

The Works
of
Henry Mahan

Volume 2
Containing

his

Bible Class Commentaries

The Works
of
Henry Mahan

Volume 2

Containing
his

Bible Class Commentaries

on

John
Romans
1 & 2 Corinthians

Produced and Published
by
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Foreword

I first met Pastor Henry Mahan in the fall of 1969. He was preaching a series of meetings in my hometown, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. I was in college at the time and only heard him preach twice; but I have never forgotten the two messages he preached. The first was on Christ Our Kinsman Redeemer from the Book of Ruth. The second was on The Grace of Our God from the Book of Hosea.

Some years later, while I was pastoring in Lookout, West Virginia, just ninety miles from Ashland, Kentucky, where Bro. Mahan pastored, he and I became close friends, frequently traveling together to preach the gospel. The influence of his faithful ministry and our close friendship for more than thirty years have been the single most important means by which our God has taught (and continues to teach) me what it is to be a gospel preacher and a pastor.

When Pastor Mahan began writing his Bible class lessons (the material from which these volumes are produced) for his own congregation, we began using them for our own Sunday Bible Class materials at Grace Church in Danville. It is my prayer, and that of our congregation, that you will find them as profitable to your souls as they have been to our own, by the blessing of God the Holy Spirit. As I read them, I can almost hear the echo of Pastor Mahan's words to me in his study more than thirty years ago: "Bro. Fortner," he said, "if you ever learn what these three words mean, you will learn the message of this Book, *'Christ is all.'*"

Donald S. Fortner, Pastor, Grace Baptist Church of Danville, KY

John

Bible Class Commentary

A Work
of
Henry Mahan

The deity of the Savior

John 1:1-9

Each book of the Bible has a prominent and dominant theme, which is peculiar to itself. The theme of John's Gospel is *the deity of the Saviour*. Here as nowhere else in scripture so fully, the Godhood of Christ is presented to our view.

1. The relation of Christ to time. 'In the beginning.' *Eternal*.

2. The relation of Christ to the Godhead. 'With God.' *One of holy trinity*.

3. The relation of Christ to the Holy Trinity. 'Was God.' *Divine revealer*.

4. The relation of Christ to the universe. 'All things made by him.' *Creator*.

5. The relation of Christ to men. Their 'life' and 'light.'

v. 1-2. John opens by immediately presenting Christ not as the son of David, nor as the son of man, but as the Son of God, which is the theme of this book.

'*In the beginning*' of creation, the beginning of time, or as Moses wrote in Gen. 1:1, 'In the beginning God.' But Christ was not only *from* the beginning, he was '*in* the beginning.' We can go back to the most remote point: that can be imagined, for Christ is without beginning, which is to say he is eternal! (John 17:5.)

'Was the Word.' A word is an expression. The word of God, then, is Deity expressing itself. This is why Christ is called the *Word* of God. Heb. 1:1-2 says that Christ is God's final spokesman. Rev. 1:8 says that Christ is God's alphabet. John 1:18 says that Christ has declared or told forth the Father. A word is the means of manifestation, communication, and revelation. Christ manifests the invisible God, communicates the love and mercy of God, and reveals the attributes and perfections of God.

'The Word was with God.' This tells of his separate personality. Our God is ONE GOD; yet the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 1 John 5:7).

'The Word was God' or 'God was the Word.' The name 'God' is common to the three persons of the Holy Trinity (Heb. 1:8). So fully and so perfectly did Christ reveal God, he could say, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father' (John 14:9; 2 Cor. 4:6; John 10:30).

v. 3. Here creation is ascribed to Him, and none but God can create. The whole creation is ascribed to the *Word* 'all things' (Col. 1:14-17). He is before all things, therefore *eternal*. He is the originator and creator of all things, therefore *omnipotent*.

v. 4. If Christ created all things, he is the fountain of life; he is the life-giver. 'Life' is used here in its widest sense. Of course, Christ is the spiritual life of believers; but all creature life is found in him (Acts 17: 27-28). The word 'light' speaks of a relation which Christ sustains to all men – *he is their light*. This is confirmed by what we read in Verse 9. Every rational man is morally enlightened (Rom. 2:15; Rom. 1:18-21) and accountable.

By nature men are dead in trespasses and sins; notwithstanding, they are all responsible before God and shall give an account (Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:12) because of the 'light' referred to here.

v. 5. Here we see the effects of the fall (Rom. 5:12; John 5:40). Every man that comes into this world is lightened by his Creator, but the natural man disregards this light. He hates it and 'loves darkness rather than light' (John 3:19). The unregenerate man is like one who is blind – he is in the dark, so neither comprehends nor apprehends the light.

v. 6. The change of subject here is abrupt. From 'the Word,' who is God, the Holy Spirit now turns to speak of the forerunner of Christ. He is called 'a man' who was sent of God. True preachers of the gospel are ordained and sent of God.

v. 7. When the sun is shining in all of its power and beauty, who are the ones who are unconscious of the fact? Who needs to be told that it is shining? The blind! What a revelation of our fallen condition that men have to be told that 'The Light' is now in their midst!

Here we have the *character* of the preacher's office – 'he came for a witness.' A witness is one who knows what he says and says what he knows.

Here we have the *theme* of the preacher's ministry – 'to bear witness of the light.' He speaks not of himself but of Christ (1 Cor. 1:23; John 16:14).

Here we have the *design* of the preacher's ministry – 'that all through him might believe.' Men become believers through receiving the preached word (Rom. 10:13-15; Rom. 1:16; 1 Peter 1:23-25).

vv. 8-9. John himself was not 'that Light.' Christ is the light. Even the believer has no light in himself nor of himself (Eph. 5:8). Christ is the true

Light, the real Light, the everlasting Light, and the underived Light (his light is his own).

The Word was made flesh

John 1:10-14

v. 10. 'He was in the world' refers to his incarnation and the 33 years he tabernacled among men. Who was in the world? The great Creator, who made the world! He came not to judge but to save. He came not as a lion to destroy but as a Lamb to redeem. He came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. What kind of reception did he receive? 'The world knew him not' (Isa. 53:1-3; 1 Cor. 2:7-8).

v. 11. 'He came unto his own' refers to the nation Israel, the seed of Abraham. He came to his temple, his priesthood, and the people who had eagerly awaited the appearance of the Messiah for centuries; but they received him not! It began with 'no room in the inn' and culminated with shouts at the crucifixion, 'We have no king but Caesar' (Acts 3:22-26).

v. 12. If the world knew him not and the Jews received him not, is the purpose of God defeated? No! The purpose of God in all things shall stand! (Prov. 19:21; Isa. 46:9-11; John 6:37-39.) The Father gave the Son a people out of every tribe, kindred, and nation (John 17:1-2, 9). By the power of the Spirit, by the preaching of the gospel of his Son, and through faith, they will all receive Christ lovingly, thankfully, and willingly, as God's gift of love and grace. They will all, with the heart, believe on his glorious name, as he is revealed to them in the word (Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 16:15-17).

v. 13. But who receives him thus? Not all, by any means! Is this believing on Christ left to chance? Is the success of his covenant and redemptive work left to the fallen will of the creature? Far from it! This verse explains

to us why men receive and believe Christ – they are born of God, ‘not of blood.’ That is to say, salvation is not a matter of heredity nor parental bloodlines nor family associations. It is ‘not of the will of the flesh.’ The will of the natural man is against God. He has no will toward God until he is born of God (John 5:40; Rom. 3:10-11). It is ‘not of the will of man.’ The new birth is not brought about by the efforts of friends, nor the persuasive powers of the preacher and the soul winners, ‘but of God.’ The new birth is divine work! It is accomplished by the will of God, by the Holy Spirit's applying the word in living power to the heart (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23-25; Acts 13:48).

v. 14. ‘And the Word was made flesh.’ He became what he previously was not. He did not cease to be God, but he became man (Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 10:4-7). Our divine Lord took upon himself human nature. He became a real man, yet a sinless, perfect man (Heb. 7:26). This union of the two natures in the person of Christ is one of the greatest mysteries of faith (1 Tim. 3:16). He was, and is, the God-man; yet the divine and the human in him were never confounded. His Deity, though veiled, was never laid aside. His humanity, though sinless, was a real humanity.

The union of the two natures in the person of Christ was necessary in order to fit him for his work as Redeemer and Mediator.

1. God cannot *suffer* and die – man cannot *satisfy* the infinite holiness required nor the infinite justice demanded. Christ, the God-man, can do both.

2. He can now be touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Heb. 4:14-16); and he has left us an example, that we should follow his steps.

The duality of nature was plainly taught in the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. He was to be the woman's seed (Gen. 3:15), a

prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:18), a lineal descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:12), a man of sorrows (Isa. 53:3-6). Yet, on the other hand, he was to be ‘God with us’ (Isa. 7:4; Matt. 1:23); he was to be the mighty God (Isa. 9:6); as Jehovah he was to come to his temple (Mal. 3:1). The one born in Bethlehem is the Ruler (Micah 5:2).

‘He dwelt (tabernacled) among us.’ The reference here is to the tabernacle in the wilderness. It foreshadowed the incarnate Son. Almost everything about the tabernacle pictured Christ. It was humble on the outside, but glorious inside. It was God’s dwelling place, his glory revealed there. It was the place where God met men and where the sin-offering and the atonement were made. It was the place of worship and the place where the Law was preserved.

‘And we beheld his glory.’

1. His *essential* glories; his divine attributes and perfections are all seen in Christ. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.
2. His *moral* glories or holiness or perfection.
3. His *official* glories, such as his covenant grace, his priesthood, his wisdom, and his kingship.
4. His *acquired* glories (Phil. 2:5-11).

Read Verses 1 and 14 together and you have a statement – the most comprehensive in its sweep, the profoundest in its depths, and yet the simplest to be found in the Bible. Here is the gift of God and the hope of the believer.

Grace and truth by Jesus Christ

John 1:15-18

Put these two verses together—Verses 1 and 14.

v. 1. – ‘In the beginning was the word.’ Jesus Christ is eternal!

v. 14. – ‘And the word was made flesh.’ God became a man!

v. 1. – ‘And the word was with God.’ As one in the blessed Trinity, he was always with God.

v. 14. – ‘And he dwelt among us.’ He actually tabernacled among men, becoming one with us, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

v. 1. – ‘And the word was God.’ In every attribute he is God.

v. 14 – ‘We beheld his glory.’ He that hath seen Christ hath seen God!

v. 15. It was of this Person that John bore witness saying, ‘This is he of whom I speak.’ Our gospel is concerning God's Son (Rom. 1:1-4). ‘He that came after me.’ Historically John the Baptist was born into this world six months before Christ was born. But ‘He that is born after I was born was before me.’ John is referring to the eternal existence, glory, and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has all preeminence and is infinitely above the heavens, the angels, Moses, John, and all other creatures (Heb. 1:4; Heb. 3:3; Heb. 7:22-24). He is preferred before all.

v. 16. The word ‘fullness’ is another term, which brings out the absolute deity, glory, and sufficiency of Christ. The same word is found in Col. 1:19 and Col. 2:9. All the fullness of God's glory, person, grace, mercy, peace, life, joy, and purpose dwells in Jesus Christ. ‘And of his fullness

(his abundance) have all we (believers) received' all that we need for time and eternity (1 Cor. 1:30); 'grace upon grace' or God's favors heaped one upon another, favor upon favor, gift upon gift. 'Ye are complete in him.'

v. 17. 'The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' A contrast is drawn between law and grace. The law (Moral and Levitical) was given to Moses or to men through Moses; it was not his own. But grace and truth were not given to Christ, for these are his own essential perfections. Moses received from God the law, which manifested what God righteously demanded of men and what men ought to do and be. The law is holy, just, and good. It demands obedience, and the only alternative is death. It is inflexible in its claims and remits no part of its penalty (Gal. 3:10). Such a law could never justify nor show mercy to a sinner. For this it was never given! The terror Israel displayed at the giving of the law is the terror felt by every sinner who truly understands the law (Exod. 20:18-19), for it is the ministration of condemnation and of death. Did the law reveal all of God's attributes? No! Did the law reveal the love and grace of God? No! The law revealed God's justice; but it did not make known his mercy! The law testified to his righteousness, but it did not exhibit his grace. The law was God's 'truth,' but not the 'full truth' about God himself. 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.' We never read 'by the law is the knowledge of God' (Rom. 8:3-4).

'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' These are fitly and inseparably joined together. We cannot have grace without truth, nor truth without grace. Those who reject grace, reject truth; and those who reject truth, reject grace. 'Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 5:21). The grace, which saves a sinner, is no mere moral weakness nor sentimental gesture such as we find in human government. It is grace, which is established on the principles of an honored law and a satisfied justice (Rom. 3:23-26). Grace does not ignore the law nor set aside its requirements; no, it 'establishes the law' (Rom.

3:31). Grace establishes the law because it has a Substitute who perfectly fulfilled the law and endured the death penalty for all who believe, in order that God may be both just and justifier! Was there no grace and truth before Christ came in the flesh? Of course there was, for he is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Law manifests what is in men – sin. Grace manifests what is in God – love. Law demands righteousness from men. Grace brings righteousness to men. Law sentences men to death. Grace brings dead men to life. Law speaks of what men must do. Grace tells what Christ has done. Law gives a knowledge of sin. Grace puts away sin.

v. 18. This verse summarizes the whole of these first 18 verses. ‘No man hath seen God at anytime’ (Exod. 33:18-23). True character is not declared in a person's ‘back parts,’ but in his face (2 Cor. 4:6). But the only begotten Son has told out, revealed, unveiled, and displayed unto us the Father (John 14:8-9). The only begotten Son, in becoming flesh, did not leave his place of inseparable union with the Father; for it does not say, ‘The Son which was,’ but ‘the Son which is in the bosom of the Father.’ God is fully revealed, for the Son has declared him. How we ought to honor, reverence, and worship the Lord Jesus Christ!

Behold the Lamb of God

John 1:19-29

Even a hurried reading of these verses will make it evident that the person who stands out most conspicuously in them is John the Baptist. He is one of the most remarkable characters in the word of God. His life and ministry were prophesied in the Old Testament (Isa. 40). His birth was due to the direct and miraculous power of God (Luke 1:7, 13). He was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). He was sent of God (John 1:6). Of him the Lord said, 'None greater among men than John the Baptist' (Matt. 11:11).

vv. 19-20. A deputation of priests and Levites was sent from Jerusalem to inquire of John as to who he was. Multitudes were hearing this man, many had been baptized of him, and a great stir had been made, so much that many wondered if he were the Christ (Luke 3:15). The Lord's forerunner, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, had appeared in the wilderness; but, lacking in spiritual understanding, these leaders knew not who he was. He confessed immediately, 'I am not the Christ.'

v. 21. They asked, 'art thou Elijah?' Why should they ask John if he were Elijah? The answer is that there was a general expectation among the Jews at that time that Elijah would again appear on earth (Matt. 16:13-14; Matt. 17: 9-10; Mal. 4:5-6). They asked again, 'Art thou that prophet?' What prophet? The answer is found in Deut. 18:15, 18. Each time John answered, 'I am not.'

vv. 22-23. 'Then who are you?' John might have answered, 'I am the son of Zacharias the priest. I am filled with the Spirit from my mother's womb.'

I am a remarkable man raised up by God and sent to Israel.’ But instead he replied, ‘I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord.’ Men who are sent of God seek no glory nor acclaim for themselves, but own that they are at best unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10). When John referred to himself as ‘the voice,’ he employed the very term the Holy Spirit used of him 700 years previously (Isa. 40:3). The mission of John was to bear witness of Christ, not himself. A voice is heard and not seen. The Lord Jesus endures long after ‘the voice’ is silent.

Also note that ‘the voice’ cried in the wilderness, not in the temple, nor in Jerusalem: for Jehovah was no more there in the temple. Judaism was an empty shell. They were a nation of legalists, steeped in self-righteous formalism, ceremonies, and rituals.

vv. 24-25. They challenged John's authority to preach or to baptize, he had received no commission from the Sanhedrin; he was outside the religious system; he had not been trained in their schools; he was not identified with either the Pharisees, the Sadducees, nor the Herodians. Who had commissioned him to go forth bidding men to repent? By what authority did he baptize?

vv. 26-28. John continued to stand his ground and would not deny that he baptized in water; but he sought to occupy them with his true mission, which was to point men to Christ. These men were raising questions about authority and baptism while they were utter strangers to Christ himself. How like men today! They want to discuss and argue about side issues while they are yet in their sins and the vital and central issue remains undecided. ‘What think ye of Christ?’ (1 Cor. 1:17.) ‘There standeth one among you, whom ye know not’ (John 1:10-11). Here stands the seed of woman, Abraham's seed, David's son, the fulfillment of all promises, prophecies, and pictures of the Messiah given by the prophets in the holy scriptures; yet, they knew him not!

‘He is revealed after me, yet he was before me’ (John 8:58). The Lord Jesus came in God's own time to this earth; but he is eternal, hath all preeminence, and is before all (Prov. 8:24-30). John could find no expression strong enough to express the difference which separated him from the one who was ‘preferred before’ him; so he said, ‘I am not worthy to unlace his shoes.’

v. 29. ‘Behold the Lamb of God.’ These Jews were looking for Messiah to come as a great prophet or a great king. They understood nothing of a ‘Saviour-Priest,’ of a ‘Lamb of God.’ You would think these priests and Levites who ministered about the temple and the sacrifices would have inquired about the sacrifice, but no; apparently they had no sense of sin – they were Abraham's seed. They would have welcomed him on the throne but not on the altar. ‘Behold the Lamb of God.’

1. In Gen. 4:4 we have the Lamb *typified*.
2. In Gen. 22:8 we have the Lamb *prophesied*.
3. In Exod. 12:5-7 we have the Lamb *slain and the blood applied*.
4. In Isa. 53:1-7 we have the Lamb *personified – a man*.
5. In John 1:29 we have the Lamb *identified*.
6. In Lev. 5:6, 13 we have the Lamb *magnified and glorified*.

This is the Son of God

John 1:30-39

When John pointed to the Lord Jesus and said, ‘behold the Lamb of God,’ the title suggests several things.

1. His *sinlessness*, for he is the Lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:19).

2. His *gentleness* and willingness to suffer. ‘He was led’ (not driven) ‘as a lamb to the slaughter’ (Isa. 53:7).

3. His *sacrifice*. He is the Lamb that ‘taketh away the sin of the world’ (Heb. 9:26).

4. *The sufficiency of that sacrifice*; ‘taketh away the sin’ (Heb. 10:14-17).

v. 30. This is the third time John has declared that Christ is ‘preferred before me’ (vv. 15 & 27). What he is doing is declaring the eternity, deity, and pre-existence of the Lord Jesus (John 17:5).

v. 31. In this verse John tells the purpose of his baptism. It was to make Christ ‘manifest’ to Israel. It was to prepare a people for him. This people was prepared by their taking the place of sinners before God (Mark 1:5). That is why John baptized in Jordan, the river of death; for, being baptized in Jordan, they acknowledged that death was their due. In this, John’s baptism differs from our baptism. In believers’ baptism, the believer does not confess that death is his due, but he shows forth the fact that he has already died—died to sin, died with Christ.

vv. 32-33. These verses have reference to the occasion when Christ was baptized of John (Matt. 3:16-17). The dove manifests the character of the one upon whom the Spirit came. The dove is a bird of love and sorrow. When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, 'There appeared unto them cloven tongues of fire.' Fire signifies divine judgment. There was that in the disciples which needed to be judged; the evil nature remained within them. But there was no sin in Christ; hence did the Spirit descend upon him like a dove. The Holy Spirit did not come upon him and then leave again, as with the prophets of old. He abode on Christ. The Spirit descended and remained on him. He it is who baptized his people with the Holy Ghost (John 20:22).

v. 34. John bore a seven-fold witness to the excellency and glory of Christ.

1. His *pre-existence*. 'He was before me' (v. 15.)
2. His *Lordship* (v. 23).
3. His *immeasurable superiority*. 'I am not worthy to unlace his shoes' (v. 27).
4. His *sacrificial work*. 'The Lamb of God' (v. 29).
5. His *holiness* (v. 32).
6. His *divine rights*. 'He baptized with the Holy Ghost' (v. 33).
7. His *divine sonship* (v. 34).

vv. 35-36. The next day John stood with two of his followers (we believe, to be John and Andrew) and, looking upon Jesus Christ as he walked by, said, 'behold the Lamb of God.' This was John's ministry and message—to point men to Christ the Redeemer.

v. 37. John and Andrew, who were fishermen by trade, had attached themselves to John. They had not only been baptized of him, but eagerly awaited the promised Messiah and Saviour of whom John preached. At

last the day arrived when this teacher, whom they believed to be God's prophet, stopped them in their walk, pointed to the passing figure, and said, 'behold, the Lamb of God.' They left John and followed the Lord Jesus!

v. 38. The Master turned and asked, 'What seek ye?' At first it may seem strange that the all-knowing Lord should ask such a question of them. His question was to reveal the true motive and purpose of these men. He asked Cain, 'Where is your brother?' He asked Adam, 'Where art thou?' In those days many followed him for various reasons – the miracles (John 2:23), the loaves and fishes (John 6:26), or because it was the popular thing to do. But some followed him because of their need and because they believed (John 6:66-69). The question is, 'What seek ye?' or 'On what is your heart set?' (Psalm 42:1).

Their reply was, 'Master, where dwellest thou?' It was not a 'what' but a 'whom' that their hearts were set upon. It was not a blessing, but the blesser himself they were interested in (2 Tim. 1:12).

v. 39. The place where he dwelt is not given. They 'abode with him.' His abiding place is theirs too – wherever that is! (John 14:3.) It is not what that we seek but whom, for salvation is a person and a living union with him!

Himself

Once it was the blessing,
Now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling,
Now it is his word;
Once his gifts I wanted,
Now the Giver own;

Once I sought for healing,
Now himself alone.

Once 'twas painful trying,
Now 'tis perfect trust;
Once a half salvation,
Now the uttermost;
Once 'twas ceaseless holding,
Now he holds me fast;
Once 'twas constant drifting,
Now my anchor's cast.

Once 'twas busy planning,
Now 'tis trustful prayer;
Once 'twas anxious caring,
Now he has the care;
Once 'twas what I wanted,
Now what Jesus says;
Once 'twas constant asking,
Now 'tis ceaseless praise.

Once it was my working,
his it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use him,
Now he uses me;
Once the power I wanted,
Now the mighty one;
Once for self I laboured,
Now for him alone.

Once I hoped in Jesus,

Now I know he's mine;
Once my lamps were dying,
Now they brightly shine;
Once for death I waited,
Now his coming hail,
And my hopes are anchored,
Save within the veil.

Come and see

John 1:40-51

v. 40-41. One of the two disciples of John, which heard him speak of Christ, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. The other we believe to be John, the author of this book (John ever seeks to hide himself, never once mentioning himself by name). Andrew heard John, then he followed and listened to the Lord Jesus; and, being convinced that Jesus was the Christ, he immediately ran to share the good news with his brother, Peter. He did not become a preacher of the gospel at this time; for that he needed to be taught and trained by the Master. But he set out to bear a simple and clear witness of the Saviour he had found.

v. 42. When the Lord beheld Simon, he said, 'Thou art Simon the Son of John.' The Lord showed that he was already thoroughly acquainted with Simon. But he adds, 'Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone.' By natural temperament Simon was fiery, impetuous, rash, and unstable. How blessed was the promise of the Lord! 'I know all about you, but you shall have a new name – a rock,' fixed and stable. Also every believer becomes 'a stone.' 'Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house' (1 Peter 2:5).

vv. 43-44. These verses are an illustration of the Good Shepherd going after his sheep (Luke 19:10). Whether the Lord uses a human instrument or not, it is Christ, himself, who seeks and finds each one given to him by the Father. Our seeking Christ is only our response to his seeking us, just as we love him because he first loved us.

v. 45. Here we find again the effect that a revelation of Christ has upon a true believer. He cannot remain silent nor indifferent. He must tell others of the Redeemer. Note the emphasis in the witness of Andrew and Phillip—‘we have found the Messiah; we have the Christ of whom Moses and the prophets did write.’ None of this ‘do you want to go to heaven?’ or emotional soul-winning pleas – simply the good news that the Christ, the Redeemer promised and prophesied in the scriptures, had come; and they had seen him and believed on him!

v. 46. Nathanael asked, ‘Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ The Saviour's lowly birth, beginning, and surroundings were a stumbling block to those who expected a great and glorious Messiah who would restore the kingdom to Israel. Many looked for a lion, not a lamb. They did not understand the types and sacrifices of the Old Testament. Phillip did not argue; he simply said, ‘Come and see for yourself.’

vv. 47-48. The Lord Jesus saw Nathanael coming and said, ‘Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!’ Christ was not saying that Nathanael was not a sinner, but that he was a man of sincerity, a true seeker with an honest and open attitude, not a hypocrite. Such shall be given more light. Nathanael replied, ‘How do you know all about me?’ Our Lord replied, ‘Before Phillip called thee, I saw thee under the fig tree.’ Our Lord is omniscient; he sees and knows all things and all people. Evidently this particular reference to his being under the fig tree carried more significance than his simply being there, for Nathanael was astounded and awed before him.

v. 49. Nathanael's eyes were opened to behold the divine glory and power of Christ Jesus, and he promptly confessed him to be the ‘Son of God.’ As we stated, the theme of John's book is Christ, the Son of God. There are seven who bear witness to his deity in this book—John the Baptist (1:34),

Nathanael (1:49), Peter (6:69), the Lord himself (10:36), Martha (11:27), Thomas (20:28), and John (20:31).

vv. 50-51. Nathanael was deeply impressed by the Lord's omniscience, but the Lord told him that he would see greater things. Yea, the time would come when he would see an open heaven and the Son of God directly connected with the Throne of God. Christ may have referred to the vision of Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17).

Water made into wine

John 2:1-11

Arthur Pink expounds this passage from a three-fold viewpoint:

Its *typical* significance.

Its *prophetic* application.

Its *practical* teaching.

1. Its typical significance.

The chapter opens with the word ‘and,’ which indicates that its contents are closely connected with what has gone before. One of the things prominent in Chapter 1 is the failure of Judaism and the turning away from it to Christ. The Priests and Levites came to John to inquire who he was. He said, ‘There standeth one among you whom ye know not’ (John 1:19-26). They didn't know the forerunner nor the Christ (John 1:11). ‘The law and the prophets were until John’ (Luke 16:16). John wound up the Old Testament system!

The wine had given out. Wine in scripture is the emblem of joy (Psalm 104:15). Judaism still existed as a religious system, but the joy was gone; it ministered no comfort to the heart. It had degenerated into a cold, mechanical routine utterly destitute of joy in God.

They set *six* water pots. Six is the number of man, for it was on the sixth day man was created. Six is the number of the superman (Rev. 13:18). Six water pots, not seven, the perfect number. All that was left of Judaism was the flesh. The feasts of the Lord had become the feasts of the Jews (John 2:13).

The water pots were of stone, not silver, which speaks of redemption, nor gold which tells of divine glory. And they were empty! No wonder they were empty of wine. Religion without Christ is empty of joy or comfort!

The mother of Jesus was perhaps representative of the nation Israel in attempting to dictate to the Lord as to what he should do. 'Display your power and glory in material fashion! Show yourself to the world!' This his brethren attempted to do in John 7:2-5. This may account for his rebuke of her. Israel had no heart nor thought of a suffering Messiah. What they desired was one who would immediately set up his kingdom here on earth. It is evident that, in typical fashion, the setting aside of Israel after the flesh is shown in these verses.

2. Its prophetic application.

Quite a bit of speculation comes forth from Pink here, but the third day is the day of resurrection. It was on the third day in creation that the earth came forth from its watery grave (Gen. 1:9, 11). Our Lord arose on the third day. It may be that Hosea 6:2 and John 2:1 should be placed side by side, in that, for two thousand years (2 days with God according to 2 Peter 3:8) Israel has been without a king, a priest, or a home. The 'second day' is almost ended, and their renaissance will come near the beginning of the third day—the year 2000. There will be a wedding, and the Lord will be married to the new Israel (Isa. 54:1-8).

3. Its practical teaching.

vv. 1-2. Our Lord sanctifies the marriage relationship. Marriage was ordained by God in Eden; and in these verses the Saviour, for all time, set his approval upon it. By gracing this festive gathering, our Lord distinguishes and glorifies this sacred institution.

v. 3. Mary's words seem to indicate two things. She ignored his Deity. He knew they had no wine. It appears she was still seeking to exert parental authority.

v. 4. *He* replied (literally), 'What to me and thee?' or 'What is there common to me and thee?' It was not that he resented her inviting his aid, but he must act in his own way. His season (as a son) of subjection to Mary and Joseph is over. The term 'woman,' in that day, was not harsh but commonly used for addressing females of all classes. On the cross the Lord addressed Mary as 'woman' (John 19:26). To have addressed her as 'mother' (on either occasion) would have called attention to human relationships. 'Woman' shows that God was speaking to her. Christ teaches that Mary was only a woman—'Blessed among women' (Luke 1:28), but not 'Blessed above women' (Matt. 12:46-50).

'Mine hour is not yet come.' This is the hour of his suffering, the hour of his humiliation, the hour when he would be subject to man's wicked will; for he would be delivered into the hands of sinners. But until then, he was not to be ordered by man. He was about his Father's business. Seven references are made in this book to that 'hour' (John 2:4, 7:30, 8:20, 12:23, 12:27, 16:32, 17:1).

v. 5. Mary accepted the Lord's rebuke, recognized the Lord's right to act as he pleased, and left the matter entirely in his hands. What a lesson for us!

vv. 6-11. Pink mentions several things to consider about this miracle.

The *occasion* of it. This was his first miracle. Hitherto he had lived in quiet seclusion in Nazareth. From this point on, he would become a public and a marked man.

The *manner* of it. Christ was the one who performed the miracle; yet the servants secured the pots, filled them with water, drew off the wine, and carried it to the governor of the feast. The means used were human; the power was divine. It may have seemed foolish to fill the pots with water, but water is a symbol of the written word (Eph. 5:26); and the way to bring joy and comfort to the human heart today is to fill it with the preached word. God will make it effectual (Rom. 10:17).

The *teaching* of it. We have a picture of the regeneration of a sinner.

1. The sinner is *empty* like the waterpots.
2. The sinner receives the *water* of the written word at the command of Christ.
3. The water produced the *best wine* by the power of Christ.
4. The change was a *miracle*, as is the new birth.
5. The miracle manifested forth *his glory* (v. 11).
6. The governor proclaimed it to be the best wine, as truly his grace and redemption is far better than the best the world can give.

Christ cleanses the temple

John 2:12-25

v. 12. This verse seems to come in as a parenthesis between the miracle at Cana and the cleansing of the temple. Mr. Pink suggests that the key word is ‘Capernaum’ which stands for two things—divine favor and divine Judgment (Matt. 11:23). The mother of Jesus may represent the nation of Israel (honored among women), his brethren may represent the nation of Israel in general unbelief (John 7:5), and his disciples may represent the small remnant in Israel who did believe in him. With these the Lord went down to Capernaum but continued there not many days. Not for long was Israel to enjoy these special favors of God.

v. 13. Here is one key to that which follows. The ‘Lord's Passover’ had degenerated into the ‘Passover of the Jews.’ It was only a matter of form and ritual. The true worship of God and the pattern of redemption by Christ was forgotten in the Passover Feast (Isa. 1:11-18).

v. 14. Animals were used in sacrifices: and these men who sold oxen, sheep, and doves to worshippers from remote areas excused their covetousness and greed by the fact that they made it convenient for these people to purchase the required animals for sacrifices. They had set up their booths and stalls all about the sacred premises. The money-changers were there to exchange foreign currency. These cattle dealers and money-changers were notorious for making bargains that profited themselves—enough to justify our calling them ‘thieves.’

vv. 15-16. We see many things in these verses. Read Matt. 21:12-13.

1. The deity of Christ. He calls the temple ‘my Father's house.’ None had ever nor could ever refer to the temple in this way. Christ alone can say this.

2. The power and authority of Christ. One man, single-handed, takes a whip, and the whole multitude flees in fear before him. This was no mere man; the terror of God had fallen upon them!

3. The wrath and righteousness of the Lamb. We think of our Lord as gentle and kind, and such he is, but this is not all that he is! Our Lord is inflexibly righteous as well as infinitely gracious. We do well to remind ourselves that ‘it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’

4. Can we not see today the commercialization of those places, which are supposed to be the house of God? The materialism, socials, and forms of entertainment that are part of church programs are an unholy mixture of the world and so-called worship.

Pink points out the prudence and gentleness of Christ in that though he drove out the sheep and the oxen and dumped the money on the floor, he said to those who sold doves, ‘Take these out.’ He did not release them to fly away. All of the other property could be retrieved, but not the doves if he had set them free.

v. 17. *His* disciples thought of the scripture in Psalm 69:9.

vv. 18-21. These Jews demanded of him a ‘sign’ or proof of his authority to cleanse the temple and to do the things he had done. They were utterly void of any understanding of the true Messiah and his mission and could neither comprehend his words nor deeds (Matt. 13:13). Yet in reality our Lord's words to them were much to the point! In raising himself from the dead he would furnish the greatest and final proof that he was God

manifest in flesh, and as God, had a right to cleanse the defiled temple which bore his name.

v. 22. Did the disciples at this time understand or believe in the promise of his resurrection? No, they did not (Mark 16:11). It was only later, after his resurrection, that they recalled this incident and believed (John 14:26).

vv. 23-25. When the people saw the miracles of Christ, many claimed to believe on him and joined themselves to him: but they were only dazzled and impressed by the miracles. Their profession was not from the heart, and he knew it (1 Kings 8:39). These men were 'stony ground' hearers. They were only intellectually convinced, and our Lord clearly discerned this. He would not commit himself to them, because he knew them all. 'Man's *affections* may be stirred, man's *intelligence* may be informed, man's *conscience* may be convicted,' but God must give him a new heart and new life. Only a new creation avails before God. Men must be born again (John 3:3-7).

We might learn a lesson here. The discreet man will be kind to all, but intimate with few. We do well to remember that all that glitters is not gold, and all who profess Christ do not know Christ. Learn not to place yourself rashly in the power of unproved professors.

Ye must be born again

John 3:1-7

v. 1. Nicodemus was a ‘ruler of the Jews,’ which probably means that he was a member of the Sanhedrin—Israel’s highest religious court. As such, we can view him as a representative of all of them.

1. He came to the Lord Jesus ‘by night’ because he was ashamed to be seen coming to Him, and he was afraid of losing his position and power. Each time Nicodemus is referred to in the word afterwards, it is repeated that he came to Jesus ‘by night’ (John 7:50-51; John 19:39).

2. He was altogether lacking in spiritual understanding of the things of God, as most religionists are.

3. Although he was a ‘ruler of the Jews’ and a student of scriptures, he was dead in trespasses and sins and needing to be ‘born again.’

v. 2. Nicodemus acknowledged that Jesus Christ was surely ‘a teacher come from God’ because the miracles of Christ differed radically from those performed by others before or since. But others did perform miracles and wonders, and this very fact warns us that we need to carefully examine the credentials of so-called miracle workers (1 John 4:1). If a man works wonders and miracles, is this a sure proof that he comes from God or that God is with him? Certainly not! We generally overlook the fact that Satan is able to work miracles and wonders, not like Christ, but enough to deceive the simple (2 Cor. 11:13-14; 2 Thess. 2:9; Matt. 24:23-24). Satan is able to work miracles and to deliver this power to others.

How are we to test those who come to us in the name of Christ? Not by their personal character or morality (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Not by their power to work wonders (2 Thess. 2:9). Here is the answer! Examine them by the word of God, by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do they preach 'thus saith the Lord'? Do they preach the gospel of God's free grace and glory in Christ Jesus? Do they exalt and glorify Christ in his redemptive work; or do they exalt themselves, the Holy Spirit, and the miracles? (Isa. 8:20; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 10; John 16:13-14.)

v. 3. Our Lord ignored Nicodemus' address with startling abruptness and said, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus called Christ 'a teacher come from God,' but it is not as a teacher that the sinner must first approach Christ. What the sinner (in the world or in religion) needs is to be 'born again.' In order to have this he must approach Christ as his Saviour. Of what value is teaching to one dead in sin, under the condemnation of God? A saved man is a fit subject for teaching, but the unsaved need preaching which will expose their depravity and reveal the one mighty to save (1 Cor. 1:21). It is not how a man should live that is of first importance, but how dead sinners are made alive spiritually. A man cannot live to God nor for God until he is born spiritually (Eph. 2:1). The kingdom of God cannot be 'seen' or understood until a man is born of God (John 1:12-13).

v. 4. Nicodemus' reply is a verification that these Jewish leaders were altogether lacking in spiritual understanding, or the fall and its consequences, and of the nature of spiritual life and faith (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 2:14).

v. 5. The word 'water' has no reference to the waters of baptism. The Lord Jesus used the word 'water' emblematically to refer to 'the *word* of God.' The word of God is always the instrument used by God in regeneration

(Psalm 119:50; 1 Cor. 4:15; James 1:18). The Holy Spirit is the begetter or the quickener, and the word of God is the seed (John 6:63; 1 Peter 1:23). By his first fleshly birth, a man enters this world a sinful creature. When a sinner is born again by the Spirit and the word of God, he enters the kingdom and family of God a new creature in Christ Jesus!

v. 6. What then is the new birth? It is not the removal of anything from the sinner, nor the changing of anything physical or fleshly in the sinner; instead, it is the communication of something to the sinner. The new birth is the impartation of a new nature. When we were born the first time we received from our parents their nature; so when we are born again, we receive from God his nature. The Spirit of God begets within us a spiritual nature (2 Peter 1:4; Gal. 5:17). That which is born of man is human; that which is born of God is divine and spiritual.

v. 7. Nicodemus was startled. He was amazed at the Saviour's words. Yet he ought not to have been. Man by birth and nature is blind and opposed to the things of God. No amount of religious training can change this evil nature. His chief need is a new nature or to be born again! It is a must! A man must have a spiritual nature before he can understand, enter, or enjoy the kingdom of God.

How can these things be?

John 3:8-15

v. 8. A comparison is drawn here between the wind and the Spirit of God in the new birth.

1. The wind is invisible; one cannot see the wind but can certainly feel the effects. Even so, one cannot see the Spirit of God; but his power and the results of his work are evident.

2. The wind is sovereign in its actions. The wind is beyond man's control. The wind does not consult us nor can it be regulated. So it is with the Spirit of God! The wind blows when it pleases, where it pleases, and as it pleases. So it is with the Spirit (Exod. 33:19; John 5:21).

3. The wind is irresistible. When the wind blows in its power, it sweeps everything before it. It is so with the Spirit of God. When he comes in the fullness of his power, he breaks down man's prejudices, subdues his will, and conquers him (Psalm 110:3). Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9).

vv. 9-10. 'How can these things be?' This question reveals the spiritual ignorance even of the religious natural man. It is true that Nicodemus was educated, religious, and doubtless of high moral character; but something more than education, morality, and sincerity are needed to understand the things of God. Even though God became incarnate and spoke in human language, men understood him not (Prov. 4:19; Eph. 4:18). Our Lord said unto him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel and yet untaught?' Even a religious teacher may be ignorant of divine truth. The fact that a preacher has

graduated with honors from some theological center is no proof that he is a man taught of God (John 6:44-45).

v. 11. Our Lord did not deal in speculation nor theory, but spoke divine truth because he is the truth! In the preceding verse Christ chided Nicodemus for his ignorance of divine truth; here he reveals the cause of such ignorance. The reason a man does not know the things of God is because he receives not God's witness concerning them (John 5:40-44). If we believe not his word, we shall continue in darkness and ignorance. None are so blind as those who will not see! As we believe God's word, he honors that faith by giving us understanding of what we believe. Walk in the light revealed and receive more light.

v. 12. 'Earthly things' are, in a sense, evident and in a measure comprehensible; but 'heavenly things' are invisible and altogether beyond our grasp until Divinely revealed to us. By 'earthly things,' which Christ had told him, we mean the new birth, which takes place on earth, and the Lord's reference to the 'wind' as an illustration of the Spirit's operation in bringing about the new birth through the word. These things Nicodemus ought to have known about from Ezek. 36:24-27. If, then, he believed not God's word about these earthly things, of what avail would it be for Christ to speak to him about 'heavenly things' or things pertaining to the counsels of God, the mysteries of grace, and the things God has prepared for them that love him (1 Cor. 2:9-10)?

v. 13. The 'heavenly things' to which the Lord had referred had not until then been clearly revealed to men. To ascend to heaven and penetrate the hidden counsels of God was an utter impossibility to fallen man. Only the Son, whose native residence is heaven, is qualified to reveal heavenly things. Our Lord did not say, 'No man hath entered heaven,' but 'No man hath ascended up to heaven.' This is an entirely different thing. Only he

that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven (even while here speaking to Nicodemus), knows the secrets and mysteries of his throne. No man ever has or ever will occupy this position but Christ.

vv. 14-15. Christ had been speaking to Nicodemus about the new birth. The new birth is the impartation of divine or eternal life; but for eternal life to be bestowed upon men, the Saviour must be lifted up. Eternal life must come out of his substitutionary death. The sacrificial work of Christ is the basis of the Spirit's operations and the ground of God's gift of life (Isa. 53:4-6). It is the Son of man who must be crucified, for atonement could be made only by one in the nature of him who sinned. Only as man was Christ capable of taking upon himself our guilt and penalty. The Jews expected the Messiah to be lifted up or elevated to the throne of David; but before this, he must be lifted up on the cross of shame, enduring the judgment of God upon our sins.

To illustrate the character, meaning, and purpose of his death, he refers to the well-known incident in Num. 21:6-9. The people were bitten by fiery serpents, dying and without hope. Moses made a serpent in the likeness of the cause and lifted it up. Those who looked in faith lived. Christ is made in the likeness of sinful flesh and crucified, and those who look to him in faith shall live.

The love of God

John 3:16-21

In the preceding verses our Lord had made mention of his death and had affirmed that the death of the cross was an imperative necessity. He did not say, 'The Son of man shall be lifted up,' but, 'The Son of man must be lifted up.' There is no other alternative if the claims of God are to be met, if the demands of justice are to be satisfied, if sin is to be put away, and if the elect are to be saved— Christ must die! (Rom. 3:25-26; 2 Cor. 5:21.) The law and justice of God demand it!

v. 16. Someone once said, 'Verse 14 is the remedy, Verse 15 is the result, and Verse 16 is the reason.' There is more in the cross of Christ than an exhibition of the holiness of God; there is the display of his great love! Verse 16 takes us back to the very foundation of everything. His great salvation was provided by love. Christ came and died because God loved us and was determined to have a people like Christ, not in order to make the Father love us. There is no discord among the Godhead. The atonement was not the cause but the effect of God's love (1 John 4:9-10). In this verse there are seven things told us about God's love.

