

The Works  
of  
**Henry Mahan**  
Volume 3

Containing  
his

Bible Class Commentaries

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of  
Henry Mahan

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Containing  
his

**Bible Class Commentaries**

on

Galatians  
Ephesians  
Philippians  
Colossians  
1 & 2Thessalonians  
1 & 2 Timothy  
Titus  
Philemon  
Hebrews  
James  
1 & 2 Peter  
1, 2 & 3 John  
Jude



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# Contents

The Book of	Page
Galatians.....	9
Ephesians.....	55
Philippians.....	101
Colossians.....	133
1 Thessalonians.....	167
2 Thessalonians.....	195
1 Timothy.....	209
2 Timothy.....	251
Titus.....	291
Philemon.....	315
Hebrews.....	327
James.....	423
1 Peter.....	471
2 Peter.....	513
1 John.....	535
2 John.....	583
3 John.....	591
Jude.....	599

## Foreword

One of the great blessings of God's grace is to be in a *true* church where the gospel is preached. Every true church has a pastor after God's own heart. 'And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding' (Jeremiah 3:15). One of the great blessings of God's grace in my life was to be raised up in a true (faithful) church with a pastor after God's own heart.

I was born and raised in the *Thirteenth Street Baptist Church* with Henry Mahan as my pastor. This is where the Lord taught me the Gospel, and called me to preach the Gospel. Some years after I had left the church where Henry Mahan pastored, and had begun to pastor a church myself, the Lord struck me down with a severe illness. I spent two months in the hospital, close to death. During my recovery, I had a lot of time to think. There were two things that stood out to me, for which I am grateful. First, I was thankful that I could face death without fear. Believing that the Lord Jesus Christ was my personal righteousness before God, I could anticipate death with joy. The other blessing I felt so grateful for was that God had given me a pastor after his own heart, who was more concerned about me knowing Christ's name than his own name. It was through the means of this man that I could face death with the confidence of the Gospel.

There is no man on earth that I esteem more highly than Pastor Henry Mahan. He is a faithful pastor, a faithful friend, and a faithful brother. The writings of this book came from a pastor after God's own heart.

-- Todd Nibert, Pastor Todds Road Grace Church, Lexington, KY



# Galatians

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan



# On mixing grace and works

## Galatians 1:1-10

Paul had planted several churches in Galatia and was now a prisoner at Rome. Some false teachers had seduced some of these Galatians from the gospel of free grace preached by Paul, persuading them that observance of the Levitical ceremonies was necessary to salvation and that justification before God was partly through faith in Christ and partly from their own works. They also said that Paul was not really an apostle like the other apostles who had been with Christ during his earthly ministry and, therefore, Paul's doctrine was not to be accepted. Paul wrote to convince the Galatians of their error, to turn them back to Christ alone and to press upon them the duties of a holy life.

v. 1. Paul claims to be an apostle, the highest office in the church. He did not receive this office from a group of men, or from any one man, but from the Lord Jesus Christ and from God the Father (Acts 26:13 -18). His office was confirmed by signs and miracles. Christ appeared to him, Christ was seen by him and he received his gospel from Christ (Gal. 1:11, 12).

v. 2. This letter and greeting are not only from Paul but from all of the brethren who were with Paul and who assisted him in the ministry. The letter is to all of the churches of Galatia. The churches were not national but congregational; each local assembly was autonomous, functioning independently without control by the others.

v. 3. Paul wishes for them the gracious favour and goodwill of God, whereby he is pleased with his elect in Christ (Eph. 1: 3-7), and peace with

God - peace of conscience, peace with one another and even peace with their enemies. God is the fountain of peace and grace, and Christ is the means to convey grace and peace to us.

v. 4. Having mentioned the Lord Jesus in verse 3, Paul goes on to describe our Redeemer by his one great act as the great High Priest over the house of God, by which he redeemed, justified, sanctified and delivered us from guilt, wrath and condemnation from this present evil world. He gave himself, soul and body, for our sins on the cross of Calvary (Heb. 9:26; 10:12-14).

v. 5. Here is the duty and occupation of the saved - to ascribe all glory and praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The glory of Christ and our gratitude to him are the theme of our lives and shall be the long-lasting and never-ending song of the redeemed throughout eternity (Rev. 5: 13).

vv. 6, 7. Paul enters into the subject matter of this epistle, which is to reprove and rebuke any man who leaves the gospel of God's free grace and attempts to mix works with grace (Rom. 11: 5, 6). It is surprising and astonishing that any person who has heard the good news of salvation by the grace of God through the merits of Christ would leave that gospel and look to a perverted gospel of grace plus works. But that is what these Galatians were doing. These teachers had persuaded the people to leave Paul's message and receive theirs, which added circumcision, ceremonies, holy days and human works to the works of Christ. This is not a gospel (good news) at all, but a perverted system of self-righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30; Col.1: 19-22; 2:8-15).

vv. 8, 9. The apostle then expressed the seriousness of their error. 'If any person preaches any other way of salvation except the full, sufficient,

complete and eternal redemption that Jesus Christ by himself accomplished on behalf of his elect (which requires nothing of the creature but faith), even if it be an angel from heaven, let that person be accursed.' Paul also says, 'If we bring any other gospel, let us be accursed.' He repeats the warning for emphasis.

*v. 10.* 'Are we trying to win the favour of man or of God? Do we seek to be men-pleasers? If we are seeking the favour and approval of men, we are not the bond-servants of Jesus Christ. Our aim is to be true to the word of God, and in doing so we will be true to our hearers.' This gospel of the free grace of God is glorifying to God and honoring to all of his excellent attributes - his love and mercy, his infinite wisdom, his righteous justice and his immutable holiness. This gospel of the free grace of God in Christ is the only hope that sinful, corrupt men have; for if righteousness comes by any obedience to the law at all, not only did Christ die in vain, but no son of Adam has any hope of being saved.

# Paul - the Apostle

## Galatians 1:11-24

The false prophets, who had seduced the churches of Galatia from the gospel of free grace and persuaded them that the observance of the Levitical ceremonies (fulfilled and abolished by Christ) was necessary for salvation and that justification and salvation were partly from faith in Christ and partly from their own works, had also charged that Paul was not a true apostle and that his doctrine was a fake. This is what Paul is dealing with in these verses. We are certainly in trouble if Paul is not an apostle, for he is responsible for about one half of the New Testament which we read and believe.

v. 11. These false teachers did not say that the gospel was man-made nor that it came from men (for they themselves pretended to preach the gospel), but they argued that Paul had no authority for what he preached other than human authority and thus was not to be followed. Therefore, Paul says that the gospel of free grace in Christ alone (which he preached) is 'not from man,' nor is he an ordinary preacher, but an appointed apostle of Christ.

v. 12. You and I do receive the gospel from men, and we are taught by men. It is true that the Holy Spirit opens our hearts, enlightens our minds and reveals the gospel to us; but he uses human teachers, preachers and witnesses. This is why we should search the word, try the spirits and take heed what we hear! But an apostle (like Paul) did not receive the gospel this way; he learned it by revelation from Jesus Christ. That is why we can quote the apostle and be sure that we are quoting and following God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

*vv. 13, 14.* 'I am no stranger to the Levitical law and ceremonies,' he says. The works, deeds and circumcision which the false teachers wished to add to the gospel and required of them were at one time his only hope for salvation and his only message.

1. Paul was born of Jewish parents, had a Jewish education, followed the Jewish law to the letter and lived as a Pharisee (Acts 26:4, 5; Phil. 3:5, 6).

2. He hated Jesus Christ and persecuted the church. Salvation by grace (apart from human merit) was a gospel which he tried to destroy.

3. His ability to defend the law was above and beyond that of many who were his equal in age. He was the champion and leader (both in ability and zeal) of those who defended the traditions and laws of his fathers. In other words, these works and law advocates were not dealing with a novice. Paul exceeded them all in every way as an advocate of salvation by works.

*v. 15.* Here Paul begins to relate his conversion - his call, the revelation of Christ in his heart and the direct revelation of the gospel to him by the Master.

1. God chose Paul to salvation and to the apostleship before he was born, yes, before the foundation of the world, as God has chosen all of his people (Jer. 1:5; Eph. 1:3, 4; 2 Thess. 2:13).

2. When it pleased God (in God's own time), he stopped Paul on his road of rebellion, enlightened him and called him to Christ (Rom. 8:29, 30; 2 Tim. 1:9; John 6:37, 44, 45).

v. 16. Christ was revealed to Paul as the Messiah, the atonement, the sin-offering, the fulfillment of every type, prophecy and ceremony, and in the glory of his person and work. But Christ was revealed in Paul, for Christ was formed in him. Christ's Spirit dwelt in him, Christ's grace was implanted in him and now he lived by the faith of the Son of God. Paul needed no ceremony, circumcision, nor works to make him complete; he was complete in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). After this revelation of Christ in Paul, he did not confer with other men to verify it or complete it.

v. 17. 'I did not seek out those who were apostles before I was called to be an apostle, but I went to Arabia; afterwards I came back to Damascus.' What he did there, how long he stayed and what ministry he pursued we are not told anywhere.

vv. 18, 19. 'After three years I visited the apostle Peter and spent fifteen days with him. I did not talk to any of the other apostles except James.' This is observed to show that Paul did not receive his gospel from men, even from the other apostles of Christ. His sole authority and revelation came from Christ.

vv. 20-24. 'What I have written to you is the truth. I did not receive my gospel from the apostles nor from the churches of Judea. I did not visit them and was unknown to them except by reputation. They heard of me, rejoiced and praised God that he was pleased to save me and call me to preach Christ.'

# Confirming the gospel of grace

## Galatians 2:1-13

As we approach this chapter, we must keep in mind the grand points that Paul establishes in this epistle:

1. Justification is by faith in Christ alone apart from works, the Levitical law, or religious ceremony.
2. Paul is truly an apostle as much as Peter, James or John.
3. He is a chosen vessel to bear the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

v. 1. This is the trip (mentioned in Acts 15:1, 2) which Paul made to Jerusalem with Barnabas, concerning the question of whether circumcision is necessary to salvation. Titus, who was a Greek and a minister of the gospel, went with him. Titus was an uncircumcised Gentile, a living testimony of the apostle's message and practice.

v. 2. They did not send for him, nor did he go to Jerusalem by a vote of the church. He felt led of God to go and talk privately with those who were apostles before him, men of great esteem and reputation. The issue was the theme of this epistle - that salvation is wholly by grace and does not require the keeping of the ceremonial law. If salvation were by anything but grace, Paul's ministry was all in vain.

v. 3. There was such agreement between Paul and the other apostles regarding the matter of the law and circumcision that Titus, an uncircumcised Greek, was accepted as a brother and fellow minister on the

spot. They required nothing further of him. If these ceremonies were necessary, the apostles of Christ would have required them of Titus!

v. 4, 5. This is why Paul and the apostles refused to circumcise Titus. If it had been a thing indifferent and only to satisfy some weak believers (as in the case of Timothy, Acts 16:1-3), he would have complied. The false prophets who had crept in insisted that circumcision and other ceremonies were necessary to salvation. Paul would not give in to such error for an hour!

v. 6. These other apostles were reputed to be great, and they were (though their office and position made no difference to Paul, for his gospel was given him by God; besides, the Lord is not impressed with men's persons or position). These men imposed no new requirements on Paul, added nothing to his gospel and made no suggestions.

v. 7, 8. 'But on the contrary, when they saw that I was ordained of God to carry the gospel to the Gentiles just as definitely as Peter was ordained to carry the gospel to the Jews, they were agreeable and rejoiced. For God, who motivated and equipped Peter for his work among the Jews, also prepared me to preach to the Gentiles' (Acts 9:13 -15).

v. 9, 10. James, Peter and John, who seemed to be the spokesmen and pillars of the church, gave Paul and Barnabas their blessings and approval of the ministry to the Gentiles and made only one stipulation - that they remember and minister to the poor, which they were eager to do!

v. 11-13. Evidently this incident occurred between Paul and the other apostles after the meeting in Jerusalem and it shows us several things.



1. How deeply ingrained the ceremonial law, circumcision and Jewish pride were in these Jews.

2. How the best of men (even apostles) are still men and subject to fall and error.

3. How Satan hates the gospel of pure grace and will use choice men to cause division.

4. How we ought to stand firm for salvation by grace through faith even when it means rebuking a leader or a close friend.

Peter had agreed with Paul's gospel and given his blessings to his ministry. But when these Jews came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, Peter feared their disfavor and withdrew from the Gentiles. Having much influence, he caused a strong division among the brethren, even causing Barnabas (who knew better) to take part in his hypocrisy. We shall take up Paul's word to Peter in the next section.

# Justified by Christ alone

## Galatians 2:14-21

When Paul, Barnabas and Titus met with the apostles in Jerusalem, Peter was there. Titus, being a Greek believer, was not compelled to be circumcised according to the Jewish law and Peter agreed with the others that circumcision was of the heart and not the flesh. When the apostles gave their right hands of fellowship and blessings to Paul and Barnabas to go to the Gentiles with the gospel of free grace in Christ apart from works, laws and ceremonies, Peter also gave his blessings. And when Peter came to Antioch to visit, he ate and fellowshiped with the Gentile believers without reservation. But when some of the Jewish brethren who were prominent Jews and zealous of the law came to Antioch, Peter, fearing their disfavor and criticism, withdrew from the Gentiles, causing a division among the brethren to the point of influencing even Barnabas to avoid the uncircumcised Gentiles. Paul rebuked Peter, Barnabas and these zealous Jews. His remarks were directed especially to Peter.

v. 14. Their walk was not in integrity, sincerity and truth, because previously they had agreed that there was no joining of ceremony and grace nor of Moses and Christ. Their walk certainly was contrary to the gospel of Christ; so Paul said, 'Peter, if you, who were born, brought up and obliged to observe all of the Levitical law, no longer feel in bondage to these ceremonies and laws (you know in your heart you are free from this yoke; all righteousness is fulfilled in Christ), why do you compel these Gentiles to live under these laws?'

v. 15. Since the apostles (who were born Jews and therefore under the law of Moses and under obligation to keep it until Christ came) had now

relinquished the law of Moses and wholly believed in Christ for all righteousness and acceptance with God, then it was totally unreasonable to lead Gentiles, who were never under the Levitical law, to observe it!

v. 16. We know that a man is not justified by the law.

1. We know this from the law itself, which requires perfect obedience (Gal. 3: 10; 4:21).

2. We know this from the gospel, which clearly states that we are complete in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9, 10).

3. We know this from experience, being fully convinced of the insufficiency of human righteousness (Rom. 7:18).

4. We know that we are justified by that faith which has Christ as its author, finisher and object.

We are justified by God of his own will through the merits and blood of Christ. Faith believes Christ, receives Christ and lays hold upon Christ and his righteousness. It is called the faith of Christ because he is the author of it as well as the object of it.

v. 17, 18. 'If we seek to be justified by Christ and do not rest in him alone (in his righteousness, his obedience, his blood and his intercession) but seek to add to Christ our own works, righteousness and obedience to the ceremonies of the law, then Christ, instead of being a minister of a perfect righteousness and acceptance, becomes a minister of the law (which is the strength of sin, 1 Cor. 15:56) and the minister of condemnation and death. Is this the work and ministry of Christ? God forbid!

If I restore the ceremonies of the law (such as circumcision, holy days, foods and drinks - the things which I preach as fulfilled by Christ, through Christ and in Christ), then I make myself an unjustified sinner. I could not

be otherwise, for the law demands perfection, and if, in Christ, I am not perfected, then I am a transgressor.'

v. 19. 'For I, through the law of Christ (the doctrine of grace or the gospel of free grace) which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (all of our pardon, righteousness, acceptance and life comes through Christ), am dead to the law which says, "Do this or that and thou shalt live." "That I might live unto God," not in sin, nor in violation of his moral law, nor in neglect of holiness and integrity, but that I should live in the will of God for his honour and glory.' Believers who are not under law but under grace do not desire to live in sin but consider themselves under a greater law - the law of his love.

v. 20. 'I am crucified with Christ. He bore my sins in his body on the tree and destroyed and made an end to them. They have no damning nor condemning power (Rom. 8:1, 33, 34). The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. My desire is to walk with him in newness of life; the law of God is written on my heart, not on tables of stone.' 'Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. I live spiritually; and it is not the same 'I' as before, but a new man, a new creature' (2 Cor. 5: 17). This new man lives by faith, looking to Christ for all things - pardon, righteousness, peace, joy, comfort and the supply of every grace.

v. 21. 'I do not despise, reject, nor make void the grace of God in Christ Jesus. If a justifying righteousness comes through obedience to the ceremonial law, then Christ died in vain.' If obedience to the law is necessary for a man to be justified before God, then all that Christ did was in vain; for no man will be justified!

# The just shall live by faith

## Galatians 3:1-12

v. 1. 'Foolish Galatians.' Any man is foolish who leaves Christ to go to Moses, who leaves the gospel of grace to go to the working of the law, who leaves the doctrine of free justification (which gives peace and comfort) to go to the law (which can only condemn and bring bondage).

'Who hath deceived you? The truth of Christ crucified has been set forth in your hearing. Who Christ is, what Christ has done, why Christ suffered and where Christ is now was faithfully preached to you.' It wasn't as if they had not heard the gospel. They had heard, claimed to believe and now were going back to the works of the law (2 Cor. 11: 3).

v. 2. He could ask them many things, but he asked this one question only, which, if rightly attended to and honestly answered, must expose their foolishness and put an end to the controversy: 'Did you receive the Spirit of God by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Did the Spirit of God (as the Spirit of regeneration, of wisdom, of understanding, of adoption and the earnest of future glory) come to you through your obedience to the law, or did he come to you when you heard the good news of Christ in the gospel and received that gospel by faith?' There is only one answer (Eph. 2:8, 9; Rom. 10:17).

v. 3. 'Is it possible that you can be so foolish as to think:

1. That having been chosen in Christ by grace, you are kept in Christ by works?

2. That having begun your Christian life depending on the Spirit and the grace of God, you must finish it depending on your own works and flesh?

3. That having been accepted in the Beloved, you are not made perfect until you add your own righteousness to his? This is unthinkable! (Heb. 12:2; Phil. 1:6.)

v. 4. These Galatians had suffered great reproach for the gospel of grace (persecutions and afflictions), as all who embrace it expect to do! Now if this gospel of pure grace in Christ is not true, then you have suffered all these afflictions needlessly. He adds, 'I hope that you will correct your mistake and abide by the gospel, that your suffering be not in vain.'

v. 5. These Galatians had not only received the Spirit of God through hearing and believing the gospel, but they had seen the gospel confirmed by extraordinary gifts, signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit, who was also still among them (Heb. 2:3, 4). Now the apostle asks, 'Did he who gave you the Spirit and he who worked these miracles do so attending the preaching of the law or the preaching of the gospel?' (Mark 16:15-18.)

v. 6. Abraham was a righteous man, head of the Jewish nation, the first of the circumcision and one in whom the false Jewish teachers gloried (and would persuade the Gentiles to the practice of circumcision in imitation of Abraham); but the apostle shows that Abraham was justified before God by faith, not by circumcision (Rom. 4:9-11, 21-23).

v. 7. Those who are of the same faith as Abraham (not of the same degree, but exercised on the same object - Jehovah the Word, the Lord our Righteousness, and wrought by the same Spirit), they are the true children of Abraham, for he is the father of all that believe, whether Jew or Gentile.

v. 8, 9. The word of God is represented as declaring the purpose of God before it comes to pass, and the word of God declared to Abraham that in his seed should all nations be blessed. This seed is Christ! (Gal. 3:16; Rom. 4:13, 16.) The gospel of righteousness in and through Christ was preached to Abraham that the Messiah would spring through him, and in the Messiah, all nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:3).

v. 10. As many as seek for justification by the works and deeds of the law and trust their own works and righteousness for acceptance with God are under the curse of the law; for the law requires doing - not knowing, or hearing, or approving, but perfectly doing all that the law requires in word, thought and deed (Gal. 4:2 1; Rom. 10: 1-4).

v. 11. There were many justified before the law was given, such as Abel, Noah, Enoch, Job, Abraham and all other believers; and there were many justified during the legal dispensation; but none was justified by his obedience to the law. The law was not given to save, but to reveal sin, to lead us to Christ (the types were given to reveal Christ). Furthermore, no man ever perfectly kept the law. The Scriptures declare, 'The just shall live by faith' (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38).

v. 12. The law is not of faith, nor does it require faith, but it requires perfect obedience by the man. The law reaches not only to the outward man but to the inward parts, requiring not only external obedience but perfect thought, motive and attitude!

# Justification by promise - not by law

## Galatians 3:13-29

v. 13. In the preceding verses Paul shows the law to be a cursing law because of its perfection and the imperfection of our nature and deeds. Therefore, no man can be justified by a law of works. In this verse he shows us how we are justified and redeemed from the curse of the law. Christ was made a curse for us (Gal. 4:4, 5; Isa. 53:4-6). Cursed is everyone who is hanged for crime (Deut. 21:22, 23).

v. 14. 'That the blessing of Abraham' - the same blessing of justification (imputed righteousness before God) which Abraham had in Christ - 'might come on the Gentiles' (Rom. 4:7-10). Abraham was not justified by law, works, nor circumcision but by Christ (Rom. 4:20-25). We receive the realization of the promise of the Spirit by faith. The Holy Spirit opens and applies the promises of God. Justification, then, is not by law but is by faith in Christ because it was purchased by Christ.

In verses 15-18 the apostle argues that justification before God cannot be by the law because these promises were made by God in a covenant 430 years before the Levitical law was given.

1. Justification is not by law because the law says, 'Do and live.' Man cannot fulfill the holy law, so the law only condemns.

2. Justification is not by law but in Christ, who redeemed us from the curse of the law by the sacrifice of himself.

3. Justification is not by law since it was promised by God in a covenant of mercy before the law was given.



*V. 15.* A covenant or testament made by a man cannot be overturned or disannulled when it is confirmed; much less can the covenant of God be disannulled or cancelled.

*v. 16.* These promises of acceptance, justification and eternal life were made not to Christ personally, not to all the natural seed of Abraham, but to Christ's body, the church, the spiritual seed of Abraham, both Jew and Gentiles. The promises are made to all believers, who are one in Christ!

*v. 17.* The Levitical law, which was given 430 years after the covenant concerning the Messiah (Gen. 12:1-3), does not and cannot change or make void the promise of life in Christ by faith.

*v. 18.* If justification is by keeping the law or by ceremony, it cannot be of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

*v. 19.* What was the purpose of the law?

1. It was given after the promise in order to reveal and expose to men their guilt and to make men more conscious of the sinfulness of sin.

2. It was given to reveal the Messiah, the Redeemer, in types and pictures until he came (Heb. 10: 1).

3. Moses served as the mediator between Israel and God (Exod. 20:18, 19). He was a type (a picture) of Christ, our Mediator. The angels of God were messengers and instruments God used in the giving of the law.

*v. 20.* A mediator has to do with more than one party. There can be no mediator if only one person is involved. Yet God is only one person; he is the one offended, standing off at a distance, giving the law, in the hands of

a mediator, revealing their alienation. Therefore, justification cannot be expected through the law.

v. 21. Is the law against or opposed to the promises of God? Of course not! The giving of the moral law and the ceremonial law does not change the promise of life in Christ. If a law could be given that would justify a sinner, then justification would be by that law.

v. 22. But the word of God, especially the law of God, pictures all mankind as sinners shut up and imprisoned by sin so that the blessing of life must come through Christ, the Messiah, to them that believe (Rom. 8:1-3).

v. 23, 24. But until Christ, the object of faith, came to fulfill the law, we were kept under the law which served as a tutor or an instructor to show us our sins, to reveal God's mercy in Christ and to instruct us in the justice and righteousness of God. The law empties the sinner of all self, glory and merit and brings him to Christ, the Justifier.

v. 25, 26. After Christ came, we are no longer under these types, pictures and ceremonies; but in Christ we are sons of God, justified, forgiven and righteous. The law has served its purpose and is put away (Heb. 10:8-10).

v. 27-29. 'As many of you (Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free) who have been baptized by the Spirit of God into a spiritual union with Jesus Christ are one in Christ. All that Christ is, you are. All that Christ has, you have. You are accepted in the Beloved!'

# Christ redeemed us from the law

## Galatians 4:1-11

In these verses Paul deals with the annulment of the ceremonial law under which the Old Testament people were as children under a tutor; he blames the Gentile believers for returning to that law when they had been freed from it!

*v. 1-2.* To illustrate what he said in Gal. 3:23-24, Paul presents the case of an heir during his childhood. The heir is owner and lord of all by promise and testament; yet while he is a child and under-age, he is not his own man. He is under restraint. kept in school, taught, and corrected as if he were a servant and not the heir. The father appoints a time for his inheritance to come into effect.

*v. 3.* Even so the Jews, when they were children in spiritual knowledge (in the infant state of the church), were kept like children in school under the ceremonies, sacrifices, and rituals of the Mosaic law. These are called 'elements of the world' because they lay in outward, worldly, and earthly things such as animal sacrifices, washings, meats, etc.

*v. 4-5.* But when the time appointed by the Father was fulfilled, he sent his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, into the world.

1. Made of a woman—not created as Adam or begotten of man as all other men are, but conceived by the Holy Spirit in a virgin's womb. He was made flesh, and he identified with us in every respect.

2. Made under the law—under the civil and judicial law as a Jew, under the ceremonial law as a son of Abraham, and under the moral law as a man and the Surety of his people.

3. To redeem them—by meeting and obeying the law in every jot and tittle. By going to the cross and suffering the penalty of our sins, Christ purchased our freedom, redeemed us from the curse of the law, and satisfied the justice of God that we might receive the power and privilege of sons of God (John 1: 12-13; Gal. 3:13).

v. 6. Now because you are truly sons of God (accepted in the Beloved, redeemed from all sin, having no condemnation), God has put his Spirit of adoption, of assurance, of comfort, of holiness in your heart whereby you can actually call God your loving Father.

The word ‘Abba’ is a Hebrew word meaning father. It may be that the word is in both Hebrew and Greek to show that God is the Father of both Jew and Gentile believers.

v. 7. Therefore, we are no longer servants under tutors, schoolmasters, ceremonies, and types; but we are sons of God who have been made free from the law and have entered into the joy and enjoyment of all blessings of redemption in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:8-11).

v. 8. When you Gentiles knew not the true God, you worshipped idols and were in bondage to gods that did not exist; they were of this world and the product of your imagination. You performed rites and ceremonies that were useless.

v. 9. Now after God has revealed himself to you in Christ Jesus and you know the true and living God (who chose you and foreknew you), why do you turn back to rituals, ceremonies, and elementary, worthless things, such as circumcision, holy days, and foods and drinks which can do

nothing for you before God? Paul is astonished that these professed believers would want to be in bondage to things from which Christ had set them free.

v. 10. By ‘days’ he means seventh-day Sabbaths. The sabbath was typical of Christ, who is the true rest of his people.

‘Months,’ designs, new moons, or the beginning of months were kept by holding religious feasts and abstaining from work.

‘Times’ mean the three times during the year that the Jewish males appeared before the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the three feasts—Tabernacle, Passover, and Pentecost.

‘Years’ are to indicate sabbatical. Every seventh year the fields were to be idle, no plowing or planting. Paul blamed these Gentiles because they were being drawn into these practices to obtain acceptance with God (Gal. 5:1-2).

v. 11. Paul knew that the true minister of God never labors in vain (Isa. 49:5; 2 Cor. 2:14-16). He speaks with reference to them. If they should persist in bringing in the ceremonies, circumcision, and observance of these laws to make effectual the redemptive work of Christ, then, for them, the gospel is preached in vain. Salvation cannot be by grace and by works (Gal. 2:21; Gal. 5:1-4).

# Christ formed in you

## Galatians 4:12-20

v. 12. Become as Paul, free from the bondage of ritualism and ceremonies. Reckon yourselves to be dead to the Levitical laws which have been fulfilled by Christ. Count these things as loss and rubbish for Christ.

‘I have become as you are (Gentiles) with respect to things spiritual. We are both alike in Christ—chosen in him, redeemed in him, perfected in him, and free from the observance of ceremonies and laws. You have not injured me by your law observances. The offense is against Christ who fulfilled the law. My feelings for you have not changed, but your feelings toward me have ‘ (Gal. 1: 6).

vv. 13-16. ‘When I first preached the gospel of God's grace to you, I did so in much weakness, humility, persecution, and bodily afflictions. You were not offended by my bodily ailments nor my sufferings (what they were we do not know); but you were so glad to hear the good news of Christ that you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ himself. What has become of that respect and regard you had for me? You would have given me your very eyes’ (this is what led many to believe that the apostle had severe eye trouble). What Paul is saying is that these people were happy in Christ (in the gospel of free grace); and now that the law-preachers had influenced them, they had not only turned from the gospel of Christ alone but had become Paul's enemies. Am I your enemy because I tell you the truth and deal sincerely with you? Am I your enemy because I preach that we are complete in Christ and have no need to be circumcised, to keep days, months, and years?

v. 17. ‘These false preachers are courting you, pretending great love and concern for you, making much of you; but their purpose is not for God’s glory nor your eternal good. What they are trying to do is to exclude me or to isolate you from me and other true apostles that you might follow them and bring them great favor and success’ (2 Peter 2:1-3). The zeal and enthusiasm of the false preachers was not to turn the Galatians to Christ but to win popular applause unto themselves.

v. 18. Paul does not condemn all zeal and affection, but only that which has an ulterior motive and objective. It is good to be zealous and extremely dedicated if our zeal is toward Christ and the gospel. The Godly zeal and affection for the gospel and one another was to be constant, continuous, and not only when he was present with them. He loved them and desired their salvation, sanctification, and peace in Christ, not only when he was there but when he was away. It seemed that when he was there, they were attached to him and the truth; but when he left, their affection cooled and they turned to others.

‘Content with beholding his face,  
my all to his pleasure resigned,  
No changes of season or place  
would make any change in my mind.’

v. 19. ‘My little children.’ Paul speaks to the Galatians most affectionately as a father to his sons. They were sons of God and were still babes in Christ; consequently, the term ‘little children’ was appropriate; but they were also ‘Paul’s children,’ for he was the instrument God used to bring them to faith in Christ.

‘Of whom I travail in birth again.’ He compares himself to a woman with child. All of his pains, sufferings, and labors in the ministry of the gospel he compares to the sorrows of a woman during the time of child-

bearing. The woman is concerned, dedicated, and involved in one purpose; and that is to bring forth a living child. She counts her suffering and pains worthwhile if she can produce a living, healthy child. The apostle had not thought for himself but for them. All that he was concerned about and dedicated to in prayer, preaching, and suffering was that Christ might be formed in them.

‘Until Christ be formed in you.’ This is the same as to be saved, to be a new creature in Christ Jesus!

1. A form of religion with its laws, ordinances, and ceremonies is not eternal life.
2. A form of morality with its fleshly do's and do not's is not eternal life.
3. A form of profession with its decisions, baptisms, and creeds is not eternal life.

‘Eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,’ to have the life of Christ, the presence of Christ, the Spirit and mind of Christ, and the very glory of Christ begotten, created, and formed in us (Gal. 2:20). Until this is done and unless this miracle of grace is accomplished, our religion is vain. It is no more than the Pharisees of old and of whom Christ said, ‘They neither know me nor my Father.’ Salvation is Christ in you; the hope of glory is Christ in you; the life of God is Christ in you (1 John 5:11-12).

v. 20. ‘I wish I could be present with you in person that I might exhort you face to face. Your concern about circumcision, holy days, and ceremonies makes me fearful of your knowledge of Christ and causes me to doubt your real interest in Christ.’ A union with Christ produces fruit and evidences; and when these fruits and evidences are absent, true ministers of the gospel are concerned for the spiritual well-being of their hearers.



When the lordship and sufficiency of Christ wane in a person, there is ample reason to question his profession.

# Born free

## Galatians 4:21-31

These verses present an allegory or a story in which people, things, and happenings have a symbolic meaning. Abraham had two sons—one by a servant maid, the other by his wife. Hagar, the servant, represented the covenant at Mount Sinai; Sarah, the free woman, represented the covenant of grace and the gospel church state. Also, their two sons represented two sorts of professors—legalists and evangelical Christians. True believers in Christ are like Isaac, children of promise; legalists are like Ishmael, men after the flesh.

v. 21. Tell me, ye that seek to be justified by the law and seek acceptance with God by obedience to the law, do you not hear what the law really says? The law never speaks peace or pardon but declares us all to be guilty (Rom. 3:19-20). It sentences us to wrath and condemnation. Do you want to be under such a law?

vv. 22-23. Abraham had two sons. Ishmael was born of a servant, so he was but a servant himself and not the heir. Isaac was born of a free woman who was joined in the family with her husband; therefore, Isaac was no servant but a free man, even the heir. A second principle is here intended. Ishmael was 'born after the flesh,' or by the ordinary strength of nature (his mother being a young woman fit for conception). Isaac was not conceived from such a principle. His mother was ninety years old and unable to bear children, so he was born by promise, or by the miracle of God.

vv. 24, 25. The two women represent the two covenants.

1. The covenant of grace under the *old administration*, which was greatly mistaken (it was never given to save) and was degenerated into a covenant of works by those who adhered to it.
2. The covenant of grace under the *new administration* (Heb. 8:7-8).

The Sinai covenant was prefigured by Hagar, the servant, by the effect which it produced if life and acceptance are sought by it. It produces children of bondage! It cannot produce heirs of life. It speaks of human works, merit, and fear and is like Jerusalem today in bondage to the law, sin, and the wrath of God. Followers of the law can no more be heirs of God than Ishmael, son of the bondswoman, can be the true heir of Abraham. He will always be the servant, not the son.

v. 26. Here Paul describes the covenant of grace in Christ—our Mediator, our Representative, our sin-offering. The Messianic kingdom of Christ is from above, not from Sinai. The righteousness is in his obedience, not in ours. Its redemption is in his sacrifice and his satisfaction, not in the ordinances of the tabernacle. Its access to the throne of God is through Christ, our Great High Priest, not through an earthly priesthood! This covenant is free from the curse of the law and from the bondage of the law and is the mother of every believer, Jew and Gentile. We are born of grace.

v. 27. This is a prophecy from Isaiah 54:1 and seems to refer to the church as it was in the early days after our Lord's death and under the ministry of the apostles. There were a few believers in a few cities, but the Lord promises that she shall be a fruitful mother with many children.

v. 28. We believers are the children of promise, as Isaac was.

1. As Isaac was promised to Abraham, we were promised and given to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:37-39; Eph. 1:3-4) .

2. As Isaac was conceived and born beyond the strength and course of nature, we are born spiritually by the power of God (John 1:12-13).

3. As Isaac was the heir by birth as the son of Abraham, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17).

v. 29. Ishmael, the son of flesh, mocked and persecuted the son of promise. Even so, the false prophets of justification by works and advocates of the Levitical Law for acceptance with God will and do mock and persecute all who trust and rest only in Christ for justification and redemption. Salvation by works and salvation by grace are opposite and contrary. True believers mock and persecute no one, but those who trust in their works and deeds have always hated and persecuted children of promise.

v. 30. Ishmael, the child of flesh and works, had to be cast out along with the mother who produced him. He could not be an heir with the true son. Even so, the system of works and human merit must be forsaken from our hearts, from our churches, and from our fellowship along with the children of flesh which this system produces. The heirs of God are the children of his grace in Christ Jesus. The self-righteous, the justified-by-works, the part-Christ-and-part flesh advocates cannot be heirs with children of promise.

v. 31. So then, we who are born again are not children of the law, of the natural flesh; but we are supernatural children of free grace. To God be all the glory!

# The liberty of grace

## Galatians 5:1-12

v. 1. We are told by the apostle to 'stand fast in' (highly esteem, maintain, defend) the liberty of Christ, of grace, of the gospel. Christ has freed us from:

1. Sin - not from the indwelling of it nor the temptation to it, but from the guilt of it, the dominion of it and the damning power of it.

2. The ceremonial law - from circumcision, sacrifices, feast days, sabbath days and all of its burdensome rites and ceremonies.

3. The moral law as a covenant of works - from its curse and condemnation, but not from obedience to it as held forth by our Lord Jesus.

Christ has given us a free use of the gospel ordinances, free access to the throne of grace and a freedom from fear of death and judgment. 'Don't allow anyone to entangle you again with a system of works and deeds in order to obtain God's favor. 'We are complete in Christ.'

v. 2. If a man submits to circumcision in order to gain acceptance with God, Christ profits him nothing. Christ must be received as our only and sufficient Redeemer. If we add anything (even if performed in a religious way) to the person and work of Christ to gain God's favour, whether it be circumcision, baptism, feasting, praying at certain times, or doing good for others, we are not fully trusting and resting in Christ. Therefore, he profits us 'nothing' for we are attempting to add our righteousness to his. This is to show contempt for him.

v. 3. If we are going to seek any measure of righteousness by works and obedience to laws, we are not depending fully on Christ and are, therefore, under obligation to obey perfectly the complete law, both ceremonial and moral.

v. 4. Keep this verse in its context! Remember to whom it is spoken and for what reason. 'You, who seek to be justified before God by your own righteousness and obedience to certain laws, such as circumcision, sabbath days, washings and abstaining from certain food, have turned away from the gospel of free grace and righteousness in Christ. You have departed from salvation by grace alone and have turned to a mixture of grace and works; therefore, Christ is become of no effect to you at all!' Christ is our whole Saviour or not our Saviour at all. He will not share his glory (Rom. 4:3-5; 11:5, 6).

v. 5. By the Holy Spirit's regeneration, revelation and help (not relying on our works, deeds, nor obedience to the law), we anticipate and wait for the fulfillment of that blessed hope of eternal glory which our right standing before God and our righteousness in Christ promise us. Our hope is in Christ, not in any deeds or works of the law.

v. 6. If we are in Christ by grace and faith, it does not profit us one thing to be circumcised or uncircumcised! To observe or not, to observe these things commanded in the Levitical law does not commend us to God. The service which God requires is a true heart of faith, which is evidenced and expressed by our love to Christ and to one another.

v. 7, 8. 'You started well in the beginning. You came as helpless sinners to Christ; you found in him all you need; you were zealous for the gospel of grace. Who turned you back to the law? Who hindered you in your faith?

Who turned you to another gospel? It was not God (who called you by grace) nor Christ (who fulfilled all things for you) nor the Holy Spirit (who revealed the gospel) nor an apostle of Christ (who preached the gospel to you). It was Satan and his messengers of human righteousness' (2 Cor. 11:2, 3, 13-15).

v. 9. Someone may say, 'There's no need for Paul to become so upset. We do not embrace the whole Jewish economy, only circumcision and a ceremony here and a sabbath day there.' Paul reminds them that a little leaven (error, evil, especially in regard to the work of Christ) will pervert and mislead the whole church. It must be stamped out immediately!

v. 10. The apostle has dealt roughly and plainly with them, yet he expresses confidence in them that they will see what he is teaching and deal with these false teachers. They shall hear their judgment from the church and from the Lord.

v. 11. Some of these false teachers contended that Paul taught that circumcision was necessary to salvation, since he had had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3). We know why Paul did this - to prevent the stumbling of weak Jews and to enable Timothy (a Gentile) to preach to them. It was not for his spiritual good.

1. 'If I am an advocate of circumcision and other laws, why do these men persecute and constantly oppose me?'

2. 'If I preach circumcision or any other work added to the person and work of Christ, the doctrine of the cross as an offence and as a stumbling-block would cease.' Men do not object to Christ's being a part Saviour. It is Christ the total and complete Saviour that they deny.

v. 12. Paul is speaking here of the false teachers (Gal. 1: 8, 9).



# Walk in the Spirit - not in the flesh

## Galatians 5:13-26

v. 13. In Christ (by the Spirit of God) every believer has been called (not only externally but internally) out of bondage to sin, Satan and the law and into the liberty of Christ and the gospel. Christ has made us free from days, ceremonies, sacrifices, circumcision and external rituals. We are complete in him. Yet the doctrine of Christian liberty may be abused, if we use it as an excuse to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, if we forget the rules of moderation, or if we make our liberty a stumbling block to weak Christians. We are to be directed in all that we do by a love for Christ and a love for others, especially for those who are babes in Christ (Rom. 14:13-16; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 10:23, 28-33).

v. 14. The moral laws of God are separated into two parts: my duties toward God and my duties toward men. These laws are fulfilled in this: 'love to God and love to men' (Matt. 22:37-40). When I consider what I can do, should do and am required to do in word, thought and deed toward others, it is all fulfilled in the word 'love' (Matt. 7:12). My love for the Lord will control my personal conduct and behavior, and my love for others will control my public conduct where others are concerned. As far as a man loves aright, so far he fulfills the law.

v. 15. 'If you are critical, unforgiving, unkind and filled with bitterness and division, you will destroy the unity, peace and fellowship of the church; for love is the cement that binds us together' (Col. 3:12-14).

v. 16. 'Walk in the Spirit.'

1. In the Holy Spirit of truth; for he guides us in all truth, revealing the word he has written.

2. In the Spirit of Christ as our example (Phil. 2:5-7).

3. In the spirit of love, exercising the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). And though the lust of the flesh is ever present, we shall not give way to it, nor be overcome by it. The presence of the flesh does not mean that it must be served.

v. 17. 'The flesh' is the corruption of nature which is still in every believer. 'The spirit' is the internal principle of grace and divine life that is born in us by the Spirit of God. These are contrary, or as opposite as light and darkness. They are enemies! One seeks to hurt or destroy the other, 'so that you cannot do the things that you would,' which is understood of both evil and good! The believer would do perfectly good (this is his desire), yet he cannot because of a nature of sin which still abides. His old nature would do all evil, but it cannot because of the divine nature that is ever present! (Rom. 7:15-17, 22, 23.)

v. 18. We are led by the Spirit of God to the word of God:

1. To the Lord Jesus Christ;

2. To the throne of grace;

3. To the duties of love and grace;

4. To a new life of fellowship with God.

It is not the law which is our leader and our inspiration, but the Holy Spirit. Men are not motivated to love and righteousness 'by law, but by the Holy Spirit.'

v. 19-21. 'In the flesh dwelleth no good thing.' Understand that these sinful practices are characteristic of the flesh, and though we have done these

things and the potential to do them is still present in our flesh (as evidenced by Abraham, David, Lot, Peter), yet this is not our pattern of life, not the practice of the believer! Our tenor of life and the bent of our wills is holiness, righteousness and peace. Those who would still live by these principles and practices of the flesh are not redeemed and shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

v. 22, 23. Notice the word is 'fruit,' not 'fruits.' This fruit is not of nature, nor flesh, but is the result of the indwelling Spirit and that which is produced by him. We can take no glory for any good or good works that are in us, for these are all by his grace. But this fruit, in various degrees according to our spiritual growth, is in every believer.

v. 24. The people who belong to Christ (who have been redeemed by his blood and indwelt by his Spirit) have put and are putting to death these works of the flesh. They have declared war on their natural flesh and the sins of the flesh and will have Christ, not sin, to reign over them.

v. 25. If we live by the spirit of grace, if we have been made alive to God by his power and presence, let us also walk daily by his help, assistance, influence and direction. We begin in the Spirit and we are sanctified daily by the Spirit of God.

v. 26. We are not desirous of honour, esteem and applause from men, for 'we are what we are by the grace of God.' God can take away what we have as easily as he gave it. We do not despise and provoke one another with our piety; nor do we want to appear to be wiser, richer in grace, nor more gifted than others, for we are less than the least of the saints. Nor do we envy the gifts, abilities, or grace of another. God will enlighten us, equip us and bless us as he sees fit to use us.

# Some good advice

## Galatians 6: 1-10

In this section the apostle deals with several areas that are most important to those who know and love the Saviour.

1. Our attitude toward those who stumble and fall.
2. Our love for one another and our identification with those in trial.
3. Our humility and genuine modesty.
4. Our generosity and willingness to share what we have.

v. 1. We are redeemed, children of God, indwelt by his Spirit of holiness and grace; but we are still human, still flesh. The motions of sin, the desires of the flesh and the potential to fall are in every believer. Therefore, if a brother falls into sin of spirit, attitude, or flesh, we are to make every attempt to recover, restore and resettle him to his place of fellowship. The attitude of strong, mature, restrained believers toward the fallen is not to be critical, 'holier than thou' and condemning. It is to be a spirit of humility and meekness, for we know that the potential to commit any sin is in us, and we only stand by the grace of God! (2 Tim. 2:24, 25.)

v. 2. 'Bear one another's frailties, infirmities and weaknesses' (and we all have them). 'Don't desert, withdraw fellowship and condemn.' 'Love beareth all things.' Bear these burdens by comforting the brother while gently reproving him. Sympathize with and forgive him in genuine mercy. In doing so we will fulfill the royal law of Christ (John 13:34).

v. 3. 'Man at his best state is altogether vanity.' 'In my flesh dwelleth no good thing.' I owe my being, my knowledge, my mercies, my preservation and my gifts to God alone (1 Cor. 4:7). In myself and left to myself I am nothing and know nothing. Now if in pride and self-esteem I think myself to be something, I am deceived. Pride of face, race, place, or grace is an abomination to God (Prov. 6:16-18).

v. 4, 5. These two verses must be considered in the context! It is so easy to compare ourselves with weaker Christians, less gifted believers, or even fallen brothers, and to begin to think that we are something special, we are strong, or we are better than others. We are not to prove ourselves by other men's sins or actions, but in the light of God's glory and holiness. If we can find some measure of genuine spiritual growth and some evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, we can rejoice in what God has truly been pleased to do for and in us, rather than being buoyed up in vain hope simply because we are not as other men. Every man is judged according to his own works, not in a comparative view of others.

v. 6. This verse has to do with the support of those who preach and teach the word of God. They that preach the gospel as pastors, evangelists and missionaries are to be supported and cared for by those whom they teach. The doctor who ministers to you, the policeman who protects you, the carpenter who builds for you are all compensated according to their service. Even so, the man who studies, prays for and teaches you the word of God (the most important service) is to share in your material substance.

v. 7. Do not be deceived by a covetous heart or by false teachers! Our God is not to be mocked; and withholding those things which are needed from his true ministers because of covetousness, ingratitude, or indifference is to mock God. He has, from the early days, ordained that those who minister in things of the temple shall partake of those things. 'What a man

sows he reaps.' This is a proverbial expression that applies to all actions, good and bad. If a man sows wheat, he reaps wheat. If a man sows nothing, he reaps nothing (2 Cor. 9:5-8).

v. 8. If a man is only concerned for his physical and material welfare, if he devotes all his possessions to pamper, please and provide for his body, he will reap the dividends of the flesh corruption! It will all decay, rot and be food for worms. But if a man uses his time, strength and substance for the glory of God and for the good of his soul and the souls of others, he will reap everlasting happiness (Matt. 6:19-21).

v. 9. If what we do and give is according to the will of God, out of a principle of love to him, for the glory of God and in the name of the Lord Jesus, we need not grow weary nor discouraged. In God's own time, either in this world or in the world to come, we shall see the fruit of our labors of love. Let us not be impatient but wait on the Lord.

v. 10. As we have the opportunity and the ability, and as the occasion requires, let us do good to all men (strangers, neighbors, believers and unbelievers), but especially let us care for, encourage and assist those who are believers with us in Christ Jesus.

## And in conclusion...

### Galatians 6:11-18

v. 11. The apostle had great affection for the believers at Galatia. The errors to which they had been exposed and into which many had fallen caused him great grief; so he says, 'Take notice of the length of this epistle and the fact that it is written in my own hand.' There were longer epistles, but most of them had been dictated by Paul and written by someone else (Rom. 16: 22). Oh, for a heart that cares for others and that is broken when their peace is threatened by error or sin!

v. 12. Paul's chief purpose in this epistle was to expose the false teachers and their errors; so he cannot conclude without taking some further notice of them, which he does by exposing their hypocrisy and ambition.

1. They do what they do to be seen of men. Their religion is an outward show (Matt. 6:1-5) and only exists in the observance of days, circumcision, and laws respecting meats and drinks. They congratulate one another on their spirituality and devotion to religious practices.

2. They want you to adopt their ceremonies and legalistic rules lest they suffer persecution from the religious Jews who were offended at the preaching of the total sufficiency of Christ. Christ crucified is our atonement, and Christ's obedience is our righteousness without any part of the Levitical Law to be added. To be saved, a man has only to look by faith to Christ, not to be baptized, circumcised, observe a day, join a church, or keep a law. 'We are complete in him!'

v. 13. These religious teachers who preach the law, teach the law, and boast of their regard for the law do not keep the whole law. This the flesh cannot do, and to bring in one part of the law for righteousness or justification before God requires us to keep the whole law perfectly. But they require you Gentiles to submit to circumcision so that they can boast before the other Jews of the number of proselytes or converts they have won to their brand of religion or system of salvation. Every religionist glories or rejoices in something. These false teachers glory in the flesh, in the outward form, in the noise they make, in the work they do, and in the souls they have won.

v. 14. Paul says, 'I glory in the cross of Christ.' My chief glory, rejoicing, and delight is in the Person and work of Christ, not in myself, my works, nor even in whatever God is pleased to do through me, but in Christ alone! He gloried not in the wood of the cross but in the person who suffered on that tree and the effects of his obedience and sacrifice. Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

'The world is crucified unto me.' I do not fear men nor what they can do anymore than I would fear one nailed to a tree. The ceremonial law is nailed to his cross. The world, its riches, honors, applause, pleasures, and profits are also nailed to that cross. I am no more drawn to them than I would be to a convicted felon nailed to a cross.

'I am crucified to the world.' The world had no affection for him, and he had none for the world. 'You can count me out of your plans; I am dead to your whole philosophy and system.' The ceremonial law was dead to Paul, and Paul was dead to it. He would have nothing to do with these beggarly elements.

v. 15. Circumcision and obedience to any of the rituals and ceremonies can profit you nothing before God for justification and righteousness.



Abstinence from these rituals and ceremonies can profit you nothing. That which is profitable and of eternal value is 'a new creature.' The new creature consists of a new spiritual man in Christ Jesus, a new glory of Christ motivated by a real love for him.

v. 16. This is the rule of our walk and conduct: to renounce all trust in and dependence upon any outward thing, to believe alone in Christ for righteousness, to walk in love, holiness, and newness of life under the influence of his Spirit and grace! (2 Cor. 5:14-15.)

v. 17. The false apostles boast of their circumcision made by their own hands; but Paul holds up the real scars in his body, made by stonings, beatings, imprisonment, and the sufferings which he endured for preaching the gospel of Christ. Like a soldier who holds up the stub of an arm lost in battle to show his devotion and bravery, Paul says, 'Don't bother me anymore with your false claims of will-worship and righteousness by the law.' Preach Christ crucified and sufferings will follow.

v. 18. Paul closes with his usual benediction, expressing his love for them as brethren and wishing for them the best blessing of God, the grace of Christ, that this might be in their hearts and spirits!

# Ephesians

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# God's free grace in Christ

## Ephesians 1:1-14

In order to help us in our study of the first part of chapter 1, I will divide it into five parts.

*vv. 1, 2.* The salutation or greeting. The writer is 'Paul.' His office is 'an apostle of Jesus Christ.' His call to that office is 'by the will of God.' The people to whom he writes are 'the saints at Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.' His prayer for them is for 'grace and peace from the Father and the Lord Jesus.'

*vv. 3.* The ground and cause of the salvation of sinners is the free grace of God in Christ. God is the God of Christ, as Christ is man and Mediator, and God is the Father of Christ, as Christ is God by an eternal and unspeakable generation (Ps. 2:7). 'Blessed be God, that is, we congratulate his greatness and goodness; we ascribe glory and honour to him and give thanks for all 'spiritual blessings.' These spiritual blessings are more than common or temporal blessings. They are 'special' blessings. They are mercy and grace through the eternal covenant, all things pertaining to justification, peace, pardon, adoption, sanctification and eternal life! 'In Christ' God has purposed, decreed and given every spiritual blessing which heaven can bestow, which heaven can require and which is needed to enter and enjoy heaven's realm. Praise God for all that I am, have and ever shall be! It is his gift through my Head and Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*vv. 4-6.* Paul deals with the means of salvation as they were purposed, decreed and prepared by the Father in his eternal counsel.

1. The Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, not because we were holy, but that we should be holy. God, in eternity past, determined to have a holy people to populate a new heaven and a new earth; therefore, he chose them in Christ out of Adam's fallen race (John 15:16; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Cor. 1:26-29).

2. The Father predestinated us to be adopted as his own children through Jesus Christ (Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29, 30). God foreordained the persons, the means and the end, or goal, of redemption according to the good pleasure of his own will.

3. The Father accepted us in Christ, which is understood of our persons as righteous, redeemed and sanctified in Christ. He looks upon us in Christ and is well pleased. We are already seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). All of this, God the Father has done for the eternal praise of his glorious grace (Eph. 2:7).

*vv. 7-12.* Paul deals with the means of salvation, as they were purchased and accomplished by Christ in the work of redemption.

1. Christ redeemed us by his blood. We were in bondage to sin, the law and justice (Gal. 3:10). The law of God is honored by his obedience and the justice of God is satisfied by his death, and we have full and complete forgiveness (Rom. 3:19-26).

2. Christ enlightened us as to the mystery of his gospel of redemption. The gospel is a hidden mystery to the natural man, Jew and Gentile (Col. 1:26; Rom. 16:25, 26; 1 Cor. 2:7-10). In Christ we see both the wisdom and the power of God in redemption. This he reveals when he pleases and to whom he pleases, that in his own time, elect angels and elect men will be brought together under one Head (Col. 1:16-18).

3. Christ enriched us. In Christ we were made God's children and we obtained that glorious inheritance of all things (Rom. 8:16, 17).

4. All of this Christ, our Redeemer, has done for the eternal praise of his glorious grace (1 Cor. 1:30, 31).

*vv. 13, 14.* Paul deals in these verses with the means of salvation as they are applied to the elect by the Holy Spirit.

1. We heard the gospel. This is hearing with the heart, the understanding and faith (Matt. 13:16, 17; 1 Thess. 1:4, 5). All men hear words, but the Holy Spirit quickens, regenerates and gives spiritual life to God's elect. They hear not just words, but truth – the good news of salvation.

2. We believed the gospel (Rom. 10:9, 10, 13-15; Eph. 2:8, 9). Faith is the gift and work of God in the soul.

3. We were sealed with the Holy Spirit. The seal or stamp of the eternal covenant is not circumcision, baptism, nor even our outward graces, but the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9, 14-16; 1 John 3:24; 4:13).

4. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance. He is the first-fruits, the pledge and foretaste, the down payment on our inheritance. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit in anticipation of the full possession of our inheritance in God's good time. And all this he does to the praise of his glory.

# Paul's prayer for the Ephesians

## Ephesians 1:15-23

v. 15. Good reports had come to Paul of the Ephesians' 'faith in the Lord Jesus.' (They had seen the glory of his person and the fullness of his grace.) Paul also had heard of their love for all believers – Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, lesser and greater. Their faith was the cause of their love, the evidence of their justification (Rom. 5:1; John 13:35).

These two graces are inseparable. Faith and love go together and are found in the same persons. Where they exist, they cannot be hidden. Faith will confess and lean on Christ, and love will manifest itself in word and in deed (1 John 4:8).

v. 16. When we discover a work of God's grace in other people, it always leads us to two special responses:

1. We give thanks to God for them because this life and love in them is not a product of their merit but the gift of God.
2. We pray for them. We need to pray continually for one another as much after we are saved as before (1 Sam. 12:23).

In the next verses Paul gives us a summary of his prayers to God on their behalf.

v. 17. 'That God may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.'

These people already knew the Lord, as was indicated by their faith in him; but this is a prayer for the increase of that knowledge (2 Peter 3:18; Phil. 3:10). This knowledge of Christ and its increase can only come by

and through the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of wisdom and revelation (John 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 2:10-13).

v. 18. 'That the eyes of your understanding may be flooded with light and understanding' – that you might see

1. the sinfulness of sin,
2. the insufficiency of your own righteousness, and
3. the beauty, glory and suitableness of Christ as Redeemer and Lord.

The natural man, being in darkness, neither sees nor understands these mysteries (2 Cor. 4:3-6). We need a better view of them.

v. 18. 'That you may know what is the hope of his calling.'

By which is meant either the hope of external happiness, Christ, who is our hope, the grace of hope, which is an exercise of faith, or all three!

For the hope of eternal glory is founded on Christ, and the grace of hope lives only in the heart where Christ dwells! As we know more of Christ, we know more of the hope of his calling.'

v. 18. 'That ye may know the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.'

The elect are the Lord's portion and inheritance, in whom he is glorified and will be glorified (Eph. 2:7). This seems to be speaking of the heavenly inheritance which the Lord is preparing for us (John 14:2, 3). Paul said there are no words to describe it (2 Cor. 12: 2-4).

v. 19. 'That you may know the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe.' This is the power of God in our conversion and faith, the power

that regenerated us, raised us from the dead and formed Christ in us (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13).

v. 20. This power of God that quickened us and made us to live spiritually is compared with that power which raised Christ from the dead. Christ was raised for our justification as our Representative. We live because he lives, and we are free from sin because Our Surety, who bore our sins, is now free from them. But there is a likeness between his resurrection and our quickening.

1. His resurrection is called a begetting. He is the first-begotten from the dead. Our regeneration is termed a begetting (1 Peter 1:3).

2. His human body was lifeless, as natural men are without spiritual life.

3. His human body could not raise itself, as we cannot give ourselves life.

4. His resurrection was the pure, unaided work of God, as is our regeneration (Eph. 2:1).

5. His resurrection led to his exaltation at the right hand of God and is where in our representative (Christ) we who are regenerated are already seated! (Eph. 2:6.)

v. 21. Christ, our Lord, is exalted far above all rule or authority, above all power and dominion in heaven, earth, or hell, and above every name that is named or title that can be conferred in this world or the world to come (Col. 1:16-18; Phil. 2:9-11). He has authority over all, especially his church!

vv. 22, 23. Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18; John 17:2). Christ is the supreme Head of his church. This headship is an honorable, glorifying gift to him as Mediator. But it is also a grace gift to the church, for he rules for



our good, he performs all offices for our salvation and he communicates all good things to us (Ps. 8:6).

# Salvation by sovereign grace

## Ephesians 2:1-10

In this portion of scripture the apostle magnifies the riches of God's grace in the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ. He describes what we were by nature (vv. 1-3). He then relates what God has done for us in Christ (vv. 4, 5). He next observes our present and future blessings and glory (vv. 6-10).

v. 1. Every man by nature is dead in sin – separated from God (v. 1 2), without God, without Christ, without the Spirit, completely deprived of any spiritual ability to do anything good (Gen. 6:5; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 8:7; 3:10-12). The fountain cause of this spiritual death was Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12, 17-19). This corrupt state of sin and spiritual deadness is continued through reproduction (Ps. 51:5; 58:3).

v. 2. Sins and evil are the path (road or direction) in which all unbelievers walk. Walking denotes a continuous practice or tenor of life. Sin was our daily employment and occupation. In this walk of darkness we had two guides.

1. 'According to the corrupt course and custom of the world.' The customs, manners and way of life of fallen flesh determined our thoughts, values and conversation (Isa. 55:8; 1 Cor. 3:3). We walked as carnal men walk, not as spiritual men walk.

2. 'According to the prince of the power of the air.' This is Satan, who is called this, not because of any power he had over winds, storms and weather, but because he is the prince of a legion of demons and evil spirits who have residence in the air. He has great power to blind men's minds, fill their hearts with evil and

lead them into great sin. Men walk after him, imitate him and do his will (John 8:44). He reigns now in all unbelievers.

v. 3. The apostle says that in this condition, conduct and state we all (Jew and Gentile, himself included) lived and walked.

1. Our course of life was 'in the lusts of our flesh.' This has to do mainly with the body – its appetites, corrupt desires and sensual delights (Gal. 5:16-21).

2. We fulfilled the desires of the flesh and mind.' Desire here is the will and thoughts of our evil minds. Not only is our flesh corrupt, but also our affections, understanding and wills. We sinned because we willed to sin. We walked in darkness because we loved darkness (John 3:19).

3. The reason for all this: 'We were children of wrath by nature.' This is the root or cause of our sin and miserable slavery. From our conception, birth and cradle we are children of wrath – God's wrath!

vv. 4, 5. 'But God who is rich in mercy...' Mercy is an attribute of God as well as righteousness and justice. God's mercy is plenteous, free and infinite in Christ. His love and mercy to his chosen people in Christ are from everlasting and arise altogether out of himself, not because of any merit foreseen in them.

'Even when we were dead in sins,' he made us alive in union and fellowship with Christ. Consider this in two ways.

1. When our Lord lived on this earth, we lived in him. When he died, we died in him. When Christ arose and ascended, we arose and are now seated with him in the heavenlies. In this sense we are quickened with Christ.

2. In regeneration (the new birth) a sinner (dead spiritually) is made alive in Christ. He is given a new nature, a new heart and becomes a new creature. Christ is that life: for he is the author, the cause and the source of life (Col. 3: 4). It is a gift of his grace.

*vv. 6, 7.* This is a spiritual resurrection from death (in sin and separation from God) unto spiritual life (a living union with God in Christ). Christ (our Representative, our federal Head, our great High Priest) has already entered into heaven, and we are loved, forgiven, accepted and made one with God in him. Throughout eternity we shall be displayed as the trophies of God's wonderful grace. All of the elect angels and elect men will forever praise the Lord for his mercy and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Rev. 5:9-14).

*vv. 8, 9.* We are redeemed from death and sin to life and glory by the free grace of God. Election, redemption, calling, repentance, faith, sanctification and eternal glory are all ours by the free grace of our Lord (1 Cor. 1:30). Faith in Christ is the way, means, or instrument by which we receive and enjoy salvation; and this saving faith is not the product of man, but the gift of God. We receive salvation by faith and give all the glory to God. Any works of righteousness done by us are not ours, but are by the grace of God.

*v. 10.* However, lest (by commending God's grace as the cause, source and sustaining power in salvation and excluding works as making any contribution in our justification) the apostle should give the impression that works and a holy life are unnecessary, he adds, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' The spirit that lives in us is the spirit of love, joy, faith, humility and truth. Our calling is a 'holy calling.' Our Father is a 'merciful and holy Father.' Our walk is with him (Phil. 1:9-11; 1 Tim. 6:11).



# No more strangers – but sons

## Ephesians 2:11-22

In the preceding verses of this chapter Paul magnifies the riches of God's grace toward Jew and Gentile sinners. We all were dead in trespasses and sins. We all were children of wrath, following Satan and fulfilling our lusts and desires. But God quickened us together with Christ. Both Jew and Gentile have need to praise the grace of God (Rom. 3:19-24).

v. 11. The Ephesians are called upon to remember and consider further (in order that God's grace and mercy to them might be magnified) that they were not only dead in sin, but were Gentile dogs – not of the covenant people Israel, not of the house of Abraham, not of the people to whom the promises, prophecies and sacrifices were given. They were called uncircumcised by way of reproach and contempt.

v. 12. As Gentiles, 'Ye were without Christ.' The Messiah was promised to Israel, the prophecies concerning the Saviour were given to Israel and the types, sacrifices and priesthood were of Israel.

'Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.' So great an alienation and distance was there between Jew and Gentile that Gentiles could not dwell among Jews, eat nor converse with them, marry them, eat the Passover, nor join with them in worship.

'Strangers from the covenant of promise,' to the covenant given to Abraham, to the covenant at Sinai and to the covenant of grace. It might read, 'strangers to the promises of the covenant.'

'Having no hope' of a Messiah or salvation by him, no hope of the first resurrection or eternal life (Rev. 20:5, 6).

‘Without God in the world,’ without any knowledge of God, without any prescribed worship of God, without any sacrifice or sin-offering by which to approach God. It was said, ‘He who dwells outside the land of Israel is like one who has no God!’

v. 13. But now, being chosen in Christ, redeemed in Christ, called to faith in Christ and becoming believers in Christ, we who were far from his law, his land, his people (aliens, strangers, without any knowledge of God) are made one with God through the blood of Christ. We are sons of God, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19-22).

Near, so near to God –  
Nearer I cannot be:  
For in the person of his Son,  
I am as near as he!

v. 14. Christ is the author of peace with God, the giver of peace to our hearts and the maker of peace between Jew and Gentile. The wall may refer to the wall in the temple which divided the court of Israel from the court of the Gentiles and kept them at a distance in worship; but it definitely is the ceremonial law of circumcision, types and sacrifices, for Christ is the fulfillment of all for Jew and Gentile (Rom. 1:16, 17).

v. 15. Christ, in his flesh, abolished all differences between Jew and Gentile. He is the tabernacle, where God meets men and men meet God. He is the one great High Priest, who intercedes on behalf of all. He is the Passover, the Lamb of God, the atonement. Circumcision is of the heart (not in the flesh) and results in a broken heart toward sin and God. All believers are one (Gal. 6:15; 3:28).

v. 16. By one body is meant either the human body of Christ, in which he obeyed the law, suffered for our sins, arose and ascended, or it may be meant that he reconciled all believers into one mystical body, the church of which he is the head. This he did by the cross, having slain the enmity of the law (both moral and ceremonial) (Eph. 5:22, 23).

v. 17. He came by his spirit in the ministry of his apostles, preaching Christ, who is our peace (peace made by his blood) and the gospel of peace to Jew and Gentile.

v. 18. Jew and Gentile have access to the Father through Christ. Neither the law nor justice stand in the way of a believing sinner approaching God if he comes through Christ alone (Heb. 4:14-16).

vv. 19, 20. Now we are no more aliens (strangers or foreigners) but citizens of the city of God, sons of God in his household. Christ is the foundation on which the church is built. He is the cornerstone which knits together all believers – Jew and Gentile, Old and New Testament saints, saints on earth and saints above, in all ages and places (Matt. 16:15-18; 1 Cor. 3:10, 11).

vv. 21, 22. This is a spiritual building and will abide for ever. It is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It grows and is brought together as God calls out his elect, It is not finished yet as it will be. It is the habitation of God through the spirit. God dwells in his people (1 Peter 2:4, 5).



# The mystery of Christ revealed

## Ephesians 3:1-8

v. 1. This epistle was written when Paul was a prisoner in Rome. He called himself ‘the prisoner of Jesus Christ’ because he was in prison for preaching Christ and his gospel. The only crime of which he was guilty was preaching the gospel of Christ and that to the Gentiles. He taught them that circumcision and the rest of the ceremonies of the law were not binding on them, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe. This stirred up the Jews against him and led to his imprisonment. ‘Therefore I am a prisoner for the sake of you Gentiles.’ Another thought to comfort is that the forces of evil only have power over God's people as the Lord permits them (and it always works for our good and his glory) (Gen. 50:19, 20; Rom. 8:28).

v. 2. The word ‘dispensation’ is stewardship or administration. The apostle Paul acted by divine authority. He was a steward or appointed ambassador of the mysteries of God to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:14, 15).

vv. 3, 4. The gospel of Christ is often called a ‘mystery’ (Eph. 1:9; 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:25-27). The Trinity, the union of two natures in Christ, the whole doctrine of salvation by grace, the union of Christ and the believer are all mysteries which the natural man does not know, understand, nor love. They must be revealed by God's spirit, even to Paul (1 Cor. 2:7-11; Gal. 1:11, 12).

v. 5. The mystery of Christ (his incarnation, imputed righteousness, sacrifice, resurrection and intercession) certainly was not known nor understood by men in general; nor was it revealed to the prophets and men

of God in the Old Testament as clearly and as plainly as it is now revealed to the apostles and to us. Some hints were given to Adam; and the gospel was preached to and by Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Isaiah; but it lay hidden for the most part in types, shadows and prophecies. One thing we know – whatever they understood about his person and work, it was not to the extent that we know and understand by his spirit (Luke 24:44-47).

v. 6. This was especially not understood by the Old Testament prophets: that the Gentiles should be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ right along with the Jews – that the Gentiles should be one with them in the same body, under one and the same Head (Jesus Christ), partakers of the same grace, and enjoy the same privileges in Christ. Even the apostles had difficulty with this mystery (Gal. 2:11-16).

v. 7. He is a true minister of the gospel who is made a minister (not by men, but by God), called of God to the work of the ministry and given the gifts and grace which are required to fulfill his responsibility. The true minister can use natural capacity, education and acquired learning; but the gift of interpreting the Scriptures, presenting the gospel of free grace, leading men in the true worship of God, and taking oversight of the church is a distinct thing from natural ability, human learning, or even internal grace; it is given by the effectual working of God's power.

v. 8. 'This grace to know Christ, to understand the mysteries of redemption in Christ and to preach Christ is given to me. I am unworthy of this high honour, for I am less than the least of all the saints, the chief of sinners.' The greatest saints are generally the most humble. They have the lowest thoughts of their works and are the greatest admirers of the grace of God. The reason for their humility is an awareness of their sinful natures and a discovery of the love and grace of God to them in Christ Jesus. Their

subject is now and will always be the ‘unsearchable riches of Christ’ (Rom. 12:3-5).

# Holy treasure in earthen vessels

## Ephesians 3:8-21

The apostle Paul was a very humble man. The choice servants of God are, generally speaking, the most humble. The reasons for their humility are that they are most aware of their own sinfulness, they have greater discoveries of God's love and grace in Christ and, being more sorely tried, they lean more completely on the arm of grace.

v. 8. Paul saw great grace in being trusted with the ministry of the gospel and having such treasure put in an earthen vessel. He was appointed to take the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

v. 9. The mystery mentioned in this verse is the gospel of Christ (Mark 4:11; 1 Cor. 2:7, 8). Natural men do not understand the gospel of substitution, do not see the wisdom of the cross and therefore must be born again, regenerated and taught of God (John 3:3; 6:44, 45). The ministry of the word is the means God uses to enlighten men (Rom. 10:13-15). The gospel was there from the beginning in the counsel and covenant of God; for he created all things in, by and for Christ (Col. 1:14-17); but it was hidden in some measure from the elect angels, from even the Old Testament saints and altogether from natural men.

v. 10. The purpose is that through and by the church of the Lord Jesus Christ the complex, many-sided wisdom of God in justifying the ungodly by Christ Jesus might be made known to the angels and powers even in heaven (1 Peter 1:12). The angels are witnesses of God's mercy to the church in Christ (Heb. 1:14).

v. 11. All of the salvation of sinners in Christ (which displays the wisdom and mercy of God) is according to his own eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ before the world began. Christ the Redeemer and the time of his incarnation, sufferings and resurrection were all decreed by God (Acts 4:26-28). The persons for whom he became incarnate, suffered and died were chosen in him (Eph. 1:3-5).

v. 12. Therefore, because we are redeemed by Christ, our Representative (Rom. 5:19; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22) and Substitute, and God has enabled us to believe on Christ (who is the object of saving faith), we have boldness to enter into the very presence of God with courage and confidence (Heb. 10:19-22).

v. 13. 'So I ask you not to be discouraged because of the trials and troubles I have gone through to preach the gospel to you. I am not ashamed to be identified with Christ in reproach (Heb. 13:13) and hatred (John 15:18, 19). It is an honour to be counted worthy to suffer with him (Heb. 11:24-26; 2 Cor. 1:6).

v. 14. 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father.' The awesome responsibility of ministering the gospel, the privilege of access to the throne of grace and the perseverance of the believers in Ephesus led Paul to pray for them (2 Cor. 2:14-16; 3:5).

v. 15. He is the Father of all believers, all the elect in heaven and earth (John 1:12; 20:17).

vv. 16-19. This is the prayer Paul prayed for them:

1. That God would strengthen them so that they would not faint under trial. That the Holy Spirit would strengthen their spirits, their

hearts and their inner selves with fresh supplies of grace. Strength to live for God's glory is from within (John 7:37-39).

2. This is the true source of all spiritual life, the key to union with the Father, the fountainhead of all blessings and the hope of eternal life – ‘Christ in you’ (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27). That they might be rooted and grounded deep in love for Christ. This is our security – his love for us and our love for him.

3. That they might be able, with all believers, to have a greater understanding of the great love of God for us – what is the breadth, the length, the height and the depth of his love (Rom. 5:8).

4. That they might understand more of the special and peculiar love of Christ for his church, which is beyond perfect knowledge (his engaging to be Surety for them, his assumption of their nature, his payment for their debts, his giving them a perfect righteousness, his intercession, his constant supply of mercy and grace). We have some knowledge of it, but the more of it we know, the more we will be filled and flooded with Christ himself.

*vv. 20, 21.* The prayer closes with a celebration of the perfection, power and glory of God. God begins, carries on and finishes the work he purposed to do for his people. This work of eternal redemption will be infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams.

# A walk worthy of our calling

## Ephesians 4:1-7

In the first three chapters of this epistle Paul deals with the doctrines of the grace of God, explaining and establishing them. In the last three chapters he deals mainly with the duties of believers with regard to the Christian walk.

v. 1. 'I beseech you to take heed to your conduct and conversation that your behavior be a credit to him who by his grace called you out of darkness into his kingdom of light. In your attitude, speech, home life, business dealings and social contacts, conduct yourselves in a way that is becoming to the name of Christ which you wear. Adorn the gospel of Christ with righteousness' (Titus 2:7-10).

v. 2. 'In lowliness and meekness,' that is, in the exercise of humility having the best thoughts of others and the lowest thoughts of ourselves; in not envying the gifts and graces of others but rejoicing in them; and in willingness to receive correction, rebuke and instruction.

'With long-suffering,' bearing patiently the faults and infirmities of others, not being easily provoked to anger nor being offended by slight or misunderstanding. God is certainly patient with us! (Gal. 6:1, 2).

'Forbearing one another in love,' making whatever allowances are necessary because you love one another! (1 Cor. 13:4-7; 1 Peter 4:8).

v. 3. 'Be eager and strive earnestly to protect and keep the harmony and oneness of spirit in the church.' This spiritual union between Christ and his people and between believers is produced by the Holy Spirit. We are united in faith, love, purpose and one body. My responsibility is to do all

within my power to protect and preserve that unity, even to surrendering my rights and opinions (Ps. 133:1; 1 Cor. 3:1-3).

v. 4. ‘There is one body,’ the church. It is called one body with respect to Jew and Gentile, to saints above and below and to separate classes and societies; for though there are several congregations and local churches, there is one church of which Christ is the Head and we are all brethren (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18).

‘There is one spirit,’ the Holy Spirit of God, who enlightens, quickens, makes alive and incorporates us all in the body of Christ – members one of another.

‘There is one hope of your calling,’ that is, the glory hoped for and which is reserved for us in heaven. There are no degrees in this glory. It will be equally possessed by all; for they are all loved with the same love, chosen in the same Head, redeemed by the same blood and secured in the same covenant.

v. 5. ‘One Lord,’ the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Lord by right of creation (Col. 1:16, 17), of the Father's decree (Acts 2:36) and of his sacrificial death (Rom. 14: 9; Phil. 2: 9-11).

‘One faith.’ There is but one true grace of faith. It may be little faith, much faith, or great faith; but its author and object are the same in all – the Lord Jesus Christ in his person and work (John 3:36).

‘One baptism.’ There is one baptism under the gospel, which is water baptism; to be administered in one and the same way – by immersion; with one and the same subjects – believers; and in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:36-39).

v. 6. There is one eternal, infinite, omnipotent God of heaven and earth, who is the Father of all believers in Christ and who is sovereign over all, taking care of us all and dwelling in us all. Paul is saying (in vs. 4-6) that,



as believers, we have all these things in common – one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, who is our Father. Therefore, we must and will be one family joined together in love stronger than anything this world can know. To disturb that unity is displeasing to God (Prov. 6:16-19).

v. 7. God's grace was given to us individually – grace to know Christ, to walk with Christ and to minister for the glory of Christ. He gives grace and gifts as he will and to whom he will, and there is no room for pride, envy, or contempt (1 Cor. 4:7).

# The work of the ministry

## Ephesians 4:8-16

v. 8. This is a quotation from Psalm 68:18, and it speaks of our Lord's ascension to heaven from Mt Olivet in the sight of the apostles (Acts 1:9-11). In this he fulfils the type of the High Priest entering into the holiest to make intercession for his people, to prepare a place for them and to send down the Holy Spirit with his grace and gifts to them.

‘He led captivity captive.’ He led a train of vanquished foes; he conquered those who had conquered us, such as sin, Satan and death. Christ conquered and triumphed over every spiritual enemy and those of his people.

‘And gave gifts to men’ – the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and especially such as qualify men for the work of the ministry and make them useful for God's glory and the good of the church (Rom. 12:5-8).

vv. 9, 10. These verses are simply saying that it could not be said of Christ that he ascended into heaven if he had not first descended or come down to the earth (John 3:13). ‘The lower parts of the earth’ does not mean hell (as the Catholics say), but rather the whole of his humiliation, beginning with his mother's womb. He was made flesh!

‘That he might fulfill all things’ that were written, prophesied and typified of him. All that he did, is doing and will do is according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Luke 24:27).

v. 11. He himself appointed and gave men gifts that qualified them to be apostles. This was the first and chief office in the church. They were called by Christ, had their doctrine directly from him and had a power to

work miracles to confirm their doctrine (Heb. 2:3, 4). This office is now ceased.

‘And some prophets’ – not ordinary ministers of the word but unusual men of God in the early church who had a particular gift to interpret scripture (especially the prophecies of the Old Testament) and of foretelling things to come, such as Agabus (Acts 11:27-30).

‘Evangelists’ – preachers of the gospel who were traveling missionaries.

‘Pastors and teachers.’ Many say this is one and the same office, and it may be, for every true pastor is a teacher of the Scriptures. But it seems to me that there are teachers in the church who are not pastors. Pastors are the shepherds of the flock, while teachers may be gifted brethren in the church, teachers of the word and assistants to the pastors.

v. 12. The reason Christ gave us these ministers of the gospel is for ‘the perfecting of all believers,’ for the best of believers are imperfect. Our faith, love, knowledge and sanctification need growth and maturity (1 Peter 2:2).

‘For the work of the ministry,’ to preach the gospel to the lost (2 Tim. 2:10), to oversee the church (1 Peter 5:1-4) and to teach the things of Christ (Matt. 28:19, 20).

‘For the edifying of the body of Christ.’ We preach and teach, not to divide nor to scatter the sheep, but to strengthen, build up and give comfort and assurance to the people of God.

v. 13. We pray, preach and teach until all the elect come to saving faith and are united in their sentiments concerning Christ, the source and object of faith. We preach until all of the elect come to a spiritual knowledge of Christ, behold his glory, trust in him and appropriate him to themselves. We preach that the elect may grow to a spiritual maturity. We will not be perfect until Christ comes and we are conformed to his image; but we,

through proper use of the word, grow from spiritual infancy to maturity and strength in Christ (1 Peter 2:1, 2). The next two verses indicate that this is the meaning.

*vv. 14, 15.* When we were first converted, we were babes in Christ – babes in understanding, having to be fed with milk; babes in strength, having to be protected, watched over and pacified; babes in fruit, having the buds of the fruit of the spirit but not the full flower. As children we are in danger from false teachers, cunning men and strange doctrines. As our tree ministers feed us the word of God, we grow up in all things in Christ. We become strong in faith, love, patience, knowledge and all grace. The danger of our being deceived or led away from Christ is lessened. The word of truth is the instrumental means of such growth (1 John 2:12, 13).

