13:18)

- The error in Egypt and thus the failure of testimony.
- The departure of Lot unto Sodom.

Altar of Worship (Gen. 22:9)

- This altar is a picture of the Work of Christ and His resurrection.
- Here Abraham was hasty and moved quickly to obey the word of God.
- Believed that God would raise Isaac back alive.

In the NT we do have 4 altars mentioned in connection with a believer's testimony:

1) Altar of Consecration

(Romans 12:1) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

2) Altar of being involved in the Gospel Work

(Phil. 2:17) “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.”

3) **Altar of spending your resources for the Gospel Work**

(Phil. 4:18) "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God."

4) **Altar of best results Godward**

(1Peter 2:5) "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

ISAAC – WELLS

(Gen. 24:62, 25:11) – Well of Lahairoi

(Gen. 26:17,18) – Well of Gerar

(Gen. 26:19,20) – Well of strive

(Gen. 26:25) – Well of blessing

Points to remind ourselves:

- Each well was associated with a place.
- Each well endured opposition.
- Each well brought prosperity to that place.
- Each well prospered the worker, house, wealth and everything.

What could "Wells" mean to us today?

- (Isa. 12:3) "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."
- In the New Testament we have at least four different words /methods used for the vocal communication of "Gospel" truth:
 - In John 5 – it is instruction, a "One to One" form of declaration of Gospel doctrine.
 - (Acts 8:4) "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."
 - (Acts 8:40) "But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea."
 - The word "preaching" here denotes "to tell the word everywhere" similar to "gossiped" in our day.
 - (Acts 8:5) "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."
 - The word "preached" here denotes "a town crier" or "herald"
 - (Acts 8:35-38) "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus ... and the eunuch said ... And Philip said ..."
 - Here the word "preached" is to declare or show the glad tidings as in vv 8,40, but is then followed by a series of "Questions & Answers" between Philip and the Eunuch.

JACOB – PILLARS

1) (Gen. 28:18) "And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it."

(Gen. 28:22) "And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

2) (Gen. 31:13) "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred."

(Gen. 31:45) "And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar."

3) (Gen. 35:14) "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon."

4) (Gen. 35:20) "And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day."

NT Application

(1Tim. 3:15) "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

a) Continue in Them

(1Tim. 4:16) "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

(2Tim 3:14) "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;"

b) Hold Fast

(2Thess. 2:15) "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

(2Tim. 1:13) "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

c) Endure

(2Tim. 2:3) "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

(2Tim 2:10) "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

(2Tim 4:3) "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

(2Tim 4:5) "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

d) Always Abounding

(1Cor. 15:58) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

So beloved, in concluding we must introspect our hearts and seek to be faithful today; we are living in times of dwindling numbers and decline of Christianity today but if we hold fast and continue in maintaining our Altars, Wells and Pillars in our lives we will be able to witness to our generation and beyond.

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MISINTERPRETED TEXTS

2Timothy 2:12 – "If we deny Him, He also will deny us"

This text has been used to teach apostasy, absence of faith and even the possibility of losing our salvation.

The context is the prospect of "eternal glory" (v10), in contrast to present temporal sufferings. Some may suffer even to the extent of physical death (v11). Not all will be martyred but all believers will be called to suffer. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (v12). However, amid suffering it is possible that we may

deny Him (as Peter denied Him), disown Him, “are unfaithful to Him” (JND). Thus denied His rightful place, His claims upon our lives, then at the Judgement Seat of Christ, He will disown such lives, He will deny us reward, we shall suffer loss of blessing. “He shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved” (1Cor. 3:15).

“If we believe not” (lack of fidelity). This involves unfaithfulness in suffering but it is not absence of saving faith or apostasy. “Yet He (emphasis) abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (v13). This is a warning. He is faithful to Himself. He acts in keeping with His character and nature.

Therefore in the context, while this is a warning to us who deny Him, it is also an encouragement to those who, “endure hardness, as a good (noble, will not shrink back) soldier of Jesus Christ” (v3).

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:
(1Peter 1:7)

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Get to Know Your Bible

OLD TESTAMENT OUTLINE

The Prophetical Books (Continued)

Joel is the book of the Holy Spirit – In chapter 2:28-29 we read of God saying “I will pour out My Spirit” which will take place in the Day of the Lord. While this awaits its final fulfilment it has had a measure or partial fulfilment as shown in Acts 2. So God has poured out His Spirit on all who believe – they have received the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). We are indwelt by the Spirit and we have within us the power of the Spirit of God to enable us to live a spiritual life for the glory of God. So Joel would remind us that we should know the fullness of the Spirit day by day and that by the Spirit we should bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Amos is the book of harmony with God – in chapter 3:3 he asks “can two walk together, except they be agreed?” – So all through Amos God is seeking to bring the people into harmony with Him. Well, God wants us to be in harmony with Himself. He wants us to walk in fellowship with Him – our lives conforming to the likeness of Christ. Amos would tell us of the necessity of harmony with God. Amos tells us of the deliverance of Israel from their enemies but speaks in figure of only a part (Ch. 3:12) – only a part of the nation, only a remnant was delivered. However, God wants us to be delivered fully from our enemies (the world, the flesh and the devil) that we might live wholly for Him – that we might be entirely for Him, walking in harmony with Him.