1. The tense of his love. 'God so loved.' He always has loved us. It is an everlasting love (Rom. 5:8; Jer. 33:3).
2. The magnitude of his love. 'God so loved.' It is an infinite love (John 15:13).
3. The scope of his love. 'God so loved the world.' His love is not limited to the Jews only, but to all nations (Rev. 5:9).

4. The nature of his love. ‘God so loved...that he gave.’ Real love ever seeks the highest interest and well being of its object. Love is unselfish; it gives! God gave the greatest gift.

5. The sacrificial character of his love. He not only gave his Son to live on earth among men, but to die the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8).

6. The design of his love. ‘That whosoever believeth on him should not perish.’ God has a people who shall not perish. No condemnation nor judgment shall come to them (Rom. 8:33-34).

7. The beneficence of his love. ‘But have everlasting life.’ This is what our Lord imparts to his own—eternal life and glory (1 John 3:1-3).

v. 17. The coming of Christ was not to condemn the world; the world was already condemned (Rom. 5:18). But he came that men and women of all nations might be saved. The word ‘might’ does not express any uncertainty about the fact of their being saved, but the word ‘might’ expresses design. He came ‘in order that’ the world might be saved. His person and work for sinners enabled God to be both just and Justifier of those who believe (1 Peter 3:18).

v. 18. For the believer there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:1) because Christ was condemned in our stead (Isa. 53:4-6). But the unbeliever is condemned already. He enters the world with the curse of sin upon him. By nature he is a child of wrath (Eph. 2:3). If he hears the gospel and believes not, he incurs a new and increased condemnation through unbelief (Matt. 11:21-24).

v. 19. Here is the cause of man's unbelief—he loves the darkness and hates the light. It is not only that men are in darkness, but they love the darkness. They prefer ignorance, error, and superstition to the light of truth

(John 5:40-44). What a proof of man's depravity! In the person of Christ perfect holiness, perfect love, and perfect truth came and dwelt among men. What was their reaction to him? 'Crucify him! Crucify him! We will not have this man reign over us!'

vv. 20-21. Here is the final test. 'Everyone that loves and practices evil hates the light (the truth of God), neither cometh to the light.' Why? Lest his deeds, error, and sin should be revealed and judged. That is why men (religious and worldly) refuse the scriptures as they are. God's word condemns us! God's word convicts us! God's word shuts us up to the mercy of God in Christ!

On the other hand, 'He that doeth truth,' which describes what is characteristic of every believer, 'cometh to the light.' Note the present tense; he comes again and again to the word of God. And for what purpose? To learn of God, and of himself, and of his blessed Redeemer. The believer finds his comfort, strength, help, directions, and hope in the exceeding great and precious promises of the word (Psalm 119:9-11, 17-18, 49-50, 105).

He must increase, but I must decrease

John 3:22-36

v. 22. This verse must be read in the light of John 4:2. By linking these two verses together, an important principle is established – what is done by the servants of Christ by his authority is as though it had been done by Christ himself (2 Cor. 5:20; Luke 10:16).

v. 23. This is one of the verses in the New Testament, which plainly teaches the proper mode of baptism. If baptism were by sprinkling or by pouring, ‘much water’ would not be required. The scriptural form of baptism is by immersion, for which ‘much water’ is needed. The very word ‘baptized’ (both in the Greek and the English) signifies to dip or to immerse. The example of our Lord himself ought to settle all controversy. No unprejudiced mind can read Matt. 3:16 without seeing that the Lord was immersed (Rom. 6:3).

v. 24. John's ministry had not yet been terminated by his imprisonment and death.

v. 25. Some of John's disciples and the Jewish religionists were in conflict over purifying. The Jews had so many purifyings, some scriptural and some traditional. We really have no way of knowing what this was about, for it does not say.

v. 26. But these same Jews (Read John 1:19) came to John and told him that Jesus of Nazareth, to whom he bore witness, was baptizing and that all men now were coming to Him, not to John! What was their motive? Were they seeking to make John jealous and envious? Were they seeking

to divide John and Jesus Christ? Perhaps! This is a favorite device of Satan, to make one servant of the Lord envious of another. An example of this is found in Num. 11:26-29. (Phil. 1:14-18; Eph. 3:8.)

v. 27. It is beautiful to see how John conducted himself on this occasion. His reply was most becoming of grace. He bows to the sovereign will of God! (1 Cor. 4:7; 1 Cor. 12:11, 18.) Like the Apostle Paul, he declares, 'I am what I am by the grace of God.'

v. 28. Continuing to reply to these Jews, John reminds his tempters of what he had told them before (John 1:20-23), that the only place he claimed was that of a voice sent by God before Christ to bear witness of him.

v. 29. Continuing, John said, 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom.' The bride is the church, the elect of all generations, the people of God; and they belong to the Bridegroom (given to him by the Father, redeemed by his blood, and brought to him by his Spirit). The friend of the Bridegroom is not jealous and envious. He is truly a friend and loves the Bridegroom, he rejoices in the happiness of the Bridegroom, and his joy is fulfilled when the Bridegroom is glorified. The servant of Christ is occupied with Christ and his glory.

v. 30. Finally, John adds, 'He must increase and I must decrease.' Blessed climax this was to John's modest reply and well calculated to crush all petty feelings, ambitions, jealousy, and self-glory that may be found in our hearts. 'He must increase.' This is the will and purpose of the Father (Col. 1:16-18). Therefore, I must decrease. The more I am occupied with Christ, the less I shall be occupied with myself. Humility is the by-product of a genuine faith in and love for Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).

v. 31. There are several contrasts between the Saviour and his servant given in Verses 28-31.

1. He is the Christ; I am only sent before him.
2. He is the Bridegroom; I am a friend.
3. He must increase; I must decrease.
4. I am of the earth and speak of those things, which pertain to the earth, but he is the Lord from heaven who has no limitations. He knows all things.

v. 32. The testimony, which our Lord bore, was a perfect one! We know in part and preach in part; but our Lord Jesus knows all heavenly things by his own perfect knowledge, for he is God!

‘No man receiveth his testimony.’ This is not to be understood without qualification, for Verse 33 tells us some who did receive his gospel. John meant that comparatively, none received his testimony. Compared with the crowds, the nation Israel, and the world's population, those who believed were few! (John 1:10-11; 1 Cor. 2:14; John 6:44-45.)

v. 33. To ‘set to his seal’ means to certify and ratify. By faith in the Lord Jesus, the believer says God hath fulfilled in Christ all that he promised of the Messiah. Not one word of God has failed (1 John 5:10). Faith glorifies God; unbelief dishonors God.

v. 34. The Father sent the Son, and the Son spoke only the words of the Father (Matt. 17:5). He differed from other messengers in that ‘In all things he has the pre-eminence.’ Others had the Spirit by measure, but the Spirit abode on him. The Lord Jesus knew the full truth, for *he* is the truth! (Col. 2:9).

v. 35. 'All things' here simply means all things – all things pertaining to the universe, to life, to the new heavens and new earth, to the church, and if there be anything else, to it.

v. 36. Here is the inevitable alternative. All things are in Christ: all things are ours through union with Christ; that union with Christ comes through faith in Christ. Those who believe not shall not see life, nor enter in, nor enjoy it.

The Samaritan woman - 1

John 4:1-10

As we study John 3 and 4 together, we discover a series of striking contrasts.

1. In John 3 we have ‘a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus;’ in John 4 it is an unnamed woman before us.

2. Nicodemus was a man of high rank; the woman was a poor woman who came to draw water.

3. One was a favored Jew; the other was a despised Samaritan.

4. One was a man of strict morals; the woman was of no reputation.

5. Nicodemus sought out Christ, but Christ seeks out the woman.

6. To the self-righteous Jew Christ said, ‘ye must be born again;’ to this Gentile sinner he speaks of ‘the gift of God.’

vv. 1-3. Even at that early date in our Lord's public ministry, the Pharisees manifested their opposition against him. He had openly condemned their ignorance and hypocrisy; and here was a man from Nazareth, whom they regarded as no more than a carpenter, who was attracting even more people than John. This could not be allowed at any cost (our Lord baptized no one, but left that to his disciples). The Pharisees probably planned some action against Christ; and because his hour was not yet come and much was to be done before his death at Jerusalem, he departed out of Judea and returned to Galilee.

v. 4. In going from Judea to Galilee, our Lord's most direct route lay through the country of Samaria. There was a longer route which some of the stricter Jews sometimes took to avoid contact with the Samaritans; but the providence and purpose of his Father took him through Samaria, for some of his elect were there (John 10:16). We shall never appreciate the gospel until we go back to the basic truth of predestination, which puts God first, which makes the choice his before it is ours (2 Thess. 2:13; John 15:16). Election is of persons; predestination is of things. His journey through Samaria was predestinated because there were some chosen sheep there which had been given him from all eternity (John 6:37-40).

v. 5. Most agree that Sychar is the city called Shechem, which was on the ground that Jacob bought and later gave to Joseph (Gen. 33:18-19; Gen. 48: 21-22). Joseph's bones were buried there (Joshua 24:32).

v. 6. Jacob's well was there. It was called his well because he either dug the well or because he and his family used it. Our Lord always traveled by foot; therefore, he was weary and sat down on the well. John takes note of his weariness to let us know that he was truly man and subject to weariness and other human infirmities. He rested on the sides of the well, and it was about noon.

vv. 7-8. The woman probably chose the hot noon hour to come to the well because she thought no one else would be there. This was no accident. She chose this hour because it was God's hour for her to meet Christ. How often people meet with divine mercy when they think not of it (Isa. 65:1). The Lord asked her for a drink of water. He asked her for a drink not only because he was weary and thirsty, but in order to deal with her on the subject of 'living water.' In the providence of God, his disciples had gone to the city to buy food that our Lord might be alone with this sinner. Alone with Christ is where a sinner needs to be—with none between.

v. 9. The Saviour's request struck the woman with surprise. Among the Jews it was considered the depth of degradation to even converse with a Samaritan, but to ask a favor of one would never be tolerated. Our Lord's humility and condescension made the woman to marvel. Oh, the grace of our Lord! Tenderly and patiently he led this adulteress step by step to conviction, conversion, and faith in him. She knew him not; she saw in him nothing but a 'Jew' (Isa. 53:1-3).

v. 10. 'If you knew the gift of God, if you knew who speaks to you, if you knew your need, you would ask of me the living water.' This is the root of man's whole problem. The gift of God is salvation; it is eternal life (1 John 5:11). God is the giver; all we do is receive. Man does not know the gift; and he does not know Christ, the giver! Neither does he know his need for mercy. 'If you knew these things, you would ask of me.' Asking proceeds from knowing. Before we ask, God has to deal with us in conviction and revelation. Notice Christ deals with her on the basis of who, not what; it is not doctrine, anymore than doing, that saves. It is the person—Christ Jesus! How different was the Lord's speech to the woman than to Nicodemus! He says nothing of the new birth but tells her at once of the 'gift of God.' Nicodemus had religion, morality, and works to glory in; she had nothing (Matt. 9:10-13).

Why is water used here as a figure of salvation?

1. It is the gift of God; man can't create it. For water we are absolutely dependent on God.
2. Water is indispensable; it is not a luxury but a necessity. We cannot live without it.
3. Water is the need of everyone— rich, poor, white and black, young and old.

4. Water descends from heaven. It is not a product of the earth but comes from above. So it is with salvation!

The Samaritan woman - 2

John 4:11-22

In the first section of this narrative we are impressed with several things.

1. Divine purpose. This sinner was one of his sheep whom he came to save, and he must cross her path.

2. Divine providence. She is brought to the well at the time he is there and the disciples are gone.

3. Divine patience. He bore with her prejudice, ignorance, and objections until he reached her heart and brought her to faith.

v. 11. The Saviour spoke metaphorically in Verse 10, comparing his grace, his mercy, and his redemption to living water, as he often did at other times regarding the new birth, the vine and the branch, the head and the body. But the woman (blind to the glory of him who spoke to her, occupied only with material things, and ignorant of spiritual matters) replied much like Nicodemus when Christ spoke to him of the new birth. All natural men are ignorant of spiritual things until they are enlightened by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-14).

v. 12. Still ignorant of the fact that she was speaking to Jacob's Lord and God, and ignorant of the fact that he was speaking of the water of life, she asked if he thought himself wiser and greater than Jacob, who could find no better water for himself, his family, and his cattle.

vv. 13-14. Over all of the 'wells of the world's providing' must be written, 'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again and again.' The 'true thirst' within men lies too deep for the waters of the earth to quench. The

thirst of the soul is a spiritual thirst, and that is why material things cannot reach it. Health, wealth, comfort, fame, luxury, and even ceremonial religion can be ours and still the heart be empty. But the person who receives the Holy Spirit, the grace of God in Christ, and the light and life of Christ shall never want any good thing that is necessary to peace, rest, comfort, hope, and eternal glory (Col. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Cor. 3:21-23). Though the believer continually desires spiritual growth and fresh supplies of grace, yet, in Christ, he has all that he needs and wants (Col. 1:12; John 7:38-39).

v. 15. The woman still did not understand that our Lord spoke of spiritual life and a true knowledge of the living God through him. Her thoughts were only of the present life and her ease and comfort in that (Rom. 8:5).

vv. 16-18. The Saviour had crossed her path; he had engaged her in conversation and secured her attention and interest; he had sown seed of spiritual truth in her mind. Now he deals with her real 'soul thirst'—her sins and her unhappy, confused life. Now comes the work of conviction of sin and the realization of her need of him and the living water. He knew all about her adultery, her sins, and her present state of shame and unhappiness (this is what brought her to the well at noon when she thought no one would be there, for she was ashamed). But he must bring her to admit it and face it herself! This accounts for questions like: 'Adam, where art thou?' or 'Cain where is your brother?' or 'Whom do you say that I, the Son of Man, am?' Faith in Christ is born of personal, known, and admitted need! (Matt. 8:1-3; Matt. 15:22-28.) 'To whom much is forgiven, he will love much.'

vv. 19-20. 'I perceive that thou art a prophet,' whose office is to reveal the will and word of God and to whom God reveals secret things—one chosen and sent of God (Heb. 1:1; Eph. 4:11). Her eyes are beginning to open; she

sees that she is in the presence of some mysterious person sent of God. But again the working of the flesh is evident, for she brings up the age-old contention between Jews and Samaritans about where to worship God. The Lord had spoken directly to her heart and conscience about sin; and it may be that she either wanted to change the subject or she thought, being a prophet, he might truly enlighten her on where to worship.

v. 21. ‘Woman, the time is at hand when you shall neither in this mountain’ (where your fathers have long worshipped God superstitiously, without any direction from him) ‘nor at Jerusalem’ (which is the place the Lord designated for the temple and worship) ‘worship the Father.’ God is putting an end to the Levitical ceremony, law, types, and holy places and days. They are all fulfilled in Christ (Heb. 10:8-10; Heb. 10:19-22; Gal. 5:1-4).

v. 22. You Samaritans have no divine instructions and rule for your worship in the mountain. You only do what your fathers in tradition and custom taught without any revelation of the divine will. You really do not know what or whom you worship, being void of divine instructions. At least the Jews know that God has revealed his will that his people should have the priesthood, the sacrifices, the mercy seat, and the day of atonement in the temple at Jerusalem. This was all done according to his word to Moses and is acceptable to God (Rom. 3:1-2; Rom. 9:3-5).

True worship

John 4:23-30

v. 23. Under the clear revelation of the gospel and the kingdom of the Messiah, true worshippers of God shall not worship God as the Samaritans (who had no divine rule nor word for their tradition), nor as the hypocritical Jews (who rested upon rituals, ceremonies, and form), nor yet as the sincere Jews (who followed the pattern in faith and sincerity—Heb. 9:6-10). But the time of reformation in and through Christ has come when true worshippers of God all worship God in Spirit, heart, and truth as opposed to temples, ceremony, and ordinances. The great question is not where to worship, but how (Phil. 3:3). This is the will of God ('My son, give me thine heart') that we come to him by faith through Christ Jesus.

v. 24. God is not a corporeal being, made up of blood, flesh, and bones, being pleased with material and fleshly things, impressed with form and lip service. God is a spiritual being, the father of spirits, and requires spiritual honor, reverence, love, and trust proportioned to his great name. It has always been true! Abel came to God with the typical offering, but he came in faith and sincerity. Abraham offered the sin-offering which pictured Christ, but he believed God! The Jews had forgotten the Spirit of the law and only kept the dead letter and the form. This was the error of their so-called worship. We do gather together or separately, we do offer public prayer or private, we do our offerings, our sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving, and our commitments to God through our great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Spirit of God, the spirit of sincerity, the spirit of faith, and the truth as it is in Christ Jesus! (Heb. 4:14-16; Heb. 10:16-22.)

v. 25. Slowly but surely the word had done its work (Rom. 10:17; James 1:18; Eph. 1:13). At last the woman had been driven from every false refuge, and she speaks of the hope of a revealed Redeemer! She had some understanding of the promises and prophecies of the coming Christ, or Messiah, who would reveal the will of God as to salvation and the worship of God (Gen. 3:15; Gen. 12:3; Gen. 49:10; Deut. 18:15; Mal. 3:1).

v. 26. 'I that speak to thee am He!' The moment the woman expresses her desire for Christ, he answered, 'I am He!' Nothing more is needed; the Saviour of sinners stood revealed. That was enough; all is settled now. It was not a mountain nor a temple, Samaritan nor Jew; she had found Christ, the Saviour-God. A needy sinner and a sovereign Saviour had met face to face; and all is set-tied, once and forever! (Matt. 11:28; John 7:37-38; Isa. 45:20-25.)

v. 27. The disciples had gone into the city to buy food and were kept there by the providence of God until the Saviour had finished the talk with the woman of Samaria. When they returned, they marveled that he talked with a woman in the road (forbidden by their traditions) and that he talked with a Samaritan woman (with whom the Jews had no dealings). But they had so much reverence and respect for the Master that they did not mention it.

v. 28. In the meantime the woman 'left her waterpot and went into the city.' She had come to the well with one thing on her mind—a pot of water; but now she had met Christ, tasted the living water, and was so taken with him that she not only forgot the water she had come for, but left even her waterpot. Once there is a clear perception of Christ to the heart, once he is revealed, known, and received as Lord and Saviour, the things of this world do not seem so important.

vv. 29-30. She said to the men of the city, ‘Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?’ ‘Come and see.’ These were the words of Philip to Nathanael in John 1:46. Christ the Lord had undoubtedly told her much more than the few words we have recorded here (John 21:25), but several things are evident here. She was totally persuaded that he was the Christ, that he was the promised Messiah! She fully believed him and found great joy in this faith and knowledge. She wanted others to know Him, so she invited them to come to him and see for themselves. Our business in witnessing is to point men to Christ; they must come and see for themselves. Evidently she was most persuasive, for they went out of the city and came to him there at the well.

His word – the foundation of faith

John 4:31-42

The disciples had gone into the city to buy food and had returned to Jacob's well to find the Master engaged in conversation with a woman of Samaria. They had marveled at this for she was not only a Samaritan, but a known adulteress. None of them asked him any questions. But now the conversation was over; she had left in great joy to tell others about the Redeemer, to try to bring them to see and hear Christ themselves. While she was gone and before the Samaritans came out to the well, Christ was left alone with his disciples.

v. 31. The disciples knew that he had been weary and hungry when they left him at the well a few hours ago; so now that they had food, they encouraged him to eat something.

v. 32. The Master replied, 'I have food to eat which you do not know about.' He had been feeding upon this food all the time that they had been away, and he explains it in Verse 34.

v. 33. They began to look at one another and ask, 'Did someone bring him food to the well while we were away?'

v. 34. Our Lord, without any rebuke for their dullness in understanding (Psalm 103:13-14), explained to them that his food and drink was to do the will of his Father and to finish the work the Father had given him to do. The will of the Father and the redemption of his sheep so occupied Him, so filled his soul, so satisfied Him, that it outweighed his natural hunger and made him forget natural food.

v. 35. There was in those countries usually about four months between seedtime and harvest. This may be true of wheat and barley but not in spiritual matters. Everyday is seed-time, watering time, and harvest time. The Master had but just spoken to this woman; now she rejoiced in Him, and others were on their way there to receive him. Lift up your eyes and behold the people of all nations and tribes who are ready to hear and believe. The seed has been sown by the prophets of old, by the word of the Lord, and by John the Baptist. We alone are not the sowers and the reapers, although we may do both.

v. 36. In the kingdom of Christ the sowers and the reapers are all one (1 Cor. 3:5-9). The prophets, the writers of scripture, the apostles, the reformers, all who sowed the seed of the gospel, and we who reap the fruit, shall have the same reward and rejoice together in his glory and eternal life.

v. 37. This was a proverb commonly used with reference to those who unjustly enjoyed the fruits of other men's labors by reaping what they did not sow (Joshua 24:13). But in our Lord's kingdom there is no such attitude, for there is no competition among believers. It is our Lord's vineyard, and we do what we do for his glory!

v. 38. Yet there is a sense in which this was true of the disciples and is true of us today. We enter in on the labors of all who have gone before us; without their faithfulness there would be no harvest (Acts 8:5).

v. 39. The woman had gone into the city and told people about Jesus Christ, whom she had met at the well. 'He told me all that ever I did. He told me things that only God knows.' And as a result of her testimony, many believed.

vv. 40-41. So when they came out to see Him, they asked him to abide with them; and he stayed there two days. The Master himself abode among them for two days, preaching the gospel of his grace and revealing to them his glory; and many believed because of his word. We do not read of any miracles that he performed among them (though he may have), but they believed his word!

v. 42. There may be a progression of faith taught here. Certainly they did believe the woman's testimony. God used her to tell them about Christ and to encourage them to 'come and see.' But after coming to him and hearing his own words, they believed more fully and strongly, so as to say to the woman, 'We have heard him ourselves and know that he is indeed the Messiah and Redeemer of people of all nations.' Faith grows. The object of saving faith is Christ, and the very foundation of faith is his word. The more of the word, the stronger the faith.

The nobleman's son healed

John 4:43-54

vv. 43-44. Our Lord spent two days in Samaria, where many people believed on Him, not because of miracles, which he did; they believed his word. We do not read of any miracles being performed in Samaria at this time. After these two days in Samaria, he journeyed into Galilee. He did not go to Nazareth, which is a city in Galilee, but into the country part of Galilee and to Cana, another city in Galilee. He said on two occasions, 'A prophet hath no honor in his own country' (Matt. 13:57; Luke 4:24).

v. 45. Perhaps this verse will give us a key to understanding Verse 44. When he came to the country of Galilee (which was his home country, where he grew up), he was received not as a prophet but as a miracle worker; for many of these Galileans were at Jerusalem during the feast of the Passover and had seen the miracles performed by him (John 2:23-25). Such is human nature, materialistic, fleshly, and caring much for the body and little for the soul (John 6:25-27; Luke 4:23). People are interested in miracles but not mercy. As a miracle-worker, Christ is honored: but as the Son of God incarnate, he is rejected (John 1:10-11) in Galilee.

v. 46. So Jesus came to Galilee and chose to go again to Cana of Galilee, where he had performed his first miracle, turning water into wine. There was a certain nobleman (royal officer and ruler) there whose son lay very ill in Capernaum. Capernaum was about twenty miles from Cana.

v. 47. It is evident that this nobleman had heard of Christ or had been present in Jerusalem or Cana when Christ performed other miracles, for he went to the Master and asked him to go to Capernaum and heal his son. He

had a form of faith in the power of Christ to heal, but it certainly was not as strong nor as great as the centurion of Matt. 8:5-10 who believed that only the word of Christ was sufficient to heal, whether he was present in body or not.

v. 48. Our Lord rebuked him. He knew the man's heart. A measure of faith he had, but not a full committal to Christ nor a full understanding of who he was (John 4:10; Mark 8:11-12). This man not only undertook to tell the Lord what to do but how to do it. He certainly did not manifest the attitude of the father in Mark 9:23-24.

v. 49. The nobleman did not become angry at the Saviour's rebuke: instead he accepted the Lord's exhortation and continued to plead for the life of his son. One thing he did know and believe, and that was that Christ could heal his son; and if he did not, the boy would die. He repeated his request, this time pleading, 'Sir, come down or my child will die.' His faith may have been weak, but he continued to plead for mercy for his son.

v. 50. Our Lord said, 'Go thy way; thy son liveth.' Upon this the man turned and left, believing the word of Christ! We see here the growth of faith. He certainly manifests more and truer faith in Christ than when he first came to him. Here is the foundation of true and saving faith – the word of God (Rom. 10:17; John 5:24; Heb. 13:5-6). The nobleman raised no objections, asked no questions, looked not for signs nor feelings, but simply went his way believing the word of Christ.

v. 51. As the nobleman journeyed home, his servants came out to meet him to bear the good news that his son was healed. They knew nothing of the meeting of their master with the Lord Jesus, but merely came to tell him the good news.

v. 52. He inquired of the servants the hour when the boy was healed; and they said, 'Yesterday at one hour past noon.' The word 'yesterday' brings out an interesting point. Cana and Capernaum were only four or five hours apart, and it was only one hour after noon that the Master pronounced the boy healed. Why did not the father rush right home? It may be that he had such confidence in the word of Christ that he completed his business in Cana and spent the night, confident that his son was all right. Verse 50 says that he believed, and indeed he did.

v. 53. We see all the way through this narrative the growth of this man's faith. He came to Christ at the first because he believed upon the testimony of others or because of the miracles he had seen. Having met the Lord Jesus himself and hearing him speak, he believed the more and rested upon his word. Now, having experienced the results of faith, the joy of our Lord's mercies, it is said, 'Himself believed, and his whole house.' He told them about Christ and they, too, believed.

v. 54. The first miracle was turning water into wine; this was the second miracle. Later he performed many more (Matt. 4:23).

Will you be made whole?

John 5:1-13

v. 1. Some believe this feast was the feast of the Passover, while some believe that it was the feast of Pentecost. We are not told which one it was; but our Lord went to Jerusalem for the feast to show his obedience to the law, which he came to fulfill (Deut. 16:16).

v. 2. We read in Nehemiah 3 of the ten gates in the walls of Jerusalem—the sheep, fish, old, valley, dung, fountain, water, horse, east, and Miphkad gates! This sheep gate was the gate through which the sacrificial animals were brought to the temple. All are meaningful as types; but the sheep gate points to Christ, the sacrificial Lamb of God. There was a pool of water called the Pool of Bethesda near this gate. Some call it the ‘pool of mercy.’ There were five porches around the pool.

vv. 3-4. On these porches lay a great number of diseased, crippled, blind, and impotent people waiting for the moving of the water; for we read in Verse Four that at a certain season an angel went down and troubled the water, and whosoever then first stepped into the water after it was troubled was completely healed of whatever disease he had. The question will certainly be asked, ‘Did this really happen or was it a superstition?’ I believe it best to leave it as the scripture states it. While there is no mention in the Old Testament of this troubling of the water, John simply states it as a fact, not a saying or a superstition.

v. 5. A certain man was there who had a disease for 38 years. We are not told what it was; but we know that he was on a bed and evidently was quite helpless, for he needed the help of someone else to get to the water.

Perhaps he had tried all other human means (like the woman with the issue of blood) to no avail and had come to the waters of Bethesda as a last resort.

v. 6. The Master saw *him*. Here is the sovereignty of our Lord in showing mercy to whom he will (Exod. 33:18-19). There was a multitude of sick people there, yet Christ looked only upon this man. He knew him and all about him (John 10:14-16). We are not told that he saw the Lord, or knew Him, or called to Him, but that our Lord saw him, knew him, and called to him. The Saviour said, 'Will you be made whole?' Of course he would; that is why he was there. But the question is asked to focus the man's attention on his need, on his total inability, and on the Saviour who addressed him! Are not these the three important things in the Spirit bringing a sinner to salvation? –our great need, our hopeless state, and the power and presence of the only one who can help us!

v. 7. The man did not know who Christ was, nor did he have any idea of his power to heal; so he answered as all impotent, helpless people must answer, 'There is no one to help.' Also, he shows the greed and selfishness of all natural men, 'While I am struggling to crawl to the water, another steps in before me.'

v. 8. The Lord Jesus, according to his own will, in fulfillment of his own divine purpose, said to this certain man, 'Rise, take up your bed, and walk!'

1. 'Rise' was a command. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ' is more than an invitation; it is a command (1 John 3:23).

2. 'Take up your bed.' This indicates that he would no longer remain in this place among the diseased and dying but would be changing his abode (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

3. 'And walk.' 'Walk in the light as he is in the light.' Before, you could not walk in the Spirit; now that you are made whole, you can (Rom. 8:1-6).

v. 9. 'And immediately he was made whole.' The Lord's salvation is both instantaneous and complete (Col. 2:9-10). Christ does not put the believing sinner into a savable state. He saves with a perfect and eternal salvation the moment we truly believe (Eccles. 3:14). The Saviour spoke, and by his word, the lame walked. It was the Sabbath day and unlawful to do work or carry burdens (Jer. 17:21). But our Lord is the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-8).

v. 10. The Jews were more concerned for their traditions and religious customs than for the fact that a great miracle had been performed. Blinded by their self-righteousness and works, they had no compassion for the man who was healed, no interest in the grace of God which healed him, and made no inquiry into how he was healed nor who healed him. At all costs, their traditions must be upheld (Matt. 15:1-3, 8-14).

v. 11. The man believed that the one who healed him was a prophet of God who did what he did by divine authority; therefore, he obeyed him contrary to their traditions (Gal. 5:1-4).

vv. 12-13. When they asked him who the man was who told him to take up his bed on the Sabbath day and walk, he was unable to tell them; for he did not know. The Lord had disappeared in the crowd.

Sevenfold proof of Christ's deity

John 5:14-27

After our Lord had healed the man at the pool of Bethesda, there being a great crowd there, he conveyed himself away. The man did not know who he was nor could he find him to show others who had healed him.

v. 14. Afterwards the Lord found him in the temple and told him to 'sin no more,' or to walk in righteousness, faith, and the light of Christ which had been revealed to him, 'lest a worse thing' than being crippled come upon him; that is, eternal condemnation (Heb. 10:38-39).

v. 15. The man then found the Jews who had inquired of him, 'Who told you to take up your bed and walk?' and told them that it was Jesus the Christ who made him whole. There was the danger of persecution and excommunication involved here; but he not only was not ashamed of Christ, but wanted to confess him and be identified with him (John 9:33-38; John 16:1-4).

v. 16. How this verse reveals the awful depravity of human nature, even the blindness and tradition of carnal religion! Here was a man, well-known, who had been afflicted for 38 years, who had lain helplessly by this pool until by the power of the Son of God he was made whole—strong enough to carry his bed! There was no doubt of the cure, of a wonderful miracle that they could not deny. Instead of being filled with joy, praise, and faith in the Messiah, they were filled with hatred and sought to kill him. They used as an excuse the fact that he had violated their Sabbath laws. Their tradition was more important to them than the glory of God or the welfare of sinners.

vv. 17-27. Beginning at Verse 17 and continuing through Verse 27, the Lord Jesus sets forth before these Jews his absolute equality and oneness with the heavenly Father! He gives a seven-fold proof of his deity. Evidently when the man identified Jesus Christ as the one who had healed him and told him to take up his bed and walk, the Jews said something to him; for Verse 17 says that he answered them!

In redemptive work he is one with the Father (v. 17). From the foundation of the world the Father has been working his will to redeem a people out of every nation (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 2:8-10). The Jews knew what he was saying, for they sought to kill him for making himself equal with God (John 10:30-33).

In will and purpose he is one with the Father (v. 19). ‘The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do’ does not restrict nor limit his power; but he is saying that the Son does not and cannot act independently of the Father, for they are one in will and purpose.

In knowledge he is one with the Father (v. 20). There is no creature who is capable of knowing and understanding all the ways and workings of God (Rom. 11:33-34). But the Son knows, for he was with him in the beginning (Prov. 8:24-30). He will yet reveal greater things in and through the Son, ‘that ye may marvel’ (John 6:61-62; 2 Tim. 1:10).

In sovereign rights he is one with the Father (v. 21). This verse presents the fourth proof of Christ's deity. He lays claim to divine sovereignty. When he healed a lame man, he did not heal them all but singled out one and made him whole. The Son, like the Father, will quicken and give life to whom he will—that ends the matter. It is not to be reasoned about, but believed (Exod. 33:18-19; Rom. 9:13-16).

In divine honor and worship he is one with the Father (vv. 22-23). The Father is the one whom we might most naturally expect to be the Judge. He has been sinned against, wronged, and his claims denied. But the Father has committed all judgment of Satan, men, and this world to the

Son (Acts 17:31). The reason for this is ‘that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father’ (Col. 1:14-18).

In imparting life he is one with the Father (vv. 24-26). Once more he links himself in perfect union with the Father. Those who hear my word, hear his word! Those who believe on me, believe on him who sent me! And they have passed from death to life; for the hearing ear and the seeing eye are not qualifications for obtaining life, but are evidences and consequences of having God-given life which is given by Father and Son (v. 26). All the elect who were dead in sin shall hear his voice and live (Eph. 2:1).

In judicial power and authority he is one with the Father (v. 27). The Father has appointed the Lord Jesus to have all judicial power and authority ‘because he is the Son of man.’ It was because the Son of God became clothed with flesh and walked this earth as man that he was despised, rejected, and crucified, his divine glory denied and disowned! Therefore, the despised one shall have the place of supreme honor and authority. All will be compelled to bow the knee to him and confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Acts 2:36; Phil. 2:5-11; Matt. 28:18; John 17:1-2).

The witness to his deity

John 5:28-38

v. 28. The Lord Jesus had spoken of his Deity, sovereignty, Lordship, the authority given him by the Father, and especially of his power to quicken and give eternal life to dead sinners. He then says to these Jews, 'Do not marvel at my power to raise men from natural death to spiritual life; the hour is coming when all those who are in the graves shall hear my voice and arise at my command.'

v. 29. All who are raised shall not partake of eternal life, happiness, and glory. They are divided into two classes. First, they that have 'done good' shall arise to live eternally with him. The words 'done good' do not refer to their own personal goodness or works, as if they merited his favor (Rom. 3: 10-12); but it refers to their walk, which manifests the new nature within them by his grace. The Christ-life within is seen by Christ-like deeds without (James 2:17-20). 'They that have done evil' describes the great company of unbelievers who have lived in sin and unbelief, died without repentance toward God and faith in Christ, and refused to hearken to his words of grace and truth. They will be compelled to hear him as he summons them to appear before his judgment throne, and these shall go away into everlasting condemnation.

v. 30. The Son cannot act independently of the Father, for they are one! When the scriptures say 'God cannot' do a thing, they do not imply that he is limited in power; but rather they declare his divine nature, character, and perfection (Titus 1:2; James 1:13). If he is God the Son, then his will and work are in perfect unison with God the Father! 'My judgment is just.' This is profoundly solemn. In the resurrection of which he spoke, he will

not deal in grace, but in inflexible righteousness. He will administer judgment, not mercy. This excludes every ray of hope for all who are raised into damnation. His will is the same as his Father's will (John 6:37-40).

v. 31. In John 8:14 the Master said, 'Though I bear record of myself, my record is true.' But here he speaks according to the law of God and the scriptures, which require two or three witnesses for any truth to be established. The words of men do need confirmation, but not so the Son of God. However, Christ came to 'fulfill all righteousness' and to do all that he did 'according to the scriptures' (Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:15). The Lord begins to set forth the many infallible witnesses to his Deity and his mission.

v. 32. The witness referred to here is the heavenly Father (Matt. 3:17; Matt. 17:5; 1 John 5:7-10).

vv. 33-35. Here the Lord reminds the Jews how, when they sent unto John, that he bore a faithful witness to Christ's person and work (John 1:20-27). 'But I receive not testimony from man.' He was not appealing to the witness of John for a confirmation of his own words and works, but he appealed to John for their sakes that they might be saved. John was sent of God to arouse men's attention and to produce in them a sense of their deep need for the one who was to come. John was indeed a famous light, burning in the knowledge and love of the truth. For a while they pretended great affection for him; but when they saw that John's one purpose was to bear witness of Christ the Lamb, they turned away from him; for they looked for a more splendid and glorious Messiah than the one Christ appeared to be.

v. 36. His mighty works bore unmistakable witness to who he is and what he came to do. He frequently appealed to his works as affording divine testimony (John 10:25, 38; John 14:11; John 15:24). Bishop Ryle calls attention to five things about our Lord's miracles.

1. Their number. They were very many.
2. Their greatness. They were mighty, supernatural works.
3. Their public nature. They were not done secretly, but publicly for all to behold.
4. Their nature. They were always works of love, mercy, and compassion. They were not just exhibitions of power, but beneficial to men.
5. Their direct appeal to man's senses. They were real, visible, and would bear any examination.

vv. 37-38. Again he says, 'The Father hath borne witness of me. But you have not heard his voice nor seen his glory.' Because of Verses 38 and 39, we believe Christ speaks here of the witness which the Father has borne of his Son through the prophets, law, and scripture. This seems to give more meaning to what follows. Christ is revealed in promise, prophecy, picture, and type in all that has been written; but they could not see, nor did they believe.

Ye will not come to me

John 5:39-47

In these verses our Lord begins to make solemn application of what he has said to these Jews about his deity, his oneness with the Father, his sovereignty, his power to give life, and his saving grace. You will hear the awful charges he brings against unbelief; but it is summed up in these words, 'You have not his word abiding in you' (v. 38), and 'You believe not his writings' (v. 47). If God's word has no place in men's hearts, they will not come to Christ, they will not love God, they will not seek the Lord, nor will they be saved. It is by the word that life is given, conviction of sin is realized, faith comes, and spiritual life grows.

v. 39. 'Search the scriptures.' This is the last witness, which our Lord cites, and for us it is the most important. John has long since passed away; the 'works' of Christ are no longer before men's eyes; the 'voice' of the Father is no more heard; but the testimony of the scriptures abides. The scriptures testify of Christ and affirm his deity (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20). Many believe that the Lord, in condemning the unbelief of these Jews, is actually saying, 'You do search the scriptures, for you hope to find life in them, the laws and ordinances which they teach; but you are missing the message of the scriptures, for they all testify of me' (Acts 10:43; Luke 24:27; Luke 24:44-46). This may be so; but there is also seen here a command, not only to read over lightly but to diligently search the scriptures.

v. 40. It was not lack of evidence, which kept these Jews from believing on and coming to Christ, but perversity of will. It is the fault of a fallen, corrupt, and depraved will! Men are unwilling by nature to own their sin,

unwilling to admit their inability, unwilling to seek God's mercy, and unwilling to cast themselves on Christ (1 Cor. 2:9, 14; Rom. 8:7).

v. 41. Here again the Lord maintains his honor and dignity as in Verse 34. He seeks not honor from men; there is nothing that we can add to him. He does not need our approval, sanction, nor honor. His objective is to please and glorify his Father; and so far as they were concerned, his desire was not to be applauded by them but that they should be saved by him. Such should be the spirit of his ministers (Acts 20:33; Gal. 1:10).

v. 42. Christ knew their hearts. He is omniscient. They posed as worshippers of God, appeared to be concerned for his honor, and called him 'Lord' with their lips; but they had no genuine love for God in their hearts. A true love for and knowledge of God would have led them to love and receive Christ.

v. 43. 'I am come in my Father's name, clothed with his authority, sent to reveal him and his redemptive will, in fulfillment of all that has been written of me; yet you receive me not! Let another (antichrist or false prophet) come in his own name, doing his own pleasure, seeking glory from men, and preaching contrary to scriptures—Him you will receive and believe!' Such is the nature and condition of our fallen wills.

v. 44. Honor signifies approbation or praise. These Jews were making it their chief aim to win the praise, approbation, and good opinion of each other and were indifferent to the approval of or communion with God. It is good for parents to receive honor from children, masters from servants, rulers from people; but these are all secondary to that honor and acceptance from God. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God' (2 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 1:6). The grace of God and the gospel are the levelers. All men humble themselves before him who loved us and gave himself for us; and

we seek his friendship, acceptance, and honor, even if it means losing the approval and friendship of all the world (James 4:4).

v. 45. Our Lord concludes by declaring that they would yet give an account of their rejection of him (John 1:11) before the tribunal of God and there would be no need of his accusing them; for they would need no other accuser than Moses, for whom they had such great regard (John 9:28-29). 'This same Moses will accuse you.'

v. 46. 'For had you really believed Moses' writings, you would believe me, for Moses wrote of me.' From the first prophecy in Gen. 3:15 through every promise, type, and pattern in his writings, Moses pointed to Christ (Heb. 8:1; Heb. 10:1-4).

v. 47. If you do not believe the scriptures, which are so plain, and you believe not Moses for whom you have so great regard, it is certain that you do not and will not believe Christ (John 3:12).

Calculating without Christ

John 6:1-13

Of all miracles performed by our Lord Jesus, the feeding of the five thousand is the only one recorded by each of the four Evangelists (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17). There must be something about it of special importance.

v. 1. ‘After these things.’ After the healing of the impotent man, the persecution of the Jews because he had done these things on their Sabbath day, and after his lengthy discourse on his deity, power, and mission, he left Jerusalem and went over the Sea of Galilee. Our Lord left the presence of the unbelieving Jews (Matt. 15:13-14). What a warning to every traditional religionist!

v. 2. This was generally the case. Almost everywhere he went he was followed by crowds, which saw the miracles and were attracted to him as a clever physician and a worker of miracles; but they totally failed to perceive that he was the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, and the true Messiah (John 2:23-25; John 6:25-26). We see the same thing today – people following clever evangelists, faith healers, and miracle workers, but few interested in Christ the Redeemer of sinners.

v. 3-4. Our Lord withdrew from the multitude, weary with their unbelief, weary with their self-righteousness and empty traditions, and sought a quiet place to be alone with his disciples. John noted that the Passover (a feast of the Jews) was near. The Lord's Passover had degenerated into ‘a feast of the Jews.’ The Passover was near; ‘the Lamb of God,’ who was in their midst, was unknown and unwanted!

v. 5-6. Evidently our Lord came down from the mountain, and the great multitude, which had followed Him, was still there. Matthew says, ‘He had compassion on them and healed their sick’ (Matt. 14:14-15). The Lord then put Phillip to a strong test. He knew what he was going to do; but to test the faith of Phillip, he asked him, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’

v. 7. We see in Phillip a portrait of ourselves, and in his answer our own thoughts and words in daily trials and difficult situations. Phillip had seen our Lord make wine of water and heal hopeless, impotent people; yet when our Lord asked him how the multitude was to be fed, Phillip began to calculate his own resources and ability to accomplish it. Two hundred pennyworth of bread would only give each one a ‘little’ to eat. Imagine talking of ‘little’ in the presence of infinite power and riches! What is our feebleness compared to his power? What is our emptiness compared to his fullness? Instead of looking to Him, Phillip, like us, looks to himself and his own strength (Phil. 4:19).