*v. 16.* Because of Christ, who is our Head, the whole church (called the whole body) in its various parts and members is joined and firmly knit together (1 Cor. 12:12, 13, 27). The bond (or cement) which holds us together is the grace of faith and love supplied by Christ to every part. When each part or member is working properly, the body grows to full maturity and builds itself up in love.

# Put off the old man and put on the new

## Ephesians 4:17-32

v. 17. Before conversion, believers walk as others (Eph. 2:2, 3). But when we are brought to a knowledge of Christ, our walk, conduct and conversation are not (or ought not be) like the unconverted. ‘The vanity of the mind’ is vain philosophy, foolish thoughts of self and God, the pursuit of worldly riches, honour and acclaim, and the continued effort to find pleasure and happiness in the world (Ps. 39:5).

vv. 18, 19. The unbelieving Gentiles are intelligent and wise enough in evil things, but in spiritual things their understanding is darkened (2 Cor. 4:3, 4; 1 Cor. 2:7-9).

They are alienated from the life of God because of sin. They have natural life and knowledge, but have no spiritual life nor proper knowledge of God (John 8:19, 42-44).

They are ignorant and their hearts are hardened against God. Every natural man is ignorant of spiritual things and his heart is hardened daily by sin (Rom. 8:7).

In their ignorance, deadness and carnality, they have given themselves to sensuality, eager to indulge in every form of evil and dishonesty. They are given to whatever sin their corrupt natures may suggest or desire.

v. 20. Believers cannot live in this manner, for a life of sin and indulgence in fleshly carnality is certainly not the life of Christ as we have been taught by his spirit.

vv. 21, 22. ‘Assuming that the Lord has spoken to you through his word and by his spirit and that you have been taught the truth as it is in Christ

Jesus (John 6:44, 45), you will put off and discard your old way of life. You will deny the old man (the old nature) the right to rule over you. The old nature has its lusts and desires, but they are deceitful. They promise pleasure and profit but yield neither! Put down this old nature with strong denials' (1 Tim. 6: 11; Titus 2:11, 12).

v. 25. By prayer, worship, reading the word and continued feeding upon Christ, our spiritual man is refreshed, revived and renewed (Ps. 51:10).

v. 24. To 'put on' the new nature is not to make ourselves new creatures in Christ, for this is God's work and not man's. It is God who regenerates and creates a new man in true righteousness and holiness. But to 'put on the new man' is to walk daily according to the principles of grace and holiness formed in us. Walk in the Spirit of Christ and avoid not only the works of evil but the very appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22).

v. 25. Reject and denounce lying, exaggeration and any effort to deceive. Speak tactfully and kindly words of truth to one another; for we are of the same body and a man is foolish to lie to himself.

vv. 26, 27. There is an anger which is not sinful, for anger is found in God and in Christ! It arises from a true zeal for God and for holiness and it is not against persons but against sins. But do not allow even this anger to continue: let it be over when the day is over. All anger and indignation should quickly be forgotten (James 1:19, 20). Do not give Satan any room, foothold, or opportunity to use you for evil purposes or to hinder the kingdom of God by your anger and bad attitude.

v. 28. Stealing takes many directions – actual theft, obtaining possessions by false representation, failing to pay debts and receiving wages while not

putting forth our best efforts. Make an honest living and be able and willing to share with others.

v. 29. Let your conversation be seasoned with grace and language which is spiritually beneficial to others. Avoid unwholesome words, worthless talk, gossip and excessive levity (Col. 3:8, 9; 4:6).

v. 30. The things mentioned above grieve, vex and offend the Holy Spirit of God, who dwells in us and by whom we are sealed unto the day of final redemption.

v. 31. Let all bitterness and wrath (bad temper, resentment and rage) be put away. Let all contention, strife and quarrelling, along with all slander and ill will, be put away! (Col. 3:19.)

v. 32. Become useful, helpful, kind and tender-hearted with one another; and forgive one another readily and freely as God in Christ forgave you (Matt. 6:14, 15).

# Be ye followers of God as his children

## Ephesians 5:1-17

v. 1. The opening sentence gives us the theme of this chapter. As the children of God, we are to imitate and follow after him in acts of righteousness and holiness, in loving and forgiving one another, in acts of mercy and goodness and in freely distributing to the needs of others (Titus 2: 7-10).

v. 2. 'Walk in love.' Here is the key to all that is commanded, expected and needed for godliness and sanctification!

1. Live in love to God our Father, who has given us all things in Christ;

2. Live in love to Christ, for the love he has for us, the relationship we have with him and the things he has done for us, but chiefly

3. Live in love to one another. Our example is Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us. He was both Priest and Sacrifice, giving his blood as a sacrifice to redeem us to God. This principle of love is sufficient motivation for mercy, forgiveness, kindness and all godliness! (Matt. 22:36-40; John 13:34, 35; 1 John 3:23.)

vv. 3, 4. Paul names several sinful practices which are unbecoming to children of God and which love for Christ and for one another should constrain them to avoid. 'Fornication' is committed between unmarried persons and was thought by the Gentiles not to be sinful. 'Uncleanness' includes adultery, incest, homosexuality and all unnatural lusts. 'Covetousness' is an immoderate desire after worldly, material things, but,



judging from the context, it denotes continual thoughts and desires for the above lusts. Not only should believers avoid these sins, but they should avoid any thoughts or suggestions by liberal thinkers that they are not exceedingly sinful!

‘Filthiness, foolish talking’ and ‘jesting’ are sins of the mouth and tongue. It is much more becoming for a believer to be giving thanks to God and speaking of his kingdom, his mercy and his blessings than to employ his tongue in secular foolishness. To be more precise, filthiness of tongue is obscene words, blasphemy and offensive language. Foolish talking is vain, idle and unprofitable babbling, filled with exaggeration and worldliness. Jestings can become sinful when too much emphasis is given to humor, kidding and joking. Christians are happy people. They are a family of joyful friends who can share humor, experiences and pleasures; but they must carefully avoid even wholesome humor, giving themselves to more spiritual conversation which edifies and builds up the believer in faith.

v. 5-7. ‘With reference to fornication, unclean sexual practices and greed for the material things of this world (which is really idolatry), don't be deceived by the vain words of so-called free thinkers and liberal religionists. These practices are evil, and no person who walks in this manner has any inheritance in the kingdom of God. A sinful, corrupt life brings the wrath of God upon a religious person as quickly as upon an atheist. Do not be a partaker with the evil men even though they profess to believe on Christ.’

v. 8. ‘At one time you were in total darkness, not knowing the evil of sin, the will of God, nor his true righteousness. You gave vent to the flesh and cared not for the glory of God. You are no longer in darkness, but are enlightened by the Spirit of God. Therefore, walk as children of light, not in sin and the works of darkness, but in faith, truth and holiness.’

v. 9. The fruit of the spirit (the kind of life produced by the presence of the Holy Spirit) is ‘goodness’ (as opposed to greed, lust and cruelty), ‘righteousness’ (as opposed to carnality, evil and worldliness) and ‘truth’ (as opposed to hypocrisy, lying and deceit). Where the Spirit of God dwells, there will be to some degree the appearance of this fruit (Gal. 5:22).

v. 10. There are many things which are ‘acceptable to the Lord’ – the person of Christ, his righteousness, sacrifice and mediation, the persons of his people in Christ and the lives and conversation of his people when they are becoming to the gospel and according to his will (Col. 3:20; Heb. 13:15, 16, 20, 21).

v. 11. The believer will not and cannot find and enjoy social fellowship with ungodly and profane people (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Though we must work, live as neighbors and often converse with unbelievers, it is impossible for a true believer to enjoy and seek out the company of persons who know not and do not love our Lord. We reprove them not only with words but with a godly life which exposes their vain way of life, as light that drives away darkness (Heb. 11:7).

vv. 12, 13. Their secret lives of pride, lust, envy, hate and idolatry are even shameful to speak about; but as light reveals and discovers things unseen in darkness, so the sins and evil of men will be discovered and revealed by a true witness of the gospel of Christ and a godly life and attitude. All righteousness (whether by word or deed) which reveals sins is considered spiritual light.

vv. 14-17. This is written to the believer; for the children of God sometimes need to be revived, awakened and rebuked for their

indifference and carelessness (Rom. 13:11-14). 'Take heed to your walk. Don't be a fool; the fashion of this world passes away. See to your calling and election; examine your faith; take inventory of your worship, prayer and devotional life; look to your attitude and daily walk.' Wise men walk with God in a careful and diligent use of the time God has given them because these are evil days and many are led away. 'Do not be unwise, but seek the will of the Lord!'

# Obedience – authority and love

## Ephesians 5:18-33

v. 18. Drunkenness is the excessive drinking of any strong drink, and it is strongly condemned in the Scriptures. Wine is mentioned here because it was the usual liquor people drank in these Eastern countries. Excessive drinking deprives a person of reason, hurts the mind, brings disease to the body, opens the door to every sin, wastes possessions and sets a man below the beasts. ‘Be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ People with the Holy Spirit have spiritual joy and are controlled and dominated by the spirit, as wine controls and dominates the drunkard. Their walk, talk and thinking are all influenced by the spirit.

v. 19. ‘Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.’ When the Holy Spirit dwells within us like a well of living water and our hearts dwell on the goodness and mercy of God, the melodies and tunes with which we cheer ourselves and others are not the profane, loose and carnal songs of flesh, but are songs consisting of spirituality which gladden the heart and edify the soul (Col. 3:16).

v. 20. ‘Giving thanks always for all things’ (James 1:17; John 3:27). All mercies, temporal and spiritual, come from the Father through our Lord Jesus; and for these mercies in Christ we continually praise and thank God (1 Thess. 5:18). We give thanks for electing love, redeeming grace, eternal life, Christian fellowship, food, affliction and trials and all things (Rom. 8:28). Murmuring and complaining against the providence of God is a great sin.

v. 21. 'Submitting yourselves to one another.' Christ is the sovereign Head of the church, the supreme authority and King of the saints; and as such he is to be feared and revered. He delegates authority in his name in the home, in the church and in the world. In fear of the Lord and in reverence for him and his glory, we submit ourselves to that authority – as wives to husbands, children to parents, servants to masters, members of the church to pastors and all men to civil magistrates (Rom. 13:1-4).

v. 22. 'Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands.' This subjection is not only in body, but in heart and spirit! Wives should think well of husbands, speak respectfully of them and to them, take care of family matters according to their husbands' will, imitate them in that which is good and bear patiently that which is not so agreeable. 'As unto the Lord,' because the Lord has commanded it, because the husband is the Lord's authority in the home and because rebellion against designated spiritual authority is rebellion against the Lord.

vv. 23, 24. Pertaining to redemption, in Christ there is neither male nor female, bond nor free; but Christ is all. But in the divine order governing the family of God on earth, our Lord has decreed authority and leadership which is to be obeyed and followed (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

Therefore, as the church is dependent on Christ, resigned to him, receiving from him protection, provision, comfort and happiness in a voluntary, sincere and hearty obedience (arising from a principle of love), so let the wives be subject to their husbands in things political, domestic and ecclesiastic.

v. 25. 'Husbands, love your wives.' This is still and always will be the key to any relationship! Because Christ loved us, he gave himself for us; because we love Christ, his yoke is easy and his burden is light. If a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church (showing affection for

her, delighting in her, seeking her contentment and happiness, concealing her faults, preferring her above his parents, neighbors or children and properly leading her in things spiritual), her submission will be a delight and joy to her.

*vv. 26, 27.* Because of the context, this reference seems to be to the custom of the Jews in their engagements to marry. A man was engaged to be married to a woman provided she had no spots, blemishes, nor past sexual affairs, If afterwards these faults were found in her, the marriage was off. But Christ found us guilty, sinful and full of fault. He loved us and cleansed us in his own blood so that he might present us holy and without spot in that day.

*v. 28-30.* Men ought to love their wives as they love themselves, for the two are actually one flesh (Gen. 2:23-25). The Lord and his church are one. This is the church of the firstborn, composed of every true believer of every generation.

*v. 31.* A man does not desert nor disown his parents; but he loves, cares and shows respect for them, honoring them as long as they live. But his marriage is the establishment of a new home and a new family, which his parents are not to interfere with nor try to control. His wife is to be preferred before his parents, and she is not to be allowed to suffer at their hands, nor are they to be allowed to come between husband and wife.

*vv. 32, 33.* The marriage union is compared to Christ's union with his church. He left his Father's house to come to earth. He loved us with infinite affection. He and his church are one. He provides for us, protects us and gives us his name for ever. We love and are in subjection to him!

# Everyday theology

## Ephesians 6:1-10

I will divide this portion of the chapter into five parts:

- vv.* 1-3 The duties of children to parents;
- v.* 4 The duties of parents to children;
- vv.* 5-8 The duties of servants to masters;
- v.* 9 The duties of masters to servants;
- v.* 10 Exhortation to all believers.

*vv.* 1-3. This verse refers mainly to unmarried children who are yet living at home with their parents. There is an honour, respect and reverence that is due to our parents all the days of our lives. Children at home are under the authority of parents as God's ministers and representatives, and they are to be respected and obeyed with a sincere and willing obedience as if their words and wishes were the words of God himself. Of course, 'in the Lord' would rule out obeying our parents in evil activities which are contrary to the word of God.

This honoring of our parents touches several areas. It goes beyond loving them, obeying their commands, overlooking their infirmities and speaking respectfully of and to them. They are to be honored in our thoughts and attitudes. They are to be cared for in their old age. This is the first commandment that carries with it a promise (as indicated in *v.*3 and Exod. 20:12).

*v.* 4. Fathers are named because they are the heads of the families and are apt to be too severe (mothers are sometimes too indulgent); but both parents are intended, for both are responsible for the general welfare and

behavior of the children. Children can be alienated from parents, from Christian doctrine and from the church by unwise and unreasonable discipline. 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' does not mean that children are to be beaten. The rod of discipline can be exercised in other and more effectual ways. Public rebuke, harsh language and passionate rages and tantrums are to be avoided. Refusing them proper recreation and wholesome fellowship with other children will discourage them. They are not adults and should not be expected to think, behave, nor even to reason like adults. Adult problems and misunderstandings, especially church difficulties, should never be discussed in the presence of children. They should be protected as much as possible from the trials of a difficult world until they are more mature.

*vv. 5-8.* Servants or workers, be obedient to those who are your superiors in things pertaining to the flesh. If you work for a person or you are under a foreman or a boss, do what you are told to do, do what you are paid to do, do what you are hired to do without complaining and quarrelling, but with respect and humility. Serve your superiors in singleness of heart, that is, cheerfully, readily and with full effort, as if you were serving Christ himself, for all of our deeds are to be done for the glory of Christ.

There are some workers who pretend to work with great diligence and industry when the boss is present (in order to impress him); then when no one is watching, they loaf and neglect their work. This is evil! We should work as diligently in his absence as in his presence; for believers have an eye to pleasing and glorifying God, not just winning the approval of men.

Working with 'good will... as to the Lord' is working with a good attitude, going beyond what we are told or expected to do, thankful that we have the health to work and a job with which to support our families and with concern for our superior's business and success.



Know this: that whatever a man does out of a right motive and principle of his heart for the glory of Christ, he will be blessed of God, whether he is a master or a servant!

v. 9. Masters, bosses and superiors, perform the duties and responsibilities toward your work as you would have your servants do theirs (the same way, with charity and humanity, as unto the Lord). Treat your servants as you would be treated. Pay them well, speak firmly but respectfully to them, remembering that you have a Master in heaven who deals with men as they deal with others. Your riches, power and position mean nothing to him; for he gives to all men the strength and possessions they have (1 Sam. 2:6, 7). A good master is as difficult to find as a good servant.

v. 10. This begins the conclusion of Paul's exhortation on the duties of believers to others. He addresses them all and says, 'Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord.'

1. The things which are commanded are impossible to perform without God's strength and grace.

2. We need his strength and power to overcome our enemies, our flesh and Satan. We need his strength to adorn the doctrine of Christ with holiness and integrity.

3. Though we are weak and can do nothing of ourselves, his grace is sufficient for all things.

# The whole armour of God

## Ephesians 6:11-24

*v. 11.* The believer lives in a world of evil. He is surrounded by evil powers and evil people. This world is not the friend of grace nor of God. Not only is sin around us, but sin is within us. The Christian life is a race to be run (Heb. 12:1), a battle to be fought (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4: 7) and a conflict that will not be over until we die. We need help and strength to stand up against all of the deceit and strategies of Satan, who is the great enemy of Christ and his people. God has provided an armor for his people and weapons to be used against Satan, sin and error.

*v. 12.* We are not contending against physical opponents. Frail, mortal men are not our real enemies. Our battle is against wicked spirits, who inhabit the supernatural sphere and who deal in lies, pride, idolatry, covetousness, lust, deceit, self-righteousness and all manner of sin against God.

*v. 13.* ‘Take upon yourselves the complete armour that God has provided for you, that you may be able to resist these evils and stand during every trial, conflict and temptation and having met every demand to continue to stand firmly in Christ.’ The battle is not against the flesh; therefore, the armour and weapons which God provides are not carnal but spiritual (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

*vv. 14-18.* The parts of this armour are given in these verses.

1. ‘Your loins girt about with truth. Wrap about you (as a strong girdle) the gospel of God's redemptive glory in and through

Christ Jesus' (1 Peter 1:13). This is the first part of the armour mentioned, for it is the most important and the foundation of all the rest. The truth about God, myself and my race and Christ and his redemptive work keeps me close to God and defends me against all evil suggestions of Satan which lead to a false hope.

2. 'The breastplate of righteousness.' This breastplate of integrity, right standing before God and holiness cannot be works of righteousness and moral integrity done and produced by me, for Satan could easily find a defect in that breastplate and destroy me. But this is the righteousness of Christ, my Lord. His perfect righteousness imputed to me and received by faith repels any accusation or charge which Satan can bring (Rom. 8:33, 34).

3. 'Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.' Several things could be taught here: a firm-footed stability or foundation in the gospel of peace; a godly walk that is agreeable to the gospel of peace; a readiness to go forth into the highways and hedges declaring the good news of peace through Christ.

4. 'Take the shield of faith.' Satan hurls darts of doubt, fear, depression, weariness and all manner of questions regarding our spiritual state. We can only be shielded against these fiery darts by faith in God's word (Rom. 4:20, 21), faith in God's purpose (Rom. 8:29, 30) and faith in Christ's redeeming work (Rom. 8:34-39).

5. 'Take the helmet of salvation.' The helmet is a piece of armour for the head and protects the head against false doctrines. This helmet is the hope of salvation in Christ alone – the salvation of which Christ is the author and the finisher (1 Thess. 5:8, 9; 1 Cor. 1:30).

6. 'The sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.' The word of God is compared to a sword in that it has two edges – the law and the gospel (Heb. 4:12). It is all edge; it has no blunt side. One cannot come near the word without its having some effect. It

convicts of sin, cutting away the righteousness of men; it kills pride, envy, lusts and all sin; it reaches the hidden and secret parts; it is the weapon God uses to defeat all his enemies (Luke 4: 3-12).

7. 'Praying.' The last weapon is prayer and includes all sorts of prayer – mental, vocal, private and public. We should live in an attitude of prayer continually. Our prayers must and will be in the spirit, by the assistance of the Spirit of God, with a sincere heart for all believers. We will persevere in prayer regardless of the suggestions of Satan or our own weak hearts.

v. 19. Pray for the ministers of the gospel, that God will not only open effectual doors for them to preach, but that he will give them boldness and wisdom to preach the gospel of Christ (which is a mystery only understood as the Holy Spirit reveals it – 1 Cor. 2:8-10; Rom. 10:13-17).

v. 20. Paul called himself an ambassador of Christ (2 Cor. 5:19, 20). He was at that time in prison.

vv. 21, 22. Tychicus was a beloved brother, who accompanied Paul on his travels, whom Paul sent to the Ephesians to relate to them Paul's affairs and to encourage them in the gospel.

vv. 23, 24. The epistle is concluded with the apostle's salutation. Those saluted are the brethren who love Christ sincerely. He wishes for them peace, love, faith and grace.



# Philippians

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# A letter from Paul to the Philippians

## Philippians 1:1-11

Introduction. Philippi was a Roman colony and the chief city of Macedonia. Paul had received special instructions to go there (Acts 16:9-12). Lydia and the jailer (as well as others) were converted, forming the church at Philippi.

Paul was in prison at Rome when he wrote this epistle. He mentions his chains, Caesar's palace and some of Caesar's household sending their greetings to the church.

Paul was especially dear to these Philippians. He was the preacher who had brought them the gospel. Upon hearing that he was a prisoner in Rome, they sent their minister, Epaphroditus, to him with presents and good wishes. He sent this epistle back to them by their minister.

The design of the epistle is:

1. To express his love and affection for them.
2. To give an account of his imprisonment and the results of it.
3. To encourage them under affliction and persecution.
4. To excite them to love, unity and peace among themselves.
5. To caution them against false teachers, who were trying to mix Moses and Christ, the law and the gospel, grace and works in salvation.
6. To exhort them to a holy life and behavior.
7. To give thanks to them for their care for him.

v. 1. Paul, though the sole writer of this epistle, includes Timothy in his salutation for several reasons.

1. Timothy was with Paul when he preached in Philippi.

2. He planned to send Timothy to them (Phil. 2:19-23).

3. He shows the continued agreement between them in love and doctrine: ‘The servants (bondslaves) of Jesus Christ.’ Paul does not say, ‘I am an apostle, and Timothy is young and less important.’ He chooses a character which fits them both – willing, loving bondslaves of Christ (See Exod. 21:2-6).

‘To all the saints, bishops and deacons at Philippi.’ Every believer is a saint, consecrated and sanctified in Christ. The bishops are the pastors and elders, concerned mainly with the spiritual state of the members. The deacons (along with the spiritual concern) are the servants of the church, who serve the Lord's Table, the tables of the poor and the secular affairs of the church.

vv. 2-5. This is a prayer of thanksgiving and petition.

1. He prays for grace and peace to be in them and upon them (v.2).

2. He thanks God for every thought and memory of them (v.3).

3. His memory of them and prayers for them bring him great joy (v.4).

4. He thanks God for their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now (v.5).

This is the attitude we need to cultivate toward other believers. Leave off judging, criticizing and finding fault. Not only thank God for one another, but pray for his grace and peace to be with all believers.

May he by whose kind grace we meet,  
Send his great Spirit from above,  
Make our communications sweet,



And cause our hearts to burn with love.

v. 6. Paul's thanksgiving and joy on behalf of this church sprang from the confidence and persuasion that the work of grace which God had begun in them would result in their eternal glorification with Christ.

1. The 'good work' is regeneration, conversion, salvation and the forming of Christ in them.

2. It is 'begun.' It is not yet finished. We are saved, we are being saved and we will finally be saved when we awake with his likeness.

3. It is a work 'in you.' Christ does a work for us and also a work in us, sanctifying and making us new creatures (Eph. 2:8-10).

4. He does the work. He is the author and finisher of our faith. Salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end (1 Cor. 4:7).

vv. 7, 8. Paul further justifies his confidence in regard to these people on the basis of two other reasons: First, God kept them on Paul's heart continually, and, second, they stood by him in love and defense of the gospel.

'It is right and appropriate for me to have this confidence and feel this way about you all, because even as you do me, I hold you in my heart as partakers and sharers, one and all with me, of grace. This is true when I am shut up in prison and when I am out in the field – for God is my witness how I long for and pursue you all with love' (Amplified Version).

vv. 9-11. Paul again prays for them.

1. 'That your love may overflow more and more.' Growth in grace includes growth in the grace of love for Christ and his people.

2. 'That your love may increase in knowledge and judgment.' Our love for Christ and his people is not blind, ignorant infatuation. We know him, and the more we know of him in his perfection, the more we love him. We know them – frail, weak and human like ourselves; yet our love grows as we are able to judge and discern true spiritual values.

3. 'That you may approve things that are excellent.' Or, 'that you may learn to sense what is of real value and excellence.' There is a difference in self-love and Christian love, in religious works and works of faith, and in knowing the doctrine of Christ and the Christ of doctrine.

4. 'That you may be sincere in your desires after God,' not stumbling nor causing others to stumble.

5. 'That you may be filled with the fruits of righteousness,' right standing before God in Christ and right doing for the glory of Christ!

# Encouragement during trial

## Philippians 1:12-30

The church at Philippi had heard of the apostle's troubles. He wanted them to have a true and right understanding of trials and afflictions. He desired that the weak among them might not be offended and that all among them might be encouraged to bear with patience and cheerfulness whatever afflictions might befall them for Christ's sake.

*vv. 12, 13.* 'Now, I want you to understand and rest assured that my imprisonment has actually served to advance and give renewed strength to the spreading of the gospel.' Persecution for Christ's sake has often meant the carrying of the gospel to other places (Acts 8:4; 11:19, 20). Someone said, 'The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church.' Also, persecution (our behavior under it and our attitude toward it) attracts attention and encourages others (Matt. 5:16).

Paul was not in prison for breaking the law, but for preaching the gospel of Christ (Acts 24:10-14). This was generally known throughout Caesar's court and in all other places. The gospel, as a result of Paul's confinement, had become an issue throughout the court (Acts 26:26). Our discomfort may be used of God to bring eternal comfort to others. It is said that ancient believers sold themselves into slavery to preach to the slaves. 'Christ became poor that we through his poverty might be rich' (2 Tim. 2:9, 10).

*v. 14.* Paul's sufferings not only resulted in the conversion of many outside the church, but were encouraging and strengthening to many within the church. These brethren were challenged and encouraged by Paul's patience and faithfulness under suffering. Many became bold to declare the gospel

of Christ. Our attitude and our general conduct during trials have a strong influence one way or the other upon those who watch us.

*vv. 15-17.* I believe we can safely say that, whoever these men were, they truly preached the gospel of God's redeeming grace in Christ. Otherwise, Paul would not have rejoiced in their ministry (Gal. 1: 8).

1. Some preached Christ out of envy. They envied Paul's gifts, power and success. It is the same as jealousy. Now that he was in jail, they hoped to gain the honor and applause of the church.

2. Some preached in strife and contention. The strife was not over the gospel of substitution, but over words, practices, government, prophecy and less understood doctrines.

3. Some preached out of a party spirit. They were not sincere, but hoped to make Paul's chains more bitter. Paul met with trouble, punishment and prison; but they were preaching with little difficulty and opposition. Perhaps they thought that Paul's troubles were of his own making and that if he did things their way, he wouldn't have so much trouble!

4. Some preached Christ out of love for Christ, for his church, for the lost and for Paul. They knew that the apostle was in prison by the hand and providence of God, who does not act in the same way toward all his servants.

*vv. 18-20.* What does it matter? Christ is preached in the glory of his person, in the fullness of his grace, in the excellency of his righteousness, in the efficacy of his sacrifice, in the power of his intercession. 'Therefore, I rejoice; and I will continue to rejoice.'

‘I know that all shall finally work together for my good (Rom. 8:28), even to my deliverance from prison to preach to you again’ (in the same way as Peter was delivered from prison through the prayers of the church).

‘This is my expectation and my desire - to magnify and glorify Christ, whether in prison or out, in life or in death. I am not ashamed of the gospel. I am not ashamed of the chains which hold me. I am not ashamed to die in prison.’

*vv. 21, 22.* ‘For to me to live is Christ.’ He is the giver of life. He is the sum and substance of life. He is the hope of life eternal - to be with him and to be like him. ‘And to die is gain.’ I will gain release from pain and receive a perfect body, release from limited knowledge to a perfect mind, release from a sinful nature to a sinless perfection, release from all trials to perfect glory and joy, release from mortality to immortality!

‘If it is the will of Christ for me to live longer in the flesh, I will continue to labour in the Lord's vineyard. I trust to have a fruitful labour. I can say nothing as to my own preference, for it is not mine to choose; the decision is the Lord's.’

*vv. 23, 24.* ‘I must be honest, however. I am hard-pressed between these two thoughts: either to live and labour, or to die and be with Christ. To die and be with Christ would be better for me. But for me to remain here is better for you. It is best for me to go and be with Christ. It is best for you and the churches for me to remain and preach the gospel to you.’

*vv. 25, 26.* Paul had no divine revelation on this matter as such, but as he considered all things and examined his own heart, he felt confidently that God would deliver him and send him forth to preach again.

*v. 27-30.* The following verses are instructions.

1. 'Conduct your churches, homes and personal lives in a way that is becoming to the gospel you profess. Live, walk and talk as believers should.'

2. 'Whether I visit you or not, let me hear from others that you are standing together in unity and spirit, that you are contending together for the true gospel of Christ.'

3. 'Do not be afraid of your enemies. The fact that men oppose you for the sake of the gospel is evidence of their condemnation and of your salvation.'

4. 'It is not only ordained of God that you believe on Christ, but also that you suffer for his glory and your good.'

5. 'We are all in the same battle, you and I.'

# Christian unity and humility

## Philippians 2:1-14

This chapter is an exhortation to unity of spirit, mutual affection and love for one another, humility and lowliness of mind and real concern and care for one another.

*vv. 1, 2.* Our Master said, 'If you love me, keep my commandments.' John said, 'If they had been of us, they no doubt would have continued with us.' Paul uses the same argument in these verses.

1. 'If there be any comfort and confidence in Christ,' that is, if you have a genuine reason for hope in Christ founded on person, his righteousness and his death and intercession.

2. 'If there be any comfort and strength in love,' the love of the Father for us which is everlasting; the love of the Son who gave himself for us; the love of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, and the love of brethren, which is so pleasant and delightful.

3. 'If there be any fellowship of the Spirit,' – if there is such a thing as a union of spirits, a oneness of heart and communion with one another.

4. 'If there is any bowels and mercy' – if there is any real depth to your affection, and real compassion and concern for one another, then fulfill ye my joy. I rejoice in the evidence of your being complete and entire by living together in unity, love, mutual concern and respect, and by having the same purpose. Be of one mind in the gospel of grace, the glory of Christ and the work of the church. This reveals the grace of God in you' (James 2:26).

v. 3. When things are done through strife, it involves quarrelling, contention and dividing into bitter camps. It leads to division. This is not the Spirit of Christ. We are not to do things seeking recognition and personal praise; this is empty vainglory. In humility and sincerity, let us regard the other brother as spiritually superior to ourselves. Paul said, 'I am less than the least of the saints.' Be ready to give way to the judgment and desires of others as they are in accord with the Scriptures.

v. 4. 'Look not every man on his own interests but on the interests and welfare of others.' Paul is still talking mainly of church fellowship. A man must have concern for his relationship with Christ, the right ordering of his home and children, his business and his other responsibilities; he is not to leave these to the care of others! He ought to be as concerned for the welfare of his brother in Christ as he is for his own comforts. Respecting spiritual things and spiritual gifts, a believer should not seek to have his own way, but should consult the glory of Christ, the will of the Spirit and the general good and peace of all the church.

vv. 5-11. Having called for unity of spirit and purpose, love and humility among brethren and sincere compassion and concern for one another, Paul uses the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 5. 'Let that humility be seen in you that was in Christ.' Let this same attitude be in you that was in Christ. Let Christ be your example of humility and lowliness of mind.

v. 6. Although being essentially one with God, Christ did not seek to obtain it by force and robbery, as did Satan and Adam. He was God and was with God in the beginning. He did not in any showy display exhibit his glory and power.



v. 7. Rather, he stripped himself of all privileges and rightful dignity and became a mere man, a carpenter and a friend of sinners.

v. 8. He was really a man, not just in appearance, but in reality. He lay nine months in a womb; he lay in a manger; he knew hunger, thirst, weariness, grief, pain and death. His real submission and obedience, from the cradle to the cross, is our example – not only our righteousness (Rom. 5:19), but our example!

vv. 9-11. God, the Father, has highly exalted and rewarded him.

v. 12. ‘Wherefore (staying with our subject and example), since you have heard my teachings and have obeyed the exhortations of God (whether I preached them to you in person or by letter), work out these Christian attitudes and principles,’ which are called ‘your salvation’ (not of your souls, but the deliverance of the church from strife and division). Do it in fear and trembling, not in fear of men or fear of damnation, but with serious caution and humility, lest we disturb and destroy the fellowship of the church which our Lord purchased with his own blood.

v. 13. ‘This attitude of humility and this spirit of love and unity are not of your own doing; but it is God who energizes and creates in you the desire and the ability to do his good pleasure. Your unity is his pleasure.’

v. 14. ‘Do all things without murmuring, grumbling, or finding fault, either with God or the brethren.’

Let brethren all agree, and peace among them spread;  
Old and young, rich and poor, are one in Christ, their Head.  
Among the saints on earth, let fervent love be found,  
Sons of our great God, with common blessings crowned;  
Let pride, that child of hell, be banished far away;

Those should in humility dwell, who the same Lord obey.

# The importance of faithful ministers

## Philippians 2:14-30

*vv. 14, 15.* In the preceding verses Paul exhorts to us Christian unity, sincere love, humility and care, and concern for the needs and welfare of others. All good things which accompany salvation (whether civil, moral, or spiritual), no matter how disagreeable to our flesh, are to be done without murmuring against the will of God or disputing among ourselves.

‘That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God,’ in the sight of men, not in the sight of God. In Christ we are blameless before God. In Christ we are sons of God. Paul is saying that our attitude, conversation and conduct before our brethren and the wicked of this world should be such that they cannot charge us with hypocrisy and insincerity. We are to be lights and examples to those about us, ‘that they may see our good works and glorify our Father’ (Matt. 5:16). In short, let us speak and live as sons of God ought (Rom. 12:1, 2).

*v. 16.* ‘Holding out and offering to men the word of life,’ the gospel of our Lord Jesus (1 Tim. 4:16; Titus 2:10). If these two things are present in and among you, then I have not labored in vain and I will be able to rejoice with you in the day of glory. Your conduct and character reveal that you are one with Christ (sons of God) and that you are burdened and concerned that others come to know the Lord Jesus. Love for Christ and love for others will constrain us to please him and to evangelize them! (Matt. 22:36-40; Gal. 5:14).

*vv. 17, 18.* Paul had been the means God used to bring the Philippian believers to Christ. He also believed that he would be killed for preaching the gospel; thus he says, ‘Do not be sorrowful when you hear of my death

and the pouring out of my blood for the sake of the gospel; but rejoice with me, for I am ready not only to be bound but to die for Christ's sake' (Acts 21:13; 5:41).

*v. 19.* Paul wished to send Timothy to visit the church (and preach to them) that he might know of their general spiritual welfare, how the gospel stood with them, how they kept the ordinances, how their ministers preached, etc. Notice how Paul proposes this: 'I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy.' Even the apostle Paul subjected his intentions, desires and plans to the will of our Lord! (Rom. 8:26; James 4:13-15).

*vv. 20, 21.* This is a serious charge, but unfortunately true. Not all ministers are genuinely interested in the glory of Christ and the good of their congregations. Rather, they seek to advance their own interests. Timothy had a heart and soul like Paul's! He preached the gospel of God's glory and grace. He sought not his own comfort and praise, but he cared for the spiritual welfare of the people (Ezek. 34:1-6).

*vv. 22-24.* 'You know Timothy's value and worth. He was with me when I preached to you at the first. He was as a son to me in the labors of the Lord. I trust that I shall also be able to visit you.' Our Lord uses his ministers to teach, set in order and lead his church. We are not to despise our true spiritual leaders, but to respect and follow them as they follow Christ (Eph. 4:10-16; Phil. 2:29).

*vv. 25-30.* Meanwhile, before Paul or Timothy could come to preach and minister to them, Epaphroditus, one of their own ministers, would return to them. He had been sent to Rome with presents from them to Paul. While at Rome (or on the journey to Rome), he became ill and was at the point of death. Believers have natural bodies and are subject to illness the

same as all men, but God had compassion on him and healed him (James 5:15, 16).

# No confidence in the flesh

## Philippians 3:1-11

v. 1. Paul begins chapter 3 with the theme and watchword of every believer: 'Rejoice in our Lord.' Christ Jesus is our chief joy:

1. In the greatness of his person, very God of very God;
2. In the fitness of his incarnation, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh;
3. In the sufficiency of his righteousness and atonement;
4. In the comforts of his providence and purpose;
5. In the glory of his intercession and return.

'To write the same things to you is not tiresome.' He rejoices to repeat the gospel of Christ over and over, for it is necessary.

1. It keeps your thoughts and hearts on Christ, the foundation.
2. It keeps you from the errors of false teachers.
3. When truth is repeated, it guards you against self-righteousness and other errors.

v. 2. These are the false teachers from the Jews, who were imposing the works and ceremonies of the law upon the Gentiles as being necessary to salvation. Paul uses the same name on them which they used to give to the Gentiles— 'dogs!' He calls them 'evil workers' because they misled the people, deceived them and perverted the gospel of Christ.

'Beware of the circumcisers' (those who mutilate the flesh for sanctifying purposes). Circumcision served its day as a token of the

covenant and may be recommended as a hygienic measure, but it has no place or meaning in the covenant of grace.

v. 3. 'We are the true circumcision, not they. They have the name, the form, the outward sign. We have in Christ and in the new birth its fulfillment.' It is the difference between having the lamb of the Old Testament sacrifice and having Christ, the Lamb of God.

1. True circumcision is having the heart pricked and laid open by the Spirit.
2. True circumcision is a renouncing of our own righteousness.
3. True circumcision is of the heart, not the flesh.
4. It is to draw nigh to God with the heart, not the body.
5. It is to rejoice in our completeness in Christ, having no confidence in carnal descent, tribe or family, ceremony or law.

Our salvation and acceptance by God are only in Christ, not in anything connected with this flesh. We worship God in heart and in spirit, not in outward rituals and ceremonies. We rejoice in Christ, in whom we are complete (Col. 2:9, 10). We have no confidence in our own fleshly works nor in anyone else.

v. 4. Paul illustrates the point using himself: 'If there is any value in our family ties, ceremonies, religious works and performances, outward obedience to law and rites, I have more room to boast than any of these false teachers.'

vv. 5, 6. Paul was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel (not an Ishmaelite or a proselyte, but a natural Israelite), of the tribe of Benjamin (this tribe was from Jacob and Rachel and kept true worship when ten revolted), had a Hebrew mother and a Hebrew father, was a Pharisee (the

strictest sect of the Jews, held in highest esteem), persecuted the church, and with respect to the observance of the outward law, was blameless.

v. 7. At one time he felt that all these things were necessary for acceptance with God, were necessary for righteousness and entitled him to the favour of God. When God revealed Christ to him, he saw all these things to be worthless in themselves. Christ is our sacrifice, our sanctification and our righteousness. He is the fulfillment of all these. That which was everything to Paul became nothing; Christ became everything (Col. 3:11).

v. 8. 'Furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to that priceless privilege (that overwhelming advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake I lost everything in order that I may have Christ, the Redeemer.'

1. He renounced not only the Jewish ceremonies, but worldly honor, reputation, substance, comforts and advantages.
2. He lost self-righteousness and gained Christ's righteousness.
3. He lost ceremonial bondage and gained his freedom.
4. He lost false peace and gained true peace with God.
5. He lost pretended glory and gained eternal glory (1 Cor. 1:30, 31).

vv. 9-11. This is my determined purpose, my one desire, my soul and heart's sincere hope, which is threefold:

1. 'That I may win Christ and be found in him,' not trusting or having any self-achieved righteousness in works and deeds, possessing that genuine righteousness of God which comes through faith in Christ - that holiness and perfect righteousness which he gives to his own (Col. 1: 22).



2. 'That I may really know him.' I do know him, but I want progressively to become more deeply and intimately acquainted with him and the wonders of his person; that I may come to know the power flowing from his resurrection and the strength it gives to believers; that I may so know and share his sufferings as to be transformed continually into his likeness, daily dying to sin and the world.

3. 'That I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.' Paul may be referring here to the resurrection of the body in the likeness of Christ in the great day of our Lord. However (because of the next verse), I believe he is talking about a moral and spiritual resurrection that lifts us out of the death and darkness of the world and sin. The world, the flesh and all of this human life are death. In Christ there is real life, real love, real holiness. There is communion with God and perfect righteousness. This is what I want. By whatever means it pleases God to bring me to this place, I want to be like Christ in attitude, spirit and heart.

# Forgetting the past Holding the present Anticipating the future

## Philippians 3:12-21

v. 12. I have not attained to perfect holiness, perfect knowledge, nor perfect happiness. Though my sanctification is perfect in Christ, it is not perfected in me. I know in part, sin dwells in me, my faith is imperfect, but I press on. I long to lay hold on that for which Christ laid hold of me. I want what the Lord purposed and purchased for me on Calvary - to be like him! (Eph. 1:3-6.)

v. 13. 'Brethren, I don't claim to have arrived at perfection in doctrine, spirit, nor deed. I am not yet all that Christ would have me to be. I am not all that I would like to be, nor even all that I ought to be. Thank God, however, I am not what I used to be! One thing I do: I forget what lies behind me - my struggles and attempts at self-righteousness in false religion, my experiences and revelations in spiritual infancy, my works and labors since conversion, my recent growth and revelations. Now I reach forth for present and future blessings and revelations of his grace.' The illustration is taken from runners in a race, who do not stop to look behind them to see how far they have come nor to determine how far they are in front of others, but they are concerned for what they are doing now and for what lies ahead.

v. 14. 'My goal and aim is to finish the race and obtain the supreme and heavenly prize - the incorruptible crown of life, righteousness and glory!'

(Ps. 17:15.) We look to Christ (Heb. 12:1, 2). We follow and depend on Christ (1 John 3:1-3).

v. 15. 'Let all of us who are spiritually mature (who are taught of God) have this same mind and hold these same convictions:

1. To count all heritage, ceremony, tradition and works of religion as rubbish that we may win Christ and be found in him.

2. To be willing to suffer the loss of all things for a knowledge of Christ.

3. To disclaim perfection in ourselves, but to aim for it.

4. To desire to be found in him, having his righteousness.

5. To desire above all things to be like Christ and press forward in perseverance to attain that incorruptible crown.'

v. 16. Nevertheless, whatever degree of the knowledge of Christ and the truth of the gospel and the light we have received, let us walk therein! As we walk in the light that God gives us, he will give more light.

Here I raise my Ebenezer;  
Hither by thy help I'm come.

My spiritual growth may be slow, even discouraging. Sometimes I may feel that I am standing still. But I know that God has revealed Christ in me, and I know whom I have believed. I will hold fast to this until he reveals more of himself.

v. 17. 'Follow me,' Paul says, 'as I follow Christ.' Paul would not have any man follow him as the head of a party or sect. He condemned others for that. He wanted them to have the same goal he had – to win Christ and be found in him! 'Also, observe others who live after this pattern I have

set for you.’ Believers should encourage and be examples to one another in the pursuit of righteousness (Matt. 5:16; Titus 2: 10).

*vv. 18, 19.* ‘I have told you often and now tell you with great sorrow that many religious people walk a road which reveals them as enemies of the cross. They hold to ceremony and circumcision, not Christ alone. They glory in the flesh, making merchandise of you. They are more interested in converts than in conversions, more interested in statistics than in spirituality, more interested in gifts than in the Giver. They turn the grace of God into a license to sin. Their end is destruction. Their god is not the living God, but their own desires and passions. What they glory in is really what they ought to be ashamed of; they are concerned for carnal, earthly, fleshly things.’ Someone said, ‘God created us to love people and use things, but sinful men love things and use people.’

*vv. 20, 21.* Our citizenship and interests are in heaven, not tied to this world. In Christ we are sons of God, seated in him, heirs of eternal glory and we patiently wait for his return. All we are, have and hope to be is in Christ. He will complete the work he has begun by changing our vile bodies into the glory and majesty of his own body, exerting the power which enables him to subject everything to himself (1 Cor. 15:51-55).

# Think on these things

## Philippians 4:1-8

v. 1. 'My brethren,' not in the natural sense but in a spiritual sense, having the same Father,' being in the same family, of the household of faith.

'My dearly beloved and longed for.' Paul sincerely loved these people and longed to be with them, to fellowship and converse with them.

'My joy and my crown.' He taught them the gospel and they were seals of his ministry and proof of his call. They were a greater joy and crown to him than anything that the world could offer. The fruits of a man's ministry are his converts and they are the best test of his ministry (Matt. 7:15-20).

'Stand fast in the Lord.'

1. Stand fast in his power, for even saints are liable to fall (Jude 24).
2. Stand fast in his gospel, which is able to save (1 Cor. 15:1).
3. Stand fast in the liberty of Christ, as opposed to the bondage of the law.
4. Stand fast in the doctrines of Christ (1 Tim. 4:16).

v. 2. Two women, Euodias and Syntyche (members of the church), evidently were divided over a problem. Paul takes notice of their conflict and exhorts them to settle it for the glory of God and to be united in fellowship and purpose. All believers should seek to preserve the unity of the church and to be of the same mind (Col. 3:12-15).

v. 3. This is evidently addressed to the pastor, who was to assist these women in settling their differences. These women were of valuable aid to Paul, Clement and others. Let us help bring people together, for the unity of the church and the glory of Christ are much more important than personal differences and disputes.

v. 4. The word ‘rejoice’ is used ten times in this epistle. I pray that we may learn the word in heart and experience as well as in doctrine. There is always cause to rejoice in the Lord! Rejoice in his grace, which is always sufficient. Rejoice in his blood, which cleanses. Rejoice in his righteousness, which justifies. Rejoice in his love, which never fails. Rejoice in his providence, which works all things together for our good. Rejoice in his intercession, which is continual. Rejoice that your names are written in the book of life!

v. 5. The ‘moderation’ here is not in eating and drinking, though this is certainly important. The word here is ‘Let all men (both in the church and out) see and recognize your humility, unselfishness, consideration and forgiving spirit.’

1. We are to deal with others not with the severity of law and justice, but with gentleness and love (Eph. 4:31, 32).

2. We are to put up with affronts and injuries by bearing them patiently and forgivingly.

3. We are to put the best interpretation on words and statements, not seeking cause for offence.

4. Let our Christian attitude adorn our doctrine, for ‘the Lord is at hand,’ meaning ‘he will help you by giving you grace,’ or ‘the Lord observes our conduct of spirit,’ or ‘the Lord is coming soon to judge all men.’ All are true.

v. 6. 'Do not fret, murmur, nor be filled with anxiety over things (Ps. 37:1-8). Take your burdens, cares and problems to the Lord in prayer. In everything let your requests be known to God, and do it with thanksgiving.' I can never come to the throne for mercy except I already have mercies for which to be thankful!

v. 7. This 'peace of God' is twofold.

1. It is the peace which is made with God by the obedience, sacrifice and intercession of our blessed Lord (Rom. 5:1).

2. It is the peace of heart, mind and conscience which arises from a correct view of Christ. We know that we have passed from death to life; we know that our sins are forgiven; we know that we are sons of God and the peace of God rules in our hearts.

'Passeth understanding.' The natural man certainly does not understand this peace and rest which Christ gives. His soul and mind are in a constant state of unrest and turmoil. Neither do we fully understand the blessed peace of God which he in mercy gives us in Christ! We accept it by faith and rest in his promise.

v. 8. 'Finally, brethren.' In this matter of attitude and humble spirit, 'think on these things!' Meditate on them. Consider and dwell upon them in order to put them into daily practice:

1. 'Whatsoever things are true' – agreeable to the truth in Christ Jesus, the truth of the gospel and the word of God.

2. 'Whatsoever things are honest' – honest in the sight of God and men, honest in business, in speech, in conduct.

3. 'Whatsoever things are just' – giving to God that which is his (worship, praise, reverence, myself) and to man that which is

his, avoiding oppression and injustice. Owe no man anything he needs or deserves.

4. 'Whatsoever things are pure' – pure in word or deed, in opposition to pride, covetousness, hatred, envy and self-seeking.

5. 'Whatsoever things are holy' – agreeable to the character of God and his kingdom, that which promotes holiness of heart and life.

6. 'Whatsoever things are lovely.' – These are faith, kindness, compassion, generosity and all commendable virtues.

7. 'Whatsoever things are of good report' – things which contribute to a good name, a good reputation, a good opinion for the glory of Christ.

If anything is virtuous and worthy of praise, think on these things. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he!' (Prov. 4:23).



# The support of missionaries and preachers

## Philippians 4:9-23

v. 9. Throughout this epistle, Paul has exhorted the people to have unity of spirit and purpose, to love one another, to have real concern and care for one another, to be of a humble mind and disposition, to avoid false teachers, to rest in Christ alone for righteousness and to meditate on holy things. Now in this verse, he makes a very important point: ‘Those things which you have learned and received.’ It is hoped that you have not just learned these things in a doctrinal way, but that you have received them not just in your head, but in your heart, and have not only ‘heard them from me, but you have seen them in me.’ What good are words if our actions and attitudes are contrary? ‘Do these things. Put them in daily practice. God will be with you!’

v. 10. Paul rejoiced over the gifts and supplies this church had sent him by their pastor. Evidently they had for some reason neglected to communicate with him for a long time. He adds, ‘I’m sure you were thinking of me, but you had no opportunity to show it.’ Let this be a lesson to us: let us always be faithful in our prayers, care and concern for those who labour faithfully in the word. Don’t forget those missionaries and ministers whom you do not see for a season.

v. 11. Paul did not mean to imply that he was wanting anything, though he possessed nothing. He had all things in Christ and found contentment and peace in whatever condition the providence of God put him, be it adversity or prosperity, with much or little (Luke 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:6-10). He learned this in the school of grace, taught by the Spirit.

v. 12. 'I know how to be treated with contempt by men, to live humbly in a low condition, to work with my hands, to be hungry and cold – yet not to be depressed, cast down or murmur against God. I know how to be held in the esteem of men, to have an abundance – yet not to be lifted up with pride and forget that 'the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.' I have learned of God how to behave toward the temporary things of earth, how to put them in their proper perspective.'

v. 13. And now, lest he be thought to be proud of his grace and ascribe too much to himself, he attributes all grace to the power of Christ in him. 'I can be happy in any state and endure all these things, not in my own strength (for no man was more conscious of his own weakness than Paul). I am ready for anything through the power of Christ in me.'

Content with beholding his face,  
my all to his pleasure resigned;  
No changes of season or place  
would make any change in my mind.

While blest with a sense of his love,  
a palace a toy would appear;  
And prisons would palaces prove  
if Jesus would dwell with me there.

v. 14. Paul adds this lest they should think that he was discounting their gift and was not grateful. He has declared, 'I can be content in need or in plenty, but I appreciate your help. You have done what you should have done. You have done well in providing for those who preach God's word' (1 Cor. 9:6-11).

*vv. 15-17.* This church was the only church that talked with Paul about the subject of giving and supporting the ministry of the word. Even when he left Philippi and went to Thessalonica, they supported his ministry and took care of his needs. Strange that, even in the days of the apostles, churches were negligent in the matter of missions and supporting missionaries. He says, 'I have not entered into this subject because I desire a gift from you. I am eager to see the fruits of righteousness and salvation in you. The kingdom of God can get along without you and me, but I would like to see some evidence that you and I are in that kingdom of grace' (James 2:14-20).

*vv. 18, 19.* 'I have in hand all of your gifts, sent to me through your pastor. These gifts have the sweet smell of an offering and sacrifice which God welcomes and in which he delights. I cannot repay you, but my God will! He shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory through Christ Jesus!'

*v. 20.* To God, who is our Father in Christ Jesus, be all the glory for the grace he gives now, for the glory and happiness expected and for the supply of every need, both temporal and spiritual.

*vv. 21-23.* 'Greet all the brethren there. The brethren and believers here send their greetings to you. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you!'



# Colossians

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# The Colossian letter

## Colossians 1:1-8

This letter to the church at Colosse was written about thirty years after Christ died on the cross. Paul wrote it while in prison at Rome, about the same time that he wrote Philippians and Ephesians.

Who brought the gospel to Colosse and when, we do not know. Paul had never preached to them (2:1). The city was destroyed six years later by an earthquake and later rebuilt.

The occasion for the letter was that Epaphras, who had preached to them, came to Rome and told Paul about their faith and love. He also reported their danger from false teachers who had come among them – Judaizers, who urged the ceremonies of the law, and Gentiles, who promoted philosophy, worship of angels and saints, will-worship and punishing the body. Paul wrote to them to confirm them in the gospel of Christ, to warn them of spiritual error and to exhort them to a discharge of their duty to God, to one another and to all men.

v. 1. 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God.' In the beginning of the Christian church there were apostles.

1. They were chosen by Christ.
2. They saw the Lord personally.
3. They had infallible knowledge of the gospel, inspired by the Holy Spirit.
4. They were gifted to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine.

All of this was by the will of God, as the Father's will and the Son's work are the same. There are no apostles in the church today!

‘And Timothy, our brother.’ While Timothy was not an apostle, Paul included him in the salutation, for the highest office-bearer in the church recognizes even the least as being a brother and worthy of respect and recognition. In Christ we are one, and he that is greatest is but a servant.

v. 2. ‘To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.’ All believers are saints and all believers are faithful brethren. We are sanctified by the Father, the Son and the Spirit. We are brethren because first, we have the same Father, second, we are in one body and family and, third, we have all one elder Brother, Christ Jesus. The key word is ‘in Christ’! We are saints and brethren because we are in Christ.

‘Grace be unto you and peace.’ Moses prayed, ‘Lord, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me thy way’ (Exod. 33:13). Where God's grace is given, all other things will follow – peace, joy, rest and more. ‘Grace’ first; then ‘peace.’

vv. 3-5. This is Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for these faithful brethren.

1. ‘We give thanks to God.’ All things are of God: that is, our salvation, faith, hope, love (Ps. 103:1-5). ‘I am what I am by the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10). Every spiritual gift is from God through our Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:27; James 1:17).

2. He thanked God for their ‘faith’ in the first place. Without faith there can be no union with Christ (Mark 16:16); there can be no benefit from Christ (Heb. 11:6).

3. He thanked God for their ‘love’ for one another (1 Cor. 13:13). Love is the evidence of faith (John 13:35). Love is the fruit of faith (Gal. 5:22). The absence of love reveals the absence of God (1 John 4: 8).

4. He thanked God for their 'hope.' The believer's inheritance is not in his hand yet. He has it in hope! Our hope is as certain as the purpose of the Father, the atonement of the Son and the witness of the Spirit. It is still hope, however, until it becomes a reality. We really have little to expect or hope for on this earth, but all things are ours in Christ – this is our hope! We heard of it in the gospel. It is the gospel that is God's instrument to beget faith and hope in the heart (Rom. 10:17; 1 Peter 1:3).

v. 6. Having mentioned the gospel which begets faith, hope and love, he says,

1. 'It came to you. You didn't come to it. God sent it to you.' He is 'found of those who sought him not' (Rom. 10:20; Gal. 1:15; 1 John 4:10).

2. The gospel 'bringeth forth fruit' (Isa. 55:11). It brings forth the fruit of faith, love, joy, peace; we are new creatures in Christ. A seed that does not produce fruit is not the seed of the word.

3. The gospel continues to produce fruit. 'Since the day you heard the gospel and knew the grace of God it has brought forth fruit.'

vv. 7, 8. Having confirmed the gospel, he commends the preacher.

1. He is commended for being a 'fellow servant' of Christ with Paul.

2. He is praised for being a 'faithful minister of Christ.'

3. He is commended for his respect for them, for he declared their love and faith in Christ. It is a good sign when one speaks well of those who are absent.



# Made fit for heaven

## Colossians 1:9-17

*vv. 9-11.* 'For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you.' Their pastor, Epaphras, had declared unto Paul the love the Colossians had for Christ and for one another. This brought forth from Paul a prayer of thanksgiving and a prayer for their further growth in grace, wisdom and understanding. The believers' graces at their best are imperfect and subject to decay (1 Col. 13:9; Rev. 2:4) and may be abused (2 Cor. 12:7). Therefore Paul prays for them.

1. 'That you may be filled with the knowledge of his will.' This is the revealed will of God, to be learned from his word and in his Son: his will of redemption, his will of purpose, his will of conduct and attitude and his will of eternal glory. He prayed not only that they should have a knowledge of these, but be 'filled' inwardly with a knowledge of his 'wisdom and spiritual understanding.' Oh, that we may be delivered from the dead letter of the law and the dry tradition of religious orthodoxy! That we may have wisdom and spiritual understanding of our sins, our need and our inability! That we may have understanding of God's manifold mercies in Christ – how he can be just and Justifier, of the riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ! May ours be not a profession of religion but a true possession of Christ.

2. 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.' This is our godly conduct and behaviour, not only in the church, but in the home, on the job and on the street. We will live and talk as those who are in Christ, seeking to please and glorify God. 'Being fruitful in every good work.' Believers are trees of

righteousness, planted by the Lord to bear the fruit of the spirit and good works of the kingdom of Christ (Eph. 2:10). 'Increasing in the knowledge of God.' Ignorance in believers dishonors God as much as fruitlessness! Both fruitfulness and a growth in knowledge of our Lord are necessary to walk worthy of the Lord!

3. 'Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power.' We are not expected to walk worthy of the Lord, be fruitful and grow in grace and knowledge in our own strength and power, but in his! (2 Cor. 12:9.) This power and grace will enable us to bear afflictions and trials with patience, perseverance and real joy. His power and grace will subdue the whole man – his hand, his heart and his tongue! (Ps. 37:1-8.)

v. 12. Paul is continually giving thanks to God. Here he gives thanks that God (by his grace in Christ) has qualified us, has made us fit, to partake of heaven, the bright and glorious inheritance of the saints. Every man in his natural state is unfit for heaven and God's presence! However, he has given us in Christ all that we need! (1 Cor. 1:30.)

vv. 13, 14. He explains how God makes us qualified and fit for heaven by drawing us out of that corrupt state in which we were born and translating us into the state of grace, called 'the kingdom of his dear Son' (Rom. 14:17). This he does in effectual regeneration by his spirit. He redeems us from sin, the law, his justice and wrath by the blood of his Son. No way of redemption can be accepted that does not totally ransom the sinner, fully honour God's law and completely satisfy his justice.

v. 15. The apostle, having spoken of our redemption, takes up a description of the redeemer!

'He is the image of the invisible God.' Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He is the visible representation in the flesh of the

invisible God (John 14:8-10; 2 Cor. 5:19). Every attribute of God is seen in Christ (Heb. 1:1-3).

‘The first-born of every creature.’ This does not mean that he was the first of creation, or the first creature made, for in the next verse it is said that all things were created by him. But Paul is saying he is the King, Lord and Owner of all creation. The Jews make the first-born to be synonymous with ‘king.’ He is the King, Owner and Heir of all creation, for it was all made by him.

*vv. 16, 17.* It was by him and in him that all things were created and by him that all things are held together.

# Christ – the head of the church

## Colossians 1:18-29

v. 18. ‘Christ is the head of the body, the church.’ By the church is meant the whole election of grace, every believer of all generations (Eph. 5:23-27). He is the representative Head from all eternity and in all time. He is the political Head, in that he reigns. He is the economical Head, in that he provides every need (1 Cor. 1:30). Without a vital union with Christ we would be as dead as a body without a head!

‘Christ is the beginning.’ He is the root, or foundation cause, of the church. We were chosen in him; from him all spiritual life flows. As Eve was from Adam, so the church is from Christ. It is a body of his preparing.

‘Christ is the first-born from the dead.’ He was the first who rose from the dead by his own power to immortality and life. He is the pledge of resurrection for us. ‘Because I live, ye shall live also’ (John 14:19). Death has no more power or claim on him.

‘That in all things he might have the pre-eminence.’ That he might have first place in our affection, in our thoughts, in our desires to be like him and in the highest praise of our lips. He is the first:

1. In sonship; no one is a son in the sense he is.
2. In election; he is the first chosen and we are chosen in him.
3. In covenant; he is the Surety, Mediator and Messenger.
4. In redemption; he wrought it and bought it.
5. In life; he quickeneth whom he will.
6. In death and resurrection; he conquered death, hell and the grave. He ought to have preeminence.

*vv. 19, 20.* It is true that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ (Col. 2:9). He is God (2 Cor. 5:19). God dwells in the body of Christ as he dwelt in the tabernacle. This fulness, however, is the fulness of complete redemption which he is able to give to believers:

1. The fulness of wisdom, holiness and righteousness.
2. The fulness of grace, peace and joy.
3. The fulness of eternal life and glory. ‘We are complete in him’ (Col. 2:10).

All of the elect, whether already in heaven or on the earth, are by his blood reconciled and brought to peace with God (Rom. 5:1-10).

*vv. 21, 22.* What Paul had said about reconciliation in general in the preceding verse, he applies to the Colossians in particular. We need to embrace these verses personally. We were strangers, enemies in our minds (Rom. 8:7), workers of iniquity. However, in the body of his flesh, by his perfect obedience and the merits of his blood, he has so reconciled us to God that we are and will be presented before God in that day free from all sin, perfect in holiness and without one charge against us (Rom. 8:33, 34; Jude 24). He has reconciled! It is finished! The work is done!

*v. 23.* ‘If you continue in the faith and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.’ All of the preceding provisions and promises are ours only if we persevere or continue in faith. Nothing but judgement awaits those who depart from Christ (Heb. 10:38, 39; 3:6, 14; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8). God keeps us through, and not apart from, faith (1 Peter 1:5; Jer. 32:40).

*vv. 24, 25.* Twice in verses 23-25, Paul says, ‘I am made a minister.’ All believers are witnesses and preachers of the gospel, but there are certain offices and responsibilities in the body of Christ to which men are

specifically called and equipped. Paul was an apostle, sent to preach the gospel, suffer certain afflictions and endure certain trials for the sake of the church. He rejoiced that he was entrusted with the gospel, counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake and to preach fully the gospel of Christ.

v. 26. This gospel of Christ (his incarnation, his nature and his person, office, death, resurrection and salvation) given to lost sinners is an ancient gospel, and it is not understood by the natural mind. It is called a mystery! (1 Cor. 2:7-14.) The gospel was before veiled in promises, sacrifices, ceremonies and prophecies; but is now made manifest (or revealed to believers) by the Holy Spirit. Without his revelation, it remains profound and mysterious. Those who have the clearest knowledge know only in part (1 Cor. 13:9; 8:1, 2).

v. 27. God, by his spirit and his ministers, would make known to you the riches of the glory of this gospel. He has laid out the great and unsearchable treasures of his mercy, his grace, his goodness, his righteousness. He has revealed all of the glory of his wisdom, mercy, justice and truth. All of this dwells in Christ! It is ours in Christ. We possess the riches of his grace and we hope for eternal glory as Christ dwells in us by faith (Col. 2:3).

v. 28. Paul had a twofold message: 'warning every man' and 'instructing every man.' Someone said, 'The blessings of God are hedged about on one side by the warnings of God, lest any presume, and on the other side by the promises of God, lest any despair.' It is the duty of the minister to warn the careless of God's wrath to come and to invite men to flee to Christ.

v. 29. 'Therefore I labour,' according to the grace and strength he gives!

# Complete in him - 1

## Colossians 2:1-7

*vv. 1-5.* The apostle wanted the people of Colosse to know what great concern he had for them (and for believers everywhere), even though he had never met them personally. He then gave reasons for this conflict and concern.

*v. 2.* ‘That your hearts might beat as one in love for Christ and one another.’ This is the way to comfort. Lack of unity of heart and affection will destroy joy and comfort.

*v. 2.* ‘That your hearts may beat as one in understanding and acknowledging the gospel of the glory of the Father and the Son (which is called in the preceding chapter ‘the mystery of God’). Union of heart in affection depends much upon common understanding and belief of the main truths concerning Christ and how God saves sinners. ‘Two will not long walk together in spiritual love who do not agree on spiritual truth.’ Let us pray for a growth in the knowledge of Christ and his grace.

*v.3.* In Christ are stored up all the riches of God's grace and glory (*v. 3*). In him are stored all wisdom and knowledge. Don't look for anything pertaining to God's mercy, grace and righteousness anywhere but in Christ. There is in Christ everything necessary to salvation (1 John 5:20).

*v.4.* ‘I say this with deep concern (*v. 4*), lest any should mislead or deceive you, lest any should draw you away from the simplicity of Christ with beguiling speech’ (2 Cor. 11:3). Satan endeavours to sow the seed of error wherever the gospel of Christ is preached. His chief weapon is to entice men to depart in any way from a full

trust and confidence in Christ alone and to lean even partially on the flesh (Rom. 11: 6).

v. 5. 'I am absent from you in the flesh' (v.5). If Paul had been there in person, he could have dealt with these errors as he dealt with Peter (Gal. 2:11-14). (We are to guard jealously the gospel of God's glory.) He was 'with them in spirit,' however, rejoicing over their faith in Christ.

v. 6. 'As ye have received Christ.' How did you receive Christ? You received him:

1. As the sum and substance of all saving truth.
2. As the fulfillment of all promises.
3. As the fountain of all grace.
4. As the whole of acceptance and righteousness with and before God.
5. As the object of faith and love.

'In the same manner as you received him, continue to walk in him. Live day by day in this faith, trust and relationship. You don't begin in Christ and get perfected, comforted or accepted in your flesh' (Gal. 3:1-3).

v. 7. In this verse Paul prescribes three means for attaining to a constant walk in Christ.

1. 'Rooted and built up in him.' This is a metaphor taken from trees deeply rooted; 'rooted in him.' The grip with which faith lays hold on Christ is like a tree deeply rooted in the ground. Its strength, nourishment, life and fruit are supplied from him. Built up in him is a metaphor taken from a building fastened to a



foundation. The shape and the stability of the building are determined by the foundation (1 Cor. 3:11).

2. 'Established in the faith, as ye have been taught, and abounding therein,' established in the doctrine of faith concerning Christ (Heb. 13:9). Not weary of old truths, not moved by new revelations from teachers who glory in the flesh, not easily offended, not driven about with every wind of doctrine, this 'building' is firmly established and growing in the faith of the Lord Jesus.

3. All of this is 'with thanksgiving.' There is great reason for thanksgiving:

The unspeakable gift of Christ.

Faith itself, which is the gift of God.

The gospel and spiritual light.

True ministers.

All things in Christ (1 Thess. 5:18).

# Complete in him - 2

## Colossians 2:8-13

After expressing his great concern and care for the church at Colosse, Paul begins to warn them of false teachers and their errors.

v. 8. In this verse the error of false religion is dealt with under three heads:

1. 'Philosophy.' There is nothing wrong with true philosophy, but the word of God is never to be subjected to human reason, and human philosophy is never to be introduced into the worship and service of God. 'Let God be true and every man a liar' (Rom. 3:4).

2. 'Tradition of men.' These are practices and rites in the church without the authority of the written word, having no warrant but custom and human tradition. For instance: infant baptism, mass, purgatory and prayers for the dead, the celebration of religious holidays such as Christmas, Easter and so forth.

3. 'Rudiments of the world.' These are the Mosaical rites and ceremonies - circumcision, abstaining from certain meats, the observance of sabbath days and so forth. Since Christ has fulfilled all these, the practice of them is sinful. The way of Christ will not mix with man's philosophy, traditions, nor legal obedience!

v. 9. There is nothing that will make a believer look to Christ alone, cling to and rest in Christ alone, more than to realize that everything God is, that God requires and that the sinner needs is in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). This is the third time that Paul has told the Colossians that all fulness is in Christ (see Col. 1:19; 2:3). You can add nothing to fulness!

v. 10. We are perfect in him! He is perfect, and our being in him makes us perfect. This is not speaking of what we shall be, but of what we are right now in Christ! Not in ourselves, but in him. He is the head of all principality and power (not only in the church, but angels, kings, rulers, religious heads, etc.). In him there is no charge, obligation, duty or service that can be demanded of us for redemption - not by anyone! (Col. 1:21, 22.)

v. 11. Circumcision was instituted by God (Gen. 17:10-13).

1. It was a token of the covenant, the promise of God's blessings.

2. It was a sign by which Israel was distinguished from other nations.

3. It is a picture of spiritual regeneration, circumcision of the heart, which is putting off the body and power of sin (Rom. 2:28, 29).

1. Circumcision was necessary to eating of Passover (Exod. 12:48).

2. A child was named at circumcision (Luke 1:59; 2:21).

3. Circumcision of heart brings us to the table of the Lord and gives us a new name – sons of God! All this we have in Christ. Thus, it is not necessary to circumcise the flesh.

v. 12. We are not only circumcised in Christ in a spiritual sense (having the token, evidence and power of the covenant of grace), but all our sins are buried with Christ (of which our baptism in water is a representation)! Christ died for our sins and was buried. When he arose, all our sins were left behind! It is through faith that we see ourselves crucified, buried and

risen with Christ. It is not just any faith, but that which is of God's operation!

v. 13. God raised Christ from the dead, and God must raise us from the dead. We were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-8). Forgiveness of sin is not done piecemeal, but is done at once and includes all sin – past, present and future (1 John 1:7).

When we savingly believe in Christ, we are at that moment united to Christ. All that Christ did, suffered, or procured as our Head (whether in his life, death, burial, resurrection, or exaltation) is imputed to us by God, even to the right to all these benefits, given to us as if we had been personally present with him at those times and had done them all ourselves (Eph. 1:3; 2:6).

# Christ or ceremony

## Colossians 2:14-23

In Christ we are complete (v. 10). In Christ we have the seal of the covenant upon our hearts (v.11). In Christ we are risen from the dead (v. 12). In Christ we are forgiven of all sins (v. 13).

*v. 14.* When we think of handwriting, we think of the handwriting on the wall against Belshazzar: ‘Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting.’ This handwriting against us is the whole ceremonial law of Moses, with its ordinances, commandments and laws, plus the moral law. We are weighed and found wanting (Rom. 3:19, 23). None but Christ could put away this handwriting, because none but Christ was able to satisfy what it required (Heb. 10:9). It took his perfect life and sacrificial death to do this.

*v. 15.* When a Roman emperor won a victory and conquered his foes, he rode through the streets in an open chariot; the captive kings and warriors, stripped of their armour and their hands tied behind their backs in chains, walked before him exposed to public shame and disgrace. Christ has disarmed all the principalities and powers which were against us (Rom. 8:33, 34). He has defeated Satan, sin, hell and death. He has made a bold display and public example of them in his cross. We are complete in Christ; he has set the captive free. We are not in bondage to any law, ceremony, or curse.

*v. 16.* Therefore, let no man sit in judgement on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to ceremonies, feast days, or Sabbaths. No man can command of us what Christ has not commanded (1 Tim. 4:1-8).

v. 17. The Old Testament ceremonies, circumcision, feast days and sacrifices were but shadows or symbols of Christ and his redemptive work. They were in effect only until he came. He is the truth, the body and the substance of all these. To continue in them is to say that Christ, the fulfillment, has not come! (Heb. 10:1-5.)

v. 18. Our reward or prize is to win Christ and be found in him, to know him and the power of his resurrected life (Phil. 3:8-14). 'Don't let anyone turn you away from this by insisting on a false humility, self-abasement, worshipping of angels and dead saints, teaching what is not in God's word (but only in his visions and imagination).' All false, unscriptural philosophies are products of the flesh and lead away from Christ!

v. 19. These men bring reproach upon Christ, who is the only Head of the church. They make angels, the virgin, or other saints to be employed with him as mediators with the Father (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). Christ is the only Head, Lord, King and Giver of life. The whole body is knit together in him. We receive our life, nourishment, growth and grace only from him! The more we draw from Christ, the more we grow and increase spiritually and the better we will be knit together in love and unity.

v. 20. If we died with Christ by virtue of our union with Christ, if we were buried and rose with him and in him have justification, pardon, redemption and sanctification, if in Christ all the ordinances, ceremonies and types were fulfilled and we are free from these requirements, if in Christ we are redeemed from the curse, covenant and condemnation of the law – why would we want to return to these shadows and types? (Gal. 4:21; 3:10.)

*vv. 21, 22.* ‘Touch not... taste not . . . handle not;’ that is, meats, unclean things and other things forbidden by religious rules. These things are of service and reference only to the body; they can be of no value to the soul. They are perishing materials and cease to be when they are not used. The using of them cannot defile, and the abstinence from them cannot sanctify, nor commend us to God. Submission to these ordinances by a believer is not commanded by God, but by false teachers.

*v. 23.* These religious rules, ceremonies and fleshly practices give the outward appearance of devotion, humility and consecration. All error has something to say in its defense. Men like to serve God with their own inventions. They like to appear to be pious and humble; so they promote self-imposed laws, discipline and punishment of the body; but these are of no value in checking the flesh or sanctifying the heart. They do not honour God, but only indulge natural flesh and its false concept of righteousness (Rom. 10:1-4).

# Christ is all

## Colossians 3:1-11

v. 1. 'If it be true that you are crucified with Christ, buried with him in baptism, risen with him and seated with him in the heavens, then seek those things which are above.'

1. Seek the heavenly country (Ps. 17:15; Heb. 11:9, 10; 1 Peter 1:3, 4).
2. Seek Christ and his righteousness (Phil. 3:9-11).
3. Seek all spiritual blessings, as peace, life and glory (Eph. 1:3; James 1:17; 3:17).

We seek those things which are above; for he is there, seated at God's right hand.

v. 2. 'Set your affection [your heart] on things above.' Unless our hearts are set on the things of Christ, they will not be sought in the proper manner. 'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life' (Prov. 4:23). Do not set your mind, thoughts and desires on the things of this world (Rom. 8:5). Food and clothing, care of families, health and necessities of life are to be sought after and provided for, yet not with anxiety and distress, as if these were our chief end or the source of our chief happiness (Matt. 6:28-34). All the things of this earth shall fade away, 'but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 John 2:15-17).

v. 3. As far as this world is concerned (with its riches, honour, temporary glory, fame, pleasures and relationships), 'ye are dead'! Our new life, our real life and interest, is with Christ in God. 'Hid with Christ' denotes the



secrecy of it (the natural man does not understand it), and the safety of it (it shall never perish). The more we are aware of our union with Christ and the more our minds are set on him, the less interest we have in this world and its passing vanities.

v. 4. Our real glory is yet to come! It will be revealed when he is revealed in his glory. Christ is our life; his life and ours are one (Gal. 2:20). He is our hope. He is our happiness; true happiness is in knowing him. He is our portion; we are joint heirs with him, and when he comes in his glory, we will enter into his glory! (1 John 3:1-3; Rom. 8:16-18.)

vv. 5, 6. Since we seek things above, are mindful of things above, are dead to the things of this world and are one with Christ, we must constantly put to death these sinful desires that remain in our flesh (Rom. 7:18-23). Let us face our bodily members and their sinful desires with honesty and truth, putting them down and refusing to yield to them when they appear.

Paul lists some of the fleshly temptations which we are to put down and deaden: fornication, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires and imaginations and all greed and covetousness. The work of mortification is not perfected in an instant (nor is it ever completely perfected in this life). So this body of sin and death remains in us that we must make it our daily task to put down evil thoughts and desires. The Lord's people are still human and will have a real struggle with the flesh. However, he will give grace and mercy for every need. The very fact that we are exhorted to mortify these fleshly appetites indicates that they still exist to some degree in the believer. God's wrath is upon the children of disobedience because this is their way of life.

v. 7. Before we met Christ, this was our way of life. We walked and lived in these things, giving full release to the flesh, greed, covetousness and sin. Now we love Christ and long to be like him in conduct, conversation

and attitude. It is not so much sin in itself that brings the wrath of God, but love for sin, hardness in sin and continuance in sin. There is sin in his people, but they confess their sins and he forgives them (1 John 2:1).

v. 8. Paul returns to his exhortation to put down and mortify sin in our members. He mentions six sins; the first three are of the heart and the rest are sins of the mouth! The right order of mortification is to begin with the heart (Matt. 23:26). Proceed then to the tongue and the outward man.

v. 9, 10. This is regeneration, this is the new birth – the Holy Spirit has created a new man with new desires, new principles, new attitudes. This new man is created in the image of Christ. We know him, his will and his ways. We hate the old man of flesh and continually put him off. By God's grace the new man will grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ until at death the old man will be totally eradicated and we will be like Christ.

v. 11. It is usual for natural men to think that they will be accepted of God because of nationality, ceremony, outward piety, works, or knowledge. It is also usual for men to conclude that God will take less notice of them if they lack these things. This verse clears that up. In regeneration, Christ is all (John. 1:12). In righteousness, Christ is all (2 Cor. 5:21). In sanctification, Christ is all (1 Cor. 1:30). In acceptance, Christ is all (Eph. 1:6, 7). In love, Christ is all (Rom. 8:39). In redemption, Christ is all (1 Peter 1:18).

# Christian graces

## Colossians 3:12-16

In the preceding verses of this chapter, the apostle exhorts us to put off the old man with his deeds. The conduct and character of the old man are anger, malice, blasphemy, filthy talk and lies. In these verses we are exhorted as the elect of God, as children of God, to behave as such in thought, word and deed. Put on the new man and his deeds; this is the fruit of the Spirit.

v. 12. It is not sufficient to cease from outward deeds of evil. We must also learn to do well and live as new creatures in Christ.

‘Put on, as the elect of God.’ There is an inseparable connection between being God's children and behaving like God's children (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:9; 1 John 4:7, 8, 20). We do well to question our union with Christ where there is no evidence of growth in the grace of Christ, the love of Christ and the fruit of his spirit.

‘Bowels of mercy’ – an inward pity and tenderness toward the needs, misery and infirmities of others.

‘Kindness.’ Our sympathy toward others should not only be inward, but outward also, expressed in words, conduct and deeds of kindness.

‘Humbleness of mind.’ This arises from a genuine sense of our own sins, infirmities and short-comings, as well as a sense of God's mercy toward us in Christ (1 Cor. 4:7). We look upon ourselves as the chief of sinners, inferior to others in graces, gifts and knowledge.

‘Meekness’ – the opposite of pride and arrogance. It destroys envy, jealousy and quarrels (1 Peter 3:4). A meek and quiet spirit will lead to patience or long-suffering. We don't feel it necessary to avenge ourselves or even to defend ourselves.

v. 13. As long as we are in the flesh we will have misunderstandings, unpleasantness and even injustices (we will feel that our rights have been violated and others have been wrong in what they have said and done). What is to be our attitude? It is to be twofold: 'forbearing' and 'forgiving.' To forbear is to control our emotions, surrendering our rights for the time being in patient hope that God will reveal his purpose and will. To forgive is actually to put the misunderstanding out of mind and restore a state of love and fellowship. This is the way our Lord treats us. He is longsuffering and patient with us, forgiving our sins, remembering them no more!

v. 14. 'Above all things,' the most necessary grace is love (Matt. 22:36-40; 1 Cor. 13:1-3, 13). This is the bond which binds everything together in complete harmony for the glory of God and the good of one another. Knowledge, activity, zeal and morality won't bind us to Christ or to one another.

v. 15. Let the peace which comes through Christ (Rom. 5:1) and the peace which comes from Christ (Rom. 12:18; 14:19; 2 Cor. 13:11, 12) actually rule our hearts, deciding and settling all matters that arise in our minds or in the assembly. As members of the body of Christ we were called to live in peace and love (1 Cor. 7:15). Let us be thankful and appreciative, first to God for all grace and then to one another. These virtues are absolutely necessary. Where love, peace and thanksgiving are absent, faith is absent!

v. 16. We are exhorted to a diligent study of God's word. This is not for information and doctrine alone, but that God's word might become such a part of us that it is said to dwell in us as a member of the family lives in a home. It is loved, respected, obeyed and delighted in richly (Ps. 1:1, 2) in an abundant fashion. We are not to study just one part of the scripture, but

all of it, that we may benefit and grow in grace (1 Peter 2:1, 2). It is not only the duty of the ministers to teach, encourage and instruct others; but it is the duty of all believers to witness, teach and encourage one another in spiritual matters. This can be done in private, in groups and in public worship. It is all to be done as unto the Lord, for the glory of the Lord and from the heart.

