

## PEACE – AND THE PRINCE OF THE PEACE

### CHRIST, OUR LEADER AND MODEL

“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6 NKJV). “He will be great” (Lk. 1:32).

The Prince of peace, our Lord Jesus Christ, is unique in several respects:

- (1) His coming to this earth;
- (2) His life, walk and public ministry;
- (3) His work accomplished at the cross, once and for all;
- (4) His present ministry in heaven;
- (5) His public and future ministry.

Let’s consider these five points in connection with the theme of peace.

#### Overview with Isaiah 9:6 as starting-point

As Prince of peace, Christ is our Leader and Finisher of the faith (Heb. 12:2). Compare: David and those who came to him for peace (1 Sam. 22:1-2; 1 Chron. 12:17-18).

Christ is Counsellor by excellence: He instructs, corrects and counsels (Rev. 3:14-22).

He is the “mighty God,” the God-Man (El-Gibbor): unsearchable mystery! Thus, in His strength and wisdom, He can and will accomplish God’s plans, bringing peace, now in our lives, later for Israel and for the whole earth.

He is the “Father of eternity” or “Father of the age” (the Millennium), but already He has introduced us into an intimate relationship of peace with His Father, who is our Father (Jn. 20:17).

#### (1) Christ is unique in His coming – His mission

Born of a virgin, He represents a new order of things, being “the second man” (Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15). He is called the Prince of peace, but also the King of peace (Heb. 7:2) and thus is really “in charge.” From His birth to His death, all was for God’s glory: glory, peace, good pleasure (Lk. 2:14; cf. Rom. 14:17, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit). Isaiah 9:6 summarizes it as follows:

- A Child is born to us - His humanity;

- A Son is given to us - His deity.

His name is “Marvellous”: what He is in Himself (the name expresses this), but also marvellous in His authority and in His official glory, in everything He is and does.

## (2) Christ is unique in His life and walk – His earthly ministry

He is our perfect Model, although rejected by men (Mt. 11:29-31). Compare Matthew 10:24 and Luke 6:40: “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.” Philippians 2:5-11 presents His stooping down or His humiliation (in seven points) and His following exaltation (also in seven points).

- v. 5 - His attitude, mindset, way of thinking (this is the resource we have in Jesus);
- v. 6 - in the form of God (from eternity in eternity);
- v. 7 - in the form of a bondman (ever since His coming).

Let’s note the links between:

- His submissiveness and obedience (Heb. 5:7; Ps. 40:7-8; Isa. 50:4-6; Ex. 21:5-6);
- His sacrifice (His work, see below);
- His supremacy (His reward: His present position and His public position in the Millennium).

Here are many lessons for us. While looking to the Lord Jesus, we can learn to count (to evaluate, to consider) the right way (the same Greek verb in the following references):

- To esteem others better than oneself (Phil. 2:3);
- Christ did not esteem it an object of robbery to be equal with God (2:6);
- Paul learned to evaluate (lit. count): on the road to Damascus (3:7); all his life afterwards (3:8, 2x); particularly in a real test, he counted it necessary to send Epaphroditus (2:25)

Do we recognize Christ as Prince and Ruler over all things? (cf. Joshua 5:14-15). Then we will be able to evaluate in the right manner, and this will contribute to practical peace.

### (3) Christ is unique in His work accomplished once and for all – His passion

Christ's person is marvellous, because His name is marvellous (Judg. 13:18). This includes His incarnation, "the Word became flesh" (Jn. 1:14), God and Man in one Person (cf. point No. 1).

Christ's work is marvellous (He acted in a marvellous way, Judg. 13:19); His entire earthly ministry was extraordinary, but especially His work on the cross.

God has glorified Him: He went up in glory, having received a marvellous position (cf. Judg. 13:20 and point # 4 below).

On the basis of His accomplished work and in virtue of His present position, we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him" (Isa. 53:5), and now "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). Because of this, God can tell us believers, "Grace and peace to you" (18 times in the NT).

### (4) Christ is unique in His present ministry – His heavenly ministry

All is based on His accomplished work on earth (3<sup>rd</sup> point). First, justice was satisfied: God's rights have been honoured and maintained, and then there is peace. "The work of righteousness will be the peace" (Isa. 32:17; cf. Ps. 85:10). Compare Melchisedec: king of righteousness, then king of Salem, that is, king of peace (Heb. 7:2). Christ **made** peace, He **is** our peace and He **announces** the good news of peace (Eph. 2:15, 17). Working from the glory, He uses His own on earth to communicate peace, to spread (to sow) it. Are we available for such a service? Because Christ, the One who made peace and who communicates it, is making us enjoy peace: "I leave peace with you, I give my peace to you" (Jn. 14:27). Notice the context of the upper room!

The kingdom of God, already now, is marked by righteousness, peace and joy (Rom. 14:17). The joy of communion is the topic of the epistle to the Philippians and it is the particular characteristic of the offering called sacrifice of prosperity or peace offering. Shalom (peace) means: what is complete, whole, perfect. God's present kingdom (1 Pet. 3:15; Rom. 14:17) is a foretaste of the future millennium, of the age to come (the millennial reign), pre-figured in the days of King Salomon, whose name means "pacific" (1 Kings 4:25).

Peace is the fruit of righteousness and it brings joy (Philippians). Furthermore, we think of the sevenfold fruit of wisdom (Jas. 3:17), in

connection with which it is said, “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (3:18). As to Christ’s future reign, the government<sup>1</sup> will be on His shoulder (Isa. 9:6). He will be King and Priest on His throne and the counsel of peace will be in between (Zech. 6:13). Thus, there will be an abundance of peace (Ps. 72:7; Jer. 33:6). This covenant of peace for days to come (Ez. 34:25; 37:26) is as it were foreshadowed in God’s heavenly people as they live in this world. But this practical realisation depends on the Prince of peace. All comes from Him, all will be for Him.

### The Prince of Peace – Represented in His disciples, in all the details of their lives

To demonstrate this peace, Christ is with His own (Emmanuel, Isa. 7:14, God with us, Mt. 1:23; cf. Mt. 28:20), so that they can go the way of peace (Lk. 1:79; Phil. 4:7, 9). The Lord Jesus wants to have us as His disciples, to represent Him in a world where He is rejected, being here as sons of peace (Lk. 10:6), showing Him forth in our daily walk, through the preparation of the gospel of peace (a part of God’s armour, containing seven parts, Eph. 6:15).

The unity of the Spirit should be kept by the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3), through the work of the Holy Spirit. But at the same time it is our responsibility (in seven points, vv. 2-3) to be diligent to keep this unity of the Spirit; harmony, unity and holiness are inseparably bound together with peace. These are privileges confided to our responsibility; if we are faithful in these things, we will realize again that our blessings come from the Prince of peace.

We should distinguish between “the peace of God” in our circumstances (Phil. 4:7) and the communion with “the God of peace,” who is with us (Phil. 4:9). “Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called sons of God” (Mt. 5:9). This peace-making is one of the nine qualities of Christ’s disciple! We represent our Lord here below by showing the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), Christ “reproduced” by the Spirit in us, in nine aspects, including peace. In God’s moral government and His ways with us, He produces, in His discipline, the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:11). Thus, it is the God of peace who works in us what is pleasing to Himself (Heb. 13:20).

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<sup>1</sup> This word is derived from the same root as the word *prince*.

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful” (Col. 3:15). Remember that it is the Prince of peace, the Lord of peace, who gives peace. “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way” (2 Thess. 3:16). Christ is included in the expression “God of peace” (7 times in the NT: Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20), working in us individually and collectively in the context of His assembly. Let us submit to the Prince of peace!