‘The birds without barn or storehouse are fed;
From them let us learn to trust for our bread.

His saints what is fitting shall never be denied,
So long as it is written – the Lord will provide.’

vv. 8-9. Evidently unbelief is infectious! Andrew, like Phillip, seemed to forget what he had seen and learned. All of them seemed blind to the glory and power of Christ. Andrew said, ‘There is a lad here with five loaves and two fish, but what are these among so many?’ They both were calculating without *Christ!* (Psalm 78:19-22; Gen. 18:14.)

v. 10. How patient the Lord was with his unbelieving disciples! There was no rebuke for either Andrew or Phillip (Psalm 103:13-14). 'Make the men sit down.' Mark says they sat down by companies in ranks by hundreds and fifties (Mark 6:39-40). Sit down because our God is a God of order (1 Cor. 14:33), and the activities of the flesh must come to an end if we are to be fed the Bread of Life (Psalm 23:2).

vv. 11-12. *He* did not scorn the loaves because they were few nor the fish because they were small. God is pleased to use small and weak things (1 Cor. 1:26-31). He is pleased to use means. Our Lord gave thanks! He teaches us to acknowledge God as the giver of every good gift and to own him as the one who provides! He gave to his disciples, and they gave to the people. God is pleased to use human instruments in accomplishing the work of his grace (Eph. 4:10-13; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Cor. 5:18-21). They were all filled. When he feeds us, we are satisfied (Col. 2:9-10).

v. 13. Then the disciples gathered up what was left and filled twelve baskets. There was abundance for all, and the boy had twelve baskets to take home. The liberal soul is made fat (Prov. 11:25).

It is I; be not afraid

John 6:14-27

v. 14. Our Lord had manifested his power in feeding the great multitude with only five loaves and two fish. The crowd was impressed, amazed, and declared that surely he is the Messiah or that Prophet (John 1:21; Deut. 18:15). These men, like all of Israel, were waiting and looking for a leader or a king to lead them in a successful revolt against the hated Romans (Acts 5:36-37). They did not understand that the true kingdom of the Messiah was not to be of this world (John 18:36) but within us. They knew not the meaning of the sacrifices and atonement nor the redemptive work of the Messiah. Do not be misled by those who talk of Christ the Prophet and King but who despise his cross!

v. 15. Our Lord immediately withdrew from these ambitious men who would try to make him king over a nation of unbelievers. He came to save sinners, to redeem a people for his glory, to call out of every nation a holy people to reign forever with him in a new heaven and a new earth (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2: 9-10). These Jews had professed with their lips Christ as that Prophet and would by force make him KING, but there is another office, which comes in between these. Christ must officiate as PRIEST, offering himself as a sacrifice for sin. Besides, he needed not to be made king by them; he *is* the King! (Rev. 19:16.)

vv. 16-17. Matthew, writing on this same episode, explains the reason why the disciples boarded their ship and left for the other side. Our Lord instructed them to do so (Matt. 14:22-23).

v. 18. It was now dark, the Lord had not come to them, and the sea was being tossed about by the wind. We live in a dark world, a world of trouble, and a world, which 'lieth in the wicked one.' Sometimes the Lord withholds the light of his presence even from his own; and they are allowed to be tossed about, sifted as wheat, and tried severely. But he will soon come, in his own time, when his purpose for us has been accomplished.

vv. 19-20. The disciples were pulling at the oars and had rowed about eight or nine miles when they saw the Lord Jesus walking on the water coming toward them, and they were afraid. Matthew says, 'They were troubled.' Think of it – troubled and afraid of their Master. But of course they had never (nor had anyone) seen nor heard of such a thing as a man walking on the sea! Mark describes their feelings more fully and notes their unbelief (Mark 6:49-52). Even believers have trouble with unbelief. 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.'

v. 21. Matthew records Peter's attempt to walk on the water (Matt. 14:28-33). The wind ceased when he came into the ship, and they were soon on land. Note their confession of faith and strong assurance in Matt. 14:32-33.

vv. 22-25. The people whose hearts were set on making this 'miracle worker' their king began to search for him. They knew that he had not entered the boat his disciples had taken to the other side. When they did not find Him, they also got on board ships and went to Capernaum. When they found Him, they said, 'Master, when and how did you get over here?'

v. 26. There was nothing wrong with their question. But to have answered them with, 'I walked across,' would have only added fuel to their ambition to make him an earthly king, further distracting them from his true

mission. Instead of explaining how he came to Capernaum, he showed them that he was acquainted with their motives and desires. Outwardly they appeared ready to honor Him, but he read their hearts. Whether it was the miracles or the loaves and fishes, these people were interested in the flesh, materialism, earthly kingdoms, and earthly comforts. They had no concern for their souls nor their relationship with the living God (John 2:23-25).

v. 27. The word 'labor' is used figuratively and signifies intense and earnest desire and effort toward obtaining that which is of great and eternal value – the Bread of Life, or the salvation of our souls. A man is foolish to be overly concerned about earthly treasure and comfort which will all perish (Mark 8:35-36; Matt. 6:31-34). Salvation is not by labor nor works but is the gift of God. Our Lord tells these people, 'The meat which endureth to eternal life the Son of Man shall give you, for him hath the Father sealed' or to him the Father hath given all authority to give eternal life (John 17:1-3). But those who enter do so willingly and sincerely. Those who receive the Son do so lovingly in faith. Those who feed upon the Bread of Life and win Christ do so in earnest dedication and full commitment. Those who find Christ seek him! Those who are saved call upon him! Those who enter in strive to do so!

I am the bread of life

John 6:28-37

v. 28. This question appears to be the language of men temporarily impressed and aroused but still in the dark concerning communion with God and life eternal. It is the old self-righteousness of natural men who are ever occupied with their own doing. They supposed that they had to do some good works for God in order to earn his favor and blessings. Salvation, the natural man believes, comes to those who earn it. Men want to make God the debtor and reckon the reward to be of works and not of grace. This is illustrated by the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18), the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2:37), and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30).

v. 29. Our Lord called them to a work they never thought of nor heard of – faith, the owning and acknowledging of him to be the true Messiah, the embracing and receiving him as the only Redeemer, and trusting him with all the concerns of their souls. This is the one thing that God requires of sinners – that they believe on the one whom he has sent into the world to save. It is not the works of the law, nor the ceremonies of the temple, but faith in Christ that saves (Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:28; Rom. 4:20-25).

vv. 30-31. They thought it reasonable that he who brought forth this new doctrine of faith (which they had never heard from their teachers, the Pharisees) should confirm his mission by signs. This was strange considering the fact that he had just fed over five thousand of them with five loaves and two fish. But if you will note Verse 31 carefully, they still had in mind an earthy, Jewish kingdom like the one led by Moses, whom they said fed our fathers forty years in the wilderness (Exod. 16:12-15;

Psalm 78:24-25). They were exalting Moses. They may have been saying, 'You fed five thousand but once, but in Moses' day our fathers ate bread for forty years.' We are interested in continual prosperity.

v. 32. 'You are mistaken in your opinion of that bread from heaven. It was not given to you by any power or virtue in Moses. It was my Father, not Moses, who gave you that bread.' Moses told them that in Exod. 16:15. Also, that bread was not the true spiritual bread but was called spiritual bread by Paul in 1 Cor. 10:3 in that it was typical of Christ. 'My Father not only gave that typical bread but he gives you me, who am the true bread.'

v. 33. The bread of God is the Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Father sent to redeem us from the curse of the law and death by sin. That typical bread had no power against even physical death. They all died in the wilderness who ate that bread; but Christ is the true bread, for he bestows eternal life! Also, only Israel ate of the manna: but Christ is the Saviour of the world – a people from all nations.

v. 34. 'Lord, give us this bread.' Their reply sounds much like the woman at the well, who said, 'Give me that water, so that I won't have to come to this well and draw water.' They still did not understand that he spoke of spiritual bread, spiritual life, and faith. They knew not God, understood not their sins, and had no need of a Redeemer (1 Cor. 2:8-14). They were interested in health and wealth and a kingdom on earth!

v. 35. 'I AM the Bread of Life!' (John 4:25-26; John 8:24). 'I am the bread that giveth spiritual and eternal life, and the bread that upholdeth and maintaineth life. I am the Messiah whom God hath sent to quicken those dead in trespasses and sin.' To 'believe on Christ' is to receive God's testimony concerning his Son and to rest on him alone for salvation (1 John 5:10-13). To 'come to Christ,' which is the effect of believing, is for

the heart to receive and embrace him in loving confidence. The believer shall never hunger nor thirst; that is, he shall never need nor want anything necessary for spiritual life and eternal happiness (Col. 2:9-10).

v. 36. Even the very sight of Jesus Christ in the flesh and the beholding of his wondrous miracles did not bring men to believe on him. They heard his words and beheld works, which never any man did, yet they did not believe (Matt. 13:13-14; John 1:10-11). Was then his mission a failure? Did he come to earth in vain? (Rom. 3:3). There can be no failure with God, as our Lord shows in his next words.

v. 37. Here the Lord Jesus speaks of a definite company of people who have been given to him by the Father in an everlasting covenant of grace. In the face of their unbelief, he encourages himself and rejoices in God's eternal election of grace (Matt. 11:24-27). He refers to this blessed company six times in John 17 (see Verses 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24). Each one that the Father gave to Christ in eternity past comes to him in time, as a lost sinner to be saved! He will never forget them, forsake them, nor cast them out (John 10: 24-30).

The elect will hear and believe

John 6:38-47

These Jews had seen Christ, heard Him, and witnessed the great miracles, which he performed; yet they believed not! But their unbelief and the unbelief of men today shall not defeat the purpose of God in Christ. For according to Verse 37, it is certain that the Father has chosen a people in Christ, given them to Christ, and made Christ their surety, substitute, and redeemer (John 17:1-2; Eph. 1:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:13). It is certain that the Father has ordained the means by which they shall be quickened, called, and believe on Christ (1 Peter 1:2, 23; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 1:21). It is certain that those chosen, called, and justified shall come to Christ and shall never perish (Rom. 8:29-30; John 10:24-29).

v. 38. Christ was on earth in the flesh to do the Father's will! The will of the Father and the will of the Son are one; for 'I and my Father are one' (John 10:30). But the Son is speaking as the servant (Isa. 42:1-4). The design of God in redemption is to have a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, to have a holy people (all like Christ) to populate that new creation, and to judge and destroy all things contrary to himself; this Christ came to do! This Christ shall do! (Isa. 53:10-11.)

v. 39. Eternal election and eternal predestination guarantee eternal preservation. 'The last day' is the end of this world as we know it and the beginning of eternity. Our Lord declares it to be the sovereign will of God that all elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and called by the Spirit shall be raised from the grave to eternal glory and that not one shall be lost. Our salvation, security, and resurrection rest not upon anything in

us now done by us, but upon the Father's choice and the Son's obedience and sacrifice! (Phil. 3:10-11, 20-21).

v. 40. This verse speaks of the same people referred to in Verses 37-39 – the elect! But election is not salvation; it is unto salvation. Christ was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world; but Christ must come to earth and die. Even so, the elect are chosen to life; but they must all hear the gospel, see by faith Christ as their righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and believe on him with a sincere heart (John 3:18, 36; Rom. 10:13-17; 1 Thess. 1:4-6).

vv. 41-42. These religious Jews were given to murmuring as those in the wilderness. Murmuring is complaining through anger, unbelief, and impatience against what they saw and heard. In this case they were offended because he said, 'I am the true bread which came down from heaven.' They knew, to some extent, what he was saying as indicated in John 10:30-33. But they knew nothing of his virgin birth; for they said, 'Is not this the son of Joseph?' How can he be the Son of God? (Matt. 1:20-23; Luke 1:30-35). Men ascribed unto him all that they could apart from divine revelation – 'John the Baptist, Elias, or one of the prophets' (Matt. 16:13-17). Only anointed eyes see Christ the Son of God!

vv. 43-44. The Lord Jesus knew their thoughts and their hearts, he knew their unbelief and rejection (Isa. 53:1-3). The following words reveal the depth, the extent, and the inability of human depravity. 'No man' (regardless of his intellect, ancestry, or environment) 'can' (is able in himself, has the ability or will or inclination of himself to) 'come to me' (believe on me, receive me, or trust in me) 'except the Father which sent me' (for the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hands. The Father planned and purposed redemption, gave it to the Son to accomplish, and sent him into the world to finish it) 'draw him' (this

drawing is the quickening, awakening, and calling of sinners to life and faith in Christ by the Holy Spirit and the word of God; 1 Cor. 2:7-14). The Holy Spirit effectually convicts men of sin, reveals the Lord Jesus Christ to them, and they come to Christ willingly, lovingly, and obediently, being made willing (Psalm 110:1-3).

v. 45. It is written in Isaiah 54:13, ‘And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.’ Those drawn to Christ do not come blindly and ignorantly; they are ‘taught of God.’ The Spirit of God through the word of God (Rom. 10:17), preachers of the gospel (Eph. 4:10-13), and divine revelations teaches sinners their need of Christ and the sufficiency of Christ (John 16:8-15). Every person who hears the way of life will come to Christ. These verses clearly reveal the design of grace, the means of grace, and the results of grace.

vv. 46-47. No one should suppose that the Father must visibly appear and teach or call a sinner. To hear and learn of the Father is not to hear his audible voice nor to see Him, for the essence of God is invisible. Christ has seen the Father, and ‘he that hath seen me hath seen the Father;’ but the revelation of grace and life is by the Spirit and the word. He that hears the gospel with the heart and believes on the Lord Jesus has eternal life (1 John 5: 10-13).

Dwelling in Christ

John 6:48-59

v. 48. 'I am that bread of life.' The first things to note in this statement are two words, 'I AM.' This goes back to Moses' question in Exod. 3:13-14 when he asked the Lord, 'What is thy name?' The answer was, 'I AM.' The use of this title by our Lord Jesus at once identifies him as Jehovah of the Old Testament and confirms his Deity. Read carefully the following verses: John 8:58, John 18:4-5, John 8:12, John 10:9, John 10:11, John 14:6, John 15:1. Christ is the true and only bread that not only gives life but upholds and maintains spiritual life. He is the bread which every sinner needs and without which he will perish.

v. 49. The manna in the wilderness was only a type of Christ, just as the rock which gave forth water was a type of Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Neither had any saving benefit nor power even to give or maintain physical life, much less spiritual life. Those who ate the manna died physically and evidently eternally, for they entered not into Canaan (Heb. 3:17-19).

v. 50. 'I am the bread of life,' who came from the highest heaven, from the bosom of the Father (1 Tim. 1:15; Gal. 4:4-5). If a man eats of me (the bread of life), he shall never die eternally. Eating Christ, the bread of life, is believing on Him, receiving him by faith. Believing on Christ is expressed by eating because eating is the reception of food to our stomachs for the sustenance of physical life, so receiving Christ by faith is the application of Christ to the soul for the beginning and continuance of spiritual and eternal life.

v. 51. Three things are significant from this verse.

1. 'I am the living bread.' He is the living God, who is life, who ever lives and gives life to dead sinners (John 1:4; John 11:25; 1 John 5:11-12).

2. 'The bread that I will give is my flesh.' To give his flesh was to offer himself as a sacrifice for sin. It is only in the crucified Christ that we find redemption and life eternal (Heb. 10:18-22).

3. 'I will give Myself for the life of the world;' not the Jews only, but for sinners of every nation; and 'if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever' (1 John 2:1-2).

v. 52. The Jews, like Nicodemus, were trying to interpret spiritual things in a carnal sense (John 3:4).

v. 53. This verse and the two which follow contain an amplification of what he said in Verse 51. While our Lord was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, he must come to earth and die. The decrees of God do not render unnecessary the obedience to and fulfillment of them. Even so, while Christ has been given a people and has redeemed them by his life and death, they must hear the gospel and believe (John 6:37-44; Rom. 10:13-15). Christ must be received and believed or men have no life!

v. 54. *He* that believeth on the Son has eternal life (John 5:24; 1 John 3:2). He has it now in a sure and just way (Rom. 3:26), and one day he shall possess it fully (Eph. 4:2-9).

v. 55. It is not just eating that nourishes a man, but eating the right food! If a man eats poison, he will die. It is so spiritually. His flesh is true life-giving meat; and his blood is saving, cleansing blood. Neither is his body, given for us, typical food, but that, which actually saves. A man is not

saved because he believes something or someone; but it is the Christ of scripture, the Christ of God, who alone can save (2 Cor. 11:3-4).

vv. 56-57. Christ speaks here of that living, vital union the believer has with him (John 15:1-5). The word 'dwelleth' is translated 'abideth.' Believers enjoy the most intimate union, communion, and fellowship with Christ. As the Father and Son are one, we are one in the Son (John 17:23). What he has, we have; and where he is, we are! He lives in dependence upon the Father; we live in dependence upon him. Also note: the tense of the verb is 'eateth' and 'drinketh,' meaning that we constantly feed upon Him, look to Him, and continue in him.

vv. 58-59. This is a summary of what he has declared in the previous verses. The synagogue in which he taught these things was in Capernaum.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

John 6:60-71

v. 60. A 'disciple' means one who is a learner or a follower. These 'disciples' are carefully distinguished from the twelve. They were people who followed Christ, attracted by the miracles, but who did not really believe him and to whom he did not commit himself (John 2:23-25; John 6:26). Their ignorance and false allegiance are revealed in the next few verses. One minute they would make him king; the next, they are leaving. Many of these disciples (having heard his gospel of divine visitation, 29-35, of sovereignty in salvation, 37-45, of salvation through a living union with him by faith, 48-59, and being unable to comprehend these great mysteries, 1 Cor. 2:14, not that his language was unintelligible, but that what they heard was irreconcilable with their own views of salvation by law and works) would not receive it (John 5:40).

v. 61. Our Lord knew what was in their hearts. 'He knew in himself.' That is, he did not need to hear their words; for he is omniscient (Luke 16:15; Psalm 7:9). He knew why they murmured. They were offended with his gospel. It was not what he did that offended them (for they were glad to be fed, healed, and to think of an earthly Jewish kingdom) but what he said (John 10:30-33).

v. 62. 'If you are offended by what I have said, what will be your reaction when all of my words are fulfilled and I enter the glory of my Father, which I have had from the beginning?' They stumbled when he called himself the bread of life, at his declaration that he came down from heaven, that he would give his life for sinners, and that the way to obtain life was to eat his flesh and drink his blood. He now speaks of death,

resurrection, and ascending up to heaven, where he was before. He did not say that these murmurers would 'see' his resurrected glory; but if they were offended at the possibility, what would be their response to the reality? (Acts 2:32-36.)

v. 63. He again presses upon them what he declared in John 6:44-45. It is the Holy Spirit who quickens by the word, who gives life to dead sinners, who gives us eyes to 'see' Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King, who gives us 'ears' to hear the gospel and 'hearts' to understand the mysteries of his grace (Matt. 16:17). The flesh (or the natural mind and human wisdom) does not profit us, nor does it have any part in the salvation of sinners. The words of Christ, the words of life, are spiritual. One cannot discern spiritual truth who has no spiritual life (1 Cor. 2:8-12).

vv. 64-65. He declared, 'There are some of you that believe not.' John adds, 'The Lord Jesus knew not only from the beginning of his ministry but from the foundation of the world who would believe, who would not believe, and who should betray him.' This springs not only from his fore-knowledge but from his fore-ordination (Rom. 8:29-30; John 10:24-28). Whatever men believe or will accept, it is God's truth that no man will nor can come to Christ nor believe on Christ except he is drawn, taught, and called supernaturally by the Spirit of God (Acts 13:48; 2 Thess. 2:13). This 'drawing' of the Father is exercised according to his sovereign will (Rom. 9:11-16).

v. 66. These disciples at large (so-called because they followed Him, partly to hear what he would say, partly to see his miracles) followed him no more. False professors may draw back, but none who truly receive Christ will fall away (1 John 2:19; Heb. 10:38-39).

v. 67. Our Lord desires no unwilling disciples: so, on the departure of the great crowd, he turned to the twelve and asked if they also desired to leave him. His question was a strong test, and their answer would certainly reveal whether or not a divine work of grace had been wrought in them. We are faced with the same question, 'Will you also go away?' (2 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 3:6, 14.)

vv. 68-69. Peter usually acted as spokesman for them. 'Lord, to whom shall we go?' Shall we turn to the Law? Nothing there but a curse. Shall we turn to the religious organizations and the Pharisees? Nothing there but dead works and superstition. Shall we turn to our own wisdom and righteousness? Nothing there but foolishness and filthy rags. 'Thou hast the words of eternal life.' He is the Word of life (1 John 1:1-3), and his word giveth life (John 6:63). 'We believe and are sure...' Notice the order here. Natural men demand to be sure before they believe. God reverses man's order. It is impossible to be sure or to have assurance or confidence until we believe! (Psalm 27:13; 2 Cor. 4:13.) We believe that thou art that Christ – prophesied, promised, and pictured throughout the Old Testament. We believe that thou art God in human flesh!

vv. 70-71. He chose them not only to the office of apostles, but he chose them to eternal life (John 15:16; Eph. 1:3-4); yet one of them, Judas Iscariot, was an informer, an instrument of Satan, and a son of perdition from the beginning (Psalm 41:9; Psalm 109:8; Zech. 11:12-13; John 17:12).

My time is not yet come

John 7:1-13

v. 1. 'After these things' evidently has reference to our Lord's ministry in Galilee (John 2:1-11; John 4:43-54) but particularly to what is recorded in Chapter 6 – his discourse on the bread of life and the fact that most of these Galilean disciples 'went back and walked no more with him.' But he remained in Galilee and would not go into Judea because the 'Jews' (that is, the religious leaders) 'sought to kill him.' They had two things against him.

1. His violation of the sabbath by healing the man at the pool of Bethesda.

2. His making himself equal with God (John 5:16-18).

v. 2. The feast of the tabernacles was a feast, which the Lord ordained the Jews to keep the 15th day of the seventh month, after they had gathered in the fruits of the land. They were to dwell in tents these seven days in remembrance of the forty years spent in the wilderness (Lev. 23:34-36, 39-44). The feast was the grand harvest festival, when the Lord of harvest was praised for his mercies.

v. 3. 'His brethren' were the brothers of Christ according to the flesh—the sons of Mary and Joseph (Matt. 12:46-47; Matt. 13:55). These men urged him to go to Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, and let his followers there see the mighty works and miracles he was doing. They observed that his disciples in Galilee had forsaken him. They thought that this feast of the tabernacles would be a good time for him to demonstrate his powers, since multitudes of Jews would be in Jerusalem at this time.

v. 4. Note the word 'if' here. The word indicates unbelief, doubt, and challenge. These brethren are saying, 'If these works of yours are real and genuine, don't confine yourself to small villages in Galilee; go to the capital of religion and show yourself to the famous and to the influential people.' They reasoned that a man who sought notoriety could not find it in obscure towns. Perhaps they hoped that he would establish his fame; and, as his kinsmen, they could share in it.

v. 5. But this verse reveals the truth about these brethren. 'They did not believe him to be the Messiah' (Psalm 69:8). Many believe that Mark 3:21 refers to these kinsmen, who thought he was 'beside himself.'

vv. 6-8. These verses must be considered together; for he begins with, 'My time is not yet come,' and closes the statement with practically the same words, 'My time is not yet fully come.' Some believe that the simple meaning of these verses is that Christ declined to go up to the feast with his brethren at this particular time. But in the light of other similar statements (John 2:4; John 8:20; Matt. 26:18), the time or hour was not yet come for him to publicly display his miracles in Jerusalem, to have a head-on confrontation with the religious leaders, to reveal himself as the Messiah and King, and so to stir up their enmity and fears of him which would lead them to crucify him in open shame. He said to these brethren, 'Your time is always ready,' or anytime is suitable for you; for you are of the world, and the world does not hate you. They had in mind, like everyone else, an earthly kingdom, great favor, and applause of the world. But our Lord came to redeem a people, to condemn the social, political, and religious world in general; therefore, he incurred the wrath of all. 'My kingdom is not of this world.' When the proper time came, our Lord would speak the words, do the works, and accomplish in Jerusalem what he came to do!

v. 9. When he said these words, he abode still in Galilee while his brethren went to the feast in Jerusalem.

v. 10. The general method of travel in those days, especially at festival seasons, was to form a caravan and travel with many people. If the 'famous Galilean' had gone with this crowd to Jerusalem, it would have been sensational and contrary to his purpose. He chose rather to go in secret and avoid the publicity. We must keep in mind the Lord's purpose was not notoriety, fame, and a following of opportunists, but to follow the divine timetable in revealing himself as the 'Lamb of God,' the Redeemer of sinners, and to accomplish that which was 'written of him in the volume of the book' (Heb. 10:7-9).

vv. 11-12. What a contrast of opinions in these early days concerning Jesus of Nazareth! The Jewish leaders sought him with wrath and contempt because six months earlier at the feast of the Passover he had stirred up their anger by violating their sabbath and making himself equal with God (John 5:16-18). The general public was divided over Him, some saying, 'He is a good man;' others, 'an imposter' (Matt. 16:13-17).

v. 13. Though many of the Galileans and the common people had a good opinion of Jesus Christ, they did not dare freely express their thoughts concerning him because they feared the rulers of the Jews, who despised him (John 19:38; Prov. 29:25).

Christ reproves the Jews

John 7:14-27

v. 14. The Lord went up to Jerusalem to the feast about the fourth day (the feast lasted eight days). He taught publicly in the temple. We are not told what his subject was, but we can assume that he expounded the scriptures and instructed the people. Perhaps he had much to say about this particular feast and its spiritual meaning.

v. 15. The Jews marveled at the manner and matter of his doctrine, he spoke as never man spake. His words were gracious, delivered with power and authority, and gave evidence of an unusual knowledge of the scriptures. They knew that Jesus of Nazareth had never sat at the feet of the Jewish doctors nor been educated in their school of the prophets, yet he not only knew the scriptures but the great mysteries of the kingdom of God.

v. 16. His doctrine was his in the sense that he is God. He is the author of it, the subject of it, and the glory of it. His doctrine respected his person as the God-man, his offices as prophet, priest, and king, and his redemptive work in life, death, and resurrection. But Christ is not speaking here from the standpoint of his essential glory, not as God, but as the servant of Jehovah, as the Son of God incarnate. His doctrine had been taught him by no man, nor did he invent it himself; but his is the wisdom which comes from the Father (John 8:28; Gal. 1:11-12).

v. 17. If any man has a heart truly set on knowing and embracing the will of God (however contrary it may be to his own thoughts), if any man seeks for the truth of God seriously, in the fear of the Lord, willing to lay

aside tradition, custom, and the wisdom of the flesh, God will reveal the truth to him so that he shall know that I do not speak from myself (as a man) but by the authority of the Father.

v. 18. Here is another proof that his doctrine was from the Father. The one who totally acts, speaks, and works only for the glory of God is no imposter; and there is no deception nor unrighteousness in him. He who preaches his own message and his own thoughts aims at his own honor and attracts attention to himself. But the servant who sincerely seeks his glory that sent him is a true servant and ought to be heard (John 5:42-44). Doctrine, which advances the honor and glory of God and humbles the creature, is most likely to be of God! (1 Cor. 1:26-31.)

v. 19. Christ completely turns the tables upon them. They charged him with being unlettered; and now he charges them with having the letter of the law but failing to render obedience to it; for they sought to kill Him, which was a violation of the sixth commandment (John 7:1, 25). Where there is no heart for the truth, there is a heart against it. Where there is enmity against the truth, there is always a hatred for those who faithfully preach it.

v. 20. The people mentioned here seem to be the common or country people who had come from other places to the feasts and knew not how the Jewish leaders sought to kill him. They said, 'You talk like a mad man. Evidently you are demon-possessed;' for they thought all insanity was demon-possession. They asked Him, 'Who seeks to kill you?' Little did they realize that at a later feast they would be crying, 'Crucify him, crucify him.'

vv. 21-23. By one work or miracle it is plain that he refers to the healing of the man by the pool of Bethesda on the sabbath (John 5:1-8). Because he

did this on the sabbath, they were offended (John 5:16). Moses passed on to you the law of circumcision, which was given to Abraham, and in obedience to that law you circumcise a male child on the sabbath day. The law required the child to be circumcised on the eighth day; and if that day falls on the sabbath and it is no breach of the law to make a wound and apply a plaster on it, then why are you angry because I have completely healed a man on the sabbath? Works of necessity and works of mercy may be legitimately performed on the sabbath. Circumcision on the eighth day was a work of necessity. The healing of the man was a work of mercy.

v. 24. He exhorts the people to be fair in their judgment of his act and to take into account all the circumstances and the scriptures. Do not be influenced by your desire to please the Pharisees and the Scribes (who had condemned him) nor by your prejudice against me. Judge this act of mercy on the basis of that which is true and righteous. In the sense that the sabbath is the day of rest, worship, and communion with God, is it not fitting that a man should be made whole on that day?

vv. 25-26. Some of the people of Jerusalem who knew the designs and counsels of the Pharisees said, 'Is not this the man they seek to kill? Here he is speaking openly, and they say nothing. Can it be possible that they have discovered that he is indeed the Christ? Have they changed their minds concerning him?'

v. 27. We know that this man is from Nazareth, that Joseph is his father, Mary is his mother, and we know his brothers and sisters. When the Christ comes, he will be of the tribe of Judah, the family of David, and of the town of Bethlehem. He will be supernaturally born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). They probably thought that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem and carried away until he appeared to the world as a man dropped down from

heaven. Jesus spent his early days in Nazareth; this they knew (John 6:41-42).

Many of the people believed

John 7:28-37

v. 28. Some of them which lived at Jerusalem said, ‘We know this man and where he came from.’ Our Lord then spoke with a loud voice that all might hear, ‘Do you know me? Do you know from whence I am? You know me to be Jesus of Nazareth, but you are wrong! I am not of Nazareth. You suppose I am from Galilee, but you are wrong! You take me to be the son of Joseph, but that is your mistake! I am not come of Myself into this world by incarnation to accomplish the salvation of sinners; the Father sent me.’ He that sent Christ is true to the covenant he made with Christ, true to his promises, and true to be believed. So with all their boasted knowledge of Him, they knew not the Father who sent him and, consequently, knew not him that was sent (John 8:19).

v. 29. ‘I know Him’ – his nature and perfections, his purposes and promises, his counsel and covenant, his mind and will; for Christ and the Father are one (John 10:30; Isa. 9:6). ‘I am from Him,’ being the only-begotten of him (John 17:5; John 1:18). ‘He sent me’ in an office capacity as the Christ to redeem his people. None of these things did they know of Jesus of Nazareth.

v. 30. Therefore, being angered by his claims, they sought to take him by force and carry him before the Sanhedrin to be tried and condemned as a blasphemer; but though this was their design, they had no power to do so, being restrained by the providence of God; for his hour to suffer and die had not yet come (Luke 4:28-30; John 8:20).

v. 31. Many of the common people, impressed by his miracles, believed on Him, at least as an extraordinary prophet and person; for they said, 'When Messiah comes, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?' (John 2:23). The Jews expected the Messiah to perform many miracles (Isa. 35:3-7; Isa. 61:1; Matt. 11:3-6).

v. 32. The Pharisees heard that the people talked among themselves about his miracles, his words, and his claims, and that many of them suspected that he could be the Christ; so they sent officers from the temple to arrest him. These Pharisees felt their authority, positions, and teachings to be threatened by him.

v. 33. Our Lord said to the officers sent to take him and to other unbelieving Jews, 'Yet a little while (six months at the most or until the next Passover, when he would be crucified) I am with you.' And then Christ would lay down his life, rise again from the dead, and ascend to the Father who sent him into the world (Heb. 1:3; Heb. 10:12).

v. 34. Great distress shall come upon Israel, and you will continue to look for the coming of the Messiah for a redeemer and deliverer; but no Messiah will appear, no redeemer will come to relieve you. You shall seek in vain (Prov. 1:24-29). 'And where I am ye cannot approach.'

vv. 35-36. Despite all of his miracles, his holiness, his words of instruction, his revelations of his deity, and the inability of their leaders to answer him or to lay hands on Him, these Jews were totally blind to who he was and what he came to do (1 Cor. 2:7-14; John 6:44-45). They wondered if he would go among the Jews in some foreign country or even among the Gentiles or Greeks. What he said in Verse 34 puzzled them, and they knew not what to make of it. These were not all illiterate men. Some were men of culture and much religious training, but they knew not

what he said; for the plainest and simplest word from God is far beyond the reach of natural wisdom.

v. 37. The last day of the feast arrived. It is called 'that great day of the feast' because on the closing day there was a general and solemn gathering of worshippers (Lev. 23:36). On this day, when the temple courts were thronged with a large crowd, our Lord stood and cried with a loud voice, 'If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.' Three words stand out and demand our attention.

1. 'Thirst.' This is a spiritual thirst (John 4:13-14), a strong desire for forgiveness, for righteousness, for a knowledge of God, and acceptance by him. This is a man longing for the living God (Psalm 42:1; Matt. 5:6).

2. 'Come to me;' not to Moses and the law, not to works and ceremonies, not to religious leaders and organizations, but to him! Coming to him is to believe on Him, to receive Him, and to trust in him (2 Tim. 1:12).

3. 'Drink;' that is, to take the water of life freely or to take of his grace freely. Salvation by Christ is of free grace, and justification is freely by his grace. We have but to come to him and drink. There is a fullness of grace in Christ. His grace is sufficient and abundant for all (Col. 2:9-10). 'All the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of him.' The fountain of life flows abundantly and freely; all the sinner need do is drink.

If any man thirst, let him come to me

John 7:38-53

On the last day of the feast our Lord declared (Verse 37) that if any man felt the need of spiritual life, righteousness, forgiveness, and inward peace, it was to be found in him. 'Let him come to me.' The law, sacrifices, and ceremonies cannot give life. They all point to Him, who is our life.

v. 38. 'He that believeth on me' explains what is meant by coming to Christ and drinking. These acts are no other than for a man to go out of himself to Christ and live by faith on him and his grace. By faith we acknowledge, receive, and believe on him as our righteousness, sin-offering, saviour, and mediator. 'Out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' That is, he shall have from Christ whatever grace, mercy, and peace he needs. This fountain of grace shall spring from within him, out of his heart. It flows continually in abundance to his comfort, to the blessing of others, and to the glory of God.

v. 39. By living water he meant the indwelling Holy Spirit; for the scriptures speak of grace and the Spirit of God under the metaphors of water, rivers, floods of water, and abundance of water (Isa. 44:3; Isa. 41:17-18; Isa. 43:19-20). All who are saved are baptized by the Spirit of God into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). All believers have the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9; John 16:13-14). 'The Holy Ghost was not yet given.' We know the Holy Ghost was in being as a divine person, equal with the Father and the Son; for he is eternal. We know that the Holy Spirit had been bestowed in his grace on the Old Testament saints. We know that he is the author of the scriptures (2 Peter 1:21). He came upon Christ in special manifestation at his baptism, and he certainly regenerated and quickened the apostles.

But after Christ was crucified, risen, and glorified, the Holy Spirit came as Christ had promised in a special manifestation upon the disciples and believers as comforter, teacher, guide, and bestower of gifts and grace.

v. 40. Some of the people who heard him said, ‘Of a truth this is the Prophet Moses wrote of in Deut. 18:15,’ which many believed was not the Messiah but an extraordinary prophet that would come before the Messiah.

v. 41. Others said, ‘This is the Christ’ – the true Messiah! This they concluded from his miracles and his gracious words. But again, as in Verse 27, the question arose, ‘Shall the Christ come from Galilee?’

v. 42. The scripture clearly states that the Christ comes of the seed of David (Isa. 11:1; Psalm 132:11, 17) and out of the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). These very things they objected to (though unknown to them) were true of Jesus of Nazareth.

v. 43. There was a sharp division among the people as to their opinions about him.

v. 44. Some of them were in favor of seizing him in a violent manner and trying him as an imposter and a blasphemer. But they were restrained by the providence of God (John 7:30).

vv. 45-49. Back in Verse 32 it is said that the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to arrest him. These officers were among the people and heard him speak. Being astonished by his person, power, and words, they returned to their masters without him. When the Pharisees asked, ‘Why have you not arrested him and brought him to us?’ they replied, ‘Never man spake like this man’ (Isa. 11:4). The Pharisees asked the officers,

‘Has he seduced and deceived you? We are your teachers and masters, and none of us has believed on him.’ Then, with great contempt and anger, they berated the common people as those who, being ignorant of the scriptures and taken in by this imposter, are under the curse of God.

vv. 50-51. Then Nicodemus (who was a Pharisee and a member of this religious court) stands up to speak for Christ. However, it is noticeable that Nicodemus did not confess his faith in Christ nor defend his claims; he only faintly and carefully states that their law did not condemn a man until he be heard and proper witnesses assembled. This he said, having a secret respect for Christ, though he had not the courage to openly confess him.

vv. 52-53. ‘Are you of Galilee?’ They knew Nicodemus was not of Galilee; but they said this in reproach and sarcasm, also asking, ‘Are you a Galilean? or are you a follower of the Galilean? No prophet arises out of Galilee.’ This was not true. Jonah and Nahum were Galileans, but it may be that they were riding the same theme found in Verses 32 and 41. None of them took the time nor put forth the effort to discover that Jesus had been born of the tribe of Judah, family of David, in Bethlehem, and only grew up in Galilee. But as little as Nicodemus said, it put a stop to their proceedings against Christ for the present.

He that is without sin let him cast a stone

John 8:1-11

v. 1. The closing verse of the preceding chapter said, ‘Every man went unto his own house;’ but our Lord went unto the Mount of Olives, a mountain less than two miles from Jerusalem. He often went there for privacy and prayer, but ‘the son of man hath not where to lay his head’ (Luke 9:58).

v. 2. Early the next morning our Lord returned to the temple, where a large crowd of people had gathered to hear him. After the manner of the Jewish teachers, ‘He sat down and taught them.’

v. 3. These Pharisees the day before had failed in their efforts to arrest Christ and put him to silence; now they sought a new method to discredit him in the eyes of the people. Having failed to take him by force, they now tried to trap him with subtlety and craftiness. They brought to him a woman who they said was taken in the act of adultery and set her before him and the assembled people.

v. 4. They called him ‘Master’ in a respectful way to cover their evil designs. ‘This woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.’ They evidently had the necessary witnesses in order to charge her legally.

v. 5. The law commanded that both the man and the woman found in adultery should be put to death (Lev. 20:10: Deut. 22:22).

v. 6. ‘What sayest thou?’ They sought to trap the Lord Jesus in a dilemma. They figured that if he said, ‘Let her go,’ they could accuse him of

ignoring the law or being an enemy of the law. But if he answered, ‘Stone her,’ he would lose the support of the people and reveal that he was not really the *friend* of sinners. What foolishness to defy infinite wisdom! But no doubt they felt that they had him cornered. Our Lord acted as though he did not even hear them, stooped down, and began to write on the ground with his finger. It is significant to note that the law given to Moses on two tables of stone was written with the ‘finger of God’ (Exod. 31:18). What he wrote we are not told. Some say that he possibly wrote some names, dates, or events known to these Pharisees; for they left quite meekly from the eldest in order to the youngest.

v. 7-8. So when they continued to ask Him, ‘What sayest thou?’ He arose and said, ‘He that is without sin among YOU, let him first cast a stone at her.’ Our Lord did not justify the woman in her sin, nor did he deny the justice of the law in condemning her; he only reminds them that they also stood condemned before the holy law and should likewise be stoned (Rom. 3:23; Gal. 6:1). By these words, calling for mercy and compassion upon the guilty from accusers equally guilty, he put these men on the spot before that large crowd. How could they cast a stone now and retain their image and leadership with these people? By doing so they would only make Jesus of Nazareth more popular. He stooped again and wrote on the ground.

v. 9. This was a day and age of great corruption, not only in doctrine and worship, but as to men's lives and manners. It is very probable that these men were guilty of the same sin; and being convicted by their own consciences (and probably by what Christ wrote), they all departed, leaving the woman standing there with Christ. Whatever this woman was, they were not fit nor qualified to judge her (Matt. 7:1-5); and they knew it.

v. 10. When our Lord stood and saw none but the woman, he said, ‘Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?’ The law required at least two witnesses before its sentence could be executed (Deut. 19:15), and the hands of the witnesses must assist in carrying out the sentence (Deut. 17:6-7). But in this case not a single witness was left.

v. 11. She replied, ‘No man, Lord.’ And he said, ‘Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.’ He never said that she was not guilty; for she was, as are all the sons of Adam. But he said that he did not condemn her. He did not come to destroy the law, but on behalf of believers, to fulfill it. He did not come to condemn us, for we were condemned already. He came to save us and deliver us from the curse of the law (John 3:17; Matt. 5:17; Gal. 3:10-14). He then exhorts her to a life of holiness and obedience by telling her to ‘go and sin no more.’ Our Lord did not say, ‘Go and sin no more, and I will not condemn thee;’ for that would not be good news (there is none that doeth good and sinneth not). But he forgave her and placed her, as we are placed, under the constraint of his love (2 Cor. 5:14). The Lord was not assigning her an impossible task (that of living absolutely without sin), but rather he is speaking of a bent of the will, a tenor of life, which is ‘holiness unto the Lord.’ True believers do not love sin nor do they practice sin as a way of life. They love Christ and long to adorn his gospel and glorify him.