# The common rule for all our actions

## Colossians 3:17-25

v. 17. This is the key verse in our study. Paul gives us a common rule for all our actions in worship and in daily life. They are to be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his glory and with thanksgiving to the Father for our interest in Christ, our position in Christ and our acceptance in Christ.

1. Whether in preaching, singing, praying, teaching, or in conversation with other believers, let us do what we do in the name of Christ and for his glory.

2. Whether in the home, on the job, or in any of our business and social contacts, we are not left at liberty to do as we please, but we are to aim at his glory and his will.

3. This will bring God's blessings, will bring unity of heart and purpose, will drive out divisions and strife, if we do all that we do, not for selfish purposes, but for Christ's sake.

v. 18, 19. From this verse to the end of the chapter, Paul talks about the duties and deeds which relate to Christians as they are members of a family. In this family there are three pairs: husbands and wives, parents and children and masters and servants. He points out the duties of each to the other, to be fulfilled for the glory of Christ and in the name of Christ.

In order for a home to be well-ordered, a place of love and contentment and for Christ to have preeminence, these two things must be true:

1. The wife must be in subjection to the husband as is fit in the Lord, obeying him, respecting his judgments and decisions, and following his leadership as long as he does not violate the word of God (Eph. 5:22-24; Gen. 3:16).

2. The husband should love his wife, treat her with kindness, respect and defend her before his parents, children and all who would discredit or abuse her. Husband and wife are one in the Lord and must not suffer this union to be broken, either in their own eyes or the eyes of others, particularly their children. No home can be built for Christ's glory or for our good if we are pulling our separate, selfish ways. We walk together in love and affection if we seek the glory of Christ.

*vv. 20, 21.* Do you children want to be happy? Do you want God's blessings on your lives? Do you desire to live for the glory of God and do all things in the name of Christ? Then 'Obey your parents.' Honour your father and mother. Respect them and their decisions. Speak respectfully of and to them. This is well pleasing to the Lord! (Exod. 20:12.)

Parents, do not abuse your parental authority. There are two dangerous directions we take in raising children: either being too hard and unreasonable with them, or being too indulgent and easy with them. Either way children will become discouraged, spoiled and rebellious. If we can seek God's will and not our own, God's glory and not our own, God's tenderness and way and not our own in dealing with our children, we will build a relationship the Lord will bless.

*v. 22.* 'Servants' here refers to all who work in the employ or service of someone else:

1. Let us give an honest, dedicated, full effort in our labors as if we were working for the Lord, not just in appearance, but with a dedicated heart.

2. Let us be concerned for our employer's business, property and profit, not stealing, wasting, or misusing equipment or tools.

3. Let us be content with our pay, asking for it in the right spirit, considering his ability to pay.

‘Masters,’ you have some obligations to your servants:

1. Give them fair and equal pay. They have families to support, children to educate and they enjoy the same things you enjoy.

2. Expect them to work, produce and promote the business; but don't be unreasonable. Treat them as you want to be treated. Don't lay burdens on them you are unwilling to bear.

3. Treat them with respect. A man may dress poorly or have less ability and education, but he is a son of God. He is an important person in the eyes of God.

vv. 25-25. ‘Whatever you do in all these areas (husbands and wives, children and parents, servants and masters), do what you do sincerely, with all your heart, as unto the Lord and before the Lord.’ If we are his children, our activities have a higher purpose and calling than just building relationships and programs that will one day crumble. We are serving the Lord Jesus Christ and his greater glory. From him we shall receive a ‘well done’ or judgement.



# Speaking to God and to men

## Colossians 4:1-18

v. 1. This verse belongs to the preceding chapter (it has no connection with what follows). The apostle, having exhorted servants to a proper discharge of their duties (as unto the Lord), proceeds to instruct those who hire and work servants to treat them in a just and equal manner. 'Treat them with respect, encouraging them in their work, and giving them fair wages. Remember that you have a Master in heaven' (Matt. 6:15; 18:23-35).

v. 2. There are three important things mentioned here in regard to our prayers.

1. 'Continue in prayer.' This does not mean that we should pray all the time. That would be impossible. We can and ought to live in an attitude of prayer and fellowship with God. This does mean to pray frequently about all things. A day should not pass without prayer.

2. 'Watch in prayer.' Be alert and intent in prayer. This is said in opposition to cold, formal and careless praying (which God despises). When we pray, let it be an undivided, sincere communion with the living God.

3. 'With thanksgiving' (Phil. 4:6). A believer always has mercies for which to be thankful. How shall we succeed in our present request if we are not thankful for what has gone before?

v. 3, 4. Paul requests prayer for himself and others who minister the word.

1. 'Pray that a door of opportunity may be opened' (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12).

2. 'Pray that the door of men's hearts may be opened.' Men may hear the gospel with natural ears and still not hear with the heart (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). The gospel of God's grace and glory is a mystery which must be revealed by the power of God's spirit, else men remain in darkness even after hearing (Matt. 13:10-13; Gal. 1:15; 1 Cor. 2:14).

3. 'Pray that the door of my lips may be opened. Pray that God will give me the words to say, the ability to say them, and the wisdom to do it for his glory! Pray that I may preach the gospel faithfully, boldly, with clearness of speech as I ought (Matt. 9: 37, 38).

v. 5. 'Them that are without' are unbelievers, people who are not members of the church family. The church is the household of faith; those who are unbelievers are not of this household. It becomes us in our communication with these people to behave wisely and in such a manner that the gospel is not blasphemed and reproached. Do all that you can in your contact with unbelievers to gain their respect, affection and approval of your conduct, conversation and attitude. We should be known in our families, our community and our business circles as peaceful, honest, holy and kind people.

v. 6. 'Let your speech be always with grace.' This is not just to talk about the grace of God, but our speech should reveal the grace of God.

1. Speak the truth faithfully and sincerely, without lying, flattery, or exaggeration.

2. Speak in love, avoiding gossip, whisperings, or anything that is injurious to the character of another. Avoid sowing discord or division.

3. Speak kindly and pleasantly. Hard words reveal a hard heart. Unkind, cutting remarks reveal a bitter spirit.

Grace is to the speech what salt is to meat. It makes it acceptable, good to the ear and a blessing to the heart. Grace in the heart will teach you how you ought to answer any person. Knowledge is not acquired by speaking, but it ought to go before it!

vii. 7, 8. Paul was in prison in Rome. He sent Tychicus and Onesimus to declare his state to the Colossian believers, to inform them of what was done in Rome, and that these ministers might comfort and encourage them. The rest of the epistle is to encourage specifically certain persons in the church.

# 1 Thessalonians

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# Evidences of our election

## 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica after they left Philippi and preached there for at least three weeks (Acts 17:1-4). The foundation of this church was then laid. Timothy came back later, establishing and comforting the young converts and returning to Paul with the good news of their faith and love. Paul wrote this, said to be his first epistle, about the year of 51 A.D.

v. 1. The salutation from Paul, Silas, and Timothy to the church at Thessalonica is sent with his usual prayer, ‘Grace be to you and peace from the Father and the Son.’

v. 2. The Apostle gives thanks for every member of the church, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, leaders and followers. He does not ascribe anything to their free-will or decision, nor does he ascribe anything to himself or his companions, who preached the gospel to them; but he gives thanks and glory to God alone, assuring them of his prayers for them (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Sam. 12:23). ‘I am mindful of you in prayer.’

v. 3. ‘I constantly remember’ with thanksgiving before God:

1. Your work, energized and activated by your faith. True faith is a working grace. Faith that does not produce good works and obedience is not saving faith (James 2:14-20).

2. Your labors, motivated by love! Love to Christ and to one another will engage a believer in worship, prayer, and in

ministering cheerfully to the needs of others. Labors and works motivated by anything but love is not pleasing to God.

v. 4. 'My brethren' (this is the relationship of those in the family of God) (Mark 3:31-35) beloved of God and beloved of me. 'I know that God has elected,' chosen, and fore-ordained you to eternal life. This is not an election to office or service, but to salvation (Eph. 1:3-4; Rom. 9:10-16).

Paul gives many evidences why he knows they have been chosen to salvation in Christ:

v. 5. 1. The manner in which the gospel came to them reveals their election, not merely in the external ministry of it, but in the internal efficacy of it through the power and revelation of God's Holy Spirit. There is a difference in hearing the arguments and teaching of men and in hearing the word preached and made clear to the heart by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:4-5; 1 Cor. 2:9-10; Matt. 16:13-17). This word of grace which the Holy Spirit applied to your heart brought great conviction, blessed assurance of your interest in Christ, and confidence in us as the ministers of Christ.

v. 6. 2. Another evidence of your election of God is the fact that you received that gospel and became followers of the Lord. We do not emulate or follow any man as such; but we follow the leadership, instruction, example, and correction of those whom God sends to minister to us the gospel (Heb. 13:7). Babes in Christ need to listen to Elders and follow them as they follow Christ.

3. Also, you received the word and stood for the gospel in spite of the afflictions and persecutions brought upon you for your faith (Acts 17:5-9). True saving faith clings to Christ and his word regardless of the consequences caused by that faith.

v. 7. 4. Another evidence of your election is that you, by your faith, works, and love, became examples and patterns for all believers! Though young in faith, you set an example for others – examples in worship, faithfulness, holiness, conversation, and conduct.

v. 8. 5. Ye became witnesses, evangelists, and missionaries. A person who has been chosen to salvation and brought to a living, vital union with Christ will carry a great burden for all people (Rom. 10:1; Rom. 9:1-3). He will witness to others and cheerfully support those who preach the gospel.

v. 9. 6. Ye turned from your idols to love and serve God who lives and is the true God. We turn from our internal idols (of pride, self-love, lusts, ambition, and rebellion) to submit to his will and providence. We turn from our external idols (not only of false ideas of God and religious ceremonies, but from materialism, family, and other earthly ties, and all things and persons which hinder our walk with him).

v. 10. 7. You look forward to and await the return of our Lord Jesus Christ who died for our sins, was raised from the dead, and is seated at the Father's right hand. He will come again; you believe this and await his coming (John 14:3; Acts 1:10-11).

# Evidences of ministerial sincerity

## 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

The apostle, giving an account of his successful ministry among the Thessalonians, commends their readiness to receive the gospel.

v. 1. What a comfort it is to a minister of the gospel to have his own conscience and the witness of others declare that he has been true to the gospel of God's glory, true to those who have heard him, and that he has not run or labored in vain! What an encouragement to see that God has brought forth fruit from the word preached (Acts 20:20-21; Acts 20:26-27). If a false prophet is known by the fruits of his ministry, may not a true minister be known by his? (Matt. 7:15-16).

v. 2. Paul was put in prison and shamefully treated at Philippi (Acts 16). He was not discouraged nor turned from his purpose to make Christ known; but as soon as he came to Thessalonica, he preached Christ as boldly as ever, meeting with much contention and opposition. Persecution and opposition ought to encourage rather than discourage us, for we are faithfully warned by our Lord that the natural man and the religionist will not receive the gospel of the grace of God! (John 16:1-4). But 'we earnestly contend' also (and this may be the main point here).

v. 3. We are willing to be a bit contentious and appeal to you with great zeal and fervor; for our preaching of the gospel of Christ does not originate from error, delusion, or an improper motive (nor in fraud or deceit). Our design is not to win you to ourselves, to a party, or to glory in your flesh, but that you may know Christ. Paul had no secular aims or



goals, but was in reality what he professed to be. In the next verses he gives the reasons and evidences of his sincerity!

v. 4. We are stewards of God, entrusted with the gospel. It is required of a steward that he be faithful. The gospel he preached was not his own, but was the gospel of God (1 Cor. 9:16). We shall give an account (Heb. 13:17).

Our design was to please God, not to please men. The gospel of Christ must not be compromised and accommodated to the thoughts, desires, and fancies of men; but it was designed to mortify the flesh and glorify the grace and mercy of God in Christ.

v. 5. We avoided flattery and praising the flesh, for we were determined to preach Christ, not to gain an interest in the affection of men. We did not flatter men to gain their support nor their interest in the gospel. Our weapons are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

We avoided covetousness. We did not use the ministry as a cloak or a covering to hide a covetous and greedy motive. Our design was not to enrich ourselves through preaching (2 Peter 2:3). God always met our needs and provided our living regardless of what men thought of us.

v. 6. We avoided ambition and vain glory. Paul did not covet their praise, nor to be called Rabbi, nor to be adored by them. He was not seeking honor from men, but that honor which comes from God (John 5:44). He was certainly an apostle and worthy of respect and double-honor. He could have used his authority as an apostle and demanded esteem and special care, but he wanted nothing to hinder their coming to faith in Christ.

v. 7. We were gentle among you. Such kindness, gentleness, and patience is becoming to the gospel of Christ and recommends the grace of God, for he is kind and gentle in dealing with sinners (Eph. 4:32). Though Paul did

not flatter the flesh, he was kind and condescending to all men and became all things to all men. He showed the kindness and care of a mother nursing and cherishing her own children. The word of God is indeed powerful, and it comes often with awesome authority upon the minds of men; but it is not our place as faulty men to use this word harshly nor in a rude, cruel, and overbearing manner (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

v. 8. The Apostle had such a strong affection for these people that he was not only willing to preach the gospel to them but was willing to give his life for them: they had become this dear to him.

# We have these things in common

## 1 Thessalonians 2:9-20

Paul continues his account of his ministry among the Thessalonians by expressing his deep personal regard for them and his thanksgiving to God for them, encouraging them in their faith, their trials, and their afflictions for the sake of the gospel.

*vv. 9-10.* The scripture is very clear on the matter of support and material care for those who preach the gospel as pastors, missionaries, and evangelists (1 Cor. 9:11-14; Gal. 6:6). But when Paul was among these people, he worked as a tent-maker (Acts 18:3), which proves that he was not seeking material gain and did not use the ministry for a cloak of covetousness. In his life, conduct, and conversation he put forth every effort to keep from bringing reproach on Christ or hindering the gospel. People watch us and listen to us, often in a critical fashion, in order that they may find some reason not to believe our gospel. Let us avoid every appearance of evil and inconsistency which might give them cause to accuse us of hypocrisy!

*vv. 11-12.* He reminds them of his tenderness, compassion, and faithfulness in ministering to them, exhorting them also to walk in a manner of life that is worthy of their holy calling. We are in this world but not of this world! (Phil. 3:17-21; 1 Cor. 7:29-31.)

*v. 13.* This is perhaps the greatest compliment Paul could pay them and the greatest blessing that could come their way. Paul, without ceasing, praises God that it is true of them. They heard the gospel of Christ from Paul, but they did not only hear Paul but God; and they received the gospel of God's

glory not in word, tradition, and logic of a mere man, but they received it as the word of God (1 Thess. 1:5). God works by his word; and when the word is heard in power, as the word of God, it works effectually to the quickening of dead sinners and the enlightening of dark minds! Men need to cease to argue scripture and hear the word of the Lord.

*vv. 14-15.* Wherever you find the children of God (whether in Judea, Thessalonica, or America), they have most things in common!

1. They agree on the depravity, inability, and sinfulness of the flesh!

2. They ascribe all the glory for salvation and providence to God alone!

3. They rest in the person and work of Christ alone for all things!

4. Their only rule for faith and conduct is the word of God!

5. Christ is the object of faith, the glory of God their object in life.

6. They endure persecution and ridicule from a world of unbelievers, both in religion and in the world (John 15:18-19; John 16:1-2; 1 Peter 4:12-14).

*v. 16.* The enemies of Christ and of his gospel did all that they could to keep Paul from preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. The Jews called for the death of Christ, killed their own prophets, and persecuted Paul, holding to their own self-righteousness and doctrine of works. They are the enemies of all men. But the wrath of God has come upon them completely and forever. Zealous religionists who deny the free grace of God are special objects of God's wrath (2 Thess. 2:10-12; 2 Peter 3:16).

*vv. 17-18.* In these verses Paul apologizes for having to leave them after such a short ministry. He was forced to leave by the rage of his persecutors. He had determined to return but was hindered by the great enemy of the gospel who stirred up opposition and contention. He was absent from them in body but not in heart.

*vv. 19-20.* The believers in Christ Paul calls his hope, his joy, his crown of rejoicing, and his glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus at his coming.

1. They were his hope and joy. He had great hope for them, and their conversion was a matter of joy for him now and would be at the return of Christ.

2. They were his crown of rejoicing, or his victor's wreath of triumph. They would be trophies of God's grace, and Paul would rejoice encircled by these to whom he had preached the gospel.

3. They were his glory and joy. Believers never glory in men but in the mercy and grace of God in Christ toward men! These believers were fruits of his ministry also, and therefore brought hope, rejoicing, and joy to his heart.

# Comfort in tribulation

## 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

Paul gives an account of his sending Timothy to Thessalonica to minister to them. He expresses his joy over the report Timothy brought back concerning their faith and love.

*vv. 1-2.* Paul had a great love for the people in this church: and he is saying that when the suspense and yearning for some word from them became unbearable, he was content to remain alone in Athens and send Timothy to them:

1. 'To establish you.' These people were young converts and needed to be established in the truth of the gospel. This is done by the ministry of the word (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 4:11-14).

2. 'To comfort you concerning your faith.' It is the will of God that his people have assurance, peace, and comfort in Christ. These people had been persecuted and afflicted because of their faith. Paul intended that they understand that their faith was like precious faith with (the same precious faith as) the apostles, and they should stand fast and be comforted in that faith (2 Peter 1:1).

*v. 3.* None of you should be surprised, disturbed, or led astray by trials and afflictions for the sake of the gospel; for you know that trials are the appointed lot of all of God's people—they are appointed by God! It is the will of God that we should have them, patiently bearing them and profiting by them (John 16:1-3; James 1:2-3; 1 Thess. 5:18).

v. 4. When I was there in person I told you that you would suffer tribulation, and it came to pass (Acts 17:5-9). The apostle did not deceive people with promises of worldly prosperity, good health, fame, and ease in this world; on the contrary, he told them, as our Master told his disciples, that they would have trouble in the flesh.

v. 5. This is one of the reasons why I sent Timothy to you, that I might know if your faith is staggering under these afflictions or standing firm. The apostle speaks of his fear that Satan may tempt them to turn back and his preaching among them prove to be in vain (Heb. 10:32-39).

vv. 6-7. Timothy brought back a good report! It is always a great joy to preachers and all believers to know that the people of God in any location continue in the faith and love of Christ (3 John 4). These two graces are always found together: faith and love. It is impossible to separate them. Those who believe, love! Therefore, in spite of all the trials and pressures of his own ministry, Paul was comforted by their faith.

vv. 8-9. Paul carried about with him a sentence of death, being hunted, imprisoned, and sentenced; but he says now, upon the news of their faith and love, his spirit is revived and he really lives! He had given thanks to God for them (1 Thess. 1:2-3); and now, having received a further account of their faith growing under trying circumstances, he must give fresh thanks to God!

vv. 10-13. Here is an account of the prayer Paul prayed continually:

1. That he might visit with them again.
2. That he might minister the word to them and more perfectly instruct them in the knowledge of divine things. The ministry of the word is the means of planting faith, increasing faith, and

perfecting it. There is no believer living who does not need the continued preaching, teaching, and reading of the word that he might grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ (1 Cor. 8:2; 1 Cor. 3:18; 1 Cor. 13:9, 12).

3. If I come to you, God himself must guide and direct my way. A journey is not to be taken without the will of God: dependence on his will, seeking his will, and submission to his will. Men may devise their ways, but God directs their goings! (James 4:13-15; Rom. 1:10.)

4. ‘The Lord make you to abound in love toward one another and toward all men as our love abounds toward you.’

5. That God may establish your hearts in holiness before him. This is where the true work of repentance, faith, and sanctification is performed –in the heart before God. The Lord Jesus will come and his saints with him; then excellency of heart-holiness, as well as the necessity of it, will appear.



# A holy walk pleases God

## 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Paul exhorts the Thessalonians in their daily walk and conduct to seek to please the Lord. Particularly, he urges sexual purity, brotherly love, peaceful living and self-supporting labor!

*vv. 1-3.* Paul does not threaten, badger, and condemn these brethren in his plea for godliness and holiness of life; but he uses words like, 'I beg of you,' I request and admonish you to do these things. He gives four reasons for holy living:

1. 'By the Lord Jesus.' By virtue of your union with Jesus Christ. We are not our own, but we are bought with a price. We belong to Christ, and by his mercy we are one with Christ. We are children of God; therefore, we ought to walk as he walked.

2. 'You have received of us how ye ought to walk.' The inspired apostles have given us the scriptures, which are perfectly clear on the matter of our conduct and conversation.

3. 'To please God.' Our motive and objective is not to please and gratify ourselves nor men, but to please God: to glorify him and to do his will. 'Lord, what would you have me do?'

4. 'This is the will of God.' That you be consecrated, separated, and set apart from the world, that you grow in grace in the knowledge of Christ, and that you 'abound more and more' (that you attain greater spiritual maturity).

*vv. 3-5.* 'That you abstain from fornication.' From all sexual impurity! Fornication is especially mentioned because this sin was common among

the Gentiles and not considered to be sin by them. Most translations render it, 'that you abstain from all sexual vice' and immorality such as adultery, incest, homosexuality, and the like.

'That every one of you know how to control and manage his own body in purity and consecration.' Many writers say the words, 'his vessel,' mean his wife (1 Peter 3:7; 1 Cor. 7:2-5).

One's body is not to be given over to the gratification or passions and cravings as the heathen who know not God.

v. 6. This verse is commonly understood as against defrauding and cheating others in business, trade, and measures – against taking advantage of the weak and ignorant (and can be thus used, for such conduct is not of God). But the subject here is not business nor trade: it is sexual purity. We believers are exhorted to treat one another's marriages and mates as we want others to deal with us. Do not covet or desire another's mate, thereby defrauding him.

v. 7. God has not called us to take part in any of the unholy practices related above; but our calling is to holiness in thought, looks, words, and in action.

v. 8. Therefore whosoever disregards, sets aside, and rejects these principles and words is not disregarding and rejecting the words and will of a mere man but is in reality rejecting and disregarding the very will of God himself. We know this, for God has given us his Holy Spirit to convince us of sin and righteousness. His Spirit in us clearly convinces us of his will in these matters and we need no other argument.

vv. 9-10. Now concerning your love for one another: you have no need for anyone to write to you and encourage you to love one another, for you

have been personally taught of God to love one another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-12). Let this love increase more and more!

*vv. 11-12.* ‘Study to be quiet.’ Make it your ambition and goal to live peaceably in your homes, church, and business (to cause no disturbance and turmoil by tale-bearing, gossiping, and unkind words or accusations).

‘Do your own business.’ Mind your own affairs. Do not concern yourself with the business and private lives of others except when you are asked to do so. Take care of YOUR OWN CALLING and ministry; use your gifts as God enables you and pray for others to be used in theirs.

‘Work with your own hands.’ There were some who would not work at all but expected to live off the charity of others (2 Thess. 3:10-13).

‘Walk honestly and honorably before people outside the church,’ so as to have their respect. Be self-supporting, do not depend on those who are without Christ to support the church of the Lord Jesus or the family of God.

# The believer's comfort regarding death

## 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The apostle comforts the Thessalonians who grieve because the death of their friends and relatives who died in the faith of Christ. His design is to persuade them from excessive sorrow and grief (which are unbecoming for a believer), to assure them of the coming of the Lord and the resurrection of all believers and to comfort them with these words of promise and instruction.

v. 13. There are many things about death, life after death and eternity of which we will remain ignorant until it comes to our time to die. But there are some things concerning those who die in the Lord of which we need not, and ought not, to be ignorant. If these things are really understood and considered, our sorrows and grief will be reduced.

Sorrow and grief are not unlawful, but natural. We weep for ourselves when we are deprived of their presence, and we weep for our temporary loss, though it be their eternal gain, but our sorrow is not like that of the unbeliever who has no hope of eternal life, or of seeing these loved ones again. They have every reason to be totally grief-stricken, but we do not, for death is only a temporary separation for us.

v. 14. 'We believe that our Lord died and rose again.' Every believer knows this to be true. This is fundamental to our faith (1 Cor. 15:12-22).

Therefore, those who have died in the faith of Christ will be raised also. They were chosen in Christ, crucified with Christ, raised and seated with him in the heavenlies. Having left this world, they are with him in paradise and will return with him when he comes again. The believer cannot be separated from Christ (John 17:23, 24). What sort of body or

dwelling they have now, we do not know (2 Cor. 5:1-4); but we know that when our bodies are raised, we shall be like Christ (1 John 3:1, 2; Luke 24:36-43).

v. 15. 'We declare unto you by the word of the Lord,'

1. That Christ shall return to this earth (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11).

2. That we who are still alive on earth when Christ comes shall not precede or go before those who are dead. The dead will rise and the living will be changed and we shall all go together into the enjoyment of Christ (1 Cor. 15:50-53).

v. 16. 'The Lord himself.' Not an angel, a messenger or a representative.

'Shall descend from heaven.' He was on our earth and into heaven after his resurrection. When all things are accomplished, he will descend from heaven into our air.

'With a shout.' It will not be a private, unknown, secret but will be with the shout of a Conqueror, a King, and every eye shall see him.

'The voice of the archangel.' Perhaps one great angel will notice of his return, but he will be accompanied by many (Jude 9; 2 Thess. 1:7).

'With the trump of God.' This will awaken all who sleep and summon the world to appear before him (1 Cor.15:52).

'The dead in Christ will rise first' - before we who are changed and before the unsaved dead are raised (Rev. 20:5, 6).

v. 17. The dead will rise and the living will be changed into of Christ and we shall go up to meet the Lord in the air. At this time it is indicated that he does not descend to earth. The earth is not fit to receive him, for it must be purged with fire, and there will be a new earth upon which he descend and dwell with his saints. He will take us to glory until the general

conflagration and destruction of the is over. But whatever (by the purpose and decree of God takes place, we shall forever be with the Lord.

v. 18. 'Comfort one another with these words!'

1. When believers die, they do not cease to be, but they are asleep in Christ.

2. These who sleep in him will return for their bodies when he comes.

3. He will come with great power and glory and we shall, with those who are raised, meet him in the air.

4. We shall for ever be with the Lord. This is our comfort, hope and our expectation.

# Looking for his return

## 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

The apostle writes about the coming of the Lord – its suddenness and the necessity of watchfulness on the part of believers. He exhorts us concerning our duties and responsibilities to the Lord and to one another and closes with a prayer for all believers.

v. 1. To write to believers that Christ will come again (John 14:3; Acts 1:10, 11), that the dead will be raised and that living believers will be changed into his likeness is necessary, for this encourages our faith and hope. It comforts us when we come to die or to bury loved ones and it encourages us in trials. But to write about the time it will occur and the season of the year it will take place is unnecessary, for:

1. It would be idle speculation to satisfy the curious.
2. No man knows that day, hour or season (Matt. 24:36).

True believers do not wish to know more than God is pleased to reveal.

v. 2. We do know that the return of Christ will be sudden and unexpected, taking the world of unbelievers by surprise, as a thief surprises those who are asleep (Luke 12:40).

v. 3. Unbelievers talk of peace and safety. They promise themselves much ease, peace and good health for years to come – then suddenly death, judgment and the coming of the Lord are upon them, as in the days of Noah (Luke 17: 26, 27), as a woman carries a child in her womb and

without any warning or notice her labour begins. Careless, indifferent unbelievers shall be overtaken and shall not escape.

v. 4. The natural man's understanding is darkened with respect to the true knowledge of God, the nature of sin, the way of salvation by Christ, the return of Christ, eternal glory and eternal condemnation (Eph. 4:17-19). We have been caned out of darkness and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. We are not in darkness, therefore we live in expectation, looking for his return (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

vv. 5, 6. He calls us children of light (2 Cor. 4:3-7). We are enlightened persons, whose understanding has been enlightened by the Holy Spirit concerning the person and work of Christ (Eph. 1:17-19). We are children of the gospel day, in distinction from the religious darkness. Therefore let us not be in a drowsy, indifferent frame of mind and spirit, like the unbeliever. Let us not be taken up with the cares and concerns of this world, but let us set a watch over our hearts, our faith and our fellowship, living as temporary citizens of this world. We are travelers passing through.

vv. 7, 8. By 'sleep' and 'drunkenness' he does not mean natural sleep or drunkenness from wine, but a stupor of mind that forgets God and spiritual matters, giving itself to indulging carnal vices and materialism. These things come naturally to unbelievers, since they are children of darkness. But we, who are of the light of understanding and the day of revelation, are in a warfare, constantly on guard against evil within and without. The man who is provided with faith, hope and love will not be found wanting. The believer is pictured as a soldier, prepared to meet the enemy and prepared for his Lord's return!



v. 9. The elect of God were not chosen in Christ to be destroyed by his wrath and judgment, but that we might obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3-5; Rom. 8:1; 2 Thess. 2:13).

v. 10. Christ died for us with this purpose in view: that he might make us partakers of his life. There is no reason why we should be in doubt of our salvation if we are in Christ by faith (Matt. 1:21). Whether we are alive when he comes or whether we are dead, we shall, because of his life and death, live forever with him.

v. 11. 'Therefore, comfort one another, encourage one another, communicate to one another the things revealed to you. Edify, strengthen and build up one another in the faith of Christ.' This can be done by continual fellowship, worship, prayer, teaching and preaching, bearing one another's trials and sincere love.

# These final words

## 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

*vv. 12, 13.* Paul speaks of faithful pastors and preachers. He exhorts the believers ‘to know them.’

‘Recognize, acknowledge, appreciate and respect them for what they are – the ministers of God!’

‘Make yourselves known to them, converse freely with them, that they may know the state of your souls and speak a word in season.’

‘Esteem or hold them in high and affectionate regard in appreciation of the work among you.’

‘Be at peace among yourselves in regard to the ministry; do not find fault, disagree and take offence over trivial matters.’ This makes the pastor's work more difficult and hinders the growth and unity of the church.

‘They labour among you.’ No honor or respect is due to the lazy, idle preachers who neglect prayer, study and the ministry of the word.

‘They preside over you in the Lord.’ They are not lords, but leaders and overseers of the church by the authority of Christ.

‘They admonish you. They teach, warn, reprove and exhort you in the things of the Lord,’ and it is in this respect that they are to be obeyed and followed (Heb. 13:7, 17).

*vv. 14, 15.* ‘I earnestly beseech you, according to our responsibility to the gospel, to the Lord, to one another and to the testimony of the gospel:’

1. ‘Warn and seriously advise them that are out of line in spirit and deed.’ Unruly conduct and attitude are not permitted to continue without warning and admonition.

2. 'Encourage the weak.' Comfort those of a broken and afflicted spirit. They have need of consolation and strength, not rebuke!

3. Be patient with everyone (even the unruly), always keeping your temper, remembering your own infirmities and afflictions (Gal. 6:1). Be patient with everybody, even the men of the world. It is only by God's grace that we walk in the light!

4. Evil for evil is not the way of Christ. Getting even, retaliating, seeking revenge is not for the believer. Rather, endure injuries and misunderstandings with patience, showing kindness towards all, and seeking the good of all, both in the church and out.

*vv. 16-18.* I like to connect these three things:

1. 'Rejoice evermore!'
2. 'Pray without ceasing!'
3. 'Give thanks to God in all things.'

This is the will of God that we rejoice always, pray continually and give thanks. What we are, what we have, where we are and – all that happens in the life of a believer are the will of God for us (Rom. 8:28). We should rejoice and give thanks! Rejoice in prosperity or adversity. Pray always; live in an attitude of prayer, even when you have no particular need or request! Let your praise, prayer and thanksgiving constantly rise to God. Very ungrateful is the man who does not set so high a value on the righteousness of Christ and the hope of eternal life that he allows anything in this life to overshadow that gift of grace. How can I complain when I am an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ?

the Spirit, such as faith, love, joy, peace, etc. He speaks of the gifts of the Spirit when they are neglected and not put to use for the glory of God. To quench the Spirit is to suppress or subdue his graces and gifts.

v. 20. Do not despise, make light of or be indifferent to the message of those who preach and interpret the word of God (1 Cor. 14:3).

v. 21. Many in our day feel almost disgusted with the very word 'preaching' because there are so many foolish and ignorant persons giving out worthless sermons from the pulpit. Therefore we must prove all words by the Scriptures and hold fast to that which is good. Some people are critical of everything; some embrace anything. The wise weigh all things by the word (1 John 4:1-3).

v. 22. I know that many interpret this as suggesting that we avoid any conduct, behavior, and actions that, while they may not be wrong for us, yet they give the appearance of wrongdoing. This is good advice, but not what the apostle is talking about. He is speaking, as in the preceding verse, of doctrinal evil! For example, when there is preaching, teaching and interpretation of scripture which, when tried by the word, does not appear to be false or wrong, but there is an unhappy suspicion in the mind, a doubt or fear entertained, a concern that there is poison somewhere, then avoid it! The truth of God is clear and gives glory to his name!

v. 24. Paul proceeds to pray for these believers. He prays the Lord God would, in a progressive manner, sanctify in spirit, soul and body. Calvin said, 'Our thoughts pure holy, our affections right and properly regulated and our bodies dedicated to good work.' He prays that God would keep them from falling away. He adds in verse 24, 'He will do it.' None of the sheep of Christ shall perish! (John 10:27-29).

v. 25-28. 'Pray for us.' Let every believer, especially God's ministers, be the objects of our prayers. 'Greet one another with a holy kiss.' Be affectionate towards one another. 'Read this epistle in the church. God be with you!'



# 2 Thessalonians

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# Christ glorified in his saints

## 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

*vv. 1, 2.* ‘Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God and Christ.’ A true church is more than a group of people banded together for religious and social functions. A true church is the work and building of the Father in Christ. He chose us, adopts us, calls us, regenerates us and receives us in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). A local church is a part of the great body of Christ – in God and in Christ (Eph. 5:25-32).

*v. 3.* ‘I give thanks to God for you, my brethren.’ All blessings come from God (James 1:17, 18). Therefore, ‘it is meet’ (it is fitting) that we should give thanks to God, not only for the presence of faith and love but for the growth of it! Wherever the goodness of God is revealed, it is fitting for us to praise him. The welfare of our brethren ought to be so dear to us that we reckon their blessings to be our own.

*v. 4.* ‘We glory in you.’ We mention you with great rejoicing in the presence of other churches. Paul did not boast of their faith to shame other believers or to exalt his ministry, but to encourage other churches to imitate them.

He rejoiced in their patience and faith under great persecution and trial. Patience is the fruit and evidence of faith! There is nothing that will sustain us in trial but faith. The stronger our faith, the better we shall be able to endure trial and affliction. Failure under trial reveals unbelief or weakness of faith.

*vv. 5, 6.* There is a twofold lesson here. God's righteous judgment is shown us in a mirror.



1. The believer whose faith in Christ and love for the gospel bring upon him the wrath of the wicked (and this to try and prove his faith in the wisdom and purpose of God) will be exalted and glorified.

2. The wicked who prosper, who walk in pride and unbelief, having no fear of God's wrath, who mock and despise the grace of God, will be brought down (Deut. 32:35; Phil. 1:28; Ps. 73:12-22). God will set everything right, and justice will take place in his own time!

v. 7. 'To you who are distressed and afflicted along with the rest of us.' God had only one Son without sin, but none without suffering (2 Tim. 3:12-14; John 16:33). Christ will come from heaven as a Redeemer to his own people and as a Judge to the whole world. Paul represents the coming of Christ as one of horror and terror for all unbelievers. He will be accompanied by his mighty angels (the angels of his majesty), who will gather the elect and cast the wicked into hell (Matt. 13:41, 42; 24:31).

v. 8. What is to be the nature of that fire we do not know, but flame and fire are often used in the Scriptures when the anger of God is spoken of. However, two things are noted here:

1. God will vindicate his elect (Luke 18:7). Vengeance is not ours, nor are we to desire it, but rather we are to desire the good of all. Vengeance belongs to God (Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30).

2. God will inflict vengeance with a view to his own glory, not only for our sake! This wrath will fall upon those who know not God and believe not the gospel of Christ (John 17:3). Ignorance of God and contempt for the gospel of his Son will bring eternal wrath.

v. 9. This shows the nature of the punishment upon those who obey not the gospel – destruction without end, undying death and eternal banishment from the presence of the Lord. The perpetuity of death is the opposite of the glory of Christ and the redeemed – as the one has no end, neither does the other!

v. 10. He will be glorified and admired of all, but he will not have this glory only for himself individually. It will be common to all believers. He shall be glorified in them. They are looked upon as nothing, vile and worthless now, but then they will be precious, full of dignity, when Christ shall pour forth his glory upon them (Eph. 2:7). ‘You will be among that number because you believed our gospel.’

v. 11, 12. ‘With all this in view we constantly pray for you that God will keep you from falling and grant unto you perseverance in his calling; for as the power to believe is of God, so is the sustaining power. We pray that God will fulfill his good pleasure and goodness towards you in Christ and that he will complete the work of faith which he began, so that in all things Christ may be glorified’ (Phil. 1:6; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

# The spirit of antichrist revealed

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

*vv. 1, 2.* Every believer sets a high value on the return of our Lord, the resurrection of the dead and the day when we shall see Christ and be like him. But the apostle warns this early church against becoming unsettled, alarmed and excited by fanatics and false teachers who declare that the return of Christ is at hand or on a near fixed date! When any event is said to be near at hand and it does not arrive quickly, disappointment gives way to despair. ‘Do not be disturbed by their claim to spiritual revelations or by their persuasive words or even by epistles addressed to you in my name!’

*vv. 3, 4.* ‘Do not be deceived by any man into thinking that the day of the Lord is near at hand’ (remember that this was written 1900 years ago in the very earliest days of the church), ‘for there must come an apostasy (a falling away from the truth of the gospel, from the grace of God in Christ, and from salvation by grace through faith) of those who profess to know God and to be saved! And the man of sin, the son of perdition, must be revealed (the one who exalts himself above God, dwelling in the house of God, claiming to be God).’ Many believe this man of sin (or Antichrist) to be an individual or a single person. Both Calvin and Gill say it is not an individual but a succession of religious leaders, or a spirit of antichrist. Both Gill and Calvin teach that this apostasy has occurred and that this spirit of antichrist certainly has possessed religion as a whole. The will of man is exalted above God in the churches, salvation has been reduced to works and deeds, God's sovereignty and reign over all things have been denied, and the spirit of antichrist reigns in most churches.

*vv. 5-8.* These verses seem to bear out the teaching of Calvin and Gill. For Paul says, ‘You know what is restraining him from being revealed at this time (or taking over completely at this time) that he might be revealed in his appointed time (for that spirit of antichrist and rebellion against God is already at work in the world). He is restrained by the Holy Spirit, and when God’s appointed day comes, this spirit of antichrist will totally dominate and the Lord Jesus will bring an end to him and his religious kingdom when he comes again!’ (1 John 2:18; 2 Tim. 3:1-7.)

*vv. 9-12.* This antichrist spirit (false religion and righteousness of men as opposed to the righteousness of God in Christ) is motivated and masterminded by Satan (2 Cor. 11:13-15). It will be attended by great power, success and all sorts of pretended miracles, marvels and lying wonders (Matt. 24:24). Those who renew these teachers of false religion do so not because they have not heard or read the truth of Christ, but because they will not receive the truth. Therefore, because they will not love the truth nor receive it, God sends them strong influence and delusions, which lead them to hold even more strongly to their error. There are none so blind as those who will not see! Those who take pleasure in righteousness, even in their own self-righteousness, will reap the fruit of it.

*v. 13.* Lest these believers should be discouraged and fearful of their security in Christ because of his account of the Antichrist and his followers, Paul encourages them in this verse.

‘I thank God for you brethren, beloved of the Lord.’ It is only because of the grace of God that we do not perish with the apostates. – Thank God he loved us first (1 John 4:10, 19).

‘God chose you from the beginning to salvation.’ We were elected to salvation in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-6).

‘Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the gospel.’ Election is not salvation, but unto salvation. Those elected must be regenerated, born again, called by the Holy Spirit to genuine repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the agent and the word of God is the seed, instrument or foundation of faith. There is a threefold sanctification of the believer: set apart by the Father (Jude 1), made holy and unblamable by Christ (1 Cor. 1:2), and regenerated and progressively sanctified by the Spirit and the word (2 Thess. 2:13).

*v. 14.* It is by and through the gospel that men are called to obtain and share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:13-15).

*vv. 15-17.* ‘So, brethren, stand firm in the faith and hold fast to the truth which you have been taught through our messages and epistles. And may God comfort you, encourage your hearts and make you steadfast in every good work and word!’

All church members, preachers and teachers do not have saving faith. They have a profession of faith, a form of godliness and the appearance of righteousness, but it is not the faith of Christ, which is the gift of God, nor the faith of God's elect, which is the operation of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:18; 4:1).

# Proficient in two things

## 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

v. 1. 'Brethren, pray for us.' The apostle Paul was himself a man of prayer. Evidently he surpassed all others in earnestness of prayer; nevertheless, frequently he requested all believers to pray for him and for all ministers of the gospel (1 Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18).

His concern is not so much for himself or the safety and welfare of the ministers themselves, but for the advancement and glory of the gospel of Christ. We should pray for the general health, gifts, wisdom, perseverance and safety of those who minister the gospel to us. But in prayer to God our chief concern is

1. That 'the word of the Lord' may be spread far and wide,
2. That doors may be opened in many places for the preaching of Christ (Col. 4:3), and
3. That the gospel may 'be glorified' or triumph in other places, as it has in you.

The gospel is glorified when men believe it, receive it and walk in holiness before God.

v. 2. Pray that true ministers of the gospel may be delivered

1. From religious Jews who, with a mad zeal of law and works, do strongly persecute the gospel and those who preach it (Rom. 15:30, 31), and
2. From false brethren in the church, who go by the name of Christ but who are in reality enemies of the gospel, tares among

the wheat, and have their own designs in mind rather than the glory of Christ (2 Peter 2:1; 1 Tim. 4:1-3).

v. 3. This is said for the comfort of the believers, who might be disturbed by these words of Paul. When Paul writes of the subtlety of Satan, the presence of false teachers, the fact that all who profess to know Christ do not have true faith and the mystery of iniquity that is already at work, some may be troubled in mind and fearful of their own state. Paul is quick to add, ‘God, who is faithful’ (to his purpose, to his promises and to his elect) will not allow any true believer to be deceived, taken in by false doctrine, overcome by Satan, or fall away. He will ‘establish you and keep you’ from the Evil One!

v. 4. The confidence which Paul had concerning these believers was not in their strength, wisdom and good behavior, but in the Lord – in his grace in and towards them, in the power of his might, without whom they could do nothing. Through his enabling and strengthening them, they could do all things (Phil. 4:13).

‘You will continue to walk in the faith of Christ and will do those things we taught and commanded you to obey.’ Paul did not put upon them anything but by the commandment of the Lord. The false teachers bind upon their followers their own rules, laws and practices, which vary with the teacher, the age, the situation or the country in which they live. The commandments of God are the same for every believer, every generation, every country and every situation!

v. 5. Paul states here a summary of that which is most necessary for believers. Let everyone be directed in heart (that is, in truth and sincerity) to become proficient in two things: love for God and patient waiting for Christ's return. If our hearts are directed towards love for God and a desire for the return of Christ, other things will fall into place.

1. If we have a heart love for God, we will love all others. We will seek God's glory and the good of others. Christ said the whole law rests on this and is fulfilled in this. This principle of love will overcome all adversaries and adversities.

2. Waiting for Christ will put the world in its proper place. We are not citizens of this world system, but we wait for our King and his kingdom. It will help us to endure the temporary trials and reproaches of men. It will give us comfort and joy and peace in waiting for ultimate redemption.



# A warning to those who will not work

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

In verses 6-12, Paul deals with a particular fault and problem that had arisen in the church. There were some people who were lazy, living idle lives, would not work at a trade and were simply living off the welfare and labour of others. This, Paul said, is a disorderly walk and is not to be permitted or encouraged.

v. 6. 'We command you in the name of the Lord Jesus.' This is a delicate subject. All believers are sympathetic towards those in need and are generous with their earthly goods and reluctant to say 'No' to any who are needy or hungry. But this command is of the Lord! 'If a man who is called a brother walketh disorderly,' this is not a man temporarily out of work or hard-pressed occasionally, but one who continues in this fashion out of laziness and choice, 'withdraw yourselves from him and him from you, for you were not instructed by us, or taught by us, to be idle or to live as beggars!'

v. 7. Even the apostle, who had the power and right to be totally supported and cared for by the church, worked with his hands, besides laboring among them in preaching and teaching the word (Acts 18:3; 1 Thess. 2:9). Paul was never idle nor lazy, but always busy doing what God called him and gifted him to do.

vv. 8, 9. 'We did not eat food freely without paying for it' (Acts 20:34, 35). The ministers of Christ are to study, pray and labour in the word (Acts 6:4). They are to live by the gospel and are to be supported by the church (1 Cor. 9:1-14). However, to set an example for these new believers and to

discourage any loafing and laziness among them, Paul labored with his hands among them. He refused to be indebted to them lest any weak brother be offended and misled.

v. 10. He repeats what he taught them in person, 'If anyone will not work who is able to work, then do not let him share your food (turn him away from your table).'

v. 11. Those who do not work with their minds and hands usually spend their idle time working their tongues; they are busybodies. Having nothing constructive to do, their time is spent interfering in the private lives and business of others.

v. 12. Now as the apostle of the Lord Jesus, Paul corrects both of these faults he has dealt with.

1. He exhorts them, in the first place, to cultivate quietness, peace and repose. 'Be content with who you are, what you have and where God has placed you.'

2. 'Work and labour in honorable employment.' God has gifted every man with ability to do something (to make some contribution to the field of labour and life).

3. 'Eat your own bread which is earned by your own labour and bought with your own money. Rejoice and thank God for it, whatever it is! Be content with what you have.'

v. 13. A word of caution: although there are many who are undeserving and who abuse our liberality, we must not, on their account, leave off helping those who genuinely need our help. 'Do not be discouraged or weary of giving to the needy and feeding the hungry just because there are ill-mannered people who take advantage of you' (Gal. 6:9).

*vv. 14, 15.* 'If anyone in the church refuses to obey what I have declared in this letter, single out that person and do not associate or keep company with him. If you humor him and pacify him in his error, you will but encourage him to continue. But if you avoid him and let him know of your displeasure, he may be ashamed and repent. However, do not consider him an enemy or reprobate, but simply admonish and warn him as a brother.'

*vv. 16-18.* Paul's conclusion and benediction upon the brethren.

# 1 Timothy

Bible Class Commentary

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# Teaching only the doctrine of Christ

## 1 Timothy 1:1-8

Timothy, to whom this epistle is written, was known for his early interest in and acquaintance with the scriptures. His mother was a Jewess and his father a Greek, which is the reason why he was not circumcised in his infancy. Mention is made in the second epistle of his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, as believers, and of his knowledge of the scriptures from a child. Paul met him at Lystra and chose him to be his companion to assist him in the spread of the gospel. Knowing that it would be disagreeable to many Jews to hear the gospel from the lips of an uncircumcised person, Paul circumcised him, becoming all things to all, that he might gain some. Paul sent Timothy to several places; and now he was at Ephesus, where he was to abide for a while. In these epistles, Paul instructs both Timothy and the church in many important matters.

*v. 1.* If Paul had been writing to Timothy only, it would have been unnecessary to call attention to his apostolic office. Timothy knew that, but Paul had his eye chiefly on others who were not so ready to listen to him or who did not so readily believe his words. These are the words of an apostle of Christ, whose office is by the commandment of God our Saviour. No man makes himself an apostle. Paul owes his apostleship to the Father and the Son. The title 'God our Saviour' belongs both to the Father and to the Son, for the Father loved us and gave the Son to redeem us. The Father does nothing except through the Son.

He calls Christ our hope. He is not only the author of a good hope for salvation and eternal life, his righteousness and sacrifice are not only the means of a good hope and his promise the foundation of a good hope, but Christ himself is our hope! He is our wisdom, righteousness,

sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:27). We do not trust a plan but a Person! We do not merely give mental assent to facts, but we receive a Person (John 1:12).

v. 2. Timothy was not related to Paul according to the flesh, but the relationship was spiritual. He calls him his son because of his age, because of his deep affection for him, because he instructed Timothy in the doctrine of faith, and because, as a faithful son, Timothy served with Paul in the ministry of the gospel.

Here is Paul's usual salutation: 'May you have a fresh discovery of his love and free favor and an increase of grace and the gifts of his Spirit. May you have a fresh application of the pardoning mercy of God through Christ. May you have peace of heart and conscience through the blood of Christ.'

v. 3. Paul reminds Timothy why he was asked to remain in Ephesus. He left him there to oppose the false teachers who corrupted the doctrine of Christ. There were some teachers in this place as in other places who taught justification by the works of the law, but the reference is to charge these teachers that they teach nothing that was not taught by Christ and his apostles! Nothing is to be introduced as doctrine which is not according to revelation!

v. 4. Paul is not only condemning doctrines which are altogether fake, but also those useless speculations, theories, and inquiries into matters which do not edify but only turn believers aside from the gospel and the simplicity of our Lord Jesus Christ. These speculations (endless inquiries into heritage and theories concerning what is to be) are but a fleshly show, do not promote either the salvation or the comfort of the people, and only

serve to confuse and distress the mind. They only serve to raise questions, not to answer them.

vv. 5-7. These false teachers boasted of having the law on their side and were teachers and guardians of the law. Paul says the law gives them no support, but rather opposes them; for the end and design, the sum and substance of the law is love to God and love to one another (Matt. 22:36-39; Gal. 5: 13-14). This love is not possible from a natural man, but springs from a pure heart (regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit of God), from a good or a clear conscience (purged from dead works, void of ill feelings, vengeance, and pride), and sincere faith. Sincere faith, with which a man really believes what he professes, always is attended with good works and love.

v. 8. The law is not the ceremonial law, which is disannulled, but the moral law, which is good because God is the author of it; and it contains good and excellent things. It is good if a man uses it for the purpose for which it was designed. But if it be used to obtain life, righteousness, salvation, or acceptance with God, it will only serve to condemn. A lawful use of the law for unbelievers is for the knowledge of sin, the conviction of sin, and to shut them up to Christ. A lawful use for the believer is to obey it in the hands of Christ from a principle of love to him (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

# I obtained mercy

## 1 Timothy 1:9-14

*vv. 9-10.* No man is righteous in himself; the righteous man here intended is the man who believes in Christ with the heart unto righteousness and who lays hold on Christ's righteousness by faith, in consequence of which he lives soberly, righteously, and godly, though not without sin. The law of God does not lie as a weight and a burden on him.

1. He delights in the law of God, and God's commandments are not grievous to him.
2. Its curse and penalty do not lie on him as a punishment to be borne.
3. It is not to him a terrifying law, bringing him into bondage and fear.
4. It is not a despised law, forcing him into a way of life he detests.

The law is enacted for the ungodly, the evil, and the profane; for it is against such persons and their deeds as an accusing, condemning, and terrifying law. Locks on doors are not made for honest men, but for crooks. Do not steal, kill, lie, etc. are not rules needed by righteous men, but laws enacted to control and convict ungodly men.

The law lies against anything that is contrary to the doctrine of Christ, takes notice of it, and condemns it. We observe the harmony between God's law and his gospel, rightly understood and used. What is contrary to the one is contrary to the other. The gospel no more excuses sin than the law does. What is repugnant to the moral law of God is also contrary to



the gospel of Christ, who said, 'I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.'

v. 11. The gospel with which we have been entrusted is the gospel of the glory of God! Paul sharply rebuked those who labored to degrade the gospel, who suggested it might lead to a life of sin, or who tried to mix it with obedience to laws and ceremonies (Rom. 11:5-6). The gospel of Christ reveals the glory of God's wisdom, his love, his righteousness, his holiness, and his grace. It is all-sufficient in this regard, and we have been entrusted with this precious treasure. We must faithfully preach and preserve it. We do not need to hedge it about with laws, rules, and ceremonies. Righteousness is by faith, not by obedience to laws (Rom. 4:20-25).

v. 12. Paul, like David, was always praising and thanking the Lord (1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20). Here he thanks the Lord Jesus for making him a minister of the gospel. He did not take this office to and of himself, but Christ called him to it. Christ enabled him by giving him abilities, gifts, knowledge, and grace. Christ counted him faithful, having made him so by his grace; for faithfulness is a necessary requisite and qualification for a gospel minister. We are not always successful, but we must be faithful! (1 Cor. 9:16.)

v. 13. 'I obtained mercy,' though I was a blasphemer, calling Christ an imposter. I was a persecutor; not content to blaspheme Christ, I put his people in prison and consented to their deaths. I was injurious, making havoc of the church, using force and violence to blot out the gospel. Yet, God had mercy on me, mercy unasked, unsought, and unmerited (Eph. 2:3-8). The fact that Paul did these things in ignorance and unbelief was not the reason he obtained mercy, but he is saying that that is indeed

mercy that pardons and justifies such an ignorant and unbelieving creature (Rom. 5:6-9).

*v. 14.* The grace of God flowed out abundantly and beyond measure for me. God is rich and plenteous in mercy toward me. ‘Where sin did overflow, grace did much more overflow.’ This grace of God toward me was accomplished by the grace of God in me, which begat the grace of faith and the grace of love. Instead of unbelief, I now had faith in Christ. Instead of rage and madness, I now loved Christ and his people.

Let our attention be directed to these two graces, which are inseparable! He who believes on Christ loves Christ and others. He who loves Christ with a sincere heart is certainly born of God and has saving faith.

# A faithful saying

## 1 Timothy 1:15-20

After exhorting Timothy to oppose the false teachers and charging the Ephesians to teach ‘no other doctrine than that which was taught by Christ and the apostles,’ after defending his ministry from slander and unjust accusations, declaring that though he was a blasphemer he ‘obtained mercy’ and was put into the ministry by the Lord Jesus, Paul proceeds to give the sum and substance of his gospel—‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’

v. 15. ‘This is a faithful saying;’ it is a true saying, not to be doubted, argued, nor debated, but to be received and believed (1 Tim. 3:16). Men are always disputing among themselves about how God saves sinners. They often are in doubt about their own salvation. Therefore, when questions and doubts arise, let us repel them with this certain and sure truth, ‘Christ came into the world to save sinners.’ He alone is the Saviour, the only Saviour.

This gospel is faithful to God's law, which is magnified and honored; it is faithful to God's justice, which is satisfied; it is faithful to God's promises; and therein is the faithfulness of Christ revealed. This gospel is ‘worthy of acceptance’ by all persons because it is the word of God, not of man. It is entirely true, suitable to the need of all, glorifies God (1 Tim. 1:11), and is the gospel preached from the beginning (Rom. 1:13).

‘Christ Jesus came into the world;’ (John 1:10; 1:14; Gal. 4:4; Isa. 7:14; 9:6). The second person of the blessed Trinity (Very God of Very God, the express image of his person) has come into this world in human flesh (Rom. 8:3; John 10:30; 14:9).

‘To save sinners.’ The word ‘sinners’ is emphatic and conclusive! Many who acknowledge that it is the office and work of Christ to save have difficulty admitting that such salvation actually belongs to sinners. The natural mind is always compelled to look for some worthiness in the creature. But the message of the gospel is ‘Christ lived and died and rose again for sinners!’ Read Matt. 9:10-13; Rom. 5:6-10.

‘Of whom I am the chief,’ the first, the greatest. Paul does not say this out of false modesty nor for vain glory, but from a real sense of his sins, which were exceedingly sinful to him (Acts 8:3; 9:13).

v. 16. ‘I obtained mercy’ (1 Tim. 1:13). Twice Paul uses this phrase; he says that though he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, the greatest sinner against Christ, God had mercy—mercy unasked, unsought, and unmerited. God was long-suffering toward me in the midst of all my sins and rebellion, as he is to all his elect. God held out such a pattern that no one should doubt that he would obtain pardon, provided he received Christ by faith. Paul is an example of the patience and grace of God for the encouragement of the faith and hope of others in Christ, though ever so great sinners! Upon being told by William Jay that he was encouraged by the conversion of a certain rebel, John Newton replied, ‘Since the Lord saved ME, I have despaired of no man living!’

v. 17. The apostle breaks forth in a doxology of praise to Christ for his sovereign mercy and abundant grace. He is the eternal King of nature, providence, and grace. His throne is forever, and of his kingdom and government, there is no end. He is immortal, for Christ is the living God, the living Redeemer; and though he died as man, he will die no more, but ever lives. He is invisible in his divine nature until manifest in flesh. He dwells in light that is inaccessible (1 Tim. 6:14-16). He is the only wise God (in opposition to all false deities); he is wisdom itself and the fountain of wisdom. To him be all honor and glory forever! (Jude 24-25).

v. 18. Paul renews the charge he gave to Timothy in Verse 3, which was not only an order to charge others to teach no other doctrine than that of the gospel, but includes the charge of preaching it himself. He tells Timothy to be true to Christ as a good soldier in the midst of a war with Satan, evil men, and false teachers (2 Cor. 10:3-4; Eph. 6:12; 1 Tim. 6:12), according to the prophecies of the Holy Spirit regarding Timothy and also the prophecies of prophets of the church concerning him (2 Tim. 4:5-7).

v. 19. 'Holding faith and good conscience.' Faith here is a general term denoting sound doctrine (1 Tim. 3:9). There are two imperatives for a preacher or teacher. He must hold to the pure truth of the gospel and he must administer that gospel with sincerity, honesty toward God and men, and a holy conversation and conduct.

Some preachers and teachers have failed in one or both, thereby making shipwreck of themselves and others. The term 'shipwreck' is appropriate; for it suggests that if we wish to arrive safely to harbor, we must continue on the course of faith and obedience and not wreck on the rocks of works, covetousness, compromise, etc. (1 Tim. 6:8-11).

v. 20. We find additional reference to Hymenaeus in 2 Tim. 2:17-18 and to Alexander in 2 Tim. 4:14. By apostolic power, Paul delivered these men into the hands of Satan as a token of God's displeasure (1 Cor. 5:4-5).

# Prayer in public worship

## 1 Timothy 2:1-15

This chapter deals primarily with the public worship of the church. The two principal parts of public worship are the ministry of the word and prayer. In chapter 1, Paul dealt with the ministry of the true gospel; now he calls on us to pray.

*v. 1.* When the Church meets for prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray not only for ourselves, our families, our friends, but for ‘all men,’ even our enemies. We offer ‘supplications’ – petitions for material and spiritual needs; ‘prayers’ – representing the spirit of devotion and good wishes; ‘intercession’ – pleading on behalf of another, and ‘giving of thanks’ – the element that should characterize all prayer. Prayer would not be acceptable if only offered for ourselves! This is not the spirit of love and grace. Prayer is not to be made for those in hell, to whom it would be of no service, nor for those in heaven, who have no need of it, nor for those who have sinned the sin unto death (1 John 5:16), but for all sorts of men, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, believers and unbelievers, moral and immoral. We understand from the following verses, from our Lord's prayer in John 17:9 and from I Timothy 1:20, that the exhortation is for us to pray for all sorts of men, of every rank, station, calling or condition.

*v. 2.* Prayer by the church is especially to be made for rulers, governors and those in places of authority in the country, for they wield great power for good or evil - they can preserve or disturb the peace of a country and they can protect or destroy the lives and property of men! Why pray for them?

1. The Lord sets up kings or removes them (Dan. 2:20, 21).
2. He influences their actions (Prov. 21:1).

v. 3-7. In these verses, Paul gives reasons why we should pray for those mentioned above.

1. This is good and acceptable in the sight of our God and Saviour, who is the Saviour of all men in the way of providence and the Saviour of the elect in the way of special grace (1 Tim. 4:10).

2. It is the will of God that all sorts of men be saved and come to a knowledge of Christ. Our Lord has a people in every nation, tongue and kindred. Do you suppose the early church prayed for Saul of Tarsus? It was God's will to save him.

3. There is but one true and living God whom, if any man is to be saved, he must know. There is but one Mediator through whom, if any man is to approach God for mercy, he must come (John 14:6).

4. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross and made an atonement for sin, this sacrifice and atonement was made for all sorts of men, for men of all nations, for Gentiles as well as Jews, for rich and poor (1 John 2:2).

5. The apostle is a preacher of the gospel to the Gentile as well as to the Jew, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth!

v. 8. In this verse the apostle's instruction concerning public prayer takes notice of men. It is the duty of all believers to pray, but because he is speaking of public prayer in the church, he says men everywhere are to pray with a forgiving, loving spirit and in faith! 'Lifting up the hands' was an outward symbol of the elevation of the heart to God. 'Holy hands'

would indicate sincerity and purity of attitude and motive before God (Mark 11:25, 26).

*vv. 9, 10.* Though women are not to conduct public worship, pray publicly or teach in the assembly, yet they are to join with the whole church in prayer. For public worship, a woman should be dressed in apparel which is not showy, conspicuous, suggestive or extreme, nor dress in such a way as to attract the eyes of others or lift up her own heart in pride. There should be no excessive arrangement of the hair or decoration of the body with gold, pearls and jewelry to attract attention. Women, as well as men, should realize that true beauty and adornment are not the adornment of the body but the right ordering of the heart!

*vv. 11, 12.* Women are not to teach, preach, lead in prayer, or have a voice in the business affairs of the church. They are to be learners, not teachers, in subjection to their husbands and to the ministers of the word (1 Cor. 14:34, 35). Women may pray, teach and instruct other women and children (Titus 2:3; Prov. 1:8).

*vv. 13, 14.* The seasons the apostle gives for women being silent in the affairs of the church and the worship of the Lord are found in the original law of the relation of woman to man before God.

1. Man's headship in creation (1 Cor. 11:3, 8, 9; Eph. 5:23). The woman, by divine rule, is in subjection to her husband, and any attempt by her to assume the part of the head or instructor is to overturn God's order.

2. Woman's priority in transgression. Man was not deceived; the woman was! She confessed that the serpent beguiled her, thereby suggesting her inferiority to man in strength; knowledge



and wisdom. Her subjection to the man is more greatly imposed since the Fall.

*v. 15.* Nevertheless, the pain and distress put upon women in child-bearing does not hinder their souls' salvation. They shall be saved eternally if they continue in faith. God's blessings are upon women in their true sphere, that of motherhood, home life and godliness. But perhaps the reference here is to the salvation of all believers through the divine Child to be born of woman - the Lord Jesus Christ.

# The office of Pastor or Elder

## 1 Timothy 3:1-7

In this chapter, Paul deals with the qualifications of officers and leaders of the churches and points to the principal reason for writing this epistle (1 Tim. 3:15), ‘that you may know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God, which is the church.’

v. 1. The apostle, having denied to women the work and office of teaching, proceeds to observe that though this belongs to men, yet not to every man, but to those whom the Lord is pleased to call and equip for this ministry (Eph. 4: 11-12; Acts 20:28; 13:2). He gives to the church some qualifications and directions in regard to men who desire the office and indicates that God has set them apart for this ministry. We know that the call to pastor and teacher involves much more than a desire to do so, but it certainly begins here. ‘He desireth a good work.’ It is not a desire for an office, a mere title of honor, and a place of profit; but the man called of God desires and delights in a laborious work. Elders are called ‘Laborers together with God’ (1 Cor. 3:9). It is an excellent labor, a useful labor, and an honorable labor, but one which involves full and complete dedication.

v. 2. ‘Blameless.’ No man is entirely free from sin nor blameless in the sight of God; but the meaning is that he should be a man of excellent reputation among men, a man of honesty, integrity, and upright conduct and conversation.

‘The husband of one wife.’ It is not required that he be married (Paul was not) nor that he not have a second wife after the death of the first, but one wife at a time! Polygamy and divorce were prevalent at that time. The elder is to be married to one woman only.

‘Vigilant,’ watchful over himself and the souls of those whom he leads. He must be alert to the wiles of Satan, the dangers of false doctrine, and to the leadership of the Spirit of God.

‘Sober.’ A better, more extensive word is temperate—in eating, drinking, hobbies, and all things pertaining to the flesh.

‘Of good behavior,’ modest, humble, considerate, and kind.

‘Given to hospitality.’ The elders minister words of truth and doctrine, but they minister to PEOPLE; therefore, they must love and be concerned for individuals. Their hearts and hands and homes must be open to all men, especially to the household of faith.

‘Apt to teach,’ one who has considerable knowledge and is able to explain, illustrate, and communicate the truth of the gospel, one who can refute error. A teacher should have the gift of public speaking.

v. 3. ‘Not given to wine.’ The elder is not intemperate in the use of wine, is not addicted to the use of it nor a follower of it.

‘No striker,’ either with his hands or his tongue! He is not a bully nor a harsh person, but gentle and considerate.

‘Not greedy of money’ (Titus 1:10-11; 1 Tim. 6:6-10). Covetousness and greed are distasteful in any believer, but especially in a minister of the gospel.

‘Patient, not a brawler, not covetous,’ one who can bear trials, reproaches, and injuries patiently rather than quarrel and contend with men; one who is gentle in his rebuke, reproofs, and corrections of those who fail and falter; not covetous of the praise and acclaim of men.

vv. 4-5. How can a man preside over the church, provide for it, and see that everything is in its proper place and done according to the word of God if he does not have the courage, will, and determination to rule over his own household (his wife, children, servants, and all who are under his roof), which is a responsibility of far less importance, much easier done,

and requiring less understanding, care, and thought? No man can be what the term 'pastor' involves if he is not in his home what the word 'father' involves. He must be a good father, a kind father, but one who is determined that God will be honored and served in and by his house.

v. 6. 'Not a novice.' He must not be a new convert, a babe in Christ. Time is not only necessary for the acquiring of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, but for the subduing of temper, pride, and impulsiveness. A new convert in such an important and honored position is liable to be lifted up with pride and self-importance, which was the downfall of Satan (Isa. 14:12-15).

v. 7. He must have a good reputation with men outside the church; for though they despise what we preach, we must not give them occasion to blaspheme our gospel because of our inconsistent and hypocritical conduct. Involvement in questionable activities and behavior will bring reproach from men and open the door for Satan to take advantage and tempt us to greater sin.

These characteristics and traits ought not be reserved only for elders and pastors, but should be the character of every believer!

# The office of Deacon

## 1 Timothy 3:8-16

An account is given here in scripture of the qualifications, faith, character and conduct of those who serve the church in the office of deacon. Most agree that Acts 6:1-4 had to do with deacons. When the number of believers was multiplied from 120 to over 3,000 and still increasing, the apostles found it impossible to give themselves to the ministry of the word of God and prayer and also to care for the physical and material needs of the people.

They called on the church to appoint some men over the tables: the table of the poor, in seeing that none want; the table of the pastors, in seeing to their support; the table of the missionaries, that they be provided for; the table of the sick, that their needs be met; the table of the Lord, by providing the bread and wine. These are to be honest men, for it is their responsibility to distribute the funds of the church. They are to be men led by the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom, that they may know how to lead the church to carry out the will of God in material matters.

The reason for the office of deacon is to enable ministers to give all their time to study, prayer and preaching, and not neglect this important duty. The financial matters of the church, care of the needy, visiting of the sick and the comfort and general welfare of the people are all very important, but not as important as the ministry of the word and prayer. When a church is very small, the pastor can be more involved with these matters, but as the church increases in size, responsibility and influences, these matters must be turned over to the deacons while the pastors study, write, preach, pray and confine their work to individual spiritual matters which require their personal attention.

v. 8. 'Deacons should be grave' – serious-minded, dedicated and honest. 'Not double-tongued' – being middle persons between the pastor and people, they must not say one thing to one and something else to the other. 'Not given to wine,' which impairs the health, dulls the mind and wastes the estate. 'Not given to greediness' and covetousness for money and possessions – generous with their own possessions and those entrusted to them by the church.

v. 9. Deacons must be men who know and love the gospel of Christ. Men should not be chosen as deacons simply because they are shrewd business men, prosperous or worldly wise; but they should be selected from among men who diligently love, hold to and defend the gospel of Christ with a sincere heart and conscience.

v. 10. One would not ordain a novice to preach or pastor a church, neither should a man be given the important office of deacon who has not been around long enough to assure the church of his faith, dedication and perseverance. When a man is given this office by the church, let him apply himself to it with diligence and dedication.

v. 11. The wife of a deacon should be a woman of respect, serious-minded, not a gossip, but a believer who, like her husband, loves the gospel and is dedicated to the glory of Christ. Because of the close relationship between husband and wife, a rebellious, gossiping, intemperate wife would hinder the effectiveness of a deacon or a preacher. A deacon's home life is as important as the pastor's home life.

v. 12. The deacon does not have to be a married man, but if he is married, he is to have only one wife, and his wife and children are to be in subjection to his leadership and control. He cannot manage the affairs of the church if he is unable to his home.

v. 13. Those who serve well as deacons are worthy of great honour, respect and appreciation from all. Blessed is the man who takes the office seriously and serves well as a deacon. He can stand before God, his pastor and the church with this boldness and confidence that he has given his best.

vv. 14, 15. 'I hope to come to see you personally before long; but if I am detained, I write these things that you may know how to conduct yourself and carry on the worship and activities of the church, which is the prop and support of the truth.'

v. 16. This verse is a summary of the great truth upon which the church is built, of which the church is the prop and support and to which pastors and deacons are dedicated. From the greatness and importance of this truth, pastors and deacons should judge their office, so that they may devote themselves to it with deeper reverence and greater care. God was manifest in the flesh (John 1:14), justified and vindicated in the Holy Spirit, seen of the angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world and received up into glory. This is the rock upon which Christ builds his church (Matt. 16:16-18).

# True godliness

## 1 Timothy 4:1-8

v. 1, 2. The Holy Spirit distinctly and clearly warns us that in these last days some professing Christians will listen to and follow evil men who profess to speak for God, but who out of covetousness and hypocrisy handle the word of God deceitfully. They will not only listen to these deceivers, but will receive their lies and false doctrines.

This 'departure from the faith' is their effort to persuade men to worship God and seek acceptance before God by the works of the flesh (such as abstaining from certain meats, from marriage, from food on certain days and observing certain rules and days of fasting).

Men by nature are inclined towards self-righteousness and carnal worship of God and are adverse towards true spiritual worship and dependence on the righteousness and mercy of Christ. Satan takes advantage of this weakness and through his ministers gives men something to do and something to give up for salvation (John 4:22-24).

vv. 3-5. These are by no means the only areas where these false teachers exercise dominion over men's consciences with their laws, rules and traditions, but are examples.

They forbid people to marry (Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 9:3-5). They command men to abstain from meat, or certain meat on certain days! This is all a hypocritical pretence of holiness and temperance.



Any creature which is made for food (and this is easy to be discerned by thinking men) is not to be refused on the basis of spiritual contamination if it is received as from the Lord with a thankful heart and a prayer of thanksgiving, called 'blessing' the food. There is nothing in itself common or unclean or unfit for use if received temperately and with thanksgiving, for nothing that goes into a man defiles him spiritually (Matt. 15:10-20).

Those who believe and know the truth of Christ (v. 3) are freed from every yoke of bondage, ceremony and invention of men. They find their righteousness, sanctification and redemption in him!

v. 6. 'If you put the brethren in remembrance of these things,' that is, all that he has said in the preceding words:

That the end of the commandment is love for Christ and others.

That Christ came into the world to save sinners.

That prayers should be made in the church for all sorts of men.

That godly women are to behave in the home and church as godly women.

That there are certain qualifications for pastors, elders and deacons.

That God is not to be worshipped nor righteousness sought by carnal means and foods but in Christ only.

'If you remind them of these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, always feeding and nourishing your own self and God's people on the truths of faith and good teaching which you have been taught and have followed!'

v. 7. Refuse all these traditions, outward carnal commandments and false standards of holiness as so many godless and old sentimental tales. Rather,

‘exercise yourself in inward godliness’ – internal grace such as faith, hope, humility, reverence and spiritual worship of God (Gal. 5:22).

v. 8. ‘Bodily exercise is of little profit.’ Paul does not speak here of jogging, tennis, golf or the physical exercise of the muscles. He gives the name ‘bodily exercise’ to all outward actions such as kneeling, fasting, eating and drinking, abstaining from meat, sex, food or whatever, that are undertaken for the sake of religion or holiness.

This is necessary, for the world has always leaned to the side of worshipping God by outward services and ceremonies and seeking holiness through making certain foods, meats and actions to be evil in themselves.

‘But godliness is profitable for all things’ – that is, he who knows and loves Christ, walks with God in truth and sincerity, is a new creature in Christ and filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit, lacks nothing. This inward godliness is health to the body and the soul; to themselves and to others, to the things of this life and of that which is to come!

# A useful ministry

## 1 Timothy 4:9-16

In the preceding verses the apostle condemns the natural tendency to seek holiness and to worship God by outward services, ceremonies, the abstaining from certain foods on certain days, and the denial of certain normal human needs. Outward religious forms, exercises, and duties are of little profit. Internal godliness (such as faith, love, humility, praise, and thanksgiving) is profitable in all things, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

v. 9. This saying is reliable and worthy of complete acceptance by everybody (1 Peter 3:10-11; Psa. 84:11-12).

v. 10. With a view to this glorious truth (that Christ is our righteousness, sanctification, and acceptance, that we are complete in him, that true godliness consists not in meats and drinks, forms and ceremonies, days and denials, but in a vital union with Christ, which produces inward spirituality and holiness), we are willing to labor and suffer reproach. We are willing to endure hardship, imprisonment, hunger, nakedness, and the reproach and persecution of false religionists because we trust in the living God, who is the deliverer, provider, and maintainer of all men. In a providential way, God gives all men breath, food, blessings, and common mercies; but he especially cares for his own! There is a general providence which attends all mankind and a special providence which relates to the elect of God (Psa. 37:23-26; Matt. 6:31-34; 5:45). John Calvin said, 'The word 'saviour' is not here taken in what we call its strict meaning in regard to eternal salvation, but is taken for one who delivers and protects. Thus we see that even unbelievers are protected by God. In this sense he is the

saviour of all men, not in regard to the spiritual salvation of their souls, but because he supports all his creatures. His goodness extends to the most wicked. Since God shows mercy and favor to those who are strangers, how shall it be with us who are members of his family?’

v. 11. Command men to reject all fleshly, profane, unscriptural doctrines and religious exercises, and teach them to exercise themselves in inward spiritual godliness. Teach them to love Christ and one another. Teach them to trust and depend on the Lord to deliver them from trouble and to supply every need.

v. 12. Timothy was a very young man. Young men are sometimes honored by God with great gifts for usefulness in the church (as Samuel, David, Solomon, Charles Spurgeon, McCheyne, and Brainerd). They should not be shunned because of their youth when they have gifts suitable to their office and behave well in it, but they ought to be honored and esteemed for their work's sake. At the same time, Paul instructs Timothy to supply by dedication, sincerity, and gravity of conduct what is wanting in age and experience. Be an example to other believers in your conduct, love, faith, and purity of life. Proper respect and honor is not demanded but earned and should depend in no way upon a person's age nor office, but upon his consecration to Christ and his gospel.

v. 13. Paul was hoping that he could visit them again, but he was unwilling for Timothy and others to be idle. Give attention to the reading of the scriptures. How shall we teach others if we are not taught of God? If so great a man is advised to study, how much more do we need such advice. We study and read for our own growth in grace and the knowledge of Christ, but we also study in order to communicate to others the doctrines of Christ. It might be worthwhile to note that reading comes before exhortation, for the scripture is the foundation of all wisdom.

v. 14. The apostle exhorts Timothy to employ, for the glory of God and the edification of the church, the grace and gifts with which he was endued. That which qualifies men for the work of the ministry is a gift from God and is not to be neglected through laziness and indifference nor other employments. At his ordination the men of God prophesied great things through his ministry.

v. 15. Two things are emphasized here—meditation and dedication. Meditate upon the scripture, spend much time in study, prayer, and personal devotion, and give yourself up wholly to the ministry of the word. Literally throw yourself completely into the work of the gospel. Your sincerity, ability, growth, and usefulness will be evident to all.

v. 16. ‘Take heed to thyself,’ to your attitude, conduct, objectives, personal faith, and relationship with Christ. ‘Take heed to your doctrine;’ see that you preach the truth of the scriptures. These two things are most important; for in so doing you shall deliver yourself from error, from the blood of men, from heresies of false teachers, and from becoming a castaway. You shall also be an instrument of God to the eternal salvation of those who hear you and a means to lead them into the truth of God concerning their behavior and general conduct.

# Rules for correction and care - 1

## 1 Timothy 5:1-13

v. 1. Do not sharply and harshly rebuke an older believer. Paul recommends gentleness and kindness in correcting faults. Besides, Timothy was a young man; and while older believers are not to be spared and indulged in error or sin, they are to be reproved and corrected as parents. They are to be in-treated, which is a kinder approach than a rebuke. It is to make an earnest appeal with respect.

Even toward young men, the preacher is to use moderation and kindness in correction and deal with them as brothers (2 Tim. 2:24; 1 Thess. 2:7). Erring believers are not strangers and enemies but brothers, whose age, office, and relationship are not to be forgotten in times of offense.

v. 2. When older women offend and err, they are to be reasoned and pleaded with as children should with their mothers; for these older women are mothers in Israel and are to be treated with great tenderness and respect.

The young women, using the freedom as a brother would with a sister, are to be told their faults freely but privately or in such a manner as to preserve their purity in the eyes of the congregation. Let none, old nor young, be held up for ridicule or shame; but let their failures be handled as one would the infirmities of a beloved father, brother, mother, or sister. All of us are careful to protect the reputation, character, and feelings of our parents, brothers, and sisters. We are slow to expose, reluctant to offend, and refuse to inform others of their failures; but we rather deal

with them tenderly and privately. This should be even more true of our spiritual family.

v. 3. 'Honor widows that are widows indeed.' By the word 'honor' Paul does not mean an expression of respect; for all believers are to be respected, honored, and held in high regard. But this is the special care, maintenance, and support given from the church fund to those in need. If widows are taken under the protection, support, and care of the church, it should be clearly established that they are without support, that they are indeed widows without children nor family to provide for them.

v. 4. If a woman's husband is dead and she has children or grandchildren, see to it that these are first made to understand that it is their duty and natural obligation to show kindness to their parents and provide for them, as their parents provided for them when they were children. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God. No believer will shift to the church his own responsibility to care for his mother.

vv. 5-7. Paul expresses his meaning more clearly. If a woman is really alone, has no children, no support, and has fixed her hope in Christ, if she continues in faith and in the fellowship of the believers, not departing from the church and the gospel, she is to be enrolled with those supported fully from the church funds.

But those ought not be received for support who are self-indulgent, indifferent, and living careless lives. If one lives like an unbeliever, it is usually safe to assume that she IS an unbeliever and is not the responsibility of the church.