### Associated Topic – the Peace-offering

The peace offering (sometimes called “sacrifice of prosperity”) is linked with peace, communion and joy (see above). It had a central place in the life of God’s earthly people (Lev. 3 and 7). The application and explanation for the Christian are found especially in 1 Corinthians 10-11). In this sacrifice there was:

- a part for God and/or a part for Christ;
- a part for the one who sacrificed;
- a special part for the officiating priest, but also for his family and the Levites;
- a part for all those who were ritually pure & clean among God’s people.

This sacrifice is a beautiful illustration of the Lord’s Supper, with regard to peace with God, peace in the individual life of the worshipper, in the domestic circle and in the life of an assembly.

### Christ’s present position – a result of His work of peace

Let’s note seven points with regard to Christ’s present position in the glory:

- (1) “He who comes from above is **above** all” (Jn. 3:31).
- (2) He is above the splendour of the sun, “a light **above** the brightness of the sun” (Acts 26:13); He is higher than the greatest glory in nature.
- (3) “**Above** [1] every principality, [2] and authority, [3] and power, [4] and dominion, [5] and every name named, not only in this age, but also in that to come; [6] and has put all things under his feet, [7] and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly” (Eph. 1:21-22, numbers added).

- (4) “He that descended is the same who has also ascended up **above** all the heavens, that he might fill all things” (Eph. 4:10) [He is Head].
- (5) “Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is **above** every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father’s glory (Phil. 2:9-11). [He is Lord].
- (6) “Thou hast loved righteousness and hast hated lawlessness; therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with oil of gladness **above** thy companions” (Heb. 1:9).
- (7) “For such a high priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become **higher than** the heavens” (Heb. 7:26).

It is this marvellous Person who is interested in each of us and who wants to help us to walk in the way of peace.

#### (5) Christ is unique in His public ministry in the world to come – millennial reign

Christ’s public glory, to be demonstrated in the world to come, is a glory that believers know already (Heb. 2:9). When Saul of Tarsus was called by Christ glorified, he saw a light that passed the glory of the sun at the noon-hour, a light more vivid than the sun’s splendour (Acts 26:13). I suggest that the sun represents Christ’s glory in His public ministry in the world to come. This is confirmed by passages like Malachi 4:2 (“And unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings”). However, Christ’s present and heavenly glory (that is going to subsist forever) is greater, like this bright light that Paul saw; this goes together with the 4<sup>th</sup> point concerning Christ’s present ministry. How great He is, our Prince of peace!

Alfred E. Bouter

## A Study of the First Epistle of John

### *Study 4. 3 Generations of the Children of God. 1 John 2:12-27*

In the first study the grouping of God's children into three different stages of growth was noted as being one of the very obvious threes in the epistle. Surprisingly, a vast number of well-known Christian teachers do not notice it. This introduction will firstly therefore show the grouping in outline form and then use an alternative outline to provide a basis to understand why many fail to notice John's true grouping.

#### Outline

I write to you children... (v.12)

- I write to you fathers... (v.13a)
- I write to you young men... (v.13b)
- I write to you little children... (v.13c)
  - I have written to you fathers... (v.14a)
  - I have written to you young men... (v.14b-17)
- Little children... (v.18-27)

Every believer is included in John's opening words to *children* (v.12). Then in verse 13 he indicates the three sub-groups of God's children to whom he is writing. In verses 14 onwards he expands on this further, increasing in volume as the maturity of his audience decreases.

#### An Alternative Outline

- I write to you children... (v.12)
- I write to you fathers... (v.13a)
- I write to you young men... (v.13b)
  - I have written to you little children... (v.13c)
  - I have written to you fathers... (v.14a)
- I have written to you young men... (v.14b)

This outline focuses on the two different tenses of the verb "to write". In many Greek manuscripts the tense changes in verse 13c – thus making 3 times "I write" and 3 times "I have written". Although this outline seems attractive in that it makes a nice little "poem" of verses 12-14, there are several reasons why it does not adequately fit with the structure and teaching of the chapter:

- It leaves the address to “little children” in v.18 without a connection.
- It does not seek to explain the differences between the words “children” (v.12) and “little children” (v.13c).
- It puts the sub-groups into a bizarre sequence, not having any intelligible moral or chronological order – children, fathers, young men.
- It relies on a disputed textual rendering of the tense of a verb rather than on the plain substance of the chapter.
- By virtue of all these things it generates in the minds of its adherents such confusion and diversity of thought that practical application and grasp of God’s thoughts becomes either difficult or impossible.

By dividing up the section based on the disputed tenses of the verbs, here are some examples of this diversity:

- “four states instead of three are here described: fathers... young men... little children... beloved children...” (A. Clarke)
- “...addressed in turn to ‘children’, ‘fathers’, ‘young men’...” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- “...John is not addressing three age groups: children, fathers, and young men. That sequence is rather unnatural. ... But if we take ‘children’ in a general sense, then John appeals to two groups: fathers and young men.” (S. Kistemaker)

What a muddle! Are there 4, 3 or 2 groups? By over-emphasising the esoteric (tenses of verbs and textual criticism), what is plainly apparent (three sub-groups of God’s children) becomes impossible for respected Bible teachers to see – beclouded and disguised in a haze of expository mumbo-jumbo!

As we progress with this study, be reminded that although the word of God is written so that it can only be apprehended by spiritual intelligence (1 Cor.2:12-16; 1 Peter 2:2; 2Peter 3:16) it does not require theological training or mastery of Greek texts to understand. It is accessible and explicable to every believer desiring thereby to enjoy fellowship with God and to obtain food and direction for life’s pathway here.



## Verse 12

### Children

The expression “children” designates every believer in the Lord Jesus. The children of God are characterised by:

- their sins are forgiven for His name’s sake
- they have a patron with the Father (2:1)
- they have received the Father’s love (3:1)
- they practise righteousness and love their brethren (3:10)

All these things are the true privileges of every believer irrespective of age or maturity. But for the moment, consider especially this wonderful privilege described here in verse 12 — your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake! Those to whom John wrote were precious to him, as indicated by the word he used to address them — but further, they were precious to God, as indicated by the fact that their sins were forgiven.

Whilst in the Greek language there is a clear distinction between the two different words for children in this chapter, an appropriate English translation is difficult. Both words are *diminutive* expressions – that is, they are derived from more formal words but have a suffix attached to change their character into something more affectionate and intimate. (In English there are many examples of words that are made diminutive by the addition of a suffix. For example: dear – dearie, kitten – kitty, etc.) Technically, both could be accurately translated “little children” — but this would fail to show the distinction between them. The first, *teknia*, emphasises relationship by birth; the second, *paidia*, emphasises that one is under the care, discipline, instruction, direction and responsibility of another. It is possible for a translation of these words to be technically correct and yet still inappropriate. An appropriate and helpful translation must clearly indicate that two distinct words are used. William Kelly’s translation, for example, achieves the task of both accuracy and appropriateness by using “dear children” and “little children” to distinguish the two. The translation by J.N.Darby makes the distinction by using “children” and “little children”.

All believers are children because they have been born again.

### Your sins are forgiven

This is an absolute fact true of every believer. John wrote because of this very reason — but having introduced various tests in the preceding

sections, it was necessary to emphasise this fact here. Recall that we dare not say that we have no sin, we must confess our sins, we dare not say that we have not committed sins, and if we sin we have a patron with the Father. But the position that is ours – for His name’s sake – is that our sins are forgiven.

Forgiveness (also translated *remission*) simply means “sending away”. The eternal consequences due to us because of our sins have been sent completely away. This is the position in which every believer stands. Of course, the consequences on earth due to us if we sin – including a break in fellowship with the Father – require confession on our part in order to be removed. It is important not to confuse these things.

Verses 13-14

Fathers

In literal terms it is likely that John is here addressing those who had personally known the Lord Jesus when He was here on earth — but the intent of what he says is much wider than that. As Christians mature, the issues and exercises that once concerned and occupied them become less important or significant. Christ Himself and knowing Him becomes the paramount concern. The apostle Paul used the expression, “that I may know Him...”