I am the light of the world

John 8:12-22

v. 12. ‘Then spake Jesus again unto them.’ ‘Then’ signifies after the Pharisees and the woman had departed. He was teaching the people when he was interrupted by these Pharisees (John 8:1-3). God is spirit (John 4:24), God is love (1 John 4:8), and God is light (1 John 1:5). John the Baptist came to bear witness of that Light (John 1:7-9). This light is the life of God (John 1:4). As darkness and death are one, light and life are one. This light is the knowledge of the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:3-6). He that believeth on Christ, receives Christ, and follows Christ, does not walk in the darkness of sin, nor in the darkness of error and ignorance, nor in the darkness of tradition, but shall have the light of life, understanding, and eternal life (1 John 5:20; John 17:3). Christ himself is the light!

v. 13. It was a known rule of law that none ought to be believed only upon his own testimony without other witnesses. Christ himself stated this in John 5:31.

v. 14. Our Lord replied, ‘Though I bear record of Myself, yet my record is true.’ This seems like a contradiction of what he said in John 5:31-39. But in John 5 he speaks of himself as a man – the servant of the Most High, as in John 5:30. Here he speaks of himself as the Light or one with and equal to the Father; therefore, speaking as God, his record is true and to be believed. Standing before them in the likeness of sinful flesh, he said, ‘I know where I came from (John 7:29), I know why I have come (Luke 19:10), I know where I go (John 13:3).’ They thought him only to be the son of Joseph, and being ignorant of their own law and prophets, did not believe him to be the Messiah.

v. 15. 'You judge after the flesh' or according to outward appearance. You are judging my claims according to what you see and bear outwardly. Because I am in the flesh you deem it impossible for me to be God (John 10:33). Outward appearances are deceptive (1 Sam. 16:7). Not only were they judging him as they saw Him, but 'after the flesh' or according to fleshly and natural reasoning, which is incapable of discerning divine truth (1 Cor. 2:14). Christ continued, 'I judge no man' in this manner. He knows the heart and see things as they actually are (Luke 16:15; John 2:24-25). Some believe he might be saying, 'I am not come at this time to judge nor condemn but to save (John 3:17).

v. 16. 'If I judge,' or better 'when' I judge, my judgment is true! My judgment is according to reality, truth, and is infallible. My judgment is the judgment of the omniscient God, for we are one! (John 10:30). This is one of his strongest claims to Deity, affirming the absolute oneness of the Son and the Father.

vv. 17-18. Christ was not appealing to the law to vindicate himself, but rather to condemn those who rejected him and denied his claims. The law you claim to believe accepts the testimony of two men as being true. I have borne witness of Myself; and the heavenly Father hath borne witness to the Son through John the Baptist, the works that he did, at his baptism, and through the holy scriptures (John 5:31-40).

v. 19. 'Where is your Father?' We know no father you have but Joseph the carpenter. He is no acceptable witness. Our Lord answered, 'You neither know me nor my Father.' These religious men boasted of their knowledge of God, yet they knew him not. Their ignorance of Christ revealed both their ignorance of the scriptures and of the Father. The knowledge of the Father, the Son, and the scriptures all go together; and this is eternal life

(John 17:3). Nor can a man truly know the one without the other, for they are one! Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his Person! (Read Matt. 11:27; John 1:18; John 14:7-10; Heb. 1:1-5.)

v. 20. The treasury (Mark 12:41) was the place where the thirteen chests stood into which the people put their contributions and therefore was a very public place to which all had access. Though the Pharisees and leaders were incensed against him and would have put him to death, yet they had no power to work their evil designs until God permitted them to do so (John 7:30; John 13:1; John 17:1). His death was appointed and ordained as to method, time, and purpose (Acts 4:27-28).

v. 21. It seems that our Lord speaks to the Pharisees as the representatives of the whole nation of Israel (John 1:11). I go my way – the way of death, sacrifice, and atonement. Someday you will seek ME, that is, your Messiah, Deliverer, and Saviour. In your great distress and trial you will seek the deliverance of the promised Messiah, but it will be in vain, for you have despised and rejected God's Christ; therefore, you will die in your sins and 'where I go,' to the Father, to the kingdom of heaven and glory, to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you cannot come!

v. 22. Before, they guessed that he would leave Jewry and go to the dispersed among the Gentiles (John 7:34-35). Now they mockingly suggest that he may kill himself.

I am he

John 8:23-32

v. 23. In these verses our Lord still asserts his divine nature. All of the disputing and trouble with these Pharisees was on this point – who is Jesus of Nazareth? He had given them the greatest proof imaginable of his witnesses and his works; yet they, being destitute of spiritual life, grace, and wisdom, did not believe. You are from the earth; you are of this world; you understand and judge all things according to carnal reasoning and wisdom; you have no spiritual knowledge or life. I am from heaven: I am not of this world (John 3:9-13; 1 Cor. 2:9-11).

v. 24. Here is the bottom line! ‘If you believe not that I am,’ (Exod. 3: 13-14) the true God, the eternal Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, the true Messiah, the only Saviour of sinners, the one and only Mediator between God and men, Prophet, Priest, and King (Isa. 9:6), ye shall die in your sins! This text plainly teaches the impossibility of salvation for those who receive not and believe not in Jesus Christ as God and Saviour (Isa. 45:21-22).

v. 25. Whether in doubt, desperation, or frustration, they said, ‘Who are you?’ To which he replied, ‘Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning’ of this discourse, or from the beginning of my ministry, or as he spoke from the beginning to Moses, ‘I am that I am’ (John 1:1-2). I am the same, and no other, than I told you at the first (John 10:24-28).

v. 26. Just as our Lord said to his disciples in John 16:12, ‘I have many things to say unto you of redemption, regeneration, sanctification, justification, and eternal glory, but you cannot bear them now;’ and as in

Mark 4:33, 'He spake the word unto them as they were able to hear it.' He tells these Pharisees, 'I have many things to say about you which will judge and condemn you. He that sent me is true in his revelation and judgments. I only speak to all men what I have received from him.' (John 14:10.)

v. 27. 'They understood not.' This reveals the total depravity of even the most religious and moral of men. The Lord God himself spoke to them of spiritual things, and they understood not (1 Cor. 2:7-9). They did not understand that he spoke to them as the one sent of the Father; or that, when he spoke of his Father (John 8:19), he spoke of the everlasting Father (Isa. 9:6).

v. 28. 'When you have lifted me up on a cross (this is what is meant by lifting up the son of man – John 3:14; John 12:32), then shall you know that I am He.' Our Lord is saying that his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension would be accompanied and followed by such manifestations of divine glory that his words would be fully vindicated and many would be convinced that he is, indeed, the Messiah (Matt. 27:54). Thousands of the ones who had cried, 'Crucify Him,' were brought on the day of Pentecost to believe on him as both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36-41).

v. 29-30. Whatever men might think of Him, his doctrine, and his office, he knew that in all he said and in all he did, he was the Father's elect servant, upheld and delighted in by him. 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' As he spoke these words (all that we have read in this chapter), it says that 'many believed on him.' Whether they truly believed with saving faith on him as the Son of God, the true Messiah, we cannot say. We read this in other places (John 2:23; John 7:31; John 10:43; John 11:45). Judging from the following verses, their impression was more in the head than in the heart.

v. 31. Our Lord spoke to those who indicated that they believed on him and described the marks and evidences of a true believer. If a man continues through his life believing Christ, loving Christ, and devoted to Christ, then he gives evidence that he is a disciple indeed. The word 'indeed' means genuine, truly, and really saved, not just a religious professor. Enduring to the end and continuing in the gospel is not a condition of salvation but is a manifestation or proof of salvation. The one who truly loves Christ will not depart from him: and the one who departs never truly loved him (1 John 2:19; Heb. 3:6, 14).

v. 32. 'Ye shall know the truth,' which is the truth of the gospel, the truth of God's glorious grace to us through Christ Jesus, that truth which is revealed to us by the Spirit of truth; or Christ himself, who is the way, the truth, and the life; or both. For how can Christ and the word of truth be separated? They are one! To know him is to be set free from the penalty of sin, the curse of the law, the power of darkness, the practice of sin, and finally from the very presence of sin; for we shall be like him!

If the Son shall make you free

John 8:33-43

v. 33. This was the reply made by the Jews to the words of our Lord in Verse 32. I'm sure that they were thinking in terms of flesh, for one replied, 'We be Abraham's seed: we are God's chosen people: we are the kingdom of God and were never in bondage!' Our Lord speaks here of the bondage of the will – spiritual slavery and captivity. Before a man knows Christ, he is in bondage. Men have no righteousness (Isa. 64:6) nor goodness (Rom. 7:18). Men have no wisdom (Rom. 3:11). Men have no strength (Rom. 5:6) nor hope (Eph. 2:12). Men are under the curse of the law – prisoners (Gal. 3:10), therefore in bondage (2 Peter 2:19). Man is a fallen creature, totally depraved, and under the dominion of sin and Satan; and from this bondage and death only the grace of God and the truth of Christ can deliver him.

v. 34. Our Lord lets them know that he is not speaking of the freedom of men's bodies, but the freedom of the soul. 'Whosoever,' whether one belongs to the favored seed of Abraham or is a pagan Gentile, all who are of the seed of Adam (having sinned in him, Rom. 5:12, 19, and having sinned in themselves) are the slaves of sin and can no more change their natures and do good in God's sight than the Ethiopian can change his skin (Jer. 13:23). They are captives of the law, which has been violated, and of the justice of God, which demands their death (Ezek. 18:20). We are all by birth, nature, and practice servants of sin.

v. 35. The servant of sin and Satan does not live and abide in the house of God nor in the true church of God. The holiness and righteousness of God will not permit it; the truth and justice of God will not allow it. 'Two

cannot walk together except they be agreed.’ ‘Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.’ (Matt. 5:20; Psalm 24:3-4.) We must have what we do not have to abide in his house – a perfect righteousness! But the Son of God abideth ever, for in him the Father is well pleased.

v. 36. Therefore, if the Son shall make you free from sin and death, you shall be free indeed – free truly and in reality, not in mere profession or claim. For Christ, the Son, as our representative in the flesh, has fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law on our behalf and gives us a perfect holiness in God's sight (Rom. 10:1-4; Jer. 23:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:19). He honored the law and satisfied justice for us before the Father, in order that God may be just and the justifier of those who believe (Rom. 3:19-26).

v. 37. ‘I know that you are descendants of Abraham according to the flesh;’ but he is not a Jew which is one outwardly (Rom. 2:28-29), nor is he the true seed of Abraham who is not a believer (Rom. 9:7; Gal. 3:7, 26-29). But what advantage is there in being a descendant of Abraham if you seek to kill your God, and his word has no place in you? Abraham believed God! This was the chief trait of Abraham –he believed God! (Rom. 4:3; Gen. 15:6.)

v. 38. My Father is God! I declare unto you his mind, purpose, and will. There is no uncertainty, but what I have seen and heard of him. You declare by your attitude and actions who your father really is; it is not the Lord God but the Devil (John 8:44).

v. 39. They objected and continued to boast of their privileges by birth, being descendants of Abraham. But our Lord destroys their boasting saying, ‘If you were truly children of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham.’ His blood in your veins is of no significance if you do not walk as he walked (Rom. 4:20-25; Gal. 3:6-9).

v. 40. I am sent of God, whom you own to be your Father. I have faithfully revealed the redemptive will of God to you and have told you nothing but the truth, for which you seek to kill me; this was not Abraham's practice. Abraham believed God! You declare by your spirit and actions that you have nothing of Abraham's spirit in you.

v. 41. Your deeds are not the deeds of Abraham but rather the deeds of the Devil, which show him to be your father rather than Abraham (Isa. 14:12-15). They objected saying, 'We be not born of fornication,' meaning either that they were not children of idolaters (idolatry is called fornication in the scriptures) or not children of Hagar, the concubine. 'We have one Father, even God.' Is not this the claim of all religions – the fatherhood of God? God is the creator of all, but the Father of believers (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:6-7).

v. 42. This statement agrees with 1 John 5:1-2. If God is a man's Father, the man will love Christ; for the Lord Jesus is one with the Father. He is the brightness of his glory and the exact image of his person (Heb. 1:3).

v. 43. The reason they could not understand the meaning and sense of his gospel was because, though they heard the sound of his words, they did not hear nor discern the spiritual sense and meaning of it. Blinded and deafened by nature, tradition, and prejudice, they had eyes but could not see, and ears but could not hear (2 Cor. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 1:18; Matt. 13:15-16).

He that is of God hears God's word

John 8:44-59

These Jews heard the Master's words, but they could not hear nor understand the spiritual sense and meaning of his message. Blinded and deafened by nature, religious tradition, and prejudice (as are all men), they rejected him and his gospel of redemption (1 Cor. 2:7-14; John 3:11-12). The word 'hear' means to receive and believe.

v. 44. This is the key point our Lord had been leading up to.

1. He had denied their claims of being the children of Abraham (v. 39).
2. He demonstrated that God was certainly not their father (v. 42).

Now he tells them in plain language who their father really is, even the devil. Their character had been formed not under divine influence, but under satanic influence (Eph. 2:1-3). The moral likeness of Satan is stamped upon all men.

v. 45. It is the truth and the God of truth which men hate. There can be no greater evidence of men's hatred for the truth than their hatred and rejection of those who tell them the truth, and only for this reason, because they do so! (John 5:43; John 10:33.)

v. 46. Many of them had called him a wine-bibber and a glutton. They had charged him with blasphemy and sedition; but he declared that not one of them could bring forth any proof of immorality, of sin in his life, nor of

corruption in his doctrine. Since not one sin could be brought against him in life or doctrine, it was unreasonable for them not to believe him (Heb 4:15; John 19:6).

v. 47. 'He that is of God' – belongs to God by eternal election (John 6:37; 2 Tim. 2:19; John 17:9) and has been born of God, is in the family of God, and is indwelt by the Spirit of truth. These will all receive God's word with affection, reverence, and obedience (John 10:26; John 18:37). The reason the Jews did not believe him was because they were not God's children.

v. 48. These men were unable to answer Him, so they resorted to vulgar and blasphemous charges. They looked upon Samaritans as detestable enemies to their national faith and intimated that a demon had possessed him and made him insane (John 10:20).

v. 49. He gave no reply to their first charge (some of the Samaritans were his elect and had believed on him); but to the second he replied, 'I have no demon, but I honor my Father.' I honor my Father by ascribing all things to Him, by doing his will, seeking his glory, and honoring his name. This a man possessed of demons could not and would not do! You prove that you are not of God by denouncing and dishonoring me (John 5:23).

v. 50. As our representative and the servant of the Father, Christ did not seek honor and glory of men. He was the humble and obedient servant (Phil. 2:5-8). 'There is one (meaning the Father) who seeks my glory, and he is the supreme judge' (Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:18-20).

v. 51. Christ had pointed to the fearful consequences of rejecting him and his words –there was one who would judge them! Now in sharp contrast he declares, 'If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death.' The

body shall die because of sin (Rom. 8:10), but he that believes shall have eternal life (John 11:25-26).

vv. 52-53. Here again is their ignorance of spiritual truth shown. No matter how simple and plain spiritual truth is expounded, the unregenerate do not understand. They said, 'Now we know you have a demon and are insane. Abraham and all the prophets are dead; are you greater than Abraham?' 'They understood not' spiritual life and resurrection, therefore thought he referred to living always on earth in the flesh.

v. 54. In reply to the question, 'Whom makest thou thyself?' He replied, 'If I honor Myself, it is worthless; it is my Father that honoreth me.' The Father honored him at birth by angels and the star, at his baptism with his voice from heaven, by works and miracles which he did through Him, after this honored him by raising him from the grave and exalting him to his right hand, and will honor him throughout eternity (Rev. 5:13-14).

v. 55. The one who honored Christ they knew not, despite the fact that they claimed to be his children. Knowledge here means more than mental acceptance of facts and natural understanding (James 2:19). It signifies spiritual understanding (1 John 5:20), affection, approval, and obedience (John 17:3).

v. 56. You glory much in Abraham and claim him as your father. Abraham foresaw my coming into the world, dying upon the cross for sinners, and the preaching of my gospel to all nations. He saw it by divine revelation and with the eye of faith. He saw, believed, rejoiced, and was glad (Rom. 4:17-22). Abraham saw his day by faith, in type, and by special revelation.

vv. 57-59. Our Lord speaks here of his eternal existence. Christ is the everlasting I AM, the eternal God, which is, was, and is to come (Exod.

3:14). When they took up stones to stone Him, he departed from their presence (Luke 4:28-30).

Christ heals a blind man

John 9:1-12

Pink points out that the sovereignty of divine grace is exemplified in the early verses of this chapter. The Saviour saw the man; the man did not see him. The man did not call upon the Lord to have mercy upon him; the Lord was the one to take the initiative. It is ever thus when sovereign grace acts.

vv. 1-2. The disciples' question indicated that they believed that all bodily afflictions came upon people because of sins committed and that some afflictions were for personal sins and some because of the sins of parents.

v. 3. The Lord was not saying that the man and his parents were not sinners; for both were guilty of original sin, and both had committed actual transgressions (Rom. 3:23). But it was not his parents' particular sin nor his own that was the cause of his blindness, but 'that the works of God might be made manifest in him.' All suffering, affliction, and death are caused by man's sin; for if sin had not entered the world, there would be no suffering. But there is much uncommon suffering and affliction, which is not due especially to personal or parental transgression. Assuming such was the error of Job's friends. The same spirit is displayed by today's 'faith-healers.' They imply that if a person has better health than his fellows, it is because he is not as great a sinner as they! This is evil thinking. The Lord God has his own reasons for permitting various afflictions; it is that he may be glorified thereby. It was so in the case of Lazarus (John 11:4), in the death of Peter (John 21:19), and in the afflictions of Paul (2 Cor. 12:9).

v. 4. The Father, who sent Christ into the world, gave him a work to do – to glorify the Father (John 17:1), to redeem his elect (Gal. 4:4-5), to preach the gospel, and to give sight to the blind (Luke 4:18). Healing those who were physically blind is but a strong picture and type of our Lord's great mission, which is to give sight to the spiritually blind. The apostles record more cases of blindness healed than of any other one affliction. It is more than coincidental that the healing of this blind man follows immediately his encounter with the spiritual ignorance and spiritual blindness demonstrated by the Jews in Chapter Eight. These works the Father sent him to do, he must do 'while it is day,' or while the day of his life on earth lasts. The night of death comes which puts an end to all such work. He left nothing undone of that which the Father gave him to do (John 17:4-5).

v. 5. These words, 'as long as I am in the world,' let us know what our Saviour meant by 'while it is day.' So long as I am in the world, it is a part of my work to show light to the world (John 14:8-9; 2 Cor. 4:6). Darkness and ignorance go together, so light and life and knowledge go together (1 John 5:20).

v. 6. Many writers spend a great amount of time discussing the spittle, the dust, the clay, and the meaning of each, for which we have no scriptural proof. But one thing is clear – our Lord used means, which had no virtue nor healing power at all in themselves, and means which were foolish and distasteful to the natural mind. So it is that by the preaching of the gospel of Christ, the spiritually blind and dead are made to see and live. It is foolishness to the world (1 Cor. 1:21-24). The preacher and his words have no power to save; the power is of God!

v. 7. There was no healing power in the water, only as a sign of the man's faith and obedience (as in the case of Naaman, the leper). It pleased our

Lord to send the blind man to wash there. The simple obedience of the blind man is beautiful. He did not reason, argue, nor ask questions. As John Trapp put it, 'He obeyed Christ blindly.' He believed Christ and was healed (John 3:36).

vv. 8-10. He returned to his friends and they were astonished. Some asked if this were the same fellow that was a blind beggar; others said that he looked like the beggar, to which he replied, 'I am he.' They then asked, 'How were your eyes opened?'

vv. 11-12. The man then told the story of his healing, and the people inquired of the whereabouts of Jesus Christ. One thing is interesting – the man did not overstate his experience nor try to tell what he did not know. He did not glamorize his experience nor claim knowledge he did not possess. There was no speculation, only the facts.

Whereas I was blind now I see

John 9:13-25

vv. 13-14. Who brought him to the Pharisees and where they met we are not told, but all of this was done on the Sabbath day. Many of our Lord's great works were done on the Sabbath (John 5:10; Matt. 12:10). Our Lord went to the temple on the Sabbath to minister the word and to minister in mercy to one in need. Perhaps he would instruct the Jews concerning the true doctrine of the Sabbath (is it not lawful to do acts of mercy on the Sabbath?), or perhaps he would show them that he is the Lord of the Sabbath, or, in the case of true believers, that Christ himself is our Sabbath, in whom true spiritual rest and peace are found.

v. 15. The Pharisees had heard from others about this miracle, but they desired now to hear it from the man himself; not for any good reason, but that they might have cause to condemn Christ for violating their Sabbath. The man was not ashamed nor afraid to own the mercy of Christ before the ruling Jews, even though it could mean excommunication and persecution (John 9:22; 2 Tim. 1:8).

v. 16. Some of the Pharisees declared, 'This Jesus is not of God, for he does not keep the Sabbath day,' as prescribed by their traditions. But others of their group (perhaps Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea) said, 'How can a man who is not of God do such miracles?' (John 3:2). Even in the Sanhedrin they could not agree about the character of this man Jesus of Nazareth. How powerful is religious tradition and human ignorance even in the presence of unanswerable miracles and holiness!

v. 17. The Pharisees then asked the man who had been healed what he thought of Jesus the Nazarene. He replied, 'He is certainly a prophet.' The Jews concluded a man to be a prophet from miracles and wonders wrought by him (John 6:14; John 7:31). It is doubtful that the man thought Jesus to be that prophet, the Messiah; but he did believe him to be a prophet sent of God (John 9:35-36).

vv. 18-19. The Pharisees really had no way of knowing that this man had been born blind; they had not known him previously. The common Jews did, for they had seen him begging. So the Pharisees called his parents and questioned them.

vv. 20-23. His parents answered, 'He is our son. He was born blind. How his sight was restored or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Why don't you ask him? He is a grown man and can speak for himself!' It may be that they were not witnesses to the miracle, but they certainly knew who had given sight to their son; everyone there knew! But they feared the wrath of these religious leaders, and they feared that they would be excommunicated from their religion and from the temple services (Prov. 29:25; John 16:1-4; John 12:8-9).

v. 24. Being now convinced that the man was telling the truth and that a notable miracle had been done for him, they would not cease from their efforts to discredit the Lord Jesus and urged the man not to own Christ, nor to praise Him, nor to glorify Him, but rather to give their God the glory and praise. For they said, 'This man Jesus is not of God but is a sinner, an imposter.' They were not interested in this man's praising the living God; their design was to deny God's Son! Our God has given all things to the Son and cannot be glorified except with, in, and through the Son (John 5:21-23; Col. 1:14-19).

v. 25. This poor beggar probably had no education, nor standing, nor friends behind him; yet he was not afraid, nor would he agree to compromise with these men who denied the Lord Jesus. The Pharisees were trying to change the issue, but the beggar would not be side-tracked. He boldly declared what the Lord had done for him. ‘One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see!’ These are words, which every believer can apply to himself. There are many things in theology and in the scriptures, which we do not know; but we all know that we were lost, without God and without hope, and the Lord Jesus in mercy and grace lifted us from the pit of sin and the curse of the law. He gave us eyes to see his glory, ears to hear his voice, and a heart to love him. We know him who saved us (2 Tim. 1:12; Job 19:26; 1 John 3:14; 1 Peter 1:18-21).

Lord, I believe

John 9:26-41

v. 26. These Pharisees were unable to get this man to deny what Christ had done for him; so they urged him to repeat the story again, either hoping that he would contradict himself or that they could find something in what he said to persuade the people that it was all a fraud. Unbelief is usually occupied with how rather than with whom! Faith is occupied with Christ himself, rather than with the method.

v. 27. It is marvelous to see how this man's boldness and confidence increased. God gave him wisdom and courage before these religious leaders. 'I gave you the full account of what Jesus of Nazareth did for me, and you did not believe.' Then, either sarcastically or else seriously, he asked them why they wanted to hear it again. Would they also be his disciples?

vv. 28-29. Unable to answer him and unable to deny this great miracle, they began to curse him and to hurl anathemas at him. How like our day! Unable to answer the scriptures or to deny the miracle of grace and regeneration, men resort to name-calling and harsh charges against the true believer. 'We are Moses' disciples.' This claim was as false as it was haughty; for if they had believed Moses, they would have believed Christ; for he wrote of Christ Jesus (John 5:45-47; Luke 24:27). They knew that God spoke to Moses, but only by tradition and through the reading of the scriptures. They knew nothing of the message, which God spoke to and through Moses concerning the Messiah and his redemptive work. This is truly indicated by their own words, 'As for this fellow, we know him not!' (John 5:39; 1 Cor. 10:4; 1 Cor. 5:7).

vv. 30-33. Here was a poor beggar, deprived of the advantages which these Pharisees enjoyed; yet he knew what they did not know. He knew that Jesus Christ was of God! God had hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes (Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 2:7-14). He rebukes these religious leaders on several counts.

1. Here is a marvelous miracle. A man has opened the eyes of a man blind from birth; and you, who claim to speak for God, do not know who he is.

2. You claim that he is an imposter and a blasphemer. We know that God does not hear and do his work through imposters, but through those who do his will.

3. Even Moses never gave sight to the blind. That was something that only Christ did.

4. If this man were not of God, he could do none of these things. Even Nicodemus, the Pharisee, admitted this (John 3:2).

v. 34. These religious leaders were infuriated. They were theologians, graduates from schools of learning, and occupied high offices; therefore, it was beneath their dignity to be instructed by this unsophisticated disciple of Christ (1 Cor. 8:2). ‘Dost thou teach us?’ In anger they excommunicated him from the temple and from all the privileges of the Commonwealth of Israel. To an Israelite, excommunication was second only to the fear of death. This has been the tactics of religious leaders for centuries, to cast true disciples out of ‘the church.’

v. 35. The report of his excommunication quickly spread and became the talk of everyone. As a man, Jesus Christ came to hear of it; though He, as God, knew it when it happened. He found him, not by chance, but because he sought him as he cares for and seeks all his sheep. How true it is that

those who honor the Lord are honored by him! The Lord receives the outcast. He asked him, ‘Do you really believe on the Son of God – the Messiah?’

vv. 36-37. He knew that this Jesus was a prophet, that he was of God, and that he was totally open to his instructions; so he said, ‘Who is He, Lord? Tell me who he is that I might believe on him.’ How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard? (Rom. 10:13-14). He spoke to the beggar as he did to the woman at the well, ‘I am he.’ Faith comes by hearing! Miracles do not work faith. This man had received sight; but he must have Christ revealed to him in order to believe on him as Prophet, Priest, and King (Rom. 10:17).

v. 38. He immediately made an open and hearty profession and confession of his faith in the Lord Jesus. He fell down and worshipped him as God, trusting, believing, and resting in him alone. His excommunication from men meant nothing. He had Christ, the Lord!

v. 39. Christ came into the world that those who are in the darkness of sin, ignorance, and unbelief, and who are conscious of that fact, and who desire spiritual sight, may see the glory of God in him. ‘And they which see might be made blind;’ or those who profess themselves to be wise, who fancy themselves to have the key of knowledge, who deny their sin and darkness by nature, might be given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. Sinners will be saved; the self-righteous will be hardened in their darkness (Matt. 6:23).

vv. 40-41. These Pharisees perceived that he referred to them and asked, ‘Are we blind also?’ Our Lord answered, ‘If you knew yourselves to be in spiritual darkness, in need of grace and forgiveness, in need of the light of God, and desired to truly see, your sin would be pardoned and taken away.’

God would have mercy upon you! But now you boast of your righteousness, your knowledge, and your spiritual wisdom. Therefore, your sin remains upon you and you shall die in your sins!'

I am the door of the sheep

John 10:1-9

In Palestine there was in each village a sheepfold, which was the common property of all the farmers. This sheepfold was protected by very high walls. When night fell, to protect their sheep from beasts and robbers, a number of different shepherds would lead their flocks to the door of the sheepfold and leave them in the care of the porter while they found lodging. The porter remained at the door until morning when the shepherds returned. The porter would then allow each shepherd to enter in and call out his own sheep. The sheep would respond to the shepherd's voice and follow him.

v. 1. Our Lord is speaking here to the Pharisees, who had just excommunicated the healed blind man from the Jewish community. Evidently the sheepfold is Judaism and not the church, for the Lord does not lead his people 'out of the church' but into it. But the main thrust here is that our Lord was calling these Pharisees (who set themselves up as shepherds of the flock and guides of the people) thieves and robbers! They were not sent of God, the sheep were not theirs, and they did not come by the only door of redemption by obedience and blood, but another way, by works and ceremony and self-righteousness (Rom. 10:1-4).

v. 2. He that comes with a divine commission and by divine authority (as prophet, priest, and king), he that comes in fulfillment of the scriptures through the door of covenant mercies (elective grace, atonement and sacrifice, fulfilling all righteousness) is the true Shepherd of the sheep (Rom. 3:25-26).

v. 3. 'To him the porter openeth.' This intends God, the Father, whose law Christ honored, whose righteousness Christ fulfilled, whose justice Christ satisfied! The sheep hear the voice of Christ, which is no other than the gospel of grace, love, and mercy (1 Thess. 1:4-5; Eph. 1:13-14). The sheep of Christ are made to hear his voice by the effectual work of the Spirit in their hearts. They are his own sheep (John 6:37-45), and he calls them by name (2 Tim. 2:19). He leads them out of Judaism, works, false religion, captivity, out from under the law as a schoolmaster, out from under the curse of the law, or out of any captivity. 'If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.'

v. 4. When he leads his sheep out, he does not drive them nor follow after them; but he goes before them to lead them, to protect them, to show them the way, and to set an example for them. The sheep follow the shepherd in the way of life, in the will of God, exercising love, humility, self-denial, and obedience; for they love the shepherd. They know and love his voice (his word, commandments, and gospel).

v. 5. The sheep of Christ will not hear, follow, nor support those preachers, teachers, and pastors who are strangers to his gospel. They do not approve of the doctrines of works, ceremony, and self-righteousness and will flee from it as disagreeable and dangerous. This is the reason the beggar who was healed heard Christ and rejected the counsel of the Pharisees. He was one of the Lord's sheep and knew his shepherd. He also detected that these false teachers were not of God (1 Cor. 2:14-15).

v. 6. Our Lord spoke this parable to these religious Pharisees; but having no knowledge of their sins, no knowledge of the righteousness of God, no knowledge of Moses' writings and the true meaning of the sacrifices and types, and not being of the sheep of Christ, they did not understand one word! (John 10:24-27.)

v. 7. Since they did not understand the parable, by way of explanation our Lord said, 'I am the door of the sheep.' He is not only our shepherd, our owner, and our King, but he himself is the door to the kingdom of God! He is the door by which we come into the presence of God (Heb. 10:19-22). Christ is God to whom the atonement is offered, he is the atonement, and he is the great high priest by whom it is offered. In the same manner, he is both the shepherd who leads and the door by which they are led out and in.

v. 8. He does not speak here of true prophets such as Moses, the prophets, and John the Baptist, but of those false prophets and priests who were not sent of God, who denied the way of redemption, and who fed themselves and not the flock (Jer. 23:25-32). The true sheep of Christ did not and will not hear a false prophet nor a false gospel. The elect of God will not hear false prophets, for it is not possible for them to be totally and finally deceived.

v. 9. Our Lord declares again, 'I am not only the shepherd of the sheep, whose own the sheep are, but I am the door!' He not only provided a way of redemption and a way into fellowship with the Father, he is that way! It is by Christ, in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ that we are accepted (Eph. 1:3-7). If any man conscious of sin, emptied of self, desirous of life believes on Christ, receives Christ, and comes to Christ, he shall be eternally saved and shall find in Christ all that he needs.

I am the good shepherd

John 10:10-18

v. 10. The Lord refers again to the false prophets who, without a call from God, thrust themselves into the sheepfold. They have not the glory of God nor the good of the sheep in mind, but they serve themselves to the ruin of men's souls (Zech. 11:16-17). 'I am come not to destroy but to save my sheep. I am come that they might have spiritual life and eternal life; not that they might only barely live and escape hell, but through my sacrifice, obedience, and mercy they might have ALL spiritual blessings and an abundance of grace' (Col. 2:9-10).

v. 11. Christ is the good shepherd ('none good but God'). Christ is the Shepherd of the Father's appointing, calling, and sending, to whom and upon whom the salvation and care of all the chosen sheep was committed (Isa. 40:9-11). The good shepherd gave his life for the redemption of his sheep. He gave himself freely and voluntarily as a ransom for them that they might be delivered from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13; Heb. 1:3). His death was not in vain but was effectual to the salvation of all the elect. Not one for whom he died shall perish, but all shall hear the gospel and believe (Acts 13:48; John 6:37-39; Rom. 8:34-39).

v. 12. The hireling is one who works for wages or hire. He does not own the sheep nor love the sheep; but he does what he does for advantage, wages, or reward. He has no other motive than what will profit him. The wolf here is trouble, trial, danger of any sort, or any enemy of the sheep. Not having any concern for the sheep, the hireling will flee and the sheep will be scattered (not devoured, for the sheep can never perish, John 10:29).

v. 13. ‘The hireling flees because he is a hireling.’ A man does what he does because of what he is! When trial and testing time comes, a man reveals what he is by what he does. Character is revealed by conduct in the crises of life. When does the hireling flee? When trouble comes! You might never have known his true character without the trial (Acts 20:28-30). The hireling cares not for the sheep, only for himself and his wages.

v. 14. Our shepherd (Psalm 23:1) is the good shepherd – good in his holiness, good in his mercy, good in his word, and good in his full provision. He is the great shepherd, the chief shepherd, who knows his sheep! He knows them in that they are his and he calls them by name. He knows them in that they are one in union and body. He knows them in that he loves them with a perfect and eternal love. He lays down his life for the redemption of his sheep, and for no other has he laid down his life. ‘My sheep know me.’ They know him with a special, spiritual, and saving knowledge, having had him revealed to them by the Spirit and the word. They know him in that they love him and approve of him as their shepherd, having committed all to him (2 Tim. 1:12).

v. 15. This verse is in connection with v. 14, and the sense is that the mutual knowledge and union of Christ and his sheep are like that which his Father and he have with each other (John 17:21-23). As the Father knows the Son and as the Son knows the Father, so Christ knows the sheep and his sheep know him. The word ‘know’ here (as frequently in scripture) signifies love and approval. ‘I lay down my life FOR,’ not only in behalf of, but in the stead of my sheep. We live only because he died (Rom. 5:6-8; Isa. 53:4-6).

v. 16. Our Lord refers here to the Gentiles, who belonged not to the Jewish state, laws, and government. This is what John is saying in 1 John 2:2, that

Christ is not only a propitiation for the sheep among the Jews but also for the sheep among other nations who will hear his voice and believe. The Father gave him a people from every tribe, nation, and kindred. He is their shepherd, having loved them and bore their sins. With the elect of Israel they shall hear his gospel, and Jew and Gentile shall be one fold and one shepherd (Eph. 2:11-16; Rom. 2:28-29).

v. 17. Christ is speaking here as the mediator, as the servant, and 'mine elect.' As the eternal Son, he is loved from all eternity (Prov. 8:30). But the Father also loved him as the obedient servant (Matt. 3:17). The laying down of his life was the supreme act of obedience to the Father's will (Phil. 2:5-11). He gave his life with the view that he might take it again. This he did by raising himself from the dead, by which he was declared to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). He made full satisfaction to the justice of God for his people and rose again for their justification. He entered heaven as our forerunner (Heb. 6:20) and ever lives to intercede for us.

v. 18. No man takes Christ's life from him by force without his willing it and consenting to it. Pilate, the Jews, and the Gentiles nailed him to a cross but not without his voluntary surrender (Acts 2:23; Acts 4:26-28). 'This is the covenant my Father gave me to fulfill, the work he gave me to do. He sent me into the world to redeem my sheep,' and the accomplishment of it required his death. He died not as a martyr, or a reformer, or a victim, but as a divine, ordained substitute. He died the appointed death at the appointed time for an appointed people (Isa. 53:10-12).

My sheep hear my voice and follow me

John 10:19-29

v. 19. The real offense is in the gospel (Gal. 5:11; 1 Cor. 1:23). It was not his works but his words that caused the division among the Jews (John 10:30-33). It was his claim to Deity, to being the Christ, to being the Redeemer of whom Moses wrote and to whom Abraham looked, of laying down his life for the sheep and taking it up again, of fulfilling all the ceremonies, types, and scriptures of the Old Testament, of being the Bread of Life, the door to communion with God. The Jews knew what he was saying and were filled with wrath (John 7:43; John 9:16).

v. 20. It was a notion among the Jews that insanity or madness was from the devil. Therefore they said, 'He has a demon and is insane,' What a sad commentary on the condition of natural men, even religious men, that they should call the Son of God, truth incarnate, a devil! (Rom. 8:7.)

v. 21. 'Many' of them thought him insane, but there were 'some' even among these Pharisees (a minority) who recognized that he neither spoke nor acted like a demoniac. 'No madman can talk in such a spiritual and divine way,' they said, 'And certainly no demoniac ever opened the eyes of the blind' (John 7: 45-46).

vv. 22-23. Many writers say that this particular feast was one appointed by Judas Maccabaeus to commemorate the purification of the temple from the idolatries of Antiochus about 165 B.C. It was observed in the month of December for eight days. The mention of 'winter' is the main clue. Our Lord walked on Solomon's porch (Acts 3:11; Acts 5:12).

v. 24. The disciples believed him to be the Christ (John 6:69). He revealed himself to the Samaritan woman and to the blind beggar (John 4:26; John 9:37) as the Christ, and many of the people thought him to be the Christ because of what he had done and said (John 4:42; John 7:40-43). Now these Jewish leaders come and say, 'If you are the Christ, declare it to us freely, openly, and in exact words.' They said this not because they thought he was the Christ nor for their own information, but rather that they might to go the Romans and in his own words declare him to be an enemy to Caesar and the expected King of the Jews.

v. 25. Our Lord had told them that he was the Son of man (John 5:27), that he was the one of whom Moses wrote (John 5:46), that he was the Living Bread (John 6:51), that Abraham rejoiced to see his day (John 8:56), and that the scriptures were written about him (John 5:39). His mighty works were clear witnesses of his Deity and total power over everything (John 5:36; John 3:2). Compare Isaiah 35:4-6.

v. 26. They were not his sheep (his elect) given him by the Father or they would have come to him (John 6:37-39). They were not chosen of the Father, predestinated to sonship, and ordained to eternal life or they would have believed on him (Acts 13:48). A man does not believe to become one of the Lord's sheep; he believes because he is one of the Lord's sheep! Faith (as repentance and every saving grace) is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 2:4; Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; Phil. 1:29).

v. 27. 'As I said unto you before (John 10:3-5), my sheep hear my voice.' His elect, his sheep, will hear his voice in the gospel, not only with the ear but with the heart. They hear because a sovereign God gives them spiritual life and the capacity to hear (Prov. 20:12; Matt. 13:15-17). 'I know them.' Each of his sheep is known to Christ by a special knowledge of approbation, acceptance, and love. As the Father's gift to Him, he prizes

them highly, affectionately, and personally. The vast crowd of the non-elect he 'never knew' (Matt. 7:23). 'And they follow me.' That is, they believe Him, love Him, cast their lot with Him, and go with him wherever he leads (2 Tim. 1:12).

v. 28. Because of covenant mercies (whereby they were given to him by the Father and he became their surety), because of his obedience in all things (whereby they received a perfect righteousness, Rom. 5:19), because of his death, resurrection, and intercession (whereby they were justified before God in such a way that God's justice and character were honored, Rom. 3:23-26), he gives his sheep eternal life (1 John 5:11-12). They shall never (now or eternally) perish; and no man, demon, power, nor force can separate them from that union with him (Rom. 8:35-39).

v. 29. There is no stronger passage to be found in the word of God guaranteeing the absolute security of every child of God. They are his sheep, they follow Him, they have eternal life, they are in the hand of Christ, the Father gave them to Christ (John 6:37; John 17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24), and they are in the Father's hand. The sheep of Christ have a double security; they are in the hand of Christ, and they are in the hand of the Father. To suggest that any of his sheep could be finally lost is to blaspheme the Lord God himself.

I and my father are one

John 10:30-42

v. 30. Our Lord is speaking here of the security of his sheep and the impossibility of anyone or anything separating even one of them from him or out of his hand and the Father's hand, because, he says, 'I and my Father are one!' They are one not only in purpose and will, but in nature, essence, power, and perfection (John 14:9; Acts 20:28; Heb. 1:8).

v. 31. As they had in John 8:59, the enraged Jews took up stones to cast at him. What he had said they considered to be blasphemy and were violently angry (Luke 4:28-29).

v. 32. Our Lord was saying, 'I have done no harm to any of you. I have caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk, which are all works of mercy and benevolence. For which of these works do you want to stone me?' In other words, 'What is there in my life or my works that would make you want to kill me?'

v. 33. Actually, his works did anger them, and they even tried to discredit them; for it was his works, which bore the strongest witness of his deity (John 5:36; Matt. 11:4-6). His works were too marvelous and too open to be denied or contradicted. But the thing they hated and resented most was his saying that God was his Father and that he and the Father were one; therefore, he must be God in human flesh! They understood exactly what he was saying, that though he was born of woman and made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet he is very God of very God (John 1:1-3; Matt. 1:21-23).

v. 34. Is it not written in the scriptures (Psalm 82:6) concerning Jewish magistrates who have been given power and authority and represent God in the government of nations, kingdoms, and individuals, 'Ye are gods'?

vv. 35-36. If the Psalmist called men 'gods' and 'sons of the highest' which received a divine commission to administer justice in the name of God to the people (as Moses was to Pharaoh, as David was to Israel and her enemies, and as Joseph was in Egypt), surely it cannot be blasphemy to Jesus Christ to assert himself to be the Son of God, who existed as a divine person from all eternity, who was set apart by the Father to the office of prophet, priest, and king, and who in the fullness of time was sent into the world to be the author of eternal redemption to the sons of men!

v. 37. Again the Saviour appeals to his works to testify concerning his divine mission and power. These works he calls 'the works of my Father.' If I do not works which no man ever did, if I do not works that only God can do, if I do not works consistent with and in fulfillment of the scriptures, if I do not works which relate to the Father's will and purpose to redeem sinners consistent with his law and justice, then you have no right or reason to believe me.

v. 38. But if I do such works as can be done only by God, then, though you find it difficult to believe my claims to being the Son of God, at least consider the works that I have done! He who does the works that only God can do must be God! This is the way for you to know, be persuaded, and believe that the Father is in me and I am in the Father, by his mighty power and divine working through me! Nicodemus started at this point. 'We know you come from God; no man can do the things you do except God be with him.' Once that is established, go on from there; don't allow human wisdom, tradition, and unbelief to turn you from him (John 6:66-69).

vv. 39-40. They sought to take him again in order to bring him before the Sanhedrin and try him for blasphemy; but he escaped out of their hands as he had done before, not through fear of them or of death, but because his time was not yet come; and he had other work to do and words to say before he suffered, died, and rose again. It was yet three months until he would die on the cross; and he journeyed beyond Jordan to Bethabara, where he was baptized of John and where John bore witness of him (John 1:28).

vv. 41-42. John the Baptist did no miracles, perhaps so that when Christ came of whom John testified, his glory in working miracles might be more clear and evident. The people of this area said, 'We honored, respected, and admired John; yet he never did those things which Jesus Christ has done. All things which John spake of this man are true.' And many believed on him there. Through the words, which he spoke, the miracles he did, and by comparing the things John said of him from the scriptures, many believed.