It is the duty of the pastor to inform the church and those who petition for help of these matters so that proper action may be taken, that none who are worthy be neglected, and that none abuse the privilege.

v. 8. If anyone fails to provide for his own relatives in need, and especially for his own parents and children, he has disowned the faith of Christ by failing to accompany that profession of faith with works and is worse than an unbeliever who performs his obligations in these matters (James 2:17-19).

vv. 9-10. Let no widow be put on full support by the church who is under sixty years of age. Those who are still young and in good health should be able to support themselves. 'Having been the wife of one man' has to do with divorcees, since remarriage after the death of one's mate is encouraged!

The widows over sixty who are enrolled for full support by the church are to be dedicated believers who have proved that dedication and faith by consecration, good works, and loyalty through the years.

vv. 11-13. Do not hastily enroll the younger widows in this program of support and care; for when they become restless and their natural desires grow strong, they may marry again outside the faith, which will cause problems for them and discouragement and difficulty for those who have supported them. They incur condemnation for leaving and denying the faith and their pledge to Christ. Also, younger widows who are idle are tempted to spend their idle hours visiting among other women and talking about things they should not talk about. When the hands are idle, the tongue is usually very active.



## Rules for correction and care - 2

### 1 Timothy 5:14-25

v. 14. 'I encourage younger women to marry.' The apostle is still on the subject of caring for widows, so we assume that he especially means young widows. God ordained marriage for the holiness and happiness of the race (Gen. 2:18:25; 1 Cor. 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4).

It is difficult for a young widow to live with such caution that people will not find some pretext for slandering her or questioning her purity. It is better, if possible, for her to marry, but only in the Lord! (1 Cor. 7:39).

v. 15. Unfortunately, there are some widows who have been drawn away from the rule of Christ and the fellowship of believers to walk in their own ways, which means actually they are under the rule of Satan.

v. 16. If there are believers in the church who have widows and needy persons in their household, let them supply the needs of these widows and not burden the church with them, that the church funds may be used to relieve those who have no one to care for them.

v. 17. Paul had instructed the church to 'honour widows that are widows indeed,' that is, to support and provide for them, but elders, pastors, missionaries, preachers and all who labour in the preaching and teaching of the word are doubly worthy of this support and care by the church. He does not encourage the support of lazy, indifferent, professional pulpiteers, but the full support of those who perform the duties of their office well and who labour faithfully in preaching and teaching! This honour is to be understood as that outward respect shown by words and attitude and a sufficient maintenance materially.

v. 18. This illustration comes from Deuteronomy 25:4. Whereas the ox was not muzzled when he trod out the corn, but was allowed to feed upon it, so those who labour in the gospel ought to be allowed to partake of the fruits of their labour (1 Cor. 9:13, 14). A man who labors in your service and for your benefit is worthy of your generous support (1 Cor. 9:11).

vv. 19, 20. Do not allow your ministers, pastors and teachers to be assailed, criticized and slandered (either privately or publicly) by individuals who do not like them or what they preach. Indifferent and careless professors generally like to excuse their sins by finding fault with the preacher. If there is a legitimate complaint, either doctrinally or morally, against an elder, established by sufficient witnesses, let it be dealt with in a scriptural and brotherly way before the church, that all may walk in fear of sin and false doctrine.

v. 21. 'I charge you to observe all these things that I have written without partiality or prejudice.' One is not to be preferred before another, but every member of the church family loved alike. Let no judgment or action be carried out in haste or disrespect, but let our dealings with one another be in love and affection.

v. 22. Men are not to be set apart as preachers, teachers, elders or deacons in a hasty and hurried manner. Let them first be proved and let it plainly appear that they have the grace of God in them and gifts for public service bestowed upon them. Do not join with others in the ordination of unfit persons. If you cannot prevent them from these errors through serious warnings, at least keep yourself pure.

v. 23. Take care of your body! Use a little wine to help digestion and other disorders. It may be, as in many countries that the water was not always

healthy and pure. Nevertheless, Paul says a little wine in order to discourage intemperance.

*vv. 24, 25.* In the matter of discerning sin, hypocrisy, true faith, godliness and spirituality in professing Christians, we are vastly handicapped, for we can only look on the outward man and our human judgment is confined to what we hear and see.

Some men's sins and faults are so open and evident that they are clearly understood by all before that great Day of Judgment, but the sin and hypocrisy of some are so well hidden that we must wait for God to expose them.

The same is true of good works! We are well aware of the good works of most, but there are many works of righteousness and love that are so secret and unrecognized by men that they will not be known until Christ comes. In that day all shall be revealed in its true light.

# Believers are good workers and good friends

## 1 Timothy 6:1-6

In this lesson, Paul gives some instructions to servants or those who work for others, rebukes false teachers, advises to contentment, and exposes the sin of covetousness.

v. 1. Every believer who works for a living has someone with authority over him. This is called ‘under the yoke.’ It is under the yoke of authority or government or in the service of someone (bought with their money or hired by them). Whether his master is a believer or an unbeliever, kind or unkind, good natured or peevish, the believer is to respect, honor, and obey him, which includes obedience to commands, a good day's work, and respect expressed in word and gesture. If a professed believer is lazy, rebellious, disobedient, disrespectful, or careless in his duties, the unbelieving master will say, ‘Is this his religion? Is this the gospel he preaches? Does his God and his doctrine teach him to rebel against authority and destroy the order that exists between man and man?’ (Eph. 6:5-6; Col. 3:22-25.)

v. 2. The name of ‘brother’ may be thought to constitute equality and consequently to take away authority and dominion, but Paul teaches differently. Actually, if a believer serves under or is employed by another believer, he should show even greater respect, more willing obedience, and subject himself to the authority of his brother, making the master's place of authority easier and more pleasant. Let us give thanks for faithful, beloved, and believing masters who are partakers of the grace of God, not

using their spiritual relationship as an excuse for taking advantage, but as a reason for better service and more dedicated labor (Philemon 15-16).

v. 3. Paul condemns all those who do not agree with and teach the above. Some of these false teachers despised authority and dominion (2 Peter 2:10), even encouraging disobedience to parents, masters, and government. The words of Christ and the doctrines of Christ are in agreement with godliness of heart and life. The gospel is the mystery of godliness, which promotes both internal and external holiness. It leads to faith, love, humility, patience, and all the duties which we owe to our fellow man (2 Cor. 5:17; Titus 2:9-10).

vv. 4-5. False teachers are puffed up with pride. The gospel of grace produces a humble spirit (Eph. 3:8); but the doctrines of men (works and self-righteousness) fill the mind with pride, vanity, and self-esteem.

They really know nothing of spiritual things, of the gospel of Christ, but spend their time in controversy, disputes, and strife over words, laws, foolish and unanswerable questions. Their ministry produces envy and jealousy, quarrels and dissension, insults and slander, and evil suspicions. The true grace of God promotes peace in the home, in the church, between labor and management, and in the neighborhood (2 Tim. 2:22-23; Rom. 14:19).

Withdraw yourself from these men who are contentious and quarrelsome, who are always disputing and galling one another, provoking men to strife, envy, and anger. They are destitute of the truth of Christ and have not the Spirit of God. They suppose that religion and Christianity are a source of profit, a money-making business, or a means of personal gain. They serve themselves and their selfish interests, making merchandise of you (2 Peter 2:1-3).

v. 6. By godliness is meant a true knowledge of God's grace in Christ Jesus, which shows itself not only in the internal fruit of the Holy Spirit (such as faith, love, humility, joy, patience) and in outward acts of worship, but also in a peaceful disposition and a gracious conduct toward others. This spirit and position with contentment (his grace is sufficient! His sacrifice is sufficient! His love and presence is sufficient! Christ is all we need!) is great and abundant gain (Matt. 11:28-30). The believer is content with his lot, his place, his duties, and his gifts; for in Christ he has all things! (1 Cor. 7:20-24.)

# Godliness with contentment

## 1 Timothy 6:7-11

A person who is born of the Spirit (has a saving interest in the Lord Jesus, is an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ and is rich in faith) has God as his portion, is contented with his lot and thankful for what he has, for in Christ he has all things that are worth having! (Phil. 4:19; Ps. 103:1-5; 2 Cor. 12:9.)

v. 7. This is a reason why godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing with us into this world but sin, and we shall go out the same way. Earthly possessions and worldly things have no value after death; but to be forgiven of sin and made an heir of Christ is of the greatest value. As soon as a man really learns this, he ceases to be concerned about his flesh and earthly possessions and becomes dedicated to laying hold of eternal life.

v. 8. Having food to eat, clothes to wear and a house to dwell in, we should be content (Phil. 4:11-13; Heb. 13:5, 6). The believer is rich in grace, love, joy and faith, whatever his earthly condition. We realize that the will of God has everything to do with our present state (1 Thess. 5:18).

v. 9. Having exhorted believers to be content with what they have and to consider worldly possessions in their proper light (as only fleeting vanities), he now explains how dangerous are the desire and pursuit of these earthly riches. If God has prospered you, use it for his glory, but to set one's heart and mind on attaining worldly place, position, possessions or praise is to be covetous (which is idolatry), to question the will of God, and usually involves the neglect of spiritual exercises and puts one in the

company and fellowship of evil men. This is the snare of Satan; it is a trap filled with the foolish and harmful lusts of the world, the flesh and the devil, and will finally totally consume and destroy.

v. 10. 'For the love of money is the root of all evil.' If we confine this only to silver and gold, we will miss the apostle's message and meaning (although greed for gold produces fraud, falsehood, cheating, hatred and almost every crime). This immoderate, insatiable desire for earthly treasure and possessions has caused some professors to depart from the fellowship of believers and from the gospel they professed, and they have suffered the terrible consequences.

Love is a heart emotion or condition and denotes a craving, desire or concern of the inward person. So that this love for money, or possessions (which I do not have in God's purpose), or position (which I do not occupy in God's will), or power (which I do not possess) is the root of all evil. This was Satan's sin (Isa. 14:12-15). Was this not Adam's sin? (Gen. 3:5, 6.) Did not the wrath of God fall on Israel in the wilderness because of their murmuring against his providence? We come back to the statement that 'Godliness with contentment is great gain!' It is not just contentment, for the rebellious lay-about may be content in his poverty and laziness, but godliness with contentment!

v. 11. 'Oh, believer, flee pride, covetousness and worldly ambition, which are the root and source of rebellion. Desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow! Covet the best gifts, starting with love! Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness! Follow after the righteousness of Christ and the honour of the gospel before men. Follow after true godliness in spirit, attitude and motive before God and men. Follow after faith, love, patience and humility! What shall it profit a man if he gain the world and lose his soul? (Matt. 6:24-34.)



# Lay hold of eternal life

## 1 Timothy 6:12-21

v. 12. 'Fight the good fight of faith.' We have much more business at hand than to be over-concerned with the things of this world. The life of faith is called a warfare (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3, 4). Our enemies are Satan (1 Peter 5:8; Luke 22:31), our fleshly nature (Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17), powers of evil (Eph. 6:12, 13) and false teachers (Matt. 24:11). The weapons of our warfare are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:3, 4), but spiritual (Eph. 6:13-16). The prize of the high calling of Christ is eternal life. Above all, 'lay hold upon it' by believing it, by receiving it, by enjoying it, by cherishing it and by expecting it. We are called unto this divine life not only by the word of the gospel, but by the internal grace and power of the Spirit. Paul commends Timothy for 'witnessing a good profession' before the apostles, the people of the church, false teachers and men of the world (Matt. 10:32-39).

vv. 13, 14. A solemn charge is laid before Timothy, before ministers of the gospel and before every believer to fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold of eternal life, to observe doctrine and discipline of the church and to preach the gospel of the grace of Christ in sincerity, purity and without compromise.

1. 'Before God, who quickeneth all things,' that is, who gives life to all creatures, who quickened us to spiritual life in Christ and who shall quicken the dead at the last day (Acts 17:24-28). Natural men, the world and all therein are nothing; we live unto God.

2. 'Before Christ Jesus' who is not only our Lord and Saviour but our example, in that he bore a faithful, plain and open witness

to truth even in the face of unparalleled suffering, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:5-8; 3:8; Acts 20:24). ‘Till the coming of Christ.’ This shows that Paul did not design this charge for Timothy only, but for all believers. We seek not the praise, approval and honour which comes from men, but we preach, walk and live before God.

v. 15. The time of Christ's appearing is unknown to all but God, but it is certain. God will bring it to pass in the time appointed by him. Our Lord Jesus Christ is now, and always has been, the blessed God. He is all-sufficient, the fountain and source of all blessedness, and the only Potentate or Governor of the whole universe. He rules over the armies of heaven and over the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:34, 35). He is King of kings and Lord of lords: he sets up kings and removes them at his pleasure (Prov. 21:1).

v. 16. ‘Who only hath immortality.’ Angels are immortal and so are the souls of men, but they have their immortality from God. Only God has immortality of himself. ‘Dwelling in that light.’ In this frail and mortal state no man can bear to see the holiness, glory and luster of God (Exod. 33:18-20). Even the heavenly creatures cover their faces before him. We see God in Christ spiritually and savingly, and that imperfectly, but when that glorious day of resurrection comes and the mortality of human nature is removed, we shall see him as he is! (1 John 3:1, 2.)

v. 17. ‘Warn them that are well off and blessed with material wealth, influence and possessions not to be proud and lifted up because of their blessings, so as to look down on and despise the poor.’ Riches are prone to produce pride. Rich men are prone to feel self-sufficient and to hold the poor in contempt. Rich men are prone to neglect prayer, become indifferent to the worship and fear of the Lord and to rest in the security of their position and possessions. This is folly. A fool may be rich and a wise

man poor, for God in his purpose and providence is the one who gives us all that we have to enjoy and can remove it as easily as he gave it! (1 Sam. 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 4:7.)

*vv. 18, 19.* Much is required of those to whom much is given, which they are accountable! True riches lie in the exercise and the fruits of grace and doing good works. Be ready to distribute and willing to give for the glory of God and the good of others!

Doing good works, sharing with others and being kind to the poor cannot lay a foundation for salvation, life and eternal happiness, for Christ alone is our sure, tried and lasting foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). But a man's attitude towards others, his attitude towards material and spiritual things and his general conduct in regard to love, generosity, kindness and good works will certainly reveal whether he has Christ as his foundation and whether he has laid hold of eternal life (James 2:14-17; Matt. 25:41-46).

*vv. 20, 21.* 'Keep that which is committed to thy trust,' which is the gospel (1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Thess. 2:4). Keep it pure and incorrupt, faithfully preach it and be not moved away from the gospel by vain debates and babblings about the law, circumcision, prophecy or new doctrines which ought not to be introduced. The false teachers boast of their scientific knowledge and oppose the scriptures. Avoid them, for some pretending to be masters of science and knowledge have departed from the faith of Christ! (Titus 3:9.)

# 2 Timothy

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# Stir up the gift of God

## 2 Timothy 1:1-7

This epistle, addressed to Timothy, was written by Paul when he was a prisoner at Rome. It appears that it was written a short time before his death, although some believe that Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon came later, since it appears that Timothy did come to him at Rome and is joined with him in those epistles. The design of the letter is to stir up Timothy to the faithful discharge of his ministry, to encourage him to suffer patiently, and to warn him against false teachers who had already risen and would afterward arise.

v. 1. ‘Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.’ This epistle, like all others, is not intended for Timothy alone, but for all believers. Timothy knew that Paul was an apostle. But for the sake of others who would read these words, Paul lays claim to the authority which belonged to his special office.

‘By the will of God’ an apostle, not by the will of men, nor by his own will, nor was it owing to any personal merit, but God separated Paul to this office by his own will and purpose (Eph. 1:11-12; Acts 9:15; Luke 7:13).

‘According to the promise of life.’ God, from the beginning, promised life in Christ; so now he appointed the apostle and other ministers to proclaim that promise and to bring men to Christ, that in him they may have life (1 John 5:11-12).

v. 2. Timothy was not Paul's natural son; but because of his youth, because Paul was his teacher in the doctrines of the gospel, because Paul had great affection for him, and because the apostles often referred to believers as

their children (Gal. 4:19; 1 John 2:1; 3 John 4), Paul calls Timothy his beloved son and desires for him grace, mercy, and peace from the Lord.

v. 3. I serve and worship the Lord God in the spirit of my forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), or, as they did, with a clear conscience. Paul was not claiming to be without sin nor to having a conscience always pure; but being sprinkled and purged by the blood of Christ, he was without sin before God. And loving Christ, seeking only his glory, preaching truth in sincerity for the eternal good of his hearers (not for personal gain and honor), his conscience was clear before men (Heb. 10:22; Rom. 9:1-2).

I give thanks to God that I am ever mindful of you, that God has laid you on my heart at all times to pray for you. This is a good sign, both for Paul and for Timothy; for Timothy in that God must have his special grace on him, and for Paul in that prayer for others is a mark of grace in his soul. Men of God are always men of prayer! When Paul thought of Timothy, he gave thanks for him and prayed for him. Both are marks of real friendship (1 Sam. 12:23; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:17-18).

vv. 4-5. When Paul left Timothy at Ephesus (because of the work he had to do), there was great sadness and many tears (Acts 20:36-38). But now Timothy had served that purpose and Paul desired him to come to Rome, for he needed him there; and the sight of Timothy would fill him with great joy.

I remember the genuine and sincere faith that is in you, which was also in your mother, Eunice. This was rich family mercy, deserving special notice and thanksgiving that God should be so gracious to the house of Timothy. Paul designs it as an encouragement to stir up Timothy to the exercise of that grace and gift of faith (2 Sam. 7:18).

v. 6. This is why I would remind you (for this cause I advise you) to exercise your gifts, fan the flame, and keep burning the gift of God given to you for the ministry of the word when God instructed me to lay hands upon you. The more abundantly we have received the grace of God, the more attentive we ought to be to exercising it and making progress day by day. In family mercies, in personal faith, and in godly gifts, Timothy was abundantly blessed. ‘To whom much is given, much is required.’

v. 7. ‘For God has not given us a spirit of fear, cowardliness, and timidity to perform our work and office in a cold, lifeless, and indifferent manner! We do not fear men; we do not fear persecution; we do not fear failure; we do not fear devils. But God has given his ministers the power of the Spirit (Luke 24:47-49) to do the work of God (Zech. 4:6). He has given the spirit of love for God, Christ, his church, and all men; and those who have it seek not their own welfare and ease, but rather the glory of Christ and the good of souls. He has given us a sound mind or self-discipline (self-control) which results in prudent conduct and behavior under all circumstances. Being of a sound mind, conviction, and principles, the believer will stand fast in the faith of Christ.

# His purpose and grace in Christ

## 2 Timothy 1:8-11

v. 8. 'Do not be ashamed of the gospel.' It is the testimony concerning our Lord Jesus - his person, his offices, his righteousness, his suffering for our sins, his resurrection, his intercession and his return. No preacher nor anyone who professes Christ has any reason to be ashamed before this evil world, of a gospel so great, so glorious, so true and so useful (Rom. 1:16; Luke 9:26).

'Nor of me his prisoner.' Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of Rome, for he had committed no crime nor broken any law, and he knew that men had no power over him, nor could they hold him any longer than his Lord willed. He was a prisoner at Rome for the sake of Christ on account of professing his name and preaching his gospel! He had no reason to be ashamed himself, and none of his friends should be ashamed of him. He was setting a noble example.

Timothy should prepare himself to endure those afflictions which come upon men for preaching and professing the gospel. The gospel of Christ is the gospel of peace; yet, through the depravity of men, it brings trouble, division and persecution. The man who shrinks from the offence of the cross will always be ashamed of the gospel.

The power and grace of God will support us in trouble and affliction. If we are called to endure anything for the gospel, our Lord will be our Deliverer. His grace is sufficient.

v. 9. How can we be ashamed of him who has saved us with an eternal salvation, who has called us by his Holy Spirit into his righteousness and to a participation of all his grace, who redeemed us and made us his children, not according to our works (at any time, either before or after our



calling), but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ before the foundation of the world? The Lord God chose us in Christ, gave his beloved Son to redeem us, would not leave us in our sins, but called us to himself, accepting us in the Beloved and keeping us by his power. To be ashamed of him and his gospel would be unthinkable. To prefer the praise and comforts of the world to the praise and glory of such a gracious Lord would reveal an unregenerate heart (Rom. 8:18). Note the sovereignty of God in our redemption: he saved us! He called us! His purpose was fulfilled in our calling! His grace provided the way! All of this was freely 'given' (not earned) 'in Christ' before the world began (2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:3, 4).

v. 10. Salvation is in Christ. Since the beginning, the grace, gifts, mercy and love of God for the elect have all been in Christ. First it lay hid in the heart and counsel of God, then it was revealed in the promises and prophecies, then in the types, shadows and sacrifices of the law. But now it is made manifest in the freeness and clearness of it by the appearance of Christ as our Redeemer in human flesh (Gal. 4:4, 5). Were the Old Testament believers ignorant of this grace in Christ? Certainly not! (John 5:46; 8:56; Luke 24:44; Acts 10:43). Abraham and others placed their confidence in his appearance (Heb. 9:26-28).

'Christ has destroyed death.'

1. He has destroyed the law of sin and death, which is the cause of death.
2. He has destroyed Satan, who has the power of death.
3. He has taken away the sting of death for his people, and that is sin.
4. He has abolished the second death, so that it has no power over us.

‘He has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.’ Christ was the first who rose again from the dead to an immortal life. Immortal life was brought to light (or understanding) by him. The doctrine of the resurrection was known by the Old Testament believers (Job 19:25-27), but not as clearly as it is now revealed in the gospel (1 Thess. 4:13-16; 1 John 3:2, 3), or as fully as it is revealed in the resurrection of our Lord.

*v. 11.* ‘I am appointed a preacher (of this gospel) (Acts 9:15; 13:2), an apostle of Jesus Christ, and a teacher of the Gentiles.’ His chief work was among the Gentiles (1 Tim. 2:7).

# Hold fast the pattern of sound doctrine

## 2 Timothy 1:12-18

v. 12. This is why I am suffering as I do. Hated, beaten, imprisoned, and called a mad-man, Paul preached the gospel of Christ; and he preached it to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews! The Gentiles were stirred up against him for introducing a new religion among them to the destruction of their idolatry. The Jews were angry because he preached salvation, righteousness, and resurrection in Christ, making vain their ceremonies, self-righteousness, and traditions. ‘Nevertheless I am not ashamed.’

Here is a definition of the faith that saves – knowledge, confidence, and committal!

1. ‘I know whom I have believed.’ A spiritual knowledge of Christ is necessary to faith in him (Rom. 10:13-14). Those who know Christ (who he is, what he did, why he did it, where he is now) believe in him; and the more they know him, the more strongly do they believe.

2. ‘I am persuaded he is able.’ Confidence in the Saviour’s willingness to save and power to save is necessary to faith (Rom. 4:20-21; Heb. 7:25; Jude 24).

3. ‘I have committed unto him.’ Where there has been no genuine and complete committal of all things to Christ, there is no true saving faith. One cannot separate faith and conduct. Committal to Christ involves our trusting him, casting ourselves upon him, and leaving ourselves totally in his hands to save, sanctify, and glorify (1 Cor. 1:30).

v. 13. Paul knew how ready men are to depart from pure doctrine and the gospel of God's glory and grace, so he exhorts Timothy to hold fast both in head and heart to the wholesome words and truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word 'form' is the 'pattern' set by Paul and the other apostles. Preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (imputed righteousness, repentance toward God, and faith in Christ) as you have heard me preach it (Acts 20:20; Rom. 8:29-34).

Hold the truth of Christ 'in faith and love.' These are the marks of sound doctrine, and he places them both in Christ. In the exercise of faith from a principle of love, these two graces always go together and have Christ as their object. No man can persevere in sound doctrine unless he is endowed with true faith and genuine love.

v. 14. Guard and keep with the greatest care the precious and excellent gospel (which has been entrusted to you) by the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you (1 Tim. 1:11; 6:20). The gospel is a treasure indeed. It contains the riches of grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and is a trust requiring faithfulness in those who are stewards of it, who shall give an account of their stewardship (1 Peter 4:10; Heb. 13:17). It must be kept pure and free from traditions and mixtures of men. Whereas the apostle knew that neither Timothy nor any other man is sufficient for these things, he directs the keeping of it to the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit who dwells in all believers.

v. 15. Timothy, being at Ephesus, which was in Asia, was well aware of the apostasy and departure from the gospel in that area (2 Tim. 4:11). We are grieved by apostasy, but not discouraged; rather, seeing so many depart from the faith, we are more determined to hold fast the gospel of substitution and keep the treasure committed to us. Evidently Phygellus and Hermogenes were ministers of the word who had shone for a while but erred from the faith and deceived the people.

*vv. 16-17.* The apostle prays for his friend, Onesiphorus, and for his household. I believe that we can infer that the blessings of the Lord rest not only on a devoted servant of Christ, but also on his household. The love of Christ for a faithful believer is so great that it diffuses itself over all who are connected with him. Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul's chains and sufferings for Christ. He not only identified himself with the afflicted apostle, but visited him and supplied him with the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and money.

*v. 18.* 'Mercy of the Lord in that day.' Too many are interested in a return on their works of charity and their investments right now, in this life. This prayer deals with the real blessings of God toward true believers –the mercy of the Lord in that day. How much richer a reward awaits those who, without the expectation of earthly reward from the hand of men, are kind to the people of God, constrained only by the love of Christ! Nothing can compare with the mercy of the Lord in that day (Rom. 8:16-18).

# Endure hardships as a good soldier

## 2 Timothy 2:1-7

v. 1. 'My son' indicates the close relationship between these two servants of Christ and expresses the deep affection Paul had for Timothy. We are members of his family, and we love one another. 'Be strong,' inwardly and outwardly, in the grace of Christ. Be rooted and grounded in it, have a full persuasion of your interest in it, preach it boldly, and defend it bravely. Oppose every error and false teacher. Grace comes from Christ alone; it is to be found only in him; and what he gives in his Son, he will maintain and strengthen by his Spirit. The flesh is sluggish, and we must frequently be aroused and encouraged (Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25).

v. 2. The things Timothy had heard from Paul were the doctrines of the gospel, the mysteries of the grace of God, the walk and works of faith, and justification by faith alone apart from works of the law. This was not Paul's theology and teaching ALONE, but was confirmed by many witnesses –Moses and the prophets, Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour, and all the other apostles and witnesses of his grace and glory (Acts 10:43; 1 John 1:1-3).

'Commit this gospel to competent, capable, and faithful men,' men who are not only believers in Christ and have received the grace of God into their hearts, but men who will preach it boldly, declare the whole counsel of God, and will not be turned aside by covetousness, fear, nor the praise of men. If future generations are to hear the gospel, we must pass the torch on to faithful young men who will continue the ministry of the gospel.

v. 3. It is certain that those who believe and preach the gospel of God's grace shall suffer persecution, trial, and affliction for the sake of the gospel (John 16:33; 15:18-20; 2 Tim. 3:12-14). Christ is our Captain and we are his warriors, engaged in the warfare against the forces of evil! We must expect to be attacked by the enemy and put to a stern test by our adversaries. These hardships and trials are to be borne patiently and courageously for the glory of our Lord.

v. 4. This verse is applicable to every believer. As soon as a soldier enrolls himself under a general, he leaves his affairs and thinks of nothing but war. The war is first and foremost; and the soldier must relinquish all hindrances, alliances, and employments of the world that would interfere with his devotion to his general and the victory of his cause. But the main reference is to ministers of the gospel, who are gospel preachers and are not to be involved and implicated in worldly affairs, politics, secular businesses and cares (1 Cor. 9:13-14; 2:2). Our chief concern is pleasing Christ, making Christ known, and honoring Christ.

v. 5. If a man competes in a sporting event such as running, jumping, or wrestling, he is not acclaimed a winner unless he competes according to the rules and finishes the required distance or time set. Even so, no man who calls himself a Christian or a minister can expect the crown of life unless he runs the race set before him according to the word of God, looking to Christ alone, pressing through all hardships and barriers to the end of the race (Heb. 3:6; 12:1-2).

v. 6. To interpret this verse correctly, we must examine and stay with the context. The farmer does not gather fruits until he has first plowed, sowed the seed, and labored in the field. 'The farmer must labor before of the fruits partaking' is the better translation. As laborers together with Christ, we must be faithful in the preaching of the gospel, witnessing, enduring

hardships and trials; and that to the end if we are to sit down in the kingdom of heaven, take our rest, and enjoy the crown of glory. All three of these illustrations (soldier, athlete, farmer) are encouraging us to faithfulness, devotion, consecration, and perseverance in the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

v. 7. 'Consider what I say.' Be strong in the grace of Christ, commit the truth of the gospel to faithful men, endure trials and hardship as a good soldier of Christ, persevere in the ministry according to the rules and word of God as a soldier, runner, and farmer. May the Lord give you an understanding of these things. No man has understanding of the mysteries of grace in himself; this is the gift of God (1 Cor. 2:7-10).



# Persecution for Christ's sake

## 2 Timothy 2:8-14

v. 8. Paul had exhorted Timothy to hold fast the pattern of sound words, to be strong in the gospel of grace, to endure hardness as a good soldier, and to commit the truth to faithful men who shall be able to teach others. In this verse, he especially mentions that part of his doctrine which was under heavy attack from Satan—that Jesus Christ was born of the seed of David and arose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:12-19). Christ our God really came to earth in the flesh, was truly man, was truly the Messiah, and died on the cross for our sins. He arose from the dead, which not only implies that he died but that his sin-offering and sacrifice was accepted by the Father, who raised him and exalted him to his right hand, where he is our Mediator. This is the fundamental truth of greatest importance to our faith, which Satan and his ministers seek to discredit (Acts 4:1-3; 17:18; 17:32; 23:6; 24:14-15). Paul calls it ‘my gospel’ because he was saved by it, entrusted with it, committed to it, and distinguishes it from the gospel of the false teachers.

v. 9. For the sake of that gospel, I am suffering afflictions, put in prison, and even wearing chains like a common criminal (2 Cor. 11:23-28); but the word of God is not chained nor imprisoned. Men may be fettered and bound for the sake of the gospel, but persecution becomes the means for spreading the gospel (Phil. 1:12-13) and encouraging others to preach it (Acts 8:1-4). When men try to extinguish the light of the gospel, it burns more brightly!

v. 10. There is an elect people, chosen by God and given to Christ (John 6:37-39; 17:2, 9), for whom Christ suffered and died. It is on their account

that the gospel is sent, preached, and published in this world (John 10:24-28; Rom. 10:13-14). For the sake of God's elect, ministers are called and qualified; so, whatever suffering, afflictions, or reproach these ministers are called upon to bear, they do so cheerfully if it promotes the salvation of the Lord's church. We will go to jail to preach to a jailer, or to the hospital to preach to a patient, or to a leper colony to call one of his own. Our goal is the salvation and eternal glory of Christ and his church, so whatever we endure here is nothing (Rom. 8:18).

v. 11. 'It is a faithful saying.' Paul uses this phrase frequently in matters of great importance and when what he is about to say is opposite to the feelings of the flesh. Nothing is more opposite to the thoughts of men or the feelings of the flesh than that we must die in order to live or that life in the Spirit demands death in the flesh. It is true that when Christ died, we died with him as our representative and we are alive to God forevermore. But there is a daily dying to this world, to our flesh, to those things which interrupt our fellowship and communion with him, and a willingness to even lay down our lives for the gospel (2 Cor. 4:7-11). As far as this world, its glories, its relationships, and its advantages are concerned, we are dead men (Gal. 6:14).

v. 12. If we really love Christ, are called by his grace, and are partakers of his blessings, we shall also be called upon to endure reproach, loss of friends, persecution, and maybe even death (John 16:33; 15:18-21; 2 Tim. 3:12). But those who are faithful in the gospel shall enjoy gospel benefits (Matt. 10:40-42; 19:29). However, if we recant, disown, and deny Christ out of the fear of men, or to win the favor of men, or to avoid persecution for the sake of the word, Christ shall disown and deny us (Luke 9:26; Matt. 13:20-21).

v. 13. Most writers agree that the meaning is that our unbelief and denial of Christ takes nothing from the Son of God nor from his glory; he stands in no need of our confession. Let those deny Christ who will; he remains unchanged. Christ is not like men who are as changeable as the wind. He will abide faithful to his covenant, to his word of promise, and to his word of threatenings (Mark 16:15-16). He cannot go contrary to his word nor his nature; for that would be to deny himself, which is not possible. Mr. Gill suggests that he may be speaking of believers whose faith is sometimes quite low, but Christ is faithful to his covenant engagements for them and will not suffer them to finally fall away. He is ever the same to them in love, mercy, and grace.

v. 14. Tell the people of God these things which I have showed to you; and charge them in the presence of God that they avoid controversy over words of no profit (useless debates over doubtful subjects) which does no good but upsets and undermines the faith of the hearers.

# Rightly dividing the word of truth

## 2 Timothy 2:15-19

v. 15. Those who study the word to please men, to boast of their knowledge of theology and Bible mysteries or to win the applause of men are not the servants of Christ! Sometimes those who are approved of by men are disapproved of by God. There is nothing that will check a foolish eagerness for man's approval and a personal display of so-called knowledge more than remembering that we must give an account to God alone (Heb. 13:17; 2 Cor. 5:9). Therefore, we study, labour, preach and declare the gospel as in the sight of God, seeking only his approval!

The study and ministry of the word is a work that requires diligence, application and sincerity, and for which no man is sufficient without the grace of God. Those who are employed in it are laborers together with God and are worthy of respect and honour. If they are faithful, bold and diligent in their study and ministry, they need not be ashamed, either before men or their Master. Those who play at preaching and are covetous of honour, applause and possessions should be ashamed now and will be in that day!

‘Rightly dividing the word of truth’ is rightly handling, skillfully teaching and correctly interpreting the scriptures in their relation to other scriptures (concerning Christ, his person and work, the law and the gospel) and being able to give both milk and meat to feed the babes, the young men and the elders (2 Peter 1:20, 21; Acts 10:43; Luke 24:44, 45; Acts 20:20, 27; 1 Cor. 3:2).

v. 16. ‘Be diligent in imparting to your hearers solid instructions, doctrines and teaching. Aim at edifying, not entertaining!’ We are not to amaze and amuse men, but to instruct them in the things of Christ. Therefore, avoid

vain, empty, useless rambling, empty talk and speculation. Those who are not content with the simplicity of the gospel turn it into profane philosophy, aiming at applause rather than the profit of the church (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1:17-24). We do not need novelties of words, high-sounding phrases and modern criticisms; these only lead men into more ungodliness. We need the word of our Lord preached as it is to men as they are!

v. 17. Paul compares the errors and heresies of false teachers to gangrene. If it is not cut out, it will spread to all of the adjoining parts until it destroys the man. These false teachers and their errors are to be opposed and those infected with them are to be cut off lest they corrupt the whole church.

v. 18. These two persons fell from the truth and went astray claiming that there was no future resurrection of the dead. Some think that they taught that there is no resurrection except spiritual resurrection or regeneration. Some think that they taught that parents live again in their children, whatever they taught, it was contrary to the scriptures and undermined the faith of some. These errors must be rooted up and out! (Titus 1:13, 14; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20; 4:16.)

v. 19. We know too well (by experience) how much trouble and scandal is produced by the apostasy and falling away of those who at one time professed faith in Christ. This is especially true in the case of those who were preachers, elders, and leaders in the church. A man or woman who has been regarded as a pillar in the church cannot depart from the gospel without involving others in his or her ruin, especially the weak. 'Nevertheless,' there is no reason why believers should lose heart and be over-disturbed, although they see people fall whom they thought to be strong.

‘The foundation of God standeth sure.’ That faith (which is the faith of God's elect) is the operation of God, is the gift of his grace, has Christ as its author, finisher and object and is firm and immovable as a foundation laid by God! It stands sure, being supported by the power of God and the intercession of Christ, and cannot be overthrown by Satan, false teachers or trials of life (Rom. 8:28-31, 38, 39).

The seal or stamp put on the elect of God is ‘The Lord knows them.’ He chose them, wrote their names in his book and will never suffer them to perish (Phil. 4:3; 1:6; John 28; 6:37-39). ‘Let everyone who loves and calls upon the name of Christ in sincerity depart from iniquity’ – both doctrinal and practical iniquity. We have a gospel to believe, preach and adorn. We have a beloved Master to love, trust and glorify in our attitude, actions and words. To call on his name is also to be called by his name as a woman is married to a man and is called by his name!

# A good minister of Christ Jesus

## 2 Timothy 2:20-26

v. 20. It grieves every believer to see those who have made a profession of faith in Christ, who put on a show of piety and zeal, who even preached and taught the word to fall away from grace, the gospel, and the fellowship of the saints. However, Paul's object is to show that we ought not be amazed, unduly disturbed, nor think it strange that tares are mixed with wheat, dead branches are on every tree, and hypocrites are present in the church.

In a palace there are pieces of furniture and articles which serve noble purposes and others which serve baser and sordid purposes. There are vessels of beauty, and there are vessels of clay and wood which have no beauty. In the church there are men and women in whom the beauty and glory of Christ are seen. There are also some who do not reflect the grace of Christ but rather bring shame and reproach upon him and the church.

v. 21. If a man stays away from the company, the heresies, the errors, and the influences of these dishonorable vessels, he can be an honorable and useful vessel, set apart by God, filled with the spirit of grace, truth, and love, useful to the Master for witnessing, teaching, and helping others in the household of faith. But evil communication and companions corrupt good manners. Association and fellowship with unregenerate, murmuring, indifferent, troublemakers in the church have a corrupting influence (Rom. 16-17, 18).

v. 22. 'Flee youthful lusts.' It is true that Timothy and all young people must and will avoid the lusts of uncleanness, lasciviousness, and worldliness; but staying with the subject and context, this is not Paul's

meaning. He is speaking of such lusts as are apt to entice young ministers and leaders; such as vain glory, popular applause, seeking and having pre-eminence, and becoming involved in disputes, debates, and divisions. If some debate arises, problem is presented, or contention appears, young men more quickly grow heated, are more easily irritated, and blunder through lack of experience; they are given to rashness. Flee this!

Follow after conformity to the will of God and exhibit faith, love, and peace with all of the believers who call on the name of the Lord in sincerity and truth. There are enough disturbers of the church from outside without having strife and division from within!

v. 23. Foolish and ignorant controversies over matters that do not edify the church and are not clearly resolved by the word of God are to be avoided. These speculations and arguments over secret mysteries, silly trifles, and unprofitable traditions only serve to foster strife and breed quarrels.

v. 24. The servant of the Lord, especially the minister of the word, ought not to strive and contend about words to no profit! He ought to strive for the faith of the gospel. To be quarrelsome and contentious over mere words, customs, and doctrines to show his intelligence, mastery, and piety is to defeat the very purpose of his office. He is to be kind, mild-tempered, and gentle to all men, preserving the bond of peace. He must be a skilled and suitable teacher, patient, and willing to bear reproach (2 Cor. 2:15-17; 3:5-7).

v. 25. Let the minister learn to correct with courtesy and gentleness those who oppose the word of God, and in turn oppose 'themselves;' for any man who opposes truth does so to his own ruin and unhappiness. We must be firm in the truth, yet tender in the spirit with our opponents in the hope that God will grant to them repentance and an understanding of the word. Don't build a wall so high between you and an opponent that he is



prevented from repenting and returning without embarrassment and humiliation. It is only by God's grace that we stand.

v. 26. Our desire and objective in ministering the truth is that men might 'come to themselves' as the prodigal, that they might 'awake out of the sleep of death' and be restored to 'their right mind.' Rebels are like drunken men, intoxicated with error and taken captive by Satan to do his will. Only the Son can make us free. Let us pray for those who will not pray themselves (Rom. 10:1).

# Perilous times for the church

## 2 Timothy 3:1-5

v. 1. When the apostle speaks of ‘the last days,’ he means the days following the coming of Christ. We have the days from Adam to Moses, from Moses (under the law) to Christ, and from Christ’s coming to the end of the world, called ‘the last days.’ Some mistakenly believed that these days would be a time of peace, holiness, and obedience to God and his word, especially in the churches and among those who claimed to know Christ. But Paul warns Timothy and all true believers to expect perilous, hard, and difficult times, not by reason of outward calamities, scarcity of food, and dangers from the sword, but by reason of the wickedness of men who profess religion! The pastors and people of God will have to contend with legalists, false teachers, hucksters, and evil and profane men and women in the churches. This situation already prevailed during the days of the apostles and has continued, growing worse, to this day (2 Tim. 1:15; 4:10-11, 14-16).

v. 2-4. He gives a description of the hypocrites, formal professors, and false preachers that would arise during these last days.

1. ‘Lovers of their own selves.’ This is put first because all error and vices flow from self-love. He who loves himself does not love Christ, despises others, has no concern for the glory of God nor the good of others. Self-love promotes free-will, human merit, and seeks honor and applause.

2. ‘Covetous.’ lovers of money, looking for personal gain and recognition in all that they do. They are not content with the

providence of God nor with what they have nor with where they are (Heb. 13:5).

3. 'Boasters.' These people brag of their honor, wealth, gifts, numbers, and righteousness. They are like the Pharisee of old who thanked God that he was not like other men (1 Cor. 4:7).

4. 'Proud.' Nothing is more offensive in the sight of God than pride in the creature (Prov. 6:17; James 4:6). Someone said, 'There is pride of RACE, pride of PLACE, and pride of FACE;' but perhaps the most offensive of all is pride of GRACE.

5. 'Blasphemers.' This has to do with thoughts and words regarding the Father, his beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit, to whom all glory, worship, reverence, and praise is due, in whom we live, move, and have our being (both natural and spiritual), and by whom we are redeemed, kept, and made heirs of eternal life. Any thought or word that renders to him any less than full glory is blasphemy.

6. 'Disobedient to parents.' These are those who despise authority, whether in parents, magistrates, pastors, employers, or whatever authority God has ordained.

7. 'Unthankful' to God for what is enjoyed by them and unthankful to men, ascribing all to themselves and their own merit (Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18).

8. 'Unholy.' Without fear of God nor regard for his word nor concern for the testimony of the gospel, they live and walk in the indulgences of the flesh both inwardly and outwardly.

9. 'Without natural affection' to husbands, wives, children, parents, and friends. Also leaving the natural use of men and women (Rom. 1:26-27).

10. 'Trucebreakers' or covenant breakers, loosing the marriage bond, making void contracts, agreements, and promises both to God and men.

11. ‘False accusers’ – slanderers of character, careless gossipers and talebearers (1 Tim. 5:19).

12. ‘Incontinent’ – not able to restrain fleshly appetites, tempers, passions, and desires even for the glory of God, intemperate in eating and drinking, indulging themselves without restraint.

13. ‘Fierce’ – unkind and hateful like cornered beasts striking out at all in reach, wounding and bent on vengeance.

14. ‘Despisers of those that are good.’ Hypocrites hate true believers as the Pharisees hated Christ. The gospel of grace and Christ's righteousness condemn their claims and bring out their malice (1 John 3:11-13).

15. ‘Traitors.’ They will betray secrets of others (words spoken to them in confidence) to preserve themselves or to gain in some way.

16. ‘Heady, highminded’ – puffed and swelled up with a vain conceit of their own intelligence, accomplishments, and abilities (1 Cor. 3:7; 2 Cor. 12:11).

17. ‘Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.’ This comes back to the first word (lovers of self, pleasure, sin, applause, worldly honor, and making a god of their bellies) and not loving the Lord Jesus Christ. Love for him puts all things in their proper place!

v. 5. They have an external show of religion, pretending great holiness, zeal, and concern for the salvation of men and the kingdom of God, yet in reality they deny the very heart of true faith – the power of it! They profess the scriptures to be the word of God but deny the power of the word to quicken, to beget life, and to give faith. They profess to believe Christ but deny the power and efficacy of his righteousness, his sacrifice, and his intercession. They talk of the Holy Spirit but deny his power to

regenerate, to sanctify, to convince of sin, and to teach. They profess to believe the GOSPEL but deny the power of the gospel to save, to justify, to make men new creatures in Christ, and to fully satisfy every need through and by Christ.

# False teachers described and denounced

## 2 Timothy 3:6-11

v. 6. The false teachers described in the verses above work after the manner of their father, Satan. As Satan attacked the woman and not the man (the subtle tempter beguiled Eve and not Adam), so these, his instruments, work themselves into the affection of the weaker vessel (1 Tim. 2:14). Every cult, sect and free-will Arminian denomination or church is dominated by women – silly, easily influenced women who like to be told that they are religious, holy and righteous! They reject the gospel of God's free grace and mercy for sinners in Christ, for they are full of the sins of self-righteousness and are led forth by a lust for new teachers, new doctrines and new heights of personal glory. The exaltation of Mary and the effeminate influence of Catholicism has led women to think that they are morally good and that men are bad! (Rom. 3:10:19.)

v. 7. Both the teachers and the captives of their humanistic religions are always learning driven by restless minds and curiosity, but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth in Christ. They learn about missions, prophecy, heaven, standards of morality and gifts of the Spirit, but never 'how God can be just and justify the ungodly.' They reform, but never repent; they pray, but never plead for mercy; they testify, but never turn to Christ; they boast of their faithfulness to religion, but never bow to the lordship of Christ. Without apology, I declare that where women reign in religion, they ruin! (1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:34.)

v. 8. We need not be surprised when adversaries rise up against our Lord to oppose his gospel of grace. Moses likewise had those who opposed him when he went to Egypt to deliver Israel. (Jannes and Jambres were the

magicians put forward by Pharaoh.) Satan will use any vessel, any trick and any method to discredit the gospel. False teachers have corrupt minds with neither the glory of God nor the good of men as their goal, but are counterfeits and have no understanding of the doctrines of saving faith!

v. 9. The false teachers, may wax worse and worse in error; they may proceed to more ungodliness and deceive many, but they shall not deceive the elect (Mark 13:22, 23). They shall proceed no further than the magicians in Egypt. Though they did lying wonders, deceived the Egyptians and caused Pharaoh to harden his heart, Israel was delivered! The folly of all followers of false religions shall someday become obvious to everyone, as was that of the magicians. The destruction at the Red Sea glorified God's salvation, but it also revealed the folly of all who opposed him!

v. 10. What follows in this verse and the next is said in opposition to the preaching, practice and principles of these false teachers. Timothy was not ignorant of Paul's doctrine; he received it from God, it was the doctrine of Christ, of the scriptures, and was preached by the other apostles. Timothy knew Paul's manner of life: he spent his time in labour (often with his own hands), his conduct was above reproach and he was fully separated to the gospel of Christ. Timothy knew Paul's purpose: it was open and manifest, not to obtain glory, applause or possessions, but that Christ might be magnified in his life and his death, and that men might be saved for the glory of God (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1). Timothy knew Paul's faith, either his faith in Christ or his faithfulness in the discharge of his ministry. Timothy knew Paul's long-suffering, both towards the Jews who were open enemies and persecutors of the gospel and towards the weak brethren in the church whose infirmities he bore! Timothy knew Paul's charity, including his love to God, to Christ and to men (1 Cor. 13:1-7). Timothy knew Paul's patience, in bearing all indignities, reproaches and persecutions for the

sake of Christ and his gospel. Paul was not moved by these but persevered with courage and boldness.

*v. 11.* These incidents mentioned were not all of the afflictions and persecutions endured by Paul for preaching the gospel of Christ, but they took place in those areas where Timothy lived. He knew about them and heard about them from faithful witnesses. To the glory of God and for the encouragement of Timothy, Paul says, ‘God delivered me out of them all’ (2 Cor. 1:10, 11; 2 Tim. 4:17, 18).



# The holy scriptures

## 2 Timothy 3:12-17

v. 12. In the preceding verse Paul speaks of the suffering, afflictions, and persecutions he had endured for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ; and he adds, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' There are no exceptions.

Satan, the world, and especially unsaved religionists hate the gospel of free grace and justification by faith alone. Going about to establish a righteousness of their own, they are opposed to the imputed righteousness of Christ and count as their enemies all who preach and believe it. Those who wish to be exempt from persecution must necessarily denounce Christ (John 15:18-21). All believers shall not be martyrs; but it is absolutely unavoidable that as soon as a true knowledge of grace and a zeal for the person and work of Christ is manifested by a believer, it kindles the rage of Satan and ungodly men. By persecution, slander, murmuring, or some other method, trial will come!

v. 13. By 'evil men' are meant not openly profane sinners of the world nor wicked men in general, but wicked men under a form of godliness (in the pulpit and the pew) who are bent on seducing and deceiving others to follow their false doctrine and gospel of works (Matt. 23:15; 24:11, 24). In the last days these religious hucksters and jugglers of truth shall wax worse and worse, deceiving many and being further deceived themselves (2 Thess. 2:8-12). It is not because error is stronger than truth nor because Satan is more powerful than the Spirit of God, but because natural men are more inclined to embrace error and will embrace that which agrees with their carnal nature (John 5:42-44).

v. 14. Although wickedness prevails, false doctrine abounds, and the enemies of Christ rise up in religious circles, you continue in the doctrines of Christ, which you have learned and have been convinced of by the word of God. You know that what you have received was not of men, but the gospel of grace has God as its author. We dare not adopt all that is taught nor defend indiscriminately all we hear, but only that which is according to the scriptures.

v. 15. From your childhood you have been taught the scriptures. The Jews very early taught their children the scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5). Men are not wise of themselves but are without understanding of spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). The scriptures are able to make men wise and knowing in this respect, for they testify of Christ (John 5:39). The Holy Spirit uses the word of God to convince of sin, to reveal Christ's person and work, and to beget life and faith in the sinner (Rom. 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18). Wisdom to salvation lies not in the knowledge of the law, rituals, and ceremonies; but true wisdom to salvation is in a spiritual knowledge of Christ, which comes from the scriptures (Luke 24:44-48).

v. 16. 'All scripture;' the whole of it (both the Old Testament and the New Testament) is verbally inspired by God, or God-breathed (2 Peter 1:20-21). The scriptures are commended by their divine authority. God used men to write his word. These men boldly wrote what the mouth of God spoke! Whoever wishes to profit in the scriptures must, first of all, lay down this as a sure and settled point: that the scriptures are not the words, doctrines, and writings of men only, but were dictated by the Holy Spirit!

Having settled this point we can go to the next; therefore, the scriptures are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

‘Doctrine,’ for discovering, confirming, and teaching all doctrine concerning God, man, redemption, eternal life, and all subjects concerning our lives in every area.

‘Reproof’ of errors, heresies, and false teachings concerning the gospel.

‘Correction’ of attitude, spirit, and practice in believers.

‘Instruction in righteousness’ in every branch of duty incumbent upon men. Whether with respect to God or men, the scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and practice.

*v. 17.* All scripture is given that the believer may grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ and be well-fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

# Preach the word

## 2 Timothy 4:1-8

v. 1. This is an unfortunate chapter division, for our lesson must begin with verse 16 of the preceding chapter. The word ‘therefore’ appropriately connects scripture with preaching. Since all scripture is God-breathed and is necessary and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction and the growth of believers, we must ‘preach the word.’ All wisdom and understanding are contained in the scriptures (Isa. 8:19, 20; 1 Peter 2:2). Neither ought we to learn, nor preachers to draw their instructions and doctrines, from any other source! The reading of the scriptures is recommended, but private reading does not hinder, nor make void the ministry of pastor-teachers! (Eph. 4:11-14.)

Paul charges Timothy and every minister of Christ before God, who chose us, and before the Redeemer; who saved us and whose gospel we preach, to be diligent, faithful and true to his word, for we shall surely give an account of our ministry when Christ comes again (Heb. 13:17; 1 Cor. 3:13). ‘The quick and the dead’ are those who are alive when he comes and those who have died but will be raised (John 5:22). What does it matter what men think of us or our message? It is Christ to whom we are accountable.

v. 2. There is no season for preaching the word of God; we are to be earnestly, constantly and wholly engaged in it at all times. We are to be preparing for it or performing it in all seasons. Reprove errors of doctrine and spirit using the scriptures! Rebuke sin and error, some privately, others more publicly, according to the nature and circumstances of the offence. Exhort men to the duties of faith, to love one another, do good works, walk as becomes the gospel of Christ and hold fast their profession

with gentleness and doctrine! Reproofs, rebukes and exhortations will utterly fail if they are not based on the word of God and given in a spirit of humility, meekness and patience! No man is to obey because we say so, but because God says so. If the word is delivered in harshness, it irritates both heart and mind. All of our exhortations, rebukes and teaching are to have one source and foundation – the scriptures!

v. 3. This is the reason for this solemn charge. The time will come (and has come) when people will not receive the gospel of God's grace in Christ. Self-righteous by nature, free-willers in mind, proud and boastful in spirit and lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, they will turn their backs on the message of grace, express their indignation at it, treat it with ridicule and contempt, and gather to themselves many false preachers and teachers who preach what men want to hear, promoting doctrines of free will and the dignity of men. Those who trust their religion, love to have their ears tickled with pleasant music, declarations of peace and words of praise for their works.

v. 4. They will turn aside from hearing the truth, not being able to receive it nor to rejoice in it, and win men to vain, empty, useless and unprofitable religious fables, ceremonies and novelties. The only remedy for this wandering is for ministers to adhere closely to the pure doctrine of Christ (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

v. 5. The more error and false teaching prevail, the more earnestly we must labour to preach the truth. The nearer danger and division are at hand, the more diligently we must watch, keeping calm and steady, doing the work of an enthusiastic, bold witness of Christ, fully performing the duties of our ministry, seeking not our own but the things of Christ. Preach the gospel, administer the ordinances and be a true and faithful servant of Christ, and we shall not be ashamed.

v. 6, 7. 'I am ready to be sacrificed, my life is ready to be poured out (as a drink offering),' which shows that Paul knew that he would be martyred (Acts 20:22-25). He did not fear death nor shrink from it, calling it his 'departure' (a removal from one place to another) (Phil. 1:21-24).

'I have fought a good fight' (1 Tim. 6:12). Whatever may be the opinion of the world, he declares that his fight for truth and the glory of Christ was both good and honorable.

'I have finished my course.' The race is over, his days and years are finished (or the course of his ministry) (Job 14:5).

'I have kept the faith' – his profession of faith, the doctrine of faith which was committed to his trust and his faithfulness to his hearers (Acts 20:26, 27).

v. 8. 'A crown of righteousness.' The happiness, glory and future state, of all believers is signified by a crown, on account of the glory and excellency of it; in agreement with the character of saints – kings; and because we are raised to sit among princes and to inherit the throne of glory.

This is called 'a crown of righteousness' because it is perfect holiness and comes to us through the righteousness of Christ. We shall be like him (1 John 3:2).

'This crown is given by God, not to me only, but to every believer.' Every believer loves him and longs for his return (2 Tim. 1:12).

# And in conclusion

## 2 Timothy 4:9-22

v. 9. 'Make every effort to come to me soon.' Paul knew that the time of his death was at hand. There were many things that Paul needed to teach young Timothy for the glory of God and the good of the church. No matter that Timothy must leave his place of labor for a season, what he could learn from Paul in a short space of time would be profitable for a long period to all the churches. Those true servants who would labor in the gospel need to confer with older, wiser, and more experienced preachers. Time spent in learning is not lost time.

v. 10. Demas was a close companion and assistant to the apostle. He is mentioned in Col. 4:14 and Philemon 24. We do not know that he denied Christ or totally apostatized; for to leave Paul (who was in prison) fearing for one's own safety or for one's physical comfort is not necessarily to leave Christ. However, the phrase 'having loved this present world' is alarming. Some believe that he came back. Let us always be ready to restore the fallen (Gal. 6:1-2). Crescens and Titus had gone away also but for good reasons and with Paul's consent; they evidently were sent to minister.

v. 11. The beloved physician, Luke, who wrote the book that bears his name and 'The Acts of the Apostles,' was a constant companion to Paul in his travels and sufferings (Col. 4:14). 'Bring Mark with you.' Mark was with Paul and Barnabas earlier in their travels and parted from them, causing some differences between Paul and Barnabas, even separating them. Now Paul was reconciled to Mark and was desirous of his company and assistance (Acts 15:36-40).

v. 12. Tychicus was evidently sent to Ephesus to supply the place of Timothy while he came to Rome.

v. 13. 'Bring the cloak.' Interpreters are not agreed on this, but most believe that with winter coming on (v. 21), the apostle needed his cloak for warmth. His books and parchments were especially important to him, for Paul was a diligent reader and student of the Old Testament and other books. Though he was old and near his end, yet he was mindful of his books and desirous of having them to read (2 Tim. 2:15).

vv. 14-15. Alexander may be the same person mentioned in Acts 19:33-34. Definitely he is the one in I Tim. 1:20. Paul said, 'He did me great wrong, and the Lord will deal with him for his opposition to the gospel and to his servant.' Alexander was now at Ephesus; and since he was such a malicious blasphemer, Timothy was warned to shun him because he resisted Paul's message strongly.

v. 16. At his first trial in Rome, none of his friends from Judea and Asia appeared to plead his cause nor to be a witness for him. Evidently they feared for their lives, as our Lord's disciples did when he was apprehended, forsaking him and fleeing. Paul loves these friends and prayed that God would forgive them (Luke 22:32).

v. 17. 'But the Lord strengthened me.' Paul does not boast of his courage and faithfulness but gives thanks to the Lord (Psalm 27:10). Though reduced to extremities, he does not give up nor lose heart; for he is supported by the grace and power of the Lord and is satisfied with them.

He was God's chosen vessel and instrument to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, even in Caesar's palace. Therefore, he was delivered by the power of God from the very jaws of death, from the hand of Satan, and



from the hand of Nero, the Roman emperor. His deliverance was a miracle of God.

v. 18. He declared that he had the same hope for the future, not that he would escape death altogether, for he must die: but he could not be vanquished by Satan nor turned aside from the ministry of Christ until his work was done and God's purpose for him was accomplished (Psalm 91:2-7). The believer does not trust in the flesh, nor stand by the power of men, nor fear what men can do. We are immortal until God calls us home, to whom be all the glory forever and ever! Salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end!

v. 19. Give my greeting to Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2-3) and to the household of Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

v. 20. Erastus was a steward or official in Corinth (Rom. 16:23) who went with Timothy to Macedonia but returned to Corinth to stay. Trophimus was an Asian of the city of Ephesus (Acts 20:4; 21:29).

v. 21. Come to me before winter when traveling will be more difficult. All the brethren here wish to be remembered to you.

v. 22. 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit' to counsel, and advise, to comfort under every trial, to supply with all grace, to keep from every enemy, and to fit you for every service. God's favor and blessings be with you! Amen.



# Titus

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan



# The salutation

## Titus 1:1-4

Paul established a church in Crete and left Titus there to finish what he had begun: to put the churches in order, seeing that they had proper pastors, leaders, doctrine and practice; to refute the false teachers and Judaizing preachers who made holiness to consist in certain foods and ceremonies; and to exhort believers to the discharge of their responsibilities by arguments based on the grace of God and the gospel of Christ (v.9; Titus 2:6, 9, 10).

Titus was an uncircumcised Greek of great grace and gifts who was very dear to the apostle. He is mentioned frequently in the apostle's writings (2 Cor. 2:13; 8:6, 16, 23; Gal. 2:1-3).

This was not a private epistle to Titus, but a public epistle to the Cretans, and thus to all believers! (2 Tim. 3:15-17.)

*v. 1.* 'A servant of God' – a humble but high title by which Peter, James and Paul wished to be known. Paul was once the servant of sin (Titus 3:3), but being called by grace, he became a willing, loving servant of God and righteousness (Rom. 6:16).

'And an apostle of Jesus Christ' – called, qualified and sent by Christ to preach his gospel; one who had his doctrine, commission and special gifts (to confirm his mission and ministry) directly from the Lord Jesus (Heb. 2:3, 4).

'According to the faith of God's elect.' His message was the message of Moses, Abraham, Isaiah and all the elect of God of every dispensation! The foundation of the prophets and apostles is redemption and resurrection by the grace of God through the merits and blood of Christ (Rom. 1:1-3).

‘And the acknowledging of the truth.’ This clause explains the nature of the faith of God's elect. It rests on, trusts in and holds to the truth of God as revealed in the scripture! Faith can find no strength, comfort or assurance in feelings, ceremonies, or tradition – only in the truth of scripture! (John 16:13; 17:17; Col. 1:5; John 8:32.)

The gospel is ‘a doctrine of godliness.’ The truth of it and experience of it have an influence that promotes internal and external godliness, leads to the worship and fear of God and results in a sober, honest and sincere conduct and way of life (2 Cor. 5:17).

v. 2. ‘In hope of eternal life’ – resting in the hope of eternal life. Our hope is not in anything now seen or possessed (physically or materially), but something future! Our hope is the life of Christ, begotten in us by the Holy Spirit, secured in the hands of Christ and laid up for us in heaven (Col. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:3, 4).

1. Eternal life is a promise, and so of free grace; not a reward or a wage, but a promise!

2. Eternal life is the promise of God, who is faithful to his word and cannot lie (being the God of truth).

3. Eternal life was promised before the world began. Life and redemption were given in Christ from the beginning (2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:3, 4).

v. 3. Now in his own appointed time God has made known his word – either Christ, his essential word; or the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation; or the word of promise of eternal life in Christ; or all three – for are they not all one? Christ is the word; Christ is our life; Christ is the gospel! God has revealed the message of eternal life in Christ through the preaching of the gospel which was committed to Paul and other faithful

apostles and preachers (Mark 16:15, 16; Rom. 10:13, 14; 1 John 1:1-3). The word is the seed by which life is given (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23).

v. 4. Titus was not Paul's natural son, but Paul, being the instrument of his conversion, his teacher and his spiritual leader, calls him his 'son.'

'After the common or general faith.' Paul immediately adds that this faith is common to them both and to all who knew the Redeemer; for though Paul was a great apostle and leader of men, in himself he was nothing and could do nothing. Our sufficiency is Christ (1 Cor. 3:4-9).

Here is Paul's usual salutation: 'May you have a fresh discovery of God's grace, love and free favour in Christ. May you have a fresh application of the pardoning mercy of God through Christ. May you have peace of heart through the blood of Christ.' Let this be our sincere prayer for every believer.

# Hold fast the faithful word

## Titus 1:5-9

v. 5. How long Paul was in Crete is unknown, but he had spent some time there. When he had to depart, he left Titus there to continue what he had begun. The building of a church and the growth of individual believers is not a work that can be brought to maturity or perfection at once (John 16:12, 13; Eph. 4:11,13; 1 Peter 2:2). Titus was left to teach the young converts the doctrines of the gospel; to instruct the church in the proper order of ordinances, discipline, officers, conduct and manners; to answer and deal with false teachers and troublemakers; and to ordain pastors in every city (Acts 14:23).

Paul knew that churches could not long remain without the ministry of pastors. Where there is a body of believers, a pastor should be appointed over them. It is thought by some from 1 Timothy 5:17 that there were two classes of elders; however, it is certain that this text refers to those who taught the word, for immediately afterward he calls them 'bishops.'

vv. 6-9. Paul points out the necessary qualifications of pastors other than being called to that office and gifted for that work by the Spirit of God (Acts 13:2, 3).

'Blameless.' No man is entirely free from sin or blameless in the sight of God, but the meaning is that he should be a man of excellent reputation among men, a man of honesty, integrity and upright conduct!

'The husband of one wife.' It is not required that a man be married (Paul was not) or that he should not have a second wife after the death of the first, but one wife at a time! Polygamy and divorce were prevalent at that time. The elder is to be married to one woman only!



‘Having faithful children.’ This cannot mean that his children must all be converted, for that is not in the power of any man (2 Sam. 23:5). The phrase can only intend that they shall be brought up in the principles and doctrines of Christ, and as long as they remain at home they shall be restrained, disciplined and obedient to their parents (1 Tim. 3:4, 5).

‘Blameless as the steward of God.’ This refers to his faithfulness in the discharge of his office, faithfulness to his Lord and the trust committed to him (to preach the gospel and feed the sheep, and to those persons under his care).

‘Not self-willed’ – not doing things according to his own will, but seeking only the will and glory of God. He is not to be stubborn, obstinate and inflexible.

‘Not soon angry,’ but slow to wrath, which shows a man to be one of compassion and understanding. An angry man is not fit to teach others nor to lead the church.

‘Not given to wine.’ The pastor is not intemperate in the use of wine and is not addicted to the use of it.

‘No striker’ – either with his tongue or hands. He is not a bully nor a harsh person, but gentle and considerate.

‘Not given to filthy lucre’ - not greedy of money or possessions. Covetousness and greed are distasteful in any believer, but especially in a minister of the gospel (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

‘A lover of hospitality.’ The elders minister to people; therefore, they must love and be concerned for individuals. Their hearts, hands and homes must be open to all men, especially to those of the faith.

‘A lover of good men’ - a lover of goodness, of good things and good people, which shows the sincerity of his character.

‘Sober,’ or self-controlled and moderate.

‘Just,’ righteous and fair in his dealings with others.

‘Holy,’ devout toward God, the word and in his personal and private life.

‘Temperate’ – in eating, drinking, hobbies and in all things pertaining to the flesh.

‘Holding fast the faithful word.’ This is the chief gift and requirement in a pastor. He is chosen principally for the sake of teaching, for the church cannot be governed or taught in any other way than by the word of God! The word is called the ‘faithful word’ and ‘the word which he has been taught.’

1. ‘The faithful word.’ It is so called because it is the word of God, it is true and it is to be believed! It contains nothing but truth and will not deceive either in its doctrine or promises (1 Tim. 1:15).

2. ‘The word he has been taught’ – according to the prophets, Christ and the apostles. We are to teach nothing else for doctrine or in a theoretical way except the word of God (Isa. 8:19, 20). Opinions, speculation and human logic have no place in the pulpit.

Sound doctrine and true scriptural preaching will not only edify, exhort and instruct the true believer, but it will at the same time subdue, convict and answer those who are in error and who deny the truth (2 Cor. 2:15, 16).

It is true that pastors, elders and bishops (by whatever name they may be called) are teachers and overseers in the church and should lead the congregation not only by instruction, but by example; but these qualifications, with the exception of ‘apt to teach,’ ought to be characteristics of every believer. Not just our pastors are to be men of godliness, honesty and witnesses of truth, but every believer has, first, a responsibility to glorify God in word and deed, thus adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, and, second, a ministry to fulfill.

# The two voices of a pastor

## Titus 1:10-16

v. 10. Pastors ought to have two voices – one for gathering the sheep and the other for dealing with and driving away wolves and thieves. The Scriptures supply him with the means of doing both! Holding fast the faithful word, he is able to call men to Christ and at the same time correct false teachers.

There are many ‘unruly’ persons who are disobedient and incorrigible, who will not be subject to the apostles, to the word, or to those who have the rule over them. They will not be brought into the church unity and teaching.

‘Vain talkers,’ who speak empty, frivolous and unscriptural things which have no substance, only tend to disturb and divide.

‘Deceivers’ lead astray both themselves and others; by their good works and clever words they deceive the simple.

‘Especially they of the circumcision.’ These are Jews who professed Christianity but tried to mix Moses and Christ, the law and the gospel, works and grace!

v. 11. Good pastors, elders and church leaders ought to be on guard against errors in doctrine or spirit, so as not to give silent approval or permission to them, which would allow error to make gradual progress and allow wicked men the opportunity of spreading their poison. Silence them with scripture and if they persevere banish them from the assembly!

Teaching things contrary to the Scriptures and foreign to the gospel of Christ, they are able to corrupt not only individuals, but whole families. These teachers have no concern for the glory of God or the good of the

church, but are interested in gaining popular applause and honor from men and in increasing their worldly substance.

v. 12. One of their own poets and spokesmen, Epimenides, said, ‘The Cretians are always liars.’ Lying seemed to be a governing vice, a national sin, characteristic of them. It was a sin to which they were especially addicted.

‘Evil beasts.’ They were savage, cruel and mischievous people.

‘Slow bellies’ – intemperate, gluttonous and drunkards. This is the testimony of one of their own leaders and the apostle warns Titus what he is up against in dealing with them.

v. 13. This statement about the Cretians (v. 12) is certainly true! Paul knew it to be a fact from his own experience among them while he was on the island. Therefore they were to be rebuked sharply, first, for these bad principles, second, for teaching things they ought not and, third, for immoralities. Rebuking and severely reproving those in error is not an enjoyable task, but it must be done that they might be sound in the faith of Christ. (v. 14.) If the truth of God concerning creation, providence, redemption and resurrection ever gains admission to our hearts, if we are ever fully persuaded of ruin by the Fall, redemption by the blood and regeneration by the Spirit, then all of the ‘Jewish fables’ of ritualism, legalism, ceremonialism and the commandments and traditions of men will be so tasteless and empty that they will not attract our minds. Men are delivered from error and kept from sinful practices by the truth of the word (Ps. 119:9; John 17:17).

v. 15. The Jewish teachers insisted that Christians were still under the law in regard to certain kinds of food, together with certain washings and purifications as ordered by Moses (Col. 2:20-22). Paul states that no kind of food is unlawful in the sight of God. To those who love Christ and are

made righteous by his merit and blood, all food and drink is received with thanksgiving, and they are not defiled by what enters the mouth (Matt. 15:11). To those who are ‘polluted and unbelieving,’ nothing is pure, for they sin in all that they do. They gain nothing by guarding against uncleanness in certain food and drink, because their pollution is inward, of the mind and heart and, therefore, even that which is pure is polluted by them. ‘Their mind’ denotes the understanding and ‘conscience’ relates to the heart (Isa. 1:5).

v. 16. These Judaizing church members professed that there is one God, and that this God is Father, Son and Spirit, as believed by the apostles. But this knowledge lay in theory and profession only. They did not have a spiritual, experimental knowledge of God in Christ, which alone brings salvation and eternal life (John 17:2; Matt. 11:27).

They boasted that they knew God, but their lives, words and works showed that they had no knowledge of him. They revealed by their mixing of works and grace that they did not know Christ in his redemptive character. They revealed by their covetousness, lies and disobedience that they did not know Christ in his sanctifying work. They revealed by their interest in ceremony and certain foods, and their efforts to establish a righteousness, that they did not know anything about Christ's righteousness (Rom. 10:1-4). There is no good in them, but they are altogether reprobate.

# Behavior becoming of believers

## Titus 2:1-5

In this chapter, Paul exhorts Titus to the full responsibility of his pastoral office toward all members of the assembly in regard to conversation, general behavior, godliness and duties toward one another. The nature of the gospel of Christ (v. 11), the power and efficacy of the gospel (v. 12) and the expectations of the gospel hope (v. 13) will produce a godly life (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 3:10, 11).

*v. 1.* ‘Speak out with all boldness’ (not fearing men nor seeking to please them) ‘that there is a life to be lived, an attitude to be shown and duties to be performed which are becoming to the gospel of God's grace and are the fruit of the Spirit of God, who indwells every believer’ (Gal. 5:22; 1 John 3:17, 18).

*v. 2.* The ‘aged men’ are men of the church who are older in years. ‘Exhort them to be sober’ (vigilant, especially watchful over themselves - their conduct, conversation and faithfulness in doctrine and spirit), for they are leaders and examples of younger members. ‘They should be grave’ (serious about spiritual and eternal matters). Foolishness, frivolity and unstableness are unbecoming to older believers. ‘They should be temperate in eating, drinking and all things that pertain to the flesh.’ Sometimes age causes people to give in and become addicted to more concern for the body and less for the soul. Exhort them, though they be unhealthy in body and weak in the flesh, that they be sound in faith and mind, strong in their love for Christ and his people and examples of patience, not only in bearing the infirmities of old age, but also the infirmities of others!

v. 3. 'Exhort the older women in the church to behave in clothing, speech, conduct and spirit as is becoming the character they bear and the name of Christ which they profess.'

'Not false accusers.' Older women who know not Christ are prone to gossip (talk too much about others), and in so doing often raise reports and false charges which cause division and misunderstanding.

'Not given to much wine.' Intemperance is scandalous in any believer, but especially in the female.

'Teachers of good things' – both by example and by instruction, but in their houses privately, for it is not the duty of women to teach and instruct publicly in the church. Let them teach 'good things,' not old wives' fables, superstitions and traditions not in keeping with scripture.

v. 4, 5. The older woman ought to teach the young women to be good wives, good mothers and godly women!

'To be sober.' The word here is 'wise and prudent.'

'To love their husbands.' Many mothers and older women have been the cause of divorce, division and unhappiness in the homes of their daughters and friends by bad example, poor counsel and advice and a rebellious spirit against their husbands and all men in general (1 Cor. 7:1-5; Eph. 5:22-25). 'Teach the young women to respect, obey, assist and submit to their husbands.'

'To love their children' - not with a foolish, ungoverned affection that makes idols and rebels of them, but with a godly love that brings them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord with firm discipline and instruction (Prov. 13:24).

'To be discreet.' Women are not men, nor are they to try to act like or compete with men. Let them be feminine, ladylike and gentle, neither dressing like men nor assuming the role of leader and spokesperson.

‘Chaste’ – in body, words and actions, having their favors and affections to their own husbands.

‘Keepers at home.’ While the husband is the head of the home, the provider and the spiritual leader, the woman is perhaps the most important single factor and figure in a home. The home's happiness and unity depend largely on her love, her good management, her care and concern for every family member and her presence there at all times. She cannot fulfill this important place and be ‘a gadder abroad’!

‘Good’ – kind to their husbands, children, friends and guests who pass through their homes.

‘Obedient to their own husbands,’ as unto the Lord and in the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife and God's voice of authority in the home.

‘That the word of God be not blasphemed.’ When those who profess to be believers in Christ and children of God behave in manner contrary to grace and the gospel of Christ, it causes unbelievers not only to doubt their profession and ridicule their religion, but also to question the truth of the gospel. ‘Is this what your Christ has made you? Is this what your Bible teaches? Then I want no part of it, for it must be a joke!’



# Conduct which agrees with our doctrine

## Titus 2:6-15

v. 6. As it is fitting and proper for aged women to teach the young women how they should behave and conduct themselves, so the pastor and elders should instruct the young men to behave prudently, temperately and wisely, taking life and faith seriously! In actions and words, let us lead lives which agree with our preaching!

v. 7. Doctrine and instructions in the grace of God will carry little authority and influence if the fruits of grace are not visible in the life of the instructor. It is not enough for us to deliver sound doctrine and truth; our words, works and attitude should be a pattern of what we preach. In 'works,' a 'pattern.' 'In doctrine,' having the strictest regard for truth with purity of motive, dignity and seriousness!

v. 8. Our words should be wholesome and free from corruption, both in the pulpit and in private conversation, in public worship and in personal contact. 'Sound speech' in the ministry of the word is imperative, but it also relates to ordinary life and familiar conversation. Everything that unbelievers and wicked persons can seize upon, which to them is improper and unwholesome for a professed believer, they will use maliciously against Christ and the gospel. The result is that through our faults and carelessness the Lord Jesus is insulted.

v. 9, 10. Here are five words of counsel and instructions for those who work for other people and firms:

1. Be submissive and obedient to your employer, whether he is a believer or an unbeliever. You are hired and paid to do a job. Do it with all your heart as unto the Lord.

2. Seek to please your employer and give satisfaction in every way. Pride of workmanship and production is not to be condemned; laziness and indifference are a disgrace to the gospel.

3. Don't talk back or contradict. Do not reply to orders either in a sarcastic, saucy, or grumbling manner. The boss may not always be right, but he is always the boss!

4. Do not steal from your firm either time, money or things which you consider of small value. Do not convert to your own use, without permission, that which belongs to the company.

5. Prove yourselves to be loyal, reliable and faithful. It is not loyalty nor faithfulness to criticize and find fault with your employer behind his back. Keep trusts and confidences which are committed to you.

In fulfilling the part of a good servant and loyal employee you are able to adorn the gospel you believe. You make that gospel attractive to others as they see you walk worthy of it.

*v. 11, 12.* 'The grace of God' – his sovereign, free, unchangeable, eternal grace to sinners in Christ, through Christ and by the merits of Christ. His gospel of grace that brings salvation, forgiveness, righteousness and eternal life has not only been delivered to us by Christ, but has been revealed to all of us by the Holy Spirit!

This gospel of grace and salvation teaches us to reject all idolatry, ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live uprightly, temperately and in a godly manner in this present world! The grace of God for us and his mercy to us present the strongest argument and motive for obedience. 'If

God so loved us, we ought to love one another. No motive is stronger than love' (John 15:14).

v. 13. 'Awaiting and looking for the fulfillment, the realization of our blessed hope.' What is the believer's blessed hope? Christ is the object and ground of our hope. Christ in us is our hope of glory. His appearing is in one sense our blessed hope, for it is at his appearing that our full redemption, both body and soul, will be revealed (Rom. 8:18, 19, 22, 23). Our blessed hope is also a hope of blessedness! (Ps. 17:15; Col. 1:5; 1 John 3:2, 3.)

v. 14. Here is another argument for and exhortation to godliness of character and conduct, drawn from the design and effect of the sacrifice and death of our Lord. He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from iniquity and sanctify for himself a people who love him, who are eager and enthusiastic to please and glorify him, who desire to live for his glory and who, through the miracle of regeneration, are new creatures in Christ. Those who are still the slaves of sin deny and make void the blessings of his redemption.

v. 15. 'Titus,' (and every teacher), 'tell them all these things! Urge believers; advise, warn and rebuke with the full authority of the gospel. Let no man despise you because you neglected your responsibility or performed it in an unkind way. Let no man despise you because you were faithful to his soul in rebuking his sin. Let not the fact that some will despise you keep you from claiming authority and respect in teaching these things.'

# Believers – love and are beloved

## Titus 3:1-6

v. 1. From this and other passages, it is evident that the apostle thought it most important for believers to be law-abiding, peaceful people, submitting to those in authority. We are all by nature desirous of power and prone to have our own way. It takes much grace to be an obedient servant, a submissive wife or child, a peaceful citizen, especially if those in authority are opposed to Christ (Rom. 13:1-3; 1 Peter 2:13-18).

‘Be prepared and willing to do any upright and honorable work.’ Let our lives be characterized by goodness and gentleness to all (Rom. 13:7, 8). The grace of Christ is not limited to religious affiliations, but controls the whole of our lives.

v. 2. The good minister of Christ will remind believers to ‘speak evil of no man.’ This is the method of maintaining peace and friendship with all men! A man's name, reputation and character are tender topics and ought to be handled carefully! Contempt for others is usually followed by insult. A thought of contempt usually gives birth to words of unkindness. Speak not evil of those in power and authority.