The Bible teacher F.B.Hole, towards the end of his life spoke of the many things that had engaged his attention as a young man, in contrast with his occupation as an old man — the simple things connected with Christ Himself. As a young man he had been involved in publishing and editing work for the blessing of many believers. As a young man he had written very helpful books on the doctrines that lie at the basis of a thorough grounding in the Christian faith — books you should have and read and treasure if it is your desire to come to a sound understanding of key New Testament doctrine — “Foundations of the Faith”, “Outlines of Truth” and “...”. But in his old age He said it was no longer these things that held his attention! The one thing John says about fathers – emphasised as important by repetition – is that they had known Him that was from the beginning.

The personal and intimate knowledge of Christ Himself is to be the ultimate goal of Christian growth.

Why did John virtually repeat what He said to the fathers? To emphasise its importance — but also to emphasise their constancy and stability. “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be constantly praising thee.” (Psalm 84:4). Think of the constancy of Anna the prophetess, “herself a widow up to eighty-four years; who did not depart from the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers...” (Luke 2:37). Constancy, stability, praise. These are the marks of fathers.

#### Young Men

“...have overcome the wicked one.” This has particular reference to overcoming his attempts to divert by false teaching. Verse 14 makes this apparent. Through the abiding word of God, young men have strength — and it by this means alone that they have any power to overcome the wicked one.

A distressing feature of these last days is the way in which many older in years, esteemed as fathers by those who are younger, fail with respect to overcoming the wicked one by refusing false teachings. The occupation of fathers with Christ — if genuine — will not dispense with the need to stand firm for the truth and against the wicked one! “Fathers”, “young men”, and “little children” are not descriptions of spiritual state but of maturity. True fathers do not dispense with or belittle what once characterised them as young men.

Do you aspire to be a young man? Then get the word of God into you. Don't merely memorise the words printed on the pages of your Bible (although this is a vital starting point), but exercise yourself to understand God's thoughts in giving those words. “Word” (logos) conveys not only the expression but the thought behind the expression — which may only be grasped by fully following up the teaching or doctrine. (Compare 1 Timothy 4:16.)

Are you a father? Then demonstrate it by your constant stability — not tossed about by every wind of doctrine. Maintain and uphold truth learned in communion with Christ.

#### Verses 15-17

But John has more to say to young men. By the abiding word of God young men may well overcome the wicked one's attempts to divert by

false teaching — but what about his attempts to divert by using the influences of the world of which he is the god? This is the particular snare to which John anticipates young men succumbing. His remedy is to thoroughly define it in order to expose what it is in its true character.

#### The world

Love not the world, nor the things in the world. If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing, and its lust, but he that does the will of God abides for eternity.

All that is in the world ... is of the world. It is not of the Father. What is the world? What are the things in the world? What does it mean that they are of the world? Young men especially but all believers generally are to take care not to love it or the things in it. We ought to take care, therefore, to know what these things mean.

“World” is used in various different ways in the New Testament. It is not a reference here to the persons who comprise the world – “for God so loved the world.” It is rather an organised system of things with an origin, motivating principle, and destiny in complete opposition to the love of the Father. In principle it began with the fall of man and was epitomised by Cain. He went out from the presence of God, took a wife, had a family, built a city, became the progenitor of urban and rural life, of entertainment, commerce and industry. It is not these things in themselves that constitute the world, but it is the systematised way in which they support and sustain life, and absorb energy and attention, in absolute separation from and without reference to God.

We are touched by or involved in all that Cain instituted daily. But are our thoughts, our habits, our conduct, our aspirations governed by it and by the principles that ensure success in it? This is the issue raised here by John.

“And when we look now at the principles and motives of the world, are they other than “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”? Do not pleasure, gain, vanity, ambition, govern men? I do not speak of exceptions, but of what characterises the world. When we speak of men rising in the world, getting on in the world, is it not ambition and gain

which are in question? Is there much difference in what Cain did in his city, and what men are now doing in theirs? If a Chinese, who had heard a missionary speak of Christ and Christianity, came to London to see what it was, would he find the mass of men, the world, governed by other motives than what governed the masses at Nankin [Nanjing], or Peking [Beijing], or Canton [Guangzhou]? Would they not be seeking gain, as he would have done there, or pleasure, as they do there, or power and honour, as they do there? What is the world in its motives? A system in which men seek honour one of another, and not the honour which cometh from God only.” (J.N. Darby, *What is the World?*)

I sit here reading these words en-route home from China. On every visit to that country I am struck with the blatant corruption in commerce, industry, society and politics – by the selfishness and lust for power. But is the western world any different? Is my natural heart any different?

Commerce, we are told, civilises. Education enlarges and improves the mind. Commerce does take away grossness and violence; but gain is its motive. Its earnest pursuit tends to destroy higher motives, and to make a moral estimate of value sink into money and selfishness. It has nowhere elevated the tone of society, but the contrary. It has not stopped wars; it has caused many. Commercial nations have, in general, been the least scrupulous, and the most grasping. Excuses may be formed; but none but a commercial people would make a war to sell opium. What has education done? It enlarges the mind. Be it so; of course it does. Does it change the motives which govern the heart? In no way. Men are more educated than they were; but what is the change? Is the influence of superstition really diminished? In no wise. On the contrary, the infidelity produced by dependence on man's mind has forced men, who are not personally established in divine truth, back into superstition, to find repose and a resting-place. One of the worst signs of the present day, and which is observable everywhere, is that deliverance from superstition and error is not now by means of positive truth; but that liberty of mind, sometimes called liberalism, which is bound by no truth, and knows no truth, but doubts all truth, is simply destructive. Go anywhere and everywhere, to India or England, Italy or

Russia, or America: deliverance from superstition is not by truth, but by disbelief of all known truth. (JND, Ibid.)

In modern society we look with disdain upon nations now using the gross methods once used by the western world to attain its present status. Commercial prosperity through drug traffic, slave labour, environmental irresponsibility etc. Did not these same methods characterise the western nations in their rise to present-day prosperity. Where would Britain and its allies be without the once lucrative enforced opium trade into China? Where the Americas without slavery? Where industry without the environmental and social irresponsibilities of the industrial revolution? Is the western world any better now? Are we any better now? By no means. All that is in the world is of the world. All that is in the world is summed up in but three moral principles – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. These have not changed and they never will.

All that is in the world

Notice again that all that is in the world is summed up by three moral principles originating in the human heart: the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. I get what I want, I want what I see, and I, I, I!

Satan tried to tempt the Lord Jesus with these three things but there was no sinful nature in Him to respond to the temptation. He had been in the wilderness in conditions of adversity. Adam and Eve in the garden were in conditions of favour and the tempter's three arrows hit their target every time. (These things have often been the subject of ministry and exposition and hence I do not address them here. If, after further meditation, you still desire clarification, please contact the editors.)

The characteristic snares of idolatry seen in the history of Israel also illustrate these three moral principles that are in the world and of the world. The worship of Astarte (whose images are translated "Asherahs" in the Darby translation, and "groves" in the KJV) – giving religious licence to sexual promiscuity or 'fertility'; the worship of Baal – as a means to increased material prosperity; the worship of Moloch – as a means to ascendancy over one's fellow. Pleasure, possessions and power.

We may say therefore that “the world” is that which is obtained by means of “the things in the world” – these moral principles rooted in the sinful human heart. The issue is not whether we have pleasure, power or possessions but whether we love it (them) and whether we are governed by these means of getting it (them). If so, the love of the Father is not in us. We may well have been the recipients of God’s love in His unspeakable gift, but it is not in us in a practical and experimental way – enjoyed in communion with Him.