Obadiah is the book of brotherly love. It is addressed to Edom the brother of Israel for Edom is identified with Esau and Israel with Jacob. Obadiah tells Edom that they exercised unbrotherly conduct when they saw their brother Israel in distress and didn’t help them – when they saw Israel afflicted by enemies they cut off the route of escape and laughs at Israel’s calamity. God said He would punish Edom for their unbrotherly conduct. Thus Obadiah would teach us the lesson of brotherly love – never rejoice in our brother’s calamity – never be glad at our brother’s sorrow – ever seek to help our brother in distress – always be a comfort and an encouragement to fellow believers – see Romans 12:10,15.

Jonah is the book of love to strangers. Jonah was sent to Nineveh the capital city of Assyria to warn them of judgement and to preach repentance but Jonah didn't want to go. He found a ship and fled down to Tarshish, fleeing from the work of the Lord. After the Lord had taken dealings with Jonah he goes to preach to the people of Nineveh but when God spared the people we find Jonah sulking and displeased. Jonah would teach us that we should have a love for those who are strangers to salvation – to those who are heading for judgement – there should be prayer for all and preaching to all because there is provision for all (1 Timothy 2). Oh that we might have a love for those who are strangers to God's grace.

Micah is the book of consistency – he tells Israel that although they were bringing their sacrifices and offerings their lives were not right for their lives were not in keeping with the sacrifices so their sacrifices were not acceptable to God. Micah says in chapter 6:8 that the Lord required of them “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly” with their God. We might regularly attend the meetings and be active in the work of God yet our lives are not consistent with that – we need to heed the lesson of Micah and have real sincerity and be marked by consistency of life.

Nahum is a book of judgement – he speaks of the judgement of Nineveh. Now when Jonah went and preached to Nineveh they repented but alas they soon settled into sin again. About 200 years after Jonah's time Nineveh was destroyed. Nahum prophesied about the judgement of Nineveh but blessed be God he also prophesied of good tidings and the publishing of peace (Ch. 1:15). This verse is quoted in Romans 10:15 telling us that for all who believe in Christ there is salvation. Thus Nahum teaches us that although there is judgement for the ungodly there will be salvation for all who trust Christ and the Lord will dwell in their midst. Although Nahum is a book of judgement it is also a book of security for those who believe.

Habakkuk is a book of justification. He has a great problem because he knows God is going to judge His people bringing the Chaldeans down upon Judah because of their sins. The problem is that the Chaldeans are more sinful than Judah. Then God says “The just shall live by his faith” (Ch. 2:4) – you may not understand or be able to enter into the dealings of God but know this that the just shall live by faith. These words are quoted three times in the New Testament (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). Habakkuk would teach us that whatever the problems or difficulties God knows those who are right before Him.

Zephaniah tells us of God's delight in His people; he tells us that God will rejoice over them, He will joy over them with singing and He rests in His love (Ch. 3:17). It is wonderful to know that we who are saved by grace, cleansed by precious blood and born of the Spirit are the people in whom the Lord delights that we are loved of Him – loved with everlasting love, led by grace that love to know. Zephaniah teaches us that we are the Lord's delight.

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi all spoke after the return from Babylon.

Haggai tells the returned remnant that they were building for themselves but neglecting the House of God. Thus his message to us today is that we can go in for material things and neglect the things of God – we can be occupied with the things of this life while neglecting spiritual things – we can be energetic in earthly pursuits and neglect the house of God, the local assembly. Oh what an important message that the Lord's interests, spiritual things, should be placed first – that we should seek to enrich the Lord first – “seek ye first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). Six times Haggai repeats “consider” which means in the Hebrew “set your hearts” – he is seeking to stir up the hearts of Judah that they put the Lord's interests before their own – it is a book of rebuke for the neglect of the things of the Lord. Thus Haggai's message to us is to put the Lord and the Lord's things first in our lives.