He whom thou lovest is sick

John 11:1-16

v. 1. The town of Bethany was about two miles from Jerusalem. Christ was not at this time in Judea but was probably in Galilee. Bethany was the town where Mary, Martha, and their brother, Lazarus, lived. The Lord knew and loved this family, having been in their home before (Luke 10:38-39). Lazarus was very ill.

v. 2. In this verse John identifies Mary, which is necessary because there were several women called by that name. John says that she is the woman of Mark 14:3-9; and he will give his own account of the story in John 12:1-8 and add what Matthew and Mark did not mention, ‘and wiped his feet with her hair.’

v. 3. The sisters sent word to the Lord Jesus that Lazarus was sick. They did not plead their merit nor that of their brother. They said nothing of their kindnesses to Christ when he had been the guest in their home; nor did they instruct the Lord as to what he should do, though it is evident that they desired his help. What they did plead was his love, his goodness, and his particular affection for Lazarus. ‘He whom thou lovest is sick.’ They did not try to obligate the Lord by saying, ‘He who loves you is sick.’

v. 4. Our Lord knew that Lazarus would die and that he would raise him from the dead. We know that what the Lord was saying here is, ‘This illness will not terminate the life of Lazarus on earth (which is our ordinary notion of death—the separation of soul and body until the resurrection), but God has sent this illness and experience that he might be glorified in his Son's raising Lazarus from the grave.’ God is glorified

when the Son is glorified (John 17:1), and Christ is glorified when his divine power is manifested and men acknowledge him to be who he is!

vv. 5-6. Though the Lord loved Lazarus and his sisters with a tender love, he did not go immediately to them either to cure Lazarus or to comfort the sisters, but stayed two more days where he was. The ways of God are sometimes strange to us, but we must not judge his love to us and his care of us by outward circumstances. These trials are for our good, to prove and strengthen faith and to glorify our God and accomplish his eternal purposes.

‘His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour; the bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.’

vv. 7-8. After two days were over and Lazarus was dead, the Lord said to the disciples, ‘Let us go into Judea again.’ They did not know that Lazarus was dead, nor did they understand that the Lord Jesus **MUST** go to Jerusalem to suffer and die to redeem them (Matt. 16:21-22); so they objected to his going back to the place where the Jews had only recently tried to stone him.

vv. 9-10. There are, on the average, twelve hours in a day. If a man walks about and does his work during the daylight hours (allotted for work), he will not stumble over obstacles because he can see. But if he tries to work at night (especially in a country where there was no artificial light), he will stumble and be hindered in many ways. What he meant was this: ‘The time given me by my Father, to accomplish my earthly ministry and redemptive work, is definitely fixed as the hours of daylight (John 9:4). This time cannot be lengthened by you, my friends, nor shortened by my enemies. My time on earth is fixed in God's eternal decree. If I walk in the light and time of his purpose, I do his will. If I do not, it is evident there is no light in me.’ (Acts 4:27-28.)

vv. 11-13. The death of believers is often compared to sleep (Gen. 47:30; Matt. 27:52; Acts 7:60; 1 Thess. 4:13). This comparison is very appropriate because in Christ we expect a glorious awakening in that great day. Lazarus' resurrection is a picture of our resurrection, for like him we shall rise. This sleep of the believer is not a state of unconsciousness or soul-sleep. The body sleeps, but the soul is with the Lord (Luke 16:19-23; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-23). 'I go to raise Lazarus from the dead,' which he calls awakening him. The disciples still did not understand, and so they said, 'Lord, if he is asleep, it will be good for his illness and he will probably recover.'

vv. 14-15. Then the Lord declared plainly to them, 'Lazarus is dead.' 'I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there; for if I had been there, I would have healed him and you would have witnessed another miracle of healing. But now Lazarus is dead and will be in the grave several days before we arrive. The miracle of resurrection from the dead will be performed for the glory of God and for your sakes, that you may believe that I am the Son of God and the true Messiah' (John 20:31).

v. 16. This is the Thomas who, to the last, showed greater difficulty in believing than the other disciples (John 20:25). In the spirit of despondency and yet devotion to his beloved Master, the doubting disciple said, 'Let us go to Jerusalem also that we may die with Him' – not with Lazarus, but with Jesus! He felt that the Lord Jesus would certainly be killed in Jerusalem. I know that, with the others, he left Christ and fled; but this was not his intention at this time (Matt. 26:35).

I am the resurrection and the life

John 11:17-32

v. 17-19. According to his own will and purpose, our Lord remained where he was when he was told that Lazarus was sick until Lazarus had died and was buried. When he finally came to the outskirts of Bethany (John 11:30), Lazarus had been in the grave four days. John makes special mention of this in order to stress the magnitude of the miracle. The body of Lazarus was already decaying and decomposing (John 11:39). Bethany was only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many of the Jews had come there to mourn with the sisters. The Jews had a custom to mourn for friends for certain days (Num. 20:29; Deut. 34:8). The length of the mourning period probably was determined by the person's importance, but all had their day.

v. 20. It seems from the story in Luke 10:38-42 that Martha was the older of the two women and had the care of the house upon her, so the news of Christ's coming came to her first. She went out to meet him while Mary (quieter and more reserved) remained in the house (Luke 10:39).

vv. 21-22. Martha said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' Mary said the same thing when she approached Christ later (John 11:32). They knew that Christ could heal all manner of disease. They probably had said this over and over to one another while Lazarus was sick, 'Oh, if only Jesus were here; why doesn't he come?' 'But,' Martha added, 'I know (I believe and am sure) that even now, whatsoever you ask of God, God will give it to you!' She did not openly ask Christ to raise her brother from the dead, but this is certainly what she had in mind.

Whether she believed Christ himself to be God, at least she did believe him to be a prophet sent from God and able to do all things.

v. 23. The Lord, in the simplest possible manner, said to her, ‘Your brother shall rise again.’ He told the disciples that Lazarus's sickness was not unto final death but for the glory of God. He came there to raise him from the dead, and this is what he is saying to Martha.

v. 24. Mary did not understand what he was saying. She, being a student of the scriptures and a disciple of Christ, believed that the dead would rise from the graves at the last day. And this is what she declared when she said, ‘I know he will rise again in the resurrection.’ She found comfort in this, as do all of God's people (Psalm 16:9-11; Psalm 17:15; Job 19:25-27; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2).

vv. 25-26. Here is where we need to camp for awhile. Christ replied, ‘I AM the resurrection and the life.’ ‘I AM the source, cause, and fountain of eternal life, hence the cause of resurrection.’ Because he is God, because he lives, because he is our surety, righteousness, and redemption—we live! Because in him dwells all the full, blessed life of God, then we are complete in him. Because he lives, we live. Life and resurrection is not only an experience Christ purchases and bestows, but he is our life (Col. 3:4). We can no more die and perish than he can. If one believes and is in Christ, though his body is in the grave, he is not dead; he lives, for he is one with Christ. This is one of the seven great ‘I AM's’ in John (John 6:35, 8:12, 10:9, 11:25, 14:6, 15:5). It is by faith that Christ is received and known. It is through faith in him that the believer rests and receives all things (Rom. 4:20-25). The Lord turned Martha's thoughts from doctrine to himself. The doctrines of salvation, resurrection, and eternal life are understood ONLY in the light of his person and work (1 John 5:20). Our

Lord is the resurrection and the life in person (John 1:3-4; 1 John 5:11). Do you believe this?

v. 27. Martha's confession is similar to Peter's in Matt. 16:16 and the eunuch's in Acts 8:37. 'Yes, Lord, it is a settled conviction of my heart that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which, according to the scriptures, should come into the world' (1 Tim. 1:15; Gal. 4:4-5; Luke 19:10; Rom. 10:9-10). The fact that Martha wavered a little later (John 11:39) does not alter the fact that she believed him. Peter had a similar experience in Matt. 14:28-30. Our eyes are not always on Christ. Sometimes we are turned in the direction of the dead flesh.

vv. 28-31. Evidently the Lord Jesus told Martha to tell Mary to come out to Him, for she went back to the house and privately told Mary that the Master had come to the town and was asking for her. Mary arose quickly and went out to the place where Martha had met with the Lord. When the mourners saw Mary leave the house, they thought that she was going to the grave of Lazarus; so they followed her.

v. 32. When Mary saw the Lord Jesus, she fell weeping at his feet. Mary's faith, love, and devotion to Christ are so evident in every account of her (Luke 10:39-42; John 12:2-3). While she repeated what Martha had said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died,' nevertheless, there she was at his feet in love, reverence, and worship. Oh, that we might be found at all times at his feet!

Lazarus, come forth

John 11:33-44

vv. 33-34. The Lord Jesus saw Mary weeping at his feet. She could say no more after her comment in Verse 32 – only weep! He saw the Jews who were with her weeping, either through sympathy or hypocritically. He thought of the sin of the creature, which is the cause of sorrow and grief, and he groaned or was deeply moved in the spirit. This shows again that our Lord had a real human soul, subject to passions, though without sin (Heb. 4:15-16). As omniscient God, he knew where Lazarus lay; but he asked them, ‘Where have you laid him?’

v. 35. As they were walking along to the grave, the Lord Jesus wept. Who is to say what his thoughts were as they walked along? He thought of Lazarus, of the grief of the sisters, of the unbelief of the multitude, and even of the lack of faith upon the part of his friends. Three times in the New Testament we read of our Lord's weeping (John 11:35; Luke 19:41; Heb. 5:7). Are his tears not tears of pity and sympathy? And are his tears, not always, somehow, connected with sin and unbelief?

vv. 36-38. The Jews did not understand the deeper cause of his grief, but they concluded from his tears that he in truth did love Lazarus. But some of them drew a worse conclusion and one that questioned the character and claims of Christ. They said, ‘This is the man who opened the eyes of the blind. Why did he not save his friend from death and heal him?’ This is much like the mockery at the cross when they said, ‘He saved others; himself he cannot save.’ They continually looked for ways to discredit and doubt him. His groaning in himself might indicate a holy anger and

indignation at the wickedness and malice of the religious Jews. The body of Lazarus lay in a cave with a stone over the entrance.

v. 39. Our Lord commanded them to roll away the stone. He could have easily commanded the stone to roll away, but our Lord avoids all theatrics and show and uses means to accomplish his purposes. What an example of simplicity, power, and authority! Martha, who was always ‘careful about many things,’ probably thought he intended only to view the body (not raise him) and therefore objected to having the stone rolled away; for she said, ‘He has been dead four days and the smell will be offensive.’ Can this be the same one who said earlier, ‘Even now, what you ask of God, God will give you?’ (John 11:22). Her faith certainly wavered at the prospect of opening the tomb.

v. 40. Her objection was followed by his kind rebuke and reminder of what he had said earlier. I'm sure someone told her what he said in John 11:4 about Lazarus' illness not being unto death but for the glory of God; also in John 11:23 he said, ‘Thy brother shall rise again;’ and in John 11:25-26 he said, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me shall never die; do you believe this?’ All of this is summarized in these words, ‘If you would believe, you would see the glory of God.’ The performing of this miracle did not depend on Martha's exercise of faith; Christ intended to raise Lazarus for his glory. What he is saying to Martha is that if she would get her eyes off the corpse and the flesh and rivet her attention on Christ, trusting Him, believing Him, she would see the greater glory of God revealed in Christ. Faith sees in him the power and the wisdom of God and rejoices (John 11:4; Psalm 63:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:6).

vv. 41-42. After they had rolled away the stone, our Lord lifted up his eyes (the throne of God being in heaven, John 17:1). He said, ‘Father’ (not ‘our Father,’ for God is his Father in a unique sense, John 1:14, John 3:16) ‘I

thank thee that thou hast heard me.’ He refers not only to this matter of raising Lazarus but to the fact the Father always hears Him, for they are one in all things. The Father wills what the Son wills, and the Son wills nothing but what the Father wills. So then it is impossible that the Father should not hear and grant the will of the Son. His prayer was for the benefit of the people who stood by, that they might believe Christ and believe that the Father sent Christ. For if the Father had not sent Jesus, he would not be the Christ and the Father would not hear him in anything. All of this was full proof and evidence of his person and divine work.

vv. 43-44. He called Lazarus by name to distinguish him from the rest of the dead. ‘Lazarus, come forth.’ It was the voice of Christ our Lord that brought forth the dead. It is his word and power which give life to those who are spiritually dead and to those who are physically dead (John 4:25-29; Eph. 2:1; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). It was the custom to wrap the dead in strips of linen with a napkin about the face (John 19:40). So Lazarus came forth as they had laid him in the tomb. Our Lord said, ‘Unwind the cloth and set him at liberty to go to his house.’ The glory of God, the revelation of his power, love, and redemption, were there for all to see. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; God was in Christ having mercy on the helpless; God was in Christ giving life to the dead. Believe in him!

There are two ways in which the Lord Jesus is to his people the resurrection and the life: in purchasing our redemption from the wages of sin by paying himself the full price that divine justice demanded, and by making us one with himself, who is the very life of all being (John 14:6; John 17:21). The believer is in Christ by the choice of the Father, by the headship and redemptive work of the Son, and by a living union. So as he lives, we live; and this experience of Lazarus will someday be ours when the Lord Jesus brings us forth from the grave to die no more (1 Cor. 15:42-49).

Christ our substitute

John 11:45-57

The miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead strengthened the faith of Mary, Martha, and the disciples, increased the hatred and bitterness of the Jewish leaders who plotted his death, caused many of the Jews to believe on Him, and caused much talk and excitement in Jerusalem among the Passover crowds.

v. 45. These Jews had come to the house to comfort the sisters: and, accompanying them to the grave with the Lord, they saw the things which the Lord had done and truly believed on him to be the Messiah. What Christ said to the Pharisees in John 10:37-38 certainly applied to them; they judged his claims to be valid by the works which he did.

v. 46. But some who witnessed the miracle were more hardened with malice and envy and ran immediately to the Pharisees in Jerusalem to accuse him and to further stir up their anger. While some believed because of what they heard and saw, others were hardened in their unbelief. This is experienced where the gospel is preached (2 Cor. 2:14-16; Acts 28:24).

vv. 47-48. The Pharisees called together a council of the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the chief priests, which went under the name of the Sanhedrin. Caiaphas, the high priest, the president of the court, was among them. The question to consider concerned this man, Jesus of Nazareth. 'What can we do, for this fellow is performing many miracles? If we don't do something to do away with Him, everyone will believe on him as the political Messiah: and the Romans, hearing about this new Jewish king, will come with their armies (for the Romans will look upon this as a threat

to Caesar) and destroy our temple, our religion, our offices, and our city.’ They feared the loss also of what little power, authority, and distinction they had as Jewish leaders.

vv. 49-50. Caiaphas, the high priest, spoke up and said, ‘You are a group of ignorant fools to sit disputing and arguing about this fellow Jesus. What is to be done is quite obvious. Kill this man without further ado. It matters not who he is nor what he does nor what is lawful or right. It is reasonable and sensible for this man to die, innocent or not, that the whole nation be not destroyed. Follow Jesus and the nation perishes; put Jesus to death and the nation will be saved.’

vv. 51-52. Caiaphas spoke from his own wicked heart, but the Spirit of God preached the glorious gospel of substitution and redemption through him. He occupied the office of high priest between God and the people, though himself a wicked man; and without becoming aware of it, the villain became a prophet to declare the substitutionary work of our Lord. Yes, indeed! The Lord Jesus would die for the ‘holy nation,’ the ‘chosen generation,’ the ‘Israel of God’ (Rom. 11:26), and for all believers in every tribe and nation (Isa. 53:4-6, 10-12). He died that we might not die (John 10:14-16; 1 John 2:2). It is true that if the Lord Jesus does not die, we shall die eternally. The Son of man **MUST** be lifted up. Two words must be learned if we are to understand the gospel—*substitution* and *satisfaction*! Christ, our substitute, endured the wrath, punishment, and guilt of our sins before the law and justice of God. He made full and complete atonement and satisfaction for all the sins of all believers before God, in order that God may be both just and Justifier (Rom. 3:26). Therefore, being justified, we have peace with God. Christ died and lives eternally; therefore, we shall not die but shall live eternally with him.

v. 53. These men had met and discussed this before; but now upon the word of the high priest, they were more intent than ever to put him to death. The high priest had satisfied their consciences.

v. 54. Our Lord, knowing that the time designated in God's eternal plan for his death had not fully arrived, no longer walked about openly from place to place among the Jews but departed to the country near the desert to a city called Ephraim, a small out-of-the-way place.

v. 55. This was the fourth Passover from Christ's entrance into his public ministry and the last he ate with his disciples. This was also the last Passover; for Christ, by his sacrifice, put an end to this and all other ceremonial observances (Heb. 10:9-14). Many of the Jews went up early to the Passover to cleanse or purify themselves and be ready to observe the Passover (Exod. 19: 10-15; Num. 9:9-14; John 18:28).

vv. 56-57. The country people who had heard of him (or had seen him and heard him preach) began to inquire of his whereabouts. 'Will he come to Jerusalem?' Some asked out of curiosity to see and hear Him, others wanted to see his miracles, and perhaps some were interested in him and what he had to say. But the chief priests and Pharisees had one thing in mind – to arrest him and put him to death. They issued orders to all that if any man saw him or knew where he was, he was to report to them, that they might take him.

Worshipping at his feet

John 12:1-13

vv. 1-2. Six days before the final Passover our Lord Jesus came again to Bethany, the town of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. They made a special supper for him. Martha, who was always a busy, active woman, served the Lord and the guests. Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, sat at the table with Christ and the others.

v. 3. Then Mary, who was usually at the feet of Christ (Luke 10:39), took a pound of very costly and fragrant ointment, anointed his feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was literally filled with the fragrance of the ointment. Several things about Mary stand out strongly:

1. Her *love* and devotion for Christ,
2. Her *gratitude* to him for raising her brother,
3. Her *humility* in wiping his feet with her hair, and
4. Her *generosity* in anointing his feet with the entire box of ointment.

Her love and gratitude produced her humility and generosity! To whom much is given and forgiven, he will give, forgive, and love much.

vv. 4-6. Then Judas Iscariot, who had no love for Christ, but rather was a hypocrite and a covetous person, said, ‘Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?’ Judas did not care for the poor; he was interested in money and material things. What he really had in mind was that Mary should sell the ointment and give the money to him as the treasurer of the twelve. Of course, he could not suggest his real

thoughts; so he tried to impress the Lord and the others with his piety and concern for the poor.

v. 7. Our Lord came to Mary's defense. 'Leave her alone; she has anointed my body in advance or to prepare me for burial.' Mary was perhaps our Lord's best listener. She often sat at his feet and heard his words. She listened and said very little. She felt that his death was near; and she took this opportunity to anoint him for that day, fearing that if the Pharisees laid hold on Him, she would never be able to anoint him (Matt. 26:12; Mark 16:1-3). If, as some suggest, Mary did not know what she did, then the Spirit of God led her to do it; for Christ added a beautiful promise (Matt. 26:13; Mark 14:9).

v. 8. 'There will always be poor people in the church and in the world for you to care and provide for; but in the flesh I will not be with you very long, and you will not have these opportunities to show your love and devotion to me so directly.' However, in these days it is clear that what we do for others in the name of Christ is as if we did it unto him (Matt. 25:34-40).

v. 9. Multitudes of people who were coming to Jerusalem for the Passover journeyed to Bethany, which was only two miles from Jerusalem. It was reported that Jesus was there; but they came to Bethany not so much to see Christ as to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. How dull and dark is the understanding of the natural man, who is more interested in the curious than in the Creator, more interested in Lazarus than in the one who gave him life. How true that while miracles are a witness of the deity and power of Christ, they do not beget saving faith. This comes only by the Spirit of God and the word of God (Luke 16:29-31). While it is said that many of these people believed, they were like those in John 2:23-25 who were impressed by the miracles which he performed (John 12:37-40).

vv. 10-11. The chief priests were not impressed but rather angered because of the notoriety that Jesus had received and because the people were flocking to him. They took counsel that they might not only put Christ to death but Lazarus also! Their hearts were totally hardened, and they wanted to remove him and every trace of his ministry. If Christ and Lazarus were both dead, all of this would soon be forgotten or be more easily denied.

vv. 12-13. On the next day, when the people who had gathered there for the Passover heard that Jesus was on his way into the city, they took palm branches and went forth to meet him. Palm branches were a sign of great joy and victory; so they carried these branches to spread before the King Messiah, who was about to make his public entrance into Jerusalem. This is what they had in mind as they shouted, 'Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.' The Passover was at hand, in commemoration of the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. These Jews wanted to be delivered from the Roman rule, which would take a mighty deliverer like Moses. Jesus of Nazareth had demonstrated his extraordinary power in raising Lazarus from the dead; therefore, it appeared that their deliverer had come and the reestablishment of David's kingdom would now become a reality.

They had no understanding at all of his true Person and work, no understanding of the spiritual meaning of the Passover or the true kingdom of the Messiah. They knew nothing of sin, salvation, or substitution but were only concerned with earthly expectations and the reestablishment of Israel as a nation of power and prominence. It was not freedom from sin and acceptance by God, which they wanted, but freedom from Rome and worldly position. This was what they saw in Jesus and why they believed. This same crowd, which cried, 'Hosanna,' later cried, 'Crucify him; we

have no king but Caesar; we will not have this man reign over us!’ Much of today's religion follows the same pattern and program – earthly ease, position, and possessions.

Behold, thy king cometh

John 12:14-26

vv. 14-15. John simply states that Christ found a young ass on which to ride into Jerusalem. 'He found it' because he directed his disciples where to find it (Luke 19: 29-35). What he did was a clear fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, and the people and their leaders should have understood it. The daughter of Zion (people of Jerusalem) is told that their spiritual Messiah, the one who will open a fountain for sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13:1), has come. To emphasize the peaceful character of his coming and his reign, he is mounted on the colt of an ass. He comes as the Lamb of God, the Prince of Peace, not as a war-lord. The King is meek, lowly, gentle; and he brings salvation (Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15). The Lord publicly placed himself prominently before the people of Israel by fulfilling all of the Old Testament prophecies. He demonstrated that he was none other than Israel's true King. They rejected him (Isa. 53:1-3; John 1:11)! He was making it perfectly clear that he was the Messiah but that his kingdom was 'not of this world.'

v. 16. John confesses his own ignorance and that of the other disciples. They saw Christ riding into Jerusalem on the ass, the people scattering the palm branches and their clothes before Him, crying, 'Hosanna to the King of Israel;' but to what purpose this was done and what prophecies were fulfilled they understood not; for, like the others, they thought of the Messiah as a Jewish ruler. But after Christ died and rose again, they began to remember his words concerning these things and why they were done, as Peter clearly preached at Pentecost (Acts 2:32-36).

vv. 17-18. The chief reason for all this acclaim and great welcome by the people in Jerusalem was that they had heard directly from a number of witnesses (who were with him when he raised Lazarus) that he had indeed raised a man who had been dead four days. Jarius' daughter had just died, and the widow's son was not yet buried when he was raised; but Lazarus they knew had been buried for four days! It made a strong impact on the people, so they were ready to make him King.

v. 19. The more radical Pharisees said to the reluctant party, 'You gain nothing by your delays and by suffering this man Jesus to continue. Something must be done now or it will be too late. The world (or the public in general) has gone (away from us) after him.' It is not enough just to turn his followers out of the synagogue; he must be killed.

vv. 20-22. There were certain Greeks or Gentiles, who were commonly called proselytes (uncircumcised converts to the religion of the Jews), who came to Jerusalem to worship at the feast (Acts 8:27). These Gentiles had given up their idols and worshipped the one God – the God of Israel. These people were allowed to come to the temple as far as the court of the Gentiles (Isa. 56:6-7; 1 Kings 8:41-42). These men, being Gentiles, did not feel at liberty to approach the Lord Jesus; so they told Phillip that they wished to see the Lord. This request presented problems to Phillip. Would not the Lord invite not only the wrath of the Pharisees but also the wrath of all the Jewish people if he visited with these Gentiles? But has not the Lord spoken of 'other sheep, which were not of this fold'? The problem being too great for Phillip, he consulted with Andrew; and they both placed the request before the Lord Jesus.

v. 23. It would seem to most that the Lord Jesus did not reveal to the disciples whether the Greeks should be given an audience with him or not. But he most certainly declared that the only way that any man, Jew or

Greek, may approach Him, be accepted, and see his glory is for the Son of Man 'to be glorified.' He must die, rise from the dead, ascend to heaven, and serve as our Mediator. His gospel would be preached to Gentiles as well as to Jews, and all nations would come to God by him. The Gentiles must, 'see Him' as Redeemer of sinners, not as this curious multitude saw Him, a Jewish King Messiah.

v. 24. Consider ordinary farming. The grain of wheat must first be buried and lose its form before it springs up again and bears fruit. So it is with the Son of Man. He must be crucified for sin, buried, and rise again that the law might be honored, the justice of God might be satisfied, and there might be a gospel of life. If he does not die (like the corn of wheat), he abides alone with no people, no fruit! Without his blood and death, there is no remission of sin. But his death will be productive of much fruit from every tribe, kindred, and nation.

v. 25. So it is with those who would be disciples of Christ. If we hold to, protect, and shield this life from being crucified and buried with Christ, if we refuse to be identified with him in truth, suffering for the gospel even to death, we shall lose our souls. But if (like the farmer who in faith cast his wheat into the ground, believing in the future harvest) we cast our lives, hope, and future to Christ, with Christ, and for Christ (caring not for worldly security, comfort, nor praise), we shall live forever! (2 Tim. 1:8-12.)

v. 26. 'If any man is willing to be my disciple (bondslave), let him follow me all the way! When the issue is between me and my gospel on the one hand, and whatever has been nearest and dearest to him (father, mother, family, the world, his own life) on the other hand, my servant will follow me' (Matt. 10: 37-39; Matt. 16:24-26). 'Where I am,' in the love of the

Father, accepted and exalted, seated at his right hand, 'there shall my servant be.' 'The Father who loves me will honor those who honor me.'

Now is the judgment of this world

John 12:27-36

v. 27. 'Now is my soul troubled.' The scriptures say, 'He made his soul an offering for sin' (Isa. 53:10). Our Lord was in a human body, and his human soul was troubled at the judgment for sin and the wrath of God that was about to fall upon him for the sins of his people, which he bore. This agony and conflict was fully experienced and expressed in the garden (Luke 22:42-44). 'What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour'? This question was posed in order to declare and confirm again his purpose in coming to earth and his eternal will to redeem a people. Shall I put forth a petition to my Father to deliver me from the suffering, shame, and judgment of the cross? Certainly not! For this cause he came to the earth; for this cause he came to this hour; it was fixed in the covenant of grace; and Christ, as our surety, agreed to it. He will lay down his life willingly; and rather than seek to avoid the cross, he will put forth the following petition, 'Father, glorify thy name!'

v. 28. 'Father, glorify thy name.' Glorify thy attributes in me and the work of redemption I have undertaken according to thy will. In purposing to save a people from Adam's fallen race, in giving the beloved Son to be made of a woman and made under the law, in bruising him on the tree, the eternal God glorifies the perfections of his nature. His love, his mercy, his truth, his justice and righteousness, and his power and wisdom are all manifested and glorified (Rom. 3:23-26; Rom. 1:16-17; Psalm 85:10). Again the voice came from heaven (as at his baptism and transfiguration) saying, 'I have both glorified it' in the incarnation of the Son, in the Son's ministry and perfect obedience, and 'I will glorify it again,' by supporting

the Son in death, by raising him from the dead and exalting him at my right hand, and in calling out a people for his glory (Phil. 2:6-11).

v. 29. Just as in the case of Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, those who were with Him, though hearing a sound, failed to hear the distinct words (Acts 9:7; Acts 22:9). Many of the people who stood near Christ when the Father spoke said, 'It thundered.' Others, however, were willing to admit that they heard a voice and said, 'An angel spoke to him.'

v. 30. Our Lord said to the people that stood by and were disputing over what they had just heard from heaven (whether thunder, the voice of God, or the voice of an angel), 'This voice came not for my sake only, but for your sakes.' Not only extraordinary miracles and been performed before their eyes, such as blind men seeing and dead men brought to life, but with their ears they had heard the voice of God speaking to him. Yet natural men do not see, hear, nor understand the grace of God nor the person and work of Christ (John 5:40-44; 1 Cor. 2:9-10; Matt. 13:13-16).

v. 31. Our Lord says, 'now is the judgment of this world' (Acts 17:30-31). The Jewish nation, having the law, the prophets, and the types, nevertheless rejected their Messiah and are brought under judgment and their place removed. The world knew him not and, consenting to his death, have this sin laid upon all unbelievers (John 3:36). The sins of all believers of all generations are judged and paid for by Christ (Rom. 8:1, 33-34), and the prince of this world (Satan) is cast down. Satan had a dominion over mankind by the fall of Adam, keeping the greater part of the world in idolatry and darkness (Eph. 2:2-3). He is not by any right the prince of this world, but by God's permission he exercises his evil power and boasts himself to be a king (Luke 4:6-7). His doom, destruction, and defeat are now accomplished (Gen. 3:15). Men and women of all nations, tongues, and tribes are redeemed in Christ.

vv. 32-33. Our Lord is revealing that he would be ‘lifted up from the earth’ on a cross, ‘as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent.’ His death would be public, violent, and expressive of his mediation between God and men, being lifted up between heaven and earth (1 Tim. 2:5-6). By means, of his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation the Lord Jesus redeems, justifies, and calls to himself all of God's elect from every age and nation. He redeems them to God by his blood and draws them to himself by his Spirit and word. Our Lord is not the Saviour of the Jews only, but the Saviour of the world (John 10:16; John 1:29; 1 John 2:2).

v. 34. The people referred to prophecies in the Old Testament which said that the Christ is a Priest forever (Psalm 110:4), Christ is King over an everlasting kingdom which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:14), and, as the son of David, he would reign upon David's throne. They could not reconcile these things with Christ's talk of rejection, shame, and death. The reason was they were talking of and looking for an earthly kingdom with a Jewish king. They knew nothing of the Messiah's spiritual work of redemption nor of his eternal kingdom in the new heaven and upon a new earth. They had no understanding of their priesthood, tabernacle, or sacrifices. They knew nothing of the character of God nor their own sinfulness (John 8:19, 41-44). They asked, ‘Who is this son of man you say must be lifted up?’ The true Messiah will live and reign, so who is this son of man that you say must die? The term ‘son of man’ occurs at least eighty times in the gospels.

vv. 35-36. Christ is the light; the gospel he preached is the light; the revelation of his divine person and work is the light. ‘Yet a little while the light is with you.’ Soon he would be gone back to the Father, judicial blindness would come upon Israel, and physical death would soon come to them all. Walk in the light of revelation, receive the word preached,

believe the Messiah, and seek the Lord in truth, that you may be children of God. Days of grace, light, and the preaching of Christ come to many in this world who ought to take advantage of this blessing. The darkness of old age, senility, gospel-hardening, false religion, and false refuges leave a man only to stumble about in confusion. Our Lord then departed from them and did hide himself, leaving them to their thoughts. 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

Israel's unbelief

John 12:37-50

v. 37. The response of the people to Christ was unbelief! Though he openly performed the most convincing miracles before them (such as feeding thousands miraculously, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead), the great majority did not believe him to be the Messiah. This clearly indicates the nature of man's sin; it is so complete and deeply rooted that the most convincing arguments and miracles will not bring a person to believe in Christ without the regenerating and efficacious work of the Holy Spirit and the word of God (Luke 16:27-31).

v. 38. Israel's rejection of Christ did not defeat God's purpose (Rom. 3:1:3). Their unbelief fulfilled what was written of them in Isaiah 53. While the guilt and responsibility for their unbelief lay entirely upon them, their rejection of Christ led to the cross and the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose (Acts 2:22-23; Acts 4:26-28). Isaiah's complaint was delivered against the people of his time; but he chiefly wrote concerning the people of the days of the Messiah, for the whole chapter is a prophecy of the Messiah. The 'arm of the Lord' is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the gospel and the power of God unto salvation (1 Cor. 2:8-14).

vv. 39-41. This quotation is from Isaiah 6:9-10 and is quoted five other times in the New Testament (Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; Acts 28:26-27; Rom. 11:8). Any effort to change the clear meaning of this text in order to bring it into harmony with one's own theology is inexcusable. God determined to leave them to the blindness and hardness of their hearts and to deny them his grace, which alone can bring men to repentance and faith (Rom. 9:11-18). Whether one says, 'They would not believe,' or,

‘They could not believe,’ makes no difference; for men by nature will not come to Christ (John 5:40); and they cannot come to Christ unless God is pleased in grace to call them, teach them, and reveal to them his redemptive glory in Christ (John 6:44-45). In withholding light, truth, and heart illumination, it is said that ‘He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts’ (Isa. 45:5-7). Isaiah's sight of God's glory is described in Isa. 6:1. It was Jehovah whom Isaiah saw, who is Christ Jesus. He recorded faithfully what he saw.

vv. 42-43. When it is said that these men believed on Him, we must not understand that they believed with true saving faith; for had they truly believed in heart that Jesus was the Christ, they would have confessed Him, followed Him, and been willing to suffer with him (1 Thess. 1:4-10; Rom. 10:9-10). Evidently, like Nicodemus, they were impressed by the miracles, which he did and by the words which he spoke; for many of these men were well versed in the scriptures. But they feared excommunication from the religious community; and they loved the respect, honor, and praise which their offices brought to them. They were not concerned for the glory, honor, and praise of God.

v. 44. ‘He who believes in me,’ Christ said, ‘does not exclusively believe in me, but believes also in the Father who sent me.’ Receiving Christ means receiving the Father (John 13:20). Knowing Christ means knowing the Father (John 17:3; Matt. 11:27). Loving Christ and coming to Christ means loving and coming to the Father (John 14:6). Christ and the Father are one (John 10:30).

v. 45. Many saw Christ who never saw the Father, for they saw Christ as a mere man. But whoever sees Christ with an eye of faith as surety of the covenant, as the righteousness of God in obedience, and as the perfect sacrifice and sin offering (which enables God to be both just and justifier

of them that believe, Rom. 3:24-26) sees the Father. He sees the glory of God, the wisdom and power of God, and he sees the redemptive will of God—all in Christ (Heb. 10:9-17).

v. 46. The elect of God, while in a state of unbelief, are in darkness even as others (Eph. 2:1-3). When God is pleased to reveal Christ to them, they are enlightened (2 Cor. 4:3-6); they are no longer in darkness, for Christ is the light. In Christ and by Christ they see the glory, the grace, and the invisible realities of redemption.

v. 47. Men may hear the gospel of Christ and understand what is being said, yet not believe it. Though faith comes by hearing, it does not come to all who hear with the natural ear. Some receive no profit by hearing, but rather reject and deny truth. 'I do not judge the unbeliever now' (he will later), for Christ came not to condemn the world (it was already condemned, John 3:17-18); but he came at this time to save sinners. Christ will leave them to another day when righteous judgment will take place (John 5:22).

v. 48. Those who reject Christ as the Messiah and who refuse the truth of the gospel of his grace will be judged. Though Christ does not judge him now, let none think that he will escape; for the words of Christ declared by the prophets, by Christ himself, and by the apostles and other faithful ministers shall rise up in the judgment against all who did not believe (Mark 16:15-16).

v. 49. He spoke not as a man separate from the Father. His gospel was not human, but divine. He came from the Father and spoke the words of the Father (John 14:10). Therefore, a rejection of his words is a rejection of God.

v. 50. His commandment here is not the law, which cannot give life, but the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. The way to life is to hear and believe his gospel. Therefore, 'as the Father said to me I have spoken.' You will do well to hear the gospel, believe, and live (John 5:24).

Christ washes the disciples' feet

John 13:1-17

v. 1. This was the fourth Passover our Lord kept after he entered his public ministry – and the last; ‘for Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us’ (1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 10:1-14). Every Passover lamb slain had been a type of Christ, the Lamb of God. No more need for pictures and patterns when ‘the Lamb of God’ has died. Christ knew that ‘his hour,’ to which he had referred so frequently, had come. He came into the world to redeem his people through his perfect life and death. He would soon accomplish that death and return to the Father to be seated as the victorious Mediator on God's right hand (Heb. 1:1-3). Having loved his own (his sheep, his elect) with an everlasting, unchangeable love, he loved them continually, forever, even to death and forever.

v. 2. Many believe that the incident occurred before the supper and not after the supper had ended, for it was the custom to have a servant to wash the dusty feet of the guests as they entered the house. However, whether before or during the meal, we do know that Judas had already made arrangements with the priests to betray the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver.

v. 3. These words express the omniscience, omnipotence, and oneness of Jesus Christ with the Father. He knows all things. He knew that the Father in covenant purpose had given all blessings, all power and authority, all persons and things, and all grace and glory into his hands (John 3:35; Heb. 2:8; Eph. 1:3). He knew that the Father had sent him to accomplish the redemption of a people, that he would be victorious and return triumphantly to glory (Psalm 24).

v. 4-5. The washing of feet was the lowest servile work and was done by the least in the house. Yet the eternal King of glory rose from his seat of honor, laid aside his robe, wrapped himself in a large towel, and began to wash, tenderly and carefully, the dusty feet of each disciple. This task was never performed by superiors, but by inferiors to superiors, as by a wife to her husband or a servant to his master. This is why we find Peter objecting to such an act by his Master.

v. 6. After having washed the feet of some of the disciples, he came to Simon Peter, who out of reverence to Christ, asked, surprised and astonished, 'Lord, dost thou wash my feet?' Peter knew himself to be a sinful man (Luke 5:8), and he had confessed Christ to be the Son of God. He thought it too far below the dignity and character of his Lord to wash the feet of such a worthless creature as he was.

v. 7. Peter knew what Christ was doing. As a common servant he was washing the feet of his disciples, but Peter did not know the meaning and teaching of the act. Christ said to him, 'You do not understand now, but someday you will' (John 16:12). How we need to learn to wait upon the Lord's own time to make spiritual truth clear to us, meanwhile patiently submitting to his word and will!

v. 8. Peter ought to have been satisfied with the Lord's reply and submitted to him; but while he spoke first out of modesty and humility, he now spoke rashly and said, 'You shall never wash my feet.' The Lord replied, 'If I wash thee not, you have no part with me in redemption or in the kingdom of God.' Christ is not speaking here of this simple act of washing Peter's feet, but he refers to the washing of regeneration and the cleansing in his precious blood. Unless a man is washed, cleansed, and purged from

sin by the precious blood of Christ, he can have no part with Christ in glory (1 John 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

v. 9. Peter, convinced of his error, fearful of losing the hope he held in Christ, and conscious of his sins, says, 'Lord, don't just wash my feet, but wash my hands and my head.' He knew that he not only had walked in sin but had done evil and thought evil.

v. 10. The Lord replied, 'He that is washed' (that is, the person who is regenerated by the Spirit of God, called to faith in Christ, and washed in the blood of the Lamb) 'does not need to be washed again.' By one sacrifice and offering, Christ has cleansed, sanctified, and perfected all for whom he died. 'They are clean every whit,' all over within and without (Heb. 10:10-14; Col. 1:21-22). He only needs to have his feet washed. The reference is to people who have been to the bath and are clean all over and have no need to wash again except their feet, which may contact dust and dirt in coming from the bath. The believer is washed clean in Christ, and he needs not to be justified again; but he needs daily forgiveness and cleansing as he walks through this world. He needs constantly to be repenting and coming to Christ for forgiveness (1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:1-2). 'You are clean, washed and justified by my blood, but not all of you,' for the hypocrite Judas was among them.

v. 11. The Lord Jesus knew that Judas did not believe and would betray him; therefore, Judas was not redeemed nor washed by the blood of Christ. His blood is effectual to the full salvation of all for whom he died and was not offered in vain for those who perish (Matt. 1:21; John 10:11; John 10:14-16; Isa. 53:11-12).

vv. 12-15. After he had washed their feet and put his robe back on, he sat down and said, 'Do you understand what I have done to you?' He had

taught them the truth of substitution, of cleansing from sin by his blood before God, of justification, and of the need for daily cleansing and forgiveness. Now he would teach them from the same act to behave in sincere and genuine humility and condescension to one another. ‘You call me Lord and Master and you speak the truth, for I am King of kings and Lord of lords. If I, your Lord and Master, have not shunned the lowest service and the meanest task in my love for you and my willingness to serve the greater glory of God and your good, then you should follow my example and be willing to serve one another in the lowest and simplest tasks and station.’

vv. 16-17. In Christ there is no great and small, no important and unimportant, but only sinners saved by his grace. We are all brethren! The servant is not greater than his Lord; and if our Lord is willing to humble himself, shall we not do likewise? Happy are ye if you know this glorious truth by experience and perform the doing of it (Phil. 2:5-11; Mark 9:33-35; 10:42-45).