The world is passing

The Lord Jesus did the will of God. How beautifully evident this was during the temptation in the wilderness. How supremely evident at the cross! “Lo, I come to do thy will.” We are to be governed by what is eternal and not by what is passing. This gives us another simple hint as to what the world is. As to any object before us we may ask, “Will it last?” Is it worth my time? Is it worth my energies? Dare I contravene the will of God in grasping after it?

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## FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL

Notes of an address by Ch. Brachotte on Mark 2 to 6  
Plumstead Conference 2002

Scriptures Read: 2:1-12, 17, 22; 3:1-5, 13-15, 20-22, 31-35; 4:1-4, 20, 22, 26-29, 35-41; 5:1-5, 15-17, 22-28, 35-40; 6:2-3, 7-11, 21-29, 34-38, 42-52; 7:1-3, 5-7, 17, 18, 24-35; 8:1-2, 4-21, 31-33, 38; 9:1-8, 14-23.

On Wednesday we saw some of the fundamental truths of Christianity. Today I would like to consider some fundamental points of the gospel and how God deals with men and with His disciples. I am not going to present the gospel - I hope that all of us here have salvation through Jesus Christ and can call Jesus Christ their Lord and Saviour - but I would like to look at these passages in the gospel of Mark as a direct message for all of us, even for believers, because we need to have a better understanding of the grace of God and how He is dealing with us.

In the first passage we read (Mark 2:1-12), the miracle of the man sick with the palsy who was lowered through the roof by four men, the Lord told him first, “Thy sins are forgiven thee” and then He healed him, but this was not the first action: it was a proof, an evidence, that He

had the power to forgive sins. This first passage introduces the fact that Jesus Christ came here, not only with a new doctrine, not only with a salvation for men, but Christianity is bringing in something totally new. This is also for us: all of us have to realise that we have not just a further doctrine, not just an improved doctrine over the previous ones, but we have new resources, a new source of efficient blessing and working of divine power whatever is our weakness and misery, and that all these effective blessings are closely connected with the true relation which should exist between us and our Lord and Saviour. This is very well summarised in 2:17 when Jesus said to them, "They that are strong have not need of a physician, but those who are ill. I have not come to call righteous men, but sinners." From this verse and from this healing of the man sick with the palsy, we have to realise that it is not simply an issue of the salvation of each of us, but the important matter is the new actual relationship that should exist between us and God the Father and the Lord Jesus. Let us ask us this question: Do we really feel that we have needs, that we do need the intervention, the action, the healing of our Lord and Saviour?

It is clear that the first need was how to get rid of the sins, how to get salvation, and it was not the issue of the physical health of this man sick with the palsy. For us also the first issue is not so much the health of our body, but the health, the condition, of our soul and spirit; our Lord has first of all this in mind. The key point in all this gospel, and what our Lord Jesus was presenting and which is new, is that He was not simply coming with a *teaching* or a *doctrine*, but He was coming with *power* and *might* and He was able to satisfy the need of the people. Furthermore, the people who were really getting the benefit of the intervention of our Lord were the people who *felt their need* and who were prepared to pray to the Lord to ask Him for a direct action, an intervention. We have to realise this; it is an important point.

In this room we are many different people; most likely the majority of us have had a Christian education, many of us have already heard of the Lord Jesus for our salvation, and due to this Christian education it might well be that for many of us there is, as for Job, a kind of hedge of protection, we have been in circumstances where Christian education has helped us in some ways. Now the question is: do we feel that we are better than other people? Are we relying on the hedge of protection which is around us? or do we feel like this person that we are sick and have a direct need of the Lord Jesus? This is a key point. Are we just happy with our life, or have we real needs that should be satisfied by the



Lord? We will see that this is a key point. In the Old Testament God was asking people to obey and to fulfil the law. Now with the gospel and with Christianity, there is today something completely new: it has been proved that it is impossible to fulfil the law, to satisfy the requirements of the law of God, and therefore God brought in His grace; the truth of God through Jesus Christ is now presented to men, and we have to realise that the grace of God is not simply presented to sinners for salvation, but we all need the grace of God all through our lives, day by day. We need *to live by the grace* of God satisfying all our needs. We have to have the attitude of these men, realising that they had no power; just as the man who was sick with the palsy, we are as those who realise they are sick and need a physician, and then the Lord is prepared to intervene, to act for us, to heal us and to give blessing. However, if we are just happy with our life, if we do not feel any special need, if we are happy that our parents have set up a hedge for our protection, then we will have no intervention of our Lord and Saviour in our lives. If we are in such a state of mind we do not know really what is the grace of God even if we are believers. Even as believers, we have to realise the complete and full need of the grace of God in all the details of our lives. It is not simply grace which forgives the sins, we have that in 2:22, “no one puts new wine into old skins; otherwise the wine bursts the skins, and the wine is poured out, and the skins will be destroyed; but new wine is to be put into new skins”, we have to realise that Christianity and the grace of God is like this new wine which has real power and which is not at all the same as just having to fulfil commandments as in the Old Testament. Real Christianity, the real Christian life which we have to live is a real, powerful life, not because we are better or because we have power, but because we realise that we have no strength, no might, as the man sick with the palsy, and that we rely completely on the grace of God for every action in our lives. This importance of the grace of God, even for believers, is not only to be understood, but we have to be intimately convinced of that and of the necessity to get the benefit of that throughout our whole life.

Another point which we see constantly during the various passages which we have read is that the grace of God is almost never stopped by anything. There is nevertheless one exception which we have seen in chapter 5 at the healing of the man with the unclean spirit whose name was Legion. There was an actual healing, but then the people asked Him to go out from the country, and He went out according to their demand. His power was no longer in action there. This spirit of unbelief always

slows down or stops the might of God; but even in this situation, the Lord Jesus went to another region where He continued His work for other people. This is very much encouraging, the grace of God is always willing to reach other people. Let *us* get the benefit of it. If we do not it will go to others, but the grace will certainly act in favour of men.

During the various passages we have read, it is impressive to see each time the Lord Jesus is doing something good, is healing, is giving blessing for men, then there is either unbelief or criticism of Him or violence against Him; sometimes it is just a despising of Him because He is just a carpenter, or the son of a carpenter; sometimes it is really unbelief asking Him to go out of the country; sometimes the enemy Satan produces a storm on the sea and the ship almost sinks, nevertheless each time we have such circumstances the Lord Jesus never stops His action. We have always the grace which is over abounding, being more abundant than previously (Rom.5:20).

This happened also at the end of chapter 4, where even the disciples thought that the Master was going to perish: immediately thereafter, He is healing the man with the unclean spirit with a greater display of power than before.

In chapter 6 we read that He was despised by His own: "What is the wisdom that is given to him..... Is not this the carpenter?" (vv.2-3), but nevertheless He then sends the twelve (v.7); so He is not only giving a simple blessing, but He is giving a blessing multiplied by twelve, He sends twelve disciples to do much more.

Immediately after this we have the account of the killing of John the Baptist by Herod and by his daughter who asked her mother to get the head of John the Baptist. This is a typical event because God was doing His best to bless the people, the men of the earth, and man's answer to that is of the worst kind, killing one of the best witnesses, John the Baptist. What happened after this murder of John the Baptist, did our Saviour stop His service for men? Not at all! Immediately after this murder of John the Baptist, we read in chapter 6:34, "Jesus.... was moved with compassion for them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd", and then there is the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; there is an overabundant blessing. God is not stopped even by the worst action of men killing one of the best witnesses at that time. This is a very important point if we are to understand how God is dealing with men now. We have to understand this grace which is displayed and which is acting in favour of men even in the worst

condition and when the violence of men is fully developed against the servants of God.