Zechariah is a book of vision. In the first six chapters he deals with nine visions he received in one night. Then in the next eight chapters he seeks to interpret the visions. He speaks to two individuals – Joshua, the high priest (Ch. 3) and Zerubbabel (Ch. 4) and the message to them is to be encouraged, to trust in the Lord. They are seeking to rebuild the temple and God says you will rebuild it and “bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying grace, grace” (Ch. 4:7). The grace of God will help us in all our work for Him. However, the secret is unfolded in chapter 4:6 “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD

of hosts". The message of Zechariah to us is that whatever work we are engaged in for the Lord we must trust in the Lord, we must lean upon Him and not be faint hearted and by the power of the Spirit we will accomplish that work. His grace is sufficient for us and the Spirit's power is available to us.

Malachi is the book of the messenger – the meaning of Malachi is "My Messenger". He speaks of John the Baptist as a messenger, he speaks of our Lord as a messenger and he speaks of Elijah as a messenger and his book is the last message of the Old Testament to the people of God. He tells them that they are giving to God only their second best or what they don't want and what was not in keeping with the word of God, the law (the torn and the lame and the sick – Ch. 1:13). They were offering to God what would not be acceptable to the Governor.

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"PAUL'S METAPHORS"

(7) ATTIRE : THE CLOTHES

To illustrate the deep profound doctrinal teachings of Paul's Epistles, he often took simple practical metaphors from every day life. In his inspired writings we learn from the illustrations drawn from different types of clothing. Among Jews, Greek, Barbarian, bond and free he would have seen many different forms of Attire.

The Scriptures speak of God Himself as; "Clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment" (Psa. 104:1-2). God has suitably clothed creation. "If God so clothe the grass of the field" (Matt. 6:30). God clothes the countryside in richness and beauty, more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory. Even in winter, creation is not unclothed but carpeted in vestures of brown, green and purple. These beautiful blendings are not in outrageous colours giving a shocking glare. The verdant green of the fields, hedges, trees and shrubs reflect the handiwork of an all wise Creator. The brilliance of the nocturnal sky reveal the "Glory of the celestial" (1Cor. 15:39-41). The beasts, birds and fish all have suitable attire, described by Paul as the "Glory of the terrestrial" (1Cor. 15:39-41). Each little animal has its own milliner. The wardrobes of the birds provide their beautiful plumage. Membranes of scales suitably clothe the fish for their environment. Nature distinguishes male and female and teaches us humans not to negate this law of creation visually or orally.

It is interesting to see that Saul of Tarsus himself is first introduced in the Bible as associated with clothes. "Witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul" (Acts 7:58). The stoning of Stephen painfully pricked the conscience of the proud young Pharisee (Acts 9:5). In the Epistles penned by Paul we learn about clothes we are to "put off", and garments we should "put on".

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation (manner of life) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22). We are to strip off the old sinful pre conversion person, that is all that we were as a result of the Fall. The 'old man' is the man in Adam before we got saved, who is to be crucified and put to death. The 'old man' is not the flesh or the old nature which we still have to restrain. "And that ye put on (wear) the new man, which after (according to) God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). Having become "new" in Christ we are to be individually clothed in practical righteous actions and purity in harmony with God's will. Evidence of this is, "Putting away (having laid aside) lying" (falsehood) as an old filthy garment – (Eph. 4:25). This was the first trouble in the church. "Thou hast not lied unto me, but unto God" (Acts 5:4).

"But now ye also put off (cast aside these garments once and for all) all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication" (Col. 3:8). These are the clothes of the old man. These garments are

defiled, antiquated and useless. “And have put on the new man” (Col. 3:10). We are to be clothed in the new creation of which Christ is the Head and is manifest by the beautiful garments of likeness to Christ.

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Rom. 13:12). It is not appropriate to wear night clothes in the day time. We are to put off the night clothes of moral darkness and put on soldiers day attire. In view of the day of the Lord’s return, we are left as light in the darkness, as reflecting His beauty in the battlefield of abomination.

What are the garments which we are to “put on”?

The wardrobe of the new man is given in (Col. 3:12-13). “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” These are seven items of beautiful apparel. The more these garments are worn the better they fit. We can continually wear these clothes knowing that they will not wear out.

When we look into the mirror of godliness, how do we look? Do we show a heart of compassion; goodness; disposition to benefit others; lowliness; give honour to others; decline to assert ones rights but rather suffer personal injury; refuse to retaliate under provocation; holding back from encounter; personal wrong completely cancelled, free from complaint and fault finding, reflect the Spirit of Christ? “And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the (uniting) bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14). Love is the girdle that draws the vesture together into the oneness of maturity and unity and is the denial of any class system among the people of God.

In these Papers we have already considered the battle in these times of conflict and the necessity to put on the whole armour of God. Suffice then to quote (1Thess. 5:8) “Putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath (to go through tribulation wrath), but to obtain salvation (by the rapture, from the very presence of sin) by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Thess. 5:8-9).