Judas, the betrayer

John 13:18-30

v. 18. The Lord Jesus refers again to what he said in Verse 11, ‘Ye are not all clean.’ When he spoke of the washing of regeneration, the redemption and forgiveness through his blood, and the daily cleansing, humility, and devotion of true believers to their Master and to one another, he spoke not of Judas, who was a hypocrite and would soon betray him. ‘I know whom I have chosen’ to salvation, eternal life, and perseverance in the way of God. The betrayal of Judas is the fulfillment of another scripture written by David pertaining to the Messiah (Psalm 41:9; John 17:12; Psalm 109:7-8).

v. 19. Christ told them that one of them would betray him; and he told them many other things, such as Peter’s denial, all of them forsaking Him, his death and resurrection, the world’s hatred and the persecution from the religious Jews, that when all these things came to pass, they would believe that he is the Messiah (John 16:1-3). He is the Lord God omniscient, who knows and declares all things before they come to pass. Also, one of the greatest proofs that Jesus is the Christ is the fact that all Old Testament scriptures are fulfilled in him (Luke 24:27, 44-47; 1 Cor. 15:1-4).

v. 20. ‘Truly, truly (you may be comforted and assured by this) I have chosen you and have sent you forth in my name to preach the gospel. You are my ambassadors and sent of me as my Father hath sent me’ (John 20:21). Those who receive the ministers of the gospel (chosen, called, and sent by Christ), those who believe and embrace their gospel, receive Christ in whose name they come (2 Cor. 5:19-20). And those who receive Christ

as preached in the everlasting gospel, receive the Father of Christ and partake of his grace.

v. 21. It is often said in scripture that our Lord groaned in himself, that he was troubled in spirit (John 11:33), and that he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. All of this shows him to be really man and to have a human soul. He was made like his brethren and tempted as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 2:16-18). He was grieved and troubled not by what would happen to Him, but at the evil nature, betrayal, and blackness of the crime Judas would commit. Also, up to this time, while he had suggested that one who had shared his fellowship would betray Him, he had not plainly said, 'One of you shall betray me.' This greatly troubled him and would be a stunning blow to them to realize that one of their own group would hand him over to the authorities to be killed. The fall of a supposed friend and disciple is always most difficult to bear. He was troubled as he broke this news to them.

v. 22. All of the disciples, surprised and astonished, looked from one to another, not having the slightest notion of whom he spoke. Evidently, up to this point, Judas had behaved as well as any of them and had shown as much zeal, enthusiasm, and dedication as the rest. He had given no occasion for anyone to suspect him more than any other, for they looked not on Judas but on one another (Matt. 13:27-30). Only the Master can truly discern the wheat from the tares (Matt. 7:22-23).

vv. 23-25. To understand this 'leaning on Jesus' bosom' one must understand the posture the Jews used at their meals. John was not sitting in a chair leaning over on Christ, which would have been too intimate and very uncomfortable. The Jews reclined at meals; and John was nearest to Christ, reclining on his side next to the Saviour. John does not refer to himself by name but usually with the statement, 'the disciple whom Jesus

loved' (John 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20). Christ, as the Son of God and the surety of his people, loves all his elect alike, not one more than another. But as man, he had a particular affection for John and admitted him near his person and more in his confidence. David is said to be 'a man after God's own heart' in this manner. Peter beckoned to John (who was so close to Christ in fellowship and position) that he should ask the Lord of whom he spoke. John, accordingly, presented the question, 'Lord, who is it?'

vv. 26-28. Some say that the Lord whispered to John; for if he had spoken out, the rest of the disciples would have known for what purpose Judas left. 'He it is to whom I give a morsel.' So after he dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas, saying unto him, 'What you do, do quickly.' Not one at the table, except John to whom the clue was given, knew why the Lord said these words to Judas.

v. 29. The disciples thought because Judas carried and cared for the money as treasurer, that the Lord was sending him to buy supplies or to give something to the poor. They had no idea that Judas was the betrayer, whom Satan had entered and possessed and who was going even now to make arrangements with the priests to sell his Lord. Another reason he whispered only to John was to prevent any reprisal against Judas on the part of the eleven. Had they known Judas' intentions, they no doubt would have prevented him. Can you imagine what Peter would have done? Consider his actions in the garden when he would have defended the Lord. Judas must be allowed to do what he did as he did it with no hindrance from the others.

v. 30. As soon as Judas received the sop, he left, fearing discovery and fully motivated by Satan. 'It was night,' which was a fitting time for such a dark deed.

A commandment newly revealed

John 13:31-38

v. 31. Judas had gone out to do what Satan led him to do, what his wicked heart designed to do, and what God determined before to be done (Psalm 41:9; Psalm 109:8; Acts 1:20; John 6:70-71). Christ, now being alone with his true disciples, talked more freely with them about his sufferings, death, and ascension and instructs them about their future conduct and behavior. ‘Now is the Son of man glorified;’ that is, the time has come that the Son shall immediately be glorified by accomplishing the work, which the Father gave him to do (John 17:1-4). By dying for his people, rising from the tomb, and ascending to heaven, he is declared to be the Son of God with all power and great glory (Psalm 24:7-10). ‘And God is glorified in him.’ The glory of God is more greatly revealed in redemption by Christ than anywhere else (Exod. 33:18-19); for hereby his wisdom and power, his truth and faithfulness, his justice and holiness, as well as his love, grace, and mercy are glorified (Rom. 3:26; Psalm 85:10).

v. 32. If God be so greatly glorified in the Lord Jesus Christ and his redemptive work (and this is an indisputable fact), as all the attributes of God are so clearly manifested and exalted in Christ, then the Father shall glorify the Son in himself and with himself. He shall raise him from the grave, set him at his own right hand (Heb. 1:6, 8, 13), give him all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18), and give him a name above every name (Phil. 2:9-11). This the Father will do straightway or in a short time (John 6:61-62). Jesus Christ is NOW King of kings and Lord of lords. His glory does not await the end of the world, but he is glorified and has all preeminence.

v. 33. The disciples did not fully understand what the Lord was teaching them, but they would later. He showed them that his sufferings and shameful death were for the glory of God and to accomplish his own eternal glory and purpose. He expresses his affection and concern for them, as well as his understanding of their weakness and failure to cope with his departure, by calling them 'little children.' He would be with them only a few days more; and they would seek him as those in distress and confusion, not knowing what to do nor where to go. He said to the Jews, 'Where I go you cannot come (John 7:34); the difference being that the unbelieving Jews, who died in unbelief, could never come where he went. The disciples, though they could not come now, would later come (John 14:2-3).

v. 34. This is certainly no new commandment in the sense that it is only recently revealed, for we find it in the law of Moses (Lev. 19:18); and John said we had it from the beginning (2 John 5). It is called new in that it is always new in the excellence of it. It is more clearly explained than before, being set forth in the gospel in a new manner. It is set forth in a new argument and example – the love of our Lord Jesus Christ for us. 'Love one another as I have loved you.' Love as brethren in the same family, children of the same Father, forgiving and forbearing one another, preferring one another, and love freely notwithstanding weaknesses and imperfections. Christ loves all of his own whether rich or poor, old or young, weak or strong, greater or lesser, not in word only but in deed and truth.

v. 35. Not only by God's grace and love shed abroad in your hearts shall you know that God has done a work of grace in you, but by this new heart, new nature, new attitude, and new conduct toward others shall all men (even the world) know that you are disciples of Christ. The distinguishing mark of a believer is not an outward garb, nor peculiar talk, nor 'holier-

than-thou' claims (as the Pharisees), but brotherly love. Love for Christ and a genuine love for his people are the distinguishing characters of a disciple (Eph. 4:32).

v. 36. Peter did not understand the Lord's words about his death, burial, and ascension to the Father. He probably thought Christ would go to some distant place; so he asked, 'Lord, whither goest thou?' The Lord replied, 'Where I go, you cannot follow now, but you shall follow me hereafter.' When Peter's work is done, when God has accomplished his purpose through him, when Peter's life on earth is over, he would certainly go to be with his Lord (Mark 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23), as will all believers.

v. 37. The Apostle was not satisfied to be still and accept the words of the Master. He had a high opinion of his devotion to Christ, of his courage in the face of the enemy, and of his willingness to follow Christ even if it cost him his life; so he said, 'I will lay down my life for you' (Rom. 12:3).

v. 38. When Christ asked, 'Will you lay down your life for my sake?' He was not questioning Peter's love and sincerity; for Peter did later lay down his life for Christ. He must destroy Peter's self-sufficiency and boasting, for Peter expressed this confidence in himself several times (Matt. 26:33; Luke 22:33; John 13:37). Our strength is not in ourselves but in him. Left alone, like Peter, we would all deny him. 'Peter, the cock shall not crow till you deny me three times' (Matt. 26:69-75).

I will come again

John 14:1-7

v. 1. The Saviour had told his disciples that one of them would betray Him, that they would all be offended because of him (Matt. 26:31), that he would go where they could not come at this time, and that Peter would deny him. These things lay heavily upon their hearts and greatly depressed their minds (John 16:6). Now in the multitude of these thoughts of grief, fear, and unbelief, our Lord comforts them and exhorts them to exercise faith. The best way to get rid of heart depression and fear is to believe God (1 Peter 5:6-7; Psalm 37:5). 'You do believe in God; you put your trust in God.' He says, 'Believe also in me.' 'For I and the Father are one. I am of the same nature and essence with him.' The Saviour knew that their faith in him as Messiah, Mediator, and God-man was yet weak; so he exhorts them to exercise faith in him. 'You have nothing to fear nor to be troubled about. As your Mediator and Redeemer, I will take care of all your concerns' (Col. 2:9-10; Rom. 9:33).

v. 2. The Lord Jesus now assures them that his going away to the Father's house is not a permanent separation; but the purpose of his coming into the world, dying on the cross, and ascending to the Father was to effect a perfect, permanent reunion with all of his elect. He would have them cease to think of an earthly kingdom and think of a spiritual, heavenly kingdom (Eph. 1:9-10). The Father's house is not one palace but many dwelling places. The word 'mansion' does not indicate different degrees of glory; for all saints are loved with the same love, bought with the same price, and are equally the sons of God. Their glory will be the same. 'Many mansions' denotes sufficiency of room. 'It is certain; it is my purpose and mission to go to the cross, to the tomb, and to glory to prepare a place for

you. If this were not true, I would have told you.’ Christ prepares us for the place, and he prepares the place for us.

v. 3. Rather than using the word ‘if,’ many writers prefer the word ‘when.’ ‘And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.’ There is no uncertainty connected with our Lord's purpose. This is the third reason he gives for rejoicing and peace of heart. Believe in me, I go to prepare a place and you, and I will return for you and receive you unto myself. ‘I will come again, for you, either by your death or in person the second time to take you with me to heaven, that where I am eternally in glory and perfection, there you will be also.’ Redemption is through Christ, salvation is IN Christ, and heaven is to be with Christ (2 Cor. 5:6-8; Phil. 1:21-23).

vv. 4-5. The Lord had told them again and again that he must die, that he must be buried and rise again, that he must go to the Father. ‘I go to my Father and to your Father.’ In these verses he talked of the Father's house; he had also told them that by faith in him they would have eternal life and glory. ‘You know where I go and you know that the way there is by faith in me.’ Though they had heard him speak often of these things, and they knew him to speak the truth, yet their knowledge was imperfect, and they were filled with anxiety and questions. Thomas, whether speaking for himself or for them all, blurted out, ‘Lord, we don't even know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’

v. 6. This is one of the seven great ‘*I am's*’ of John's gospel. (John 6:48) ‘I am the bread of life.’ (John 8:12) ‘I am the light of the world.’ (John 10:9) ‘I am the door.’ (John 10:11) ‘I am the good shepherd.’ (John 11:25) ‘I am the resurrection and the life.’ (John 14:6) ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’ (John 15:1) ‘I am the true vine.’

He is saying to the disciples that he is the way to God. He does not merely show us the way by example, he is not merely a prophet to teach us the way, nor does he merely guide us in the way by strong help and assistance – he is himself the way! He is the way from God to men in that all divine blessings come from the Father through the Son (Eph. 1:3). He is the way from man to God in that he is our righteousness, our High Priest, and our sin offering. By his holy life he honored the law of God, and by his death he enabled God to be just and justify those who believe (Rom. 3:25-26; Heb. 10:9-22).

He is the truth itself. He is not only the true God and true man, but he is truth itself; he is the sum and substance of all the truth of the gospel, of all the types and shadows; and he is the true way in, opposition to every false way. Pilate asked, ‘What is truth?’ Our Lord answers here, ‘I am the truth.’

He is the life. Christ speaks of life as opposed to death – all death and all kinds of death. He has life in himself (John 1:4; John 5:26). He is the source and giver of life for his own (John 6:33; John 10:28). He is the light of life, the word of life, and he came that we might have life. Since men in Adam lost the way to God (your sins have separated you and your God), lost the truth of God (let God be true and every man a liar), and lost the life of God (for in Adam all died), no man can come to God, know God, nor live before God except in Christ. Christ Jesus is the only way of access to God (Acts 4:12; 2 Cor. 5:21).

v. 7. In one sense of the word the disciples knew him and knew what he had said. But in another sense they did not know him like they would know him when all that he had said and done would be taught them by the Spirit (John 16:12-15). If their minds had been freer of their traditions, of thoughts of an earthly kingdom, and if they had listened and learned to know Him, they would have known the Father; for knowledge of Christ and the Father go together, he who believes one believes the other, he who

sees one sees the other, and the knowledge of both is necessary to life (John 17:3). 'In a short time, when the Spirit is poured upon you, you will have an enlarged knowledge both of me and of my Father.'

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father

John 14:8-15

v. 8. Philip took upon himself to speak for all of the disciples and addressed the Lord (as Thomas had in Verse 5) in a very humble and reverent manner. ‘Lord, show us a visible manifestation of the Father, as Moses and Israel had; and we will be satisfied and less disturbed about your departure, the Father's house, the way, and our eternal hope’ (Exod. 33:18-20).

v. 9. Was there any one fact that our Lord emphasized so repeatedly to the disciples and others as the truth of his oneness with the Father? (John 5:17-21; John 6:41-42; John 8:58; John 10:30-33; John 12:44-45). Surely Philip and the others had heard these words. This is why our Lord tenderly rebuked him by saying, ‘Have I been with you so long, have you seen the miracles, have you heard my words, and still you do not know that I am God in human flesh? He that hath seen me (not with natural eyes, but with eyes of spiritual understanding) hath seen the Father’ (Matt. 1:21-23; Heb. 1:1-3). It is also true that he who has NOT seen the Son has NOT seen the Father. Why do you ask to see what you have already seen? In the Son we have God's final revelation. Redemptive revelation apart from Jesus Christ is impossible.

v. 10. The Lord our God is one God, yet three persons (1 John 5:7; John 14:16-17). The Father and the Son are one in essence, in divine attributes, in purpose, and in perfection. The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. ‘Do you not believe this, Philip?’ It must be the very foundation of your faith! ‘You believe in God, believe in me’ (v. 1). ‘If you know me, you know the Father’ (v. 7). ‘If you see me, you see the Father’ (v. 9).

And now ‘If you hear me, you hear the Father’ (v. 10); ‘for the words I speak are the words, works, and doctrines of the Father who sent me and who dwells in me.’ The words Christ spoke and the works Christ did were not of himself AS MAN, but of the Father who dwelt in him.

v. 11. The faith of the disciples (which had seldom been strong) was wavering, and the Lord Jesus tenderly and patiently encouraged them. ‘Believe my words, which never any mere man spoke, and with an authority no man ever had, revealing the Old Testament scriptures as they have never been revealed – or else believe me for the works you have seen me do, such works as none but God can do.’ ‘The words I speak and the works I do, reveal that I am come from the Father.’

v. 12. The Lord refers mainly to these disciples who, believing on Him, would be filled with the Holy Spirit and perform miracles in the physical realm (Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3-4) for the confirmation of the truth of their gospel. These disciples did indeed duplicate the great miracles of their Lord. When he says, ‘Greater work than these shall he do,’ the greater works are spiritual works! This is the preaching of the gospel (even to the Gentile world) and the conversion of sinners. Miracles in the physical realm served only to confirm the claims of the apostles, as proof of the presence of God with them and as proof of their doctrine being from God until the New Testament was completed. These miracles gradually disappeared when they were no longer necessary. We have the word of God, full and complete, and do not need any other credentials. The regeneration, conversion, and salvation of a sinner is a greater work than any physical healing.

vv. 13-14. There is a connection between these two verses and Verse 12. The Master is still talking to and about these apostles. No miracle nor feat was beyond their power as long as it was desired and done in the name of

Christ, for the accomplishment of his purpose and glory, and that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Tongues, gifts, and miracles were never signs for believers but for unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22). As long as what they prayed for in his name served his greater glory, it would be done (Acts 3:6; Acts 3:16-18; Acts 4:10). Every miracle served to preach and glorify Christ.

v. 15. 'If you love me you will keep my commandments, my instructions, my words; and you will go forth as my witnesses and feed my sheep' (John 21:15-17). Since they had sat down at the table, the Lord Jesus had taught them humility, love, inner attitudes, and outward conduct. He had exhorted them to believe and to continue in faith, to pray in his name, and to continue his work. Now he says, 'If your love for me is genuine, you will do what I say' (1 John 5:1-3).

The Holy Spirit, our comforter

John 14:16-21

v. 16. Christ speaks as mediator and promises to intercede for them (Luke 22:32; 1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 8:34). Here is another reference to the trinity of persons in the Godhead--the Father prayed unto, the Son in human nature praying, and the Holy Spirit prayed for. The 'Comforter' is the Holy Spirit, who takes the things of Christ and reveals them to his people (John 16:13-14). He regenerates, sheds abroad God's love in the heart, teaches, guides, is the Spirit of adoption, seals the believer, and abides with us always as the pledge or earnest of our future glory.

v. 17. He is called 'the Spirit of truth' because he is truth (1 John 5:6), he guides men into all truth (John 16:13), and he revealed all the truth contained in the scriptures (Acts 1:16; 2 Peter 1:21). The world of natural men cannot receive the Holy Spirit nor the truth of the gospel revealed by the Holy Spirit because their eyes are blind, their ears are deaf, and they have no heart understanding of God (Matt. 13:13-16; 1 Cor. 2:9-14). As a result of the fall, all men are spiritually dead (Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1, 5) and must be regenerated or born again to see (understand) the kingdom of God (John 3:3-8), to know and love God, and to partake of eternal life. The believer knows God, he knows the Redeemer (John 17:3), and he knows the Spirit of God, who dwells with him and in him.

v. 18. 'I will not leave you orphans,' as when a father dies and his children are left orphans for others to care for and to raise. 'I will come to you.' The reference here is not to the return of Christ but to the presence of his Spirit with them, for to have the Spirit of Christ is to have Christ and the Father (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:12). Our Lord ascended to heaven; but when

the Holy Spirit came upon them, Christ truly returned to them (Acts 1:4-5, 8).

v. 19. The world saw the man Jesus Christ with fleshly eyes. They never really saw him nor knew him. Soon he would be crucified, buried, risen, and exalted to the right hand of God. The world then would see him no more in any revelation. But the believer sees Christ! Some saw him in the flesh before he died and again after he arose. But this 'seeing Christ' is with eyes of faith – Christ eternal, Christ incarnate, Christ our righteousness, Christ our redemption, Christ our mediator, and Christ our Lord. We (who never saw him in the flesh) see him in the scriptures. Because he lives as God (the giver of life) and as our Redeemer (the purchaser of eternal life), we shall also live and never die. Christ is our life (Col. 3:4); and being one with Him, we shall live eternally.

v. 20. When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will recognize and understand this spiritual union between the believer and the Lord God. 'I am in the Father, you are in me, I am in you, and we are all one' (John 17:21-23). Christ, by his Spirit, actually lives in the believer (Gal. 2:20). He is the head and we are the body. He is the vine and we are branches. To harm a believer is to harm Christ, and to bless a believer is to bless Christ (Acts 9:4; Matt. 25:40).

v. 21. The believer who has the precepts and commandments of Christ has them not in a book, but written on his mind to think upon them, and on his heart to love them. By the grace of God and the power of the Spirit, he keeps them. His commandments are not grievous to those who love him. 'He it is that loveth me.' Others may talk of loving and believing on Christ, but one cannot separate faith and conduct. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he!' Obedience to Christ is evidence of love for Christ. Our love for Christ is not the cause or condition of the Father's love to his

people, for 'we love him because he first loved us' (1 John 4:10). 'He that loveth me will have a clearer discovery of the Father's love for him and of my love for him and I will more and more manifest myself to him.' Everything that we are and have spiritually in union with Christ is capable of growth as he is pleased to reveal himself and his word to us (1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Peter 3:18; 2 Peter 1:4-8). So our Lord is saying that those who have seen him and love Him, he will all their lives favor them with his presence and manifestations of his fullness, his grace, and his glory.

Peace I leave with you

John 14:22-31

v. 22. Most likely the disciples still had thoughts of a great kingdom of the Messiah, visible to the whole world (Acts 1:6). Therefore, when the Lord Jesus talked of the world seeing him no more, of returning only to them and to other believers, and of dwelling with them, the Apostle Jude (surnamed Thaddaeus, author of the epistle which bears his name) asked, 'How can we see you, know you, and walk with you and the world not see you?' It may be, as some suggest, that Jude was asking not HOW but WHY display his power and kingdom to them alone and not to the public in general.

v. 23. Our Lord answered Jude's question and also confirmed what he said before in Verse 21, 'Because you love me and keep my words.' No love, no works of ours (seen or foreseen) are the CAUSE of his eternal love and mercy toward believers (1 John 4:10, 19). Yet our love for him and our obedience to his word are proof of his grace in us and of our part in his spiritual kingdom; and this will result in our eternal good (Rom. 8:28), further manifestation of his grace, and the living God, Father, Son, and Spirit, dwelling in us (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16).

vv. 24-25. Those who do not sincerely love the Lord Jesus Christ do not love his words, his doctrine, nor his ordinances and will not obey them. These words apply not only to the profane world but also to professors of religion, who do their works to be seen of men and not out of love for Christ. Therefore, Christ will not manifest himself to them nor dwell with them (John 2:23-25; 1 Cor. 16:22). This declaration is not mine only (or not mine as a man); but this is my Father's decree. It is not from earth but

from heaven. ‘All these things I have spoken to you, being yet present. After my departure I, through the Spirit, will make them much clearer to you’ (John 16:12-13).

v. 26. Between the time that our Lord spoke these words and the time when the Holy Spirit came upon them, think of the significant events that occurred and the vast amount of scriptures and promises of Christ that were fulfilled—the crucifixion, the rent veil, the resurrection, his appearances to them, and the ascension. The indwelling Holy Spirit will more fully and perfectly instruct them in all these things and also will bring to their remembrance all that Christ said to them, things which they could not, under the circumstances, enter into. There are no new truths, only newly revealed truth. We learn the truth as God is pleased to reveal it and as we are able to receive it (1 John 2:20, 27).

v. 27. ‘Peace be to you,’ was the Jewish salutation (1 Sam. 25:5-6). Under that word they comprehended all manner of good to their friends, both when they greeted them or when they departed from them. Christ, about to depart from the disciples, said, ‘Peace I leave with you.’ But this peace Christ leaves with you is ‘My peace,’ which the world can never bestow, no matter how often they say, ‘Peace be to you’ (Jer. 6:13-14). The peace of this world is at best external and temporary; but the peace of Christ is internal, lasting, based on the sure promises of his word and the merits of his blood, and will strengthen and sustain his people through any trial. Therefore, he tells them, ‘Do not be troubled at my departure nor be afraid of the dangers you face; for in the midst of it you shall have my presence and my peace!’

vv. 28-29. The Lord Jesus had told them again and again that he must suffer these things, that he must die to fulfill all that was written of him and necessary for our salvation, that he must depart, and that he would

come again to them. If the disciples had loved him as they ought and if they had believed him as they should, rather than being depressed and troubled, they would have rejoiced at his words. Their thoughts were too much on themselves and not for his greater glory. Love rejoices that he has finished his work, he is glorified at the Father's right hand, he has a name above every name, our redemption is complete, and he lives to die no more. 'My Father is greater than I'— not in essence (John 10:30); but as a mediator between God and men, himself man, he is inferior (1 Tim. 2:5). He told them all these things before they came to pass so that when they saw them happen, they would not be overwhelmed with sorrow but would believe.

v. 30. He had been talking with them for hours and would talk with them much more after his resurrection, for he was with them for forty days. But he means there will not be much time for teaching and conversation before his death; for Satan, the prince of this world, had already inspired Judas, the soldiers, and the Sanhedrin to arrest him; and they were on their way. Satan comes: but he would find no fault in Christ, nothing in agreement with his evil designs, nothing in our Representative and God's anointed but complete holiness and submission to the Father's will (John 18:38).

v. 31. Christ offers no resistance (Isa. 53:7) to show all that he perfectly loves the Father and that he came only to do the will of the Father (Heb. 10:7-10). He calmly arises and bids the disciples to follow him. 'No man takes my life from me; I lay it down' (John 10:18).

I am the vine

John 15:1-7

v. 1. Our Lord had told his disciples and others on previous occasions, 'I am the *door*; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved.' There is no other door. He said, 'I am the true *bread* from heaven;' 'I am the *water* of life;' 'I am the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*.' Everything that God has spiritually and eternally is in Christ, by Christ, and through Christ (John 3:35; Col. 2:9; 1 Cor. 1:30). Acceptance, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life are ours by a living union with Christ; for he is the true vine. Believers are branches that have life, grow, and bear fruit only because of their union with the life-giving vine. With respect to the vine and the branches that are in the vine, 'My Father is the vine-dresser' who purposed, planted, and supported the vine (Heb. 10:5; Gal. 4:4-5) for the purposes of his will and for his own glory (Eph. 1:11-12).

v. 2. There are many religionists (such as Judas, Simon Magus, Demas, and others) who even appear to be in Christ by association, outward profession, and performance of church duties; but they bear no spiritual fruit--love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22). Religious duties and what men call 'fruit' may be produced without any true spiritual union with Christ (Luke 16:15). These professors are dead branches which will eventually be exposed and taken away. The true branches which are savingly rooted in Christ by the Father's will and through genuine faith not only bear spiritual fruit, but they are constantly pruned, cleansed, and cared for by the Father through trial, teaching, and afflictions that they may grow and bring forth more fruit (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:7; Psalm 119:71). The fruitless branches were never 'in Christ' by grace through faith. They only appeared to be.

v. 3. Christ had told his disciples in John 13:10 that they were ‘clean, but not all,’ because Judas was then among them. His being gone, Christ could now say to the eleven, ‘Ye are clean.’ Not by works, by law, nor by ceremony were they clean, regenerated, sanctified, and justified, but by his blood through the word preached and believed (Titus 3:5; James 1:18). These men were all true branches in the true vine, Christ Jesus. By the grace of God they believed in Christ, loved Christ, and were in Christ, never to be separated from him (John 10:27-30; Eccles. 3:14; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

v. 4. It is true that once a man is saved by God's grace, he will remain saved forever; yet the scriptures are full of warnings to believers against unbelief (Heb. 3:12-14), against drawing back (Heb. 10:38-39), to continue in the faith (Col. 1:21-23), and against neglecting his word (Heb. 2:1-3). Abiding in Christ is abiding in his word (v. 7), abiding in his love (v. 10), and abiding in his Spirit (1 John 2:27). This abiding in Christ is not a condition which man fulfills by himself before Christ will give him life, but abiding in Christ is the result of Christ's gift of life and true evidence that we have the life of Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Branches on a grapevine do not bear fruit by themselves but from the vine and as a result of their union with the life-giving vine; neither can any man bear, produce, nor possess any spiritual knowledge, life, gift, grace, or holiness except through Christ's abiding in him and his abiding in Christ (Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 15:10).

v. 5. Three things are expressed here:

1. Christ himself is the vine, the fountain, the spring, and the source of all life; and we are the branches who have no life, power, nor even existence apart from him. Without him we have and can do absolutely nothing.

2. Believers are truly one with Christ (John 17:21-23), and that close union with Christ is expressed here; for when one looks at the vineyard, he considers the vine and the branches to be one; and truly they are one as the head and the body are one (1 Cor. 12:12).

3. Those branches which abide in Christ will surely bring forth the fruit of his Spirit (1 John 4:7-8; 1 Thess. 1:4-10). His presence, power, and Spirit beget peace, righteousness, and love.

v. 6. When the vine-dresser comes to care for his vineyard, he prunes, dresses, and gives special attention to the branches which have life, green leaves, and fruit. But the branches which are hanging around the vine, diseased, dead, and fruitless, he takes away, bundles them together, and burns them. These fruitless branches are false religious professors who profess to believe, who are numbered with the church, and who appear to men to be 'in Christ.' But like the wheat and the tares, it takes the eye of God to discern the real difference. We form our opinions by outward signs. God looks on the heart, and he will expose the counterfeit.

v. 7. Abiding in Christ means many things, such as regeneration or the very fact of spiritual life (Eph. 2:1; John 1:12-13), faith in Christ (Heb. 10:38), love for Christ (John 15:10; John 21:17), and perseverance (Heb. 3:6, 14). But abiding or living in Christ is expressed here simply as 'my words abide in you.' His word is truth, the gospel, his promises, precepts, and grace, and is called 'the word of life' (Phil. 2:16; Heb. 4:12; John 6:63). The word of God is called the seed of life (1 Peter 1:23-25; Luke 8:11-15). One cannot separate the incarnate Word and the written word. It is impossible for a man to abide in Christ who knows not, loves not, and obeys not his word. 'Ye shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.' This must not be understood of temporal things, such as riches, honors, material and physical luxuries, which we may at times covet, but of things spiritual. The man in whom his word abides desires the will of

God and the glory of God and will pray accordingly (Rom. 8:26). Yet all things spiritually required, needed, and sought will be given if we abide in him and his words abide in us (Matt. 7:7-11; Phil. 4:19; 1 Cor. 3:21-23).

Abiding in his love

John 15:8-16

v. 8. When believers walk in truth and love, when they adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, with generous, gracious and exemplary lives and behavior, they glorify God (Matt. 5:16). The fruits of righteousness, by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, displayed by a believer, not only glorify the power, grace and mercy of God in them but cause others to glorify God. 'So shall ye be my disciples.' Our fruitfulness does not make us disciples of Christ, but is proof and evidence that we are his disciples. Good fruit does not make a tree good; the tree is first good and the fruit is evidence that the tree is good.

v. 9. The Father's love to the Son is eternal, unchangeable, constant, full and perfect. In all these respects Christ loves his people. This ought to encourage us not only to cherish that love above all things but to continue in that state of love and favour (1 John 4:7-11). 'Abide in me, abide in my word and abide in my love'; this is true faith and discipleship.

v. 10. All of these words seem to enforce the principle of perseverance in faith and love for Christ as taught throughout the word. It is not those who occasionally cry, 'Lord, Lord, who will enter the kingdom of heaven, nor those who name Christ with their lips while their hearts are far from him, nor those who profess to know and love him; but those who truly believe, know and love Christ will walk with him, continue in faith and good works and continue in his love, even as he is for ever the Son of God and always does those things that please his Father (Jer. 32:40; Col 1:21-23; Heb. 3:6, 14). Men show the operation of grace in the heart and true love for Christ by continuing in faith, in his word and in his love.

v. 11. His words concerning their union with him as the vine and branches, his love for them and their love for him, and his exhortation for them to continue in him, in his words and in his love were spoken to them in order that his joy, peace and rest might remain in them, fill them and encourage them even in the most severe trials of life (Col. 3:15; Rom. 15:13; Phil 4:7). Difficult times were ahead (John 16:1-4), and they would recall these words in these days.

v. 12. While speaking of perseverance in faith and setting forth the evidences of true discipleship, our Lord comes to the clearest proof and sign of a union with him: 'that you love one another' (John 13:34-35). Love is the principal commandment on which all the others rest (1 Cor. 13:13; 5:13-14; Matt. 22:36-40). Love is of God, and 'He that loveth not knoweth not God' (1 John 4:7-10, 20-21). It is only as we are in Christ, in his word and in his love that we are able really to love one another and that we shall keep on loving one another.

v. 13. When you combine verses 12 and 13 you are able to see what kind of love our Lord is saying we are to have for one another: 'As I have loved you and lay down my life for you.' There is no way that we can copy the infinite, substitutionary and redemptive love of our Lord; nevertheless, the principle of self-sacrifice, self-denial and doing all that we can for the benefit and well-being of others, even to the point of denying ourselves, is there. Like the love of Christ for us, our love for one another gives, forgives, sacrifices, continues and is sincere (1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 4:32).

v. 14. The word 'friend' carries a powerful message, and Abraham was called the friend of God (Isa. 41:8). God spoke to Moses as a friend (Exod. 33:11). Our Lord calls true believers his friends. What favor to be the friends of God! The friends of the Lord are those who love him and do his

commandments. Not that these things gain for us the favour of God and the blessings of his covenant, for that is the gift of his grace in Christ; but the sense is that by obeying his word and doing his will out of a principle of love for him, it becomes evident that we are truly sons and friends of Christ.

v. 15. There is a sense in which we are the servants and bond slaves of our Lord (Rom. 1:1; Exod. 21:1-6), and we delight to serve him in love for ever. But our Lord is saying to his disciples, 'You are more than servants; you are my friends.' A master usually keeps himself distant from servants, commands them to do his bidding without explanation and rewards them or punishes them according to their productivity. With a friend it is different. A friend is loved and taken into one's confidence, plans and counsels. Christ reveals to us, as we are able to receive it, his purpose, his counsel, the great designs of his grace and the glories of his redemptive will. Christ has made known to us, his friends, the glory, gospel, word and purpose of the Father (John 17:6-8, 14).

v. 16. Though we are friends of Christ and with Christ, that friendship and love did not begin with us but with him. Men by nature hate God (Rom. 8:7). This friendship was one-sided in its origin. He chose us, he set his love upon us, he redeemed us and he called us to himself (Rom. 8:28-31; Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:3-4). We love him because he loved us; we seek him because he sought us, and we call upon him because he made us willing (Psalm 110:3; John 4:10-19; Rom. 5:8). It was Christ who elected us out of a world of sin and darkness and ordained that we should be his sheep, his followers and bear fruit for his glory (Eph. 2:8-10). Being in Christ by purpose and abiding in Christ by grace will produce lasting fruit and bring further mercies and blessings to those who seek his glory and pray accordingly.

The hatred of the world

John 15:17-27

v. 17. This is the third time in his last words to the disciples that Christ has told them to ‘love one another’ (John 13:34, 15:12, 15:17). He had declared such strong love for them that it is right and proper for them to love one another. If we abide in Him, in his word, and in his love, we will love one another. We not only love him because he first loved us, but we love others because he first loved us (1 John 4:19-20).

v. 18. The ‘world’ here is not only the secular, evil world but the religious world as well. The disciples had experienced the hatred of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin. He is saying that after he is gone, this hatred will be vented upon them. The disciples of Christ are hated because they are not of the world and because they belong to the one whom the world hates. Men do not hate their gods nor the god they call ‘Jehovah,’ but they hate the living God who is revealed in Jesus Christ and in the word! (John 1:10-11, 5:16, 7:1, 8:59.)

v. 19. Believers are in the world but not of the world (John 17:14). Believers are different from the world in character, attitude, principle, affections, and objectives. If they were like the world in these things, the world would love them; for everyone loves those who are like them. But Christ said, ‘I have chosen you out from among the world to know me, to love me, to walk in my word, to do my will; therefore, the world will hate you just as they hate me and my words’ (2 Tim. 3:12; Phil. 1:29). The believer's very existence, manner of life, and gospel message condemn the world.

v. 20. For their further comfort under the hatred of the world, he reminds them of a saying he used before to teach them humility, self-denial, and brotherly love. 'The servant is not greater than his Lord' (John 13:16). We are infinitely less deserving and lower than our Lord; so if they have persecuted Him, why should we hope to escape? 'If they are inclined of the Spirit to receive my word, they will receive and keep your words, which are but my words preached by you' (Luke 10:16).

v. 21. All of the hatred, persecution, and evil done to believers is 'for my name's sake' or because of me! 'You are called by my name, and you call upon my name. You love me, confess me to be the Messiah and Redeemer, and preach to others my gospel of free and sovereign grace. Therefore, their hatred for me compels them to hate and persecute you. You have no cause to be ashamed, but you have cause to rejoice (Matt. 5:10-12). All of this the world does because they know not my Father who sent me' (John 8:19, 42, 54-55).

v. 22. The sin Christ speaks of here is the sin of Israel and the religious Jews in rejecting the Messiah sent to them (Acts 3:25-26; John 1:11). If he had not come in his incarnation, in fulfillment of all their law and prophets, and with undeniable proof of his person, they would not be under such strong judgment for their particular sin; but he has come and they have no excuse (Isa. 53:1-3; Rom. 11:7-10).

v. 23. It is a common error in this world that many pretend to know, love, and worship God while they reject and despise the Lord Jesus Christ. This is impossible! Whoever hates him that is sent, hates also him that sent him. God the Father and Christ are ONE (John 10:30, 5:23). The hatred of the world is toward the Father, the Son, and all who love him.

v. 24. In Verse 22 our Lord spoke about his words, which they heard and despised; now he refers to the supernatural and miraculous works, which he did. Surely the hatred of these religious Jews is inexcusable. They have both seen and heard (John 5:31-40); they have had plainly revealed to them that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. Their sin of unbelief is further aggravated and terrible in the light of such revelations.

v. 25. This hatred and rejection was prophesied by David in Psalm 35:19 and is the means by which God fulfilled his redemptive work. The hatred of men must result in the crucifixion of Christ in order that his people may be saved (Acts 2:23, 36; Acts 4:27-28); yet the guilt rests on men, for they did what they wanted to do. Nothing in him gave them cause for this hatred; the evil was in themselves.

v. 26. 'But when the Holy Spirit is come, he shall bring all my words to your remembrance; he shall take the things of Mine' (wisdom, righteousness, justification, redemption, substitution, satisfaction, eternal life) 'and show them to you.' He will not glorify himself, speak of himself, magnify his gifts, nor call attention to himself. He shall testify of me and he shall glorify me! (John 16:13-15.)

v. 27. The apostles and those believers who follow the apostles shall testify, witness, and preach of Christ. He speaks especially here to the eleven who had been with him from the beginning (Acts 1:8; Heb. 2:3-4). But all of the elect love Christ and love to bear witness of him (Acts 8:4; 2 Tim. 4:2).

The Holy Spirit's ministry - 1

John 16:1-11

v. 1. As in many places the chapter division here is unfortunate, for the Lord continues to speak concerning the hatred and persecution which his true disciples will have to endure for his sake and for the gospel they preach. He is preparing them for these hardships and trials (especially from the hands of devout, religious people) that they might not be shocked nor surprised and to prevent such grievous disappointment which might tend to undermine their faith. While the natural man is religious, he is not a friend of grace, substitution, and redemption in Christ alone (1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Cor. 2:14).

v. 2. The Jews had already made a law that if any man did confess Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ, he would be excommunicated (John 9:22; John 12:42). To them this meant to be cut off from the Jewish nation, from the promises, and from the hope of Israel. It also meant that they would be considered pagans, lose their jobs, be cut off from their families, and denied honorable burial. The time will even come when religious zealots will put you to death in the name of God, convinced that you are heretics and that they serve God in destroying you. The death of Stephen is an example (Acts 7:57-60). Saul of Tarsus felt this way at one time (Acts 26:9).

v. 3. The reason behind all this hatred and persecution of believers is a willful ignorance of the true and living God (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). These Jews had created their own god (Psalm 50:21). They boasted of their knowledge of God, yet they knew him not, nor Christ as the true

Messiah (Rom. 10:1-4). They could have known, but they refused to hear (John 15:21-24).

v. 4. He told them all of these things concerning his going away, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the hatred and persecution of the world, and the ignorance and enmity of the Jewish leaders so that when these things did come to pass (and they certainly would), the disciples might remember that he told them of all this. This would serve to strengthen their faith in him and to anticipate the fulfillment of all his words. He did not tell them earlier of all this because he was with them personally at all times, and the wrath of the Jews was chiefly against him, not them. Now he is going away, and the enmity will fall upon them as well as the responsibility of the ministry of the word. God will reveal his purpose and his will as we are ready to receive it and as our needs require it (John 16:12: Mark 4:33).

vv. 5-6. When Christ spoke earlier of going away, Peter asked why he could not go with him (John 13:36). Thomas told him that he not only did not know where he was going but he did not know the way there (John 14:5). But now the Lord had told them that he was not leaving for some place on earth, but that he would die, rise from the dead, and go to his Father's house to prepare a place for them, that his death and return to the Father should be cause for rejoicing. He told them that he would come to them by his Spirit. This was a moment for many questions about all these mysterious and great things! But there were no questions, only sorrow in their hearts over their Lord's leaving them and perhaps great disappointment that the great kingdom they had expected had not become a reality. With our earthbound flesh and our materialistic, selfish natures, how dull we are to the grand and great redemptive glory of our Lord! (1 Cor. 7:29-31.)

v. 7. ‘Nevertheless, though you ask no questions, I tell you that it is absolutely necessary for you that I die, rise again, and go to the Father.’ His death atoned for our sins, removed the curse of the law, enables God to be just and the justifier of all believers, secures peace and reconciliation, opens the way for believers into the holiest, gives us a mediator with the Father, transacts all our business with the living God, and, as our forerunner, enters heaven and possesses and prepares a place for us. The Holy Spirit was certainly here before, but he had not come in so special and peculiar manner as he would come to believers after Christ was glorified. He would indwell them as the promise of the Father, as their comforter, teacher, guide, and the glorifier of Christ. Had Christ not died, arose, and ascended to the Father, there would have been nothing for the Holy Spirit to do—no blood to sprinkle, no salvation to apply, no righteousness to reveal, and no comfort to give.

vv. 8-11. The Spirit will indwell, teach, and preach through believers the testimony of God and the gospel of Christ. Conviction of sin (as to its guilt and curse), a revelation of Christ to the heart, and convincing men and women of sin, righteousness, and judgment are not by the might of men, the power of persuasion and logic, but by God's Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-14). Conviction of sin and convincing the sinner of his need of mercy and grace are always accomplished by the Holy Spirit's using the word of God and are related to Christ, his person and work. The essence of all sin is unbelief. The Holy Spirit will reveal Christ as he did at Pentecost and bring men to believe on him (Acts 2:36-38). The Holy Spirit will reveal to sinners the righteousness of God, which is Christ (Rom. 10:4; Rom. 5:19). The fact that the Father raised him from the dead and received him at his right hand is full proof that his obedience and work for us is sufficient. We have a complete sanctification and holiness in Christ. With respect to judgment, the believer is cleared (Rom. 8:1, 33-34). Satan, evil powers, and rulers of darkness have all met their conqueror in Christ. He has

destroyed the power of sin and death. He has all power in heaven and earth to give eternal life to his own (John 17:2). We have nothing and no one to fear. Our Lord is telling his disciples that their ministry, by the power of the Holy Spirit, shall not fail. He will have a people from every nation.