Another point we also have to see and understand from these various passages is the real condition of the religious men. Constantly, during these passages, the religious men are objecting to what the Lord is doing, objecting to His capacity for healing, or objecting to His person, either because He is healing on the Sabbath day, or because He is just a carpenter, or because He has not learned the law. There are an infinite number of reasons to state why the Lord should not do what He is doing. It is a very important point all through these passages to realise and understand that religion is not improving men but is making men more opposed to the true power of Christ and of the cross. We heard yesterday that in Jamaica it is considered as something good to be Christian. I think that in Europe it is the reverse; I am speaking of France, but in some countries it is even worse, we are at a time when there is more and more direct opposition to the gospel, against the word of God and against Christians. Even if we are still more or less preserved, we have not to have any illusions: we live in a time when the situation is getting worse and worse, and the response to the word of God is going and growing from indifference to direct and positive opposition. Nevertheless, we learn from these passages that this does not stop the Lord. If there is opposition, if there is unbelief, it is no problem to Him: He goes to other people, the grace of God is always active and pouring out.

There is another point, a very important one in these passages. In chapter 4 we have read of the parable of the sower, and we see that the Lord Jesus was no longer seeking fruit from His people, Israel, He was sowing the word of God and this is bringing forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty fold and some a hundred fold. Furthermore, a little further on it says, "Thus is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast the seed upon the earth and should sleep and rise up night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth bears fruit of itself" (vv.26-28). It is not presented here as in Matthew that the man sleeps and while he sleeps there is the sowing of tares; in the meanwhile, the work of God is going on. We could think that the Lord Jesus sleeps and apparently nothing happens, but nevertheless the harvest grows and fruit is produced. This is a very important point for our understanding of how God is dealing with us and in this world: even if there is no big appearance, even if no big things are being done, the work is done by the Lord, and there is a big multiplication, a hundred

fold. At the beginning the Lord was coming to present the kingdom, to present this healing, a total reversal of the power of the enemy, but He was rejected, more or less, and this is why there is this parable of the sower, the Lord Jesus comes and sows the word of God. We could be a little bit surprised, wondering what is the use of just giving words to people, nothing more. We have to be convinced of the real power of the word of God: this power characterises the grace, this is actually and efficiently operating in the souls of men. It is a question of faith for us to realise this power of God. We are in a time of weakness, we are in the day of small things (Zech.4:10), this is indisputable; there will be no display of power or might as in other times; if there were a great appearance of power, then we, the Christians, would take it as an opportunity to boast ourselves, to pride ourselves or to attribute the results to ourselves and not to the Lord. There will certainly be no appearance in the development of God's work, the actual work will remain essentially secret, not seen by others, nevertheless we have to have faith in the Holy Spirit and in the power of the word of God. It is what we see in this chapter. Despite all, the Word of God is working, and working efficiently.

Another point is the attitude of people, of each of us, in front of the actual work of God. We have this example in chapter 5 concerning the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, and the woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years. These are good examples because we have a mighty man, this ruler of the synagogue, with an official position and we have at the very opposite this poor woman, having lost all her money during the twelve years, paying the physicians for nothing. Both of them had no other option but to go to the Lord to ask Him and to pray and to get the blessing that the Lord is prepared to give them. The other people do not understand; even when He is going to heal the young girl He has to put all the other people, out of the house because they were laughing at Him, they did not believe that He was able to heal: let us have the same mind as Jairus or this woman with the issue of blood. Have we *real needs* to display to the Lord? Do we really realise that we have no other option than to go to the Lord and to pray for it? We know that we have to pray; maybe we say our prayers morning and evening and before meals, okay, but do we realise more deeply that in every detail of our lives we need this intervention of the Lord to get the real response that we need for all our life? This is an important point. Even if it is no longer the time for the Lord to get the kingdom, to be recognised as the King, even if He has been rejected, even if He has been simply sowing

the seed, the word, in the country, nevertheless there is no other way than to go to the Lord and to ask Him and to get the blessing. We have to realise, each of us, that we are not in a better condition than Jairus, we have to realise that we are not in a better condition than the woman with the issue of blood.

There is a real difficulty for many of us: we have grown up in Christian families, we have got this hedge of protection around us and there might be the tendency to think that finally we are a little bit better than other people, that we have not so much need as the other sinners of the world. Let us realise that we are all on the same level, and as Job, at the end of his book, we have to realise and say, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:6), which is for the Old Testament, the same wording as we have in Romans 7:18, "In me... good does not dwell". We have to be personally convinced of this. We have to realise the power of the grace which is not simply the grace forgiving our sins to get salvation, but we have to realise this grace of God which we need for each and every step of our lives, every action, every stage, every minute of every day. This is a way of understanding the Christian life. It is difficult to realise this, especially for those who have had a Christian education with good parents: there is the immediate tendency to say, 'Well, we are not so bad. We are a little bit better than the others', but there is no other way to live a good Christian life than to be asking for and getting all our resources from the Lord, whether as this ruler of the synagogue or as this woman with the issue of blood.

There is another point which I would like to make, in relation to the attitude of the disciples. When reading all these passages (and we have not gone time to go through the rest of the Gospel), we are always impressed by the constant attitude of unbelief of the disciples. When they were with the Lord in the boat and there was a storm on the sea they believed that the boat would sink and that they would all be lost; then at a further point of the Gospel when the Pharisees presented their traditions against the grace of the Lord regarding the washing of hands before eating, the disciples came to the Lord and said, 'Why are you saying that the uncleanness is coming from the inner part of men, we do not understand that'. This attitude is also seen in chapter 3:21, "And his relatives having heard of it went out to lay hold on him, for they said, He is out of his mind". We have already mentioned that when He was asleep in the boat during the great storm of wind, "They awake him up and say to him, Teacher, dost thou not care that we are perishing?" they even believed that the Lord Jesus could perish in a boat! When He went

to heal the young girl (we have spoken of this already) in chapter 5:40 and He said that the damsel was not dead but sleeping, they laughed Him to scorn. In chapter 6 we have also during the storm the Lord walking on the sea (6:48) and “they, seeing him walking on the sea, thought that it was an apparition, and cried out”. Then this verse 52 says: “For they understood not through (or ‘even after’) the loaves: for their heart was hardened”. The hearts of the twelve disciples were hardened, though they had been for many months so close to Him! What a condition! what a state of mind! This is very significant and we have to learn a lot from it.

Let us look at 6:37, we have all these people, this multitude, and the Lord has compassion for them because “they were as sheep not having a shepherd.... When it was already late in the day, his disciples came to him, saying: The place is desert, it is already late in the day; send them away that they may go into the country and villages around and buy themselves bread, for they have not anything they can eat. And he answering said to them, *Give ye them to eat*” (vv.34-37). This sentence is very important. He was telling the disciples that they were to give food to this multitude. Why does the Lord give such an order to His disciples? Is it because they have made progress, because now they are in a position to understand the power of God, because they are better than in the past? Not at all! It is just after that that they are afraid of the Lord walking on the sea and considered Him a spirit, a ghost; it is immediately after that that it is said that they did not consider the miracle of the loaves, their hearts were hardened. It was to such disciples, in such a poor condition, that the Lord said, “*Give ye them to eat*”. This is very important for us to understand because the Lord is asking us to work for Him. Is He asking us to work for Him because we are skilled workers, because we have a high level of gift, because we are sophisticated people with a lot of intelligence? Not at all! He was asking these disciples to work for Him because they had only two fishes and five loaves in their hand; nothing more. Intelligence? No intelligence. Faith? Practically none. A good heart for the Lord? Only a hardened heart. We would say with these people there is nothing to do, it is better to forget these people and take others who are in a better shape, but the Lord does not do that, He says to them, “*Give ye them to eat*”. We have to realise that we are on the same level as these disciples, and when we realise that, when we realise that we are not better than that, we have no other way than to rely upon the real grace of God, not the grace which is

needed for our salvation, but the grace that we need at each and every step of our lives.