As the Bride of the Lamb, we will wear garments of white linen, clean and white. Meantime, dear child of God, let us lay aside the garments of the flesh, and let us; “Put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

“When I stand before Thy throne
Dressed in beauties not mine own;
When I see Thee as Thou art -
Love Thee with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe”.

R. Murry McCheyne (1819-1843)

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The Servant of God

“Ye shall be witnesses unto Me” (Acts 1:8)

True Characteristics of a Servant

The word of God calls a servant of God by various names, which would clearly indicate what exactly God expects of him. They are as follows:

1. A Witness (Acts 1:8): He is like the man who was told to “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how

great things the Lord hath done for thee.” (Mark 5:19) – to simply tell others what God has done for his own soul, which would bear evidence of the truth and the genuineness of what he is preaching. Witnessing is telling about what one has heard, seen and experienced.

2. A Speaker (1Pet. 4:11): As a speaker his message should be distinct (Neh. 8:8), sound (Titus 2:8), and bold (Eph. 6:19).
3. A Preacher (Rom. 10:14,15): To “preach” means to “herald” and declare. His work is but to *proclaim the message* not of his own, but that of God who has called him.
4. A Fisherman (Matt. 4:18-22): The servant of God should go in search of people and seek to *win them for Christ*. He should not seek social advancement, monetary benefit or worldly gain.
5. A Labourer (1Cor. 3:9): It should be noted that the servant has to labour hard. His job is not an *easy* or a *soft* one. His work demands his whole body, soul and mind. He has to be in His service constantly, prepared to do *any job* and at *any time* (Luke 17:7,8).
6. A Minister (1Cor. 4:1): This means “servant” (2Cor. 4:5) which would imply MINUS (under) STER (men), that is, *an underling*, a worker inferior in rank.
7. A Teacher (Matt. 28:20): It is important that his teaching is consistent with his practical life. What he practises should form the core of his teaching, even as our Lord has set the example, “All that Jesus began both to *do* and *teach*” (Acts 1:1).
8. An Affirmer (Titus 3:8): This would mean that he is to *maintain* and *affirm* the things he is preaching. He must possess strong conviction about Biblical truths and the doctrines he stands for, and must preach them emphatically and as of absolute necessity.
9. An Exhorter (Rom. 12:8): He should be capable of exhorting and admonishing others with love, and leading them to obey God and His word.
10. A Builder (1Cor. 3:9-15): Care must be taken that the building is established upon the *one* sure foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ. We should never forget that this work of building-up will one day be tested by fire.
11. A “Nothing” (1Cor. 3:7): A worker must realize what he is, and what his position is, as he does his job of planting or watering. He should be humble, in order to be a useful vessel in His Master’s service.
12. A Christ Exalter (Col. 1:18): Christ and Christ alone should be exalted in his *life* and in his *service*. As John the Baptist confessed he must be able to say truthfully, “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30).

God’s great commission, the Magna Carta of Christian ministry, of evangelizing the world is seen in Matthew 28:18-20:

“All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

In Luke 7:1-10 we read the story of the Roman centurion who realized that his power lay in the fact of his being in authority (see verse 8). He knew that the soldiers obeyed him because at his command were the soldiers of the Roman Empire and the authority of Caesar himself. His great faith lay in realizing that Christ also was a Man under authority of God – and on that account, He had but to say the word “GO” and the dreaded enemy Satan, through whom death came in, would flee and the servant would live for Christ’s service.

We are all men and woman having some kind of authority in our workplaces. Yes, it is true that Christ has said, “As My Father has sent Me, *even so* send I you” (John 20:21). Christ Himself is *with us*, when He gives the command “*go*”; He is all powerful, and we go with His given authority. Let us therefore, take courage and go forth into the world in His strength and authority, which is our mighty armour. There is *authority*, *power* and *strength* in His Great Commission, when He commands us to “*go*”.

A Life Mission

When one gets this call of God to “*go*”, he must be obedient to His call to serve. In this respect, the apostle Paul is a good example for us all. When the Lord Jesus Christ met him on the road to Damascus, and chose him as a fit *vessel* to take the glad tidings to the Gentile world, he says that he “conferred not with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:6), but immediately obeyed, submitting himself to God (Acts 26:19). His whole-hearted willingness is expressed in his words “Lord, what wilt thou have me to *do*” (Acts 9:6). Fulfilling the will of God for him, and completing the work entrusted to him became his “life mission”. He never looked back, but constantly pushed forward, amidst oppositions and persecutions, and finally was able to confess, “I have *fought* a good fight. I have *finished* my course, I have *kept* the faith” (2Timothy 4:7).

So, also, should everyone who has received the call of God, be obedient and follow Him as was said about Peter and the others “They *forsook* all, and *followed Him*” (Luke 5:11).