‘To be no brawlers.’ The word here is ‘be not contentious, quarrelsome and always fighting.’ There are other ways of fighting than with fists and guns; the believer is to engage in neither! Church members, married people, parents and children, neighbors who are forever quarreling, striving and bickering are very unbecoming to Christ and generally reveal by their attitude their ignorance of his grace. Let us be gentle and forbearing showing real courtesy and kindness to all people (Eph. 4:32).

v. 3. Nothing will subdue a man's pride, moderate his severity toward others and cause him to be gentle and forgiving like remembering what he was by nature before Christ forgave him and made him a new creature! Ignorance of our past sins and our present faults is the only reason why we are unforgiving, unmerciful and critical! In order that we might be more gentle and loving toward others, Paul exhorts us to remember what we were: 'Foolish, disobedient to God, deceived in heart and mind, serving our fleshly lusts, living in hatred and envy.' This knowledge of what we were and what God has been pleased to do for us by his grace alone should bring forth great grace and kindness toward those whom we regard to be wrong. Since our Lord by these marks distinguishes the children of God from unbelievers, we must both love and be beloved (1 John 4:7, 8).

v. 4. 'The goodness and love of God our Saviour' was made known to all of the saints of the Old Testament in promise, prophecy and blessings. The goodness and love of God our Saviour is said to have 'appeared' (was manifested) when our Lord Jesus came to earth in the flesh. He gave actual demonstration that he did not in vain promise salvation to men. This verse refers to the manifestation of his goodness and love to us personally and in a special manner by his Spirit. The grace and love of Christ 'appeared' to us when we were enlightened in the knowledge of the gospel!

v. 5. The Lord saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but wholly and completely because of his mercy and grace (2 Tim. 1:9). The motive and reason for our redemption are found in God, not in us. It is foolishness to think that a man comes to God by his own merit, works, or deeds. We by nature depart further and further from God until he puts forth his hand and brings us to himself by the 'washing of regeneration' (that is, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit)! We are born of water and the Spirit. The cause of regeneration is the Spirit and the

means is the word of God, whereby we are washed and cleansed. Our hearts are purified by faith and our consciences are purged by the blood of Christ. 'The renewing of the Holy Ghost' refers to the new creature, the new man, the new heart and the newness of life and conduct under the influence of the Spirit of God. We have no cause to boast in ourselves or over others (1 Cor. 4:7). Let us show mercy as we have received mercy!

v. 6. The love and kindness of God the Father come through Christ. The mercy of God is through Christ. Salvation itself is by and through Christ. The grace communicated in regeneration and renewing is out of Christ's fullness, the Spirit himself being given forth through Christ. Christ's every supply of grace, by which the work is carried on, is wrought in us by Christ's hands (Eph. 2:8.10).

# Heirs, hope, holiness and heretics

## Titus 3:7-15

v. 7. The design of Paul in verses 5-7 is to ascribe to the grace and mercy of God all that we are, all that we have and all that we shall be. We must not exalt ourselves proudly against others nor treat them unkindly (see vv. 2, 3). Neither regeneration, justification, nor sonship is acquired by labour, works, or law, but by the free gift of God's mercy through Jesus Christ.

‘Made heirs.’ In eternity past God made us his sons in Christ and heirs of the grace of life by his gracious act of adoption (Eph. 1:3-5, 11; Rom. 8:29-31).

‘Justified by his grace.’ Justification is the act of God by which he wills not to impute sins to his people, but to Christ their Surety. We are righteous through the righteousness of Christ. We are totally free from all judgment, condemnation and sin by the sacrifice of Christ (Rom. 8:33, 34). When Christ was raised from the dead, we were raised in him, justified, acquitted and freed from guilt (Rom. 4:7, 8, 23-25).

‘According to the hope of eternal life.’ We are still in the world, though we are heirs of life and certain to possess all of his blessings in Christ. We do not yet enjoy the reality of it, but our hope in Christ and Christ, ‘who is our hope,’ give us the full and complete certainty of eternal life.

v. 8. ‘A faithful saying.’ Paul uses this expression when he wishes to make a very strong point and solemn declaration (1 Tim. 1:15; 2 Tim. 2:11). Titus is cautioned to teach those things which are certain, to dwell on those things and leave others to talk idly about other things of little importance! One thing is quite certain - those who believe God (who are justified, regenerated and children of God by his grace) are to live holy and godly lives, being very careful to maintain works of faith and labors of

love. One cannot separate faith and conduct (James 2:17, 20). Applying ourselves to honorable occupations and doing good to others is profitable to us and to all men.

v. 9. ‘Avoid foolish questions’ which contribute nothing to godliness. It is necessary to seek in order to find, but there is a limit to seeking. We bow to things God has revealed and leave the secret things to him (2 Tim. 2:23).

‘Avoid genealogies.’ Foolish men spend time studying the lineage of tribes, races and leaders. This is a total waste of time (1 Tim. 1:4).

‘Avoid contentions and strivings about the law.’ The law itself does not produce contention, for those who love God love God's law. Legalists and ceremonialists disturb the peace of the church by their absurd controversies over the observance of ceremonies, foods and drinks, holy days and circumcision. In our preaching and teaching, we should always be concerned for those things that are true, that bring glory to Christ and that are profitable and useful to believers. Contentions and strivings about the law are not!

vv. 10, 11. A ‘heretic’ is one who denies a fundamental doctrine of Christianity having to do with the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the doctrines relating to the person, office and work of Christ and the inspiration of the Scriptures. (A heretic prefers his own opinion to the clear revelation of scripture.) ‘After his error has been solemnly admonished by the church at least twice, have nothing to do with him socially, privately, or in church communion.’ Such a person has departed from the faith, is corrupted and will go on sinning against God, proving himself unworthy of fellowship. The church is justified in its rejection and exclusion of him.



*vv. 12, 13.* These men were evidently ministers of the gospel, friends and co-laborers with Paul. He would send one of them to Crete to aid the church while Titus came to confer with him. Paul wanted Titus to bring Zenas and Apollos with him, seeing that they wanted for nothing. The church should always see that God's true servants are properly cared for.

*v. 14.* Two popular applications of this verse are:

1. Let our people apply themselves to honest labour and employment so that they can supply their families, help those in need, support the gospel and relieve the poor. We must not live idle and unfruitful lives.

2. All good works in general are intended and done from a principle of love, with a view to the glory of God. Good works are the fruit of the Spirit and of God's grace. They are fruits of righteousness. People who are without them are like trees without fruit - useless and unprofitable!

*v. 15.* 'All who are with me wish to be remembered to you.' They send their greetings. 'Greet those who love us in Christ. God's favour and blessings be with you all. Amen; so be it.'

# Philemon

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# Salute to a man of true faith

## Philemon 1-7

This epistle was written by Paul when he was a prisoner at Rome. It seems to have been written at the same time and sent by the same person as the Epistle to the Colossians, since the same persons were with the apostle at the writing of both. (Compare vv. 23, 24 with Col. 4:10-14).

It is probable that Philemon was a Colossian, since his servant, Onesimus, is said to be one of the Colossians (Col. 4:9).

Onesimus, Philemon's servant, had either embezzled or stolen his master's goods and fled to Rome. While at Rome he had heard Paul preach (Paul was a prisoner in his own hired house and regularly preached the gospel to all who visited him). Onesimus had been converted and manifested such grace and gifts that Paul would have kept him with him (vv. 11-13), but he was now sending him back to Philemon, entreating Philemon to receive him not only as to be reconciled to Onesimus, but to receive him as a beloved brother (v. 16).

v. 1. 'A prisoner of Christ.' In the same sense in which he calls himself 'an apostle of Christ,' Paul now calls himself 'the prisoner of Christ.' The chains by which he was bound were there because of the gospel of Christ. It was by our Lord's will that he was a prisoner. He was not ashamed, but rather gloried in the privilege of being identified with Christ in suffering (2 Cor. 12:9, 10).

'And Timothy our brother.' Timothy was with Paul and joined with him in this epistle. He was well known to Philemon and united with Paul in this request.

'Unto Philemon.' Many reports have come to us concerning Philemon. He is said to be a Gentile, a Colossian, a rich, respected and hospitable

man. Paul calls him a 'fellow-laborer' in the gospel, indicating that Philemon was involved with Paul in the ministry of the gospel.

v. 2. 'Apphia' is a woman's name. It is believed that she was the wife of Philemon, since she is placed next to him and before Archippus, a minister of the word. Philemon's wife certainly needed to be of the same mind as her husband in receiving the runaway servant, otherwise she could have been a great hindrance to this reconciliation. Archippus is believed to have been a preacher of the gospel and a minister of the church (Col. 4:17). Paul addressed the epistle to him because of his interest in the family of Philemon and Onesimus' new relationship with the church there.

'And to the church in thy house.' Evidently, Philemon had a large household, including family, children, servants and visitors, who worshipped the Lord and studied the word on a regular basis in his house. They were like a church made up of themselves.

v. 3. This is the same form of salutation Paul used in other epistles. 'Grace to you,' is an increase of grace as to its degrees, exercise and growth. Every grace is imperfect in this life and those who have the most stand in need of more. By 'peace' is meant peace with God through Christ, peace in our own consciences and peace with one another. The source of all grace and peace is our Lord.

v. 4. The apostle was a man who spent much time in prayer, not only for himself, but for all the churches, ministers of the gospel and believers (Eph. 1:15, 16; Phil. 1:3, 4). Two important characteristics of believers are revealed here: 'I give thanks to God, and I pray for you'!

v. 5. The praise Paul had for Philemon included briefly the whole character of a believer. It consists mainly of two parts: first, faith in Christ

and, second, love for one another! All the actions and duties of our life relate to these: faith and love! (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4). Faith especially looks to Christ, for through him alone can the Father be known and only in him can eternal life be had (1 John 5:11-13). Love is not limited to the saints, for the believer loves all men, but since they are of the household and family of God they are especially loved (1 John 4:7-11).

v. 6. These words are connected with verse 4. Paul prayed that Philemon's faith, exercising itself by good works, might be proved to be true faith! He called it the 'communication of faith' because it is not in mere words and profession; it is manifested to men by actual deeds. Although faith is a principle of the heart, it communicates itself to others by deeds (James 2:17-20).

Every grace and any other good thing that is in a believer, or done for the good of others by a believer, should be acknowledged as coming from Christ Jesus, who is the source of all love and grace. What we do in love for others we do because Christ dwells in us, and we give him all the glory (1 Cor. 15:10).

v. 7. It is plain enough that Paul was saying that he had great joy and consolation because Philemon ministered relief, comfort and strength to those in need. Not only did Philemon relieve their physical needs, but their hearts were filled with gladness, pressures of the mind were relieved and they gained pleasure of soul in his kindness.

# Once unprofitable, now profitable

## Philemon 8-15

v. 8. 'Philemon,' Paul states, 'I could, as an apostle of Christ and a minister of the gospel, use my authority and command you to receive, forgive and be reconciled to Onesimus' (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13). We, as believers, are commanded to love one another, to be reconciled to one another and to forgive those who repent. Upon this foundation the apostle could have commanded Philemon to do what was right (Luke 17:3, 4).

v. 9. 'For love's sake I beseech thee.' This is the true and proper motivation for all good works (2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 1 Peter 4:8).

1. For the sake of God's love for us (by which love he chose us, redeemed us and called us).
2. For the sake of the love which we have for him.
3. For the sake of the love Paul had for Philemon and Philemon had for Paul.
4. For the sake of love Philemon had for Onesimus, now a true believer in Christ.

Paul mentioned his office in verse 8. Now he mentions his age and repeats the fact that he is in prison for the sake of this gospel of grace and love. This advice (to receive Onesimus) comes from an apostle, an elder, an old man of considerable wisdom and experience and from one who has proved his devotion by suffering.

v. 10. Paul calls Onesimus his son, not only out of affection for him, but because Paul was his spiritual father; Onesimus had been saved under the

preaching of Paul. Though Paul was bound, the word of God was not (2 Tim. 2:9, 10). Onesimus was born again by the word of God preached by Paul while in prison, so he was especially dear to him.

v. 11. In past days Onesimus had been an unprofitable, useless servant. He had been a bad example to other servants and a rebel who had probably stolen from Philemon and fled to Rome. All men by nature are unprofitable to God and men (Rom. 3:12), good for nothing but to be cast out and burned.

Now the regenerated, redeemed ex-slave is profitable to himself, for godliness is great gain, profitable to Philemon as a good servant and a helper in the gospel ministry and profitable to others as an example, a testimony to the grace of God and a brother in the assembly!

vv. 12-14. 'I am sending him back to you. You receive him, therefore, not reluctantly, suspiciously, or on probation, but as though you were receiving my very own heart. I would have kept him here with me to assist me and minister to my needs in your stead; but without first consulting you and having your permission, I would not do it.' This shows two things.

1. The great modesty and humility of the apostle Paul. Though he had the spiritual authority to keep Onesimus and command Philemon to abide by his decision, he would do nothing with another man's property without his consent.

2. The gifts, benevolence and assistance which we render to one another must not be by compulsion and pressure, but willing and voluntary; otherwise it is of no spiritual value! If Philemon chose to return Onesimus to Paul, then all would be blessed and God glorified. By his example, Paul shows that ministers are to draw disciples by love rather than drag them by force!

v. 15. If we are angry on account of offences done to us by men, our minds ought to be comforted with the thought that those things done through hatred and ill-will result, by the good providence of God, in our good and the accomplishment of his purpose for us and them (Rom. 8:28; Gen. 45:5-8; 50:19, 20).

Onesimus ran away from Philemon with evil in his heart. Philemon was deprived of his servant, employee and perhaps of the goods stolen. But in all of this, God was sovereignly working his will. Onesimus ran directly into the arms of Paul and the gospel. Philemon not only received back a servant, but a brother beloved for all eternity. Had Onesimus never left in anger, he would not have returned in joy!

Let us endeavor to look upon and accept all success and affliction as being in the good providence of our Lord!



# Charge it to me

## Philemon 16-25

Paul exhorted Philemon to receive, forgive and be reconciled to his runaway servant, Onesimus, who had been converted to faith in Christ and whom Paul was now sending home bearing this epistle (Col. 4:8, 9).

v. 16. Onesimus was to be received as a servant, for a servant he was, and there is no reason to believe that his call by grace had dissolved this relationship with his employer (1 Cor. 7:21-24). Believers are not to despise authority, hard work, nor a humble station in life, but rather will glorify Christ by rendering honor to whom honor is due! (Rom. 13:7, 8).

Another relationship now existed between Onesimus and Philemon: they were now brothers in Christ. Paul said, 'He is beloved to me, who am the instrument of his conversion, but more beloved to you, being of the same nation, the same household, an object of your concern and prayers for a long time and now one in Christ.'

v. 17. 'If you count me your partner, companion and friend in the grace of Christ as being engaged in common cause, partakers of a common faith and interested in the same common salvation, receive Onesimus into your heart, home and affections as you would receive me if I come to you?' (Matt. 25:40, 45).

v. 18. 'If Onesimus has wronged you by idling away time, spoiling his work, or corrupting fellow-servants, if he owes you anything by robbing you and wasting your goods, charge it to me! I will stand good for all his debts and damages.' Philemon would surely see in this statement the grace

and mercy of Christ, to whom our great debt of sin was imputed and who paid in full all that we owed (Rom. 4:7, 8; Gal. 3:13, 14).

v. 19. Paul beseeches Philemon to receive Onesimus freely with no strings attached, to ask nothing of him for past debts, offences, or duties. ‘Anything you feel that he owes you, charge it to me; and as I have written this with my own hand and signed it, I will repay you!’ The meaning is, ‘Do not contend with this man over what he owes you unless you choose to have me as your debtor in his stead! Then we would be forced to talk about what you owe me!’

Where and what would Philemon be if Paul had not, through much suffering and trial, brought him the gospel? He is saying to Philemon, ‘If you feel impressed to talk about what Onesimus owes you materially, I would remind you that you owe me your very life!’

v. 20. ‘Yes, brother, by doing what I ask of you in regard to Onesimus, you will give me much joy and inward pleasure. Nothing could be more cheering and comforting to me than to see believers walking in love and obedience to the commands of Christ’ (3 John 3, 4).

v. 21. ‘I write these words to you in perfect confidence that you will not only do what I have asked of you, but that you will do even more.’

This is characteristic of men and women who love Christ. It is not reluctant obedience to assigned duties, rules, tithes and what is expected of them. Rather, above and beyond these rules and laws, they serve Christ and his church. It is not ‘What must I do?’ It is ‘What can I do?’ It is not doing what is expected and commanded but, motivated by love for Christ, giving myself, my treasure and my time to him.

v. 22. 'Prepare a guest room for me. It may be that God will hear your prayers and I shall have the privilege of visiting you and ministering the gospel again to your household.'

v. 23. Epaphras was a Colossian, a minister of the church of Colosse, and was well known to Philemon (Col. 1:7). He may have been sent to Paul by the Colossians, as Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians, and was committed to prison with Paul.

v. 24. Others who were there and sent their greetings were John Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke. Paul called them his 'fellow-workers.' Demas was the same person who afterwards left Paul (2 Tim. 4:10). Mark was Barnabas's sister's son, whom Paul and Barnabas took to Antioch, who became a matter of contention between Paul and Barnabas, but who later was reconciled to Paul. Aristarchus was of Macedonia and went with Paul on his voyage to Rome. Luke was the beloved physician who wrote the Acts of the Apostles and the book which bears his name.

v. 25. 'The grace (blessing and favour) of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, be with your spirit! Amen, so be it!'



# Hebrews

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# Jesus Christ – the Word of God

## Hebrews 1:1-3

The great design of the book of Hebrews is to set forth the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ over angels, over Moses, and over Aaron and his sons. It shows the superiority of his priesthood over the old priesthood, his sacrifice over all other sacrifices, and his covenant over the old covenant. It teaches the Hebrews the true knowledge of the mysteries of their law--the design, use, and meaning of its ceremonies. It is a book of warning against apostasy and a book showing the true glory of faith in Christ.

v. 1. God spoke to our fathers in Old Testament times by the prophets. These prophets were Moses, Isaiah, David, Jeremiah, and many others. He spoke to them in different ways and at different times. He spoke to the prophets himself in a dream, in a vision, or by an angel; and the prophets delivered his message to the people.

What did he speak to them about? He spoke to them about mercy and redemption through Christ, the Messiah. Each of these revelations sets forth a portion of the truth about Christ (Acts 10:43; Luke 24:44-45; John 5:46; John 8:56).

1. Christ in prophecy (Gen. 3:15; Gen. 49:10; Isa. 7:14; Isa. 9:6; Micah 5:2).

2. Christ in sacrifice (Exo. 12:12-14; Lev. 16:15-22).

3. Christ in type (John 3:14-16) –the Smitten Rock, the Tabernacle, the Brazen Serpent, the Passover.

v. 2. ‘Hath in these last days.’ This is a common New Testament phrase referring to the days after the coming of Christ. Some believe that the

duration of this world shall be 6000 years divided into three parts –2000 years without the law, 2000 years in the law, and 2000 years in the days of the revealed Messiah. We have been in these last days since Christ came to the earth.

‘Spoken to us by his Son.’ The word of God, the message of mercy, the truth of redemption actually became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14; Matt. 1:21-23; John 14:8-10; John 10:30).

‘Whom he hath appointed heir of all things.’ All that the Father has belongs to Christ –the kingdom of nature, of providence, and of grace. It is not only decreed to him but he purchased it on the cross (Rom. 14:9; Col. 1:16-18).

v. 3. There are three important things about Christ, our Lord, which are set forth in this verse –who he is, what he did, and where he is now.

1. Who he is? The brightness of his glory, the sole expression of the glory of God. The reference is to the sun and its rays. The Father and the Son are the same as the sun and its rays. One is not before the other, and they cannot be divided or separated. He is the perfect revelation and the exact image and character as the Father (Isa. 9:6; John 1:1-3; John 10:30; John 14:8-10; Matt. 1:21-23).

2. What he did. ‘By himself purged our sins.’ The Lord Jesus of himself, by himself alone, and by the sacrifice of himself made atonement for the sins of his people. He took our sins upon himself, bore them, and died under the penalty of them, thereby abolishing them completely (Col. 1:19-22; Isa. 53:4-6).

3. Where he is now. ‘Sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.’ The ‘majesty’ is God, the Father, to whom majesty belongs and who is clothed with majesty. His right hand means power, greatness, acceptance, and glory. Here sits the man, Christ

Jesus, and all his elect in him. This shows that his work of redemption is finished (the Old Testament priests never sat down in the tabernacle, for their work was never done nor ever effectual) and accepted; and he awaits for its full revelation to the universe.

v. 4. This is a note that shall be sounded throughout the entire book –the excellence, superiority, and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ over all creatures, all covenants, all priests, and all sacrifices. Paul starts with the angels. He is as much superior to the angels as a creator to the creature, as a king to his subjects, as a master to his servants (Phil. 2:9-11).



# Christ more excellent than angels

## Hebrews 1:4-14

v. 4. This verse sounds a note that shall be sounded throughout the entire book –the excellence, superiority, and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ over all creatures, all covenants, all priests, and all sacrifices. Christ is as much superior to angels as his glorious name is above their name (Phil. 2:9-11). This is to discourage the worship and adoration of angels (Rev. 22:8-9). Angels are not to be worshipped, nor are men to be bowed to (Acts 10:25-26; Matt. 23:8-11).

v. 5. To which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my begotten Son’? (Matt. 3:16-17.) Christ is the Son of God, not by creation as the angels, nor by adoption as we are, but by nature! His office as Messiah is not the foundation of his sonship; his sonship is the foundation of his office. He was the Son before he was the Prophet, Priest, and King (John 1:1-2; John 17:1-4).

v. 6. When he brings his Son into the world, he says, ‘Let all the angels of God worship him.’ In many scriptures we find the angels of God attending to the incarnate Lord (Luke 2:9-14; Mark 1:13; Luke 24:2-5; Acts 1:10-11).

v. 7. Referring to the angels, God says, ‘They are created spirits’ – nonmaterial, they die not, and they are ‘ministers of God.’ They do his bidding; they attend his presence and are ready to do as he commands. They may be called flames of fire for their power and swiftness, or burning love and zeal, or the fact that they are the executioners of God's wrath. The chariot of fire which bore Elijah away was perhaps angels.

v. 8. To the Son, Jesus Christ, the Father says, 'Your Throne, O God, is forever.' Christ is God (John 1:1, 14; John 10:30; Matt. 1:23; Acts 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:19). The reason why his throne is forever and the scepter of his kingdom is righteousness, justice, and truth is because Jesus Christ is God!

v. 9. 'Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.' he showed this in casting Adam from the garden, in all his dealings with Israel, and in working out a perfect righteousness for his people; and he will show it in Judgment at the last day! 'Your God' may mean the Godhead or the Father; for the Father is the God of Christ as man (Eph. 1:3). Because of what he has done, he is anointed with oil of gladness above all his companions (Col. 1:14-18).

v. 10. Christ Jesus is the Creator of all things--the earth and the heavens. Our Redeemer, our Mediator, our Saviour--the Lord Jesus Christ is the sovereign Creator. This verse is addressed to the Son as indicated in Verse 8. All these words set forth the deity, eternality, wisdom, and excellence of Christ.

v. 11. The heavens and the earth in their present form shall pass away (Rom. 8:19-22). The curse will be removed, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth, purified and without sin. But Christ remains as he is, without change, the same yesterday, today, and forever (Isa. 51:6).

v. 12. Clothes in time wear out and lose their beauty and usefulness. The owner folds them up, lays them aside, and replaces them with a new garment. Christ is unchangeable in his nature, in his person, in his offices, and in the virtue of his blood and righteousness. To rest and trust in him is to never die nor be ashamed (Job 19:23-27).

v. 13. God the Father never said this to the angels. He never promised it to them; he never designed to give it to them, but to the Son, Jesus Christ.

v. 14. The angels are servants to the Father, to the Son, and to his people (the elect who shall be heirs of salvation). The ministry of angels lies in things spiritual and temporal (or what concerns our bodies and souls), in directing and preserving us in journeys, in delivering us from outward dangers, in restraining things that would harm us, and in destroying our enemies. They also make known the mind of the Lord to us. They assist us in trial and temptation. They carry us to heaven and will gather the elect at that last day. They are sent forth by Christ to minister to us.

# So great salvation

## Hebrews 2:1-9

v. 1. 'Therefore' (since God has spoken to us by the Son himself; since we have a full revelation of his mercy and righteousness in Christ; since Christ, who is infinitely above all angels, prophets, and priests, has preached to us the gospel of redemption), 'we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard from him.'

vv. 1-4. Paul gives several reasons why we ought to give the more earnest heed to what Christ has said.

1. Christ is the Messiah, himself, of whom all the others spoke; and he is the last messenger (John 3:36; 1 Peter 1:18-20).

2. (v. 1) 'Lest we let them slip away.' We can let them slip away by not receiving them when they are preached, by being taken up with other things and neglecting them, by removing ourselves from where they are preached, and by hardness of heart, we lose them through the judgment of God (Israel did).

3. (vv. 2&3) If the message given through angels (that is, the law spoken by them to Moses) was authentic and disobedience to that law and ceremony received a just penalty, how shall we escape severe penalty if we refuse to receive so great salvation declared by the Lord himself?

a. It is great because of the *author* of it (Heb. 5:8-9).

b. It is great because of the *wisdom* of it (Rom. 3:25-26).

c. It is great because of the *cost* of it (1 Cor. 6:20).

d. It is great because of the *power* of it (Rom. 1:16).

4. (v. 4) This gospel was spoken by our Lord himself. It was confirmed by the apostles. It was established and endorsed by the Father, who gave these apostles great gifts and marvelous manifestations of the Holy Spirit as credentials that they spoke for God and spoke the truth. They spoke in other languages, healed the sick, even raised the dead, and cast out demons (Mark 16: 17-18).

In the light of all this, how shall we escape the judgment and wrath of God if we are indifferent to this gospel?

v. 5. It is not the angels, but Christ who has been given a name above every name, who is head and King of the new heaven and new earth, and to whom is committed all judgment (Phil. 2:9-11; John 5:22). Angels are powerful, numerous, ministering spirits, about the throne but not on the throne. Christ is the King! All things are delivered unto him of the Father (Matt. 11:27).

vv. 6-9. This is a quotation from David's Psalm 8:3-8 and may set forth man's position on the earth before he fell. But the Apostle Paul appropriates them to man as represented by the Lord Jesus Christ. One can read these verses along with Gen. 1:26-28 and ascribe this to man in his original creation. But take it along with Verse 9 and see how that Christ, our Lord, for a while was made flesh and through suffering and death experienced death for every one of his people.

Mr. Spurgeon wrote a beautiful word on this Psalm, emphasizing Verse 4, 'What is man that thou art mindful of him?' 'The least grain of sand is not so small to the whole earth as man is to heaven. When I think of the heavens –the sun, the moon, and the stars –O God, what is man? Man, in the pride of his heart, sees no wonder in God's being mindful of him; but a humble soul is astonished. Will the Lord have respect to such a vile worm as I? Will the Lord acquaint himself with such a sinful wretch,

enough to die for me? Will the Lord open his heart to me? 'What is man that thou are mindful of him' or carest for him?'

Man is but a piece of clay  
That's animated by thy heavenly breath;  
And when that breath thou takest away,  
he is clay again by death.

Baser than clay is he,  
For sin hath made him like the beasts that perish;  
Tho' next to angels he was in degree,  
Yet this beast thou dost cherish.

Worse than a beast is man,  
Who after thine own image made at first  
Became the devil's servant by sin;  
And can a thing be more accurst?

Thou didst thyself abase,  
And put off all robes of majesty,  
Taking his nature to give him thy grace,  
Thou hast made him one with thee.

He is not worthy of the least of all thy mercies –he's a beast!

# He took on him the seed of Abraham

## Hebrews 2:10-18

v. 10. The first reference is to the Father: 'For it became him.' Salvation was an act worthy of the Father and characteristic of his nature of love (for God is love). He is the first cause of all things in creation and grace, and they are all for his glory and good pleasure.

The second reference is to *us*: 'In bringing many sons unto glory.' These sons are predestinated to the adoption of children, redeemed by Christ, called by his Spirit, and heirs of heavenly glory. There are many of them out of every kindred and nation (Rom. 8:28-31; Rev. 5:9).

The third person mentioned is Christ: 'The captain of their salvation.' He is called the captain of our salvation because he is the author of it; he is our King and Lord; he is our guide and leader. By the Father's purpose and love (John 3:16) and because of the Father's righteousness and justice, the Saviour must suffer perfectly all that the law and justice of God required of us (Rom. 3:19-26). The only way that Christ could redeem us in agreement with the attributes of God was to suffer, and that in a perfect manner (Luke 24:26; Luke 24:46).

v. 11. Christ, who sanctifies, and those he sanctifies have one Father and stand in relationship as brethren. Christ is the first-born of many brethren. This relationship Christ acknowledges (Matt. 12:46-50; John 20:17). In Christ and with Christ we have one Father, we are one family, we are one body, and we are one covenant. Though he is God over all, he is not ashamed to own us as brethren.

vv. 12-13. These words are quoted from Psalm 22:22 (without doubt a Psalm of Christ) as proof of what Paul said in Verse 11. The other

quotation is from Isaiah 8:17-18. Christ receives his children as a gift from the Father (John 17:2). He receives them as a purchase paid for by his blood (1 Cor. 6:20). He receives them from the Holy Spirit as those who are called; they come to him in faith!

v. 14. Since those whom he redeems are of human nature, Christ also became a man and assumed a human nature like theirs. He took flesh and blood, subject to temptation, infirmities, and death; but Christ took his nature of a virgin and was without sin. We were under sentence of death because of sin. In order to take this Judgment and sentence upon himself to redeem us, Christ had to become a man (1 Cor. 15:21), a man who could die under the wrath and Judgment of sin. God cannot die, but God in the flesh can experience death. Satan cannot kill and destroy except by permission, but he is said to have the power of death because he introduced sin which brought death. Sin is the sting of death, and sin is the force and power of Satan's kingdom. Christ destroys this power and force over all believers (John 11:25-26).

v. 15. This is applicable to all believers; for without hope in Christ, death is certainly a fearful experience. How can any person who has no hope of pardon, forgiveness, and eternal life look upon death without fear? But this scripture is especially spoken concerning the Jews under the Law of Moses, which was a bondage and constantly spoke of death because they were daily transgressing those ceremonies and laws. Without Christ, the Law of God offers no hope, only death (Rom. 8:15).

v. 16. There was no salvation designed for the fallen angels (Jude 6). Christ took human nature as derived from Abraham, for the Messiah was to spring from Abraham and is promised as that seed of his in whom all nations would be blessed (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16). This shows, too, God's sovereignty and his distinguishing grace and mercy to men.



v. 17. It was necessary for Christ to become man, for unless he was a man:

1. He could not be a High Priest to offer sacrifice for sin and make intercession, for the High Priest was taken from among men (Heb. 5:1).

2. He would have no sacrifice to offer, for he had to shed his blood (Heb. 9:11-12).

3. He could not be a faithful High Priest or Mediator with a perfect righteousness to plead (Rom. 5:19).

v. 18. He was tempted in all things –he suffered, he hungered, he thirsted, he was despised, he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Therefore, he is able to sympathize and aid us in our infirmities.

# Christ, the Son – Moses, the servant

## Hebrews 3:1-6

There are three main divisions in this chapter.

1. The glory and pre-eminence of Christ over Moses (vv. 1-6).
2. A strong warning against unbelief (vv. 7-13).
3. An exhortation to perseverance (vv. 14-19).

v. 1. Paul calls the Hebrews ‘holy brethren,’ not because of their birth or because of any merit in them, but because of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:4; Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22). We are also partakers of ‘the heavenly calling’ because it is from heaven that we are called to Christ, and it is to heaven that we are called. The old theologians used to talk of an effectual call and a general call. All men receive a general call (or warning) through nature (Rom. 1:18-20), by conscience (Rom. 2:14-15), and by providence (Amos 4:6-12); but the elect receive an effectual, conquering call (Gal. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:9).

‘Consider’ or take a good look at Christ Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest whom we confess and profess as ours!

1. He is the apostle because he was sent of God to preach the gospel of redemption (Luke 4:18) and to secure the salvation of his people by his obedience and death (Rom. 5:19; Heb. 9:26-28).

2. He is the high priest because he enters the holiest with his atonement and intercedes for us with the Father (Heb. 9:11-12; Heb. 9:24; Heb. 10:19-22).

v. 2. As Moses was faithful to the trust and responsibility put upon him by God (for he had the whole house of Israel committed to his charge and care), so Christ, our Mediator and Surety, had committed to him all the elect of God to bring them to glory. He shall not fail but shall accomplish all that he was given to do (John 6:37-39).

v. 3. Our Lord Jesus is considered worthy of a much greater honor than Moses as the builder of the house has more honor than the house itself. This is said in answer to the Jewish temptation to speak of Moses or Abraham as their father. Christ and Moses are not to be compared any more than the builder of a house is to be regarded on the same level as the house. Moses was but a servant. Christ is the Son, the Lord, the heir (John 9:28-29; John 5:45-47). Moses is of no value unless he is put in his proper place as Christ's servant.

v. 4. A house does not build itself. Someone must plan it and erect it. The planner and builder of all things is our Lord. The reference here is especially to his church or the body of believers (Matt. 16:18; 1 Peter 2:5). The greatest saints and apostles (even Moses) are built by and upon Christ and receive all their gifts from him (1 Cor. 3:4-9).

v. 5. Moses was not only a servant, but he was the Lord's servant; and he was faithful with fear, reverence, and obedience to all that God called him. In his entire ministry of prophecy, type, and writing, he was a testimony to Christ. He wrote of Christ, he spoke of Christ, and he erected the tabernacle, the greatest type and picture of Christ (Luke 24:44-45; 1 Peter 1:9-12).

v. 6. Christ is not a servant as Moses was. He is the Son, the Master, and the heir of all things. 'Whose house are we!' Believers in Christ (whether

Jews or Gentiles) are living stones, built up a spiritual house in whom Christ dwells by faith and over whom he reigns (Col 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:30).

‘If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.’ These words are not to be understood as a condition of sonship, nor do they indicate that sons of God can and will depart from him; but they are written to distinguish between genuine stones planted by God and counterfeit stones. Living stones will continue; imitation stones will fall (1 John 2:19; Matt. 15:13; Col. 1:20-23).

# Unbelief – the greatest sin

## Hebrews 3:7-19

*vv. 7-11.* This is a direct quotation from Psalm 95:7-11. These Israelites were professing to be God's people; but at the same time they were rebellious, murmurers, and unbelievers.

1. They would not hear the voice of God as he spoke to them by Moses. God speaks to us by his Son. 'This is my Son, hear ye him.' (Heb. 1:1-2.)

2. They hardened their hearts. There is a natural hardness of heart with which we are all born; but there is an acquired, voluntary hardness of heart that comes through rejection of truth, light, and warnings and through continuance in sin (Matt. 11:20-24; Prov. 29:1).

3. They tried God's patience and longsuffering through their complaints, murmurings, and rebellion even though they had seen his goodness, provisions, protection, and miracles for forty years.

4. God was grieved with them. This speaks after the manner of men and denotes that God was weary of them, displeased with them, and angry with them. He firmly declares that they shall not enter into the land of Canaan (called God's 'rest' because he promised it and gave it to Israel).

*v. 12.* 'Take heed brethren.' This warning is written to us (founded upon this Old Testament example) as a caution lest we follow the same path and miss the 'rest' of Christ. Unbelief was the first sin of man and is the mother-sin.

1. Unbelief renders the word unprofitable (1 John 5:10-13).
2. Unbelief shuts us out from the mercies of Christ (Mark 16:16).
3. Unbelief causes us to finally depart from dependence upon and confidence in Christ.
4. Unbelief closes the door of prayer (Heb. 11:6; James 1:6).
5. Unbelief sets up other gods such as reason, human wisdom, and human philosophy.

v. 13. Encourage one another, exhort one another, instruct and teach one another while the time of life lasts and while the grace of God is available. How can we do this? It is to be done daily:

1. By worshipping, praying, and praising God together (Heb. 10:24-25).
2. By teaching, preaching, and studying the Scriptures (1 Pet. 2:1; 2 Tim. 3:14-17).
3. By talking together about divine things and less about foolish things.
4. By warning one another when we see signs of indifference and worldliness.

v. 14. We only participate in the blessings and benefits of Christ by a genuine, persevering faith. No man is in Christ by a temporary faith or a false faith, or a second-hand faith. There are examples throughout the New Testament of faith that was not saving faith (John 2:23-25; John 6:26; Acts 8:13, 18-21). Faith that saves is God-given, genuine, and continues growing in strength and confidence (Col. 1:21-23; Heb. 10:38-39).

v. 15. This is a repetition of Verses 7 and 8.

The next three verses are three questions leading up to the 19th verse. These verses explain why they were shut out of the land of promise and stand as a severe warning to us in this day of mercy and grace.

v. 16. Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious and provoked the Lord God? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

v. 17. With whom was the Lord God irritated and provoked and grieved for forty years? Was it not those who sinned by murmuring and rebelling and whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

v. 18. To whom did God swear that they should not enter into his rest but to those who listened to his word and believed not?

What a solemn warning to us who are favored with a clearer revelation of his grace in Christ. Though they had many evidences of God's goodness and much light and truth, they did not believe.

v. 19. So we see the summary of the whole matter. They were not able to enter into his rest because of unbelief. They were not willing to believe God, to trust God, to rely on God –so unbelief shut them out (Rom. 4:20-25; Heb. 2:1-3).

# Entering into rest

## Hebrews 4:1-11

Most of the Israelites who left Egypt with Moses died in the wilderness before they came to the Land of Promise. They did not enter in because of unbelief. They did not believe God; they did not trust his promises, power, or providence. This example is given by Paul to show the evil nature of unbelief and to warn us who profess faith in Christ (Heb. 3:12-13).

v. 1. 'Let us therefore fear.' This is not a fear that the grace, goodness, and righteousness of Christ shall fail or desert us; but it is a cautious fear and a watchfulness over our own faith in him (2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10). This promise of rest which we have in Christ is two-fold:

1. There is the present rest we have in Christ (Matt. 11:28; Heb. 4:10). We are free from the bondage of fear, from the yoke of ceremonialism and works. We rest in his love, righteousness, and acceptance.

2. There is the future, eternal rest of heaven! When we enter that land, we will be eternally free from all temptation, doubt, fear, and sin (Rev. 21:1-5).

With so much at stake, we should be wholeheartedly dedicated to seeking the Lord in saving faith (Phil. 3:8-11).

v. 2. The gospel of Christ has been preached to us (the gospel of grace, not of works; the gospel of God's Son—his deity, his perfect obedience, his substitutionary atonement, his resurrection and intercession; how that in Christ the law of God is honored and the justice of God is satisfied, Rom.



3:25-26). But this gospel of Christ was preached to them also—by type, promise, sacrifice, and example. It did them no good. It did not save them nor profit them because they did not believe God! Abraham believed God (Rom. 4:20-25). ‘The Just shall live by faith.’

v. 3. We who have believed on Christ and who have received him do now enter into rest. This is spiritual rest –rest from salvation by works, from the burden of the law, and from all toil and labor to gain life. It is an enjoyment of inward peace and rest, notwithstanding trials, toils, labors, and temptations. We have spiritual ease and comfort in Christ, our Lord. Only believers enjoy this rest. God has sworn that those who believe shall not perish (Rom. 5:1; Rom. 8:1, 33-35).

Paul begins here to describe this spiritual rest we have in Christ by removing all other rests mentioned in scripture.

vv. 3-4. The ‘rest’ which believers now enjoy in Christ is not the rest of God following the creation of the world. God made the worlds in six days and rested from the works of creation, not the works of providence; for in them he works even now!

v. 5. Another rest is Canaan or typical rest. The unbelieving Jews did not enter into Canaan but turned around and wandered in the wilderness until they died.

v. 6. Some did enter in and must enter into the typical rest, although those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of their unbelief. Joshua did lead a people into Canaan! The type must be fulfilled, and Canaan must be inhabited by the people of God.

v. 7. God set a day when men would by faith enter into this true rest which he promised. It is the gospel dispensation! Today is the day of salvation; now is the accepted time. It is no longer a typical rest, but a possession.

v. 8. Joshua brought them into a land of rest where they had rest for a while from their temporal enemies and where they enjoyed for a season the blessings of God. But this was not that true spiritual rest in Christ, or God would not have spoken of another day.

v. 9. The people whom God hath chosen, for whom Christ died, and who believe on him do enter into a spiritual rest. heaven is but a perfection and a continuation of what he begins in our hearts when he brings us to faith (John 6:37-40).

v. 10. Paul speaks here of Christ. Christ had a work to do in preaching the gospel and in obtaining the salvation and redemption of his people. This work was given to him and he finished it. He ceased from these works never to do them again, he is seated, having entered his rest, as God ceased from the works of creation when he had finished them. It does no violence to the word to apply this to the believer who ceases from a works' religion and by faith rests in Christ.

v. 11. Let us strive by faith (seeking the Lord and looking only to him) to enter with him into that rest.

'Tis done, the great transaction's done;  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine.'

This rest, peace, and joy in Christ is not full for many of us. We enter more and more by faith, prayer, hearing the word, and attendance on the ordinances of Christ.

# Christ – the word of God

## Hebrews 4:12-16

v. 12. Does ‘the Word of God’ here mean the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ; or does the passage refer to the Bible and to the gospel? You will find John Owen, John Gill, and a host of others who say this is Christ, our Lord, who is the Word. On the other side, John Calvin and others all declare it is the Scriptures that Paul is calling the word of God. Why can't it be both? Christ and the Scriptures must go together! As Christ reveals the Father, so this Book reveals Christ; they cannot be separated. Christ is the Truth; Christ is the Gospel. It is only because Christ is alive that his word is alive and effectual (John 1:1-4; John 1:14; John 5:39; Luke 24:44-46; Acts 10:43).

1. The word is *alive*. The word ‘quick’ is an old English word for alive. This is a living Book, the words of our living Redeemer (1 Peter 1:23-25; James 1:18). The word is the Living Seed.

2. The word is *powerful*. Our Lord and his word are active and effectual. He spoke for the elect in the council and covenant of grace (Heb. 7:22). He spoke all things out of nothing in creation (Heb. 11:3; Gen. 1:6, 9). He spoke and revealed the Father (John 14:10). He spoke and the dead came forth (John 5:24-25).

3. The word is *sharp* as a two-edged sword. The word is all edge; it has no blunt side. It is alive all over. You cannot come near the word of God without its having some effect on you (2 Cor. 2:14-16). Our Lord comes ‘not to send peace but a sword,’ and that sword begins in our own souls, wounding and killing. However, it kills nothing but that which ought to be killed –our pride, envy, lust, and sins.

4. The word is *piercing* and can find its way anywhere. Although the soul and spirit are invisible and the joints and marrow are covered and hid, so penetrating is the divine word that it reaches the most hidden and secret things of men and women. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Christ knows the heart and will make manifest all that is therein by his word (Luke 16:15).

v. 13. Christ, our Lord, is omniscient. There is no creature, angel or man, but what is known to him and seen by him (John 2:23-25). He knows unbelievers, he knows false professors, and he knows his sheep (John 10:14). There is not a thought, an imagination, a motive, a word, or a deed that he does not know. It is all uncovered and opened to him with whom we have to do. Christ the incarnate Word and Christ the revealed and written word will be dealt with by every creature. Believers have to do with him now as our Prophet, Priest, and King. We have to do with his righteousness, his blood, and his intercession! Unbelievers will have to do with him in that great day (John 5:22; John 12:48-49).

v. 14. Christ is called the Great High Priest because of the deity of his person, the efficacy of his sacrifice, and the place in which he officiates--heaven! (Heb. 9:11-12; Heb. 9:24.) he is also great in respect to the continuation of his priesthood. Inasmuch as we have such a great High Priest and such a certain hope of eternal life in him, let us hold fast our faith in him. Let us hold fast our inward confidence, make use of the means of grace such as prayer, worship, study, and fellowship, and by words and deeds show forth his praise (Heb. 3:6; Heb. 3:14).

v. 15. Though he is God and totally without any sin, he is able to sympathize with his people; for when he came to this earth, he was tempted and tried in all points as we are, yet he knew no sin. He

understands our weaknesses and infirmities, our pains and tears, our temptations from Satan. This union with Christ not only brings his pity and sympathy but also his divine assistance, support, and deliverance (1 John 2:1).

v. 16. 'Let US' (all believers, all who love Christ and rest in his redemptive work) 'come boldly' (without fear of being turned away because of our sins and infirmities, without fear of condemnation) before 'the throne of grace' (because Christ obeyed the law and died for our sins, the throne of judgment and justice is now a throne of grace). here we will find mercy and grace for every need (Heb. 10:19-24).

# Christ—the Great High Priest

## Hebrews 5:1-14

The apostle, having made mention of Christ as our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-15), proceeds in this chapter to give an account of a high priest and to apply the office to Christ, our Lord.

v. 1. Everyone that was a high priest under the Law was a *man*. He was a common man, taken out from among them (Exo. 28:1). He was ordained and invested with this superior office by anointing with oil, that he might represent them in things pertaining to God. He presided over them in the name of God; he appeared before God in their stead; he presented their gifts and sacrifices to God; he blessed them. The high priest stands between God and men. Christ is our High Priest. Let us never attempt to go to God except through Christ nor expect any favor from God except through Christ.

vv. 2-3. This high priest was a common man of like passions and was himself a man of sinful infirmity who understood and sympathized with the people in their ignorance and their transgressions of the Law; for he, too, was a sinner. Christ, our Lord, became a man and knows our frame (Heb. 4:15; Psalm 103:14).

When the high priest brought a sin-offering and atonement for the people, he was obliged to offer an atonement for his own sin; for he needed mercy also. In this, Christ differed from the Old Testament priests; for he had no sin (Heb. 7:27).

vv. 4-5. The office of high priest is an office of the highest honor because of the work performed by the priest in representing the people before God.

Therefore, no man can take this office except he who is appointed and ordained of God.

Even Christ did not take this high and honorable office unto himself, nor did he receive it from men, nor did he inherit it through the Levitical tribe (he who said, 'Thou art my Son') made him our High Priest. The Father appointed him to the office, anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and sent him to execute it (John 8:54).

v. 6. In many ways Aaron and the other high priests were types of Christ, our great High Priest.

- 1.They were men of flesh who understood and pitied their fellow creatures.
- 2.They were chosen of God to be high priests.
- 3.They were intercessors between God and men.
- 4.They offered blood sacrifices for sin.

But in many ways the Priesthood of Christ cannot be typified by men.

- 1.They were many –he is the One High Priest.
- 2.Their priesthood was temporary–his is eternal (Heb. 7:1-3).
- 3.They offered many sacrifices–he only one (Heb. 10:12).
4. They offered the blood of others–he gave his own blood (Heb. 9:12).
5. Their sacrifices could not put away sin–his did (Heb. 10:14).
6. Their work was never finished–his complete (John 17:4).

(Melchisedec will be dealt with in Chapter 7).

v. 7. In the days of his fleshly dwelling on earth, Christ (as our representative, numbered and identified with transgressors) offered unto

the Father effectual prayers and supplications (entreaties) with tears. This shows the actual weight of our sorrow and our sin which was upon him. He was heard for the holiness and righteousness of his life and nature; and the Father delivered him from the power of death and from the state of death. We are delivered in him. 'He that believeth on *me* shall never die.'

*vv. 8-9.* More than one meaning is found here. Though Christ is the Son of God, he is not exempt from suffering if he is to redeem a people (Rom. 8:32). None of the children of God are exempt (John 16:33). Though he is the Son of God, he cannot execute a perfect righteousness to the full extent that the Law and justice demand without a perfect suffering (Luke 24:44-47).

Being perfect in his active and passive obedience, Christ became the author of a perfect, eternal salvation to all who believe on him. He gives us a perfect righteousness before the Law and a perfect justification before the throne (2 Cor. 5:21).

*vv. 10-11.* Paul had many things to say about this mysterious person called Melchisedec and how he was a type of Christ; and he had many things to say regarding the Priesthood of Christ that are difficult to explain, especially when people are sluggish, indifferent, and not keenly interested in spiritual truth.

*v. 12.* You have been redeemed, have heard the gospel, and have been in the kingdom of God long enough to be teachers yourselves; yet you need someone to teach you over again the very simplest beginnings of gospel truth. You are not ready for strong meat but are still babes needing milk.

*vv. 13-14.* There are babes in Christ, there are young men, and there are mature believers in the church. God does not neglect nor despise babes. They must be fed, but it is unfortunate when people remain babes by



reason of neglect of the means of grace. The Lord intends for us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ and become mature believers who can enter into the great mysteries of his gospel and who can digest the strong meat of the word.

# Final perseverance

## Hebrews 6:1-6

Looking at the whole passage, it appears that the apostle Paul wishes to push believers on to growth and maturity. There is a tendency in the flesh to stand and rest and to say, 'I am saved; I have passed from death to life. Jesus Christ is my refuge; here I may find contentment and rest.' But Paul urges us to progress in the truth of God--to grow to maturity, to grow up from a state of childhood to the fulness of maturity in Christ.

*vv. 1-3.* In order to grow, the believer must leave the elementary teachings and doctrines of Christ. We must not lose them; we must not deny them nor forget them, but lay them in our hearts as the foundation of all that we profess and expect. We don't want to rest here, for there must be a building erected on this foundation. The apostle then mentions six foundation principles which must be well laid at first and then built upon.

1. Repentance from dead works. We are convinced of sin, of sins, and even of the evil of our religious and moral works. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done' (Titus 3:5).

2. Faith toward God. We have a firm belief in the nature, existence, and attributes of God, in the mind and purpose of God revealed in his word, and especially in the record which he has given concerning redemption in Christ. Repentance toward God and faith in Christ are inseparable.

3. The doctrine of baptism. We are baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). We are baptized in water as identification with Christ in his death and as a confession of our faith. Then there is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5).

4. Laying on of hands. This was a special power conferred on apostles to give the Holy Spirit and gifts (Acts 8:17; 1 Tim. 4:14). It was practiced by the church to ordain deacons and missionaries (Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3). We are warned to exercise care in this regard (1 Tim. 5:22).

5. The resurrection of the dead. This is the reunion of the soul and body that shall come to pass when Christ comes (1 Thess. 4:13).

6. Eternal judgment. God shall judge all men in that day--the wicked by their works which shall be found wanting and the believer in the Person and work of Christ which shall result in eternal life.

*Who are the people spoken of?*

vv. 4-6. If you read John Gill, John Owen, and most Calvinistic writers, they all say that these people are professors of Christianity but not true believers. Spurgeon said their interpretation of this passage is influenced by the doctrine they are seeking to prove, not by what it actually says; for even a child reading these verses would declare these people saved.

1. Who were once enlightened. The first work of the Holy Spirit is to enlighten the soul. We were in darkness, but the Holy Spirit has given us the light of revelation. We know who we are, who Christ is, and why he came. I do not consider any man enlightened who is not saved.

2. Have tasted the heavenly gift. What is the heavenly gift? It is Christ (who is the unspeakable gift) or eternal life (which is the gift of God). If I have tasted of the heavenly gift, then it is mine. This is the same word used in 1 Peter 2:3 and means to experience or to eat.

3. Made partakers of the Holy Ghost. Only a believer is a partaker of the Holy Ghost. He either dwells in a man or he doesn't. Where the Holy Ghost dwells, there is life. 'If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' But if a man is a partaker of the Holy Ghost, he is an object of grace.

4. Have tasted the good word of God. These people have experienced the quickening power of the word and the sanctifying influence of the word. They have eaten the word and found it to be good! Is the good word of God Christ or the written word or both? How can they be separated?

5. Have tasted the powers of the world to come. They have experienced and received the power of faith, the power of hope, and the power of love--for 'now abideth these three.' These are the powers of the world to come. So I say, whatever the meaning of this text, if these people are not children of God, who is?

*What is meant by falling away?*

1. To fall into sin is not to fall away (Prov. 24:16). We have countless examples of this in David, Abraham, Lot, etc.

2. To deny Christ is not to fall away. Peter denied him but came back.

Then what is falling away to the place of impossible recovery? Well, there never has been a case of it yet, so I can't describe it to you; but I will tell you what I suppose it is. It would be for the Holy Spirit to depart from a believer; for the work of God's grace to cease; for the blood of Christ to lose its efficacy; for God, who has begun a work, to leave off finishing it and to say, 'Sinner, I half-saved you, now I damn you.' This is what falling away is. A man cannot fall away from a position he has never occupied.

*If he could fall away, it would be impossible to ever renew him.*

How else can they be saved? Is there a healing stream better than the foundation of blood? Is there a better righteousness than Christ's? No! If they could fall away as some teach, it would require a second incarnation, a second Calvary, a second putting him to shame, a second regeneration! He died for those who crucified him once. Shall I crucify him again? (John 10:27-29.)

# An exhortation to perseverance

## Hebrews 6:7-20

*vv. 7-8.* The apostle illustrates what he has taught in the first six verses. The rain falls on the earth. In some places the ground is good, rich, and fertile; and there fruit and vegetables grow for man. This is blessed ground for which we are grateful. But in some places nothing grows but thorns and briars that are of no value, fit only to be burned.

The rain is the grace of God and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:4-10). Where the gospel comes in power by the Holy Spirit, it brings forth the fruit of the Spirit and the fruits of repentance, faith, and righteousness to the glory of God. This is the good ground blessed of God (1 Cor. 3:6). All other ground produces evil, hate, unbelief, self-righteousness, and pride. These are of no use to God or men, only to be destroyed (Mark 4:14-20).

*v. 9.* The apostle addresses all believers as beloved of the Lord and of him. I am persuaded better things of you than thorns, briars, and cursing. I am convinced that he who called you to Christ will also accompany that regenerating work with the grace of his Spirit and the fruits of righteousness. If the Spirit of God dwells in a person, the fruits of the Spirit to different degrees will be revealed (Gal. 5:22; Rom. 8:9).

*v. 10.* Their work of faith and labor of love in his name and to others is really not theirs but his work in them and through them, yet it is called theirs because it is done by their faculties and hearts by the grace of God (Eph. 2:8-10; Gal. 2:20-21). God is faithful to those whom he has called and who walk in his love (Matt. 10:40-42). 'He giveth more grace as the burdens grow greater. He sendeth more strength as the labors increase. To

added affliction he sendeth his mercy, and to multiplied trials his multiplied peace.’ He said to Paul, ‘My grace is sufficient.’

v. 11. I desire that every one of you show the same diligence in the exercise of faith and love (ministering to one another faithfully, forgiving, showing mercy, trusting the Redeemer), not only that you may keep up a hope of eternal life, but that you should grow to a full and confident assurance of that hope until the day God calls you home (1 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Peter 3:18).

v. 12. Do not grow disinterested and careless in spiritual matters (Gal. 5:16-17); but be imitators of men like Abraham, who through faith, patience, and perseverance inherited the promise. Study the many trials of Abraham from the day of his calling to old age. He remained faithful, revealing to all the sole object of his faith--he believed God!

vv. 13-15. God made a promise to Abraham –a son, a nation, a covenant, a better land (Gen. 22:17; Gal. 3:16). He swore this by himself because he could swear by no greater. Abraham believed God and went out. He spent his whole life as a wanderer, but by faith he saw all that God promised (Rom. 4:19-22). He never quit amid all the trials God was pleased to allow. Faith is not a once-for-all isolated act, but a continuous state of heart. ‘I believe God!’

v. 16. When men make a promise, they swear by the greater; for there is always One greater than men; and when an oath is taken about a matter that is doubtful, it settles the matter.

v. 17. Wherefore God, willing to show the believers the unchangeableness of his purpose and promise of life in Christ, bound himself by an oath!

v. 18. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge from sin, judgment, the curse of the law, and condemnation have a strong encouragement to hold fast to our hope in Christ based on two unchangeable things –

1. God's promise and
2. God's oath!

It is impossible for God to lie, and it is impossible for God to break his oath (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29).

v. 19. Now we have this hope and confidence as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. It cannot slip and cannot let us drift away. It is a hope which reaches to the very certainty of his presence, within the veil.

v. 20. Here Christ our Lord has already entered in, representing us. He appears for us and intercedes for us and prepares a place for us! (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14.)



# Melchisedec – true type of Christ

## Hebrews 7:1-28

We can see the importance of this study of Melchisedec as a type of Christ's Priesthood from the fact that Paul continues to mention him in reference to Christ (Heb. 5:6; 5:10; 6:20; 7:17; 7:21). At the beginning of this study, I pointed out that the book of Hebrews declares the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus above the prophets, above the angels, and above Moses; and in this chapter his Priesthood is far superior to that of Aaron and the ceremonial priesthood. Melchisedec is a better type of Christ's Priesthood than Aaron or his sons.

*vv. 1-2.* Who is Melchisedec? Read Gen. 14:18-20. This, along with what Paul writes in this chapter, is all that we know of Melchisedec. He is called the king of righteousness, the king of peace, and the priest of the Most High God.

*v. 3.* We have no record of his father, mother, or ancestry, no record of when he was born or when he died, only that he was like the Lord Jesus Christ with a continual priesthood without interruption. Some say this was an appearance of Christ, himself, with the bread and wine of the Lord's Table. But the main point is that the Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, like Melchisedec's (not like Aaron's), is eternal and continual. He was before Aaron and lives eternally (Heb. 10:11-12).

*vv. 4-10.* Paul is showing the greatness of Melchisedec; and the key is Verse Seven, which states that the lesser person is always blessed by the greater person. The sons of Levi were appointed priests and received tithes and gifts from the descendants of Abraham. They also represented Israel

as priests before God and blessed Israel. But Levi and his sons paid tithes and were blessed by Melchisedec; and not only they, but Abraham himself was blessed by Melchisedec and paid tithes and honor to him. Christ has no rival nor equal, so the Levitical priesthood cannot accurately portray his Priesthood. God sent forth Melchisedec to give us a more accurate type of our Lord's eternal Priesthood!

v. 11. If a perfect fellowship with God and justification from sin had been attained under the Levitical priesthood with its ceremonial law and sacrifices (for it was under this priesthood that the ceremonial law was ordained), why was it necessary to bring in another and different kind of priest after the order of Melchisedec, rather than one of the tribe, order, and rank of Aaron (Heb. 10:1-4)?

v. 12. If there is a change in the priesthood, there must also be a change in the law concerning the priesthood. This is a clear indication that the ceremonial law is abolished (Heb. 10:9).

vv. 13-14. One of whom all these things are said (Jesus Christ, the great High Priest of a better covenant) did not even belong to the priestly line but to the tribe of Judah. No member of the tribe of Judah ever officiated at the altar.

vv. 15-17. It is evident from the scripture, from the fact that the Levitical priesthood was not effectual to put away sin, and from the presence of another priest arising who bears the likeness of Melchisedec (not Aaron) where power and authority is based. It is not on the carnal ordinances but on the deity of his Person, the eternity of his life, and the effectuality of his one sacrifice that there is a decided change in law regarding the priesthood.

*vv. 18-19.* The old law of ceremony, sacrifice, and an earthly priesthood is cancelled. It made nothing and no one perfect, but Christ did (Heb. 10:12-14). It is by him that we draw nigh to God.

*vv. 20-25.* In these verses the superior excellency of Christ's Priesthood to the Levitical one is shown in several particulars.

1. Those priests were ordained without an oath taken by God (Heb. 6:17; Psalm 10:4). God will not change his Purpose toward us in Christ.

2. The old covenant under which Israel was represented by Aaron had no power to save; but Christ, our Surety (the word signifies one who draws near), does draw near to God with an effectual sacrifice and righteousness.

3. There were many priests –he was but one. They were mortal; therefore, they died. But Christ, because he is eternal, has an unchanging priesthood.

4. They could not put away sin because their priesthood was only representative and ineffectual; but he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he has always, is now, and always will be our great High Priest, interceding for us (Rom. 8:34).

*vv. 26-27.* Here is the High Priest who is perfectly suited for our need. He is holy, blameless, and unstained by sin –one with us and yet separate and exalted high above ALL.

He only needs to offer one sacrifice. This he did once (Heb. 9:24-26).

*v. 28.* The ceremonial law makes men high priests who have sin themselves; but God, himself, with an eternal oath, made the Lord Jesus, his beloved Son, to be our great High Priest who is consecrated eternally.

# Christ – the true tabernacle

## Hebrews 8:1-6

In this chapter Paul shows that the Priesthood of Christ, our Lord, is far superior to the priests of Aaron's line in that he ministers in a better place (heaven), has a better sacrifice (his blood), has a better tabernacle (his body), and provides a better covenant with better promises!

*vv. 1-2.* A better place--heaven! This is the sum of what has been said: We have such a High Priest as has been described. He is Christ Jesus, who was born of Mary, crucified in our stead, arose on the third day, and ascended to the heavens where he is seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

1. He is sat down (Heb. 1:3), which shows that his work is done. The Levitical priests always stood.

2. He is on the right hand of the Majesty, which shows that his work is accepted; and he is possessed of honor, glory, authority, and equality. We are seated with him and in him (Eph. 2:4-7).

3. He intercedes and ministers for us, not in the holy place made with hands (which is but typical), but in the very presence of God (Heb. 9:24). He is a minister of the true tabernacle, which is his body. (More on this in Verses 4-5).

*v. 3.* A better sacrifice –his blood! The typical priests of old never came to the tabernacle without the proper sacrifices (Heb. 9:7; Heb. 9:22). Their sacrifices could never put away sin; therefore, they were offered over and over as long as the tabernacle stood (Heb. 10:1-4). If Christ is to appear before the Majesty in the heavens as our great, effectual Priest and

mediator, he must have an effectual blood sacrifice. He brought his own body and blood (Heb. 9: 11:12; 1 Cor. 5:7).

vv. 4-5. A better tabernacle--his body! In Verse 2 Christ is called the 'true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.' Verses 4 and 5 talk about the tabernacle which man pitched according to God's directions. This tabernacle in the wilderness was typical. God dwelt there, his glory was seen, he granted his presence to the people, the sacrifices were brought, and the people looked to the tabernacle. Now if Christ's human nature were only earthly, he would not even be a priest, for he was not of the tribe of Levi; and if he had died and remained on the earth, his Priesthood would be of no value, for his priesthood was perfected in heaven. It was when he died, arose, and appeared in glory that all other sacrifices and priesthods ceased (Heb. 10: 7-10). The true tabernacle was his body in which he tabernacled among men. Here the glory of God is seen in the face of Christ Jesus. Through him, God communes with his people; by him, sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered, and to him, believers look for forgiveness and acceptance. His blood is the atonement for sin.

v. 6. A better covenant with better promises! A more excellent ministry. They were many--he one! They died--he lives! Their sacrifices were typical --his were effectual! They ministered on earth--he in heaven (Heb. 10:10-14).

A better covenant. The covenant of the Levitical priesthood was a temporary and typical one; it is now ceased. Its administration reached to the Jews; in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Its manifestation was dim and hidden in ceremony and ordinances; Christ is a full and clear revelation of mercy and grace. This covenant was conditional with obedience; the covenant of grace is by grace through faith and unchanging in Christ (Rom. 3:24-26).

Better promises. The promises of that old covenant consisted mainly in earthly, temporary blessings such as Canaan--land of peace, plenty, and prosperity. The promises of Christ are eternal forgiveness, eternal glory, and eternal life. When Israel obeyed God and worshipped God according to the pattern given, God blessed them with peace and plenty. When they neglected the tabernacle and served other gods, he dealt with them in wrath and judgment. In Christ, our mediator, we have a better covenant with better promises. He has reconciled us to God. Being the God-man, he lays his hand on both and brings us, who were far off, to God, makes peace through the blood of his cross, and satisfies the justice of God by the sacrifice of himself. He makes us sons of God, indwells us with his Spirit, and makes us priests of God. Our promises and blessings have to do with a spiritual kingdom and life, not an earthly nation and benefits.

# The new covenant

## Hebrews 8:7-13

v. 7. The first covenant spoken of here is the covenant of the Levitical Priesthood, made with Israel and delivered by Moses. It was a typical covenant (Heb. 7:11, 18).

1. The *people* with whom it was made were typical of the true Israel of God.

2. The *blessings* promised in it were shadows of good things to come.

3. The *sacrifices* of it were pictures of Christ's sacrifice.

4. The *mediators* were the priests who were types of Christ, our great High Priest!

This covenant was deficient. It had a weakness in that it was only typical. Its priests were only sinful men; its sacrifices were animal blood; its offerings could not remove sin. If this covenant could have redeemed, there would have been no reason for Christ to come! (Heb. 10:1-4, 9.)

v. 8. 'But finding fault with them' (both with the covenant which had its weakness and with the people who continued not in it), God said, 'The days come when I will make a new covenant' (Jer. 31:31-34).

This covenant is called a new covenant not with respect to its origin or its age, for it is the everlasting covenant made with Christ before the foundation of the world (Heb. 13:20; Rev. 13:8). It is called the new covenant in that it is newly revealed! That which is revealed second was made first. It is called new because it is always new; it will never be old

nor give place to another. It is also called new because it gives a new heart, a new nature, and a new spirit!

*vv. 9-12.* ‘This is the new covenant I will make with them after those days,’ after the times of the Old Testament, when the Messiah shall come and the gospel of grace shall be preached.

1. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write them in their hearts.’ By the law of God we can understand several things:

(a) The moral law of God which is summed up in these two, ‘Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself.’

(b) All the commandments of our Lord with respect to repentance, faith, and godliness.

(c) The whole word of God, which the believer loves and cherishes. These are written not on tablets of stone, but on the heart and mind of the believer, so that he thinks on them, and not only thinks on them but loves them. ‘I love thy law, O Lord.’ His commandments are not grievous but precious (Matt. 11:28-30).

2. ‘I will be to them their God and they shall be my people.’ Not as he is the God of all creation or the God of nature and providence, but he is their God as he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus (John 17:21; 1 John 1:3). ‘They shall be my people,’ not in the sense that all mankind are his people, but as sons of God, whom God loved in a special way and chose in Christ--the family of God (Rom. 8:14-17).

3. They ‘all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.’ I believe if we go back to Heb. 1:1, we can get some light on this. God spoke to the people through the prophets and the priests. If a



man wanted to know what the Lord had to say, he inquired of the prophet. If he wanted to offer a sacrifice, he went to the priest. Some would put these restrictions on us today if they could. Every believer is a son; every believer is a student of the word; every believer is a priest to offer sacrifices of prayer and praise; every believer has the Spirit of God dwelling in him. While we have pastors and teachers today that we may grow to maturity through the word, all believers know the Lord, pray to the Lord, and walk with the Lord. ‘Ye are kings and priests unto God! (Heb. 4:14-16; Heb. 10:19-22.)

4. ‘I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,’ that is, their sin; for all unrighteousness is sin. The phrase tells us that God will forgive our sins (1 John 1:8-10). God will pardon freely those to whom he is reconciled in Christ. Forgiveness of his children's sins is not only an act of mercy, but an act of justice; for Christ has paid for our sins (1 John 2:1-2).

5. ‘Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more!’ This means all sins and all kinds of sins –original, actual, before conversion, and after conversion. He remembers them no more. They are cast into the depths of the sea; they are cast behind his back. You may look for them, but they cannot be found!

v. 13. In the establishing of the New Covenant, the Levitical Covenant is done away. It has served its day but is now disappeared and used no more, as a garment rots and vanishes away (Gal. 5:1-6).

# Christ – our atonement

## Hebrews 9:1-12

The design of the apostle in this chapter is three-fold:

1. To show the pre-eminence of Christ over the tabernacle, its furniture, its priesthood, and its sacrifices—all fulfilled in Christ!
2. To show how all which had gone before in the Levitical Covenant were types and pictures of Christ, having no power in themselves to save (Heb. 10: 1-4).
3. To mark an end to all Levitical ceremonies, sacrifices, and the first covenant (Heb. 10:9).

*vv. 1-5.* This typical covenant had a tabernacle made according to divine instruction, of earthly material, with rules and regulations for sacrifice and worship. The tabernacle was 45 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet high. It had two rooms separated by a heavy veil.

1. In the first compartment, called the Holy place, were three pieces of furniture.

(a) The table of shewbread. This table was made of wood overlaid with gold, which pictures the humanity and deity of Christ. The bread (12 loaves) represents Christ, the bread of life.

(b) The golden candlestick. There were no windows. This lampstand was the only light, which represents Christ as the light of the world. The lampstand was pure gold (representing his pure deity), and there were seven candles (the number of deity).

(c) The altar of incense (Exo. 30:1, 6-9). The continual, sweet burning incense before the veil is the intercession of Christ before the Father.

2. In the second compartment (measuring 15 feet by 15 feet by 15 feet) was really one piece of furniture with two parts. It is called the ark! This was the most important piece of furniture. It was 3-3/4 feet long, 2-1/4 feet wide, 2-1/4 feet high, made of wood covered with pure gold, and contained the tables of the law, Aaron's rod that budded, and the golden pot of manna. The mercy-seat was a solid slab of pure gold (no wood) and it formed a cover for the ark. The mercy-seat, or better the propitiatory (deriving its name from the blood of propitiation) was overshadowed by the cherubims of glory (Rom. 3: 25-26).

*vv. 6-7.* Into this first room, called the Holy place, the common priests went every day, morning and evening, accomplishing the service of God by offering sacrifices, burning incense, and trimming the lamps. But into the Holy of Holies, beyond the veil, went the high priest alone every year to put the blood on the mercy-seat covering the broken law. This day was called the Day of Atonement (Exo. 30:10; Lev. 16:15-17).

*vv. 8-10.* Here are several things which the Holy Spirit is teaching the Lord's people.

1. The way into the presence of God (which is Christ--Heb. 10:18-20) is not clearly revealed or actually manifested while this first tabernacle stood. Until Christ comes, the sacrifices must continue as set forth.

2. This first tabernacle (*v. 9*) was only a symbol, a picture for the time present to typify the work of Christ.

3. These sacrifices could never take away sin nor purify the conscience, so they must continually be offered (Heb. 10:1-4).

4. These ceremonies were imposed upon them until the coming of Christ, who fulfilled them all and established the reality of a better covenant of grace.

*vv. 11-12.* But that appointed time came (Gal. 4:4-5). Christ, the great High Priest of good things to come (such as peace, righteousness, reconciliation, grace, and mercy), came in a body prepared for him by the Father. He tabernacles among men. In him, men meet God, and in him, God deals with men. He is our representative, our righteousness, and our redemption (2 Cor. 5:19). He was numbered with the transgressors and died under the penalty of our sins. As our great High Priest, he entered once into the presence of God (the true Holy place) and made a once-for-all atonement. Through this one offering he perfected all believers and obtained eternal redemption! (Heb. 10:11-14.) Now we are all priests (Christ, our great High Priest), and through Christ we can come boldly before the very throne of grace (Heb. 4:14-16; Heb. 10:19-22; Luke 23:45).

# Remission of sins by the blood of Christ

## Hebrews 9:13-28

To better understand this portion of scripture, I will divide it into four parts.

1. The *efficacy* of his blood (vv. 13-14).
2. The *necessity* of his blood (vv. 15-17).
3. The blood *illustrated* on earth (vv. 18-23).
4. The blood *applied* in heaven (vv. 24-28).

vv. 13-14. We know that the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin (Heb. 10:4). These sacrifices were never given to remove sin but to illustrate the atonement and sacrifice of Christ. But if these Old Testament sacrifices did purify the people, hold back the wrath of God, and sanctify the flesh in an external way, how much more shall the very blood of God's Son, offered to God (without spot, sin, or stain) through the Holy Spirit by design and purpose, thoroughly cleanse us, purify our souls, and deliver us from seeking acceptance through our dead works! If they could come to God through types, how much better to come to God in Christ! If they could find comfort and confidence in types, how much more comfort and assurance do we find in Christ! The blood of Christ effectually cleanses from all sin! (1 John 1:7.)

vv. 15-17. These verses show us that Old Testament believers were redeemed by the death of Christ exactly as we are. This first testament reaches from Adam to Christ, for Adam and his sons offered blood sacrifices upon an altar. The transgressions that were under it are the sins of believers from Adam until Christ's personal coming into the world, and

the redemption of these sins was by the death of Christ (Acts 10:43; John 8:56). The promise of eternal inheritance was made to all believers by him who is the Mediator of the will and testament (1 Cor. 10:4; Luke 24:44-47).

Where there is a will and testament, there must be the death of the testator. No claim can be made by the heirs until the testator dies; even so, all that Christ has given to all believers can never be ours actually until he, by his death fulfills the requirements of law and justice (John 3:14-16; Rom. 3: 19-26). Christ must suffer and die if we are to be redeemed (1 Peter 1:18-21).

*vv. 18-23.* Even the old covenant with Israel was not ratified nor put in force without blood. When Moses had given them the pattern for the tabernacle and its services, he took the blood and water (typical of the blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ, typical also of justification and sanctification) and sprinkled the book, the roll of the law and covenant, and the people. He also sprinkled the tabernacle and all the vessels used in divine worship. In fact, under the law of Moses almost all things were purified by means of blood (Lev. 17:11). Some things were cleansed by water and fire, but without the blood there was no forgiveness of sin! No example of pardon, where there is no blood, can be given. The blood of Christ has been shed; it would be foolish to suppose pardon without it (1 Cor. 5:7).

In Verse 23, we see that the tabernacle, the mercy-seat, the written law, the priesthood, and the nation Israel were all patterns of what is in heaven (Heb. 8:5). Christ, our great High Priest, comes before the holy throne of God representing spiritual Israel. He satisfies the law; he atones for our sin with his blood; he prays for us; he presents a suitable atonement. Now if all this in heaven is done through his blood, the pattern on earth must have blood sacrifices.

vv. 24-28. Christ, our Mediator and High Priest, is not entered into a holy place made by human hands (as the tabernacle), which was but a pattern, or picture, of the true tabernacle; but he has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

It is not necessary for him to offer more than one sacrifice (Heb. 10:11-14). If he had to offer a yearly atonement like the priests of old, he would have suffered death thousands of times; for he has been our Priest from the foundation of the world. But now in these last days, he hath appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Isa. 53:4-6; Heb. 10:17-18).

As men die just once and face judgment but once, so Christ was once offered to bear our sins. They are paid for and put away. Unto them who believe on him and look for him, he will appear without sin unto eternal glory (Rom. 8:1, 33-34).

# He takes away the first and establishes the second

## Hebrews 10:1-10

v. 1. The ceremonial law given by Moses is a figure or picture of the good things to come in Christ. These ‘good things’ are pardon, peace, rest, fellowship, preservation, and eternal life. The tabernacle, the priesthood, and the law were not given to put away sin, but only to serve as a blueprint of the real tabernacle and sacrifice, which is Christ (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 8:4-5).

v. 2. If any or all of these sacrifices could put away sin –

1. They would have ceased to be offered! If I bring an atonement and it puts away my sin, then I need not offer another (Heb. 10:12-14).

2. The people who offered the sacrifice would be discharged from all sin and guilt and would feel no condemnation (Rom. 8:1; Rom. 5:1).

This is the reason we have such assurance and confidence in Christ (Rom. 8: 33-34). He has offered one sacrifice, and we feel totally confident that our sins are gone (Heb. 10:17; Isa. 53:4-6).

v. 3. In these Old Testament sacrifices offered on a regular basis, a fresh remembrance of sin is brought forth; they are still there. The very sacrifices themselves reminded the people of their sins. The sacrifices



must continue until the Messiah comes and puts an end to them and to sin by his sacrifice.

v. 4. It is not possible for animal blood to take away sin.

1. Sin is a transgression of the moral law. These sacrifices belong to a ceremonial law. Christ was born under and obeyed the moral law (Gal. 4:4-5).

2. The blood is not the same blood. It is not from the same kind of person who sinned. But Christ was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh (Heb. 2:16-18).

3. Sin deals with the mind and conscience to which an animal cannot relate. Christ made his soul an offering for sin. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:10-11).

Verses 5-8 is a quotation from Psalm 40:6-8 in which David writes of Christ who was to come.

v. 5. God would have the sacrifices and offerings continue only for a time until Christ came (1 Cor. 5:7). He would never accept them as a term of righteousness; but he clothed Christ in a human body prepared by the Holy Spirit, that Christ might (in the body of a man) obey the law and suffer for sin (Rom. 5:19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22).

v. 6. Burnt offerings and sacrifices could never satisfy his justice, appease his anger, honor his law, nor put away sin. There is no pleasure nor satisfaction in a picture (Isa 1:11-18).

v. 7. In the Book of God (the Bible) it is clearly written that Christ should come to work out the redemptive will of God (Luke 24:44-47).

v. 8. In this verse, Paul repeats the prophecy, including all sacrifices and types; so that when they are all fulfilled and replaced by Christ, it will be clearly stated that none of them gave any pleasure to the Father except as they were offered in faith toward Christ (Heb. 11:4, 17, 28).

v. 9. In completely fulfilling the redemptive will of God (John 6:38), Christ has put away all sacrifices, all offerings, the priesthood, and all that was associated with that covenant; and he stands in the place of them all. When we have Christ, we have all things (1 Cor. 3:21-23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2: 9-10).

v. 10. here is the sum of it all. here is the gospel of redemption in a verse!

1. 'By the which will:' that is, by the will, purpose, and design of the heavenly Father. Eternally decreed, we are redeemed (John 1:11-13; Rom. 9: 11-16; Eph. 1:5, 9, 11).

2. 'We are sanctified.' Sin is put away; we are holy and accepted by God (Eph. 1:6; Col. 1:21-22; Jude 24).

3. 'Through the offering of the body of Christ.' his human body was offered on the cross. His blood was shed. He died for our sins (Isa. 53:4-6).

4. 'Once for all.' One atonement—one sacrifice—one offering (1 Peter 1: 18-21; Heb. 9:26-28).

# The foundation and exercise of grace

## Hebrews 10:11-25

v. 11. 'Every priest.' We are not speaking of the High Priest, who offered the atonement once a year, but of the common priests (who were many) who offered daily sacrifices. 'Standeth' at the altar, showing that their work was never finished. 'Which can never take away sins.' The fact that they were continually offered indicates that they were ineffectual (Num. 28:3-4).

v. 12. 'But this man.' Our Lord became a man, though not a mere man, but the God-man (Isa. 7:14; Isa. 9:6; Matt. 1:23). 'Offered one sacrifice,' forever. 'Sat down on the right hand of God' (Heb. 1:3). His work done, his sacrifice accepted, his people sanctified, our sins pardoned—he sat down. All this is different from the priests under the Law. They were many—Christ One! They offered many sacrifices—he only one! They stood—he sat. Their sacrifices were but types—his effectual!

v. 13. 'Til his enemies be made his footstool' (Psalm 110:1); that is, until all enemies of him and his people be subdued under him—carnal professors, profane rebels, the world, the devil, all the powers of darkness, and the last enemy, death itself (1 Cor. 15:25-26).

v. 14. 'By one offering,' himself, body and soul. This is why he sat down, why he expects his enemies to be destroyed, why he is at the right hand of God. He has accomplished what he came to do. He has completely cleansed, perfected, and made holy all who were given him by the Father. To be sanctified is to be set apart by the Father (Jude 1), to be declared

holy by the Son (1 Cor. 1:2), and to be made holy both instantly and progressively by his Spirit (2 Thess. 2:13).

*vv. 15-17.* This is a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34. The word of God is one, both Old and New Testament. This is the sum and substance of the new covenant. After the days of types, ceremonies, and promises, when the Messiah has come and fulfilled all things, my laws, my gospel, my commandments will be written on their minds (to think on them) and on their hearts (to love them), not on tablets of stone. They shall all be priests to offer sacrifices of faith, praise, and devotion; and because of the sufficient sacrifice of the Redeemer, all sin shall be forgiven and remembered no more (1 John 1:7). In the Old Testament sacrifices, there was a remembrance of sin with every sacrifice, but now he has put away sin and will remember it no more!