We have no more time. There would be a lot of things to consider in the same direction. There is a second multiplication of the bread and apparently the disciples have no more faith than the first time. There is one person who gets a great answer to her request, it is the woman in chapter 7:24-30, the woman in the border of Tyre and Sidon whose daughter had an unclean spirit. This woman considered that she was on the level of the dogs who just get the piece of bread under the table of the master. Such a person, realising that she was in such a poor and miserable condition, obtained a great response, given to her because she was convinced of her misery and convinced of the infinite grace of God which is pouring out in favour of those who deserve nothing.

Even after the Lord was on the mountain of transfiguration, showing Himself in almost full glory as in the kingdom, despite all this wonderful scene, we have, immediately after, the disciples unable to heal the son who had a dumb spirit. Then they go to the Lord and the Lord says, "O unbelieving generation! how long shall I be with you?" (9:19) There is this word of the Lord after in verse 23, "Jesus said to him, The 'if thou couldst' is: believe; all things are possible to him that believes". The wording in the French Darby translation makes it clear that the issue is not whether the Lord can or cannot, the issue is: believe. Why? Is it because we have more power, because we know the word of God better, because we have attended this conference and have an improved level of Christian knowledge? Not at all! Why then? Just because there is the grace of God, and we have a need, and the Lord is able to satisfy this. Let us keep this permanently in mind, the grace of God is never stopped, even by unbelief, except that where there is unbelief the grace of God goes elsewhere or to other people. Let us remember also the permanent opposition of the religious men (and this opposition is growing and growing, getting worse and worse). We have not to have any illusions on this issue, but let us be as Job, as this poor woman of Tyre and Sidon, relying only upon the word of God, the power of God, realising that we have need of it for each and every detail of our daily life and that our inability and incapability are absolute. The only way to have a full blessing, not only for us individually, but also for our families and for our assemblies, is to abandon any confidence in ourselves and to turn to the Lord, to His grace, in humility and humiliation, having no rights, no strength by ourselves. Let us present to

Him our needs: “Ye have not because ye ask not” (Jas.4:2). Let us be sure that God is willing to pour out His fully overflowing grace.

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### ‘THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS’

read 2 Timothy 2: 1 - 10

The Assembly of God, —the company of people called out between the day of Pentecost and the moment when Christ will call us home —has been gathered out for the express purpose that, during the season of Christ's rejection, we should be here in exact correspondence with all that Christ is, and this not merely individually as saved sinners, but as an Assembly in which can be set forth certain glories and certain functions which no individual could possibly set forth.

Now as to Christ in glory, it is not that He is a different Person from what He was on earth, but that all He was on earth has passed through death and resurrection and so into glory, and is seen there in Him. In connection with this I would like to refer to the gospels of which we have four, and each one represents the Lord Jesus Christ in certain graces. Just as this epistle begins with the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, I would take the gospel of John first. In this gospel we have certain things set out in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Man on the



earth, of great importance. We get first of all life seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, life that is entirely according to God. Secondly, I think we get relationship; we get the Son down here as a man but in relationship with His Father. Thirdly we get communion, uninterrupted, holy, blessed, intimate, wondrous communion.

In this gospel He is presented down here as that Eternal Life which was with the Father. It is a life of a distinct kind from that which the ordinary natural man lives born of Adam. The Lord Jesus truly came down in the condition of flesh and blood, but He lived here after a new manner of life, a life that had its home with the Father; as it says, that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. Then relationship. Although when people looked at the Lord Jesus Christ they might speak of Him as Jesus of Nazareth, and somewhat contemptuously speak of His lowly birth, His apparent lineage, relations, and His trade as a carpenter, yet nevertheless, that lowly, gracious, perfect, blessed Man was found here as Son in relationship with the Father. He could look up into His Father's presence and commune with His Father in all the joy and blessedness of that known relationship. To sum up briefly, we have these three things presented in the gospel of John, life, relationship, and the deepest communion with the Father.

Now remember that that Person has gone on high and all these things are found in Him there, are they not? As He says in the end of the gospel, 'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.' Then He breathed upon them and communicated His life to them here, saying, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.'

We are left here then to represent Christ in these three things. In the Christian Assembly there should be seen this grace which was in Christ Jesus; there should be seen in us a character of life different from the character of life that you see in men in the world; there should be seen in us all the blessedness of our relationship with God as Father, and there should be with us all the depth of communion that nothing can disturb. I think that when we begin to consider for a moment something of the grace that is set forth in Christ Jesus we can see that it opens out tremendous possibilities for us.

Now come to the third gospel, the gospel of Luke. In this gospel we have set forth all that God is in grace, in a Man here on earth; so that as

you watch the footsteps of the Lord Jesus and His ways, and listen to His ministry in the gospel of Luke you are brought into contact with the resources of God in grace for every condition of man; and that too, even if the earth closes up, opens heaven to us. Now that is a second thing connected with the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and one of the things that has to be worked out in the Assembly of God on the earth; that is that the Assembly of God should be down here through grace enabled to represent the thoughts and the love and the grace of God working in a world such as this is. The Assembly of God while it is most wonderful and has connected with it the most wonderful truths, is yet to be down here the great exponent of the heart of God in a world such as this is. And therefore you cannot dissociate the thought of the Assembly from the gospel. It could not possibly be.

Then you take the second gospel, the gospel of Mark. I think we have the thought brought out there in wondrous detail of the Lord Jesus as the Servant of God, and as Servant not only doing the works of God and meeting the necessities of men, but also speaking the word of God, so that the words that He spake were God's testimony to men. And you find that all His works commanded the appreciation of God, and at the same time He was tireless and swift in His meeting of every need that came across His Path. And the Assembly of God is formed also to be the great exponent of Christ, the transcript of Christ with regard to this love of service. You might say it is summed up in Peter's address in Acts 10, when He says, 'He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him.' Now we who are Christians are united by the Holy Ghost to Christ, and we are so formed and constituted that we should be down here in this world reproducing what Christ is, as He was presented in the gospel of Mark about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. I was hearing the complaint of one dear sister who said that the Christians she knew seemed to think nothing more than about going to meetings and never seemed to have any time to do any good works. I wonder if we are like that? How many poor do you care for and visit? In what way do you exhibit this activity of the love and grace of Christ in the presence of all the needs around? And remember that He whom you love and whom you are left on this earth to represent went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. So while we value meetings and value opportunities of getting together, and we need to abide by the truth and learn it and to be in the power and good of it,

let us see that it is found in our affection. As it works in us it will produce in us likeness to Christ that we shall be representatives of Him here, and there will be with all our learning the doing of those good works that are in correspondence with it and we shall love to be connected with the testimony of God, the truth of God's word, and the ministry that God has to send out whether to His professed people or to the world.

And then, lastly in the gospel of Matthew. I think we find the Lord Jesus Christ coming down as the great Administrator of the will of God, to the carrying out of His promises and purposes with regard to the earth, and to administer that which God has put under His control Now the Assembly of God is intended to be down here, a company of people in the world under the rule of Christ, in which all the functions and all the administration should be ordered according to His will, and where the will of man is ruled out.

Now I have only given a little summary, but brief as it is, I think it will suit these words, 'The grace which is in Christ Jesus?' and you will see it opens out tremendous possibilities, and it shows that when we speak of the Assembly of God, after all, we know very little about it. As long as we break bread we say, we are in fellowship: we seem to be quite content with coming to meetings and going to meetings, and we attend the breaking of bread and the gospel meetings. and perhaps one in ten at any rate attend the prayer meetings, and perhaps two in ten attend the Bible reading, and we think we are getting along very well; and as long as we do not have a regular good fall out it is all right. O! but is that Christianity? You remember that we are left here so that although the world cannot see Christ it should be able to look at us and understand what kind of a Person He is. Is there not a whole field of acquisition before us? Is there not everything to learn? And it is not only a question of information and getting our minds instructed, but the Holy Spirit working into our souls every line of the truth, and bringing it out in power.