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Bible Colleges

"The gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11-12)

Bible Colleges are normally associated with the need to provide teaching and training for the teachers of the future in the organisations which they represent. We appreciate that there are Colleges and Institutes, where men have devoted their lives to the study of the word of God. They set a high standard of Biblical scholarship and exposition, which is exemplary and has been a blessing to many students of Scripture. However, they are institutions which can be limited by the denominational background of the teachers and the predominance of views which limit or even misrepresent the teaching of Scripture.

We must not overlook the fact that Bible Colleges are training students for a vocation as a ministerial class, which is contrary to the mind of God. We must also remember that courses at Bible Colleges lead to a qualification, which is not only recognised but required by those who teach the Scriptures. This leads to a distinctive, separate, ministerial class, which excludes those who do not possess the required qualification. Clerisy has been described as ‘the dispensational sin against the Holy Spirit’, because human authorisation of a ministerial class is a denial of the truth that it is the sole prerogative of the Holy Spirit to bestow and direct the exercise of spiritual gift. Spiritual gift is bestowed by God (Romans 12:3-8; 1Corinthians 12:28-31); by Christ, as the risen and exalted Head of the Church (Ephesians 4:7-16); and by the Holy Spirit, who is also in sovereign control of its exercise (1Corinthians 12:4-11). It does not require human authorisation but recognition.

The conversion and commission of the apostle Paul is unique in many respects. However, it does provide us with a pattern for service, which is extremely relevant to the question of authorisation of service and our spiritual education. The opening chapter of the epistle to the Galatians places considerable emphasis upon the Divine source of Paul’s ministry and its message. It has established principles which are of fundamental importance. W.Trew writes concerning Paul’s appointment to service “*by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.*”

‘In Galatians 1:1, “Jesus Christ” is mentioned before “God the Father”. Here it is to emphasise that absolute authority is in His hand, as raised from the dead, and that appointment to service in relation to the present administration of God is His prerogative. It is very evident that this cuts at the very roots of the principle of human ordination so essential to clerisy.’

‘Fully conscious of his Divine call and commission, Paul had no need to refer to men in authority that he might receive credentials from their hands further to accredit or authorise him. ... For any man or body of men to claim the right to licence, and so to authorise the use of spiritual gift that the risen Lord has given, is an intrusion upon the sovereign rights of Christ, the only Head of the Church.’

F.W.Grant writes, ‘As we think of the character of Christianity, it is plain how fully the Divine call and commission are characteristic of its ministry. ... The gift is from God alone. The possession of the God-given gift carries with it the responsibility and Divine commission to use the gift that God has given, in the sphere that God appoints. To accept human ordination or authorisation of it would only be to dishonour the glorious Giver.’

In Galatians chapter 1, Paul wrote that after his conversion, *“immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem ...”* Paul’s time in Arabia answered to Moses’ forty years at the backside of the desert, when two thirds of his life was over before he received the call to lead Israel. It answered to David’s period in the wilderness, when he was hunted by Saul like *“a partridge in the mountains.”* Every servant needs a comparable period when they have more to do with God than with men.

When Paul left Arabia, he returned to Damascus, where he had been converted. During his visit to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, Greek speaking Jews *“went about to slay him, Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus”*, where he was born and brought up. He *“came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,”* where he served for about six or seven years before Barnabas brought him to Antioch and *“a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people.”* When he was commended to the work (Acts 13:2,3), Barnabas was the senior man at the commencement of their service together.

Paul served locally and with an older man, before he was led into his distinctive service as the apostle to the Gentiles. Joshua was *“Moses’ minister”* (Joshua 1:1; Exodus 24:13), before he led the people in the conquest of the land. Elijah’s mantle fell upon Elisha, *“Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him”* (1Kings 19:21). Barnabas and Paul had *“John [Mark] to their minister.”* When the apostle Paul commenced his second missionary journey, he came to Derbe and Lystra, where he found Timothy, who was *“well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him”* (Acts 16:2,3). Here is another important aspect of a servant’s education and training, where he first learns to serve in the company of older men. This is an education which no Bible College can provide.

Bible Colleges usurp the unique position of the assembly, as the place where it is the responsibility of overseers, teachers and shepherds, to teach the Scriptures and communicate its truths to the people of God and the next generation. There is special emphasis placed upon the need to commit an outline of apostolic teaching to *“faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”* (2Timothy 2:2). The assembly is also the sphere where there is liberty for spiritual gift to be exercised and developed and where the truth is not only taught but can be practiced in the reality of assembly life. No Bible College course or curriculum can be a substitute for the real thing.