The Holy Spirit's ministry - 2

John 16:12-22

v. 12. Our Lord is not speaking here of any ‘brand-new’ doctrines or truths which he had not previously told them or made known to them concerning his person and work, redemption, and eternal life. In the years they had been with Him, he had made known to them all things which he had received of the Father (John 15:15; John 17:6-8). Rather he speaks of the same truth gloriously clarified and amplified, and of other things concerning their ministry, the church, the Mosaic laws, and things which require more spiritual maturity to receive and experience. One truth is laid upon another, and we are taught as we are enabled of the Spirit of God to receive. This is spiritual growth!

v. 13. When the Holy Spirit fills you and indwells you (John 14:17), he will guide you or lead you into all truth. The Holy Spirit as a guide and teacher goes before, leads the way, opens the understanding, removes obstacles such as tradition, prejudices, and forms, and makes the truth of Christ clear to believers. He will make known all the counsel of God, which is necessary, profitable, and useful to the church. What the Spirit teaches will not be of himself, as the Son did not speak from himself but of and from the Father (John 7:16; John 8:28; John 12:49). The Father, Son, and Spirit are one; and what the Father purposes, the Son purchases and the Spirit applies. The Holy Spirit does not stress one point at the expense of another but guides us into all truth. He will also reveal to you ‘things to come,’ concerning the Lord's return, the end of the world, and things, which shall be. John wrote of these in the Revelation. The Holy Spirit uses the word of God to teach believers, not dreams, visions, and

special revelations. He always uses the written word and speaks according to the word (Isa. 8:19-20; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

v. 14. The Holy Spirit does not glorify himself, nor magnify his gifts, nor inspire men to preach and talk of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit does not lead men to believe that being baptized with the Spirit, endowed with gifts, and attaining the higher life experience is better than salvation and meeting Christ in faith. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, speaks of Christ, reveals Christ, and enables believers to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). We are complete in Christ (Col. 2:9-10). What Christ has done, is doing, and will do is the theme of the Holy Spirit's teaching. When the gospel is neglected, when Christ is not preached, when men seek gifts and healing rather than mercy, grace, and redemption in Christ, one can be certain that it is not the Holy Spirit of truth who is speaking (1 John 4:1-3).

v. 15. The Father has given all things into the hands of Christ (John 3:35; John 17:2; Col. 1:16-19) – all things in heaven, earth, and under the earth; all things in redemption; all things pertaining to believers, both here and eternally; all things in the new heaven and earth. Therefore, if the Holy Spirit reveals and teaches anything of God and from God, it will pertain to Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:9-11). If a man has the Spirit of God, he will be able to say with Paul, 'We preach Christ' (1 Cor. 2:1-2).

vv. 16-20. Our Lord said to them, 'A little while and you shall not see me.' He must die on the cross as our sacrifice and sin-offering, he must be buried and lie in the tomb, and for those few days the disciples would not see him. Then they would see him again, for he appeared to them many times in his glorified body. But even when he ascended to the Father, he did not leave them alone; for he came to them in his Holy Spirit and dwelt with them (John 14:16-18). One must not separate the Father, Son, and

Spirit, nor the resurrection, ascension, and coming of the Spirit. When the disciples began to inquire concerning these words, ‘A little while and you shall not see me, and a little while and ye shall see me,’ the Saviour replied, ‘The world shall rejoice;’ for the world looked on the death of Christ as a cause for rejoicing. They were rid of Him, his influence, and his teachings. During the crucifixion and burial ‘you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned to joy;’ for he arose victoriously over sin, death, and the grave. He lives to die no more.

vv. 21-22. When a woman gives birth to a child, she experiences great pain, suffering, and sorrow during her labor. But when the child is born, the sorrow and pain are forgotten and she rejoices in her child. The death of Christ and the brief separation from his disciples caused them great sorrow and confusion; but he arose, appeared to them, and came in his Spirit to dwell with them, causing their hearts to rejoice with a joy that can never be taken from them (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6).

Do you now believe?

John 16:23-33

v. 23. The disciples were so full of fear, disappointment, doubt and questions. They asked, 'Where are you going?' How can we know the way?' 'Show us the Father.' 'How shall we see you and the world not see you?' Now he says to them, 'In that day, ye shall ask me nothing.' In that day, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will not be at a loss to understand the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension of the Son of man. You will know, as you are taught by the Spirit and the scriptures, why Christ came to die (John 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 15:1-2). All spiritual blessings, knowledge, grace, peace and rest which you ask of the Father in my name will be given you.' All spiritual blessings are in Christ, through Christ and because of Christ (John 3:35-36; Eph. 1:3-6). There is nothing the law requires, justice demands, or the believer needs or wants that is not met and given in Christ and for the glory of Christ.

v. 24. The disciples had prayed to the Father, for they asked the Lord to teach them to pray. Yet up to this point they had not asked the Father for anything because of Christ's blood, righteousness, sacrifice and mediation, for up to this point they did not have a clear understanding of his redemptive work. 'Ask, and ye shall receive' (Matt. 7:7-11), that is, 'in my name, because you will receive of me all you need, and your joy, assurance and peace will be full and complete.'

v. 25. The expression 'these things' refers to all the teachings of Christ spoken to the disciples that night (John 13-16). 'These things' were made clear to the disciples after they had come to pass and by the Holy Spirit who indwelt them, as they are plain to us who live on this side of the cross

(1 Cor. 2:8-12). But at this particular time 'these things' seemed like proverbs or veiled sayings which they did not comprehend. They are clear to the believing heart (John 7:16-17). The seed of the gospel has become an open flower revealing the glory and wisdom of God in Christ (Rom. 3:19-26).

vv. 26-27. The Lord is saying, 'After I am crucified, risen and ascended to the Father and the Holy Spirit comes to guide you in a clear understanding of me and my work, you will pray to the Father in my name and he will hear and bless you (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25), not only because I intercede for you and stand for you, but because the Father himself loves you.' Christ came because God loves his own (John 3:16). He loves us with an everlasting love because of Christ; we are in Christ, and we love Christ (Rom. 8:35-39).

v. 28. This passage records three central facts in the purpose of redemption.

1. *'I came forth from the Father.'* This refers to our Saviour's deity, his pre-existence and the Father's will to redeem (Heb. 10:9-10).

2. *'I am come into the world.'* This is his incarnation (John 1:14; Gal. 4:4-5) and his representative work as the second Adam (Rom. 5:19).

3. *'I leave the world and go to the Father.'* The Lord Jesus is ascended, exalted and seated at the right hand as our Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14-16).

vv. 29-30. When the Saviour said, 'The Father loves you because you love me and believe that I came from the Father into the world, and I leave the world and go to my Father,' the disciples replied, 'Now we understand!'

This is clear to us and not a mystery any more. We are sure that you know all things. There is no reason for any man to doubt you or question you, for we believe that you came forth from God.' The matter is settled, they seem to indicate. But they had said this before (Matt. 16:16; John 6:67-69).

vv. 31-32. 'Do ye now believe?' 'Do you really believe?' Though they professed to believe, a trying time was upon them when this faith would waver. Peter would deny him, and all would forsake him and return to their homes and friends, even to their old vocation as fishermen (John 21:3). For when Peter said, 'I go fishing,' he actually meant, 'I return to my old profession.' It was on that occasion that our Lord asked Peter if he loved him more than these – the sea, boats and nets (John 21:15). Yet, though forsaken of them, Christ was never without the Father – his love, his approval and his presence.

v. 33. 'All of these things have I spoken to you this night that in me ye might have peace.' It is true that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20-21); and in Christ we have peace of conscience and heart, knowing that our sins are forgiven. But in this case he refers to the trials, troubles and tribulations the disciples and all believers will have in a world which hates God and hates the gospel of grace (2 Tim. 3:12). 'I have conquered Satan and the world.' His victory is our victory, and we have no cause to fear the men of this world nor the forces of evil in this world (Matt. 10:28; 2 Cor. 2:14; 1 John 4:4; 5:4-5).

The Lord's prayer - 1

John 17:1-8

v. 1. 'These words spake Jesus' refers to all the preceding words of comfort, instruction and direction that he had spoken to his disciples in the three preceding chapters. Our Lord lifted his eyes to heaven, which indicates the soul and heart being lifted towards the Father. While God is everywhere and fills heaven and earth, yet in heaven he manifests his glory. Though such a gesture is not necessary, our Lord fell on his face and prayed (Matt 26:39). The publican did *not* lift his eyes towards heaven, yet he was heard.

'The hour is come' – to suffer and die, to depart out of this world, to redeem the people given to him by the Father, in the manner determined by the Father, that he might be both just and justifier (Rom. 3:25-26; Gal. 4:4-5).

'Glorify thy son.' As God, he needed no added glory; but as man and Mediator, he prays that the Father will support, sustain and uphold him through all that he must endure for our sanctification and redemption, that the Son may glorify the Father's virtues of love, righteousness, mercy and truth (Ps. 85:10). The obedience and death of Christ effectually redeem all believers (Isa. 53:4-6), glorify the love and grace of the Son (Rev. 5:9-10), and magnify the riches of the Father's grace (Eph. 2:4-7).

v. 2. Our Lord Jesus, as King of kings and Lord of lords, had all power, authority and government over everybody and everything (Matt. 28:28; Col. 1:16-18). The Father has given him an elect people out of all nations; and in order to gather those people, Christ must have absolute authority over everybody, without exception. Eternal life is a free gift that the Son gives to such as the Father has given him in the eternal covenant (John

6:37-39; 10:26-29; Acts 13:48). In order to save some, the one who saves must have authority over all (Phil. 2:9-11).

v. 3. Eternal life is not a profession of religion, nor a reformation of manners, nor a knowledge of facts about God; but it is an experience of regeneration and revelation of God in the heart (Gal. 1:15-16; 4:19; Col. 1:27). Eternal life is spiritual life, divine life and the life of God in us (1 John 5:20). To know the only true God is not merely abstract knowledge (James 2:19); but it is to believe him, receive him and love him as he reveals himself in Christ. The Father cannot be known savingly except in and by the Son (Matt. 11:27; John 14:6).

v. 4. To glorify God is to love him perfectly, to obey him perfectly, and to live in absolute submission to his perfect will. *'I have glorified thee on the earth.'* This only Christ could say! (John 4:34; 8:29; Heb. 10:7). The work the Father gave him to do was to fulfill all righteousness (Rom. 3:21-22; 5:19; 10:4), to defeat and destroy all enemies such as sin, Satan and death (John 12:31), and to redeem and save the elect (1 Peter 1:18-19). He could say, *'I have finished the work,'* because it was so near and so certain that he would finish it (John 19:30).

v. 5. We have here two important things:

1. Christ Jesus is God and was with God and was God from eternity (John 1:14; Prov. 8:23-30). To return to the glory of the Father's presence is his delight.

2. Christ returns to the presence of the Father as 'the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2:5), the Mediator and Forerunner of all whom he redeems.

He prays to be returned in this office and to this glory even as he was before. He is received, exalted and seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and we are received with and in him (John 17:21-22; Eph. 2:6; Heb. 2:11-13).

v. 6. *'I have manifested thy name,'* or 'revealed thyself, the perfections of thy nature, thy redemptive will, thy gospel of mercy and grace and thy wisdom, power and glory' (1 Cor. 1:24; 2 Cor. 4:6). This he manifested to those whom the Father gave him out of the world. They were chosen by the Father and given to the Son, whom he appointed as their Surety, Head and Mediator. The Lord is thinking of all the elect, but here particularly of these disciples who were with him. By the grace of God they received Christ and his word (John 1:10-13).

v. 7. This is something our Lord emphasized strongly – that the words he spoke were the Father's words, that the works he did were the Father's works, that he came to do the Father's will. He did not take it upon himself to be our high priest (Heb. 5:5). When the Father raised him from the dead and exalted him, he gave assurance to all that Jesus Christ is his anointed, ordained and designated Redeemer (Acts 17:30-31). Let all know that all things such as all power, all spiritual gifts and all things pertaining to the kingdom are of the Father and are by his appointment, his decree and according to his will (Heb. 10:5-14).

v. 8. Christ gave to us the words of the Father called in scripture the doctrine of God, the word of truth, the testimony of God, the ministry of reconciliation and the gospel of God; and, with these disciples, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we gladly receive his words. We receive them gladly, with reverence and meekness, with love and gratitude, and know certainly that Jesus of Nazareth came from the Father as Mediator to seek

and to save the lost, to redeem the chosen ones and to perform all that is necessary to their salvation. He is the true Messiah and no impostor.

The Lord's prayer - 2

John 17:9-15

v. 9. Our Lord prays to the Father as man and mediator on earth. His intercession in heaven is not called prayer but intercession. His prayers are always heard, for he never prayed contrary to the will of the Father nor contrary to the glory of the Father. He prays here for his apostles and for all who believe on Him, which shows his care, concern, and love for them. 'I pray NOT for the world' of unbelievers, who live in sin and will die in sin. As he prayed not for those who would never believe, so he died not for them. For whom Christ is the propitiation, he is the advocate and mediator; and for whom he died, he makes intercession. He prayed for those that the Father had given him in the covenant of grace (John 6:37-45) to be saved, kept, and received up to eternal glory. 'For they are thine,' not merely by creation but by eternal election and special grace (2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 2:19).

v. 10. 'All mine are thine and thine are mine.' This is understood only when we understand that the Father and the Son are ONE in essence, in ownership, and in purpose (John 10:30; John 5:17-23). I am glorified or made glorious IN their redemption (Eph. 2:7; Rev. 5:9-13) and BY them who worship me, love me, and attribute the whole of their salvation to me. He will be glorified now and throughout eternity. Paul speaks in Eph. 1 of the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the redemption of the elect; and after each division he adds, 'to the praise of his glory' (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). Whom the Father chose, the Son redeemed and the Holy Spirit calls. 'All my people are thy people, and thy people are my people.'

v. 11. The Saviour would soon die and depart out of this world in which he had walked for over thirty years. It is an unfriendly, hostile, difficult world of sin and unbelief (Isa. 53:1-3; John 15:18-19; 1 John 5:19). While the Lord Jesus would go to the Father, enter within the veil as our forerunner (Heb. 6:19-20), and sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on High (Heb. 1:3), his disciples would remain in the world to preach the gospel and be exposed to evil, temptation, and hardships. His prayer is that the Father would protect and guard them, hedge them about, keep them faithful to the gospel, and in unity with him and one another, that these believers may be one in love, in purpose, in message, and someday ONE in a greater way than we can now imagine (John 17:23-24).

v. 12. The Lord Jesus is the surety of his people (Heb. 7:22) and the good shepherd of all the sheep (John 10:14-16), and not one of those apostles nor one of those given him by the Father can ever be lost (John 6:37-39). He kept and will keep them from the evil one and eternal ruin (1 Peter 1:3-5). But Judas, son of perdition, by his own choice and willful apostasy is lost, and fulfilled all that was written of him. Judas was never one of the elect of God nor one given to Christ but was a reprobate from the beginning (John 6:64, 70-71; Psalm 109:7-8). Wicked men do what their evil hearts devise, but in all things they fulfill the purpose of our sovereign Lord (Acts 4:27-28; Luke 22:22; Psalm 76:10).

v. 13. About six weeks from this time the Saviour would leave the apostles and ascend to the Father, and the disciples would be without his bodily presence. He has spoken these things (all that he imparted to them in Chapters 13-16) and put forth this prayer that the joy of his people might not be diminished by his going from them, but that they might rejoice in his redemptive work, his exaltation, his intercession, and his return (John 15:11).

v. 14. The sense here is more than just preaching the word to these disciples, for he had given the word to many in this fashion. But he had opened their hearts to understand, receive, and embrace the word of God in faith and love, so that the word dwelt in them, was engrafted in them, and changed them into the likeness of the word. The word in their hearts made them to be of another spirit from the carnal worldling and religionist; therefore, they were hated by these people. Believers are born, live, and die in this world as all other men; but in spirit, attitude, conduct, conversation, and walk they are not of and like the world, even as their Lord (Rom. 8:4-10).

v. 15. Although they were not of the world and would be hated, persecuted, and killed by his enemies in the world, the Saviour does not ask the Father to take them out of the world; for they had a work to do—a gospel to preach (John 20:21; Matt. 28:18-20). It is for his glory, the salvation of his elect (2 Tim. 2:9-10), and the comfort and edification of his church that we remain in this world. They will be taken to glory in his own time. However, he prays that they might all be kept from ‘the evil one.’ The believer does not pray for death, nor for deliverance from the common ills of mankind, nor even from persecution for the sake of the gospel, but to be delivered from sin, from the power and testing of Satan, and certainly from apostasy (1 John 5:18). Back of all evil influence stands Satan, so that it is especially against him that we need protection (Luke 22:31-32).

The Lord's prayer - 3

John 17:16-26

v. 16. Our Lord repeats the words he said in Verse 14, where they are given as a reason for the world's hatred and here as a reason for divine protection from the evil one. Who they are and what they are incite his wrath against them.

v. 17. Though our sanctification in Christ is perfect (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10), yet there is a need for spiritual growth and development in love, faith, humility, knowledge, and all Christian graces. Believers are first new-born babes, then young men, and later fathers in Christ. This sanctifying work is done by the Holy Spirit through the word of God (1 Peter 2:1-3). His word is infallible truth; and our spiritual growth depends not upon feelings, visions, and resolutions, but upon an ever-increasing love for, understanding of, and embracing of his word (Psalm 119:9-16, 33-34, 65-72). As the word of God is the seed in regeneration (1 Peter 1:23), so it is the source of true holiness of life and conversation.

v. 18. Our Redeemer was sent into the world by the Father to accomplish the full redemption of his people, to fulfill the gospel, and to proclaim it (Isa. 61:1-3). He took not that office or honor unto himself, but the Father ordained and sent him (Heb. 5:4-6). Even so, these apostles were appointed, ordained, and sent by Christ as his ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:19-21; John 20:21-23).

v. 19. This is not to be understood to mean Christ's making himself holy, for he did no sin: but he is saying, 'I set myself apart as a sacrifice for sin, well-pleasing and acceptable to the Father, that my people might be

sanctified' (Eph. 1:3-7; Eph. 5:25-26). The Father sanctified us in his divine election (Jude 1), the Son sanctified us by his sacrifice (Heb. 10:10-14), and the Holy Spirit sanctified us in regeneration, in calling, and in belief of the truth (2 Thess. 2:13).

v. 20. He prays not only for these apostles and present disciples, but for all who will receive and believe the gospel.

1. He prayed not for people who would die in unbelief (John 17:9).

2. He prayed for those who were not then believers but who would believe (John 10:16).

3. Faith comes by hearing the word, for Christ prays for those who would believe 'through their word' (Rom. 10:17).

v. 21. There is a union and oneness between the Father and the Son in nature, essence, power, affection, and purpose which infinitely transcends any kind of union among men; yet the oneness of all believers resembles that which exists between the Father and the Son.

They have a common *faith*, which all experience and agree in the main point of the gospel—salvation alone by the Lord Jesus Christ.

They have a common *affection*, being knit together in love to each other (1 John 4:7-11).

They have a common *goal*—the glory of God.

And they are all one in Christ and in God by his grace. Not only will God's grace in Christ be manifested to future believers, but to the whole universe (Eph. 2:7; Phil. 2:9-11).

v. 22. This glory is eternal life, which the Father vested in the Son, which the Son purchased and perfected by the work which he did, and which the Son gives to every believer. This is indicated by Verses 1-4 of this chapter

(2 Peter 1:2-4). Moses asked, ‘Show me thy glory’ (Exod. 33:18-19). Because he has bestowed upon us this glory of grace and mercy in Christ, we are one with Christ in God.

v. 23. Hendriksen said, ‘When God dwells in the Son and he (through the Spirit) dwells in believers, then, naturally, these believers become partakers of all the riches that are in Christ—pardon, righteousness, love, joy, knowledge, wisdom, etc.—and when all the members of the church universal become partakers of these blessings, the church, of course, will be one, just as the Father and the Son are one.’ Then all the world shall know that Christ is the only Saviour and that the Father loves the elect as he loves the only begotten Son (John 3:16). Christ came BECAUSE God loved us.

v. 24. What a prospect! what a future! to be with him where he is! (John 14:2-3) and actually to behold his glory! Someone said, ‘To see life is to live, and to see his glory is to be glorified with Him’ (1 John 3:1-3; Psalm 17:15). The glory, praise, and adoration of Christ will be our eternal vocation (Rev. 5:9-14).

vv. 25-26. The world religions and the world in general do not know God (John 1:10-11). But the Son knows the Father and has manifested the Father to every believer, and they all know him to be the Messiah sent by the Father. He has declared the name of the Lord Jehovah-jireh (Gen. 22:13-14), Jehovah-rapha (Exod. 15:26), Jehovah-nissi (Exod. 17:8-15), Jehovah-shalom (Judges 6:24), Jehovah-rahah (Psalm 23:1), Jehovah-tsidkenu (Jer. 23:6), and Jehovah-Shammah (Ezek. 48:35)—and will continue to declare it, for his name is Wonderful (Isa. 9:6). The love of God revealed to the heart begets love in the heart (1 John 4:19).

The betrayal

John 18:1-12

v. 1. When our Lord had spoken these words of comfort, instruction, and teaching concerning his death, departure, the disciples' future ministry (John 13-16), and his priestly prayer, he went with his disciples over the Brook Cedron (2 Sam. 15:23) into a garden called Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36).

v. 2. Poole says this garden was probably at the foot of Mt. Olivet, where the Lord often went alone and with his disciples (Luke 21:37; Luke 22:39). Judas was well acquainted with this private place of prayer and meditation. One thing made clear in his going to this place that Judas knew so well is that the Master was not hiding nor evading the betrayal and arrest. He went there to meet Judas.

v. 3. John does not mention Judas's going to the priests, contracting with them to betray the Lord, and the kiss of betrayal (Matt. 26:14-16, 47-50). Also according to the other evangelists, the party which came to arrest him was a great multitude (Matt. 26:47) made up of the chief priests, elders of the people, officers, and soldiers with torches and weapons. John's main point is that Judas, the betrayer, knowing where our Lord would be, served as the guide and encouragement for these who would kill him. Led by one of his disciples, they came out against him as if he were a criminal. What a shame and an insult to our Lord!

vv. 4-5. Our Lord knew all things that would come upon him from the manger to the cross. He is God! He purposed and willed it all that righteousness might be fulfilled, justice satisfied, the nature of sin

exposed, and his elect redeemed (John 6:64). He knew (and it was recorded in the Old Testament) not only that he must suffer and die, but all the circumstances that would attend his death (Luke 24:27, 44-46; Acts 15:18). Our Lord stepped out in the open and walked forward until he stood directly in front of this multitude. It was probably then that Judas stepped forth and kissed him on the cheek saying, 'Hail, master.' This was the pre-arranged sign but wholly unnecessary, for our Lord would identify himself when his hour was come; and all that they would and could do was pre-determined by himself (Acts 4:27-28). He asked, 'Whom seek ye?' He was, as always, in total control of the whole situation. The mob or several of them answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' John again mentions the fact that Judas (who sold out, led them to the garden, and planted the evil kiss of betrayal) still stood with these wicked men. Our Lord said, 'I AM HE,' or 'I AM' (Exod. 3:13-14; John 8:24), declaring himself to be Jehovah God; the Christ; the Messiah; as well as Jesus of Nazareth.

v. 6. His answer was delivered with so much majesty, authority, and divine power that they all went backward and fell to the ground (Rev. 1:17). He is God, King of kings; he speaks and worlds are created: he speaks and men live or die; he speaks and graves are opened. 'No man takes my life from me; I lay it down of myself.' Think of his sovereignty and power when just the sound of his voice prostrates and terrorizes a multitude of enemies (Isa. 46:9-11). He might easily have walked away (Luke 4:29-30); but he allowed them to rise up, arrest him, and take him away.

vv. 7-9. The Saviour's question and their answer were the same as in Verses 4-5. He makes it very clear that it was he alone whom they sought. He said, 'Let these (his disciples) go their way.' Christ must suffer alone. He alone is our Saviour, redeemer, and sacrifice (Heb. 1:3; Isa. 63:3). If Christ suffers, his people must go free. Substitution is the essence of the gospel and it is seen here. Christ is apprehended and his people go free

(Isa. 53:4-6). Christ dies and we live! Christ bears all the curse, penalty, and wrath against sin, enabling God to be just and justifier; and we are free indeed. 'Payment God's justice cannot twice demand; first, at my bleeding Surety's hand and then again at mine.' Substitution and satisfaction—learn the meaning of these in reference to the person and work of Jesus Christ and one learns the gospel. He will lose none which the Father gave and for whom he is the sin-offering (John 6:37-39; John 17:12).

v. 10. The disciples had two swords among them (Luke 22:35-38). Peter had one of them, and, acting impulsively (as he often did) yet fully intending to deliver his Master or die with him as he had boasted, drew the sword and smote Malchus, the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear; undoubtedly he meant to behead him and missed.

v. 11. Our Lord spoke to Peter in rebuke (Matt. 26:52) and also to prevent his repeating the action. The term 'cup' refers to his suffering and death decreed by the Father (Matt. 20:22; John 12:27) for our sins. The death of the Redeemer was not an accident, nor only an example, nor the death of a helpless reformer. It was decreed, designed, and determined in the covenant of grace from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; Heb. 9:25-26; Heb. 13:20). 'Shall I not drink it?' He is not only able to fulfill all that is written of Him, but he is willing (John 10:18).

v. 12. They bound the hands of the Lord Jesus and led him away. The disciples forsook him and fled (Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:50). Mark states that a young man (not one of the disciples) attempted to follow; but when they tried to lay hold on him, he fled (Mark 14:51-52).

Christ before Caiaphas

John 18:13-24

v. 13-14. After the soldiers and temple police arrested our Lord Jesus in the garden, they led him first to Annas. Who was Annas? (Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6). Most believe that he had been the high priest; but though now deposed, he remained the ruling power behind the office. The office of high priest was so corrupted it was often changed, being bought and sold for money. So when Christ was taken into custody, the first one to consult was Annas, the proud, ambitious, and wealthy older man, who really gave orders to his younger son-in-law, Caiaphas, the high priest. Caiaphas was the one who had plotted the death of Christ for a long time (John 11:49-52), arguing that no matter who Jesus was nor what he did, it was better for him to die than for the Romans to be stirred up by his kingly claims and destroy the whole nation. John considered this statement by Caiaphas to be a prophecy of the substitutionary work of Christ in dying for believers—Jew and Gentile. What took place before Annas we do not know, but Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas (John 18:24).

v. 15. It is said that ‘all the disciples forsook him and fled’ (Matt. 26:56). Evidently Peter came back and followed ‘afar off’ as Christ was led to the palace of the high priest (Luke 22:54). Another disciple also followed Christ to the house of Caiaphas. Who this was we are not sure, but he knew the high priest and could go directly into the courtyard without being questioned or arrested. It may have been Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, or one of the chief rulers who was said to believe (John 12:42).

v. 16. Peter, being a fisherman and unknown to the high priest or his servants, waited outside the door. This other disciple who went directly

into the palace, being well known even to the servants, ordered the servant who kept the door to admit Peter. This is further proof that the other disciple was not one of the twelve but a man of influence, who could not only enter the palace but also gain admittance for a friend.

v. 17. The girl who kept the door thought that she recognized Peter and asked him if he was not one of the Lord's disciples. Peter replied, 'I am not his disciple.' Our Lord had told Peter that he would deny him three times (John 13:36-38). This was the first denial.

v. 18. The officers who had arrested Jesus and brought him to the palace of Caiaphas and the servants of the palace stood around a fire they had built to keep warm. Peter, who had already denied that he was a disciple, joined these servants and officers at the fireside to warm himself, for it was very cold in the courtyard (Matt. 26:58; Mark 14:54). Who can say what thoughts were going through Peter's mind and heart? He loved the master; we know that! He was confident that Jesus was the Christ; we know that! He was an aggressive, impulsive, and curious man who made it his business to get the facts. But he was confused and afraid. Those who are most critical of the Apostle Peter need to consider the circumstances more carefully and consider their own weaknesses in times of trial (Gal. 6:1).

v. 19. When one reads all four accounts of our Lord's experiences after his arrest, it is evident that he had to endure two trials—an ecclesiastical trial before the high priest, and a civil trial before Pilate. In this trial before the high priest he was asked about his disciples and his doctrine. They wanted to prove he was a false prophet guilty of blasphemy and violating the law and the traditions of the fathers. While they had no authority in civil matters, they would like to have some charge against him to send to Pilate and Herod.

v. 20. Our Lord replied, 'I spake openly to all men (friends and enemies). I taught in the synagogue and in the temple to all who came there. I said nothing in secret that I did not teach in public.' His gospel was the truth of the scriptures, the truth of God, and meant for every ear. He was not guilty of sedition, blasphemy, nor destroying the law: rather he honored and fulfilled it (Matt. 5:17-18).

v. 21. 'Why do you ask me, the accused, about my teaching? Wouldn't it be wiser to ask them that heard me? They know what I taught.' Three things are evident here:

1. His doctrine was so pure, so free from sedition, and so true to scriptures that he was willing to submit his case to those who had heard him.

2. It was a foolish thing for the high priest to ask an accused man to testify against himself.

3. If one really wants to know what a preacher is preaching, don't ask him; ask those who hear him regularly.

v. 22. His words were so clear and condemning that one of the officers who stood by struck the Lord and accused him of contempt and disregard for the office of high priest. This event also shows the disorder and disarray in this supposedly holy court. A man on trial is struck by an inferior officer and nothing is made of it. However, this is only the beginning of his great suffering, humiliation, and pain of soul and body endured for our sins.

v. 23. The Lord replied, 'If I have spoken lies or evil or contemptibly, then prove it; but if I have spoken truth and wisdom, then why do you smite me?'

v. 24. This verse only lets us know that these things were done before Caiaphas, the high priest, to whom Annas had sent the Lord Jesus.

Christ before Pilate - 1

John 18:25-40

vv. 25-27. While our Lord was being tried before the high priest, the apostle Peter was undergoing a severe trial in the courtyard. A full account of the three times he denied the Lord is given in Matthew 26:69-75. This denial of Christ arose from two things: fear of men and lack of faith in the Lord's power to keep and deliver him (Luke 12:4-9). Luke wrote that the Lord looked upon Peter (Luke 22:61-62); and when Peter saw the pain, the hurt and yet the love in his eyes, he went out and wept bitterly. Though Peter failed this trial, as our Lord had said he would, he was still a disciple, a child of God and a believer (Ps. 37:23-25). Oh, that we might learn to love and forgive as our Lord loves and forgives (Eph. 4:32)!

v. 28. Caiaphas, the chief priests and their Sanhedrin had tried our Lord most of the night, and now, very early in the morning (probably about 6 a.m.), having judged him worthy of death (Matt. 26:63-68; Mark 14:63-64), they led him to the judgment hall of Pilate. It was the Passover season, so these religious hypocrites dared not go into the judgment hall of the heathen Gentiles lest in some way they should be defiled. They could falsely accuse the Son of God, lie, be filled with covetousness, hate and evil; but they were careful to observe their traditions (Matt. 23:23-26).

vv. 29-30. Pilate came out to meet them and asked, 'What accusation, or charge, bring ye against this man? What crime is he guilty of? What proof do you have?' Pilate asked this that, as judge, he might be capable of dealing with the accused. This offended the Jews that Pilate should question them in such a way; so they replied, 'If he were not a criminal, we would not have brought him to you.' They dared not mention the true

reasons for their hatred of Christ, but insinuated that he was guilty of some crime which came under Caesar's court.

v. 31. Pilate evidently had heard of Jesus of Nazareth and his unusual works and miracles, as had all the people of that area (Acts 26:26). He was not ignorant of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, so he said, 'You take him and judge him according to your laws,' for he knew it to be a religious, not a civil matter. But the Jews protested, 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.' Some say this right was taken away by the Romans; some say it was taken away by their own court. But their punishment was by stoning, and they wanted him to be crucified as a common criminal by the Romans, partly to relieve them of any guilt in the eyes of the people. If they had stoned Jesus of Nazareth, it would have raised a tumult among the people.

v. 32. Our Lord had told his disciples what death he would die, and he must remove the curse from us by being made a curse for us (Matt. 20:17-19; Gal. 3:13; Deut. 21:22-23). Crucifixion was not a Jewish but a Roman death. These Jews were doing what they wanted to do, yet fulfilling the purpose of God in the death of our Substitute (Acts 2:22-24; 4:27-28). God makes even the wrath of men to praise him.

vv. 33-34. Pilate then brought the Lord Jesus into the judgment hall and asked him privately and pointedly, 'Art thou the King of the Jews?' Our Lord's answer gives us some insight into this question asked by Pilate, for our Lord knows the thoughts of all men. Pilate's behavior during this entire episode reveals that he was deeply concerned about how he dealt with this unusual person (Matt. 27:19). The Lord replied to his question, 'Do you ask if am I the king of the Jews as a private person, for your own information, or do you ask as a judge, having heard such an accusation?'

v. 35. Pilate responded, 'Am I a Jew? Do you think I am concerned about your law, prophets and religion? Your own people and leaders have delivered you to me to be crucified. What have you done? What have you done to stir up such hatred among the leaders of your nation?' (John 1:11).

v. 36. 'I do not deny that I am the Messiah. I have a kingdom, but my kingdom is not an earthly kingdom as the Jews expect and desire. If my kingdom were an earthly kingdom, my servants would fight; and I would not be bound and delivered to you. My kingdom is not threat to the Roman government, for my kingdom is a spiritual kingdom over the hearts and minds of men, not earthly and worldly.' His kingdom is certainly *in* this world but not *of* it.

v. 37. Pilate wanted a yes or no! 'Art thou a king, then? If you have a kingdom, then you must be a king.' Our Lord answered, 'Your conclusion is correct; I am indeed the King!' Jesus Christ was born and came into the world from heaven as King and Saviour. He came as Prophet to declare the truth of God's glory, redemption and kingdom. He came as Priest to offer himself as our sacrifice and atonement. He came as King to rule over his kingdom and covenant people. All that are given to him of the Father and are of the truth hear his voice and follow him (John 10:26-30).

v. 38. Pilate (politician, skeptic and man of the world) asked, 'What is truth?' not realizing that the Truth was standing in front of him (John 14:6). He then went to the Jews and said, 'I find in (Jesus) no fault at all.'

vv. 39-40. Where this custom originated, we do not know. Probably the Romans granted to the Jews, in honour of their great Passover festival, the life of any criminal they desired. Pilate felt sure that they would choose to release Jesus of Nazareth (guilty of no crime) rather than a noted criminal like Barabbas, and he would have Christ Jesus off his hands. But not so!

They cried, 'Not this man! Release Barabbas and crucify Jesus!' (Matt. 27:15-26).

Christ before Pilate - 2

John 19:1-11

v. 1. Having failed in his attempt to release Jesus by forcing the Jews to choose between Barabbas and Christ, Pilate ordered the Lord to be scourged. It appears that he thought that they might be satisfied with Jesus being scourged and released, for scourging was horrible torture (John 19:12). The victim was stripped naked, fastened to a post, and severely whipped (Isa. 53:5).

v. 2-3. This scourging was followed by a mock coronation in the soldiers' hall (Matt. 27:26-31). The soldiers wanted to torture him and also to mock the fact that he was said to be 'the King of the Jews.' The cruel, thorny crown served both purposes. Perhaps this crown of thorns reaches back to Gen. 3:18 in connection with the thorns and thistles promised Adam's sons as a result of the fall. Our Lord bore the curse of sin for us (Gal. 3:13). The soldiers threw about his shoulders a purple robe (probably a faded old soldier's mantle), put a reed in his hand to represent a king's sceptre (Gen. 49:10), and marched about striking him with their fists, spitting upon Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews.' Our Lord was delivered to Pilate, charged with making himself King. The soldiers mocked him as a king, and he was crucified with this charge written over his head, 'The King of the Jews.' He is indeed the King of kings and Lord of lords and will be owned, received, and acknowledged as such by all whom he saves (Rom. 10:9-10) and one day by every creature (Phil. 2:9-11).

v. 4-5. Pilate was a troubled, confused man. He was afraid of this man, Jesus Christ (Matt. 27:19), he did not want to get the Jews stirred up against him, he was worried that word of this tumult should get to Caesar

and endanger his position, and he found no fault in Christ, knowing the Jews had an evil motive in it all (Matt. 27:18). So he tried one more plan! Pilate went out before the people and said, 'Behold, I bring him forth to you that you may know that I find no fault in him.' He hoped to reach some sympathy and compassion in this mob; so he pointed to Jesus Christ, as he was led forth, and said, 'Behold, the man!' Not 'your king,' for this would have provoked them, but a man like yourselves who ought to be treated with some sympathy and compassion. Our Lord came forth wearing the crown of thorns, the mocking robe, bloody and beaten, his face and body marred as no other man (Isa. 52:14). Pilate hoped that they would be satisfied with what had been done to him.

v. 6. It is significant to note who looked upon the Lord in this terrible condition and began to cry, 'Crucify Him, crucify him.' It was not the people but the chief priests and officers of the temple—men who made great pretensions to piety and religion. How wicked is the unregenerate heart, especially when it is clothed in religious garb! Pilate said, 'You crucify Him, for I find no fault in him.' It is also significant how many times Pilate said, 'I find no fault in Him' (John 18:38; 19:4; 19:6). By means of Pilate, our God declares the innocence and holiness of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21-22; Isa. 53: 9-10). Our Lord is the perfect Man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin; as such he is our representative and our righteousness before God (Rom. 5:19; 1 Peter 3:18). In his holy life he honored the law for us, and in his death he satisfied divine justice (Rom. 4:25).

v. 7. The law they referred to was the law for putting false prophets to death (Deut. 18:20; Lev. 24:16). They understood perfectly what the Lord Jesus had said to them (John 10:30-33). He declared himself to be God; and for this, according to their law, they insisted that he must die.

vv. 8-9. On top of all his other fears and doubts, this new revelation caused Pilate to be more afraid. Is it possible that this prisoner is related to Deity? He remembered his wife's dream and warning, he knew that Jesus was innocent, he certainly had heard of the man's life and miracles, and he had to be impressed with the Lord's conduct throughout this whole affair. He took the Saviour back into the judgment hall and asked, 'Where are you from?' But Christ gave him no answer. He deserved no answer! He had totally ignored every word Christ spoke, compromised justice by scourging an innocent man, and had no other motive through it all except his own welfare. However, our Lord was willing to die for his people and made no defense (Isa. 53:7).

vv. 10-11. Pilate's reply is natural. He is fearful and afraid, his conscience is troubling him, his whole domain is up in arms over this one man, and being totally confused at the serenity and calmness of this Jesus, who refuses to defend himself while facing death on a cruel cross, he cried, 'Do you stand in silence and refuse to answer me when you know that I have the power to crucify you or release you? How dare you! Do you know who I am and what power I have?' Our Lord replied, 'You could have no power or authority over me at all, except the power my Father allows you to have' (John 3:27; Acts 4:26-28). Our Lord is saying that Pilate, like Pharaoh, was an instrument used by God to accomplish his purpose and glory (Rom. 9:17). The greater sin belonged to these religious leaders who so grossly sinned against the scriptures they claimed to believe and the light God had given as they heard Christ speak (Luke 12:47-48).

Jesus of Nazareth - King of the Jews

John 19:12-27

v. 12. As a result of the discussion he had with the Lord Jesus in verses 8-11, Pilate sought to release Jesus. He knew that he was innocent of their charges and was no rebel nor threat to Caesar. But when he sought to release Jesus Christ, the Jews took up a cry which they knew would influence the governor, 'If you let this man go, you are an enemy of Caesar: for whosoever makes himself King speaks against Caesar.' That did it! Pilate understood what they said and knew that if they lodged a complaint (even lies or insinuations) against him before Tiberias, who was then Caesar, he would be in grave danger of losing everything. He knew that these Jews were liars who had no love for Caesar, but he saw their determination to kill Jesus of Nazareth and knew that they would stop at nothing to do so.

vv. 13-14. When Pilate heard that they intended to accuse him of treason before Caesar, he brought the Lord Jesus forth to pass sentence upon him. The moment for which the entire history of redemption had been waiting had arrived –Pilate made up his mind to deliver Jesus Christ to be crucified (Gen. 3:15; Gen. 22:8, 14; Rev. 13:8). Pilate sat down on his official chair. It was Friday of the Passover week, for it was the day preceding the Sabbath, when the cooking was done and other preparations were made. The Jewish day was divided into four parts –the third hour (6:00 a.m. -9:00 a.m.), the sixth hour (9:00 a.m. – 12 noon), the ninth hour (12 noon – 3:00 p.m.), and the twelfth hour (3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.). So it was about the sixth hour (or around 9:00 a.m.) that Pilate cried, 'Behold your King!' Who knows what Pilate was really thinking and saying? Was he mocking them and all Jews, whom he evidently despised? Was he

ridiculing the shackled, weak, defenseless man before him who was about to be slain? Or was he speaking prophetically as Caiaphas did in John 11:49-52. It is possible that he had more in mind than mocking and ridicule from what he wrote above the cross of Jesus and refused to change (John 19:19-22).

vv. 15-16. In answer to Pilate's question, 'Shall I crucify your King?' they cried, 'We have no king but Caesar!' They used to say, 'We have no king but God.' In reality they resented Caesar's rule (Matt. 22:17). No people were more zealous for their liberty than these Jews nor more impatient under foreign rule; yet their hatred for Jesus Christ and his gospel of grace and redemption was so intense that they were willing to bow to Tiberias rather than have Christ reign over them (Luke 19:14). This is the issue in salvation – who is your Lord and King? (Rom. 10:9-10.) Christ is not your Saviour if he is not the Lord of your life! (Matt. 6:24). Having rejected their Messiah and having bowed to the god of this world, they led Jesus away to be crucified.

vv. 17-18. They made him carry his own cross. He carried it as long as he was physically able, then one called Simon of Cyrene was ordered to take over the difficult task (Luke 23:26). Compelling him to carry his own cross added to the shame. Much speculation and tradition surrounds 'the place of a skull,' Golgotha or Calvary; but there are no facts to support much of it. It was outside the city, it was a place of execution, and it was evidently on a hill.

The important thing is not where the crucifixion took place but who was crucified -- the God-man! Why was he crucified? For the sins of his people! What did he accomplish? 'By himself purged our sins' and enabled a holy God to be 'just and justifier' of those who believe (Rom. 3:25-26). One may find the actual spot where Christ died and the actual cross on which Christ hung and be no better for it. Forgiveness of sin and

redemption are through faith in him, not contact with so-called 'holy places, things, or relics' (2 Kings 18:1-4). Two thieves were crucified with him (Luke 23:32-33).

vv. 19-22. Pilate wrote upon a board the superscription of his accusation containing the substance of the charges against him and nailed it to his cross, 'JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.' It was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin that it might be read by all Jews, Greeks, and Romans; for he is indeed the Saviour of men of every nation, and he is the King of all (Phil. 2:9-11). The Jews were offended by what Pilate had written, for they did not own him to be their King and they resented the implication. They said, 'Write that he said, I am the King of the Jews. We are not crucifying our king; we are crucifying a traitor and an imposter.' Pilate refused to yield to their demands and said, 'What I have written, I have written.' He must save face in some way. He must show his authority in some way, for he had given in to them too much already. But how true concerning all involved in this matter! What God has written, he has written! What Pilate had written and done was done for all time. What these Jews had done and what was written of them was done and written forever (Matt. 27:24-25).

vv. 23-24. Evidently there were four soldiers who crucified Him, for it says that they divided his garments in four parts. Someone suggested there may have been sandals, head gear, belt, and another garment; for they crucified him naked. The fifth piece was a robe woven in one piece without seams. Instead of cutting or tearing it to be divided among them, they cast lots for it that the scripture might be fulfilled (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Psalm 22:18).

vv. 25-27. Our Lord commended his mother, Mary, to the care of John, the author of this epistle. He ordered John to take care of her as if she had

been his own mother. Evidently Joseph was dead, otherwise he would have cared for her. From that time Mary lived with John. Even in his most difficult hour, our Lord provides for his own and leaves us an example (1 Tim. 5:8).