*v. 18.* Where there is absolute remission, forgiveness, and cancellation of all penalty, there is no longer any offering or sacrifice to be made. If we are in Christ and redeemed by Christ, it is dishonoring to our Saviour not to rest in his grace and his atonement (Rom. 8:1).

‘Tis done, the great transaction's done,  
I am my Lord's and he is mine.’

### *The foundation of grace*

*vv. 19-21.* We have full freedom and confidence to enter the very presence of God by the power and virtue of his blood (Heb. 4:14-16). The veil in the temple is rent in two, and the ceremonies and sacrifices have all been laid aside by Christ's effectual sacrifice in the flesh (Gal. 5:1). We have an eternal, great High Priest who rules and reigns by virtue of his atonement and who is accepted and has absolute authority!

*The duties and exercises of grace (vv. 22-25)*

v. 22. Let us all come forward in prayer and praise before our God with honest, open, and sincere hearts. He will receive us, for our hearts have been sprinkled with the blood of Christ and our bodies have been washed or purified by his Spirit.

v. 23. Let us persevere in faith and grace, whatever the trial, the fear, the doubt; for God is faithful to his promise, and in that he promised.

v. 24. Let us consider one another both as frail men and as brethren. If we are busy loving and giving love, we will have less time to complain of being neglected. We can also help to kindle and re-kindle love and grace in others.

v. 25. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. It is the duty and privilege of believers to meet together for worship, praise and fellowship.

1. Because of *God*, who has appointed it, who approves of it, who is glorified in it, and who should be worshipped.

2. Because of *ourselves*. We need to be edified, instructed, refreshed, and comforted.

3. Because of *others*, that they may be convinced, converted, and brought to a knowledge of Christ.

# The just shall live by faith

## Hebrews 10:26-39

vv. 26-27. These words have been wrongly made use of in order to prove that persons who commit sin after baptism are lost or should be excluded from the fellowship, and they have brought great distress to the honest heart that is burdened with a sense of inward sin and realizes that ALL of our sins have a degree of willfulness. The true sense of the whole is this: After men have embraced and professed the truth of the gospel of Christ (and particularly the great truth of this chapter--that Jesus Christ is the only High Priest, his blood the only atonement, his sacrifice the end and fulfillment of all types) and yet after all *this*, against all evidences, light, and revelation, they willfully deny the sufficiency of Christ and the efficacy of his sacrifice, there is no other sacrifice for sin--there is no other Saviour! There is no help for them, no hope, only a certain fearful judgment against them eternally. There is no going back to the Mosaic ceremonies; so if you willfully turn from Christ, there is no hope! (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 3:11.)

vv. 28-29. God gave the moral and ceremonial laws to the people through Moses, and any person who rejected them or set at naught their rules and sacrifices was put to death (Deut. 17:1-6). While the tabernacle and ordinances stood, they were binding upon the people. If God poured his wrath upon those who made light of the types, think how severe shall be his judgments upon those who reject or make light of the precious blood of his dear Son. A return to circumcision and ceremony (away from Christ) is to bring contempt upon the Person of Christ (Gal. 5:1-4; Gal. 4:21).

*vv. 30-31.* Such persons who choose will-worship, circumcision, works, and law in the stead of the revealed Christ have every reason to expect the wrath and judgment of God to fall on them; for it is threatened in the word of God (Deut. 32:35-39). We have many examples of God's dealing in wrath with Israel when they turned to idols. It is a fearful thing to incur the wrath of the eternal and living God (John 3:36).

*vv. 32-34.* To encourage these Hebrew believers to persevere in Christ and to hold to their confidence in him and not be disturbed and discouraged by false prophets, ceremonialists, and legalists (who would question their liberty in Christ), Paul tells them to remember the early days of faith when they endured mocking, ridicule, and affliction. When you left the world to walk with Christ, they did not allow you to leave peacefully; but you knew that in heaven you had a family, an inheritance, and a lasting glory, even if you lost everything here. The people you lose for Christ's sake are nothing compared to the family you gain. The comforts, pleasures, and fame of this world are soap bubbles –the glory of heaven is eternal.

*v. 35.* Cast not away your confidence, your boldness in Christ; for great reward is in store for the true believer.

*v. 36.* You have great need of patience and perseverance in Christ, for the fulfillment of the promise is to those who continue in the faith of Christ (Heb. 3:6, 14; Col. 1:19-23).

*v. 37.* Yet a little while and Christ will come for his own (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11). When Christ comes, he will put an end to all suffering and death (1 Cor. 15:24-26; Rev. 21:4-5).

*v. 38.* True believers live by faith, not by law, works, merit, or ceremony.

1. They *receive* spiritual life by faith in Christ.

2. That life is *sustained* and kept by the power of God through faith.

3. That life shall be *perfected* by faith –all of grace! Works make no contribution to our life in Christ; and if any professor of faith draws back to ceremonialism or away from PURE faith in Christ, ‘My soul hath no delight in him.’

v. 39. True believers will not and do not leave Christ, nor will they take up beggarly elements in the place of Christ. ‘To whom shall we go? He hath the words of life.’ (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:38-39.)



# The nature of faith

## Hebrews 11:1-6

In the preceding chapter, Paul wrote about true persevering faith by which men are united with Christ and draw not back but believe to the salvation of their souls. In this chapter, he speaks of the nature, works, and response of faith and proceeds to illustrate it with examples of Old Testament saints.

v. 1. A two-fold definition of faith (or the nature of faith).

1. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for.' What are the things hoped for? Eternal salvation and deliverance, perseverance in Christ, eternal glory, and fellowship with God. Faith is the ground, foundation, and support of these things. Because of our confidence in God and his word, faith gives us possession of these things beforehand. Faith gives them reality to us. They are certain, but our faith gives us confidence (Rom. 4:17-25; Acts 27:21-25).

2. 'The evidence of things not seen' (2 Cor. 4:18). Things which were done in eternity—the council, covenant, and purpose of God. Things which were done in time—incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Things which are done now—intercession, providence, work of the Spirit. Things in the future—resurrection, judgment, eternal glory. These are all unseen, but faith gives the heart proof and evidence of these unseen things. His word, his Spirit, his work in us are all in all (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 13:5-6).

v. 2. These elders were men of faith who lived in ancient times--Abel, Job, Enoch, Noah. These men were justified and accepted by their faith and not

because of their deeds. Paul mentions this to take from these Hebrews any esteem for the elders because of who they were and what they did. They were justified by faith; and unless we have the same faith, it is useless to boast of our elders (John 8:39).

v. 3. A man of faith understands how all things were created. The visible creation was formed from nothing. It all came into existence by the command of our God, who made all things out of nothing and gave it form as it pleased him! (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-18.)

From Verse 4 through the rest of the chapter, Paul gives examples of faith among the Old Testament believers –before the flood, from the flood to Moses, from Moses to the prophets, kings, and judges.

v. 4. Abel offered the sacrifice of blood because he believed God! Abel, by nature, was not more excellent than Cain; but his sacrifice was because it typified and pointed to Christ. It was a lamb, the firstling of the flock; it died and shed its blood. Cain's offering was one of works which had no reference to Christ at all. Abel was not righteous by nature, nor by his faith, but by Christ to whom his offering looked.

He received the witness of this acceptance in his conscience by the Spirit of God. He is dead, but his faith and example are yet spoken of. In these two men the world's two religions are pictured –salvation by Christ or salvation by human works! (Gen. 4:3-5.)

v. 5. Enoch was caught up to heaven, not temporarily as Paul, but like Elijah, there to continue. He was changed from mortality to immortality without dying. Several things are seen here:

1. The close relationship between this life and glory. He walked with God on earth, and one day he didn't return. God took him to glory (Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:1-8).

2. Old Testament believers knew, expected, and enjoyed eternal life through faith, just as we do (Rom. 4:3).

3. He went to heaven as some shall at the coming of Christ, without dying (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

4. The resurrection of all believers is shown. He went to glory body and soul! (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:42-44.)

Enoch walked with God in faith! It is faith that pleases God (John 6:28-29).

v. 6. Without faith it is impossible to please God, for those without faith are without Christ (Rom. 8:8; Eph. 2:12-14). Christ is our peace, our righteousness, and our sanctification! Someone said that in Verse 6 are the two fundamental truths of religion. He that cometh to God in Christ:

1. Must believe that God is, not only that there is a God but that God is who he says he is –Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as revealed in the blessed Scriptures. He is holy, eternal, unchangeable, love, mercy, and truth. He is the God of creation, providence, and grace.

2. Must believe he will fulfill every promise and purpose toward believers in Christ Jesus. There is but one way to seek God, and that is in Christ. True faith actually believes and is confident that God will give us all that Christ purchased (Rom. 8:31-34; 1 Cor. 1:30).

# Examples of faith

## Hebrews 11:7-16

v. 7. Our example begins with Noah's faith; but the Scriptures begin with God's grace, by which Noah believed (Gen. 6:5-8). Noah and his family were the exceptions to the general apostasy. God always reserves a remnant for himself even in the worst times (Rom. 11:5). 'Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.' This shows that he was not without sin, or he would have had no need for grace. 'But Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet,' such as rain, flood, destruction of all men, and the building of a ship (that is agreeable to the apostle's definition of faith in Verse 1), Noah believed God! He believed the word of God and prepared an ark as he was instructed. By his faith, his works, and his words of warning, he both passed judgment on their unbelief and wickedness, and he made their unbelief and rebellion more obvious. Unbelief is evil enough, but it appears more evil and deliberate in the presence of faith. This faith made him an heir of the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 4:3).

v. 8. Again, our example of faith spotlights the faith of a man (which is our subject –examples of faith). But God's grace and call came to Abram down in Ur of the Chaldees, a land of idolatry (Gen. 12:1-4; Joshua 24:2-3). Abram believed God and journeyed to a land he had not seen. God changed his name to Abraham (Gen. 17:1-5) fifteen years after he left Ur. God leads his people in ways known to him but not known to them. Faith follows the Lord when it knows not where, how, or why! (Acts 27:21-25.)

vv. 9-10. It was by faith that Abraham lived in Canaan, the land of promise, for a little over 75 years. He believed that God would give this land to his seed though he never had an inheritance in it (Acts 7:4-5).

When he died, Isaac was 75, Jacob was 15, and they dwelled in tents. Israel later possessed the land. Abraham looked for a permanent abode in heaven. His hopes and expectations were upon the world to come, and it was this faith which moved him to obey the word of God and to do and to suffer what God required (Rom. 8:17, 18).

v. 11. When God announced to Abraham that he would have a son by Sarah, who was nearly 90 years old, she seemed to be in a state of unbelief (Gen. 18:9-15). Abraham was guilty of the same doubts (Gen. 17:15-19). It is evident from our text that Sarah, like Abraham, was brought to a full belief in the promised son; for Paul said that by faith she received physical power to conceive a child.

v. 12. So from one man, Abraham (though he was physically as good as dead), there have sprung descendants whose number is as the stars of heaven and as countless as the innumerable sands on the seashore, as was promised to Abraham by our Lord (Gen. 15:5-6).

v. 13. 'These all died in faith,' not all the seed of Abraham, but all of the believers such as those mentioned—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah. They died as other men die a corporeal death; but they died sustained and controlled by faith in their people possessing the land of Canaan, faith in the promised Messiah, and faith in an eternal inheritance in heaven.

'Not having received the tangible fulfillment of the promises,' only having seen them by faith in his word. This goes back to the definition of faith in Verse 1.

Looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promises, they were confident of them, embraced them, anticipated them as their chief source of happiness, and were not ashamed to confess that they were only pilgrims traveling through this world with no desire to settle or remain here.

1. People who talk this way (that their treasure, satisfaction, and affection are not of this world –that they are strangers here – that they seek a heavenly country and an eternal inheritance) show plainly that they have seen some things by faith that the natural man does not see and that they are sincerely seeking that inheritance (1 Cor. 2:8-15).

2. It is true, also, that if they had been homesick for those countries and the gods they left, they had plenty of opportunity to return to them (John 6:66-68).

3. But the real truth is that they had their hearts set on the inheritance of Christ and would not be denied nor turned about. Because of that faith and confidence, God is not ashamed to be called ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ He has prepared an inheritance for them and for all believers, which proves he is not ashamed of the relation he stands in to them (Heb. 2:11).

# Examples of faith (continued)

## Hebrews 11:17-26

*vv. 17-19.* Of all the trials of Abraham's faith, this was the most difficult. He had left his homeland, divided the land in Lot's favor, resisted the riches of pagan kings, waited for the birth of Isaac, turned Ishmael out of his house, and now God commanded him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham proceeded to do as he was commanded (offer his only son unto God) because he believed that God could and would raise Isaac from the dead.

1. He knew that God had said, 'In Isaac shalt thy seed be called.' This promise of a great nation through Isaac must be fulfilled (Gen. 15:4-6; Gen. 21:12).

2. God had already done what was equivalent to raising Isaac from the dead, for he had come from the dead womb of Sarah.

3. Abraham actually did offer Isaac! It was done when he determined in his heart to do it! All of the rest was done for example, picture, and teaching. In the sacrifice of the ram in Isaac's place, we have a picture of our Lord's taking our place and dying for our sins (Gen. 22:8, 14). But in the mind and heart of Abraham, Isaac was as good as dead; and when God spared Isaac, it was like receiving him from the dead. The issues of faith and life are settled in the heart (Rom. 4:20-22).

*v. 20.* Read Gen. 27:26-33. Isaac said, 'I have blessed him and he shall be blessed.' You might ask, 'How could Isaac, by faith, bless Jacob when he

was deceived?' He thought that he was blessing Esau, but it was the will of God that he bless Jacob (Rom. 9:11-13). Therefore, he knew (though he was not aware that he blessed Jacob) that the person he blessed in the name of the Lord *would be blessed!* Man supposes, but God disposes. The man who believes God believes that the sovereign purpose of God will be accomplished, even though he does not understand it (Eph. 1:11; Gen. 50:20).

v. 21. Gen. 48:13-19. The patriarchs blessed their sons and grandsons in the name of the Lord, usually during their last days. Jacob crossed his hands and gave the greater blessing to the younger son of Joseph. This he did because he believed that the blessing he delivered would be fulfilled. He worshipped God and gave praise and glory to God that he was permitted to see Joseph again and his grandsons.

v. 22. Joseph and the people of Israel were well situated in Egypt, but Joseph believed God and knew that someday the children of Israel would be leaving Egypt and going to the land God had promised them. He commanded that his bones be taken to Canaan (Gen. 50:24-26).

v. 23. This verse speaks of the faith of the parents of Moses. Pharaoh had commanded that all male Hebrew babies should be killed, but Moses' parents were not awed by the king's decrees. They believed in the providence and protection of the Lord God and perhaps saw in Moses the deliverer of God's people out of Egypt, so they hid him at the risk of their own lives.

vv. 24-26. Moses was 40 years old, educated, wealthy, and apparently designed by his mother to be the Pharaoh's successor. But he knew that he was an Israelite, and by faith and choice he refused the honors of Egypt in order to be identified with the Lord God and his oppressed people. He



believed the promises of God to be better than the in-hand possessions of Egypt. He esteemed the reproaches and afflictions of the people of God better than the sinful pleasures of Egypt. God's promises are eternal; all here is temporary.

Christ was made known to Old Testament believers (Isa. 53:1-6; John 5:46; Deut. 18:15). They believed in him, in his coming, and in his deliverance. He was typified in their sacrifices and spoken of by their prophets. His inheritance was expected by them. Moses chose to be identified with God and his people because by faith he looked beyond that day to the reward of Christ.

## Examples of faith (continued)

### Hebrews 11:27-40

As we study these examples of faith, we need to continually go back to Verse One of this chapter and review the definition of faith. True saving faith receives as fact and reality that which is not revealed to the natural senses. It is the assurance of all that we hope for in Christ and the proof and reality of things we do not see. Faith believes that God IS and that God will do all that he says, regardless of the circumstances. Where there is true faith, there are always two things present:

1. The *grace of God*. Faith is the gift of God, not the product of the natural heart.
2. The *word of God*, which is the foundation of faith. We can only believe what God has said and has revealed to us (Isa. 8:19-20; Rom. 10:17).

v. 26-29. Moses fled from Egypt, not simply because he had killed an Egyptian and feared Pharaoh, but because he believed God. He knew of the promises of God to Israel, and he was willing to endure the afflictions and reproaches of Christ because by faith he saw him.

It was by faith that he instructed the people of Israel to slay the lamb and put the blood on the door, which was typical of the blood of Christ being sprinkled on the hearts and consciences of his people.

It was by faith that he believed that God would make a passage through the Red Sea and deliver them from the Egyptians (Exo. 14:10-14).

v. 30. Marching around the walls of Jericho seven times, blowing the trumpets, and shouting seemed a useless activity; but they believed God and did as he commanded. The walls fell (Joshua 6:1-25).

v. 31. The harlot Rahab (Joshua 2:10-15, 18) hid the spies of Israel and dropped the scarlet line from the window. She believed God. Some say that the scarlet line gave birth to the red light, but is it not a picture of the red blood of redemption?

v. 32. By faith, Gideon marched against a huge army with only three hundred men (Judges 7:15). By faith, Barak engaged in battle under the sole direction of a woman, Deborah, giving God the glory (Judges 4:14; Judges 5:1-3). By faith, Samson, in the last act of his life, destroyed the Philistines (Judges 16:28-30). By faith, Jephthah returned to Israel (from which he had been cast out because he was the son of a harlot, Judges 11:1-40) to deliver Israel from her enemies. By faith, David slew Goliath (1 Sam. 17:20-29). By faith, Samuel was always ready to hearken to the voice of God.

v. 33. By faith, they subdued kingdoms. Believers have no reason to fear wicked rulers or their powers. Our God is King and reigns over all (Prov. 21:1).

By faith, they wrought righteousness or administered justice, for righteousness is the fruit and evidence of faith. Our faith is not our righteousness (Christ is our righteousness, and faith brings us into union with Christ), but true faith produces righteous acts and attitudes (James 2:18).

By faith, they obtained promises. Their faith was not the cause of the promises being made nor the cause of the promises being fulfilled. God's purpose, love, and grace give and fulfill all promises; but their faith

received them, believed them, waited for them to be fulfilled, and even enjoyed them before they became a reality!

By faith, they stopped the mouths of lions. A lion was slain by Samson and by David, and the mouths of lions in Daniel's den were closed. This may refer also to stopping the mouth of Satan, who is a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8).

*v. 34-38.* All these are examples of faith without reference to particular persons. They did great things, suffered great things, and endured great things because they believed God!

*v. 39.* Christ is the promise, for he is the fulfillment of all things provided in God's purpose and grace. In him all of the promises center. The Old Testament believers rested in the promise of Christ and life in him, though he came to earth after they had died.

*v. 40.* They had Christ in promise; we have himself! They had him in type; we have him in reality! They believed and were saved by looking to him who was to come; we believe and are saved by him who has come. They were justified and perfected, not in the law, but in Christ. And so they were not made perfect without us nor we without them, for all believers in all dispensations are one church and general assembly.

# Looking to Christ

## Hebrews 12:1-13

In this part of the book, Paul presses us to a constant exercise of faith and patience under trial, chastisement, affliction, or whatever God, in his purpose, calls upon us to endure.

v. 1. This ‘great cloud of witnesses’ are the men and women of faith who have borne witness or testimony to the truth. Let us lay aside everything that is a hindrance to running the Christian race –worldly cares, riches, worldly companions, and involvements that take our interest and concern from Christ. When a runner is in a race, he does not wear heavy clothes and shoes which only serve to slow him down. Let us lay aside the sin which clings to us! This may be a particular sin that a person may be inclined to more than other sins, or it may be the sin of unbelief. But if our goal is to win Christ and be found in him, then let us pursue this goal with patient endurance and active persistence.

v. 2. We must look away from all that would distract us and look TO our Lord Jesus. We don't look to him with the natural eye but with the eye of faith (John 6:40; Isa. 45:22).

1. He is Jesus, our Saviour, who was appointed and sent by the Father to be our redeemer, our representative, our ransom, and our mediator (Matt. 1:21-23).

2. He is the author of our faith. It is not in us to believe (Rom. 8:29-30). By his grace and Spirit, he led us to believe! We do believe him (Eph. 2:8-9).

3. He is the object of our faith (2 Tim. 1:8-12).

4. He is the finisher of our faith or the One who brings it to maturity and gives us that which is the goal of faith—eternal life and the salvation of our souls (Eph. 2:4-7).

Christ, for the joy of redeeming his people, endured the cruel death of the cross, treating the shame and humiliation of it with contempt. He ignored the shame and was victorious. The proof of his success is that he is ascended and is on the right hand of God. This is our example; for the joy that is set before us, throughout eternity, let us endure trial, ignore the mocking and humiliation, and continue in the faith of Christ! (1 Peter 5:10-11.)

v. 3. When you are discouraged and grow weary, just think of Christ and the grievous opposition and bitter hostility he endured and consider that in the light of your own trials and afflictions (Rom. 8:18).

v. 4. Our conflicts against sin, the enemies of grace, and the trials of life have cost us very little. One thing we can say; we have not resisted to the shedding of our blood. Our Lord did, and so did many of these who have gone before.

v. 5. I would remind you also, lest you forget, the word of God in Prov. 3:11-12 which says, ‘My sons, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.’ Do not think lightly of or refuse to submit to the correction and discipline of the Lord. Don't lose your courage and give up when you are corrected or disciplined by him (James 1:2-4).

v. 6. The Lord corrects, disciplines, and teaches by trial, by affliction, and by tribulation everyone whom he loves. The Lord had only one Son

without sin: he has none without suffering (1 Peter 1:6-7; John 16:33; 2 Cor. 1:7; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 1:29).

v. 7-8. All true believers must take part in and endure God's discipline, work of correction, and providential dealings; for God is dealing with us as sons. He is working in us the graces of humility, love, patience, and faith and is weaning us from the world. He is making us like Christ. If you be without this corrective discipline, you are not a child of God.

vv. 9-10. Our earthly parents corrected and disciplined us, and we respected them and yielded to their wisdom. Shall we not much more yield to our heavenly Father? Our earthly fathers disciplined us for a short period of time according to their limited wisdom; but the Lord, for our eternal good, disciplines and corrects us in his perfect wisdom, that we may be like Christ (Rom. 8:28).

vv. 11-13. No trial or suffering is pleasant, nor does it bring joy at the time. It is difficult and painful; nevertheless, after it is over, it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness and godliness to those who have patiently endured it. Joseph is a good example of this (Gen. 50:20).

So then be courageous, be faithful, and be of good cheer under the providence of God (Psalm 27:13-14). Depart not from the path of faith. Love and help one another. Let the fallen be restored and the weak encouraged (Gal. 6:1-2).

# Lest any depart from the grace of God

## Hebrews 12:14-17

v. 14. 'Follow peace with all men.' To follow peace and harmony with others is not only to desire it, but to exert the utmost in a man's power to attain it with everyone.

1. In the church. 'How blessed it is when brethren dwell together in unity.' Read Eph. 4:1-3; Col. 3:12-16.

2. In the home, between husband and wife, parents and children (Col. 3:18-21).

3. In our natural relationships with friends, neighbors, and co-workers, yea, even with our enemies as much as is possible (Rom. 12:17-20).

Our God is the God of peace, our Saviour is the Prince of Peace, the fruit of the Spirit is peace, and we are called to peace and to believe the gospel of peace. Shall we be characterized as quarrelsome, trouble-makers, and contentious? God forbid!

'Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' There has to be a two-fold meaning here:

1. The holiness or righteousness of Christ, which is to be followed after by believing on him and receiving in him perfect sanctification and acceptance before God. 'Ye are complete in him.' (1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21.)

2. The holiness or Godliness of an obedient walk. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' If he is not a new person with a new attitude, a new character, and a new conduct, he is not in



Christ and shall not enter heaven. We are justified by faith, and our faith is justified by our works (James 2:17-21; Gal. 5:22-26).

v. 15. We are to look carefully and diligently to ourselves and to one another, lest any of us fall from or depart from the true gospel of the grace of God (Heb. 3:13-14). Men do not fall from the free favor and love of God in Christ, which is everlasting, unchangeable, and implanted in regeneration (Rom. 8:34-39); but some profess to believe, profess to know that grace and that love, and profess to embrace that gospel who later depart, deny, and compromise it (1 John 2:19). The heart is deceitful and wicked (Prov. 4:23).

This root of bitterness is a root that lies hidden in a man's heart and is apt to spring up in an unexpected manner and time to bear bitter fruit of contention, malice, pride, and covetousness which will divide friends, churches, families, and even believers, I must set a watch upon my heart, my mind, and my tongue, lest Satan get an advantage and many be affected.

v. 16. The birthright which Esau treated with contempt and sold for a mere morsel of meat was more than the greater part of his father's estate. The birthright was a spiritual position –God's man in the family. It carried with it spiritual blessings and divine favor. Esau's desires were sensual, abandoned, and fleshly; so he threw aside the favor of God to satisfy his current designs. Shall we be so foolish as to even consider that anything the world has to offer is worth departing from the fellowship of our Lord? (Mark 8:34-38.)

v. 17. Those who are so foolish to allow anything in this life to cause them to renounce their faith and duty as children of the living God will, like Esau, someday weep with bitter tears when it is beyond their power to recover what is lost! Guard against fleshly appetites and apostasy; guard

against neglecting spiritual blessings and privileges lest you come, at last, to bitterly mourn your foolishness and wickedness.

We have entered a race. The prize goes to those who finish (Heb. 10:35-39). There will be difficult times, perhaps heavy trials; and along the way there will be tempting pastures of pleasures which appeal to our flesh. We must go on! We may proceed rapidly or slowly; we may even stumble and fall; but looking to Christ, we continue! I have a responsibility to the doctrines of Christ, my Lord. Neither the frowns nor smiles of men will cause me to surrender them. I have a responsibility to the church of the Lord Jesus. I have a responsibility to my family to keep it together, to set a godly example in worship, integrity, and faithfulness. I must not lay down this trust nor fail to see it through. I have a responsibility to the captain of my soul! He loves me and I love him.

‘Must Jesus bear the cross alone  
and all the world go free?  
No, there's a cross for everyone,  
and there's a cross for me.

The consecrated cross I'll bear  
'til death shall set me free –  
And then go home, my crown to wear;  
for there's a crown for me.’

# Not to the law – but to Christ

## Hebrews 12:18-24

We are not under the ceremonial law with all of its washings, meats and drinks, sacrifices, and sin-offerings. Christ, our Lord, has fulfilled all this. We are in a gospel church-state of which Christ Jesus is the head; he is prophet, priest, and king! Nor do we come to the holy, moral law of God for acceptance and righteousness but to Christ, our Mediator. Do we realize the privilege and happiness of being delivered from the legal dispensation under which Israel lived? Do we realize the terror and awesomeness of the Law? It is described in these verses.

*vv. 18-21.* The place where the Law was given was Mt. Sinai, which might not be touched (Exo. 19:12), which burned with fire, and which set forth the majesty, holiness, and righteousness of God.

The circumstances attending the giving of the Law –blackness, darkness, and tempest accompanied the giving of the Law because it offered no hope to sinful people, only curses and wrath. When the angels announced the birth of Christ, the light and glory of God shone round about them; for they brought glad tidings of redemption.

The matter of the Law given by the ‘voice of words’ (v. 19) was the Ten Commandments, requiring perfect obedience but giving no strength to perform them. It revealed their sins but offered no mercy and no saviour (Gal. 3:10; Gal. 4:21).

The effect of the law on Moses and the people–’They could not endure that which was commanded.’ They backed away, and even Moses trembled! (Exo. 20: 18-21.)

vv. 22-24. The happiness of the church state or the believer's position today is given in these verses and expressed by the names used.

'Mount Sion' is the church the Lord Jesus to which the believer comes, in distinction from the legal dispensation signified by Mt. Sinai. It is called Mount Sion because it is chosen by God and is the place of his habitation. Here his gospel is preached, he communes with his people, and his ordinances are administered; it is an immovable mountain (Matt. 16:18). We come to Christ, not to a place, a Law, or a ceremony which only typifies him.

'City of the living God.' This church is a city built on Christ and is full of inhabitants (true believers) under proper leaders, guarded by his power and free from fear (Heb. 11:10, 16).

'The heavenly Jerusalem.' Jerusalem signifies the vision of peace or 'they shall see peace.' It is the place of worship and the palace of the King. It is called the heavenly Jerusalem to distinguish it from the earthly Jerusalem. The church is the city of God because he built it, dwells in it, protects it, and defends it. We meet on earth, but our communion and association are in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6).

'To an innumerable company of angels.' Believers are brought into a state of friendship and fellowship with angels who minister to us (Heb. 1:14).

'To the general assembly and church of the first born.' The word 'assembly,' according to Dr. Gill, was a public and common gathering of the Greeks and signifies a large collection and convention. The church of God is assembled in the mind of God from all eternity. They are assembled in Christ, their Redeemer, then and now; they will assemble in his presence all together personally in that great day. The church of the firstborn is made up of all God's elect in all times and places and reaches even to the saints in heaven! Their names are written in heaven in the Lamb's Book of Life.

‘To God the judge of all.’ Believers have free access to God, the Judge of righteousness, through the blood and sacrifice of Christ. Our sins have been judged and paid for in Christ; therefore, there is no judgment nor condemnation which prevents our acceptance (Heb. 2:14-16; Heb. 10:19-22).

‘To the spirits of just men made perfect.’ This may refer to the fellowship of believers who are justified and made perfect in Christ Jesus and whose communion and fellowship is not of a fleshly, social nature mainly, but of a spiritual communion. Their souls and hearts are knit together in love for Christ and one another (1 John 1:3).

‘To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.’ Coming to Christ is by faith, out of a sense of need, and by a revelation of his fullness and sufficiency; it is the blessing of blessings, for we are complete in him. This is the key and focal point of this entire portion of scripture: we come not to the Law, ceremonies, or works but to Christ; and in Christ we have a right to all privileges and blessings of God (Col. 2:9-10; Col. 1:19-23).

‘To the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.’ There may be two thoughts suggested here.

1. Abel's blood, shed by his brother, cries for vengeance and wrath; Christ's blood cries for pardon and peace.

2. The blood of Abel's sacrifice may be the reference. His sacrifice was the first blood sacrifice mentioned. It was offered by faith and pointed to Christ's sacrifice. However, the blood of Christ is not typical but effectual and perfects all for whom it was shed, leaving no remembrance of sin (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:9).

# See that ye refuse not him that speaketh

## Hebrews 12:25-29

There are only five verses in this lesson; but they are words of grace, words of hope, words of warning, and words of promise.

v. 25. 'Him that speaketh' is Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant.

1. He spoke for the elect in the council and covenant of eternal grace (Heb. 8:6).
2. He spoke in the creation of all things out of nothing (Heb. 11:3; John 1:1-4).
3. He spoke from Sinai in giving the Law.
4. He spoke as Prophet of the church in days of his flesh.
5. He spoke through his servants in giving the Scriptures.
6. He speaks now in heaven, interceding for believers.

How foolish to refuse to hear him, but men do (John 1:11; John 3:19; John 5:43).

1. His gospel is *refused* through unbelief,
2. His gospel is *neglected* through indifference, and
3. His gospel is *perverted* through covetousness and self-righteousness.

'Him that spoke on Earth' may mean God, who spoke on Mt. Sinai in giving his Law, or Moses, who was on the earth and of the earth, who spoke for God to the people as a mediator whom they promised to hear and heed, but did not! (Acts 7:37-39.)

If they, who refused to hear the words of Moses, did not escape the wrath and Judgment of God, how shall we escape if we turn away from him who speaks from heaven? (Heb. 1:1-2; Heb. 2:1-3.) Christ came from heaven; he is the Lord of heaven; his doctrine is from heaven; and, having finished his work, he is seated in heaven from which he shall come to judge or reward all men (John 12: 47-50).

v. 26. At Sinai the earth was shaken by his voice, which voice was the voice of thunder, the voice of trumpets, and the voice of words (Exo. 19:18-19; Psalm 68:7-8). 'Once more I shake not the earth only but also heaven' (Haggai 2:6-7). This was the coming of the Messiah—the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Redeemer. His coming not only shook the earth but all of heaven also!

v. 27. 'And this word, yet once more' indicates the final removal of all that can be shaken, such as Sinai and its Law, the Jewish state (both political and ecclesiastical), the whole Mosaic economy, the tabernacle with its ceremonies and sacrifices, and all things pertaining to divine worship which are made with hands and which are made to be shaken and removed (Heb. 10:8-10).

'That those things which cannot be shaken or moved may remain.' This is the kingdom and priesthood of Christ which is forever and all the good things that come through him, such as justification, adoption, redemption, sanctification, and the heavenly inheritance, also the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel—baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the church!

v. 28. We have been received into his kingdom; and we, by faith, have received the scepter of King Jesus. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. His kingdom and reign shall know no end (Phil. 2:9-11). Therefore, let us offer to our Lord pleasing service, acceptable worship, and praise with reverence and godly fear. He is Almighty God and worthy of all

praise and worship. The statement, 'Let us have grace,' is better rendered, 'Let us hold the gospel of the grace of God and continue therein!' (Heb. 13:15.)

v. 29. 'For our God is a consuming fire.' There are two points to be dealt with here.

1. It may be understood of his jealousy (Deut. 4:24) in matters of worship and approach to him. God only is to be worshipped, and he is to be approached in the manner and way suitable to him and fixed by him. He is to have all the glory, and to come any other way is to be utterly rejected and consumed in the fire of his wrath (John 14:6).

2. Our God is a consuming fire. He is a wall of fire in his providence to protect and provide. He is a fire to warm and guide them. He is a fire to consume their enemies and to purify them and their eternal dwelling.



# Practical godliness

## Hebrews 13:1-7

The Apostle Paul, having finished the doctrinal part of this epistle, closes it with practical exhortations to brotherly love, godliness, unity in doctrine and spirit, and words about various graces.

v. 1. 'Let brotherly love continue' in you and among you. We are to love all men, even our enemies; but the love Paul is speaking of here is a special family love between people who are in a spiritual relationship to one another through Christ. We pray for one another, bear one another's burdens, forbear and forgive one another, and meet together to encourage and exhort one another. Without this love, professing faith in Christ is useless (1 Peter 2:17; 1 John 3:14-18). This love is to continue (without failure) as a fixed practice and grow as our love for Christ continues and grows.

v. 2. Do not forget, neglect, nor refuse to extend hospitality to strangers in this brotherhood. Be friendly, cordial, and gracious, sharing the comforts and provisions of your home generously; for in doing this, some have entertained unawares angels or special messengers of the Lord. Examples: Abraham (Gen. 18:1-8), LOT (Gen. 19:1-3), disciples (Luke 24:28-31). Our Lord said that entertaining his people is entertaining him (Matt. 25:38-40).

v. 3. Remember them that are in prison (not for criminal action but for the sake of Christ and the gospel) as if you were a fellow prisoner with them and remember those who are afflicted, who suffer in the body, who want food and clothing, since you also are liable to the same bodily needs. If we

love as brothers and sisters, we will see that missionaries, old people, needy people, sick people, and people out of work do not lack for that which we can supply.

v. 4. Let marriage be held in honor. Marriage was instituted by God (Gen. 2:22-25). Marriage was honored with the presence of Christ at the marriage feast (John 2:1-2). Marriage was chosen by Paul as a symbol of Christ's union with the church (Eph. 5:22-25). Sexual love between husband and wife is honorable, holy, and ordained of God. It is encouraged by the Apostle Paul to prevent sin (1 Cor. 7:1-5). But God will judge and deal with those who are promiscuous and unchaste. Married believers shall live together in love, compassion, and submission, protecting and building their marriages and homes for the glory of God and the good of themselves and the gospel.

v. 5. Let your character and conduct be free from love of money, free from craving wealth and worldly possessions, free from greed and lust for material things. Be content with what God has given you. Be content with your present position and circumstance; for God has said, 'I will not in any way fail you, nor give you up, nor leave you without support.' 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.' (Matt. 6:25-34; Phil. 4:6, 11-12; 1 Tim. 6:6-8.)

v. 6. 'So that we may boldly say..., 'or so that we can be confident and not alarmed over what man can do. The Lord is our helper (Phil. 4:19). He will meet my every need--spiritually, materially, and physically (Matt. 6:24-34).

v. 7. Remember them that are guides and authority over you. Christ is our King; but pastors are subordinate leaders who point the way to Christ, teach the word of God, guide you in an understanding of the Scriptures,

and are responsible to see that the church continues in the way of Christ. To remember them is to respect them, to follow their leadership, to pray for them, to provide for their material needs, and to honor them for Christ's sake. Imitate the faith of a true pastor; that is, his gospel, his conviction that Christ is the only Redeemer and the giver of life. We are not to imitate any man (only Jesus alone). You can follow that and do well, considering that the goal and object of their ministry is the glory of Christ and your eternal good (Heb. 13:17).

# Let us go forth unto him

## Hebrews 13:8-14

v. 8. In verse seven, Paul exhorts us to respect, acknowledge, and follow the faithful pastors and spiritual guides whom the Lord has been pleased to give to us. Consider the subject and object of their ministry—Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. A faithful pastor will preach Christ. The goal of his life and ministry will be to know Christ. The glory of Christ is the object of his conversation and conduct.

1. Christ is the same in his glory, his offices, his purpose, and his work yesterday (not the day immediately past but ancient times). In the beginning of the world, he was the everlasting I AM, the Lamb slain, the surety of his people. In Old Testament times, he was the substance of the sacrifices, the types, and the promises.

2. Today, (under the gospel dispensation) in his person, he is the God-man; in his offices, he is Prophet, Priest, and King.

3. Forever he is the same, for he never dies. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his priesthood an unchanging one. His love and care for his people never change (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29; Phil. 1:6).

v. 9. Let our hearts ‘be established with grace.’ There are three key words here.

1. Heart –conviction, repentance, faith, and a right knowledge of Christ are heart works, not just mental acceptance of facts and doctrines (Rom. 10:9-10).

2. Established –convinced, persuaded, and settled in our hearts regarding the righteousness of God and the way to God.

3. Grace –we understand that salvation, justification, and eternal happiness are the results of God's grace to us in Christ Jesus, not by deeds of the law nor works of the flesh (Titus 3:5-7; 2 Tim. 1:8-11).

Be not unsettled, tossed about, and carried away from this grace by the variety and multitude of strange doctrines which come your way from the lips of men. They are called 'strange doctrines' because they are not taught in the word of God, because they are not in agreement with the person and work of Christ, and because they are contrary to the doctrine of salvation by grace.

Those who are occupied with the ceremonial law, eating certain meats, keeping certain days, or engaging in certain ceremonies have not profited in their souls by such conduct. These things cannot sanctify, justify, establish the heart, nor give peace to the soul (Col. 2:16-22; Rom. 14:17).

*v. 10.* The reference is to the eating of the sacrifice by the priests (Lev. 6:14-16). The sacrifice was offered, burned upon the altar, and eaten by the priests. We have an altar –not the cross, nor the Lord's Table, nor a bench at the front of the church, but Christ himself. He is altar, sacrifice, and priest. We have the right to come to Christ and, therefore, to eat of his flesh and drink of his blood (John 6:53-57). Those who persist in being saved by works and duties of the law have no right to come to Christ (Gal. 5:2-4).

*vv. 11-12.* On the day of atonement, the bullock and goat were slain and the blood was brought into the holy of holies and sprinkled on the mercy-seat to make an atonement. The bullock and goat were then taken outside the camp and burned (Lev. 16:15-17, 27-28).

In order to sanctify us with his blood and to fulfill this type of himself, Christ was crucified outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem, which answered to the camp of Israel in the wilderness. The flesh, skin, and dung of the sin-offering were unclean before God and had to be carried outside the camp to be disposed of. Even the men who handled it were unclean. We see in this not only the suffering of our Lord for sin, but the shame and reproach he endured as our sin-offering. Bearing our sins, he was unclean and must die outside the camp.

v. 13. 'Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp.' The key words here are 'unto him.' He is our sin-offering, our hope of redemption, and our Redeemer. Where he is, there we must be; whether in the camp or outside the camp, there are we (John 14:3). In his shame and reproach, he suffered without the camp. So, being one with him, we quit the camp of ceremony, legalism, human works, worldliness, or whatever to be identified with our Lord. Whatever reproach we incur from the natural or religious world is welcomed, because we find in him all we need (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10).

v. 14. The world and everything in it are unstable and temporary. The riches, honors, pleasures, the persons in it, and the fashion of it pass away. And though we are in this world, we are not of it; and when the will of God is done, we will be taken out of it to heaven where all is peace, perfect love, and eternal (1 John 2:15-17).

# Outward evidence of inward grace

## Hebrews 13:15-25

v. 15. By Christ (through Christ) ‘let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.’

1. There is no coming to God but through Christ. All of our mercies and blessings come through him, and our praise and thanksgivings are only acceptable to God on account of Christ (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 10:19-22).

2. Being made priests before God by Christ and all legal, typical sacrifices having been fulfilled and abolished by Christ, our High Priest, Paul points out what sacrifice we are to offer to God. It is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:19-20).

3. ‘Continually.’ In every condition the believer has much for which to be thankful (Psalm 150:1-6).

4. It is called ‘the fruit of our lips’ in reference to the offering of first-fruits in the Old Testament, to distinguish it from ceremonial sacrifices, and to show in what way we are to praise God; namely, with our lips.

v. 16. Do not forget nor neglect to be kind and generous, contributing and distributing to the needy and underprivileged. The sacrifices of praise and of love are pleasing to God. Helping others with a generous spirit shows the work of grace in our hearts and is glorifying to God (Matt. 25:34-40; 1 Tim. 6:17-18; Phil. 4:15-18).

v. 17. ‘Them that have the rule over you’ are the pastors and leaders of the church as mentioned in Verse Seven.

1. How do we obey them? By attending to the word preached by them, by receiving the word preached, by regarding and respecting their counsel, advice, and rebukes, and by recognizing their God-given authority and leadership.

2. True pastors are not concerned about worldly gain, fame, and possessions, but for the spiritual welfare of their hearers (John 21:15-17). They must give an account to their own consciences that they remain faithful. They must give an account to the church to whom they minister. They must also account to the Lord for whom they speak (Acts 20:28).

3. If you receive his message and are faithful to Christ, the faithful minister goes about his work with joy and not grief, his prayers before the throne of grace are born of joy and not grief, and in the great day of Judgment (when he shall be a witness of your final end) that, too, will bring Joy and not grief. To refuse to hear the gospel from true ministers is to refuse to hear Christ (Eph. 5:11-16) and will certainly grieve him and be unprofitable to you.

*vv. 18-19.* Pray for those who minister the word. The work of the ministry of the gospel is so important and you have such a concern in it, that you ought to be moved to pray that God will give the pastor and the missionary his word for you and for the church. If the pastor is blessed, the people will be blessed. If he is not anointed, the people suffer. 'I trust,' says Paul, 'that as a minister of the gospel I am faithfully preaching the word of God without regard to the favors or frowns of men,' as a good steward of the grace of God (Acts 20:25-27). The ministers of Christ are sometimes hindered by Satan and his emissaries who create trouble; but God will see them through, and for this we pray to him (1 Thess. 2:14-18).



v. 20-21. The epistle concludes with a prayer for the Hebrews. Paul asked them to pray for him; he in turn (and by way of example) prays for them.

(Amplified Version) ‘May the God of peace, who is the author and giver of peace, and who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood that sealed and ratified the everlasting testament, strengthen (complete, perfect) and make you what you ought to be, and equip you with everything good that you may carry out his will; while he himself works in you and accomplishes that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, the Messiah; to whom be the glory forever and ever.’

v. 22-25. The children of God are sometimes sluggish and need to be stirred up; so Paul calls on them to listen to the message of exhortation, warning, and encouragement which he has written. Timothy has been released from prison. ‘If he comes here soon, I will see you along with him.’

‘Give my greetings to all your spiritual leaders and all believers. The Italian believers greet you.’ Paul was probably writing from Rome.

# James

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# The trying of faith

## James 1:1-5

The Epistle of James was not received by many churches without opposition. Some men of the past have rejected it as being without authority. I receive it completely because I see no reason to reject it. It contains nothing unworthy of an apostle of Christ. It is full of beneficial instructions for every believer on the subjects of patience, prayer, humility, good works, the restraining of the tongue, contempt for the world and true faith. The writings of Solomon differ much from those of David, just as the writings of James differ from those of Paul. This diversity, however, does not make us approve of one and condemn the other.

*v. 1.* ‘James, a servant.’ In identifying himself, James claims no distinction except that which we all possess, ‘servants of God’ (Ps. 116:16, 18). We never (nor do we want to) rise above this blessed position, not even in glory (Rev. 22:3).

‘And of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ In all of our worship, service and praise, we honour the Father and the Son (John 5:23). The Father will be honoured, worshipped and known only in the Son (John 14:6). We look to Christ for atonement, acceptance and assistance.

‘To the twelve tribes.’ The Jewish people were referred to as the twelve tribes, named for the twelve sons of Jacob. I am sure, however, that James had in mind not simply Jews, but believers (of his own nation). They were the true Israel! I am sure also that Gentile believers are not excluded from this salutation, for we too are strangers and sojourners on this earth, citizens of another kingdom, seeking a country.

v. 2. The next verses deal with trials which every believer shall have in this world (John 16:33; 15:19, 20; 2 Tim. 3:12). How are we to regard these trials? What is to be our attitude? 'My brethren, consider it joy of the highest kind when you are put under trial by the hand of God' (Matt. 5:11, 12; Acts 5:41; 2 Cor. 12:10).

v. 3. Three reasons are given why we should regard our trials as blessings.

1. We are providentially brought under these trials by the hand of our heavenly Father, who will work all things (difficult as they may seem) together for our good (Rom. 8:28; Heb. 12:5-8). We should rejoice in the prospect of the future good that we shall receive from these trials.

2. Faith must be tried. It can only be proved by trial. How often faith is counterfeited! Trials are given that we may determine if we are leaning on the flesh or the Lord. If I would know the genuineness of my faith, if I would know that I have not run in vain, if I would know that I am not a stony-ground hearer, my faith must be tried!

3. Trials not only reveal faith, but they work, bring out and encourage patience (Rom. 5:3). Were God not to try us, leaving us free from trouble, we would never learn patience, pity, compassion or perseverance.

v. 4. We are to endure trials without seeking a quick deliverance, so that the full work may be done, the lesson well learned. We must not grow weary and seek a premature relief. We must not resign from the race, but we must endure to the end that we might be fully developed and mature in grace. 'Wanting nothing,' that is, lacking nothing essential to a strong, mature believer in Christ, being grounded and settled in faith! We must be

gracious in love, as well as grounded in truth. We must be strong in practice, as well as sound in principle. We must be givers of mercy, as well as receivers of mercy.

v. 5. These next verses are connected with the preceding ones. How can we be happy in the midst of trials? We are to endure trials without complaining, fretting or questioning God's providence (Job 1:21). We are to endure trials without seeking a quick deliverance, that the full work of God might be done. How can we be patient? How can we pierce the darkness of divine dealings? How can mere human beings submit to the will of God and become disentangled from our own flesh, will and desires?

James bids us to ask the Lord to give us wisdom! The term 'wisdom' is more than knowledge, information or learning. We can have vast stores of knowledge and be fools! 'Knowledge is the horse; wisdom is the driver who steers him in the proper direction.' Wisdom is the proper combination of truth and Spirit, of faith and conduct, of mind and heart, of knowing the will of God and yielding to it. Wisdom is discernment of heart and discipline of mouth. Wisdom is seeing the mind and providence of God and yielding to it in the face of opposition from within and without, regardless of frowns and flatteries which Satan uses to turn us aside.

'Let him ask of God.' It is not, 'Let him search the writings of men,' or 'Let him copy other experiences.' Far simpler and far more effective is this way: 'Let him ask of God' (Matt. 7:7-11). No real seeker is sent away empty. That which is for our good and his glory is given liberally and bountifully.

'He upbraideth not.' He does not point to the past and say, 'Look what a mess you have made! Look at how you have failed! You don't deserve what you ask! You don't appreciate what you have!' We never weary our Lord by asking too much or too often! He is plenteous in mercy.

‘It is not really the trials themselves that produce patience, godliness and faith. Trials determine nothing themselves. It is our attitude, feeling and behaviour under trial that produces the results. Actually, trials may harden instead of softening. They may drive us away from the Master instead of bringing us near. It depends on how we react to them’ (John Adams).

# Let him ask in faith

## James 1:6-12

v. 6. 'Let him ask of God' (v. 5). If we desire grace under trial, ask God. If we desire patience and wisdom under trial, ask God.

'But let him ask in faith.' We must not only go to the right place, but we must approach him in the right manner – believing! Faith in the existence of God, faith in the power and purpose of God and faith in the wisdom and will of God are essential to prayer (Heb. 11:6; Matt. 22:21). 'Nothing wavering.' We must not waver (doubt) about the thing asked for, nor whether it is right to ask it. That should be determined before we ask!

1. The thing asked for: today we are urgent, tomorrow indifferent. Today we are zealous; tomorrow it is forgotten. Today we trust; tomorrow we doubt. We are as unsettled as the waves of the sea.

2. The right to ask: we do not deserve anything, nor do we have any merits on which to plead. Our plea is the merits of Christ and the relationship we have with the Father (Matt. 7:7-12).

vv. 7, 8. The unsure, wavering man (who is in today and out tomorrow, divided in his interests, and whose heart is not fixed toward a definite commitment to Christ and his will) can receive nothing from God; he is double-minded, uncertain. He is inclined to God and to the world. He has a desire toward God, but a reluctance to let go of the world. He wants the grace of patience, but not the trial which is necessary to the grace. He wants to be used of God, but in the way and place he chooses. He wants the crown without the cross. Such a man may not be a hypocrite (pretending to be what he is not), but he is simply unsure, unsettled and

uncommitted! Job said, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.' A divided heart is attributed to lack of purpose and lack of faith.

v. 9. 'Let the brother.' We are brothers and sisters in Christ. This is not just a title. It is a family relationship! The ties and bonds of grace in the blood of Christ are deeper and stronger than those of nature. Brethren in Christ are closer than brothers in the flesh. Theirs is an eternal union (1 John 4:7-11).

'The brother of low degree.' The low degree refers not to his spiritual state. He is a brother without wealth, property, influence or earthly rank. Let him rejoice that in Christ he possesses true riches, true greatness and true rank. He is a child of the King, a priest, a king and an heir of all things (Matt. 11:11; James 2:5, 6; 1 Cor 1:26, 29). He is also an equal brother, or, rather, he is the most important! (1 Cor. 6:4.)

v. 10. 'Let the rich brother rejoice.' Let this brother rejoice that God has taught him the grace of humility! The natural tendency of wealth, talent and position is to fill men with pride, self-importance and vain glory. Happy is the leader, the wealthy, influential brother, who has learned:

1. That he is nothing!
2. The vanity, frailty and emptiness of material and fleshly possessions.
3. That God gave and God can take away (Job. 1:21; 1 Cor. 4:7).

As the flower of the grass he shall pass away.' Earthly riches, fame and glory, like flowers, have their outward show and beauty, which attract the eye and the mind. These things are gay and glittering, pleasant to behold and to possess, but years, rust and age soon destroy them and they



are no more. Put your hand on everything your natural eye can behold and say, 'This, too, shall pass away.'

v. 11. The sun comes up in a burning heat and withers the grass and the flowers. So shall the rich, worldly-minded man wither and die in the midst of his pursuits. Riches and worldly recognition are uncertain and only vain show. Beauty, strength and health shall decay and die. Sometimes they fade and die in a man's lifetime, but always in his death. Only a spiritual knowledge of Christ, an interest in Christ and hope in Christ shall abide (Heb. 13:8; Matt. 7:19, 20; 6:31-34).

v. 12. The one great object of these verses is to comfort and direct believers who are subjected to heavy trials. These trials are from the Father and are for our good. They reveal faith, strengthen faith, promote patience, make us useful servants and wean us from this world. There is a temptation in all trials to doubt the love of God, to rebel against his hand, and even to turn back. Happy is the man who stands up under trials, for when God has put him as gold in the fire, when God has purged his pride and proved his faith, when God has revealed the true grace and confidence of his heart in Christ, he shall receive the crown of life. It is called a crown because of the glory of it, which will be on both the soul and body of the believer. It is called a crown because we are kings. It is called a crown of life because it is eternal life that fadeth not away (1 John 3:1-3; Rev. 5:9, 10).

# Every good gift from God

## James 1:13-18

v. 13. The great objective of the preceding verses is to comfort and instruct believers who are subjected to heavy trials. These trials are from our Father and for our good. They reveal and strengthen faith. They produce patience, wean us from the vanities of the world and make us useful servants in all areas. There is also an element of temptation in every trial – to complain, to doubt the love of God, to turn back or to give way to self-pity. But in verse 13 the apostle uses the word ‘tempted’ in another sense. Here he speaks of inward temptations which are the fleshly desires that entice us to sin. God is not the author of these. They flow from the corruption of our nature. Let no man be so blasphemous as to ascribe any of his sinful inclinations to God. God is pure and holy, not subject to or tempted by anything evil; neither does he ever tempt anyone to sin.

v. 14. Every man who sins against God does so because he is tempted, enticed and caught in the snare of ‘his own inward lust.’ The word ‘lust’ means the principle or root of our corrupt nature, which has its dwelling in our hearts. We were born with it (brought it into the world), it continues with us and we can call it all our own! (Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Rom. 7:18, 21; Gal. 5:17.) For anything good or holy that we think or do, we can give God the glory! Anything evil can be attributed to ourselves and our sinful natures, not to God!

v. 15. There arises in our hearts thoughts of pride, sinful pleasure, covetousness and vengeance, which are agreeable to our corrupt nature.

Instead of resisting these thoughts and rejecting the deeds, we cherish them, play with them and contrive ways to bring them about. After consenting to them, we perform them, and the consequence is judgment! Every sin is deserving of death; death is the just wages of sin! Man is the author of his own destruction (Rom. 5:12, 18, 19). We praise God for his mercy, grace and forgiveness in Christ (Rom. 8:1, 33, 34).

v. 16. Do not err in this regard: God is not the author of our sin, nor may we charge him with being involved in our temptation to sin. This is a very great error, for it strikes at the very nature of God. Our sins all have their beginning, continuation and results in our own natures ('I saw.. I coveted... I took,' Josh. 7:21).

v. 17. This verse must be taken in connection with what has gone before. When James mentions 'every good gift,' it is in opposition to the evil in and from us, of which he says God is not the cause (Matt. 7:11). Whether of nature, providence or grace, every good gift (called 'perfect gift' because it has no mixture of evil whatever) is from our Lord! Again let us take the full blame for all evil and ascribe to God all glory for every good thing!

He is the 'Father of lights.' Light in the Scriptures means especially two things: the light of truth and the light of holiness. God is the origin, source and giver of these! From him, descends every good, useful and necessary gift. With him, there is never a shadow, shade or appearance of change. In him, there is no darkness, no change, no inconsistency. He never varies in his dealings with men (Heb. 13:8). He is the author of all good and no evil. We should abhor whatever comes to our minds, or is suggested by others, which is not compatible with his holy praise. Also, in this regard, we are pressed to depend upon and declare unreservedly the grace of God to sinners in Christ. Outside of Christ, we have no hope! (Rom. 7:24, 25.)

v. 18. This is brought forth as the highest example of the preceding verse. All spiritual life and light originates with God.

‘Of his own will begat he us.’ Our election to salvation, our adoption as sons and heirs of God, was not in consideration of our works, deeds or faith, or because of foreseen merit. It is according to his own free choice. We were chosen, loved, adopted and enrolled before we were born (Rom. 9:11, 16).

‘With the word of truth.’ The will of God is the reason, the Spirit of God is the agent and the word is the instrument or seed of regeneration (1 Peter 1:23). ‘First-fruits of his creatures.’ Those who are redeemed from among men are the first-fruits unto God. They are separated ‘holy unto the Lord’ and distinguished from others as the first-fruits of harvest were. They are preferred and more excellent than all, being made so by the grace of God (1 Cor. 4:7).

# Doers of the word - not hearers only

## James 1:19-27

v. 19. Since the gospel, ‘the word of truth,’ is the means and instrument which God uses in regeneration (v. 18), in Christian growth (1 Peter 2:2) and to comfort his people (1 Thess. 4:18), ‘Let every man be swift [eager] to hear.’ Let us seize upon every opportunity to hear the word. ‘Let us be slow to speak,’ either against what is heard without thoroughly weighing and considering it, or for what is heard until we are taught in the word. Be content to be a hearer of the word. We must not set ourselves up as teachers of the Scriptures until we have listened, learned and been taught of the Spirit (1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Tim. 2:15).

‘Let us be slow to wrath,’ when the doctrines of grace are preached, when corrections and instructions are given and when sin is exposed. According to the context, we are not to become angry or upset when someone disagrees with us, does not believe our gospel or lives contrary to our desires (Pro. 14:29). A passionate, angry spirit does not adorn the gospel.

v. 20. We do not persuade men to faith and righteousness, nor do we promote the glory of God, with an angry spirit. ‘A meek and quiet spirit is of great price in the sight of God.’

v. 21. To divide this verse into two points will open it up to us.

1. ‘Lay aside all manner of filthiness,’ both of flesh and spirit, especially pride, vanity, malice and evil speaking. The word ‘superfluity’ means ‘excess’ or what is ‘not needed.’ We are never wholly cleansed or rid of these things in this life. We are exhorted

constantly to ‘weed our gardens’ and rid ourselves of the passions of flesh and spirit.

2. ‘Receive the word with meekness and gentleness,’ even that word which is contrary to our thoughts and ideas. The ‘engrafted’ word is that which is put into the heart by the Holy Spirit, made a part of our very being by the power of God and is able to save our souls (Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 3:15).

v. 22. We are to be eager to hear the word of God.

1. We are to hear it thoughtfully and quietly, slow to become authorities and teachers.

2. We are to hear it humbly, as it is the word of our Lord (Rom. 9:20).

3. But we are not to be hearers only.

The word of God is to be believed, loved and obeyed! We are to put into practice its commandments, ordinances and principles (John 25:14). Those who rest upon outward hearing of the word only will be greatly disappointed in that day (Matt. 7: 26, 27).

*vv. 23, 24.* The word of God not only reveals the holy God to men; it also discovers sinful man to himself. The man who hears only is like a man who looks into a mirror and sees dirt, blemishes, hair in disarray but, rather than seeking cleansing and renewal, he goes his way, forgetting his condition and need. He finds it convenient to forget what he saw – both his guilt and the grace of Christ.

v. 25. The man who ‘looks into’ the word (not beholds and goes his way, but gazes with care, concern and interest into this gospel – called the perfect law of liberty – with full intent to receive, believe and obey it)

shall be blessed in his life of faith and obedience. It is called ‘the perfect law of liberty’ because it has liberty as its subject.

1. Christ frees us from the curse, condemnation and bondage of the law.
2. He frees us from the power and dominion of sin.
3. He gives us freedom to approach the throne of grace.
4. He leads us into the liberty of his grace!

‘He continues therein.’ Looking to Christ, looking into his word for faith, growth and leadership, and looking to his spirit for grace, strength and instruction is a lifelong occupation and privilege (Heb. 12:1, 2).

v. 26. If a man professes to be religious (or appears to be so by preaching, praying or personal piety) and does not control his tongue, but boasts of his works, speaks evil of others, is critical of others, sows discord among the brethren, or speaks in wrath, unkindness and gossip, the man is a fraud, a phony, a hypocrite, and his profession is in vain!

v. 27. That religion which is sincere and genuine, free from hypocrisy before God, is supported by the labors of love and works of faith. This is not a full definition of true religion, but shows the effects and evidences of it, by which it is known, and without which it cannot be genuine and sincere. Where there is true faith in the heart, there is love to God; where there is love to God, there is love to others; and this will show itself in works.

# Fulfilling the royal law

## James 2:1-9

*v. 1.* In the first verses of this chapter, James rebukes a respect of persons on account of outward circumstances and material advantage! In the body of Christ, there are no rich and poor, important and unimportant, great and small, black and white, but Christ is all (Col. 3:10, 11; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13). We are to show no partiality, favoritism or preference because of material or physical differences between believers!

Brethren, children of the same Father and family ought never to have, hold and profess the faith of Christ in such a manner as to cater to the rich and powerful and show contempt for the poor and weak!

*vv. 2-4.* An illustration. Suppose two men come into our assembly. One, judging by his gold rings and fine clothes, is a very wealthy and influential man. The other, judging by his shabby clothes, is a very poor and ignorant man. If we are impressed and awed by the presence of the wealthy man and say to him, 'Here is a choice seat. We are glad to have you. Welcome to our assembly,' and with some contempt and indignation, say to the poor, 'Sit in the back, or on the floor,' we are discriminating, judging and making a distinction between them not based on faith, godliness or a spiritual relationship with Christ, but on material advantage! Our motive is wrong. Our thoughts are evil. We do not demonstrate the love of Christ (Acts 10:34, 35; Ps. 40:4).

The people of God are not to enlist the aid of the world's famous, wealthy and important to further the cause of Christ. In the church fellowship we are to despise any inclination within us to honour and cater for the flesh! (Ps. 118:6-9.) We are to cultivate a spirit of love and oneness which highly regards all believers, rich or poor, for Christ's sake! (1 Tim. 5:21.)



v. 5. ‘Listen to this, my beloved brethren. Hath not our Lord chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world?’ They are not poor at all, for they are rich in faith and grace. Has not God chosen those who have nothing in this world and are looked upon as being nothing? In reality they are somebody, for they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ in the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 1:26-29). The Lord’s choice of his people is not based upon the merit, intelligence, morals or wealth of men, but is according to his mercy and grace.

vv. 6, 7. When we show respect to men because of material or physical difference, when we distinguish between men on this basis, we not only humiliate, dishonour and show contempt for the poor, but also for our Lord! We are as much as saying that he did a wrong thing in choosing his elect without regard to natural advantage. Is it not the worldly rich and powerful who are usually idled with pride and arrogance and who really hold us in contempt? Is it not usually the rich and powerful who oppress the church and hate the gospel of free grace for sinners? Is it not usually the rich and famous who blaspheme the name of the Lord Jesus and worship not before his throne? It is true that our Lord has called and conquered some of the world’s mighty and noble, but not many! Material wealth, fame and popularity generally beget more pride, self-righteousness and contempt for grace!

v. 8. On the other hand, ‘if you really fulfill the royal law’ (so called because it is the law of the King of kings) ‘you do well!’ This royal law says, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ (Matt. 22:34-40; Gal. 5:13, 14; 6:2). Every person is my neighbour and is to be an object of my love and compassion, especially those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

v. 9. If we show partiality, favoritism and honour to one person above another because of position, power or wealth, we commit sin, and we are rebuked and convicted by the law of our Lord as transgressors. If motive in such behaviour is considered, the sin is evident: for we are doubting the care of our Lord and looking to the arm of fleshly influence and help. If understanding in such behaviour is considered, the sin is evident: for our judgment of the persons' relationship with God is formed not by heart and life, but by appearance and possessions (Luke 16:15; 12:15). Many who flee some of the outward, more obvious forms of sin may find themselves great transgressors and stoners in regard to attitude, spirit, and absence of genuine love!

# Good works – the evidence of faith

## James 2:10-18

v. 10. A man is not at liberty to obey and neglect what commandments of Christ he pleases, but should have respect to them all. Men of pharisaical disposition may fancy (because they are outwardly moral) that they have kept the law of God (like the rich young ruler or Saul of Tarsus), but this is a sad mistake. To offend in one point (even what we may regard as a small point) is to be treated by the law as a transgressor (Rom. 2:28, 29).

v. 11. The same Lawgiver (the living God) who gave the seventh commandment delivered the sixth commandment. The point James makes is that the law of God is one (a single law), though it consists of different precepts. To violate one precept of the law makes us violators of the whole law.

v. 12. ‘So speak and so do.’ Both words and actions should be weighed! Believers are to give attention to what they think, say and do, for the believer is judged by, and responsible to the law of Christ, especially about love (John 13:34, 35). Christ is our law, and our profession is weighed by the same.

v. 13. The man ‘who has shown no mercy’ to the poor and distressed members of Christ, but has for gain shown respect to the powerful, ‘will receive judgment before God without mercy’ (Matt. 25:41-45; Mark 11:25, 26). Merciful men, who have shown mercy in the name of Christ and for the glory of Christ, are not afraid of judgment, but rather rejoice in view of it, knowing that in Christ there is no judgment. They know what manner of men they are by God’s grace.

v. 14. What is the use for any person to say that he has faith in Christ if he has no good works (no labour of love) to show for it? Can this kind of faith save? Certainly not! True faith is not historical faith, nor faith that lies only in words. True faith that saves is an operative grace that works by love and kindness both to Christ and others (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 2:4).

vv. 15, 16. ‘Suppose a brother or sister is without proper clothing and has nothing to eat, and you say to him, ‘Goodbye! Keep yourself warm and well-fed,’ yet you do not give him any clothes or food. What good have you done him? Will your words warm him? Will your words feed him?’ Of course not! A man is foolish to think that words alone can profit a man in these circumstances. In the same way, foolish is the man who thinks that his words of religion will take the place of works of faith!

v. 17. Faith that has no works is a dead, useless, false faith! Works without faith are dead works. Faith without works is dead faith! Good works are second acts, necessarily flowing from the life of faith. By these works there is clear evidence that faith is living and active! Those who perform them in the name of Christ are true and living believers. Works are not infallible proof of genuine faith, but the absence of works is certain proof of the absence of faith!

v. 18. A true believer in Christ may very justly call upon a person who professes religion but who has no works of faith (no labour of love, no life of dedication) to prove what he professes. ‘You say that you have faith. I am saying nothing about having faith, but it is evident to you, and to all, that I do have works (I believe Christ, I worship him, I support his gospel, I help his people, I show mercy to the needy and compassion to the weak). Now, you prove to me that you believe and love Christ; give me some evidence that you are a child of God.’ Faith is an inward principle in the

heart, a hidden thing which can only be known and seen by external works and results. The faith of Christ, which is real, needs not words of confirmation, but is confirmed and evidenced by good work.

# Faith without works is dead

## James 2:19-26

These verses are a continuation of the warning given by the man who has a faith that produces good works, godliness and obedience, to the man who boasts of a faith without works. He is declaring that while works are not an infallible proof of faith, the absence of works is certain proof of the absence of faith!

v. 19. Faith without works is no more than the faith of devils who are damned. ‘You believe that there is one God; you do well,’ for there is but one God, proved by the light of nature, the works of creation, providence and the Scriptures. But the devils also have this same historical faith and knowledge. They know and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah! (Luke 4:34; Acts 16:17; 19:15.) These devils tremble at the wrath of God and the thought of future torment (Mark 5:7; Matt. 8:28, 29).

v. 20. ‘O vain, foolish man, do you want proof or evidence that faith without deeds is useless and as dead as a body without life? I will give you proof that good works necessarily flow from true faith as breath, movement and warmth flow from a natural body that lives.’

v. 21. An example is Abraham. ‘Was not Abraham justified by works?’ One must remember the subject! We are not discussing the justification of Abraham’s soul before God (Rom. 4:2-5; 3:28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11), but the truth of his faith and the reality of his justification. The faith that Abraham claimed was demonstrated and confirmed by his willingness to offer his son upon the altar. One cannot separate true faith and obedience. If Abraham had refused to leave his country or refused to offer his son, it

would have been proof that he did not really believe God, though he may have claimed with his words that he did! His faith was attended by good works and evidenced by them!

v. 22. ‘Do you see how that Abraham’s faith and his actions were working together?’ When God gave a command, Abraham readily obeyed because he believed God. His works and obedience declared his faith to be sincere, true and genuine! His faith in God led him to obey, even though he knew not why, how, or where. There is no ‘perfect’ faith! A better word may be ‘complete,’ or ‘genuine.’ By his works his claim of faith is justified!

v. 23. Genesis 15:6 speaks of Abraham’s faith and the imputation of it to him for righteousness long before Isaac was born. The sacrifice of Isaac was a fulfillment of this scripture. His obedience is a clear proof of the truth of his faith and gives reason to believe that he was a justified person, loved and favored by God. Abraham also loved God and showed himself friendly to him, trusting in him and yielded to his will (Isa. 41:8).

v. 24. It may appear that James is contradicting Paul’s statement in Romans 3:28. This is not true! Paul speaks of the justification of the soul before God. James speaks of the justification of our faith before men (v. 18). Paul speaks of our works as a cause, saying that good works cannot be the cause of justification. James speaks of good works as an effect, flowing from faith and showing the sincerity of faith. Paul warns the legalists and self-righteous who sought acceptance by works. James warns the libertines and worldly who sought acceptance by an empty profession of faith that had no regard for holiness and good works!

v. 25. Rahab is another example. She believed God, and her faith was shown to be true and genuine by her works. Wherever there is faith, in Jew or Gentile, male or female, greater or lesser believers, there will be good

works to follow. Therefore that person is a vain and foolish person who lays claim to faith, boasts of favour with God and looks upon godliness and good works as unnecessary!

v. 26. As a body when the spirit, breath and life are gone out of it is dead and useless, so faith without works is a vain, useless, unprofitable thing that can neither justify, save, nor give any reason or comfort that a man will be saved!



# Can the tongue be tamed?

## James 3:1-8

v. 1. Almost all writers agree that the word ‘masters’ is ‘teachers.’ ‘My brethren, do not rush eagerly toward and aspire to be teachers of the Scriptures. Take not this office presumptuously upon yourselves.’

Unqualified, untaught and uncalled teachers and preachers are partly responsible for the corrupt practice and doctrine in churches today. We do not want to discourage men from the office of teacher, but we must urge restraint and avoid ordaining novices. We must pray that God will call and make known to us who should preach and teach his word (Luke 10:1, 2; Acts 13:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:22; 3:6). Teaching the word requires not only a fluent tongue, a knowledge of the Scriptures and a sincere heart, but also an anointing of the Lord.

‘The greater condemnation.’ That is saying, ‘We teachers are judged by a higher standard and with greater severity than others, for when we become teachers, we assume greater accountability and responsibility’ (Matt. 5:19).

v. 2. ‘We all, without exception [teachers, pupils, preachers], fall and offend in many ways.’ Those of us who teach and those of us who are taught have many infirmities (1 John 1:8-10). The tongue, however, is our major source of offence. If a person can learn to control his tongue, he is a mature believer. The person who has learned when to speak, what to speak and how to speak for the glory of God and the good of the church is mature. His actions will be in keeping with his words – controlled by love and grace!

This follows verse 1 because the person who has taken upon himself to speak for God, for the Scriptures and for the church is in an especially precarious position.

The tongue is a small member, but it can produce amazing, astounding, sometimes disastrous, sometimes marvellous results! Three illustrations follow.

v. 3. The horse's bit. The horse is a big, strong animal, wild and self-willed, but by placing a very small bit in his mouth, we can turn his whole body in the direction we want him to go!

v. 4. The ship's rudder. How vast, bulky, and heavy is the ship which is driven by wind or powerful motors! Yet we can turn that great ship to safety or to the rocks by a very small rudder.

v. 5. A small fire. Just a match or even a spark can destroy a home, a forest or a city, like the horse's bit, the rudder and the match, the tongue is a small thing; yet it can do great and mighty things. The tongue, well-ordered and sanctified, can preach the gospel, comfort, bring happiness, build friendships, unite people, etc. But the tongue can also do great harm and evil (as shown in the next verse).

v. 6. The tongue, when moved by anger, envy, jealousy, ambition and like passions, is like a destructive, spreading fire which destroys without partiality or pity.

1. It is like a fire from the heat of it; it is an instrument of wrath that stirs passions like water boiling.

2. It is like a fire in the danger of it, no one in its path is safe; it can turn a happy home or church into a barren wilderness.

3. It is like a fire in the duration of it; a fire out of control is hard to stop, and words spoken in anger live on and on.

This small member can destroy friendships that have stood for years. It can destroy homes and churches that have been happy and content. It can destroy character and reputations, plant suspicion and doubt and turn men from the truth to error.

v. 7, 8. Man has succeeded in taming beasts, birds, serpents and even the fish of the sea, 'but the tongue can no man tame.' No man can control it, hold it in check, or stop its bitterness and evil. No man can tame the tongue but the grace of God can tame, subdue and make it an instrument for God's praise and goodness. When the grace of God acts on the heart, it will subdue the tongue.

1. Grace slays the corruption which uses the tongue as an outlet.

2. Grace quenches the flames of hate and jealousy which motivate the tongue.

3. Grace implants a new nature of love which influences the tongue to speak in kindness, truth and sincerity, for the glory of God and the good of all men.

Only one great power can change this small member from an instrument of evil to an instrument of good – the grace of God in Christ.

# Who among you is wise?

## James 3:9-18

v. 9. The human tongue is the instrument that is used in praising God for all his mercies in Christ, both in prayer and singing hymns. The tongue is used to thank God before meals, to speak of his glorious attributes and to join with other believers in worshipping the Lord. The human tongue is also the instrument that is used to curse, criticize, slander and speak harshly and hurtfully to men and women who were made by God in his own image.

v. 10. Some, by the grace of God, use their tongues to bless God! Some, whose tongues are untamed by grace, use their tongues to curse others and speak unkindly. Unfortunately, there are those who try to do both! With the same tongue they bless God, talk religion and profess holiness, while they also curse, criticize and speak evil of one another. ‘This, my brethren, is a contradiction.’ Not only is it wicked and sinful, but it is unnatural, unbecoming and unworthy of the Christian name.

vv. 11, 12. These illustrations are given to show how ridiculous and absurd it is to think that a man may truly praise God and with the same tongue lie, curse and blaspheme. It cannot be done, any more than a fountain can yield both fresh and bitter water at the same time, or a fig tree can bear olives.

v. 13. ‘Who among you is a wise and intelligent person?’ All of us like to think that we are wise and knowledgeable. Not one of us would consider himself a fool! If you would prove that you are spiritually wise and intelligent, let it be by your conduct and conversation. This is not a single

act or two, but a course of living which is in keeping with the word of God. It is the spirit of humility, peace and love (1 Tim. 6:11; Col. 3:12-15). Daily godliness, words seasoned with grace, an attitude of humility and love – these are evidences of spiritual wisdom.

v. 14. ‘But if you have bitter envy, jealousy, strife and contention in your hearts and from your mouths, do not glory in your so-called knowledge and wisdom, for it is a lie; it is contrary to the truth (1 Cor. 3:13; 1 John 2:9; 4:20).

vv. 15, 16. This superficial wisdom is not from God, but is of the earth, unspiritual and even devilish. You can be sure that when our attitude and words create strife, confusion and division among the brethren, when we speak from envy, bitterness and selfishness, it is not the wisdom of God. Where wise men worship, there are love, mercy and peace. But where there are envy and strife, there will be ‘confusion and evil works’ (Gal. 5:13-16). ‘Wisdom is justified and vindicated by her children and their deeds’ (Matt. 11:19).

v. 17. But the wisdom which is from God is:

1. ‘Pure.’ ‘Out of the heart the mouth speaks.’ When the heart entertains pure and good thoughts, the mouth speaks accordingly (Matt. 5:8).

2. ‘Peaceable.’ ‘This is the opposite of strife (Pro. 15:1, 2; Matt. 5:9). Men who desire peace speak peacefully.

3. ‘Gentle,’ mild, courteous, kind and patient. To contend for truth is not to be harsh, cruel and unbending, as some suppose. Gentleness is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), an attribute of Christ (2 Cor. 10:1) and also of his servants (2 Tim. 2:24).

4. 'Easy to be entreated,' or 'willing to listen' to any word of reason, explanation or exhortation; quick to forgive and waiting to be gracious. This is not a sign of weakness but of wisdom.

5. 'Full of mercy and good fruits.' Wisdom knows who makes men to differ, knows who makes rich and poor, knows whence comes our help. Having freely received, it freely gives (Matt. 10:8; Eccles. 11:1).

6. 'Without partiality.' Wisdom does not judge by outward appearance, skin color or power to reimburse. It is no respecter of men's persons, but loves and reaches out to all.

7. 'Without hypocrisy.' True spiritual wisdom in Christ is straightforward, free from doubts, fears and insincerity.

v. 18. Where heavenly wisdom and love live and operate, the fruit of righteousness is enjoyed. Those who sow in peace usually reap a peaceful harvest. Love begets love. 'He who would have friends must show himself friendly' (Pro. 18:24).

# The cause of contention and its cure

## James 4:1-10

In the preceding chapter, James warns believers against strife, contention, envy and pride. This behaviour is not of God, but is of the earth, sensual and devilish. In this chapter, he gives the true cause of contention and strife, cautioning us against allowing this spirit to prevail.

v. 1. ‘What causes strife, discord and quarrels (whether public or private) among you?’ All of us know that these things ought not to be. We have an abundance of scripture exhorting us to love one another, forgive, be kind, exercise patience, look not on our own welfare (but on the welfare of others) and preserve the unity of the Spirit (Ps. 133:1, 2). In spite of what we are taught and what we know to be the right way, however, misunderstandings and contention arise. Why?

The real cause is the corruption of nature – pride, envy, covetousness and jealousy, which, like so many soldiers, are stationed in our bodies and war against the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 17; Rom. 7:18-22). Our troubles come from within ourselves!

v. 2. ‘You are jealous and covet what others have’ (either materially, physically or spiritually). When these lusts and desires go unfilled, you turn against those who have what you covet, becoming murderers in your hearts (for to dislike or hate another is murder). You burn with envy and anger inwardly because you are not as blessed as someone else. You are not able to obtain the happiness, contentment, usefulness and gifts you see in others. Therefore you war against them in thought, criticism and insinuation. Perhaps the reason you do not have what you so strongly crave is that you have not asked God for it! Our carnal nature wants what

it does not have and resents others who have it, which leads to bad feelings.

v. 3. ‘But’ you may say, ‘I have prayed, I have asked God for gifts, blessings, talent, prosperity and happiness, but he does not give me what I asked for.’ Two charges are brought against us:

1. ‘You have not because you ask not.’ Murmuring and praying are not generally found in the same heart. Envy and intercession are not usually companions.

2. If you do ask God, and yet fail to receive, it is because you ask for the wrong purpose (evil, sinful motives). Your intention is to use the gift for your own pleasure and satisfaction, not for the glory of God.

v. 4. ‘Ye adulterers and adulteresses.’ This is not literal, but figurative and metaphorical. He is an adulterer who leaves his wife for another. We become adulterers in a spiritual sense when we leave Christ, our first love, and set our hearts and affections on the world and the things of the world. ‘Do you not know that an immoderate love for material and worldly things and a delight in the company and conversation of worldly people constitute a conflict with God?’ We cannot serve two masters. It ought to be enough to have his love, grace and presence, along with the fellowship of his people (Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:5; Matt. 6:24-34).

v. 5. There are two popular interpretations of this verse:

1. ‘Do you suppose that the scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, ‘The Holy Spirit, whom God has caused to dwell in us, yearns over us and desires our whole heart to be dedicated to the glory of and fellowship with our Lord?’