In the New Testament it is the assembly, which is the spiritual university, where careful, systematic, positive instruction should meet the highest standards. Overseers are responsible to see that Divine order is maintained and that the Holy Spirit is able to direct spiritual exercise and develop spiritual gift. Sadly, this is frequently lacking but it does not alter the truth of what the Scriptures teach.

The serious purpose and standards of Bible study at Bible Colleges and Institutes is a challenge to all who take the place of leadership as teachers in the churches of God and to younger men, who must be prepared to devote as much time as possible to the study of the Scriptures over a considerable period, as part of preparation for service. This is a challenge that leaves us with no room for complacency.

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The Divine Glories of Christ

In Hebrews 1.

The Son – In whom God speaks to all
The Universal Heir – Possessing all
The Creator of Worlds – Forming all
The Effulgence of God’s Glory – Declaring all
The Image of God’s Person – Manifesting all
The Upholder of Worlds – Sustaining all
The Purger of Sins – Putting away all

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Assurance

Only one basis exists for absolute assurance in any matter, and that is the Word of God. This is the only reliable, infallible, unalterable foundation for confidence in a world marked by uncertainty and change, and full of the lies of the great deceiver of men’s souls, the devil. “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).

1. Assurance of Salvation

The Word of God is clear and positive in its teaching that the only ground upon which God can save any person on earth is the perfect atoning work of the perfect sinless Saviour, whom He sent into the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, His only Son.

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1Cor. 3:11).

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation” (Isaiah 28:16).

“The foundation of God standeth sure” (2Tim. 2:19).

The weakest faith that builds upon this foundation brings the soul into an unshakeable position of security, for this foundation is “sure”, and all who build by faith upon it are given the absolute divine assurance that “He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded” (1Peter 2:6). The righteous work of Christ is the divine basis of salvation, and the Word of God is the divine basis of assurance of salvation, bringing the believer into the peace of God by its definite and categorical promises. Even the “simple” believer, resting humbly upon its promises, is made not only “wise” unto salvation, but “sure” of salvation.

“The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isaiah 32:17)

And yet a large section of Christendom firmly believes that it is presumption for anyone to say he is saved. This is largely the result of the false idea that salvation depends upon our own worthiness and works, so that we must wait until the day of judgement to know if we are good enough to go to heaven. This heathen notion, though common throughout Christendom, is diametrically opposed to the Word of God which says, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8,9) Many others who do not believe in the eternal security of the true believer in Christ, misapply such Scriptures as, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matt.

24:13), and teach that unless a believer perseveres and remains faithful to the end of his life, he will be lost eternally.

The Word of God is clear that we can neither save ourselves nor keep ourselves, but that the One who saves is the One who keeps to the end. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost (right through to the end) that come unto God by Him" (Heb. 7:25). God has entrusted all His people to Christ, and it is no longer a question of whether we can lose ourselves or not, but rather whether He can lose us or not. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:39,40). Our security and eternal salvation do not depend upon our faithfulness but upon His, not upon our power but upon His.

"Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me" (John 17:11).

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

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2Tim. 1:12).

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform (perfect) it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

To build our hopes of salvation upon our own efforts or merits is to build upon a foundation of sand and to rob our souls of any possibility of assurance of heart or peace of mind in the matter. We can never make real progress in the Christian life until we are enabled to believe what God says, and to "know that we have passed from death unto life" (1John 3:14).

2. Assurance in Supplication

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1John 3:18-23).

Confidence (or freedom of speech) in prayer depends upon the assurance in our hearts that we are of the truth, that we are God's genuine children through faith in His word, so that peace reigns in the conscience as to our true spiritual standing before God. Once we have the joy in our souls that we are God's children we can come to Him freely in prayer, as to a loving Father in heaven, knowing that He delights to hear and answer the cries of His children (Matt. 7:9-11). When in all our ways we are marked by obedience and a desire to please Him, we will be careful to see that our prayers are according to His will (John 15:7; James 5:16; 1Peter 3:10-12).

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life... And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1John 5:13-15).

But God would have us to enjoy divine assurance, not only in our salvation and in our supplications to Him, but also in our service towards men.

3. Assurance in Service

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost (Spirit), and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake" (1Thess. 1:5).

These early servants of Christ were completely confident in their ministry, their mission and their message;

and their confidence was in good measure the secret of their Holy Spirit power.

There are many different ministries (services), and these are appointed to individual believers by the Lord Himself (Matt. 25:14,15,19; Romans 12:1-8; 1Cor. 12). For each ministry He gives the needful gift or ability. What each believer needs to do is to seek to determine what gift the Lord has given and what service He has appointed. His prayer must be, not, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" (John 21:21), but rather, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). And having learned what the Lord would have him do, not what he would like to do himself, or what others would have him do, he must regard the task as a sacred divine trust. "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col. 4:17).