We have been looking at that word, 'The grace that is in Christ Jesus' as it is presented in the four gospels. Now the Apostle says to Timothy, 'Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' These things should not be mere theories, but every line of the truth ought to be wrought in living power in our souls. What is the secret of having the truth of God in real power in our souls? An honoured brother once said, 'I think the

secret of having the truth in power may be said to be this, That every line, every bit of the truth that we learn should be accompanied by a corresponding self-judgment in our own souls . . . Paul, the moment he got the light of Christ's glory shining in upon his soul, was broken down and bowed himself in the dust in self-judgment before Him; for three days and three nights he neither ate nor drank. And the result was that the truth of the glory of Christ acquired such a place in his soul that when he got on to his feet he straightway preached in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.'

Now it seems to me that being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus involves this, that with regard to every part of the truth which we learn from God there must be the getting into the presence of God in connection with it and judging ourselves as deeply as we know how in the light of the truth that God has made known to us, otherwise you are likely to lose its force. It is not that the thing becomes untrue, but so far as you are concerned, you, who might be the vessel of it and the exponent of it, lose the force of it because when you learned it you never learned it with the corresponding self-judgment. Now what does that mean? If I see that God has Christ before Him and His intention is to reproduce Christ in us down here, what does it mean but the setting aside of all that I am, and of all that man is, and all that the world can bring in the Holy Spirit just displacing everything by Christ. So that if you see anything in connection with Christ and you wish for it to have its real power in your soul, get before the Lord with that bit of truth which you have learned. and judge yourselves in the light of it. Make room for Christ, for you find the opposite in yourselves, and in your associations, or in things connected with you Judge yourselves; allow the light of that truth to shine in upon your soul and judge yourselves in the light of it, so that the truth may become a living power and force in your life. I do not know anything that more discourages me, humanly speaking, than to see people coming fifty-two Sundays in the year, and as many weekday nights to hear addresses, and never budge an inch, getting on in their souls. You come year after year and find them just where they were. And why? Just for that very reason they have fallen into the habit of listening to the truth and never allowing the spirit of self-judgment to enter accompany the hearing of it.

Then. the apostle says 'The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses. the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able

to teach others also. Now it seems to me that the apostle recognises that the mass of Christians were giving up the truth but he recalls Timothy to what he had heard from himself. We have these things in the epistles; but, he says to Timothy, 'These things you have heard of me. Now if Timothy through exercise of soul became strong in the grace that was in Christ Jesus, and in his own life, and own way, was brought under the power of the truth he was to commit these same things to faithful men. That is, I suppose, the apostle in a way expects that these faithful men would be distinguishable among the general unfaithfulness. But Timothy was to seek them out and getting into their company and into exercise with them he was to speak of these things together with them so that they might become suited vessels to carry it on. You often feel that speaking of the rank and file, that the very things we ought to be most familiar with we can hardly speak about. We have to speak of elementary things, and it is very nice to speak about elementary things when you meet a simple child to try and help him at the point where you find him. If he is not clear about the forgiveness of sins, well, try to help him. If he is not clear about peace with God, try to help him. If he has not yet learned the seventh of Romans, go patiently over it with him; get it deeper into your own soul while helping him. but help according as to how you find him But how seldom you really find saints of God who are eager to learn the deeper truths of Christ and God's purpose in connection with Him. And therefore you are greatly limited and do not even have time to speak about these things; but wherever you find a faithful men, it is your privilege and mine, to share with him what we can of all that we have learned.

'The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.' If you are getting into exercise as to the proper truths of the gospel and as to the deeper truths of the Assembly of God, wherever you find an open ear, and a heart that appreciates these things with you, share together what you are learning about the Lord. Make sure it is what we have heard of Paul among many witnesses; we have it all recorded here in the Word, but what you are learning of Christ share with your brother, and in that way you are preparing some who in their turn will be able to teach others also. I think that we cannot rely upon the continuation of gift in the way in which we have known it in past years. We are all conscious how that in past years there have been outstanding men, there have been those whom we have recognised as getting a distinct

impression from the Lord, and they have preached the truth and been in the exercise and power of it, and they have brought the truth before us in such a way that we recognise their message from the Lord. But they have passed and their places are not filled, and we are left very very weak we are left where we have the truth but we have not these gifts, but we are weak, and we are made conscious of this. Now supposing we had no longer these eminent and special gifts and we were left in our weakness does that mean we can no longer get into touch with the truth that is in Christ Jesus? Certainly not. We have it here, and we have the Holy Ghost given to us, but if we are to pass it on there must be this communication, as it says here, 'The things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.'

Now there are three things in the following verses that I would like to refer to. You will notice in the fourth verse you have the warrior spoken of; in the fifth verse what you might call the wrestler; and in the sixth verse, the worker. The warrior, the wrestler, and the worker: these are the three ways in which the Christian is called to stand in these days.

With regard to the warrior, we read, 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.' It seems as though there must be an undivided heart for Christ if we are going to stand in these difficult days. The warrior — the soldier — is a man who is called at the bidding of his king and country to put those things first that relate to the king's honour, and the affairs of life have to be relegated to the rear. He is a man chosen to be a soldier, and in his capacity of soldier his one business is to please him who hath called him to be a soldier. Now you are in that position in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, seeing the battle-field, and knowing all the power of the enemy, and the difficulties among His own people, has called you to be a soldier. One of the first things we have to watch is the way in which the affairs of life absorb our attention to the exclusion of the Lord's interest. Whatever shape the Lord's interest may take in your life, and whatever service you are to render, be on your guard that the affairs of life do not occupy such a place in your mind that they shut out the claims of Christ. It is very difficult: the state of affairs in the world is such that we feel the distraction of these things, the uncertainties of employment, the difficulties of trade and business, and all the things that are pending in

social and political life; all these things tend to drift into the mind like a sand-drift blown by the wind, and to extinguish all the devotedness to Christ. I would ask you whether this may not be the secret in your case of a great deal of indifference to the Lord's interests? Is it not that there has come in such a crowding of duties, such a pressure, that you can hardly find time to discover what the Lord's will is with regard to you, and when difficulties come in you are non-plussed, not having the habit of referring to the Lord and having His will? The result is you are liable to be carried about by that influence and the other influence, because you have not time to get into exercise yourself.

The second thing is the wrestler. It says, 'If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.' That is, there are certain rules of the ring, and if you are going to strive for masteries, if you are going into special games you must make yourself acquainted with the rules of the games, for if you transgress you may be ruled out, disqualified. In connection with the prize we are looking for it is of the greatest importance that we should make ourselves familiar with every desire of the Lord's heart, and with all these rules which He has given us to walk by. I might ask you, do you read the Word systematically? Do you read only certain portions that you are rather fond of and fancy?

Our first verse reads, 'Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.' As far as I can understand, in this epistle there are seven things that are said to be 'IN CHRIST JESUS', beginning with the promise of life in the first chapter. Seven things seem to suggest the idea of a circumference within which it is safe for the Christian to walk in the midst of all corruption, and that 'IN CHRIST JESUS' involves our knowing all that is included and all that is shut out. 'IN CHRIST JESUS' you cannot bring in anything which is of Adam, you cannot bring in anything of your own will, or of man's organisation, or of man's resources. 'IN CHRIST JESUS' shuts it all out. And what we are to be strong in is 'THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.' That is the circumference within which it is safe for us to walk. Well if I do not know what it includes I obviously shall be at fault; a difficulty will come in and I shall be distracted, and will not know where to look; or I may strive unlawfully in my earnestness, and when putting forth my strength I may do it in some way the word of God condemns, and as far as playing the game is concerned I am disqualified.