2. 'The scripture is clear which declares that the spirit of flesh and human nature which remains in us lusts enviously after those things which still appeal to the flesh (Rom. 7:23-25).

v. 6. But God gives us more and more grace to meet this evil tendency and all other carnal desires. His grace is sufficient to give us victory (2 Cor. 12:9). 'More grace' indicates a growth in grace. But he gives his grace 'to the humble,' not to the proud. He gives grace to those who are sensible of their own weakness and acknowledge it, who think the worst of themselves and the best of others, who do not envy the gifts and graces of others, but rejoice at them. He not only gives grace at the first, but he gives them more grace! It may be said, 'To those who have grace and humility, God gives more, and from those who have not he takes away even that which they have in common grace!'

v. 7. The way to overcome pride and defeat the spirit of envy, strife and contention is to submit ourselves to God!

1. To his will regarding gifts, talents and worldly possessions.
2. To leave it to God to make us what he would have us be.
3. To leave it to God to prosper or empty us.
4. To leave it to God to honour or humiliate us.

The way to overcome these evil tendencies is to resist them (to resist covetousness, envy, jealousy and wrong thoughts when we feel them rising within us). These thoughts and attitudes are of the devil and must be resisted.

v. 8. 'You who have been overcome with and a party to contention, envy and strife, 'draw close to God and he will receive you. Admit that you have sinned and need to be cleansed. Recognize that you have wavered

and your affections have been divided. Purify your hearts from spiritual adultery by returning to your first love!’

*vv. 9, 10.* ‘As you draw near to God, be deeply penitent and weep over your disloyalty. Let your laughter be turned to grief. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and he will lift you up.’

# The Lord willing

## James 4:10-17

v. 10. When men, before the Lord and from their hearts, acknowledge their sinfulness and unworthiness, seek the grace and mercy of God in Christ and walk humbly before God, owning their dependence on his grace, then he will lift them from the dunghill, give them a place and a name in his favour.

v. 11. Here is an evil of which we are all too guilty: speaking of another person in a critical, judgmental way. We are more prone to find fault than to encourage, to point out failures than to praise virtue, to repeat the bad rather than the good. One can never exalt himself by discrediting another! Gossip and criticism are not acceptable even if the report be true. Our words should be guided by love as well as truth (Lev. 19:16; Prov. 11:13).

In speaking evil of and judging a brother, we usurp God's office, an act of power that does not belong to us! We sit in the chair of judge and sentencer (Rom. 14:4). The law forbids rash judgment, gossip and evil speaking. In doing this we in effect become judges of the law. We are taking upon ourselves to decide which law is greatest – the one our brother broke or the one we despise by judging him.

v. 12. Only God is the Lawgiver and the Judge. He is able and willing to save by Jesus Christ even those who have despised his law. He is also able to destroy those who refuse to be humbled and to seek mercy. 'Who are you that presume to pass judgment on your brother or neighbour? You can neither save nor destroy! You have no access to his heart or mind. You have no knowledge of the extent of his failure, nor the extent of his repentance' (Jude 9).

v. 13. The apostle does not condemn buying and selling of merchandise or the lawful practice of going about one's business. He is rebuking those who resolve upon those things without consulting the will of God or considering the uncertainty and frailty of human life. We say that we are going here or there, that we are going to do this or that, as if these things are in our power and we have no dependence on the providence and blessings of God (1 Sam. 2:6-8; Deut. 32:39; John 3:27).

v. 14. You and I know nothing of tomorrow, not even if we will live until then. We cannot foresee what shall befall us tomorrow. Therefore it is stupidity and haughtiness to determine on this course or that without the will of God, in whom we live, move and have our being!

'What is your life?' Or, what is the nature of your life? You are but a wisp of vapor, a puff of smoke, a mist that is visible for a little while and then disappears. The reference is to the breath of man which cannot be depended upon (Job 14:1-5; Ps. 103:13-16).

v. 15. Instead of saying we will go to such-and-such a place, and we will do this or that, it should be said, 'If the Lord is willing, we shall live and we shall do this or that.' This is the condition of doing anything: is it agreeable to the sovereign will of the Lord, by which everything in the world comes to pass? (Rom. 1:10; 1 Cor. 4:19; Heb. 6:3.)

v. 16. 'As it is, you boast presumptuously of tomorrow, of the continuance of life, of going to certain places and doing certain things. All such boasting and planning without regard to the will and providence of our Lord is evil.' When we make plans and blueprints without a reference to the will of the Lord, we are expressing independence and ascribing too much to our power and will, as if our lives and fortunes were in our own hands.

v. 17. A person who knows what is right in regard to the above (putting a watch on our tongues, sowing discord among brethren, slander and evil speaking and idle boasting concerning our lives and daily activities) and does not do what is right, to him it is sin!

# A warning concerning riches

## James 5:1-6

v. 1. ‘Go to now, ye rich men.’ All rich men are not addressed here. Some wealthy men love Christ, love others and make good use of their riches for the glory of God, the preaching of the gospel and the relief of human suffering. The apostle writes to rich men who assemble with the church, who profess religion, but who, notwithstanding their profession, are not rich toward God, but are laying up treasures for themselves, boasting of their wealth and not making use of their substance for the glory of God and the good of others.

‘Weep and lament for the miseries that shall come upon you.’ These are eternal miseries that await all unbelievers and hypocrites. It is not possible that a man can know and love Christ who loves material wealth, has no compassion for the needy and does not give of himself and his substance to preach the gospel around the world (1 John 3:17, 18; Luke 12:19-21).

vv. 2, 3. Material riches, clothes, estates, houses and lands are all corruptible things and will one day rot and lie in ruins (1 Cor. 7:31). You have more clothes than you can wear, but instead of sharing them, you allow them to decay. Your gold and silver is rusting on the shelf and in bank vaults while people are in need of the gospel and assistance. Instead of making use of your substance in trade, in support of the poor and in the preaching of the gospel, you hoard and cherish it. The decay and rust of this wealth will come forth as a testimony against you at the judgment and it will prove to be a burning fire that will torment you in hell (Luke 16:25).

‘You heap treasure together for the last days.’ In your selfishness and covetousness you gather together riches, valuables, gold and silver for a

rich and prosperous old age. Instead of comfort, you will find that you have accumulated the wrath of God (Matt. 6:19-21).

The Lord has made us stewards of his grace and of the gifts of his grace, whether they be spiritual or material. Let us be good stewards, putting to use for his glory and the happiness of others all that passes through our hearts or hands (Luke 6:33-38).

v. 4. Much of this rusting gold and decaying possessions was accumulated by not paying your employees and workers fair and just wages. You have prospered abundantly through their labour; by working them for a pittance and not sharing with them, you have become rich. Their cries for vengeance and justice have come to the ears of the Lord of hosts (Lev. 19:13; Jer. 22:13).

vv. 5, 6. Here on earth you have enjoyed soft, luxurious living, while others have toiled and laboured for bare necessities. You have lived in self-indulgence and self-gratification while your servants lived in want. Like beasts that are fattened up by the farmer for the slaughter, like the turkey that is fed well for weeks before being cooked, you are fattening yourselves for God's wrath. When men add to the misery and bitterness of others (when it is in their power to relieve this misery), the oppressed cannot change this injustice, but God can (Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30).

Perhaps we will say, 'I am not rich and am not likely to be.' There is still a warning for us all in regard to material possessions. We are responsible on a smaller scale for what God puts into our hands. What little or much I have belongs to my Father, and I resolve to use it for his glory and the good of others (Pro. 11:24; Matt. 6:31-34; 1 Chron. 29:12-16).

Nine Bible words in regard to giving

1. Grace (2 Cor. 8:7).

2. Love (2 Cor. 8:8).
3. Willing (2 Cor. 8:12).
4. Proportion (1 Cor. 16:2).
5. Everyone (1 Cor. 16:2).
6. Bountifully (liberally) (2 Cor. 9:5, 6).
7. Cheerfully (voluntarily) (2 Cor. 9:7).
8. Unto the Lord (Matt. 6:1-5).
9. Forget not (Heb. 13:16).



# Pattern of patience

## James 5:7-12

v. 7. When the apostle addressed the rich professors of religion who lived in luxury and greed, kept back the honest wages of their servants and treasured up gold and silver instead of using it for the glory of God and the good of men, he did not call them brethren. Here he addresses the poor who were oppressed by the rich, and these he calls 'brethren'! He advises them to 'be patient' under their suffering and afflictions until death or the coming of the Lord, when he will take vengeance on all their oppressors and deliver them from all their troubles. While we are on earth the Lord would have us to hear our trials patiently, not murmur against his providence, nor seek vengeance on men (Rom. 12:19-21; Heb. 10:30, 31). 'Be like the farmer who sows precious seed and then waits patiently and expectantly for the harvest.' He waits for the early rains and the latter rains. He does not fret because the earth does not immediately yield the ripe fruit.

v. 8. Like the farmer who waits patiently for all the means that are necessary for a full and fruitful harvest, let us wait patiently for the means of divine grace which are necessary to try our faith, work God's will and bring forth the ripe fruit of grace. Our Lord is mindful of our situation and circumstances. They will all work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

'Establish your hearts,' which are prone to doubt, to fear and to question God's love and providence (Ps. 103:13, 14). The heart is established by the word of God, prayer, gospel ordinances and the fellowship and encouragement of other believers. We must make use of these in order to take heart, be of good cheer and not be discouraged or dismayed. 'Lift up your heads and hearts for the coming of the Lord

draweth near!’ At his coming, we shall enter into the joys of our Lord and be for ever free from all sin, sorrow and suffering (Rev. 21:1-7).

v. 9. ‘Grudge not against one another.’ Complain not against one another on account of another’s riches, gifts or prosperity (either temporal or spiritual). ‘A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.’ Do not envy one another or secretly complain and condemn one another, lest you be condemned openly at the bar of God by the Judge of the whole earth, who looks upon the heart and is aware of the murmurings, grumbings and envious thoughts of men (1 Sam. 16:7).

Don’t set yourself up as a judge of men or your own state. There is but one Judge of all the earth, and he is at the door. He is just and righteous and will set all things right.

v. 10. ‘Look upon the prophets. They walked with God, were highly favored of God; God revealed the mysteries of his will to them, and they spoke for God. Still, though they enjoyed God’s favour, they suffered much, being ridiculed, mocked, hated of men and even put to death. Their afflictions and trials were great, yet they were very patient through them. These people are examples and patterns for us! (Heb. 11:35-40; 2 Cor. 11:23-30.)

v. 11. We look back at the courage, faith and patience of these believers and call them blessed! They are happy now; the glory of God rests upon them. They felt honoured to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake. Now they are glorified with him (Matt. 10:16-22).

‘You have heard especially of the patience and endurance of Job in the book that bears his name.’ Though he was severely tried in the loss of all temporal comforts, possessions and friends, he did not murmur against God or charge him foolishly (Job 1:21, 22). ‘You have also seen the Lord’s purpose in all this and how he richly blessed Job, for the Lord is

full of pity, tenderness and mercy.’ The Lord loves his children and all that he brings to pass in their lives is for their eternal good (Job 42:10; Ps. 111:4).

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

William Cowper, 1774

v. 12. Impatience and murmuring against the providence of God should not manifest themselves in secret envy, sighs and groans. Especially they should not break forth in rash oaths, or in profane swearing.

‘Above all things.’ The profanation of God's name is a serious offence (Ex. 20:7; Matt. 5:33-37). The Lord strictly commands us to reverence his holy name. Nor are we to swear by heaven or earth, because the glory of God is everywhere shining forth, and when angry men swear by heaven or earth, they only designate the Worker by his works!

It has been a common vice in all ages to find ways to curse or swear while not mentioning the name of God. Men imagine that there is no evil as long as they do not mention the name of God. This is deception and delusion, for the angry, rebellious spirit and attitude are present, whatever the words that come forth! We are not to swear out of passion, anger or habit.

There is a form of swearing that is not sinful. There are illustrations in scripture of men who took lawful oaths in the fear of the Lord for his

sanction and glory (Deut. 6:13; 1 Kings 17:1; Gal. 1:20; 2 Cor. 1:23). The apostle is warning against a careless, profane use of God's name, works or kingdom in our conversation. A 'yes' or 'no' is usually sufficient for an honest believer; anything more than this puts us in grave danger of God's wrath.

# The prayer of faith shall save the sick

## James 5:13-20

v. 13. 'Is any among you afflicted?' The people of God generally are poor and afflicted. Those whom the Lord loves, as he loved Lazarus, are not free from sickness, sorrow and trials (John 16:33; Heb. 12:5-8). Times of affliction and trial are times to pray (2 Cor. 12:7-10), not to murmur or despair. Let us then pray for patience, wisdom and deliverance (James 1:5, 6).

'Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.' As afflictions ought to stimulate us to pray, prosperity and blessings ought to lead us to praise God. Let us be thankful to God for his many mercies, temporal and spiritual. Such is the perverseness of men that times of blessings and prosperity find them forgetting him who is the source of all blessings (James 1:17).

v. 14. 'Is any sick among you?' The bodies of believers (as well as others) are liable to a variety of diseases (Phil. 2:25-27; 2 Tim. 4:20). 'Let him call for the elders of the church.' This may mean those who hold that office by the authority of the church, or the older men of the church, sound in faith, men of gravity and long experience. 'And let them pray over him.' Let them pray for his comfort, his recovery and the grace of God to strengthen him in his need. 'Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.' Some suggest that this means to use ordinary medicine, as well as prayer. Some suggest that this ought not to be done today because the extraordinary gift of healing in the church has ceased (Mark 6:13). Others say that the oil is symbolic of the Spirit of God and should be applied as this scripture commands. Whether we anoint with oil or whether we pray for them without the anointing, let all be done in the name of, for the glory of, and according to the will of our Lord Jesus (John 14:13, 14; Heb. 4:16; 1 John 5:14, 15).

v. 15. James emphasizes the importance of faith in praying. He calls it the 'prayer of faith,' faith on the part of the elders and on the part of the sick brother. When we doubt God, we close the door of prayer (Heb. 11:6; James 1:6, 7; Matt. 21:22). We cannot say that God will heal everyone for whom we pray. It may be his will for that one to die or to bear an affection longer, for his good and God's glory, but we can certainly say faithless prayer will not be heard or answered. 'If he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.' No man lives without sin; but the sense is that if this brother has been guilty of offences which God has taken particular notice of, and on account of which he has brought him down, in order that he might acknowledge them and repent, God will heal him and forgive him (Ps. 51:3, 4, 7-11).

v. 16. It is not profitable to us, nor to anyone else for us to name, number and confess all our sins to one another. Only the Lord is to hear our confessions, and only before him are we to expose our hearts. But we are to acknowledge together (mutually confess) that we are sinners, that we are not without fault or the potential to commit sin. When we have openly offended a brother, confession and repentance are in order, that we may be reconciled. Pray one for another that we may be healed, not just in body but in Spirit, fellowship and attitude.

'The effectual, retreat prayer.' That is, the prayer that is put up with power, energy and life, that is truly from the heart, put forth with ardor and importunity, from a man who by faith is justified and clothed in the righteousness of Christ, avails much. God hears not cold, formal prayers from profane and false professors.

vv. 17, 18. Elijah was truly a human being, born in sin, by nature no better than others, subject to like passions (both in soul and body) as we are. He was not free from sinful passions, such as impatience, fear and unbelief.

Yet he prayed to God in earnestness, with his understanding; heart and spirit engaged therein, that it might not rain; and he was heard. He was also heard three years later when he prayed for rain. The point is that we are not to imagine that Elijah was heard by God because of his own merit or goodness, but because of the grace of God and the merit of Christ. We must not imagine that men like Elijah and Moses were half-gods or that they had a peculiar, personal line to God; they were men like you and me, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

*vv. 19, 20.* ‘Brethren, if any one among you strays from the truth of Christ and falls into error, and another believer (by prayer, teaching and solemn warning) is the means the Holy Spirit uses to bring the fallen one back to God, let that faithful witness understand that when he preaches, teaches and faithfully witnesses to sinners, he will be the means of turning them from eternal death and procuring the pardon of all their sins’ (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 10:13-15).

# 1 Peter

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan



# The elect — redeemed and preserved

## 1 Peter 1:1-5

The writer of this epistle is Simon Peter. It is called his General Epistle because it is not addressed to any particular person or church but to Christians in several places. It is thought by some to be the oldest of all the epistles. 1 Peter 5:12-13 gives us the place from which it was written (Babylon) and the brother by whom it was sent (Silas, the friend and companion of Paul). Also found here is the design of the epistle, ‘to declare to you that this is the true account of the grace of God.’

v. 1. Peter does not call himself the vicar or successor of Christ nor the head of the church, but only an apostle of Christ. He writes to the people of God who were driven from their homes and lands by persecution and for the sake of the gospel (Acts 8:1-4; Acts 11:19).

v. 2. ‘Elect.’ — Believers are called the elect of God because God has chosen them to salvation (2 Thess. 2:13; Mark 13:20; 1 Cor. 1:27-30; 1 Thess. 1:4; Rom. 11:5-7; Rom. 9:11; Acts 13:48).

The cause of election is ‘according to the foreknowledge of God.’ The reasons for our election are not found in us but in God (Eph. 2:4-5; Matt. 11:25-26; 1 John 4:10). God knows because God foreordains (Rom. 8:29-30).

The means God uses to carry out the design of election are ‘sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth’ (2 Thess. 2:13). The Holy Spirit quickens, convicts of sin, reveals Christ to the heart, and works true repentance and faith in the sinner (Eph. 1:12-14; Rom. 10:13-17).

The end or goal of election is obedience to Christ and to be cleansed and justified through his blood. Election is not salvation; it is unto salvation. Those who are elect will hear his voice and will believe on Christ and will be saved (John 10:24-28; Rom. 8:28-30). The sprinkling of the blood of Christ alludes to the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb in the Old Testament.

v. 3-4. Here we have an example of the sacrifice of praise Paul mentioned in Hebrews. Every time Paul talks about God's electing, regenerating, and redeeming grace, he blesses or praises God (Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13).

The *cause* is again according to his abundant mercy.

The *means* is the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. Christ died for our sins and arose for our Justification. 'Because I live, ye shall live.'

The *end* or goal is a living hope and a certain inheritance. This hope is called a living hope because it is based not on dead works but on the Person and work of a living Christ! Our inheritance is incorruptible—neither moth, nor rust, nor decay, nor years have any effect on it. It is undefiled—pure and holy and untouched by sin. It fadeth not away as the world and its fashion. It is reserved in heaven for you—it awaits your coming (John 14:13).

v. 5. Our Lord Jesus Christ has assumed full responsibility for his people—to redeem them, to keep them, to intercede for them, and to finally present them all before the Father (Rom. 8:34; Jude 24; John 6:37-40; Phil. 1:6). We are kept through faith (not in rebellion and disobedience), looking to Christ, living by Christ, and leaning on Christ. We have been saved, we are being saved, and our final salvation (or deliverance) is ready to be revealed. There is the preservation of the believer by the power of God

and the perseverance of the believer in faith. He will not leave us, and we will not leave him. It is impossible to have one without the other (Jer. 32:40; Psalm 74:24, 28; Heb. 3:6, 14).

# The trial of your faith

## 1 Peter 1:6-16

v. 6. This verse is a part of what has been written before. Believers are a happy people. They rejoice that they are the elect of God, that they have been regenerated by the Spirit of God; they rejoice in the redemption of Christ, for their sins are forgiven; they rejoice in the resurrection of Christ; and they rejoice in their inheritance, which is reserved in heaven.

‘Though now for a little while we are distressed by trials and temptations’ (John 16:33; Luke 6:21-24). The word ‘temptation’ refers not to temptation to sin but refers to the trials which God in his wisdom decrees and permits for our good. These trials come in different ways—the trial of difficult service, the trial of reproach from unbelievers, the trial of riches or poverty, the trial of sickness or sorrow, the trial of success or failure, the trial of disappointment (Rom. 8:28). Sometimes trials of faith are unpleasant to the flesh, but not always. God may permit a man to prosper in order to try his faith.

v. 7. God has a reason for every trial and affliction that he brings into our lives. Faith is tried to reveal the genuineness of it. Your faith is more precious than gold (which will finally perish), and gold must be tested by fire. When gold comes through the fire, it is purged of its dross and shines the brighter. So faith that comes through real trial is purged of pride, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness; only that which rests in Christ is left.

Faith is tried in order to strengthen it and increase it. The more my faith is used, the stronger it becomes. Trials do not produce faith; they reveal faith!

Faith is tried to reveal the value of it to me (1 Cor. 15:19). Nothing is better for us than to find out how frail we are and how fragile are the

things of this world. Our trials enable us to comfort others who are tried (2 Cor. 1:3-4). Faith which survives trial will be honored and praised at the appearing of Christ. It will bring glory to Christ and to us.

v. 8. We have never seen Christ with our natural eyes, yet we believe him (John 20:29). We believe not with a notional, historical, or temporary faith but actually looking to him as our Lord and Saviour with confidence, unspeakable joy, and full expectation, being confident that what he has promised, he is able to perform (Rom. 4:20-21).

v. 9. The chief design of this verse is to distinguish this great salvation from a temporary deliverance. The end of faith (or the results of faith) is not just to make life here bearable or only to give us moral principles by which to live; but the outcome of faith is the complete salvation of our souls from sin, from the law, from hell, from eternal death, and to eternal glory with our Lord. This is the salvation we now have by faith in our risen Lord!

v. 10. The prophets of the Old Testament, who wrote of Christ's coming and of the redemption which he would accomplish (Isa. 53:4-6; Acts 10:43; John 5: 46), searched and enquired earnestly about this salvation (Luke 2:25-32).

v. 11. The spirit of Christ was in these prophets of old. They wrote as they were taught and moved by the Spirit. They prophesied as they were inspired by the Spirit. The Spirit of God prophesied through them concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, and they sought to find out when this would take place and to whom this great grace should come (Luke 24:27, 45-47).

v. 12. It was revealed to these Old Testament prophets that the services they rendered and the coming of the Messiah of which they spoke would not be fulfilled in their day but in a later day. Therefore, those who lived in the days of his coming would recognize the Messiah from the fulfillment of their prophecies and all Old Testament types and pictures. They were ministering to us. The fulfillment of these things is reported to you by the same Holy Spirit who inspired them to prophesy of him. We proclaim the gospel by the same spirit by which they prophesied and promised the gospel. Into the very things which we preach and you believe, the angels desire to look!

vv. 13-16. Therefore (since you are so highly favored as to be a witness and a recipient of all that these great prophets only talked about, hoped for, and enquired into; and since you have had revealed to your heart mysteries that the angels desire to look into), consider the following:

1. Apply your mind and heart diligently to these things that we have in Christ. Be sober, take them seriously and conscientiously, setting your full hope on the grace that is yours in Christ.

2. Live as obedient children of God. Do not conform your lives to the world with its vanities and lusts which governed you before you knew the gospel.

3. As the one who called you out of sin to himself is holy, you, yourselves, also be holy in your conduct, your conversation, and your manner of living. For it is written in Lev. 11:44-45, 'Be ye holy for I am holy,' saith the Lord!

# The price of redemption

## 1 Peter 1:17-25

v. 17. Believers in this world are pilgrims and sojourners. Though we are in this world, we are not of it. We are natives here by our first birth, but our second birth makes us citizens of a heavenly country. We are here for a little while only. So if we call God our Father and if we call on God for his mercy and grace in Christ through this life and for life to come, let us do so in true reverence and fear of God and with sincerity of heart. For God, without respect of persons, is a true judge of the works of men. He looks on the heart, not on the outward flesh (John 6:28-29; Luke 16:15).

v. 18. You know that God did not redeem you from the useless way of life filled with tradition, ceremonialism, ritualism, and vain and useless things (received from your forefathers) with silver and gold. The price of redemption is higher than this. Peter is not talking about the corruption of human nature (from which we have certainly been redeemed) but about Judaism, with all of its vain religious show of outward self-righteousness.

v. 19. But you were purchased with the precious blood of Christ the Messiah, like that of a sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish. Christ's blood is human blood, only not tainted with sin. Christ's blood is the blood of one who is God as well as man and was freely shed in the stead of his people. Christ's blood is a sufficient price for our redemption because of who he is. It is precious blood (precious to the Father and to the believer) for a priceless purchase! (Matt. 26:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:12; Rev. 1:5.)

v. 20. Christ was chosen and ordained to be our Surety and Saviour before the foundation of the world. Redemption of sinners by the blood of Christ was no after-thought of God when Adam fell. There was a Saviour provided before Adam fell (Rev. 13:8; Heb. 13:20; Acts 2:23). But he was brought out to public view and to public rejection and crucifixion in these last days.

v. 21. It was all for you, who by him do believe in God. Christ came to redeem all who believe (Matt. 1:21). He fulfilled all righteousness for us. He bore our sins in his body and rose for our justification. He ascended to the Father, where he ever liveth to make intercession for you.

1. It is by him that we believe, for faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9).

2. It is by him that we can approach God (John 14:6).

3. It is by him that we are accepted by God (Eph. 1:6).

4. It is by him that we can know God (1 Cor. 1:30). Our faith and hope have this sure foundation—Christ has both risen and entered into glory. My Lord and Representative has won the battle and has already occupied heaven for me (John 14:2-3).

v. 22. The apostle now passes to another exhortation; namely, to brotherly love, seeing that you have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to lay hold of Christ by faith and by the blood of Christ. Your souls and hearts have been purified and cleansed and sanctified. See that you love one another fervently and sincerely with a pure heart, for the end of sanctification and the evidence of sanctification is love (1 John 3:14; John 13:35; 1 Cor. 13:1-3).

v. 23. We have been born again and belong to the same family, being born of the same Father; therefore, we ought to love as brethren. This glorious



birth is not of natural seed, which serves only to corrupt us and impart an evil nature, but of holy seed, the Word of God, which lives and abides in us forever. Our first conception leads only back to the dust; our spiritual conception is eternal life! (James 1:18.)

v. 24. All flesh (all that is natural and of man) is like the grass of the field, which withers and dies. All of the honor and glory of the flesh is like the flower, which fades and finally drops off in death and decay (Isa. 40:6-8).

v. 25. But the word of God (by which he created the world and all things and by which he created us anew in Christ Jesus) abides forever (2 Cor. 4:6). This word is the gospel, which was preached to you!

# Christ – the chief cornerstone

## 1 Peter 2:1-8

There is no subject more important than the nature and extent of the inward change that takes place when a man is savingly joined to Christ. Some think that this sanctification is God's work and that man has nothing to do with it. They say that God saves us, sanctifies us, and works his will in us; and we need give no concern to the matter of holiness. Others think that the work of sanctification and personal holiness is man's work entirely—that God gives us the means and waits to see what we will make of ourselves.

Peter cuts both of these errors out by the roots. On the one hand he teaches that we are the elect of God, born of the Spirit, given a new nature, a new heart, a new direction, and indwelt by the Spirit of God. But on the other hand, this dramatic change is accomplished through knowledge and belief of the truth (2 Thess. 2:13; Mark 16:15-16). We are born again, but we are babes who must mature and grow. God has appointed means of growth—the word, prayer, worship, fellowship, trials, personal determination and effort (2 Peter 1:5-8). 'God worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure' (Phil. 2:12-13).

v. 1. Peter exhorts us to lay aside (to be done with) these things that are disagreeable and contrary to spiritual life. Unfortunately, it is not a 'once for all' accomplishment but a continual effort of 'laying aside' the following:

1. *Malice*—ill-will and ill-feeling toward others. Malice is born of self-love.

2. *Guile* or deceit. The word is used for all dishonest ways of gaining our goals. We must be men and women who speak the truth and who deal honestly with all men.

3. *Hypocrisy*. This is the opposite of sincerity. It is pretending to be what we aren't and speaking with our lips what is not in our hearts.

4. *Envy* is the natural effect of malice and reveals the absence of love. Envy is the uneasiness a person feels in the happiness, prosperity, or success of another.

5. *Evil speaking*. When we think of evil speaking, we usually think of blasphemy or dirty words; but perhaps the worst and most damaging form of evil speaking is gossip, slander, and criticism of others. Whispering and fault-finding do not reveal a work of grace in the heart. The exhortation is to lay these sins aside.

v. 2-3. 'As new born babes.' He takes for granted that we are born again and are little children in the family of God. Therefore, as a baby desires the breast, we should have the same hunger and thirst for the word of God that we may grow in grace, in love, in knowledge, in patience, in humility, and in faith. 'Sincere' milk is the pure, unmixed word of God. This is our real food—not tradition nor man's ideas and thoughts about the word, but the word of God itself.

Verse 3 is in reference to Psalm 34:8. If we have indeed tasted and know by our own experience that the Lord has been good and gracious to us in Christ, we will seek to lay aside these fleshly deeds that are dishonoring to him and uncharacteristic of his children; and we will feed on his word, which is our bread and meat. The new man lives on spiritual food. 'The ear is the mouth of the mind.'

v. 4. 'To whom coming.' Believing on Christ and living in Christ are not isolated acts of faith but a *continuous coming to Christ*, a continual

exercise of faith in his love, his grace, his blood, and his intercession. We came to Christ and we continue to come to Christ, 'looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.'

'As unto a living stone.' Peter is not the rock upon which the church is built, but Christ is that foundation stone (that stone that has life and gives life to the whole building). He was rejected and refused by religious leaders but chosen of the Father as Surety, Head of the church, Saviour of the body, and heir of all things.

v. 5-6. Believers are stones found in the same quarry as all men, dug out by God's grace, separated by God's spirit, and given life by Christ. We are made a spiritual building and become the house of God (Heb. 3:6). This is in distinction from the material tabernacle of old in which the presence of God dwelt in type. We are the tabernacle of God. We are a holy priesthood (like the priests of old) who offer sacrifices of faith, love, and praise, acceptable to God in Christ Jesus.

Verse 6 is a quotation from Isaiah 28:14-16. These false religionists sought acceptance, deliverance, and protection from judgment and condemnation in form, ceremony, and works. They were not afraid, for they felt secure in their false refuges. But their refuge of lies shall be destroyed. However, we can have assurance and confidence if our refuge is Christ; for he is the stone (precious and sure) that God laid and tried. He who rests in Christ shall never be put to shame.

v. 7-8. Unto you who have seen your guilt, who have seen your inability, who have seen your need of the Saviour, who have seen his grace and power to save, and who have received him as Prophet, Priest, and King, he is precious! He is precious in his person, in his sacrifice, in his offices, and in every way!

But to the unpersuaded and the unbelieving, the very stone which they rejected and refused has become the main cornerstone by the decree and

act of God. Therefore, instead of being to them their foundation and refuge, he is a stone which causes them to stumble and is an offense to them (1 Cor. 1:23; Rom. 9:32-33; Matt. 26:31-33). They stumble at his birth and parentage, at his outward poverty, at his friends, at his doctrine, at his death. 'Whereunto they were appointed.' The scripture says that Pharaoh hardened his heart, but it also says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart! The scripture says that wicked men crucified Christ, but it says they did what God determined before to be done. We can say that stumbling and destruction is the appointed end of all who reject Christ, the cornerstone (Matt. 21:44); or we can say that those who willingly refuse Christ and stumble at his gospel of grace and substitution were vessels of wrath from the beginning (Rom. 9:22-23); and we would be right on both counts.

# Free men – servants of God

## 1 Peter 2:9-16

v. 9. ‘Ye are a chosen generation.’ The Father chose us out of every nation of his own sovereign will and pleasure (not because of our faith, holiness, or works) to grace here and glory hereafter (Eph 1:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:13).

‘A royal priesthood’ (A kingdom of priests, Rev. 5:9-10). We are kings to wear royal apparel (the robe of Christ’s righteousness) and to reign with Christ forever. We are priests anointed by the Holy Spirit and allowed to draw nigh to God and offer up by Christ our spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise.

‘A holy nation.’ As Israel was separated from other nations and called the people of God, so we are true Israel, a special and holy nation (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 2:28-29).

‘A peculiar people,’ or better, a special people to whom God bears a special love, favors with special blessings, and takes special care of (Deut. 7:6-8).

‘That you should show the praise of him who called you.’ Two important things are implied here.

1. We are saved to the praise of his glory and forever will be trophies of his grace so that all the universe might praise God for his mercy and grace (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; Eph. 2:4-7).

2. We are responsible to show by our lives, our words, and our deeds the praises of our merciful God (Psalm 150:6). Let others see our godliness and glorify your Father.

v. 10. From eternity past, we have always been the people of God, given to Christ, represented by Christ as our Surety, and in his covenant of grace.

But before Christ was revealed to our hearts and we were born of his spirit, we were not his willing people, not his servants or sons, but children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-4). We knew nothing of his mercy, but now we have obtained or received mercy!

v. 11. Peter called them ‘dearly beloved’ to express his great love for them and to show that what he is about to teach comes from a sincere affection for them and a desire for their good. He calls them ‘strangers and pilgrims’ because they are strangers in an unfriendly world, they are different from the people about them, and they are bound for a better country.

‘Abstain from fleshly lusts.’ Every believer is still a human living in a natural body and subject to desires of the flesh and the body. Peter did not expect us to be totally free from these motions of sin; but he tells us to abstain from them, to suppress them, and refuse to give in to them; for they are enemies to spiritual peace, comfort, and growth. These cannot destroy the soul but can cause us much discomfort and unrest. Some of these fleshly lusts are pride, anger, jealousy, covetousness, envy, gossip, murmuring, and intemperance in all things.

v. 12. ‘Conduct yourselves before your family, your fellow-workers, your neighbors, and your friends in an honest, righteous, and loving manner so that even though they speak of you as fanatics, radicals, hypocrites, etc., yet when real trial and examination is put upon you, when God visits you and them with affliction and trouble, they must admit that you are different, that you have something they do not have. Sometimes God visits us in prosperity, sometimes in disappointment, sometimes in joy, sometimes in sorrow. How you conduct yourselves under different tests will determine whether those who observe you glorify God or laugh at your profession’ (2 Sam. 12:14).

*vv. 13-14.* The Christian is to obey all of the laws of the land. We are to live in our community, state, and nation as good and obedient citizens; for civil government and rulers are ordained of God for our good and for our peace. We are to submit to high authority and to inferior men of authority (Rom. 13:1-8).

*v. 15.* By doing good works, by living honest lives, by a right attitude toward leaders and those in authority, we will take away from the enemies of God one of their chief weapons—a critical tongue! Your godly lives will silence the ignorant charges and ill-informed criticisms of foolish people.

*v. 16.* We are free men and women—free from the curse and penalty of the law. We have freedom of access to God, but we are not free *to sin*; we are not free to live in contempt of laws that are binding on all men (God's laws and man's laws that are in accord with God's law). We are not free to despise government and authority. We show ourselves to be the true servants of God by a holy and honest life.



# Honor to whom honor is due

## 1 Peter 2:17-25

v. 17. 'Honor all men' to whom honor is due, according to office, position, rank, authority, or circumstance, whether believers or unbelievers.

Husbands and wives are to honor and respect one another. Children are to honor, respect, and obey parents. Teachers and school officials are to be honored and held in great esteem. Pastors and elders are worthy of honor and respect. Government officials and all who are vested with civil authority are to be honored (Rom. 13:1-8).

'Love the brotherhood.' This is special, family love for all believers who are of the same body, spirit, and faith. We are taught of our Lord to hate no one, but to love all people and especially those of the faith of Christ (1 Thess. 4:9).

'Fear God.' This is not a slavish fear of wrath, judgment, and punishment, but a reverent and holy respect and awe before the living God. God is greatly to be feared, worshipped, and praised (Prov. 9:10; Eph. 5:21; 1 Peter 1:17).

'Honor the king.' The king or president of a nation holds a high office and represents authority. That office and authority are to be respected and honored regardless of who the man may be. We salute and speak respectfully not so much of the man as the office or authority he represents. It is a sad commentary on our times when people speak disrespectfully and joke carelessly about leaders and officials, especially of the highest office of the land.

v. 18. The unbelieving Jews had a notion that because they were the seed of Abraham, they ought not to be the servants of any. Some of the believers in Christ thought that they should not have to be subject to

unbelieving masters since Christ was their master. They also had the idea that they should not have to serve and be obedient to believing masters since they were equally brothers in the Lord. Peter says that a workman, servant, or hired man is to be subject to, obey, and serve the person in authority with fear, respect, and loyalty whether he is a brother or an unbeliever. Faith does not do away with authority, a chain of command, and dedicated service (Eph. 6:5-7).

*vv. 19-20.* If a believer is a good and obedient wife, child, servant, or subject and suffers persecution, endures grief, and is mistreated, his conduct and attitude are well-pleasing to God. However, if one is rebellious, lazy, and disloyal and suffers the consequences, there is no glory nor honor if he endures it patiently. We must not call it bearing our cross and suffering for Christ when our difficulties are brought upon us because of our own evil attitude and behavior (Matt. 5:11-12).

*v. 21.* You were called to obedience, godliness, good works, and to bear whatever affliction, trial, and suffering that may result from a godly conversation (John 16:33; Phil. 1:29). If we must bear reproach and suffering in the pursuit of a true Christian conduct, then this is all part of our calling (2 Tim. 3:10-12).

*vv. 22-23.* Christ is our example! He committed no sin. He was in the world and did no sin. There was no guile, deceit, lies, or exaggeration in his mouth; yet he suffered. When men reviled him (calling him a devil, a wine-bibber, a friend of sinners), he did not revile them in return. When he suffered, he did not make them suffer in return nor did he threaten them with vengeance, but rather prayed for them. He committed his cause to the Father; he left his case with the Judge of all men, who will do right. This is our example! We may be misunderstood, ridiculed, and persecuted; but we are not to employ these same methods in our treatment of our enemies, but

are to love and pray for them, leaving our cause in the hands of our Father!  
(Deut. 32:35; 1 Thess. 5:15.)

*vv. 24-25.* Christ bore our sins in his body on the cross that we might be Justified, pardoned, and redeemed before God and that we, being dead to this world, should live righteously and godly. We were as sheep going astray, walking our own way; but by his grace and mercy, we have come back to our Shepherd and Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. We live not to please ourselves but to please him who redeemed us! (Rom 6:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:14-17.)

# Husbands and wives

## 1 Peter 3:1-7

v. 1. In the preceding chapter the apostle speaks of giving honor, obedience, and respect to kings, magistrates, and people who hold an office or a position of leadership and authority. This chapter begins with ‘likewise’ (in the same manner) as the husband is the leader and ruling authority in the home, the wife is to be in subjection. Other scriptures dealing with this subject are Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3, and Eph. 5:22-24. A woman who desires to be in God’s will shall love her husband, speak respectfully of him and to him, and seek to carry out his wishes in family affairs.

Peter explains that one reason for this is that, if the husband is not a believer, he will be impressed by the behavior and spiritual attitude of his wife and will seek the mercy of the Lord. Peter is not teaching that a man is saved without hearing the gospel; but it is not the arguments, nagging, and talking of religion by the wife that impress him, but her godly attitude and conduct.

v. 2. When the unbelieving partner observes the modest and holy conduct of his wife, along with her love for and faith in Christ, together with a reverence for his authority, he will be impressed and may be led to seek the Lord. A rebellious, contentious, and bossy wife can never impress an unbelieving husband. Her religion is vain (James 2:18-20).

v. 3. ‘Whose adorning.’ Let it not be only outward such as the hair, jewelry, and clothing of the body. The apostle is not condemning the proper care and beauty of the hair. There were women among the Jews whose business it was to plait and care for women’s hair. He is not

forbidding the moderate use of jewelry. (The daughters of Abraham were supplied with such things—Gen. 24:22, 30, 47, 53.) He is not forbidding neat, attractive, modest clothing which is suitable to age, character, and station in life; but he is saying that believing women should not so much regard and be so intent on the adorning of their bodies and the outward signs of beauty as they should be concerned with the beauty of a godly character, attitude, and personality. The beauty of the heart and mind and soul is real beauty (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

v. 4. Women (and men), let your care and concern be toward making beautiful the inward person (called ‘the hidden man’ because it is not seen with the natural eye as the corruptible, outward ornaments are seen). Far better to be known for the inward beauty of a meek and quiet spirit which lasts eternally than to impress people for a while with corruptible ornaments and outward beauty that will soon fade and wither away (Luke 16:15; Matt. 23:25-28).

v. 5. This is the example set for us by all the women of the past who trusted in God. Their adorning and marks of beauty came not from outward wardrobes, Jewelry, and hairstyles; but they were in subjection to the law of God, submissive wives, and good mothers (Titus 2:3-5). Nothing is less attractive or uglier than a woman trying to rule a home or a church (1 Tim. 2:8-15).

v. 6. Sarah journeyed with Abraham wherever he went, did the things he asked her to do, and respectfully called him her Lord. You women can be called the true daughters of Sarah as you follow her example, not being shaken by fear for your security, your rights, your pride, or your station in life. After all, you are not seeking the praise of people but the praise of the Lord.

v. 7. Likewise (in the same manner), there is an honor, respect, and recognition to be given to the wife by her husband.

1. ‘Dwell with your wives according to knowledge.’ Use wisdom and good sense. Your wife is not a slave, but a loving companion. She is not a subject to be ordered about by a rod of law, but apart of you to be instructed in love.

2. ‘Give honor to the wife.’ There are several honors that crown the head of a woman. She was created by God as she is in order to bring joy, companionship, and comfort to man (1 Cor. 11:9). She is a man’s wife. There is no one closer or of more importance to him on this earth (Gen. 2:24). She is a mother (Gen. 3:20). What could carry more honor, respect, or recognition as far as this world of flesh is concerned than to bring forth a son or a daughter?

3. ‘Treat her as a weaker vessel;’ that is, with tenderness, gentleness, and kindness. Real strength shines brighter when it can carry a great load and at the same time caress a flower. The man who holds his wife in contempt holds God in contempt, for she is a gift from God.

4. She is to be looked upon as a joint-heir with you of the grace of God. She is a daughter of our blessed King; therefore, to abuse her, mistreat her, and to treat her with contempt is to incur the wrath of her Father and to hinder your prayers and fellowship with him (Eph. 5:25).

# He that will love life and see good days

## 1 Peter 3:8-14

v. 8. ‘Finally.’ Having finished the subject respecting citizens and magistrates, servants and masters, husbands and wives, Peter sums up the whole matter with the following words:

‘Be ye all of the same mind’ whatever difference in sex, station, position, or age. Be of the same mind toward God; seek his will, his glory, his acceptance. Be of the same mind toward one another; we are all children of his family. Be of the same mind toward the good and growth of his church. ‘He that is not for me is against me.’

‘Have compassion one of another.’ Sympathize, not criticize! Weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

‘Love as brethren.’ That is, love ALL of the believers, love as Christ loved us, love without hypocrisy in deed, not in word only, and love continually, for true love never dies. How will this love be expressed? In praying for one another, in forgiving one another, in sharing with one another both temporal and spiritual needs, and in seeking out one another for fellowship and encouragement.

‘Be pitiful.’ The word here is compassionate and tender (Eph. 4:32).

‘Be courteous.’ Be friendly, seeking those things which are most agreeable and beneficial to others. Avoid moody pouting, stiffness, and pride.

v. 9. ‘Not rendering evil for evil.’ That is, if you feel that someone has slighted you, ignored you, or wronged you, do not get even by returning the same treatment or attitude; rather, forgive them and love them. It could be a total misunderstanding on your part; but even if not, we are to forgive others as God forgives us.

‘Or railing for railing.’ That is, do not return harsh language and tongue lashing to such as have given it to you. It is a terrible temptation to answer back in the way we have been addressed; but it is not the way of our Lord, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.

‘Knowing that you are thereunto called.’ You are called. You are called to love, not hate; to bless, not curse; to forgive, not revenge; to mercy, not Judgment; to demonstrate the Spirit of Christ, not the spirit of evil. You are called to inherit a blessing and to be a blessing.

*vv. 10-12.* This is taken from Psalm 34:12-16. It is referring to the man who desires to live a true spiritual life, who desires communion with God, who wants the blessings of Christ on him, and who wishes to be like Christ.

1. Let him refrain his tongue from lies, slander, gossip, harsh words, criticism, and boasting.

2. Let him turn away from evil and seek righteousness, avoid the company and conversation of evil men and seek the company of believers, avoid the appearance of evil and do good.

3. Let him not only desire peace with God, himself, and his fellow-men, but let him pursue it with strong resolution! Too many sit back and talk of their willingness to love, forgive, and show kindness if someone would like to have it. Don’t be just a friend of peace and good will—be a promoter!

4. The eyes of the Lord are upon us. He knows our thoughts, our motives, and our attitudes; and his ears are open to hear those who seek peace and righteousness. We may deceive others and even ourselves, but not our Lord. It is not nearly so much action as it is attitude and spirit which bring the Lord’s wrath; for his face is against those who have a bitter spirit, a self-righteous spirit, a proud spirit, and an unforgiving spirit. Let us remember 1 Sam.



16:7. This is perhaps the greatest error of today's religionist and is the place of greatest danger for the true believer—forgetting that God sees, knows, and measures the hearts of men!

v. 13. What harm can possibly come to you for walking with God, fulfilling the will and commandments of God, and seeking to imitate the Spirit and mind of Christ? (Rom. 8:31-35; Psalm 1.)

v. 14. But in case you should suffer for the truth you believe, and for the humble spirit of Christ you demonstrate, and for returning good for evil, consider yourself to be blessed and even to be envied (Matt. 5:10-12). Do not be afraid of the opponents of truth or troubled by their hatred. The presence and blessings of the Lord are upon his own! His special blessings are upon them when they suffer for righteousness!

# A good conscience toward God

## 1 Peter 3:15-22

v. 15. ‘Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.’ (Lev. 10:3.) God is essentially, infinitely, and perfectly holy. We do not make him so; but we declare, proclaim, and regard him to be our Holy and sovereign Lord in two ways.

1. *Externally.* The Lord is sanctified by his people externally when they obey his commands, worship him together, praise and call upon him, and declare publicly his glory.

2. *Internally.* This verse exhorts us to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts. Unless we truly love, believe, praise, and worship him in our hearts, all of our outward forms and claims are hypocrisy! It is mockery to talk of God’s sovereignty and glory with my lips if I do not believe it and bless God in my heart.

‘Be ready to give an answer.’ When a person asks you to tell him why you believe your sins are pardoned, why you believe that your name is written in heaven, and why you believe that you are not under condemnation but hope to reign eternally with Christ, be ready always to give him a scriptural answer. It is because Christ Jesus is your righteousness before the law, Christ Jesus is your justifier by his blood, and Christ Jesus is your mediator before God’s throne!

Give that answer in a humble fashion, for we are what we are by the grace of God. Give that answer with ‘the fear of the Lord,’ being careful that he gets all the glory for your blessings. Give that answer courteously and respectfully; it may be that the person is a true seeker.

v. 16. If we are going to profess before men that we are the sons of God, if we are going to lay claim to a part in the family and body of Christ, let us make sure that we have a true inward communion with him. It is with the heart that man believes unto righteousness. They may slander you, revile you, and ridicule you; but if your relationship with Christ is genuine, you will be vindicated (Matt. 5:44). In behaving humbly and graciously before your enemies, you will cause them to be ashamed of their attitude and conduct toward you.

v. 17. All things are ordered by the will of God (Dan. 4:35), even the sufferings and afflictions of his people (which is the reason these afflictions should be borne with patience). So if it is the will of God for you to suffer for righteousness, it is certainly better than suffering for evil, as all men shall who know not God! (Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:12.)

v. 18. We can approach this verse from two directions.

1. *Christ, our example.* If we as believers (sincere and honest in our faith before God and before men) are ridiculed, misunderstood, and called upon to suffer unjustly, remember that Christ, the Just, Holy, and sinless Son of God, was despised and hated of men. He suffered not for his sins but for our sins, that he might bring us to God, that he might fulfill God's eternal will.

2. *Christ, our redeemer.* God is holy, righteous, and just! He will in no way and under no circumstances clear the guilty. His law must be honored, and his justice must be satisfied. If God chooses to justify and forgive us, he must do it in a way consistent with his holiness and righteousness. This is why Christ came, why he obeyed the law in the flesh, why he died on the cross, that God might be just, holy, and righteous in the display of his love and mercy (Rom. 3:19-26).

v. 19. Christ was put to death in his human body; but he was raised from the dead by his divine nature, by his eternal spirit. Christ existed in his eternal nature and spirit before the worlds, before Abraham, in the days of Noah. Christ (by his spirit and nature in which he became our surety, our representative, by which he was raised from the dead) preached to men who are now in the regions of the damned. The gospel of God's Lamb is no new message. It is the word of faith in and by the Spirit of Christ that all the prophets preached (Acts 10:43; Rom. 1:1-2).

v. 20. Christ (by his spirit) went in the ministry of Noah (the preacher of righteousness) and preached to those wicked, disobedient people. Noah preached and built an ark before their eyes. This was not just Noah alone, but the Spirit of God speaking, warning, teaching!

v. 21. The baptism of a believer is a picture or figure like the ark of Noah. The family of Noah went into the ark and were shut in by God, representing a burial. They were covered by water from above and beneath (immersed in water). They came out as in resurrection, delivered from death and judgment which claimed all others. When a believer is baptized, it is a figure of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and of our death to sin and self, our burial with Christ, and our being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. It is not baptism that saves but whom baptism represents! It is not the cleansing of the flesh, but a living union with Christ in the heart (1 Cor. 1:17-18).

v. 22. Christ is seated on the right hand of God; and all angels (good and bad), all authorities, kings, governors, rulers, demons, power in heaven, earth, and hell, and all flesh are subject to him (John 17:2; Matt. 28:18).

# Why we do what we do

## 1 Peter 4:1-11

v. 1. ‘Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh.’ The eternal, holy, Son of God took upon himself the likeness of sinful flesh and suffered reproach, indignities, the curse of the law, the wrath of God, and even death for us.

‘Arm yourselves with the same mind.’ As he suffered for you, be prepared to suffer whatever persecution, reproaches, and self-denials you may be called upon to suffer for righteousness sake, for the sake of him and his gospel.

‘He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.’ Two true implications are given here.

1. Christ, who bore our sins in his body, suffered for them, and died for them, is now clear of these sins. The sins imputed to him (for which he made satisfaction) are gone! In Christ, we are justified and freed from the charge of sin, the condemnation of sin, and the curse of sin. We stand in God’s sight as if we had never sinned.

2. The person who is crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and risen with Christ has ceased to be the servant of sin, self, and the world. He has not ceased from the burden of it nor a continual war with it, but he has ceased from the servitude and dominion of sin through divine grace and is the bond-slave of Christ.

v. 2. We are sons of God, saved by his grace; but we are still in this world, and we have a time left to spend here. However, we are not going to spend the remaining days of our natural lives dominated by fleshly appetites and desires; but we will live our days here ruled by the will of God. We desire

to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this world, motivated and constrained by the love of God.

v. 3. Before we met Christ and were born of his spirit, we lived as heathens and pagans (Eph. 2:1-5). The things that we now hate, we once loved; the things that are now shame to us were once our delight. We have no cause to judge and condemn those who exploit the flesh, for we ourselves were in the same darkness (Titus 3:2-3).

v. 4. The people of the world do not understand you. They think it strange that you do not enjoy and take part in their evil. How can you not find sin a pleasure and a delight? How can you enjoy godliness and religion? They don't. They call you fools, fanatics, and do-gooders. They don't understand you; but you understand them, for you were once like them.

v. 5. They shall one day have to give an account to Christ, who is ready to Judge the living (when he comes) and the dead (Rev. 20:11-15). To those who are in Christ there is no judgment, but all who die in their sins shall be judged justly and fairly according to their works (Rom. 8:1).

v. 6. This is the reason the gospel of Christ was preached to those who are now dead (such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and all of the Old Testament believers) that, though they were still men in the flesh, subject to like passions, chastened of God, hated and misunderstood by natural men, they lived then and now live for the glory of God in the spirit. They lived by faith then, walking in the Spirit; and they live eternally now by God's grace! The same gospel of Christ quickened them that now makes us live in the spirit (Rom. 1:1-3; John 5:46; John 8:56).

v. 7. The end of your life is near; we are sure of that, but also the end of the world is near. Christ is coming, and the day of his wrath is at the door.

Therefore, be serious, be solemn, and call upon God in prayer for his mercy in Christ for yourselves, your children, and your kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 10:1).

v. 8. Above all things have a genuine and unfailing love for one another; for real love will overlook, disregard, and forgive the infirmities, failures, and sins of others (Prov. 10:12). If you remember what you were (except for God's grace), what you could be, and really care for the welfare of others, you will forgive and overlook their infirmities (Matt. 6:14-15).

v. 9. Generosity and hospitality are marks of grace, not only to our friends and families but to strangers, the poor who come our way, and all whom it is in our power to help. We must learn to share what God has given us and deal in mercy with others without murmuring, doing it with a cheerful spirit as representing Christ (Eph. 4:32).

v. 10. There is nothing which we have in nature or grace that is not the gift of God (1 Cor. 4:7). As each of you have received a particular talent, divine endowment, or certain power in certain areas (whether physical, material, or spiritual), employ that talent as a faithful steward of the many-sided grace of God. God did not bring us into his body for our comfort and satisfaction alone, but for his glory and the good of the whole body of Christ.

v. 11. Whoever preaches or teaches, let him declare the word of God according to the Scriptures. Whoever renders service, let him do it according to the strength and ability God has given him. Whoever prays, sings, gives, witnesses, waits on tables, relieves the sick and poor, visits the widows and orphans, or in any way makes a contribution to the kingdom of God, let him do it without complaining, with strength of

purpose, out of gratitude and love to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ—to whom be praise and glory forever and ever!



# Rejoicing in trials and afflictions

## 1 Peter 4:12-19

v. 12. Beloved believers, do not be amazed and bewildered by difficult trials and afflictions which come upon you. Afflictions, trials, and sufferings are the common lot of God's people in all ages. God has only one Son without sin—none without suffering! For even Christ our Lord suffered hatred, reproach, and contradiction (John 16:1-3, 33). Trials in the life of a believer are not by chance but are by appointment and according to the will of God (Phil. 1:29). Trials and afflictions try the graces of believers.

1. They try our *faith*, which becomes more precious through trial.
2. They try our *love for Christ*, which cannot be dimmed or drowned in the floods of suffering.
3. They try our *hope of eternal life*, weaning us from fleshly foundations.
4. They try our *profession of religion*, revealing whether it is in Christ's person or in the loaves and fishes he provides (John 2:23-25).

Trials are not strange and unusual for the true believer, but they are the common lot of all who will live Godly in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:12).

v. 13. Rejoice and glory in trials and afflictions brought upon you by the will of God and for the sake of the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

1. Rejoice that the hand of God is upon you in mercy, making you like Christ, creating saving graces in you, and counting you worthy to suffer for his glory.

2. Rejoice that you are blessed to share the sufferings of Christ, being identified with him in a world that rejects and hates him (John 15:18-20).

3. Rejoice that when his full glory is revealed at the last day, you that have been identified with him, suffered with him, and confessed him, will be glorified with him (2 Tim. 2:12; Matt. 10:32-33).

*v. 14.* When religionists and others speak evil of you and persecute you for your faith in Christ Jesus and your belief in his gospel of sovereign grace, do not be downcast and blue. Be happy! You are to be envied, for you are truly blessed of God; the Spirit of God rests upon you. They are blaspheming the name, work, and Lordship of Christ; but you are glorifying him by your faith, your loyalty, and your willingness to praise him in a wicked and evil generation (Matt. 5:10-12).

*v. 15.* Let none of you suffer as a murderer—who hates others, destroys character and reputation by gossip and slander, or who wishes misfortune on others. Let none of you suffer as a thief—who robs men of the love you owe them and the gospel message you are sent to share. Let none of you suffer as an evildoer—who breaks either the laws of God or the laws of men. Let none of you suffer as a meddler or a busybody—who takes upon himself to manage, direct, or command the affairs and lives of others.

*v. 16.* If you are privileged to suffer for being a true believer in Christ, for loving his word, his gospel, and his grace, and for declaring the gospel of substitution, do not be ashamed; but give glory to God that you are counted worthy to suffer in his name and for his glory.

v. 17. 'The house of God' is the household of God or the true sons of God. The time has arrived when God will judge his people, not for their sins (there is no judgment or condemnation in Christ); but by trial, affliction, and suffering, he will try and prove their faith, love, and trust. They will be proven beyond doubt to be his own, as he proved the faith and love of Abraham by severe trial. If God is pleased to put his children through the furnace of affliction to prove their faith, what shall be the fate of those who bear his infinite wrath? (Psalm 37:38; Psalm 73:17-18.)

v. 18. If the believer is saved with difficulty because of the holiness of God's law and the strictness of his righteous justice (which required the perfect obedience and infinite suffering of his only begotten Son), what shall become of the ungodly and the unbeliever? Since 'God spared not his own Son' (Rom. 8:32), will he spare the ungodly?

v. 19. Therefore, let us who are predestined by the sovereign will and wisdom of our God to suffer and endure trials for his glory commit our souls to him who created us for his glory and who will never leave us nor forsake us!

# Humility in his service

## 1 Peter 5:1-14

v. 1. Peter is not speaking to the elders in age but to the men whose business it is to teach and preach the word of God. Most believe that an elder is tied to a particular church, while an apostle has authority in all the churches. Peter calls himself an elder and an apostle, a witness of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory of Christ, having been with the Lord all the days of his ministry and his transfiguration. However, today's elders also are witnesses or preachers of his suffering and glory, having seen them by faith.

v. 2. Elders and pastors are to feed the people of God the word of God (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28). Elders are to take the leadership of the church, not by coercion or constraint but willingly, not motivated by advantage, pay, personal power, and praise but for the glory of God with a cheerful spirit (Heb. 13:7, 17).

v. 3. Pastors and elders are not to rule with an iron hand over God's people as though they were kings and lords; but being examples and patterns of love, kindness, honesty, and doctrinal soundness, they are to lead the church.

v. 4. Pastors are called shepherds in the scriptures, but really we are but under-shepherds. Christ is the great Shepherd—the chief shepherd; and when he shall appear, the faithful pastors and elders shall hear the Master say, 'Well done.' This crown of glory is God's eternal glory and happiness. Like the crown of righteousness, it shall be to all those who love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

v. 5. Since the elders and pastors are usually men of years and proven experience (1 Tim. 3:4-6), the younger would be those younger in the faith as well as in age. The younger in the church are to give due respect to spiritual leaders and are to follow their teaching and counsel as it is true to the Scriptures.

Every member of the body is to be clothed in humility, with freedom from arrogance and pride toward one another. God sets himself against the proud, the overbearing, the boastful, and the presumptuous; and he gives grace and blessings to the humble (Eph. 4:1-2).

v. 6. Therefore, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Bow and patiently bear every affliction, look not on your own things but on the welfare and happiness of others, work graciously for the glory of God and the good of the church, do the humble tasks, look not for recognition and praise; for sooner or later the truly humble and gracious will be exalted by the Lord God! (Matt. 23:11-12; John 13:12-17.)

v. 7. Cast all of your cares, your worries, your anxieties, your concerns, and your fears once and for all on Christ. He cares for you affectionately, having loved you from the beginning; and he cares for you watchfully, giving his angels charge over you (Heb. 1:14; Heb. 13:5-6).

v. 8. 'Be sober and vigilant.' There are several things that are indicated here.

1 . *Sobriety* or moderation in the use of wine, along with watchfulness over our conduct and attitude, for the glory of Christ.

2 . *Seriousness* of mind and carefulness to maintain sound beliefs and practices personally and in the church.

3. *Sincerity* in our profession, our prayers, and our worship, trying the spirits whether they be of God.

All of this is necessary because your enemy, the devil, roams about like a hungry lion seeking someone to seize upon (Luke 22:31; Job 1:8-12).

v. 9. Withstand temptation and fight against error of spirit and flesh. Be firm in your faith, rooted and grounded in Christ Jesus, knowing that all believers throughout the whole world have the same conflicts, the same trials, and the same enemy! (John 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:10-12.)

vv. 10-11. After you have suffered awhile in this world, the God of all grace (who chose you in Christ, redeemed you by his mercy, and called you to repentance and faith by his spirit) will complete and make you what you ought to be and what he predestined you to be—just like his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! (Phil. 1:6.)

To him be the glory for all things! (1 Peter 4:11.)

v. 12. Peter sent this letter by Silas, who is mentioned often in the book of Acts.

v. 13. Marcus is probably John Mark.

v. 14. A kiss of love is an expression of true Christian affection.

# 2 Peter

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# Grace given and grace growing

## 2 Peter 1:1-9

v. 1. This epistle was written by Simon Peter in his old age, shortly before he was to be martyred. As he put it in Verse 14, 'shortly I must put off this tabernacle.' First he calls himself a bond-servant of Christ and second, an apostle. He was sent by Christ, had his commission and doctrine directly from the Lord Jesus, and had a power to work miracles (Heb. 2:3-4).

The epistle is addressed to believers in Christ who have, by the grace of God, obtained like precious faith.

1. It is like (that is, the same) faith as the apostles, for there is but one faith (called the common faith) which is common to all believers. Though not the same in degree, it is the same in its source, its object, and its results.

2. This saving faith in Christ is precious, for it is worth more than ten thousand worlds. Through faith, we are Justified and made heirs of God and Joint-heirs with Christ.

3. This faith comes to us in and through the righteousness of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Faith is the gift of God, as the righteousness of Christ is the gift of God. Where the righteousness of Christ is imputed, faith is also given to receive it. Abraham was chosen of God, accepted in the Beloved, an object of special grace and revelation. Therefore, he believed God; and this faith was accredited to him as right standing with God. His sheep will hear and will believe (John 10:22-28; Acts 13:48).



v. 2. Peter prays for them a multiplication of grace and peace. The grace of God toward us is infinite in Christ, our Lord; and we have perfect peace toward God in Christ. The grace and peace of God know no degrees in themselves, yet the manifestations of grace and peace to us and in us are capable of being increased. Throughout the word of God (as I grow in the knowledge of Christ), there will be new discoveries of the love and favor of God to my soul; there will be a growth in the internal graces of love, joy, humility, and faith; there will be an increase in spiritual peace in believing and a fulness of peace in trials and afflictions (1 Peter 2:1-2).

v. 3. By his divine purpose and power, God has given to us all things that are necessary, needful, and suited to spiritual life (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:10; Col. 1:12). Through a knowledge of Christ, who has called us by and to his own glory and excellence, we have all things that pertain to eternal life, all things that give a right to it, and all things that equip us for it.

v. 4. By his glory, power, and righteousness Christ has given to us exceeding great and precious promises. The promises of the new and everlasting covenant are forgiveness, sanctification, union with Christ, and eternal life. By these promises, we are made partakers of a new nature, a new man, and a new life (which is Christ formed in us—Gal. 2:20; Gal. 4:19). By the presence and ruling power of this new nature, we escape, not the corruption and depravity of human nature (which is present as long as we are in the world), but the corrupt manners, vices, conduct, and principles of this world. Our new nature makes us inwardly seek holiness and outwardly avoid the prevailing corruption of the times.

vv. 5-7. ‘Beside this,’ or from the consideration of the free grace of God toward us and the precious promises of his gospel, we should seek to grow in the exercise of grace and good works.

‘Add to your faith virtue.’ Faith is the foundation and basis of all good works; however, faith does not and cannot stand alone (James 2:17-20). Virtue here is not just morality but Christian virtue, which is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

‘And to virtue knowledge,’ knowledge of the will of God that we may perform it, knowledge of the Scriptures that we may walk therein, wisdom and intelligence in regard to our conduct and conversation that we might be good witnesses for Christ.

‘And to knowledge temperance,’ avoiding excess in eating and drinking, socializing, materialism, entertainment, and anything that engaged in to excess would hinder spiritual growth and fellowship (Rom. 14:14-15; 1 Tim. 4:3-5).

‘And to temperance patience.’ Patience is necessary to a Christian walk; for we are faced with reproach from men, trial from God, and difficulties from within ourselves. A man may be overcome by anger, pride, jealousy, envy, and self-pity, as well as by strong drink.

‘And to patience godliness,’ or ‘the fear of the Lord.’ This includes both inward and outward worship of the Lord—an attitude of thanksgiving, submission, praise, active prayer, and hearing of the word.

‘And to godliness brotherly kindness,’ without which godliness or external worship and religious profession would be a vain show. Love and brotherly kindness are evidences of regeneration (John 13:35; Eph. 4:32).

‘And to brotherly kindness charity’ to all people, even our enemies. Charity is more extensive in its objects and acts than brotherly kindness.

*vv. 8-9.* As these qualities are yours and increasingly abound in you, they will keep you from being empty and unfruitful in your spiritual life. He that is without these graces and growth is shortsighted, seeing only what is near him and what concerns him and ignoring what God has done for him (or what he professes that God has done).

# Make your calling and election sure

## 2 Peter 1:10-21

v. 10. The primary concern of every believer should be to make sure of his calling and election of God. We cannot look into God's Book of Life nor into his eternal decrees, so how are we to know that we are chosen to life?

1. By our calling. 'Whom he predestinated, he called.' If we can find that we have been called to Christ by God's spirit, we may conclude that we are chosen to salvation. A close examination of ourselves will reveal whether or not we are called of Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 13:5). Have I been called out of the darkness of tradition, ceremony, self-righteousness, and sin to the light of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 4:6)? Is Christ my life, my all, my Lord? (1 Cor. 1:30.)

2. By the presence of the aforementioned graces—faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. He that is without these spiritual graces has reason to doubt his election of God.

3. If I seek first the kingdom of God—if I am determined to win Christ and be found in him—if to be called of God and accepted in the Beloved is my diligent concern—if to grow in his grace and the knowledge of Christ is my primary object, I shall never fall—not that I shall never sin nor that I shall never fall into sin (for there is no man that lives and sins not), but I shall never totally fall from the mercy and grace of God in Christ.

v. 11. These who are diligent and dedicated in the faith of Jesus Christ shall have an abundant supply of grace and strength to carry them through

the duties and trials of this life; and when this life is ended, they shall have a triumphant and glorious entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord (Jude 24-25; Eccles. 3:14).

*v. 12-13.* If ministers are negligent in their work of preaching, teaching, rebuking, exhorting, and encouraging, it can hardly be expected that the people will be diligent in examination of faith and grace.

1. We need to be taught by our pastors and teachers all that God has been pleased to reveal.

2. We need to be reminded of what we already know (lest we forget) in order to improve our knowledge and to reduce our knowledge to practice.

3. We need to be continually established in the belief of the truth that we be not shaken by every wind of doctrine or false teacher who comes our way. Peter says, ‘As long as I live in this tent of flesh, I will stir you up to faith and godliness by preaching.’

*v. 14.* The body is but the tabernacle of the soul. It is a weak and frail tent and must soon be put off as we take off our clothes at night. The nearness of death makes the apostle diligent in the business of eternal life. The Lord had told Peter of his martyrdom (John 21:18-19).

*v. 15.* Peter’s ambition was that the people to whom he preached continue in the doctrine of Christ after he was taken away from them. We cannot guarantee the steadfastness of any assembly after the present leaders die; but we can be faithful in laying a good foundation, building there on gold, silver, and precious stones and praying that God will keep Christ ever before our children.

*vv. 16-18.* The gospel of Christ which the apostle preached to them (the incarnation of Deity–Christ, the Messiah, the God-man, the anointed Redeemer of his people) was not some fable or story handed down to the apostle. He says, ‘I was an eyewitness of his majesty. I was with him on the Mount of Transfiguration when the Father spoke and said, ‘This is my beloved Son–hear ye him.’ I was there when Moses (the law) and Elijah (the prophets) appeared with him and talked with him about his sacrifice on the cross’ (Matt. 17:1-6; Luke 9:30-31).

*v. 19.* We have a better foundation and a more sure evidence of Christ and the gospel than an eyewitness account of his glory, and that is the Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament revelation given by the Holy Spirit in Peter’s day. A man’s testimony is to be received only if it is according to the Scriptures (Isa. 8:20). The word of God is the final test of every claim or creed (1 Cor. 15:1-4). You do well to take heed to the Scriptures and weigh every man’s word accordingly (Acts 17:11).

*v. 20.* No scripture prophecy is of a man’s own opinion, but it is a revelation of the mind of God. We search the Scriptures, not to prove what we think is right, but to find out what God says is right.

No scripture can be interpreted in the light of human wisdom, but only in the light of other scripture and by the Holy Spirit who is the Author. The apostles in the New Testament epistles constantly made reference to the Old Testament to prove their doctrine.

*v. 21.* All scripture (Old Testament and New Testament) came into being by the will of God. Men of God wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write. The Bible is verbally inspired or God-breathed! (2 Tim. 3:16-17.)

# Beware of false teachers

## 2 Peter 2:1-9

v. 1-3. This chapter contains a description of and warning concerning false teachers and preachers. They are described by their doctrines, their covetousness, their ways, their success, and their end.

1. There are false teachers and preachers in the Christian church Just as there had been false prophets among the Jews (Deut. 13:1-5; Jer. 23:16-17; Matt. 7:15-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-4).

2. These false teachers bring in doctrines that are contrary to the Scriptures (even denying the Person and Work of Christ, our Lord). All true preachers will give Christ his proper place and glory, and all false preachers and heresies deny in some way the redemptive work of Christ (1 John 4:1-3). Weigh all preaching in the light of Christ—his eternal Sonship and humanity, his sovereignty and suretyship, his perfect righteousness and effectual sacrifice, his priestly work and intercession, his exaltation and second coming. All false preachers will either deny or diminish in some way Christ as Just and Justifier.

3. These false teachers are motivated by covetousness. Their goal is not the glory of God nor the good of the church, but their own gain, glory, and personal satisfaction. Not knowing or loving Christ, they can never lose themselves, deny themselves, or take up their cross and follow him.

4. These false teachers' ways of deception are: (a) privily; that is, they come in secretly, under a disguise of righteousness, gradually, little by little, under pretence of truth, introducing their heresy. (b) with feigned words—words of their own choosing,

cunning arguments, and logic, not words of the Holy Spirit, new and flattering words which have men's persons in admiration because of worldly gain. (c) make merchandise of you—dealing with men's souls as a merchant with his goods. They care not for you nor your eternal welfare. You are but a means by which they enrich themselves with gain and worldly glory.

5. These false teachers are usually successful because many shall follow their corrupt, worldly ways. The road of error and religious idolatry is a broad way in which many walk. 'Many will say to me in that day...' (Matt. 7:22).

6. These false teachers (with their followers) are moving toward swift destruction. Their heresies are damnable, for they will lead to certain damnation. God's Judgments are not asleep, and their foot shall slide in due time (Deut. 32:35).

*vv. 4-6.* God's Judgments against heresy, idolatry, and evil are illustrated and confirmed in these verses.

1. The angels that sinned were once pure and holy, high and honorable. They abode not in the truth but (through pride and covetousness) sought equality with God (John 8:44; 1 Tim. 3:6).

2. God spared not the world of the ungodly but destroyed them all in the flood of judgment.

3. God turned the evil cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes as an example to all those who afterwards would live ungodly.

All of this is saying that God will punish sin. He will deal in judgment with the ungodly, whether it be the openly wicked who walk in corrupt evil or the false teachers who hide their evil pride and covetousness under a cloak of religion (Exo. 34:7; Isa. 45:23-25; Psalm 73:17-22).

v. 7-9. Notice is taken in these and the preceding verses of the Lord's mercy in delivering the righteous, such as Noah and Lot, when wicked men are destroyed (Rom. 8:1; Rom. 8:35-39).

'The Lord knoweth how to deliver' those that fear him and worship him out of trial and tribulation such as Noah and Lot were exposed to. Evil may abound, false teachers may increase, and the true worship of the Lord may all but perish from the earth; but our God has a people who are chosen by him, redeemed by his Son, and called and sanctified by his spirit. He will keep them from falling (Jude 24) while he reserves, in his long-suffering and patience, the ungodly (to be punished) for the day of judgment.



# Two great errors of false teachers

## 2 Peter 2:10-22

There were and are false preachers and teachers in the Christian church, just as there were false teachers among the Jews. We are warned to mark them and beware of them (Matt. 7:15-16; 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

v. 10. These false teachers and preachers (besides denying the true gospel of redemption through Christ alone—2 Peter 2:1) are guilty of two great errors.

‘They walk after the flesh’ in the lust of uncleanness; that is, their tenor of life is the satisfaction, pampering, and attention to the flesh. Their bodies, not their souls, are their main concern. The emphasis today in their circles is healing, fleshly entertainment and enjoyment, and financial well-being.

‘They despise dominion’ or authority. They are always advocates of man’s free-will and enemies of the absolute sovereignty and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. These false teachers and their followers never preach the sovereignty of God in salvation, they never declare the Lordship of Christ in a believer’s life (Christ is accepted as Saviour only), they never emphasize the authority of the man in the home and church (their women lead, teach, and usurp authority on an equal basis). They seldom have any local church authority but are usually a movement or organization outside the church, denouncing the churches, pastors, and doctrine. Their cry is usually, ‘let’s forget doctrine and let every religionist do his own thing.’

They are presumptuous, bold and daring, not fearing to speak of holy things in the most familiar fashion. There is no reverence or fear of God in their hearts or words.

They are self-willed, pleased with themselves, proud of their accomplishments, vain in their reports of numerical success.

They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. The name of our Heavenly Father rolls off their tongues carelessly. They use the word ‘god’ as frequently and meaninglessly as they would the name of a fellow human.

They speak of ‘Jesus’ as if he were a next-door neighbor (rarely calling him, ‘Lord’). They won’t hesitate to correct or take issue with the apostle Paul. Reverence, holy awe, and humility are things unknown to them.

*vv. 11-12.* Even the elect angels (who are superior in might and power to any man, who are guardians over particular men, and who preside over kingdoms) do not bring charges and accusations against the other angels that fell nor against magistrates nor those in authority (Jude 9); but these false teachers who are like dumb beasts, made to be killed and consumed, do not hesitate to speak of mysterious and holy things which they neither understand nor love. They shall perish in their corruption.

*vv. 13-14.* These false religionists shall receive a fit reward for their wrong—doing (Matt. 7:22-23). They are interested only in living luxuriously and comfortably in this world of daytime, but the night cometh. They claim the name of Christ and the fellowship of the body of Christ; but they are only spots and blemishes, reveling in their own deception and hypocrisy. They have lustful, adulterous eyes, they have hearts that are filled with covetousness and materialism, and they prey upon unstable people who are easily led astray with their fleshly promises and preaching.

*vv. 15-16.* Balaam was promised great reward and honor to curse the people of Israel (Numbers 22:17). Balaam entertained these men (not just once, but twice) because of his covetousness. False teachers forsake the right way, the way of truth, and the gospel of truth for the rewards of unrighteousness, greedy of money and praise.

*v. 17.* They are wells without water, which look large and deep and promise much, but have nothing in them. They promise much to their followers, but in the end prove to be but dry, empty wells. Christ is the well of living water. To drink of him is to never thirst again (John 4:14; John 7:37-39).

They are clouds that are carried with the wind. We see large, dark clouds overhead and expect a refreshing rain on our parched land; but we discover that they are empty and only driven by a dry wind. They have excited our hopes and expectations only to disappoint us—nothing but dry wind.

*vv. 18-19.* They bestow flattering words, titles, and praise on the flesh for their own interest and worldly advantage. They beguile and lure the people with their promises of health, happiness, prosperity, and eternal life, while they, themselves, are in the gall of bitterness and depravity. The people who are led astray by the false teachers are not the elect of God (who cannot be deceived); but they prey upon the ignorant and the untaught who have religious interests, who have reformed their lives, and who are trying to establish a righteousness before God. But in following these false teachers, they become enslaved to a greater bondage than worldliness, and that is self-righteousness! (Matt. 23:15.) It is a deadlier form of worldliness.

*vv. 20-22.* If a man temporarily escapes the pollutions of this world through an exposure to the gospel and again becomes entangled and

overcome, his condition is worse; for he is hiding in a false refuge, whereas before he had no refuge! He makes God a party to his evil, whereas before he sought mercy. He is sinning against the light, whereas before he could plead ignorance.

# The promise of his coming

## 2 Peter 3:1-18

In this chapter the apostle deals with four specific things.

1. He mentions the reason for writing this epistle,
2. He foretells that there will be scoffers in the last days who doubt the coming of Christ,
3. He describes the coming of the Lord and the destruction of the earth, and
4. He closes with the use that we should make of these things.

*vv. 1-2.* ‘I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.’ Perhaps a better word than pure is sincere. We are sincere in the worship of God, in the faith of Christ, and in love to one another. Yet, we need to be constantly stirred up to remembrance of the doctrines of Christ, the duties of believers, and the promises of our Lord, not only because we are still human and prone to forget, but because we need the constant preaching of the word to grow to spiritual maturity (1 Peter 2:2).

‘That you may be mindful of’ two things especially.

1. ‘The words spoken before by the holy prophets;’ that is, the prophets of the Old Testament. They were men of God; and they spoke of Christ in promise, prophecy, and type (Acts 10:43; Luke 24:44; Rom. 1:2).

2. ‘And the commandment of the Lord Jesus given through us, his apostles.’

Perhaps one of two things (or both) are referred to here—his commandment to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-

47) or his commandment to love one another (John 13:34; 1 John 3:23).

*vv. 3-4.* We know from the writing of the apostles that in the last days men will make a mock of sin, they will jeer and mock at all religion, they will mock ministers of the true gospel, and they will reject the gospel of grace. Especially will they mock the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the torments of hell, and the joys of heaven (1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). They will be a people who walk after their own desires and do their own thing.

The object of their scorn is Christ and the promise of his return (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16-18). They reason that many years have come and gone, everything is the same, and nothing has changed from the beginning of creation.

*vv. 5-7.* They are willingly ignorant of three things.

1. They overlook the fact that it was by the word of God that all things were created. The heavens came into existence by the word of God, and the earth was formed out of the waters by the word of God. God created it all, and by him it remains to this day (Col. 1:16-17).

2. They overlook the fact that God once did destroy by water the world that then existed. The earth was covered by water by the command of God, and by his command it was removed. All things have not continued as they were.

3. They forget that by the same word which created the world, it is sustained and kept intact, reserved for destruction by fire (2 Thess. 1:7-10). He will not again destroy the world by water, but by fire (Gen. 9:11-15).

*vv. 8, 9.* The apostle then addresses the believers, again calling them ‘beloved.’ Let these men scoff and mock all they will. The length of time that has passed since the promise of Christ’s coming has no significance upon the fulfillment of that promise, since the longest term of time is nothing with God (however important it may be to men). Besides, the reason his coming is being deferred is the long-suffering of God toward his elect (‘to us-ward’). He is unwilling that even one should perish, for they shall all be brought to repentance and faith (John 6:37-39).

*v. 10.* His coming shall be sudden, at an hour when you think not, and the entire world shall be destroyed by fire (Matt. 24:35-42).

*vv. 11, 12.* Believing that the earth and all therein (whether of flesh, nature, or art) will be utterly destroyed, what manner of persons ought we to be? Certainly we should not be as the scoffers who ridicule the gospel and the day of his wrath, nor as the indifferent professors of religion, nor as the materialistic worldlings, but as holy, sincere and dedicated men, waiting for the Lord’s return, praying, hearing, reading, living soberly and righteously (Ps.27:4).