But not only do we need to know what ministry the Lord has given to us, we need clear guidance as to where and when and how to fulfil it. "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not... we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them" (Acts 16:6-10). In these days of complete revelation we may not expect special visions for guidance, but in one way or another, negatively and positively, by shutting doors and opening doors, the Lord by His Spirit and His Word would seek to give His servants the assurance of His will (Romans 1:10; 15:29,32) . As to the message, the Lord's messenger will need to be certain that it is the Lord's message that he carries (Haggai 1:13; 1Thess. 2:2-4,13).

This assurance that the message is of God and his present mission is of God will give the servant confidence in the power of God to bless His own word, and will preserve him from the introduction of unseemly means and methods in his service (1Cor. 1:17; 2Cor. 2:17; 4:1,2; 10:3-5).

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1Cor. 15:58).

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Help for Young Believers

(1) Love for the Word of God

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart:" (Jeremiah 15:16)

All godly people rejoice to see newly saved persons feasting upon the Word of God. Hunger is normal to the newly born, and as the infant cries out for nourishment, and by it grows and develops daily, so those who are born again cry out for their spiritual food. Where this normal tendency is lacking, there is reason to doubt if there has been a genuine conversion to God.

The reasons for this appetite for the Word are varied. The newly born soul is in love with Christ. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1John 4:19). When a man or woman discovers from the Word that Christ suffered the judgment of his or her sins on Calvary, that He died to save them from hell, they desire to know more about Him, and for that, they turn to the Word.

Another reason for this hunger is their desire to know the will of God so that they may do it, and not that which would displease the One he or she now owns as Lord and Master. They will soon learn that they should be buried in the waters of baptism, as the Lord commanded, giving testimony to faith in Christ and death to the world. If they are favoured by having the example and counsel of some who have themselves learned God's ways, they will soon wish to be received into the fellowship of Christians who gather in scriptural simplicity unto their Lord Jesus Christ, to remember His death for them. He or she replies to the

questions of their own heart, and to those of their friends, saying simply: “The Word of God has brought me here”.

The Word of God is the believer’s daily food. As did the Israelite in the wilderness, with the manna, so the young believer must in early Christian life develop the habit of gathering their daily portion. The earlier this is done each day the better. They see Christ in its every page, and their soul feeds upon Him and is strengthened through all the day. Their satisfaction is manifest to all, and they are able to speak to others of what they have been feeding upon. They fear to go out into an ungodly world without strengthening their soul with some word from God.

The Word of God is the Christian’s guide book. It is good to have the guidance and counsel of good men, who have confidence that what they counsel us to do is according to Scripture. However if we would be strong in the Lord, we must obtain personal convictions regarding what is right – we must place our own feet firmly upon the Word. Then we shall not say: “Brother So-and-So says this is the way”, but we shall affirm: “The Word of God teaches thus”.

Older people require nourishment as well as do children; so do older Christians need the Word of God to sustain their spiritual strength. Is it not too common for older believers to neglect the Word? We get to thinking we know a good deal about the Bible, and gradually neglect it. Those who do soon grow weak spiritually. Perhaps you say that you find less pleasure in it than formerly. If so, search your heart to see if in any matter you are disobedient to its message.

The Spirit of God applies the Word to our souls. Has He been grieved by our unwillingness to obey the Word? Have you sister, cut your hair, when He says it should be allowed to grow its natural length? (1Cor. 11:15). Do you adorn your body with worldly glitter, when He says: “modest apparel” (1Tim. 2:9). These outward things may seem unimportant, but they reveal the inward state of the soul. As you stand before the mirror, do you ask yourself: “Will this please the Lord?”

The prophets of old, who were men of definite conviction, said emphatically: “Thus saith the Lord”. Likewise our Lord spake with authority, and not as the scribes. Evidently they would say: “It seems to me: I presume,” while our Lord said: “I say unto you”. Let all those who would attempt to teach the Word of God to others avoid the use of such words of uncertainty, as: “I suppose, I guess,” and use rather: “God says,” or “It is clear from the Word of God”. This certainly requires a knowledge of the Scriptures and ability to quote them which is best acquired by a youthful mind.

The Lord increase daily our love for His holy inspired Word!

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Questions and Answers

Question: What is, “The hope of salvation?” (1Thess. 5:8)?

Answer: This does not mean that there should be any shadow of doubt about the eternal salvation which we possess through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and salvation from our sins through His finished work on the cross.

“Putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation”, is in “the times and the seasons” (v1), of conflict. The context is a military atmosphere. We are to be awake, aroused, as a sentry on guard duty, having put on the protective wear of “faith”, “love” and “hope”. These are protection against surprise. We are sustained in vigilance and courage. The enemy is the spirit of the age. The helmet is for the mind. We are to be intelligent as to the consummation of salvation from the coming day of judgement.