Well, may God give you to strive according to the illustration, 'Striving lawfully for the mastery;' but see that you strive lawfully; that you know what the rules of the game are. Supposing that you were for instance to say, 'I want to see everybody converted.' and you were to set yourself out to preach the gospel and see the whole world converted. Oh how you would set out with tremendous energy! But have you studied the rules of the game? Is this exactly what is set forth in the mind of God for the present time? Supposing you say, 'Well now I want to win souls and see them saved.' and you adopt some of the expedients which are very popular today. Well I wonder if you have studied the circumference, what 'IN CHRIST JESUS' means, and have you given a thought to what is consistent with that word 'IN CHRIST JESUS!' A great many of those methods are brought with the best of intentions but are they according to the rules of the game? Is it striving lawfully or unlawfully? God give us to test ourselves.

Then the third thing is in the sixth verse, which you require to alter a little, for the true translation is, 'The husbandman must labour before partaking of the fruits.' (N.Tr.). The idea is that before the partaking of the fruit there must be labour, there must be the toil. And I think that any amount of toil is worthwhile in connection with the interests of Christ, because, 'Ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' If you do strive according to the rules and do your service according to the mind of the Lord, shutting out your own thought and will, and man's ways and methods, and do it in the power of the Holy Spirit consistently with the Spirit that is in Christ Jesus, there will be certainly the working and the toiling, and the praying and the tears, but your work IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD. There will be the answer. Turn to that passage in 1 Corinthians 15. You may apparently be defeated your work may seem to disappear, your scholars that you have loved and prayed for may be scattered, and you may think, 'Well it has all been labour in vain. But look at verse 58, in that resurrection chapter in which God shows that everything that goes into the grave will have to come up out of it. The apostle says, '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.' It makes it as plain as possible to me I have only to see that my labour is in the Lord. I have only to study what the Lord's will is, and to do my work, of whatever kind it is IN THE LORD, and as sure as God's work is true, that work will reappear, nothing will be lost.



'Your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' You visit a sick man; before you go get into touch with your Lord and then visit him, and just be in His hand, and what He gives you to say, say it and commend it to Him. Do you think that the Lord is ever going to forget that visit? Perhaps there did not seem much result. Perhaps you were not well received. Perhaps it all seemed to be in vain. But in so far as your visit was in the Lord you will see that visit again in glory. I do not know in what shape the answer will be, you will have your Lord's approval. You go to your Sunday School class, and have the boys or the girls, as the case may be, and you pray and seek in every way to shut out all that is merely superficial and sentimental or emotional. and you seek to bring Christ before their souls, praying that God will teach the young Christians and save the unconverted. Do you think that your service falls to the ground? Do you think that it is simply done and forgotten, and there is no more of it? In so far as your labour is in the Lord you will see that again. There is not a word spoken in the Lord, a thing done in the Lord, at home or abroad, but you will find God's answer in resurrection. And so it says here the labourer will be 'partaker of the fruits'. You will get the fruit, but be content, if God so will it, to go labouring on; only see to it that your labour is in the Lord.

In connection with your labour, read verse 8, 'Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David, according to my glad tidings' (N.Tr.). The very Master whom you wish to serve and whose graces you wish to represent on earth, was One who toiled and laboured and wept. And Oh! how He pleaded with Israel again and again! Was it not He that said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.' Did He not say, 'I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain.' Did not the Lord feel it? Yet He says, 'My judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God' (Isa. 49: 4). That work, which in His lifetime, seemed to have been all in vain was found in resurrection to be of such a character that it will fill the whole universe with blessing. 'Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead.' Remember that though you may labour in your lifetime, and may say, 'Well, somehow or other, I have not been allowed to see much result of my labour', if your labour has been in the Lord, you shall, as sure as God's word is true, see the fruit in the

resurrection day. God is faithful to His word, 'He that goeth forth and weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' (Ps. 126: 6). And so with regard to all that we may think to be breaking up on every side, study what your Lord's will is, and see to it that your life's testimony and service and everything are IN THE LORD, and you will certainly be partakers of the fruits.

The apostle adds, 'Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things.' May God give us to learn more of the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and seek to be consistent with it. 'Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.' Find faithful men if you can and communicate these things one to the other. Even though you do not get the mass, go on with everything you can learn of Christ Jesus, keeping within the circumference. And be assured of this that nothing that is wrought here by the Holy Spirit for the Lord will ever disappear. Only set the Lord before you, get into exercise as to His will, and do it in all humility; but with this confidence that as sure as God's word stands for ever, and is settled in heaven, you will see the results in resurrection. AMEN.

W H Westcott

☞ from MS Notes by E C Pressland of Harrow, 1886 ☛

During the last 50 years much long-neglected teaching of the word has been confessed and taught by earnest saints. Some chief items of it are:—

1. The known possession and enjoyment of eternal life, 1 John 5:13.
2. The present indwelling of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 6:19.
3. The church of God as God's spiritual house, 1 Pet. 2:5.
4. The relationship of Christ to His saints, as Head of His body, the church; & they members one of another, Eph. 4:15, 25.
5. The Heavenly calling, Phil. 3:20.
6. The presence of the Lord with His gathered saints, Matt. 18:20.
7. The Lord's second coming at any moment, 1 Cor. 15:51, 52.



These truths so separated saints from much current religion; that they were charged with bigotry and exclusiveness. But their enjoyment of

the Lord kept them steady, though. not without trial, or without inconsistency. Declension however, set in, until many seem to have lost the power of these truths if not the form. It may profit as warning to note possible causes of this. Some may be:-

- ‘lusts of other things’
- mystical holiness
- heavenly pretensions
- undue personal influence
- Pride of intelligence
- authority assumed by gift and then allowed, followed by ‘I am of Paul and I am of Apollos’, etc.

While the adversary, as an angel of light, has deceived by misrepresenting circumstances and by falsehood there were many whom he could not seduce by worldliness or by spiritual pride. His successes on a small scale first, showed how many leading brothers despite remonstrance, would give up principles for expediency, and this paved the way for a bold stroke, which should if possible, destroy the testimony to the Spirit’s unity.



Satan has so far succeed in his attack on keeping the unity of the Spirit. What shame, what humiliation mark the solemn and painful story. Then what remains for faith today? As ever there is a path for individual fidelity. It is the plain course of the old confession, only to be held with more rigid guard, lest further declension come in. The love and care of the Lord have kept the feet of a few, and have given escape and success to faith. To His name alone is all the praise. It is theirs now to go on more lowly and dependently, lest a new snare deceive them, and they be ‘spoiled.’

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|---|--|
| • ‘Narrow is the way’                                 | —the Lord has given no word to widen it.                     |
| • ‘Let no man therefore judge you’                    | }  |
| • ‘Beware of deceitful workers’                       | } <i>each soul for himself must get more</i>                 |
| • ‘Shall a man bring you into bondage’                | } <i>closely to the Word and own ministry</i>                |
|   | } <i>only as it leads him to it.</i>                         |
| • ‘not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together | —the fewer they are, the more value is each joint of supply. |

The claims of the truths at the head of this paper have grown, not diminished, in importance, by present testing. They flow out of the

fullness of Christ for us; and as we link them up with Himself, our joy in Him will grow too, and He will make them effective in us. They belong to ‘the apostles doctrine.’

- But they make you so narrow’ —They are the Lord’s will
- ‘But you assume too much to yourselves by all that’ —Our only assumption is counting on Him for power to obey
- ‘But that is too high a standard for the present time’ —until the Lord lowers the standard faith will not
- ‘But difficulties are vastly greater than 50 years ago’ —were they 100 fold more so ‘greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world’

Nehemiah’s path on his mule was blocked by ruins. Did he therefore give up Jerusalem? Nay, but his words are: ‘see the distress ... come, let us build.’ etc., and presently despite the despised remnant with him, kept there the feast of Tabernacles better than Solomon in all his glory.



[Do not these considerations of yesteryear have a voice to us today?]  
“Thy word is truth” John 17:17