*vv. 13, 14.* According to his promise, ‘we look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness’ for all those in Christ. Therefore, the only thing that should really concern us is to be found in Christ in the day of his coming (Phil. 3:7-9).

*vv. 15, 16.* Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord (or the delay of his coming) is for the salvation of all his chosen ones. He waits, he stays, that none given to Christ might perish but that all might be saved. Paul wrote of these things in his epistles – of the covenant of grace and of the election and redemption of the chosen ones (Rom. 8:28-31). The unlearned and

unstable twist these scriptures (as they do other scriptures) to their own destruction.

*vv. 17, 18.* ‘Beloved, you are aware of these mysteries. God has revealed them to you’ (1 Cor. 2:9,10). Stand in them and be not led away. Not only are we to stand, but we are to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ – to whom be all the glory!



# 1 John

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# Eternal life manifested unto us

## 1 John 1:1-10

The author of this epistle was John son of Zebedee, the youngest of the apostles, who survived them all. It is called a 'general epistle' because it is not addressed to any particular church or person. It is written to Christians in general! It is written chiefly to promote brotherly love, to oppose worldly living on the part of believers, to deal with the doctrine of the Trinity, to deal with the deity and humanity of Christ, to encourage assurance and to set forth the gospel of God's grace in Christ.

*v.1.* 'That which was from the beginning' refers to the deity and eternity of Christ. He existed from the beginning (John 1:1, 2). Jesus Christ is God (John 10:30-33; 2 Cor. 5:19; Acts 20:28; Heb. 1:8). God appeared in the fulness of time in human flesh. We saw him, heard him, looked upon him and touched him. He is called 'the Word of Life' because he has life in himself; he is the author of life. He came to restore spiritual life lost in Adam (John 1:4).

*v.2.* 'We announce to you and bear witness that we are eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses to the fact that the beloved Son of God, who was with the Father in all eternity, who is life itself, the fountain of eternal life, the cause, author and giver of life, was manifested in human flesh! He has come that we might have life (John 10:10, 11; 1 John 5:11-13; Gal. 4:4, 5).

*vv. 3, 4.* He repeats the words 'seen and heard' the third time, that there be no doubt of the certainty of his doctrine. 'We declare this glorious truth to you for two reasons: that you might participate in this glorious body of Christ, united to God in acceptance, communion and fellowship, and that

you might enjoy the complete and perfect happiness of eternal life in Christ.’

Being in union with Christ, we become partakers of him and of his blessings. We are brought into an intimacy and fellowship with him and with the Father as sons of God. His banner over us is love. He lives in us and we in him. This is true joy (Rom. 4:7, 8; Ps. 103:1-5; 1 Peter 1:8, 9).

v.5. ‘This is the message, the promise, the gospel which we have heard from Christ — the message that we declare unto you — that God is light.’ He is light as opposed to the darkness of sin. He is pure and holy. He is righteousness and truth. He is just and exact in his judgments. In him there is ‘no darkness at all,’ no alloy, no compromise. He requires absolute perfection and can accept no less than pure holiness. Christ is our righteousness and sanctification. It is in him that we are accepted, and in him we have fellowship with God.

v.6. If any says he knows and has fellowship with God but walks in the darkness of sin, unbelief and ignorance, he lies, and does not act truthfully (John 14:6; 12:35, 36). This is also true of the man who professes to believe in Christ. We walk not only in the light of Christ as Justifier, but in the light of Christ as Lord and Master of our lives.

v.7. If we are enlightened by the Spirit with a true sight and sense of sin to know our Lord Jesus and the way of salvation through his obedience and sacrifice, and we are growing in grace and knowledge of him, then we have fellowship with God and the blood of Christ gives us complete justification, pardon and deliverance from all sin. This cleansing is perpetual and for ever!

v.8. No one is free from sin — either from a sinful nature or from the sin that proceeds from the nature of evil (Rom. 3:9-12, 23). To make such a claim is to be deceived and to be filled with lies.

v.9. If we own our sins against God, confess them in sincerity and indeed seek forgiveness through the merits of Christ, God ‘is faithful’ to his promise (Rom. 4:20-25) ‘and just’ (Rom. 3:25, 26) ‘to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!’ (Col.1:19-22).

v.10. He goes still further and declares that those who profess purity and freedom from sin blaspheme God, for he everywhere represents the whole race of man as guilty (Rom. 3:19).

# Christ our advocate

## 1 John 2:1-6

*v.l.* ‘My little children.’ This general epistle is addressed to all believers. ‘I write unto you that you sin not.’ John does not hold out the possibility that any man can be totally free from sin. This would be contrary to his own words in 1 John 1:8-10 and contrary to all scripture. But he is saying, ‘I write this epistle to you that you might not live in sin, indulge the flesh, walk in disobedience and behave like the world of unregenerate men.’ The will of God is our sanctification and holiness in spirit, word and deed. The true grace of God in a man’s heart does not condone or excuse his sin, but condemns it and gives him a continuous desire to be like Christ and glorify his Lord. True believers mourn their sins, confess them and seek to avoid them.

‘And if any man sin.....’ — as every man does, even every one that walks in light and fellowship with God, believes on Christ and is justified by his blood. As much as we hate sin and see to avoid it, we are still in this flesh and in this world (Rom. 7:18-25).

Under no circumstances does a believer excuse sin, justify it, or permit it to go unjudged and unconfessed simply because it is atoned for by Christ. But we do have an Advocate with the Father, a great High Priest, who makes intercession for us, pleads for us whose sins have been laid on him and has made full satisfaction for them; therefore, our sins should not be laid to our charge. He is the Advocate ‘with the Father,’ against whom all sin is committed and to whom satisfaction is made. Christ is the only Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). He is Jesus Christ the righteous! It is his righteousness that is imputed to us (Rom. 5:19; 10:4; 8:31-34; 2 Cor. 5:21).

v.2. 'He is the propitiation for our sins.' Propitiation means 'to cover, to atone for, to pardon and reconcile.' In order that the wrath of God be appeased, his justice and holiness satisfied so that he can forgive sin, be just and Justifier, Christ died for us (Heb. 9:22; 1 John 4:10). He is the propitiation (sin offering) not just for the Jew, but for Jew and Gentile believers, not just for this generation, but for believers of every generation, not just for those who read this epistle, but for every believer throughout the whole world. Our Lord has a people out of every tribe, tongue and nation. As he is not the Advocate or Mediator for unbelievers, neither is he a propitiation for them (John 17:9).

v.3. Throughout this earthly journey believers struggle with inward sin, doubts, fears, trials and attacks from Satan, and often are heard to say with Newton,

'Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it gives me anxious thought —  
Do I love the Lord or no,  
Am I his or am I not?

John says, 'This is how we discern daily by experience that we are coming to know him: if we bear in mind, observe and practice the teachings precepts and words of our Lord Jesus' words and commandments of Christ in regard to faith, love, forgiveness, humility, works of charity, kindness, giving, witnessing and all that relates to our daily walk' (1 John 5:3). The love of Christ and the words of Christ are our rule of life.

v.4. The person who says, 'I know and am acquainted with Christ in a saving interest,' but has no love for his teachings and commandments, is not telling the truth, and the truth of the gospel is not in him. For if any man be in Christ, he is a new person. He is a bonds slave of Christ and his

whole life and desire is to become more deeply and personally acquainted with him. This is done through his words and teachings (1 Peter 2:1, 2).

v.5. He who treasures the word of Christ, who bears in mind the precepts, who observes his message in its entirety, in him has the love of God and for God been established and it is reaching maturity. This is the way we know that we are in Christ: we love him, his word, his will, his presence. You cannot separate Christ and his teaching, or Christ and his commandments.

v.6. He that says that he and Christ are one ought to walk as Christ walked, love as Christ loved, forgive as Christ forgave and be humble as Christ was humble! (John 15:4, 5.)

# Love – the rule of life

## 1 John 2:7-14

v.7. This is referring to what John has written in the preceding verses:

1. Christ is our Advocate with the Father.
2. Christ is our atonement and mercy seat.
3. Those who know God love him and keep his word and commandments, and those who abide in Christ seek to walk as he walked.

This is no new teaching or commandment but dates back to the beginning. We have no new gospel, but the ancient, eternal gospel of God's grace in Christ, the principles and commandments of which are always the same (Rom. 1:1-3; John 8:56; 5:46).

v.8. John speaks here of brotherly love and refers probably to the words of Christ in John 13:34. This is no new commandment in the sense that it has been recently formulated and brought into existence; Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. His gospel, his law, his teachings are all the same, but this commandment to love one another is

1. Newly explained by him and purged from the false teachings of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:21, 27, 38, 43).
2. Newly exemplified by Christ in his love for us;
3. Newly enforced by the argument, 'How can we love God and not love our brethren? How can we be new creatures in Christ and not be like Christ?' That which is true in Christ is true in you who are in Christ.



The 'darkness' or dimness of the ceremonial law is past and the clear 'light' or Christ shines. The darkness of sin and ignorance is past and we have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

*vv. 9-11.* The person who says that he has been illuminated by the Holy Spirit, has a true knowledge of the gospel and walks in the light of fellowship and union with Christ, yet who hates his brother (by creation, as all men are brothers, or by regeneration, as brothers in Christ) is still in a state of unregeneracy and ignorance. He is still in darkness as far as the gospel is concerned (Matt. 5:43-48).

He who loves reveals a work of grace in his heart, for love is of God, not the product of nature (1 John 4:7, 8). Love does not lead to sin as hate does. Love is the rule of life (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14) and produces obedience.

He reminds us in verse 11 that whatever appearance of excellence or merit we may show, if love is absent, it is all sinful darkness and to no avail (1 Cor. 13:1-3; 1 John 4:7-11).

*vv.12-14.* This commandment of love to God and one another, the apostle writes to believers (distinguished as little children, young men and fathers) and urges them to obedience from the consideration of God's blessings which are peculiar to them.

'Little children' are not infants but babies in Christ. Nothing stimulates men to love God and walk in holiness more than when they are properly taught and knowledgeable of the blessings of forgiveness in the name and by the merits of Christ. 'You are sinners by nature and practice, but your sins are all forgiven' (Rom. 4:7, 8). 'You know the Father.' This spirit of adoption gives the children assurance and a sense of security; and as our gracious Father we love, honour and obey him.

‘Young men’ are those who are in the flower of their spiritual age. ‘You are strong in faith, strong in purpose and principle! You have overcome the world, which is particularly difficult for men in their prime. Your strength is not in the flesh nor in your determination, but because the word of God abides in you, both the living Word and the written word!’ (Ps. 119:9).

‘Fathers.’ Most children refuse to learn, most young men are occupied with other pursuits and most older people excuse themselves because they are weary. But the fathers in Christ have known him that is the Ancient of Days, the eternal I Am! There is no growing old in Christ, but an eternal youth (Ps. 103:5). Christ grows sweeter every day, and the fellowship with him causes us to lose interest in the things of the world. The more we walk with Christ, the less interested we are in the fashion of this world.

# Love not the world

## 1 John 2:15-20

*v.15.* ‘Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world.’ The believer loves relatives and friends in the world, he loves and pities all people in the world, he loves the blessings of fellowship and the good things that God gives to us and enables us to enjoy in the world, but he does not love the world nor the things of the world above God and Christ. He doesn’t take satisfaction or contentment in them, nor make idols of them, nor prefer them to heavenly and spiritual things! His citizenship and interests are in the kingdom of God. His true family is the family of God and he knows that the fashion of this world passes away. He prefers nothing and no one in this world to Christ.

If a man’s affections and interests are set upon the world, the things of the world and the companionship of the worldly people, it is clearly evident that he does not have the love of God in him. No man can serve two masters (2 Tim. 2:19; Luke 14:25-33).

*v.16.* All that is in this world, connected with it, or identified with it (under three headings), will pass away.

1. ‘The lust of the flesh’ or the body — all carnal and sensual desires, unchaste thoughts, intemperance in food and drink, costly apparel, luxurious and wasteful living, fine homes and indulgence of our fleshly appetites toward materialism and self-satisfaction.

2. ‘The lust of the eyes’ — after unlawful or unspiritual objects, covetousness after gold, silver, land and the possession of visible things. Achan said, ‘I saw it, I coveted it and I took it.’

3. 'The pride of life' — ambition, honour, worldly fame, the chief places and the high seats. Seek not the honour and praise of men, for these things are not of the Father but of the world (John 5:44).

v.17. There is nothing in this world or connected with it that is not temporary and will not finally pass away. The word 'lust' means that which is coveted or desired, or that which captivates the desires of carnal men in this world. That which is most precious, important and valuable in this world is marked for destruction. But those who seek God, his kingdom and his righteousness shall abide for ever. Our spiritual family will never die, our heavenly home shall never decay, our new body shall never grow old, the glory of Christ will never fade and we shall be for ever satisfied in his likeness (Ps. 17:15).

v.18. 'It is the last time.' So many ages have passed since the death of John that one might say his prophecy is not true, but we must understand the design of the apostle!

1. All things are accomplished; nothing is prophesied, typified, or promised concerning redemption that is not fulfilled in Christ; nothing remains except the coming of Christ to gather his own. This is indeed the last dispensation.

2. If the eternity of God's kingdom is kept in mind, both prior to Calvary and afterwards, the time between Christ's death and Christ's return will appear to us as a moment.

'You have been warned that antichrists shall come.' Those who suppose that would only be one man are mistaken, for John says, 'Even now there are many antichrists.' Some day this evil defection will prevail through the whole visible church (2 Thess. 2:7, 8). From the day of our Lord's death, we have moved steadily

toward that day of apostasy and the day of his return. These are indeed the last days.

v.19. These false professors, antichrists, find and have found their way into the church and for a time keep up their masquerade, living and acting under false pretences. But sooner or later they will fall away and depart from the fellowship of the gospel and the church. Their departure clearly reveals that they were never members of the body of Christ, never truly regenerated and in love with Christ; or they no doubt would have continued in the faith and fellowship! If their hearts had been right with God, they would have remained steadfast to him, his gospel and his church (Job 17:9; Jer. 32:40).

God permits these trials, for they are useful and necessary to his church. The church is like a threshing-floor — the chaff must be blown away while the wheat remains. The tares will grow among the true grain, that it might be more evident to us that salvation is of the Lord. Nothing will reveal more clearly to us that salvation, sanctification and righteousness are the work of God in us and for us that to observe those who try to do this work themselves (Eph. 2:8-10).

We have been taught by the word and by the Spirit of God that it is the Lord who chose us, called us, revealed Christ to us, keeps us by his power through faith and works his will and grace in us (Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 4:7). This truth is more clearly revealed to us when we observe first-hand those who try to establish their own righteousness, merit the approval of God by their own works and faith, and forever boast of their decisions, experiences and personal spirituality. They all finally fall, wilt under trial and depart from the faith. As we watch them depart, we are impressed to cry, ‘Salvation is of the Lord!’ ‘I am what I am by the grace of God!’

‘If one true sheep of Christ could fall away;  
My weak soul would fall a thousand times a day.’

v.20. 'You have the anointing of the Holy Spirit; you are the Lord's anointed ones, true believers, and you know the truth.' His anointing is not only a quickening one but a teaching one! It enlightens the understanding. You know the living God, you know the nature of fallen man, you know the grace of the Lord Jesus, you know the true gospel and you can discern false teachers and their message!

# Jesus is the Christ

## 1 John 2:21-29

v.21. If these believers had not known the Father, who is the God of truth, Christ, who is truth itself, the Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth and the gospel, which is the word of truth, there would have been no reason to write to them about antichrists, false prophets and false professors who would infiltrate the visible churches. But because they did know the truth, it was proper to establish them, to encourage them and to warn them against these deceivers.

Sometimes a lie is so mixed with an element of truth that it is difficult to discern, but if you will remember, nothing false, no deception, no compromise, nor part gospel is of Christ, the Truth!

vv. 22, 23. 'Jesus is the Christ.' He is the true, eternal Son of God. There cannot be a father without a son, or a son without a father. He that honors not the Son as such honors not the Father. He is the very Christ and true Messiah spoken of by the prophets, typified in the sacrifices and looked for by Old Testament saints. He is the God-man, Mediator and Saviour. He is that Prophet, our great High Priest and sovereign King. He is our sin-offering, propitiation and atonement! Anyone who denies this, no matter what high office, position, or praise he gives to Jesus Christ, is a liar, an antichrist, and does not know the Father or the Son. Jesus of Nazareth is either the Christ and all that is written, promised, prophesied, typified and expected of the Christ, or he is an impostor! If he is the Christ and we compromise, deny or take away any aspect of his total deity, humanity, office, work, or glory, then we are impostors, liars, antichrists!

v.24. This is the gospel which they heard from the apostles, for the apostles began their ministry with the deity, sonship, lordship and messiahship of Christ (Acts 2:36). We believers have been baptized in the name of the Father and the Son, standing in such a relationship as Father and Son to one another and we in Christ (Acts 9:20; 8:37).

‘If this gospel of truth remains in your heart and you remain in this gospel, you shall continue, accepted in the Beloved by the Father.’ Here is the fruit of perseverance, that they in who God’s truth remains remain in God! (Heb. 3:6, 14).

v.25. ‘This is....eternal life.’ We cannot live apart from Christ. The Father put this promise of life and all other promises into the hands of Christ. Christ himself is life, and the sum of the gospel is that all who believe in him have eternal life. John insists that the beginning of life is to be found in Christ, the continuation of that life is continuing in the faith of Christ and the ultimate perfection of that life is in being made like Christ eternally (1 John 3:2).

v.26. God’s elect may be staggered, tossed to and fro and subject to doubts and fears but they cannot totally and finally be deceived. But some will try to seduce them. These people lie in wait to deceive, walking in craftiness and handling the word of God deceitfully. Therefore, that they might be known, shunned and avoided, the apostle points them out and shows who they are.

v.27. ‘The anointing which you have received’ is the ‘unction from the Holy One’ (v.20), or the grace of the Holy Spirit, who quickens us, convicts us, teaches us and abides in us (Rom. 8:9; 1 John 3:24). His spirit abides in us, it is an eternal abiding and can never be taken away. ‘Ye need not that any man teach you’ does not deny pastors and teachers, for John himself taught them and this very epistle was teaching them, but man



is not our authority! The teaching of men which is contrary to the word of God (inspired by the Holy Spirit and revealed to our hearts) is to be rejected (John 16:12-15; Acts 17:11). The Holy Spirit of truth; abide in his teaching.

v.28. 'Abide in Christ' (John 15:4-7). Exercise faith in him, hope in him, walk in him, look to him, that when he shall appear the second time, we shall not be put to shame as those will be who refuse his lordship and redemption. We have this confidence — that if we are washed in his blood and clothed in his righteousness we shall stand before him without spot, fault or blemish.

v.29. Christ is righteous as God in his nature, as man in his obedience, life and work, and as Mediator in faithfully discharging the work he undertook. He is the author of eternal righteousness, which is revealed in the gospel, imputed by God and received by faith. So everyone that lives upon and by the righteousness of Christ and is obedient to his words is born of him!

# Six arguments for holiness of life (1)

## 1 John 2:29-3:6

This passage has a twofold theme. Believers will live holy lives and they will love one another. Faith is always connected with a righteous life (James 2:20) and a spirit of love for all men, especially all believers (1 John 4:7). Several arguments or reasons are presented for godly living on the part of believers.

*1 John 2:29.* The first argument for holiness of life is that if you know that Christ our Lord is absolutely righteous (obedient to the Father's will in his thoughts, actions and words), you know that those who are begotten of him (in like manner) will seek to be like him in righteousness and obedience to the Father's will. To be born of God is to have the nature of God, the grace of God and the presence of Christ formed in us, causing us to love and desire the will and ways of God.

*1 John 3:1.* The second argument for holiness of life is the love of God which has been bestowed upon us. 'Behold' — take notice with wonder and astonishment, what matchless, amazing and wonderful love the Father has given freely and graciously to us! The more abundantly God's goodness has been manifested to us, the greater are our obligations to him (Rom. 12:1). 'That we should be called sons of God.' This is a privilege and blessing that exceeds all others. Children of wrath are now children of love; rebels and traitors are now sons; enemies are now heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. How can we serve self and sin when we are recipients of such love and grace?

The reason the people of this world do not recognize and acknowledge us as children of God is that they do not know God. They did not know

Christ but treated him with ridicule and contempt. It cannot be inferred (by natural men) from our present condition and state that God is our Father (John 6:42).

v.2. Though the world may not recognize us as sons of God, though our present condition is very short of God's glory, though our bodies are flesh and death is before us, though we are subject to many miseries, temptations and trials, though we are aware of the sin and evil within us — now, at this very moment, we are the sons of God! We are foolish to estimate what we shall be by what we are now. But we know from his word of promise that when Christ comes again, we shall be changed into his glorious image! (Rom. 8:29; John 17:24; 1 Cor. 15:45-54; Phil. 3:20, 21).

v.3. The third argument for holiness of life is that every person who has this hope in him (that he will one day be like Christ, perfectly conformed to his image), who has a real desire to be like Christ (Ps. 17:15), will make every effort to be like Christ now! It is foolishness for a man to say, 'I want to be like Christ some day, but not now! I want to fellowship with God in eternity, but not now!'

v.4. The fourth argument for holiness of life is that every person who practices sin (designs a course or life of sin, 'for there is no one who doeth good and sinneth not'), who excuses or justifies himself in the liberty of sin unrestrained and unregulated by the commands of Christ, is lawless and hateful to God, for sin is the breaking and violating of God's law. No true believer can be happy outside the will and fellowship of God.

v.5. The fifth argument for holiness of life is the office and work of Christ to take away our sins.

1. In Christ, the believer has no sins (John 1:29; Rom. 4:7, 8).
2. But the main thought of this verse is that Christ came to destroy the reigning power of sin in the believer (Rom. 6:5-16; 8:5-14).

v.6. The sixth argument for holiness of life is that those who know Christ and abide in him do not habitually and deliberately practice a life of sin. They hate sin in them and about them. They grieve over their falls and their lack of grace. They desire and strive to manifest the fruit of the Spirit in word and deed.

Those who live in sin and continue to practice hate, intemperance, indifference, covetousness, greed, drunkenness and dishonesty have not seen the redemptive glory of Christ with eyes of faith and have never known Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

## Six arguments for holiness of life (2)

### 1 John 3:7-13

v.7. Do not be deceived by false prophets and wicked persons who preach that it does not matter how a person lives, provided he believes the gospel, or that knowledge of theology is sufficient without obedience to the lordship of Christ in conduct. This is not true. One cannot separate faith and conduct. As Christ our Lord showed himself to be a righteous man by doing good, obeying the Father and demonstrating love and compassion, so those who are united to him by faith, justified by his grace and regenerated by his spirit will seek to imitate their Lord. As a tree is known by its fruit, so a righteous man is known by his works. Good fruit does not make a tree good, but shows it to be good; so good works do not make us righteous (only Christ can do that), but show us to be so (James 2:14-20, 26).

v.8. A man who practices sin, dishonesty, drunkenness, malice, envy, lies and disobedience to the commandments of Christ is not of God, but takes his character from the evil one, for Satan has violated the way and laws of righteousness from the beginning. He imitates Satan, not Christ, and resembles his parent as children do their parents (John 8:41, 42). Christ came not only to put away our sins in regard to the penalty of them and the curse of the law, but to deliver us from the power of Satan and the practice of ungodliness (Rom. 6:12-18).

v.9. He that is regenerated by the Spirit of God, in whom Christ is formed, who is a new creature in Christ, does not make sin his practice and course of his life. He is not without the motions of sin within, nor free from thoughts, words and deeds of sin in his life, but he does not give himself

up to sin, excuse it, nor continue in it as a servant of sin. God's nature and the grace of the Spirit abide in him and he cannot practice a life of sin; he is born of God! A life of sin is distasteful to him who pants after holiness and desire to be like Christ.

*v.10.* By attitude, conduct and daily walk it is made perfectly clear who are those who take their nature from God and are his children, and who are those who take their nature from the devil and are his children. No one who does not practice and seek godliness and righteousness, who does not seek to be conformed to the will of God in purpose, thought and deeds, is of God. A man who does not love others is not of God either. A godly walk and a spirit of love and mercy are evidences of grace and faith. The absence of these is evidence of the absence of grace.

*v.11.* The reason we can be so emphatic on this score is because this is the message sent from the Father by Christ, it is what his ministry declared and is the commandment which he often taught (John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17).

*v.12.* Let us not be like Cain, who took his nature and got his motivation from Satan and killed his brother. This was the first instance and example of hatred of the brethren. What was the cause of this hatred? What moved him to hate and kill his brother? Abel attributed everything to God — all mercy, righteousness, forgiveness, acceptance and all grace. Cain attributed everything to himself. The controversy was over salvation by grace alone or by works! Cain hated his brother on this account. While his brother looked to God alone for salvation, Cain sought acceptance on the basis of his righteousness and works. So carnal men today hate those who find righteousness in Christ alone.

v.13. ‘Therefore, do not be amazed and surprised if the world (especially the religious world, as most men are) detest you and persecute you. Your faith in Christ condemns their self-righteousness and exposes their false hope!’ How often we have heard this claim: ‘If what you preach (meaning sovereign grace in Christ) is true, then I’m not saved!’ Yes, if what Abel believed and did is true and the only way to God, then Cain came the wrong way and was rejected. This was the cause of his hatred.

## Six arguments for holiness of life (3)

### 1 John 3:14-24

*v.14.* Genuine love for the brethren is an evidence of redemption. It is not the cause but the sign, for no one sincerely loves his brethren unless he is regenerated by the Spirit of God. It is God's spirit who sheds abroad God's love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22). The love of the natural man is self-love (Luke 6:31-35). 'He that loveth not' continues in a state of spiritual death.

*v.15.* Anyone who hates another in his heart is a murderer, for out of the heart proceeded evil thoughts, murders, adulteries (Matt. 15:19, 20; 5:21, 22). An attitude of hate and a spirit of malice reveal an unregenerate heart, for salvation is a heart work. A man may keep his hands from mischief, but if he neglects the keeping of the heart he is in danger of condemnation (Prov. 4:23).

*v.16.* John now shows what true love is. For an understanding of perfect love, he sets before us the example of Christ. He laid down his life for those whom he loved. This is the mark to which he bids us advance. Our love is approved when we transfer the love of ourselves to our brethren, forgetting ourselves and seeking the good and welfare of others. It is certain that we are far from being equal to Christ, but John recommends that we imitate him (Phil. 2:3-5; Rom. 15:1-3; 12:10).

*v.17.* John now speaks of the common duties of love.

1. No one truly has the love of God in him or a love for the brethren unless he really demonstrates that love and care when the



occasion occurs. ‘If you are in need, what I have is yours,’ says love.

2. As far as anyone has the means, he will assist his brethren because he realizes that the Lord has entrusted us with what we have for the good of his kingdom and people. It is not ours at all, but his (1 Chron. 29:14).

3. It is our responsibility to see that everyone’s needs (in the family of God) are met, not grudgingly or of necessity, but rejoicing that we are privileged to glorify our God and his grace in this way.

*v.18.* Let us not merely profess with our tongues that we love one another, but prove it by deeds; for this is the only true way of showing love. We read in scripture of the work and labor of love. Talking about love is mere show! Demonstrating love in meeting the physical, material and spiritual needs of others is love in truth.

*v.19.* Christ, not our love or works, is the object of our faith. Christ’s obedience and sacrifice, not our love or works, are the foundation of our faith. His spirit, using his word of promise, bears witness that we are the sons of God; and love is an aid, an accessory, a prop for our faith, not the foundation! If we in truth love our brethren, we have an evidence that we are of the truth and can have a good conscience and assurance before him! Peter’s heart was clear before Christ when he said, ‘Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you.’

*v.20.* But if we do not find a genuine love for the brethren in our hearts and our hearts and consciences trouble us and condemn us over the absence of this love, what will be the judgment and condemnation of God against us? He is infinitely greater than our hearts and knows our feelings

and thoughts perfectly. If our consciences (in their limited capacities) condemn us, think how he must judge and condemn us.

v.21. We are not talking here of having no sense of sin or awareness of our imperfections (Ps. 51:3, 4; Phil. 3:12); but, staying with the context, if we know that we love and trust Christ alone, that there is in our hearts a love for the brethren, a desire to be like Christ and a confidence in his person and work, then we can have assurance and confidence of life eternal.

vv. 22, 23. These two things are always connected — confidence toward God and prayer (Heb. 11:6). No one can really pray except those who have a sense of sonship in Christ and rightly worship God with a sincere and true heart. God hears those who believe on his Son and love one another. This is his commandment (John 6:29; 13:34). Our confidence in prayer is not founded on our works, but the absence of faith in Christ and love for the brethren indicates an absence of that sonship which gives us the privilege of prayer.

v.24. This is what John has been saying throughout this entire chapter. Faith and conduct cannot be separated; belief and obedience are always found in the same heart. When his spirit and his word governs our hearts and lives, it is evident that Christ dwells in us and we dwell in Christ. Whatever good works are done by us proceed from the grace of his spirit who dwells in us.

# A special test for false preachers

## 1 John 4:1-6

In this chapter, the apostle warns against evil seducing spirits, advises us to examine and try the spirits, gives rules by which evil spirits are recognized and then returns to his favorite subject — brotherly love!

*v.1.* ‘Beloved, believe not every spirit.’ The word ‘spirit’ signifies to a man who claims to be endowed with the gift of the Spirit to perform the office of prophet, preacher, or teacher. God’s word is received from the mouth of man, but some who claim to speak for God are false preachers and are sent by Satan to deceive and disturb the church. There were false teachers among Israel, there were false teachers in the days of the apostles and there are false teachers today (2 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 11:13-15). Let this fact be fixed in our minds that, from the time the gospel began to be preached, false prophets immediately appeared, and we must not be dazzled by everybody who claims to be holy, to speak for God, to work wonders and to be a minister of righteousness. We must try these spirits (these preachers and religious leaders).

*v.2.* Let all preachers and religious leaders be tried by the word of God first (Acts 17:11; Isa. 8:19, 20). This will expose most of them, for they do not preach the word of truth at all. Their messages are full of free will, human righteousness, life by law and works, the advocacy of Mary and saints, God’s weakness and inability, sabbath keeping, rituals and holy days, infant salvation and all manner of tradition and open error. But John lays down a special mark by which we can easily distinguish between true and false prophets. Christ Jesus is the object of true faith and the whole foundation of acceptance with God. Therefore, he is also the stone at

which all heretics stumble, and his person and work will be the place where error will be most evident.

1. When the apostle says Jesus Christ ‘is come’ we conclude that he was, before he came, with the Father, co-equal, co-eternal. He is very God of very God (Isa. 9:6).

2. By saying he came ‘in the flesh,’ he means that Christ, by putting on flesh, became a real man, of the same nature with us, that he might become our Brother, except that he was free from every sin and corruption (Heb. 2:14-18; John 1:14).

3. And lastly, by saying that he came, the cause of his coming must be declared, for the Father did not send him here for nothing (Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10; Isa. 53:10-12; Rom. 3:25, 26; Gal. 4:4, 5). As some heretics depart from the faith, denying the divine nature of Christ, and others depart from the faith denying the effectual, sufficient and substitutionary work of Christ, leaving the final redemption of men’s souls up to their own free will, works, or co-operative efforts (Heb. 10:11-18).

v.3. This attack on the person and work of Christ, whatever direction it may take, is satanically inspired, for it robs Christ of his merit and glory! It is the spirit which motivated Cain to reject the blood atonement, the Galatian heretics to preach circumcision, the Catholics to enthrone Mary and fundamentalist of today to say, ‘Christ has done all that he can do; now salvation is up to you’ (Rom. 8:28-34). This spirit is not anti-religion, not anti-morality, not even anti-good works; it is anti-Christ! (Col. 1:14-20).

v.4. ‘Ye are of God. You are born of God (John 1:12, 13), and by the power of God ye shall discern error and overcome false preachers.’ The

Spirit of God in us is greater than the spirit of evil and error in the false prophets.

v.5. There is no reason for us to be disturbed. These heretics are of the world system of which Satan is the prince, and it is not unusual that those under his direction should listen to him.

v.6. 'We are of God' — true preachers, true believers and the true gospel of Christ. All who are of God know God, are chosen of God and will hear God's word (John 10:24-28; Acts 12:48). 'Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error,' by the answer to this question: 'What think ye of Christ?'

# Let us love one another

## 1 John 4:7-13

In these verses, John enforces brotherly love for the following reasons:

1. Love is of God;
2. Love is a fruit of his spirit and grace;
3. Love is an evidence that we are born of God.

This is the epistle of the doctrine of faith and the exhortation to love, and the apostle continually passes from one to the other.

*vv. 7, 8.* ‘Let us love one another’ — not just our friends and those who love us, but all people, especially all believers (Luke 6:32-35; Gal. 6:10). ‘For love is of God.’ That is, love not only is the command of God, according to his will and well-pleasing in his sight, but love comes from God (Rom. 5:5). It is the fruit of his spirit (Gal. 5:22) and is the evidence of regeneration, for everyone that truly loves is born of God!

‘God is love.’ His nature is to love, to show mercy, to forgive. God is the fountain of love and this effect flows from him. A person who is born of God has his nature regenerated in him, knows God in a personal, intimate relationship and will by the presence of this new nature love others. If this fruit of love is absent, then God is not there at all and this person, though he professes to know God, does not know God at all.

*vv.9-11.* God’s love to us is revealed and manifested in many ways, but particularly in two.

1. 'God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him' (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). This is the principal evidence of God's love for us and far surpasses all others. It ought to fill our minds with wonder and amazement. He subjected Christ to all the sorrow, grief, suffering and death of this world that his wounds might restore us to life.

2. 'He loved us; we did not love him' (Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:1-5). He freely loved us when there was no return of love on our part. In order that sinful men may possess life and happiness, it was necessary that their sins be paid for and an atonement made for them, that the justice of God should be honoured and satisfied (Rom. 3:25, 26), that peace and righteousness be reconciled. Christ's death did not make God love us but was because God loved us. His coming into the world was the effect of God's love.

'Beloved, if God loved us so freely, so sacrificially, so infinitely, we ought also to love one another.' It should not be difficult for one who is the object of such love to manifest it toward others! It should not be difficult for one who has been forgiven so freely to forgive! It should not be difficult for one who has received such mercy to show mercy!

*vv. 12, 13.* 'No man hath seen God at any time.' The same words were spoken by John the Baptist in John 1:18, but they have not the same thing in view. In John 1:18, the Baptist is saying that God cannot be known, except as he reveals himself in Christ, and the apostle is saying here that a man cannot know that God dwells in him by seeing God or talking to God, but he can know that God dwells in him when the Spirit of God produces in him the nature of God and the fruit of God, which is faith and love. If we truly believe in him and sincerely love one another, we have good evidence that God dwells in us (1 John 3:24).

‘His love is perfected in us.’ This grace of love will not be perfect and complete until we are perfectly conformed to his image in glory, when faith and hope shall be no more; but the sense is that this grace of love is growing in us. It is sincere and genuine, not in word and tongue but in deed and truth. The fruit of the Spirit is present in every believer, but as believers grow in the knowledge of Christ and his word, they grow in grace and the fruit of his spirit.



# The fruit of love

## 1 John 4:14-21

*v.14.* When John declares that ‘We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son,’ he refers chiefly to himself and the other apostles. They were eye-witnesses to his glory (1 John 1:1-3). They had seen his works and miracles; they had seen him dying, rising and ascending to glory.

‘To be the Saviour of the world’ — not of the Jews only (1 John 2:2), but of the Gentiles as well. He is the Redeemer of all who believe on him, without distinction of nation, sex, age, state, or condition. He came to save us from the power of Satan, from the bondage and curse of the law and from wrath to come. He is the only Saviour of sinners (Acts 4:12).

*v.15.* We are united to God only by Christ. The Father has vested all things pertaining to life eternal in the Son, Jesus Christ (Col. 2:9, 10; 1 John 5:11-13; John 14:6). He that hath the Son by faith hath the Father! (1 John 2:12; 2 John 9). This confession, that Christ Jesus is not a mere man but the everlasting God in human flesh (Isa. 9:6), is not merely a mouth creed, but a heart belief (Rom. 10:9, 10).

*v.16.* It is the same as if he had said, ‘We know the love of God for us by believing. Such knowledge is only attained by faith! The love of God is in Christ (Rom. 8:38, 39). No man knows or can be certain of the love and mercy of God to sinners except as he believes in and knows Christ (Matt. 11:27). We go from faith to love; by faith in Christ God dwells in us, and God is love. Then wherever God abides, love will be there. Hence it follows that he that exercises love to God and to men dwells in God and God in him.

v.17. John begins to show the fruit of God's love to us and our love for God; we can dare to stand boldly before God, now at the throne of grace (Heb. 10:19) and later at the final judgment. By nature we dread the presence of God, and justly so, for our sins hold us guilty; therefore, condemnation and hell must come to our minds when we think of God. Natural man has reason to fear and shun the presence of God. But the believer does not fear the Day of Judgment; on the contrary, we approach death and judgment confidently and cheerfully because of his love to us in Christ. As Christ is the Son of God by nature, we are sons of God by adoption. As he is loved by the Father with an everlasting and unchangeable love, so are we loved by him with the same kind of love even while we are in this world (1 John 3:1, 2). As he was a man of sorrows, afflicted, tempted, hated and tempted by Satan, so are we! Moreover, as he is now in Heaven, so are we reprehensively in him (Eph. 2:6).

v.18. When the love of God in Christ is seen and known by faith (how God can be just and justifier, how God is reconciled in Christ, how sins are purged, cleansed and forgiven by Christ's obedience and death), peace is given to our hearts, so that we no longer fear the curse of the law and the condemnation of God (Rom. 5:1; 8:1).

Genuine, sincere and believing love does away with slavish and servile fear (Rom. 8:15-17). When a person still fears the curse and condemnation of the law and justice and is tormented by a dread of wrath and judgment, it is quite certain that he is filled with unbelief concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ. He does not believe and trust Christ.

v.19. Lest love to God and so to one another should be thought to be a product of our own nature, the apostle reminds us that God's love to us preceded our love to him. Our love for him and our love for the brethren is

a gift of his grace shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. I am what I am, have what I have and do what I do by the grace of God.

v.20. Nothing can be more contradictory than for a man to say, 'I love God and hate my brother.' This is a lie that he speaks and a thing impossible. A man cannot love God and hate the image of God before his eyes, for God is before us in those who bear his image and the likeness of his Son.

v.21. This is another argument for brotherly love drawn from the authority and commandment of Christ. He not only commanded us concerning the love of the Father, but commanded us to love one another (1 John 3:23, 24).

# The nature of faith and love

## 1 John 5:1-5

The twofold theme of this epistle, saving faith and brotherly love, continues in this chapter as the apostle deals with the nature of faith and love and Christ, the object of both. Saving faith cannot be separated from love.

*v. 1.* All who are born of God believe that Jesus is the Christ. The title, 'the Christ,' signifies 'anointed' and includes all the offices of the Son of God. To believe him to be the Christ is to believe him to be that Prophet Moses said should come, who has declared the whole mind and will of the Father. It is to believe he is that Priest that should arise after the order of Melchizedek and make atonement for sin and intercession for transgressors. It is to believe that he is that King whom God hath set over all things.

This believing is not a mere assent to the fact nor merely acknowledging it as the devils have done (Luke 4:41). It is to believe with the heart (Rom. 10:9, 10). It is to look to Christ, trust in him and receive him as our righteousness, to rest in his blood for cleansing, to lay hold of him as our only Saviour, Redeemer and Mediator.

Such faith is far above the reach of the human mind. It is the gift of God; it is the result of regeneration and a new birth, for we must be drawn to Christ by the Father (John 6:44, 45).

Those who are born of God will love all who are born of God. Some understand this to be Christ, and it is true that Christ is the object of faith and love (John 8:42); but the apostle is saying, as in 1 John 4:7, 12, 20, that all who love God love one another!

v.2. In this verse, John shows what true love is, the nature of true love! True love is when God holds the supremacy and pre-eminence! We may profess love to someone because of natural relationship, or social friendship, or from a benefit of favour received, or from a natural attraction; but this is not brotherly love, spiritual love, or continuing love. True love for others springs from true heart love for God. Carnal love stops when the relationship, the attraction, or the favors stop. This is self-love. But when we love God, we love them that belong to God and will never cease to love him or them.

v.3. Keeping God's commandments is an evidence of love to God. This shows that love is not in word and tongue (in profession only) but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18). If our hearts are really devoted to our Lord, then our chief desire will be to do his will and obey his word.

The commandments of Christ are not burdensome, heavy or disagreeable to one who is born of God and loves God (Matt. 11:28-30; Rom. 7:22). While we struggle with the motions and desires of the flesh, and while there is always a conflict between the flesh and the spirit, the difficulty does not arise from the commandments of Christ, or our love for them, or our desire to be like him, but from our corrupt flesh (Rom. 7:21-24; Ps. 17:15).

v.4. 'Everyone that is born of God is victorious over the world, and this is the victory — even our faith.'

The word 'world' has a wide meaning: it includes whatever is contrary to the Spirit of God. The corruption of our nature is part of the world; all lusts, all the crafts of Satan, all evil are of the world. Though we are exposed to these, yet the Spirit of God declares we are already victorious; the enemy has been defeated and put to flight and in Christ we are more than conquerors! Our warfare continues through life, our conflicts are daily, but in Christ we have the victory (1 Cor. 15:57, 58).

v.5. Who has this victory? Who has this confidence and assurance? Who has this eternal life and deliverance? No one but the person who believes in, receives and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ obtains the victory — not trust and confidence in self, or in works, or even in our faith, but only in Jesus Christ. It is seeing the Son in the glory, fulness and suitability of his person, office and grace; going to him, trusting and living upon him. This shows that the victory over the world is not owing to the faith itself, but to its object, Christ, who has overcome it and made us conquerors in him.

# Jesus Christ is the Son of God

## 1 John 5:6-10

v.6. In order that our faith and confidence may rest safely and securely on Christ (as stated in verse 5), John says that he is the complete substance and fulfillment of all that is typified in the ceremonial law. In the Levitical law, we meet continually with water and blood — by pure water all filth was washed away, so that men might come before God pure and clean, and by blood expiation was made, that men might come before God reconciled and justified! The whole perfection of sanctification and justification is fulfilled in Christ! (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ's side became the fountain of blood and water (John 19:34) in order that believers may know that cleansing (of which the ancient baptisms were types) is found in him and atonement (of which the ancient sacrifices were types) is found in him. He is our righteousness and redemption.

The Holy Spirit of truth, whose authority is unquestionable, bears witness in every believer to the sufficiency of Christ, that our faith might not vacillate and that we might have confidence before God (Rom. 8:16). We do not go to the blood of Christ for justification and to the law for sanctification, but to Christ for both.

v.7. God, in order to confirm our faith in Christ as the Son of God, our Redeemer and eternal Lord and Saviour, bring forth the proper witnesses (Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1; John 5:31). The heavenly witnesses of Christ's sonship and redemption are the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one in essence, unity, purpose and testimony. At the baptism of Christ, all bore witness (Matt. 3:16, 17; John 1:32-34) to his sonship and glory.

v.8. There are some that believe that these three on earth, that bear witness to his sonship, his redemptive work and his glory, are water baptism, the Lord's table and the gospel. While it is true that these are witnesses of our Lord's saving office, they are not the earthly witnesses referred to in this verse. Staying with the context, we will have to conclude that on the cross it happened by God's purpose that both water and blood flowed from the side of Christ; so the Holy Spirit bears witness, through the word of God and the blood of Christ that not only some part of our salvation is found in Christ, but the whole of it. The heavenly witnesses are one and the earthly witnesses are in perfect unison with God's righteousness, justice and purpose — the Spirit, the word and the blood.

v.9. If the witness of a sufficient number of credible men is accepted and believed by us, how much more should we receive the witness of God, which he has testified of his Son Christ Jesus, even the witness of the Father, the Son, the Spirit, the water, the blood and the Spirit in our hearts! (John 5:31-39.) God has not left himself without a witness. We have sufficient witnesses for a firm and strong faith in the Lord Jesus.

v.10. He who believes on the Lord Jesus as the eternal Lord, who came in the flesh, obeyed and honoured the law, brought in everlasting righteousness and justification for all who believe, has the witness of God in himself. His faith is not just a religious creed but a heart experience, not just a set of facts accepted but a living Lord revealed in him by the Holy Spirit. He knows his sin against God, the insufficiency of his own righteousness, his inability to please God or atone for sin and that without Christ he can do nothing. He has experienced the peace, joy and rest that come from finding all in Christ (Col. 2:9, 10).

He who does not believe on Christ is guilty of the greatest blasphemy. It is God (not men) that he does not believe, and he has made the God of truth to be a liar because he refuses the heavenly witness concerning



Christ! Some wonder why God commends faith so much and condemns unbelief so severely. The glory of God is implicated in this. It is God who has borne witness of salvation in Christ.

# Eternal life is in his Son

## 1 John 5:11-15

*v.11.* This is the record, the sum and substance of all that is declared, written and preached. God, out of his pure free grace, because of his sovereign will and pleasure, is pleased to give to some of the fallen sons of Adam eternal life! This life is the spiritual life lost in the Fall, the life of God, the life of glory and fellowship with God, the life of righteousness and happiness and freedom from sin, sorrow and death forever.

This eternal life is in Jesus Christ — not only the promise of it, the purpose of it and the purchase of it, but life itself is in Christ (Col. 3:4; John 14:6; 11:25; Gal. 2:20). Three things are included here: first, we are all dead until God in grace restores us to life; second, this life comes to us through a vital union with Christ by faith and, third, we cannot otherwise partake of this life except in Christ.

*v.12.* The person who has Christ (that is, a spiritual and experimental knowledge of him, true faith in him and in whose heart Christ dwells) has eternal life. He possesses it now and has a right to that good hope of the fulness of the inheritance (1 John 3:1, 2).

The person who has no saving knowledge of Christ (no faith in him nor enjoyment of him) is dead in sin, alienated from the life of God and shall die the second death (John 3:36).

*v.13.* The things that are written concerning salvation in Christ are not only written to encourage sinners to believe on Christ and come to him that they might be saved, but they are written to confirm and give confidence and assurance to those who already believe on Christ. There ought to be a daily progress in faith, a growth in faith, grace and the

knowledge of Christ. How is faith confirmed? How is faith increased? Even by having the person and work, the office and power of Christ explained to us again and again. Eternal life is to be found nowhere but in Christ, and in order that those who are already in Christ might have assurance and make progress in faith, the preacher is to magnify over and over again the grace of Christ.

*v.14.* This is the confidence that we have in Christ (our Saviour, Mediator and Redeemer) that we dare to call boldly on God (Eph. 3:12; Heb. 10:19-22). We dare to call God ‘Father’ (Rom. 8:14-16; Heb. 11:6).

‘If we ask anything according to his will.’ This passage is added to remind us that there is a right way or rule of prayer. Even when we subject our own wishes to the will of God we come to God only through Christ, we are persuaded that our prayers are heard (that he is to be believed) and we pray according to his will! (Rom. 8:26.)

*v.15.* Since we know that God hears us — we have his promise, we are commanded in scripture to pray, we are taught by our Lord to pray (‘When ye pray say, Our Father’) and we have the example of the apostles, who were men of prayer — we can be sure that in God’s own time and way we shall have everything that we ask which is in accordance with his will (Luke 18:1; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:17, 18; 1 Tim. 2:8; James 5:16).

# The sin unto death - apostasy

## 1 John 5:16-21

v.16. John has been writing about prayer and encouraging believers to pray with confidence that God will hear us and grant those petitions that are according to his will. Those who have an interest at the throne of grace should make use of it for others, and especially for weak brothers and for those who are overtaken with sin. We are encouraged to pray for the lost, that God will save them (Rom. 10:1); but this verse says if a brother (a born-again member of the church) is observed to sin (as the best of men do in word, thought and deed) or falls into sin, we are to pray for him! God will hear and give the brother life, by which may be meant comfort, peace and causing him to live cheerfully and not be swallowed up with sorrow and despair. Of course, the brother does not continue in the sin; he has a sense of it, a sorrow for it, is ashamed of it and forsakes it. ‘There is a sin unto death,’ which is not only deserving of death, as all sin is, but which shall certainly lead to death for all who commit it, with exception. John Gill says, ‘This sin unto death is the sin against the Holy Spirit — it is sinning wilfully, not in a practical, but doctrinal way by denying the truth of the gospel of Christ.’ John Calvin says, ‘This sin unto death is not a partial fall or a transgression of a single commandment, but apostasy, by which men alienate themselves from Christ and surrender themselves to Satan. We ought not rashly to conclude that any professed believer has apostatized; love should make us believe the best; but if one has departed, let us not contend with the justice of God or seek to be more merciful than he is!’ We are not urged to pray for apostates.

freely forgiven and, third, because of the mercy of God. David's sin, Jacob's sins, Peter's sins were not unto death. They enjoyed repentance unto life and a fresh application of pardoning grace. Weak believers may read the preceding verse and be overcome with despair, so John adds, 'There is a sin which is not unto death' (Heb. 8:12; 1 John 1:9; 2:1).

v.18. We know that those who are regenerated by the grace of God, (who have Christ formed in them and are partakers of the divine nature) do not sin the sin unto death, which is apostasy, or a denial of the gospel of substitution and free grace. They do not fall away from the grace of God. They keep themselves in the fear of God, the faith of Christ and do not suffer themselves to be led away by Satan and surrender themselves to the deadly wound of Satan (Heb. 6:4-6). All true believers sin, else why would we be taught to pray 'Forgive us our sin'? Why should we be instructed to confess our sins? But true believers never deny Christ, his person, or work.

v.19. In order to be prepared for the contest of life, for the allurements and attractions prepared by Satan to draw men away from God, for the trials and difficulties ahead, we need to know two things: first, that 'we are of God,' born of God, loved of God, redeemed by God, called of God, sons of God and seated in Christ; and second, that 'the whole world lieth in the wicked one,' or is under the dominion of Satan. Therefore, we do not hesitate to shun the world, we do not fear its enmity and we do not covet its honors, because we are of God and the world is alienated from God.

v.20. The second person in the Godhead, equal to the Father and of the same nature with him, is come from the Father into this world, in the flesh, to work our salvation for his people by his obedience, suffering and death. He has given us a knowledge of spiritual things, of himself, of God in him,

of the truths of the gospel and the mysteries of grace, that we may know the Father, the true and living God (John 17:3), and that we may know we are in Christ by covenant mercies, by faith and by the will of God. Christ is the true God and Christ is eternal life (1 John 5:11-13).

*v.21.* ‘Little children, keep yourselves from false gods, from anyone and anything that would occupy the place in your heart due to God; keep yourselves from traditions, superstitions, images and religious practices and observances introduced by those who call themselves Christians, if these things are not according to the scripture and glorifying to God.

# 2 John

Bible Class Commentary

A Work  
of  
Henry Mahan

# In truth and love

## 2 John 1-6

We feel certain that the author of this epistle is the apostle John, chiefly because of the likeness of the style and the subject matter, comparing it with 1 John. Read 2 John 5-9 and then 1 John 2:7, 8 and 1 John 3:23.

The epistle is addressed not to a church, but to a certain woman and her children. We should not think this so unusual, for in Christ there is neither male nor female; they are both one in him. Think of the Lord's special attention to and care of certain women; the Samaritan woman, Mary and Martha, the woman with the issue, the Syrophenician and others. After his resurrection he appeared to a woman and sent her to tell the disciples that he was alive. Think of Miriam, Ruth, Deborah, Esther, Dorcas, Lydia, Priscilla, Lois and Eunice. No wonder that the Lord was pleased to honour and distinguish by divine grace a certain woman by addressing to her an apostolic epistle!

v. 1. 'The elder.' Some think that John was nearly a hundred years old, having outlived all the other apostles. He may be referring to his office or to his age. The term fits both.

'To the elect lady and her children.' It is futile to try to give her a name or to decide if she is a widow. We know no more about her than the word tells us. She is one of God's elect, chosen by his grace to life eternal (Matt. 24:31; Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:4). Evidently her children were grown up, had made a profession of the truth and walked in it (v. 4).

John expresses his sincere and heartfelt love for them and adds, 'All who know them and recognize and understand the truth as it is in Christ



love them.’ The believer has love for all people, but he has a special love for those who are in the family of faith (Gal. 6:10; Titus 3:15). The ground for the love and respect paid to this lady and her children by the apostle and all who knew them was their regard for the truth! Those who love the truth will love it in others.

v. 2. The word ‘truth’ occurs five times in the first four verses. It refers both to Christ and to the doctrine of Christ, for they cannot be separated! Truth to John was not mere facts or a theory about Christ, but Christ himself! (John 14:6; 4:24; 8:32; 18:37). Christ dwells in us and shall be with us for ever. The word of Christ dwells in us, an inward principle of grace (John 17:17; 15:4-7).

v. 3. This is the same salutation used by other apostles (1 Tim. 1:2; Rom 1:7), only it is added here, with respect to Christ, that he is the Son of God. This was a special issue to John and he dealt with it frequently in all his writings (John 1:1; 10:30; 1 John 1:3, 7; 4:2, 15).

‘In truth and love.’ John is called by some ‘the apostle of love.’ These two words (‘truth’ and ‘love’) occur repeatedly in this epistle. They are noble and natural companions which cannot be separated on earth any more than in heaven. God is light (truth) and God is love. In the family of believers they ought to be united. Truth without love becomes stern, cold and even cruel; love without truth (if it were possible) would be unstable and without foundation.

v. 4. It brought great joy to the heart of the apostles to find the children of this dear woman walking (living day by day) in a continual, progressive spirit, attitude and conversation which revealed that Christ was in them. They not only professed to know Christ, but their conduct and conversation revealed a living union with Christ. This is the

commandment we have received from the Father (Micah 6:8; 1 John 3:18).

v. 5. This is almost identical with 1 John 2:7, 8. John refers probably to the words of Christ in John 13:34. This is no new commandment in the sense that it has been formulated and brought recently into effect: Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, and his gospel, commandments and teachings are the same. But this commandment to love one another is newly explained by him and purged from the error of the Pharisees. It is newly exemplified by Christ in his love for us. It is newly enforced by the argument, 'How can we love God and not love one another? How can we be in Christ and not be like Christ?'

v. 6. The love which this commandment requires is an active, obedient love. Warm feelings toward God or toward men are worthless unless they are united with truth on one hand and obedience on the other (Matt 7:24; James 2:14-17). This is the will (or commandment) of God, that his people walk in love (guided by it and practicing it).

# Our attitude toward false preachers

## 2 John 7-13

v.7. ‘Many deceivers have gone out into the world.’ John is referring to false teachers and preachers, who are described by their character and work. They are seducers who cause others to go astray. They pretend to be ministers of the word, to have a love for truth, to be concerned for men’s souls and to have a view of the glory of God. But they handle the word deceitfully. They are impostors (1 John 2:18; Matt.7:15, 16; 2 Peter 2:1-3).

The chief error of these impostors is their denial of the person and work of Christ. They profess to believe in Christ as a prophet, teacher, healer or even a messenger from God, but they deny that he is God incarnate! They deny that the divine Word was made flesh and dwelt among us! (1 John 4:1-3; John 1:14; Isa. 9:6). All who deny that Jesus Christ is God are deceivers and anti-Christ (John 10:30-33; Matt. 1:21-23).

v.8. This is an exhortation to the elect lady and her children to look about them, be aware of this error, take care of themselves and beware of these false teachers and their doctrines (2 Cor. 11:1-4).

‘Don’t lose those things (or throw away all) that we have laboured for, and in the process lose your own soul.’ If we depart from the gospel of Christ, there remains no sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:26; 6:4-6). Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). If we are not redeemed in him, we have no life or hope (Gal. 4:4, 5). Persevere in the faith of Christ until we are made like him; this is our full reward (Heb. 3:6, 14; Col. 1:19-23).

v. 9. ‘Whosoever transgresseth.’ Not the law of God, of which everyone is a transgressor daily in thought, word and deed, but the person who denies the doctrine of Christ, the Messiah, has not, knows not and believes not God.

‘The doctrine of Christ’ concerns:

1. His person as the Son of God, as truly God, and the union of the two natures — divine and human, in one person.
2. His offices as Mediator, Surety, Prophet, Priest and King.
3. His redemptive work — his obedience, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension.
4. His return to judge and to reign.

This is the doctrine of King Messiah, the doctrine of redemption and eternal glory. The man who abides in the truth of Christ has both the Father and the Son. He has an interest in them and a knowledge of them (John 17:3; 1 John 5:11-13).

v. 10. ‘If there comes to your church or your home (under the character of a preacher, teacher, or a religious leader) one who does not preach this doctrine but despises and denies it, do not allow him to preach in the house of God and do not entertain him in your home’ (Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:8, 9).

‘Neither bid him God speed.’ Do not give the false teacher the usual civil form of salutation, as ‘Good day,’ ‘All hail,’ ‘Health and prosperity,’ or ‘God bless you.’ Do not encourage him or give him the impression that you are sympathetic with him, for it could mislead others to think favorably of him.

v. 11. Those who wish false teachers well, who encourage them, or who converse with them in a friendly and familiar way instead of reproving

them and shunning them as they ought, are aiding and abetting them, supporting them in their attacks on Christ and can be considered partakers in their evil deeds.

*v.12.* ‘Although I have many things to write to you and to declare unto you, I prefer not to do so with paper and ink. I hope to visit you and talk with you personally, so that our joy may be complete.’

There is a great value in writing to believers and communicating in various ways, but nothing replaces personal fellowship, exhortation and encouragement (Heb. 10:24, 25; 3:13; Col. 3:16).

*v.13.* ‘The children of your sister, who is also one of God’s elect, chosen ones, wish to be remembered to you.’ Evidently her sister’s children lived near the apostle and knew of this letter to her.

# 3 John

Bible Class Commentary

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# Fellow helpers to the truth

## 3 John 1-8

The name 'Gaius' appears in the New Testament four times. It was as common in the Roman Empire as John Smith is among us. The Gaius addressed here is not the brother Paul baptized (1 Cor. 1:14) but is a beloved brother who was converted under the ministry of John.

The second epistle written to the elect lady used the words 'truth' and 'love' frequently. These are natural companions which cannot be separated. In this epistle, the emphasis is on truth and deeds, which are really the same, for 'faith worketh by love' (Gal. 5:6).

v. 1. John calls himself an 'elder' on account of his age and office and addresses the epistles to 'the beloved Gaius.' This indicates the character of Gaius.

1. He was beloved of the Lord, as are all believers (2 Thess. 2:13).
2. He was loved by the apostle.
3. He was loved by the brethren, who knew him, being a person of great faith, integrity and liberality.

We should strive not only to believe grace but to be gracious, not only to be sound in doctrine but to be a loving and lovable person.

v. 2. John is certainly not putting success in temporal affairs (in the business of life or good health) above all things. A better translation is 'Beloved I pray that in all things thou mightest succeed and be in good

health, even as thy soul prospereth.’ Success in anything depends on the blessing of God (1 Sam. 2:6, 7; John 3:27). Success and prosperity are wonderful powers in the hands of a wise and gracious man and are a great blessing to the church of which he is a member. Health of body (for many obvious reasons) is one of God’s best gifts. The state of the body exercises a great influence on the mind and soul. John wishes that Gaius’ earthly career and condition may be as bright as his spiritual career and condition.

v. 3. The brethren came to John from the place where Gaius lived, testifying of the truth of the gospel and the gracious spirit that dwelt in him. They told John that Gaius was truly a man in whom Christ was formed, and that he walked before God and men in a fashion which gave glory to God.

These men and John did not envy the gifts and grace of Gaius, but rather rejoiced together in the truth and blessings of God found in him (2 John 4). We weep when professing believers do not walk in the truth of grace and we rejoice when they do!

v. 4. ‘I have no greater joy. Nothing makes me happier than to hear that those to whom I have preached the gospel, and to whom I have been the means of God to bring them to a knowledge of Christ, are believing and walking in the truth!’ We can give no better gift to our friends, nor greater inheritance to our families, than to preach the gospel to them. They can bring no greater joy and satisfaction to our hearts than to receive the truth and walk therein (Acts 3:2-6; Philemon 20, 21).

v. 5. John commends Gaius for his hospitality and charity to the brethren of his acquaintance and fellowship also to strangers who crossed his path. He was a kind and generous man, who cared for and ministered to the



needs of his friends and opened his heart and home to strangers (Heb. 13:1, 2).

This he did ‘faithfully.’ He did not do it in a hypocritical and pretentious way (to be seen of men and gain applause from them), but he served from a principle of love (Matt. 6:1-4).

v. 6. These traveling preachers, who were strangers to Gaius before they came to his town, testified before the church at Ephesus of his love, friendship and care of them. They were greatly moved by his spirit of grace and love and could not refrain from praising the grace of God in him.

We do well to aid God’s children and to help make their journey through this world to be more pleasant — especially those who are traveling missionaries (Matt. 10:42; 2 Kings 4:8-10).

vv. 7, 8. These traveling preachers and missionaries have gone out from home and family for Christ’s sake and are not supported by the Gentiles and heathen to whom they preach, taking nothing from them. So we ourselves ought to support such people (to welcome and provide for them) in order that we be fellow-laborers and helpers in the truth. It is a great privilege to preach the gospel and an equal privilege and blessing to provide for those who preach it, for in doing so we also minister the gospel.

# Follow not that which is evil

## 3 John 9-14

v. 9. The apostle John wrote a letter to the church of which Gaius was a member. It was a letter of instructions, counsel and apostolic orders. But Diotrephes, who was evidently an officer in the church (perhaps an elder or even a pastor — in those large churches there were oftentimes more elders and pastors than one: see Acts 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1), refused to accept his instructions and counsel.

This man Diotrephes coveted more than was his due. His pride led him to seek pre-eminence and recognition and to lord it over God's people. There is an honour and authority which belongs to officers of the church (to preside, govern and lead according to the word), but this may be carried to far, as it was by this man! Everything in a church ought to be done by pastor and people in love, meekness and with mutual consent, with each seeking the glory of Christ and the good of all (Phil. 2:3-8; Rom. 12:3; 10:1; 1 Cor. 4:6, 7).

v. 10. 'When I come to visit the church again I will call attention to what he is doing, expose him to the church and reprove him for his deeds' (Gal. 2:11).

Diotrephes had some uncomplimentary things to say about the apostle. This is not unusual, for true ministers of the gospel are prated against not only by men of the world, but also by professors of religion. Usually what is said against them is silly, idle and empty stuff, as the word 'prating' indicates. For want of real charges they take up any little matter and rail against them in order to hurt their character, spoil their usefulness and render their ministry ineffective, and all of this railing and prating is only to exalt themselves in the eyes of the people (1 Tim. 5:19; 2 Cor. 10:10).

Not satisfied with speaking against the ministry of John, this man refused to receive the preachers and missionaries sent by John. He threatened to cast out of the church (which was an abuse of church discipline) those who received these missionaries.

v. 11. ‘Beloved, do not imitate evil of any kind; but do not imitate the particular evil of Diotrephes, such as pride, ambition, love of pre-eminence and inhospitality to preachers and other believers. Do not imitate the evil of a critical spirit and a careless criticism of those who minister the word of God (Titus 3:1, 2; Jams 4:11; Eph. 4:31, 32). Follow and imitate that which is good, such as love, forgiveness, kindness and humility’ (Gal. 5:22-26). It is not only important that we learn grace in doctrine, but that we learn grace in heart and spirit. He who manifests the grace and spirit of Christ in attitude and action is of God, and he who does not has evidently not experienced the grace of God and does not know God at all (1 John 4:6-8, 20, 21).

v. 12. The man Demetrius was different from Diotrephes and therefore John makes mention of him to Gaius. His example is to be followed — not the example of Diotrephes. Demetrius was kind, considerate and gracious. He had a good reputation and report, not only among the brethren but also of those without. He was loved and respected by all.

Trouble-makers and those of a critical spirit usually find many followers. This is unfortunate, yet natural to the flesh (John 5:43). But let those who are wise mark the man of a Christ-like attitude and a loving spirit and follow his example.

‘I John, bear record to the character of Demetrius, and you know that my word is true and dependable.’

vv. 13, 14. ‘I had many things to say to you when I began to write, but I prefer not to put them on paper. I hope to see you soon and we will talk

together face to face. Peace be to you! Our friends here send you greetings. Remember me to our friends there (to everyone of them personally) by name.'

# Jude

Bible Class Commentary

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Henry Mahan

# The common salvation

## Jude 1-3

This epistle was written by Jude, one of the twelve apostles of Christ (Acts 1:13). It is called a 'general epistle' because it is not written to any particular person or church but to the saints in general. The design of the epistle is to exhort believers to continue in and contend for the faith, to describe false teachers, to point out their principles, practices and dreadful end, so that we might shun and avoid them.

*v. 1.* 'Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ.' This is a common title for all believers, yet here, as in other epistles, it is peculiar to an apostle, or a minister of the gospel. It is not just a mark of humility, but it reveals two other things: first, God called him to serve in the kingdom of Christ and, second, he obeyed Christ and faithfully performed the commands and the will of his Master.

'To them that are sanctified by God the Father.' This does not refer to internal sanctification, but to the act of eternal election which is peculiar to the Father. The language is taken from the Old Testament Scriptures, used of persons and things that were sanctified and set apart for and unto the Lord (Gen. 2:3; Exo. 13:2; 29:44). God takes that which is ordinary and common and by divine decree sets it apart for his glory (2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:3, 4).

'Preserved in Christ Jesus.' Those who are sanctified, or set apart by God the Father in election, are in Christ. They are chosen in him, they are put into his hands, they are redeemed by him, they are sanctified or made holy by him (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 5:21), they are accepted in him and they are kept by him (Jude 24; John 10:27, 28).

‘And Called’ – not merely externally by the preaching of the word, but internally by the Spirit and grace of God (1 Thess. 1:4, 5). This is a special and effectual call, whereby men are called out of darkness into light, out of bondage into liberty and out of the world into fellowship with God (1 John 1:3).

v. 2. Jude salutes them with a desire for the multiplication of mercy, peace and love unto and among them. Someone said, ‘Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve, and mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve.’

‘Mercy’ is a perfection of God and is revealed in a special manner through Christ to all believers. We need eternal mercy, redeeming mercy, daily mercies and future mercy.

‘Peace’ may design a fresh and enlarged view of the peace we have through the blood of his cross (Col. 1:20), an increase of peace in our own hearts and conscience (Rom. 8:1; Isa. 26:3) – and may also include peace among ourselves.

‘Love’ is understood as that of God toward men as well as that of men toward God and toward one another. It is impossible to have one without the other (1 John 1:7, 9).

v. 3. ‘Beloved.’ Jude called the persons to whom he writes ‘Beloved.’ They were beloved of God, beloved of him and beloved of other believers.

‘The common salvation’ (Titus 1:4). I believe Jude is speaking here of the gospel, redemption, faith and all things that pertain to our salvation. The covenant of grace and the blessings and promises of it are shared commonly by all believers. The gospel may be said to be common because it is preached to all believers. Jesus Christ is a common because he is preached to all believers. Jesus Christ is a common Saviour in that all of our righteousness, redemption, wisdom and sanctification are in him. We

are bought with the same blood, justified by the same righteousness, called by the same spirit and shall enjoy and possess the same glory.

‘Earnestly contend for the faith.’ Jude here designs, by ‘the faith,’ the whole scheme of evangelical truths to be preached and believed. It is sometimes called the ‘word of faith,’ ‘the faith of the gospel,’ ‘the mystery of faith,’ ‘the most holy faith,’ or ‘the common faith.’ The faith is to be preached, contended for and defended against false teachers: the Trinity, the deity and sonship of Christ, the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, the state and condition of man by nature, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the grace of God in election, justification by his blood, imputed and imparted righteousness, regeneration and sanctification, final perseverance, the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the future glory of the saints and the eternal condemnation of the lost.

This is said to be ‘delivered to the saints’ (Heb. 1:1, 2). It was delivered to Christ as our Mediator. It was promised, pictured and prophesied by Old Testament writers and ceremonies. It was delivered to the apostles by Christ himself and to us by his apostles (Heb. 2:1-3).

We can contend for the faith by preaching it openly, boldly and faithfully, by bearing an experimental and holy testimony to it, by praying for the success of it, by supporting with our gifts, our presence and our prayers the preaching of it and by encouraging and exhorting other believers.



# Enemies within the church

## Jude 4-8

In the preceding verse, believers are exhorted earnestly, boldly and faithfully to hold to, stand by and contend for all that pertains to the faith. This will not be easy, for there are enemies without and within the church who, motivated Satan, will seek to pervert, compromise and destroy the true gospel of redeeming grace as it is purchased by and revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 4. The most treacherous and subtle enemy is the one inside the church (2 Peter 2:1; 1 Tim. 4:1-3). Satan sows his tares among the wheat. He does this in the night while men sleep, in order that he might corrupt the church. They creep in unsuspected and under false profession (Matt. 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:13-15).

‘They were long ago ordained to this judgment.’ The church is not tried, nor the Lord Jesus betrayed, nor the gospel challenged except according to the counsel and will of God (John 19:11; 17:12; Ps. 109:7, 8). Those who creep in, infiltrate the church and corrupt the truth are foretold and their judgment is foretold. They, too, serve the purpose of God (Rom. 9:17; Prov. 16:4).

‘They are ungodly men who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.’ They abuse salvation by grace by living a life of sin and encouraging others to take an impure and profane attitude toward sin (Rom. 6:1-4, 15; Titus 1:16; 2:11-14).

The true gospel is denied, the true grace of the Lord God is denied and the true redemptive work of Christ is denied by these men, if not in words, yet in works. Election is unto holiness (Eph. 1:4). Our calling is a holy

calling (2 Tim. 1:9). Righteousness is not only imputed but also imparted to us by his grace and spirit (1 John 3:10). Those who use the grace of God as an excuse to sin or a cloak for their evil deny Christ and his gospel.

v. 5-7. 'I remind you of what you already know – that if any trifle thus with the grace of God, this contempt for his grace and glory of his Son will not go unpunished.' This he proves by three examples.

The people of Israel were the chosen nation, a special people; yet, notwithstanding their wonderful deliverance out of Egypt, because of their unbelief, rebellion and evil, God destroyed them in the wilderness! No outward privilege and profession will screen a rebel from the wrath of God. God will make severe examples of those who despise his grace. The fountain of all their evil and sin was unbelief.

The angels enjoyed a higher state than Israel. They were free spirits who enjoyed the light and presence of God. They were high, honourable and happy; yet by deserting their posts of honour, being unwilling to be subject to God, they were turned out of heaven and reserved without hope unto eternal condemnation. Wherever they go, they drag their chains of bondage. To depart from the grace of God is to be for ever damned (Heb. 6:4-6).

Sodom and Gomorrah is a more general example, testifying that God will judge and punish all the ungodly without difference! To pervert the gospel of God, the grace of God, or the laws and designs of God will bring eternal condemnation. These men were given up to homosexuality and strange flesh (Rom. 1:26-28; Lev. 20:13).

In these examples, unbelief, pride and fleshly corruption are found in creatures who had at one time or another enjoyed a revelation from God and special privileges of common grace, and were exposed to his truth. Take heed, brethren, lest these be found in us (Heb. 3:12; 10:38, 39).

v. 8. 'Likewise,' or in the same way as in the above examples, 'these filthy dreamers' (false teachers), who creep into the church, are guilty of three great errors: they 'defile the flesh, despise authority and slander dignities'!

They are called 'filthy dreamers'; for what they taught was not the word of God, but their own thoughts, imaginations and dreams, which came to them in their sleep of death and darkness (Jer. 23:25-28). They defiled the flesh by unclean practices and behaviour.

They despised the commandment of Christ, the rule of Christ and his word. They chose to do as they pleased, unrestrained.

They spoke evil of the apostles, pastors and church officers, refusing their leadership and dishonoring them (Heb. 13:17).

# Falling stars and clouds without water

## Jude 9-13

In the preceding verses, Jude describe the false teachers and enemies of Christ which have infiltrated the church, ‘creeping in unawares.’ They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, they deny the gospel of substitution, they defile the flesh, despise authority and speak evil of the apostles, pastors and church leaders without any just cause. Their motive in discrediting the true preachers is to exalt themselves and draw away disciples to themselves.

v. 9. There is some controversy over what is meant by ‘the body of Moses.’ Some say it is the body of his laws. Calvin said, ‘It is beyond controversy that Moses died and was buried by the Lord, and his grave is concealed according to the purpose of God, that neither he nor his grave become an object of worship and idolatry’ (Deut. 34:1.6). Evidently Satan, who encourages men to idolatry, will-worship and creature-worship, desired otherwise. The devil disputed with Michael over Moses' body. Michael dared not speak more severely against Satan than to deliver him to God to be restrained and rebuked. Michael was not afraid of Satan, nor did he honour and respect this condemned reprobate; but he chose to leave judgment and condemnation to him who alone has the right and wisdom to deal with principalities and powers!

The argument is from the greater to the lesser: that is; if Michael dared not give a railing word against Satan, how great is the insolence of these men who speak evil of God-ordained authority in whatever realm!

v. 10. These men, though they profess faith and piety, are natural men, without spiritual understanding. Men have a large share of natural

knowledge of things physical, material, civil and even moral. But, being dead in trespasses and sin, they neither receive nor understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7). Therefore, like brute beasts, they speak evil of the ministers of the gospel, sit in judgment on the Scriptures, take upon themselves to govern and disrupt the church, and in general deal with the great mysteries and interpretation of spiritual things which they do not understand.

v. 11. 'Woe unto them.' This is a declaration of deserved condemnation and a prediction of what shall befall them.

'They have gone in the way of Cain.' This was the way of envy. Cain envied the acceptance of his brother's offering. These men envied the gifts and success bestowed on true ministers. Cain's way was the way of hatred. He rose up and killed his brother rather than admit his own error.

'They ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.' Balaam's great error was covetousness, or an immoderate love for money. False teachers are usually motivated by a love for applause, filthy lucre, or self-glory.

'They perished in rebellion like that of Korah' (Num. 16:1-3). As Korah contradicted Moses and Aaron, these men oppose the ministers of Christ, whom they would discredit and cast out that they might themselves rule.

vv. 12, 13. Hypocrites, false teachers and religious opportunists are 'spots in your love-feasts'! Early Christians evidently met together for feasts of fellowship, unity and brotherly love to encourage one another, to edify one another and to strengthen one another. These deceivers came among them to feed themselves, to promote their own positions and to sow discord.

'They are clouds without water.' They are compared to clouds for their great number, their sudden rise, their darkness, their stormy character, their elevating themselves in high positions and their being puffed up with

pride, as well as their sudden departure and destruction. But mainly they are said to be clouds without water because, though having the appearance and promise of rain, they are without any grace, truth, or blessings.

‘They are trees withered, without fruit, and twice dead.’ They are without leaves that provide shade and without fruit such as grace, love, humility and joy. ‘Twice dead’ seems to imply that they are not only dead in sin, as all natural men, but also judicially blinded or given over by God to a corrupt mind!

‘They are raging waves of the sea.’ This shows their great swelling pride and their frothy, showy, empty words, which are nothing but a noisy, empty, blustering ministry that ends in shame.

‘They are wandering stars.’ The reference is probably to falling stars, which dazzle the eyes for a moment with a sudden light and then plunge forever into darkness.

# Now unto him that is able to keep us

## Jude 14-25

*vv. 14, 15.* This was Enoch, the son of Jared, who walked with God and was translated body and soul to heaven. Enoch did not experience death (Gen. 5:18-24). He is said to be the seventh generation from Adam, in the line of Seth. Evidently this prophecy of Enoch was handed down from age to age and was in full credit with the Jews, so the apostle Jude refers to it (or else he had it by divine inspiration).

The Lord Jesus will come again! This is not his first coming, which was to seek and save, not to judge and condemn. This is his second coming (John 14:3; Acts 1:10, 11; 1 Thess. 4:16-18). His second coming will show forth his glory and majesty, gather his elect together and mark the final judgment of the wicked. He will be accompanied by the redeemed and his holy angels.

‘To execute judgment upon all’ (John 5:22). His righteous judgment shall fall upon men, not only for their ungodly deeds, but for their words against him. The special reference here is to those false teachers and men who spoke against his person and offices, his blood and righteousness, his ministers and people! (Matt. 25:31-33.)

*v. 16.* These trouble-makers, false teachers and self-willed hypocrites are usually ‘murmurers and complainers.’ They have no joy, rest, or peace in Christ; so they murmur against God, his sovereignty, his providence, his government and his gospel of free grace. They murmur against ministers of the gospel, against civil magistrates, against their lot in life and against everything that is not to their liking (Num. 14:26-29). They walk after their own desires, not caring for the welfare or feelings of others. But they

speak flattering words and openly court men whom they hope to entrap and from whom they hope to gain either praise or possessions (James 2:1).

*vv. 17, 18.* The apostle addresses the true believers who might be disturbed and troubled by these murmurers and complainers. ‘The apostles of the Lord Jesus told you that in these last days scoffers, mockers and false preachers would arise, who seek not the glory of Christ but their own unholy desires’ (2 Peter 3:2, 3; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-4).

*v. 19.* These people are agitators, causing division and strife in the church. They are ‘sensual,’ or only natural men, who profess to know Christ but have never been regenerated or made partakers of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 14-16).

*vv. 20, 21.* Jude shows how believers can overcome the devices of Satan and avoid being influenced and deceived by false teachers and hypocrites in the church.

1. ‘Build yourselves up on your most holy faith.’ Christ is the object of our faith; the word of God is the foundation of faith; but we should not be content with our present knowledge and condition. We desire faith to be increased and grow (Luke 17:5; 2 Thess. 1:3; 2 Peter 3:18). Faith is strengthened through the ministry of the word and fellowship with other believers.

2. ‘Pray in the Holy Ghost.’ The way of persevering is by the power of God through faith (1 Peter 1:5). No man can keep himself, whatever his knowledge and faith. We must flee to God in prayer, and that not in a formal manner but in the spirit! (Rom. 8: 26, 27.)



3. 'Keep yourselves in the love of God.' There are two things which are applicable here. First, the love of God for us in Christ is always to be set before us, kept in view and strength is to be drawn from it (Rom. 8:35-39). Second, we are to keep ourselves in love with God (John 21:15; Rev. 2:4). Mature, strong love casts out fear, motivates good works and is satisfied to feed on Christ.

4. 'Look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus.' The mercy of Christ may be considered as past, which consists of his covenant mercies, his redemption of our souls, his holy calling and thousands more; as present in interceding for us, comforting our hearts, keeping us and meeting our every need; and as future, which will be shown at death, resurrection and in his eternal kingdom! This mercy is to be looked for by faith.

*vv. 22, 25.* There are some who have gone astray, being deceived and tempted because of ignorance, infirmities and the force of temptation. These are not to be avoided and cut off, as one would the false teachers, but are to be instructed in meekness, brotherly love and compassion, pulling them out of the fire of soul-destroying doctrines and sinful practices. Pray for them, help them and restore them; yet despise and condemn their behaviour and conduct as one would a filthy garment.

*vv. 24, 25.* The epistle is concluded with a doxology or an ascription of glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is able to keep his elect from finally falling and is able to present them faultless before his glorious presence!