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Thess. 5:9). Salvation in this chapter is therefore deliverance from the coming wrath, the “Day of the Lord” (5:2), “sudden destruction” (5:3). The pre-tribulation rapture of the church will fulfil God’s sovereign purpose, the good pleasure of His will, to save us completely from His judgement upon this sinful world.

... What manner of entering in we had unto you, ...
how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living
and true God; And to wait for His Son from Heaven,
whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which
delivered us from the wrath to come.

(1Thessalonians 1:9,10)

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What must I do to be saved?...
Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ
and thou shalt be saved...

(Acts 16:30,31)

The above question and answer were drawn out in the most remarkable of circumstances within the ancient Roman colonial city of Philippi, in Macedonia. The jailor of the city prison, having received a charge against two men to retain them securely, had ***“thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks”***. Under Roman law, for a jailor to lose a prisoner meant certain death. Hence, wanting to guarantee his future wellbeing, this heartless man took such measures with these men, who had beforehand been stripped of their garments at the command of magistrates, and beaten until their backs were bleeding.

AND THEIR CRIME? They had gone to the city with others to proclaim the glorious gospel of Christ and seek the freedom of individuals captivated by the snares of the devil. One poor girl under Satanic influence had indeed been totally liberated from her demonic practises and bondage, but her exploiting masters, realising their means of base gain through her was gone, raised false charges against them, who without trial, received the treatment as detailed above.

However, not deterred by their sufferings, at midnight in the midst of the prison they prayed and sang praises to God. The response: an earthquake sent by the mighty God of heaven, which loosed the prisoners fetters and opened the prison’s doors. This awakened the sleeping jailor who, realising his predicament and fearing that his prisoners had fled, drew out his sword to kill himself.

What must I do to be Saved?

In the urgency of the situation, one of the two men, Paul by name, cried aloud to the jailor ***“do thyself no harm, for we are all here”*** which drew from the alarmed man the above response. This was clearly a heart cry concerning his spiritual wellbeing as his physical life was no longer in jeopardy. In reality, the jailor was the real prisoner that night who needed liberating, not from iron fetters, but from the penalty and power of his own sin. God in His mercy arranged the earthquake to convict him of his peril due to his sins and his need to escape a future judgment from Hell’s imprisonment and torment in darkness and solitude for ever.

Likewise, we all need to individually recognise that we too require a similar deliverance from those defiling things within – ***“evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies”***

(Matthew 15:19). The Lord Jesus Christ even warned those who wrongly claimed to be children of God, ***“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin”*** (John 8:34). Perhaps you too need a sharp alarm to awake you to the seriousness of your own sin and looming judgment for it.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved...

The reply of the servants of God to the jailor’s desperate question focuses on that needed hearts response that would seal his forgiveness and souls salvation – a placing of his total confidence in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus by faith alone to make him forever a child of the living God. Salvation is a gift to be received. This was a salvation that was equally available to all his household, family members and servants, if they too individually heeded and believed in their hearts.

Perhaps you do recognise your own failure but stumble at the false notion as so many, thinking it a matter of self effort to gain peace with God. This is not an infrequent attitude of people recorded in the Bible. Some once asked the eternal Son of God, ***“What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”*** His response was similar as given to the jailor, ***“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent”*** (John 6:28,29).

And they spake unto him the word of the Lord...

The record tells how these preachers consolidated their response by further enlightening this man and his household concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus, possibly by detailing the truth of His deity and incarnation, His sinless life and works of kindness and power. They certainly would have told of His sufferings, not only at the unjust hands of His enemies on a shameful Roman cross but also at the righteous hands of a holy God, as He offered Himself on that cross as the ultimate sacrifice for man’s sin ***“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed”*** (Isaiah 53:5). His death culminated in His bodily resurrection and exaltation to God’s right hand. This is why you also can and must trust Him.

That night, the jailor and many of his household were saved by faith alone in Christ. He underwent a total change of heart showing true repentance; he washed the preacher’s stripes and fed them. He proved the reality of his conversion and bore testimony to it by publicly identifying Himself with the living Christ by water baptism and probably became associated with the company of believers in Philippi.

This truly is God’s order: (i) **Salvation** of the soul by faith in Christ; (ii) **Baptism** as an act of identification with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; (iii) **Reception** into a local assembly of believers for worship and fellowship and growth and witness for Christ.

AND THE PREACHER’S? They were released and pursued their preaching mission with great boldness amid much hostility, in order to spread the glorious gospel to a perishing world. While all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ can likewise expect trials and afflictions of varying severity on earth, they can be assured of being safe in Christ and have no need to fear the future torment facing the lost.

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