The substitute

John 19:28-42

v. 28. Of the seven words from the cross, John records three:

The seven words are:

‘Father, forgive them’ (Luke 23:34);

‘Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise’ (Luke 23:43);

‘Woman, behold thy son’ (John 19:26-27);

‘My God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ (Matt. 27:46);

‘I thirst’ (John 19:28);

‘It is finished’ (John 19:30);

‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit’ (Luke 23:46).

Our Lord's task was accomplished. He had honored the law in life; and now in his suffering and death under the wrath of God against the sin of his people, he had fully satisfied justice (Isa. 53:4-6). That the scripture might be fulfilled (Psalm 22:15; Psalm 69:21), he cried, ‘I thirst.’ He suffered the burning thirst of hell (Luke 16:24) that we might drink the water of life and never thirst (John 4:14).

vv. 29-30. This vessel full of vinegar or sour wine was a Roman soldier's drink. They filled a sponge with it, put it on a reed, and dabbed it over his parched mouth and lips (Ruth 2:14). When Christ received the vinegar, he cried, ‘It is finished,’ bowed his head, and died. What was finished?

1. The whole will of God in regard to redemption (Heb. 10:7).

2. The whole work his Father had given him to do (1 Tim. 1:15).
3. The Levitical law and all types and ceremonies (Heb. 10:9-14).
4. The righteousness of God performed, perfected, and imputed to believers (Rom. 3:19-24; Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The proof of the accomplishment of all that he came to do was his resurrection from the dead (Acts 17:31). Salvation and eternal life is the gift of God, not of works on our part, but through the Person and work of our substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:18-21).

‘Tis finished: the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's and he is mine.’

Nothing need nor can be added to his finished work.

v. 31. It was late in the afternoon, and the Jews' Sabbath day began immediately after sunset; so they urged Pilate to break the legs of the crucified and hasten their death that their bodies might be taken down and buried before the Sabbath began. This Sabbath was a high day, when all the Jews presented themselves before the Lord in the temple. Dead bodies hanging on crosses would defile their Sabbath and ceremonies (Deut. 21:22-23). What hypocrisy, evil, and inconsistency stand clothed in religion! They were not concerned about crucifying the Messiah, only with defiling their holy day.

vv. 32-33. They broke the legs of the two thieves; but when they came to Christ and saw that he was dead, they broke not his legs. This was not out of compassion for him (as we shall see in the next verses), but that which restrained them was God's divine providence and purpose.

vv. 34-37. A soldier with a spear pierced his side, and there came out blood and water. John wrote that he saw this, and his record is true (1 John 5:6-8). The blood and water from the Lord's side signify justification and sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30).

‘Let the water and the blood,
From thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power’

But all this was done also that the scriptures should be fulfilled (Exod. 12:46; Psalm 34:20; Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7).

v. 38. Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man (Matt. 27:57), an honorable man (Mark 15:43), a member of the Sanhedrin, but he had not agreed to their plot to crucify Christ (Luke 23:50-51) and was a secret disciple of Christ. He was full of fear of the Jews but now shows great courage in asking Pilate to allow him to take the body of Christ and bury it in his own sepulchre. This would certainly identify him as a disciple of Christ and bring the wrath of the Jews upon him.

vv. 39-40. To the cross at the same time came another prominent Jewish leader named Nicodemus (John 3:1-3; John 7:50-52), a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, and a master in Israel. Nicodemus also was afraid to confess Christ earlier, but now, out of love for Christ, brought a costly mixture of burial spices, and with Joseph, wound the body in linen with the spices and buried the body of Jesus.

vv. 41-42. The grave was not a hole in the ground, but much like a cave or a vault in the rocks. On the side of the city where he was crucified was a garden (perhaps belonging to the rich man, Joseph), and in the garden was a sepulchre in which no one had ever been buried. This was necessary that when he arose, there should be no doubt that it was he and not another who was raised. They rolled a stone over the door of the grave (Mark 15:46), and Pilate sealed the stone and set guards around the grave (Matt. 27:62-66).

He is risen

John 20:1-17

v. 1. Our Lord was laid in the tomb toward the close of the sixth day of the week (Friday), a stone was rolled to the door, and guards were placed outside the tomb (Matt. 27:59-66). He lay in the tomb all the Sabbath day and arose on the first day of the week. His resurrection confirms all his claims (Rom. 1:4), denotes the Father's acceptance of his work (Acts 17:31), and assures every believer of his own resurrection (John 14:19; 1 Cor. 15:20-23). The women were prevented from coming to the tomb to anoint the body (Luke 23:55-56) because of the Jewish Sabbath laws. But a few hours after the Sabbath was over, while it was still dark, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome (Mark 16:1) came to the grave and found the stone rolled away (Matt. 28:2-4).

v. 2. After looking into the sepulchre and seeing that the body of Jesus was gone, Mary ran to tell the disciples. John says nothing about the other women nor about the angels which appeared to them and said, 'The Lord is risen,' as reported by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Mary found the disciples and addressed Peter and John, telling them that someone had taken away the body of the Lord; and she added, 'We know not where they have taken him.'

vv. 3-4. Peter and John immediately left the house to go to the tomb to investigate the report brought by the women. Being the younger of the two, John outran Peter and came first to the tomb.

vv. 5-8. John came first to the sepulchre but did not enter. He stooped down, looked in, and saw the linen grave clothes in which the body of the Lord had been wrapped; yet he went not in but waited for Peter. When Peter arrived at the tomb, he rushed in and John followed him. The linen clothes were lying in one place, and the napkin which was about his head was folded and placed separately from the wrappings. This was not the work of thieves nor officials, for the body would not have been unwrapped nor such care taken with the linen and napkin. What they observed was the work of one in no hurry, but with thought, care, and composure laid aside these emblems of death and came forth. John reports what he saw and declared that he believed. What did John believe? That the Lord had actually risen from the dead or the report of the women that someone had removed the body?

vv. 9-10. It is difficult to say what these disciples believed; for John writes here that even though the Lord had told them that he would arise from the grave and they found not his body, they did not fully understand the scriptures and the types of the Old Testament by which his resurrection was foretold and pictured (Psalm 16:10; Jonah 2:10; Matt. 12:39-40; Matt. 16:21-22; Luke 24:11; Luke 24:22-25). John and Peter returned to their own homes.

vv. 11-12. Mary returned to the sepulchre; and after Peter and John had departed, she remained there weeping, not knowing that the Lord had risen but thinking that the body had been removed by someone. She stooped down and looked again into the tomb and saw two angels. One was sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body had been laid (Luke 24:3-6).

v. 13. The angel asked her, ‘Why do you weep?’ There is no cause to weep but to rejoice, for the Lord is risen! What a commentary on our carnality

and unbelief! With no remembrance of the Lord's promise to rise, ignoring the presence of these heavenly beings, and making no inquiry as to why they were there, she continued to weep and say, 'They have taken away my Lord's body, and I don't know where they have taken him.'

v. 14. Perhaps she heard someone behind her, or perhaps one of the angels pointed behind her; but as soon as these words were out of her mouth, she turned around and the Lord Jesus was standing before her. She knew not that it was Christ. Why? I do not know. Perhaps her eyes were swollen and filled with tears, perhaps through modesty she kept her head lowered, perhaps the light was dim, perhaps she did not expect him and he was clothed differently, or perhaps her eyes were holden as the disciples' eyes in Luke 24:16.

v. 15. The Lord asked her, 'Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' Mary, supposing him to be the gardener or caretaker, replied, 'Sir, if you have removed the body of my Lord, tell me where you have taken him and I will care for the body.'

vv. 16-17. Then the Lord Jesus called her by name in such a way as she had heard many times before; and she knew Him, crying, 'Rabboni – my Master.' Mary evidently fell at his feet as she had done so often and would cling to him in joy, with reverence, and possessively. He replied, 'There is not reason to cling to me and try to hold me to you and with you. I am not yet ascended to the right hand in glory but will be with you for awhile. You will have opportunity enough to see me, hear me, and touch me before my ascension.' At this time the Lord would have her go and tell his disciples all that she had seen and that he would soon ascend to his Father and their Father – to his God and their God. Because of his mercy and grace, all that is his is ours who believe. Because of our identification with

him as our representative and Redeemer, his Father is our Father – fully reconciled (2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 8:34).

Peace be unto you

John 20:18-23

v. 18. This was the first appearance of our Lord after his resurrection (Mark 16:9). Matthew tells of another appearance to the women as they went to tell his disciples (Matt. 28:9-10). Luke wrote that he appeared to two disciples as they were going to Emmaus, also mentioned by Mark (Mark 16:12-13). These appearances were all on the same day on which he arose. The Apostle Paul reports several appearances of Christ during the time between his resurrection and ascension (1 Cor. 15:3-7).

v. 19. On that same Sunday evening the disciples were assembled in a certain place with the doors securely shut and locked. The Jews had taken their Master's life; and they feared that they may be next, especially since it was rumored that they had stolen his body. Our Lord came, stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you.' There is no indication that he came through the door without opening it. This would deny the very thing he said to them in Luke 24:39-43. He is *the man* Christ Jesus—glorified, but flesh and bones. The locks, bars, and bolts on the doors simply gave way to him and let him in. The stone was rolled away that he might come forth from the grave. He did not walk through the stone.

v. 20. When he had greeted them, he showed them the scars on his hands made by the nails when he was crucified and the wound in his side made by the spear of the soldier. Luke adds that he showed them the scars on his feet also (Luke 24:40). The primary reason for showing the disciples his wounds was to convince them that he had indeed risen and that the reports given by the women and the two disciples (which they did not believe—Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:11) were true. But the wounds and scars of our

Lord Jesus are and will remain as proof of his great love for those whom he redeemed and evidence of our full salvation in him (Isa. 53:4-6). The disciples rejoiced and were glad when it finally dawned on them that it was their Lord and that he was alive.

v. 21. 'Peace be unto you' was a usual salutation among the Jews (Gen. 43:23); but our Lord repeated it after he had showed them his hands and feet to show that notwithstanding their forsaking Him, denying Him, and not believing his word, he was indeed reconciled to them, loved them, and they had peace with God (Rom. 5:1). It also may have reference to the gospel of peace, which they would preach to all nations; for he continued, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.' The Father sent the Son into the world to redeem his covenant people; now the Son sends his disciples into the world to preach the gospel of Christ to those people that they might believe and be saved (2 Tim. 2:9-10). How was their mission like his?

1. Their authority is both divine—God sent them.
2. They are both sent into the same place—the world.
3. They would be treated the same—hated and killed.
4. Their ministry, like his, would be confirmed by miracles and wonders (Heb. 2:3-4).
5. They were sent to preach the gospel, which gospel heals, delivers, and sets men free (Luke 4:18).

vv. 22-23. When he had set before them this awesome task of which Paul said, 'Who is sufficient for these things,' he breathed on them. The word 'Spirit' signifies breath. As God breathed into Adam the breath of life, our Lord breathed into his apostles the Holy Spirit of God (John 3:8). The disciples had before received the Spirit of God in regeneration and in sanctification, and even had worked miracles. They had believed Christ

and confessed Him, which is impossible apart from the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:9-12). As indicated by the words of Christ, 'Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained,' these disciples had the Holy Spirit, power, discernment of spirits, the gift of tongues, and authority which ordinary ministers and Christians since that day cannot with any truth and modesty pretend to have. Read in the New Testament of their discernment of men's hearts and spirits (Acts 5:3-5). Read of their speaking in languages they never learned, of casting out demons and raising the dead (Acts 16:16-18; Acts 20:9-12), and of their authority expressed in their epistles to the churches, which epistles are verily the word of God without error or contradiction. The Holy Spirit was upon these apostles as upon no other men, and they had revelations and authority as given to no other men. However, Christ did not give them the authority or power to forgive sins; this is not what he is saying. Only God can forgive sin, and that through the blood and righteousness of Christ. And without true repentance toward God and faith in Christ, no man's sins are forgiven. The power here is the power of discernment beyond the ordinary, outward signs. There are no apostles today and really no need for such; for the gospel of Christ has been preached, confirmed by God, and the scriptures are complete. Let those who would hear from God hear his word: and let those who would see God glorified, sinners saved, and believers confirmed, preach the word; for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; Rom. 10:13-17).

My Lord and my God

John 20:24-31

v. 24. Our Lord had appeared to his disciples, convinced them that he had indeed risen from the dead, and given them the Holy Spirit to empower them for their ministry to the world; but Thomas, one of the twelve, was not present with them when the Lord appeared. There is no way of knowing where he was nor why he was not there, but there is a lesson to be learned from his absence. He missed the joy of seeing the risen Lord. He missed hearing our Lord's words of peace. He missed the peace and assurance itself as evidenced by his words in the next verse, 'I will not believe.' Paul exhorts believers to 'forsake not the assembling of ourselves together' (Heb. 10:25). Such neglect leads to spiritual leanness, snares and temptations, and missed blessings.

v. 25. The disciples found Thomas, and with great joy and assurance of faith, told him that they had 'seen the Lord.' They not only had the testimony of the women and the angels, but they saw him with their own eyes. But Thomas replied, 'Except I shall see the print of the nails and touch those scars in his hands and side, I will not believe.' Thomas was present at the raising of Lazarus and had heard Christ himself say that he would rise from the dead, and now he had the testimony of his ten friends that Christ had risen; but he did not believe. How great is the sin of unbelief and how stubborn is the human heart! Paul calls it an evil heart, which does not believe the Lord (Heb. 3:12). Thank God, he overrules our unbelief and is faithful to us when we are not faithful to him (2 Tim. 2:13).

v. 26. The disciples were together on the first day of the week (the day of Christ's resurrection), and the Lord had appeared unto them. We find them

together again on this same day, probably in the same place, hoping that he would come to them again. This time Thomas was with them! Evidently the disciples began from that day and experience to meet on Sunday. It appears from Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 16:2 that the Christians met the first day of the week for preaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and praise. We do not read in the New Testament of any congregation of Christians meeting on the Jewish Sabbath. We find the apostles preaching to the Jews assembled on that day, but no record is found of Christians meeting on that day for religious exercises. The Lord again stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be unto you.'

v. 27. Our Lord knew (as he knows all things) the conversation which had taken place with Thomas. He knew the very words which Thomas had spoken concerning the prints of the nails and the wound in his side; and with compassion toward his weakness and infirmities, in a kind and tender way, the Lord addressed Thomas, 'Reach hither and touch the scars with your own hands and be not faithless, but believing.' Faith glorifies and pleases God (Heb. 11:6). Faith in the Lord Jesus justifies the soul (Rom. 3:28; Rom. 5:1). Faith saves (Luke 7:50). Faith brings the blessings of God upon us (Mark 9:23; Luke 17: 5-6). Unbelief is the root of evil, dishonors God, makes the word of no effect, and damns the soul (Mark 16:15-16).

v. 28. We are not told that Thomas carried out his intentions: but rather, astonished at the Lord's grace, ashamed of his unbelief, and in total faith and confidence he exclaimed, 'My Lord and my God.' 'My Lord,' to whom I yield myself in total submission, and 'my God,' whom I worship and believe. We are told that this is the first time the name God is given to Christ by a man. By his resurrection he is declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). Thomas, who doubted so strongly, was the first to acknowledge Christ to be 'God overall blessed forever.'

v. 29. There were many who saw the Lord Jesus and the miracles he did who did not believe him nor follow him. Thomas was blessed by God's grace to truly and sincerely believe Christ as a result of seeing the risen Lord. Our Lord acknowledged Thomas' faith, but with a gentle rebuke declares that they are more blessed who believe him though they have not seen him in the flesh. They believe his word, his gospel, and his promises. The less need faith has of evidences that appeal to the senses, the stronger it is (Rom. 10:17; Rom. 4: 20-21; Heb. 11:1).

v. 30. Whether John is speaking of the signs and wonders that Christ did in the presence of his disciples during the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension or if he refers to all the wonders, works, and words of our Lord during his time on this earth, we do not know. But it is certain that this book John has written could not contain them, nor all the books in the world (John 21:25).

v. 31. These words that I have written under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit of God (2 Peter 1:20-21) are written that you might believe in your heart (Rom. 10:9-10) that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed *the Christ* – promised, prophesied, and pictured in the Old Testament – and that he is Emmanuel, '*God with us*' (Acts 8:37). This heart faith in Jesus Christ is of great concern because eternal life depends upon it. By believing on Christ and through his blessed name, we have eternal life, access to the throne, and acceptance before God (Acts 2:36; Acts 4:11-12; Rom. 3:19-24; Rom. 4:22-25; 1 John 5:10-13).

Christ on the shore

John 21:1-9

v. 1. After our Lord had risen from the dead, appeared to Mary and twice to his disciples, he showed himself to seven of the disciples who had gone to Galilee according to his instructions (Matt. 28:10, 16). These appearances were more than just physical appearances in order that they could see him and know that he lives. He manifested himself to them in his divine majesty, his resurrected glory, his love and compassion for them, and his victorious redemptive work (John 20:28-31). Here are the recorded appearances of Christ after his resurrection. There may have been more; we do not know (Acts 1:3).

1. To Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18).
2. To the women (Matt. 28:9-10).
3. To Cleopas and his companion (Luke 24:13-35).
4. To Simon (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5).
5. To the disciples, Thomas being absent (John 20:19-23).
6. To the disciples, Thomas being present (John 20:24-29).
7. To the seven at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-14).
8. To the disciples on the mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20).
9. To the five hundred (1 Cor. 15:6).
10. To James, the Lord's brother (1 Cor. 15:7).
11. To the eleven disciples on Olivet, near Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-11; Luke 24:50-51).
12. To Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-7).

vv. 2-3. There were seven of his disciples assembled together in a certain place not far from the Sea of Galilee (Tiberias); and Peter said to the

others, 'I go fishing.' This was his business and occupation before he met the Master. Judging from the following verses, it would seem that Peter (having nothing to do, unsure of his master's purpose for him, and being a man of action more than contemplation and waiting) decided to go back to the boats and nets. Whether Peter was turning his back on preaching and returning to his former occupation, we do not know for sure; but it appears so. The other disciples were ready to follow where Peter led and they said, 'We also go with you.' They evidently still owned boats and nets; so they entered a ship, as they had done so often before, and fished all night. This night they caught nothing. Our Lord is sovereign over the fish of the sea, and he prevented them from having any success this night. They had been called to be fishers of men, not fishermen of this sort.

vv. 4-5. Morning dawned and the Lord Jesus stood on the shore. The disciples were only about one hundred yards offshore and could both hear him and see Him, but they did not know that it was the Lord. He asked, 'You have caught nothing at all, have you?' They replied, 'No!' He did not ask this question for information nor because he did not know, but the reason was two-fold: to draw their attention to the fact that their return to their old occupation was a total failure ('without him we can do nothing'), and to make them attentive to the miracle he was about to perform. He can and does indeed supply the needs of his people (Phil. 4:19).

v. 6. Experienced fishermen do not usually obey the orders of strangers standing on the shore. Nevertheless, at the command to 'cast the net on the right side of the ship,' they obeyed and caught a multitude. Several things might be suggested—the calm, majestic, authoritative voice of the Master, or perhaps they recalled a similar incident (Luke 5:4) that happened months before, or did John begin to suspect that it was the Master when he spoke? At any rate, these weary fishermen obeyed and caught 153 fish.

vv. 7-8. John said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' If he did not recognize the Lord's voice, at least he knew from this miracle who it was. Peter had been toiling with the nets, stripped down to a loincloth, or with nothing on, because it was hot, hard work. Realizing that his Lord (whom he had denied, whom he had doubted, and whom he had disobeyed by leaving the place of meeting to return to fishing) was standing on the shore speaking to them in love and patience. Peter, anxious to be in his fellowship and good graces, wrapped his fisher's coat about himself and jumped into the water to swim ashore. He felt guilty about where he was and what he was doing (for he had led the others there). Yet he loved the Master and wanted to be the first to welcome him. We see this impulsiveness in Peter quite often. The other disciples stayed in the ship and rowed to shore with the fish.

v. 9. The disciples came from their defeat, frustration, and failure at sea to find a fire kindled and a meal of bread and fish prepared for them by the Lord. What a lesson for those who minister the gospel! We are unable to provide anything in our own strength, but by his grace he will fully meet our needs. Also the Master's provisions are so complete that nothing of ours need be added. The command, when he provides, is simply, 'Come and dine, for all things are ready.' It is so in redemption—Christ is all and in all. All we bring to him is our emptiness, our need, and our sin. We stand before him and his spiritual blessings as these weary, hungry disciples stood before that meal. It was all provided by their loving Lord (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10; Eph. 1:3).

Lovest thou me?

John 21:10-17

v. 10. The disciples landed their boat with the net full of fish dragging behind, ran to where Peter and the Master were standing beside a fire of coals, and all stood amazed and delighted before a complete meal of bread and fish prepared by the Lord. Before they were to dine and talk, their fish must be cared for; so the Master said, ‘Bring your fish to land.’

v. 11. Simon Peter (I'm sure all of the disciples helped him, but Peter was the leader) drew the net to shore and counted one hundred fifty-three great fish. Usually this many fish would break a net, but there was not a tear in it (Luke 5:4-9). Everything connected with this incident is miraculous in order to strengthen the faith of these disciples who would carry the gospel to the world (Heb. 2:3-4).

v. 12. Evidently not much conversation had taken place, only the instructions of the Lord. The disciples were silently stunned and awed in his presence and before his great power. They landed the boat, stood about in silent wonder observing him and the meal he had provided, emptied the net, and counted their catch as he had instructed them; and now he said to them, ‘Come and eat breakfast.’ None of them asked any questions, for they knew that it was the Lord. Their doubts, unbelief, and questions about his resurrection were all resolved. Their Master was again with them, providing for them and serving them. They were satisfied and happy. They knew it was the Lord himself.

vv. 13-14. The Lord took the bread and fish, which he had prepared and gave it to them. It is so important to observe that the banquet of mercy is

provided and served to hungry sinners by the blessed Lord himself (Psalm 23). Christ, himself, is the fountain of all grace and the source of all mercy. John Flavel wrote that all spiritual blessings are in and through Christ, those blessings are ours by a living union with Him, that union with Christ is through faith, and faith is the gift of God and comes by hearing the word. This was the third time he appeared to his disciples since his resurrection (John 20:19; John 20:26; John 21:7).

v. 15. After they had finished eating and had refreshed themselves, the Lord singled out Simon Peter and said to him, ‘Lovest thou me more than these?’ This setting was similar to the one in which Peter had denied the Lord. It was around a fire, and Peter denied the Lord three times. Some suggest the Lord pointed to the boats, the nets, and the sea, which had been Peter's life and occupation. Now his life was to be Christ and his occupation to preach and to feed the Lord's sheep. Others say Christ asked if Peter really loved him more than the other disciples loved him; for Peter had said, ‘Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet I will never be offended’ (Matt. 26:33).

Peter did not hesitate nor boast of the degree of his love; he simply replied, ‘Lord, you know that I love you.’ With modesty and humility, yet acknowledging the omniscience of Christ and his own affection for Christ, he declared his love for the Master. ‘Feed my lambs,’ Christ said. Feed the new-born, the weak believer, and the Lord's little children (1 Peter 5:1-2).

v. 16. The second question is a little different from the first in that the Lord left out, ‘more than these,’ and simply asked, ‘Do you love me?’ Peter replied in the same way as before, as if to say, ‘What more can I say or do? You know that I love you.’ ‘Feed my sheep’—both the sheep of Israel and the sheep among the Gentiles (Ezek. 34:1-6).

v. 17. Peter was grieved when the Lord asked him the third time, 'Lovest thou me?' It has been suggested that the Lord asked this question three times because Peter had denied him three times. I'm sure that the memory of that incident added to Peter's grief that the Lord should keep repeating this same question. Peter appealed to the Lord's complete knowledge of all things, of all men's hearts and thoughts, and replied, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I do love you.' This is the vital issue and question of questions for all professed Christians, 'Do you love Christ?' Not, 'do you love the word, the doctrine, the church, the law, the people of God?' though you certainly will if you love Christ. But do you love him? This is where life and hope and grace are born—love for Christ (1 Cor. 16:22). Again the Lord said, 'Feed my sheep.' It may be observed from the repetition of this phrase following Peter's declaration of love for Christ that the only proper persons to feed the Lord's sheep are those who truly love him! There are pretended shepherds who feed themselves and in time of trouble leave the flock, or who feed goats and not sheep, or who feed them not the true bread. But since the work is so laborious, the opposition from the religious world so great, the reproach of the world so constant, and conflict with powers of darkness so real, only true lovers of Christ faithfully perform the work of feeding the sheep. They are faithful to preach and teach the word because they love Christ, they love the gospel of his grace, and they love his sheep. They also know that God will bless, honor, and prosper his preached word (Isa. 55:11). They are motivated by Christ's love for them and their love for him (2 Cor. 5:9-15).

Follow me

John 21:18-25

vv. 18-19. Verse 19 gives us the meaning of our Lord's words to Peter in Verse 18. Peter (as all of the apostles except John, who was exiled to Patmos) would die a martyr. The Lord tells him by what death he would glorify God – crucifixion! When you were young, you freely dressed yourself and traveled where you would in freedom. But you will live to be an old man, preaching the gospel of God's grace and feeding the sheep of Christ: and then you will be bound as a prisoner, stretching forth your hands on a cross; and they will take you to a shameful, cruel death. 'Where thou wouldest not' means NOT that Peter would be unwilling to die for Christ, but that this type of death is disagreeable to the flesh. Our Lord glorified the Father in death (John 13:31-32), and the disciples would also glorify God in their deaths (2 Peter 1:14). It is reported in 'Fox's Book of Martyrs' that:

Peter was crucified at Rome.

James the less, at age 94, was stoned and beaten to death.

John was exiled to Patmos.

Andrew was crucified.

Philip was stoned then crucified.

Thomas was killed with a spear.

Bartholomew was beaten then crucified.

Matthew was slain with a halberd.

James the great was beheaded.

Simon Zelotos was crucified.

Jude was crucified.

The Lord said to Peter, 'Follow me,' in preaching the gospel and in death. Our Lord renewed the call he had given to Peter earlier (Matt. 4:18-20).

vv. 20-21. Peter looked over at John, the writer of this book, who (without calling his own name) describes himself so as to leave no doubt as to whom Peter meant. 'Lord, what shall John do? What shall John suffer?' It is really difficult to determine the reason Peter asked this of Christ. Was he genuinely concerned for his friend John? Was he just curious about John's future service and usefulness? Or was he thinking, 'If I am to be a prisoner and die for the faith, should not John and the others suffer also? Am I the only one who shall bear the wrath of men for the glory of God?' From the answer that our Lord gave to Peter, we can determine that the question was impertinent, improper, and totally out of place. Evidently our Lord's command, 'You follow me,' had not registered fully with Peter.

v. 22. The Lord's reply carries a strong rebuke for Peter's curiosity, friendly interest, probing into secret matters, or whatever it was that motivated Peter's question. 'If it is my will for John to live and not die until I return, of what concern is that to you? You follow me!' While the body of Christ is made up of many members and our one goal and purpose is to glorify our head, Jesus Christ—to preach his word, to feed his sheep, and to follow Him--yet the work each member does, the gifts each member has, the place each occupies, and the suffering each endures are according to the will and purpose of the Lord. We must be occupied with our own ministry, calling, and faithfulness to Christ and not be taken up with how, when, or where he is pleased to use others (1 Cor. 12:12-27). There should be no jealousy, envy, nor self-seeking among the servants of the great King. In his infinite wisdom and according to his purpose, he calls and assigns each servant to his place and work, which work is to be done willingly, diligently, and unto the Lord (2 Tim. 2:9-10).

v. 23-24. I suppose that it is only normal and natural (men being what they are, always ready to misinterpret, misread, and misapply the word of the Lord) that the rumor went forth among the brethren (and remained for a long time) that John would not die but would remain until the second coming of the Lord Jesus. But John, who wrote this epistle (and we know that his testimony is correct), sets the record straight. The Lord did not say that John would not die! In answer to Peter's concern for what place John would serve and what death John would die, the Lord said, 'If it is my will for John to live until I come and never die, that is of no concern to you. Peter; it is your business to follow me and fulfill my purpose, whatever I am pleased to do with John.'

v. 25. We must never imagine that all that our Saviour did and said are recorded in this book or in any other book. If all the miracles he did, sermons he preached, works he performed, and words he spoke had been written in books, the world itself could not contain the books that must be written: for he is from everlasting to everlasting! However, God has been pleased to have written all that is necessary and needful for us to know concerning the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may know Him, believe Him, and be brought to life eternal (John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Romans

Bible Class Commentary

A Work
of
Henry Mahan

The gospel concerning his son

Roman 1:1-6

The epistle to the Romans was not Paul's first epistle. Several were written before it. It may be placed first because of the excellency of it or perhaps because of the subject of it! The chief design of this epistle is to set in a clear light the doctrine of justification—which is not by nature, law, or ceremony but by the righteousness of Christ imputed through the grace of God and received by faith.

Calvin said, 'When anyone gains a knowledge of this epistle, he has an entrance opened to him to all the most hidden treasures of scripture.'

v. 1. 'Paul.' Most agree that the apostle was called Saul among the Jews and Paul, by the Gentiles (Acts 13:9). One thing is certain—the true servants of Christ are not fond of fancy titles. Paul identifies himself in a three-fold way:

1. 'A servant of Jesus Christ,' This was not only an expression of humility, but one which denotes a true minister of Christ and his church; for he does consider himself indeed a willing, loving, obedient bondsman of Jesus Christ. (Exo. 21:1-6).

2. 'Called to be an apostle.' An apostle was one who was sent by Christ, had his authority and doctrine directly from Christ, and had special power to work miracles in confirmation of his mission and authority (Heb. 2:3-4). Several questioned his apostleship because he was called after Christ ascended.

3. 'Separated unto the gospel.' We know that he was separated from his mother's womb (Gal. 1:15), he was separated to bear the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 9:15), and he was separated by the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:2); but this reference is to his determination to preach the gospel of God! He was fully dedicated to preaching the gospel. (1 Cor. 1:17; 1 Cor. 2:2). It is the gospel of God in that he is the author of it, the executor of it, the subject of it, and the revealer of it.

v. 3. These words are to be read with verse one, 'The gospel of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,' and express the subject matter of the gospel. Christ is the gospel! The gospel concerns his person and his work. The whole gospel is included in Christ; and as a man removes one step from Christ, he departs from the gospel (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 John 5:11-13, 20).

Two things must be found in Christ in order that we may obtain salvation in him: deity and humanity (Isa. 9:6; Matt. 1:23; John 1:14). He is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ; and according to the flesh he is the seed of David (Psalm 132:11; Luke 1:32). It appears to have been a common thing for the Jews to refer to their Messiah as the Son of David (Mark 10:47; Matt. 22:42).

v. 4. Our Lord Jesus was made or became the seed of David (Gal. 4:4), but he was declared to be the Son of God (John 10:30). He is the Son of God with power (Heb. 1:2-3; Matt. 28:18; John 17:2; John 5:36). 'According to the spirit of holiness' can be understood either of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16) or the divine nature of Christ, which was without sin.

He was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. On this great fact of his resurrection from the dead, Paul rests the truth of his gospel (1 Cor. 15:12-19). His resurrection declares him to be all that he claimed.

v. 5. Having completed his definition of the gospel, Paul speaks of his call to the apostleship and the end of his ministry. By the mercy of Christ he received grace in conversion and the office of an apostle. It was through divine favor, not his own worthiness, that he was chosen for such a high office (1 Cor. 15:10).

We have received a command to preach the gospel among all nations, and this gospel is received or obeyed by faith (Mark 16:15-16). It is our duty to preach the word, and it is the duty of all men to hear and believe (John 6:28-29). By special appointment Paul was a minister to the Gentiles for the honor and glory of the name of Christ, in whose name Paul went and in whose name he preached (Rom. 10:13-15).

v. 6. The calling here is not to an office; but it is that internal, effectual, and personal call of the Spirit of God to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:26-30).

Ready to preach the gospel

Romans 1:7-15

v. 7. The apostle addresses all the believers in Rome without any distinction except to say that they are ‘beloved of God’ and ‘called to be saints.’ The Lord, through his own kindness, made us objects of his love (1 John 4:10) and by his Spirit called us by the gospel to the obedience of faith (1 Thess. 4:10).

Then comes the apostle's usual salutation, ‘Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.’ He prays for an increase of grace, for every grace is imperfect; and those who have the most stand in need of more (2 Peter 3:18). By peace is meant peace with God through Christ, peace in our own hearts, and peace among believers and with all men. The Father is the Giver, and Christ is the Fountain of all blessings in this life and throughout eternity!

v. 8. After the inscription and salutation follows a thanksgiving.

1. The object of thanksgiving is God. Since all that we are, have, and know comes from him, it is reasonable that we should praise and thank God (1 Thess. 5:18; James 1:17).

2. The person through whom thanks are given is Christ. There is no coming to God except through Christ, nor is any sacrifice of prayer or praise acceptable except through him (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

3. The persons for whom this thanksgiving was made were all the believers in Rome, and the thing for which the apostle was most thankful was the fact that these people believed the gospel so strongly and so openly that their faith in Christ was known

throughout the world. Men and women of true faith are not ashamed to declare it (Rom. 1:16; Luke 9:26).

v. 9. 'God is my witness.' These words are an appeal to God and carry in them the form of an oath, for Paul was personally unknown to the saints at Rome; so in assuring them of his affection, interest, and continual prayers for them, he says, 'The Lord God, whom I serve in my innermost being, in heart, mind, and spirit in the glorious gospel of his dear Son, is my witness that I continually mention you in my prayers.'

v. 10. One of the things Paul requested at the throne of grace was that he might have the opportunity to visit the church at Rome. He prayed that it might be the will of God for him to have a prosperous or profitable visit among them.

v. 11. It was not Paul's desire just to travel, or to see the great city of Rome, or to behold the riches, grandeur, and historical sights; but he desired to minister to the church spiritual light, knowledge, peace, and comfort through the word. God has given Paul the ability to preach the gospel, teach the word, and establish churches in the truth (Eph. 4:11-14; Heb, 3:13). He wanted to lend his aid to the saints at Rome to help confirm and establish them in the faith.

v. 12. When the word of God is faithfully preached and believers are established firmly in faith, then comfort and assurance follow! When believers are established, both they and the minister are comforted together. The grace of faith is the same in all, called common faith (Titus 1:4).

v. 13. This desire to visit them was not a sudden impulse but a desire he had entertained for a long time. He was hindered either by God, who had

work for him in other places (Acts 16:6-9), or by Satan, who sometimes by divine permission has such power (1 Thess. 2:18), or by his duties in other places. Paul desired to have some fruit among them. We understand 'fruit' to be the conversion of sinners, the edification of believers, and the fruitfulness of believers in grace and works (Matt. 7:15-16; John 5:16).

v. 14. Because of the mercy of God to me and by his divine call to the ministry of the word, I have an obligation to fulfill, a duty to perform, and a debt to pay to all men, cultured and uncultured, wise and unwise. The gospel is the same for all men and is to be preached to the civilized, cultured nations as well as to the pagan, uncivilized barbarians. It is the same gospel to those who are learned and wise, with respect to human wisdom and knowledge, and to those who are unlearned and untaught in natural things (1 Cor. 1:26-30; Matt. 11:25).

v. 15. Paul was willing and ready to preach the gospel to the headquarters of the Roman Empire, the seat of Satan, and where the heat of persecution was. He was anxious to fulfill God's calling, as far as he was allowed to do so by the Lord.

I am not ashamed of the gospel

Romans 1:16-20

v. 16. The apostle declares that he is not ashamed of the gospel of God's grace, of mercy to the guilty through Christ, of salvation by substitution. Though it seemed nonsense to some and a stumbling block to others, Paul was not ashamed to believe it and to preach it (1 Cor. 1:18-24). Some in religion reveal that they cannot bear the reproach of his gospel. They own it in private, but they will not preach it in public. Some cover the offense of the cross with words of wisdom and human philosophy, seeking to please men. Some add their works to his grace.

The gospel of Christ and the preaching of that gospel are the means God uses to:

1. Quicken dead sinners (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; Mark 16:15-16),
2. Open blind eyes (2 Cor. 4:3-6),
3. Reveal Christ (Rom. 10:13-15; 1 Cor. 15: 1-4), and
4. Declare salvation through Christ (Rom. 3:24-26).

‘To the Jew first and also to the Greek.’ The word ‘Greek’ includes all the Gentles. These two classes comprehend all mankind. The Jews were chosen to receive the law, the prophets, the types, and the tabernacle; thus, we can say the gospel in type and promise was first preached to them (John 1:11-13; Rom. 3:1-2).

v. 17. The gospel of Christ reveals the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:25-26). If we would seek salvation or life with God, his righteousness must first be found; for God is holy, just, and righteous; and in order to be loved

by God, accepted by God, and justified before God, WE must become righteous--not by our righteousness, which is filthy rags, but by his righteousness (Matt. 5:20; Rom. 10:1-4). We cannot obtain salvation anywhere but through the gospel of Christ, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21). This righteousness is not known nor understood by the light of nature but must be revealed (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

‘Revealed from faith to faith.’ Righteousness is secured by Christ and received by faith. ‘From faith to faith’ means from one degree of faith to another; for faith, like any other grace, grows. As we grow in faith, we have a clearer view of God's righteousness in Christ and a clearer view of our sin and unworthiness.

‘The just shall live by faith.’ Four times this appears in scripture (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). We begin by faith (Rom. 3:22), we continue in faith (Col. 1:23), and we die in faith (Heb. 11:13). We live not upon faith, but by it upon Christ!

v. 18. There are two revelations given from heaven: one is the grace of God in Christ (the righteousness of God upon all who believe) and the other is the wrath and judgment of God upon unbelievers.

This wrath is revealed in the law, in the judgment of God upon Adam, Sodom, Noah's world, and countless other examples, and in the cross of Christ on which God spared not his own Son who bore the sin of his sheep (Psa. 5:5; Psa. 7:11; John 3:36).

The apostle begins in this verse to describe the awful ungodliness and unrighteousness of men living under the revelation of nature but destitute of the true knowledge of God. They have some knowledge of the divine being through creation and conscience but repress it and give way to evil only.

vv. 19-20. There are some things that cannot be known of God except through gospel revelation, but there are some things that may be known of God by nature. God himself is invisible; but his power, majesty, and glory shine forth in the things he has made (Psalm 19:1).

‘Clearly seen’ is the word used here. God gave men eyes to look about them, above them, and around them to behold his glory.

‘Being understood’ refers to the mind and heart of man, which should in an intelligent and thoughtful way recognize God and love God. Because they walk not in the light which they have, they are without excuse. They have no excuse for their idolatry and vicious lives. When sons of Adam have nothing more than the manifestation of the living God in the works of creation, providence, the law, and conscience, they have enough to render them inexcusable before God; for it is their duty to make good use of these things; and the cause of their not doing so is their evil hearts (Rom. 2:14-15).

Wherefore God gave them up

Romans 1:21-32

v. 21. Paul testifies here that God has given to men the means of knowing there is a God; for the world does not exist by chance, nor could it sustain itself. His eternity is evident, for he is the maker of all things. His power upholds all things and continues their existence. His wisdom arranged things in their proper order. His goodness is evident, for there is no other cause but himself for the creation and preservation of the earth. His justice punishes the guilty.

Though men had such a knowledge of God, they neither thought nor spoke honorably of him. They did not glorify him as God, nor honor him as the Creator, nor worship him as the Lord and governor of the universe.

They were not thankful for the knowledge they had nor for their mercies. They forsook the truth of God and turned to the vanity of their own reason and foolish imaginations. Their foolish minds and hearts, when turned away from God, could only plunge headlong into the darkness of error, delusions, and unrighteousness (Isa. 55:8-9; Prov. 14:12; Rom. 8:7). Men who will not have God to reign over them will have darkness and death to reign in them.

v. 22. The so-called learned men among the Gentiles first called themselves wise men; then, to cover their vanity and pride, they called themselves philosophers. But, notwithstanding all their arrogance and claims to be lovers of wisdom, they became fools; for there is no true wisdom, knowledge, nor understanding apart from our Lord (1 Cor. 3:18-20; Prov. 2:6; 1 Cor. 1:19-20). A man's greatest mistake is to seek wisdom in his own thoughts and understanding and to try to draw God down to the

level of his own low condition, rather than to humbly look to God for a revelation of himself (Matt. 11:25-27; Matt. 13:10-13, 16).

v. 23. Having imagined such a god as they could comprehend according to their carnal reasoning and natural understanding, they were very far from any knowledge of the true and living God (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). God is incorruptible, immortal, and invisible, and thus is opposed to all corruptible creatures and things (1 Tim. 1:17; Col. 1:14-15). He has a glory essential to him which cannot be changed or represented by a person, picture, or image called by his name. The heathen say, 'We know God is in the heavens; and this picture, statue, or person is not God but his image.' This is still idolatry, for it is a high indignity to God to form so gross an idea of his majesty as to dare to represent him by any image of him (John 4:24; Heb. 1:1-3; Exo. 20:4-5). Let us do away with all religious relics, images, pictures, crosses, and representations of the living God—which is idolatry. Man's degeneration led him down from images of men and birds (to represent God) to beasts and even snakes!

v. 24. We see in the rest of this chapter where idolatry leads. When men refuse the true knowledge of God and follow their imaginations and the pollution of their minds and hearts, they sink lower and lower into the darkest and vilest sorts of evil.

'God gave them up' is a phrase that appears three times in the next few verses. That is, God withdrew his providential restraints and left them to the pollution of their nature. The heart of man is the source of all wickedness! The lusts that dwell there are many and tend to uncleanness of one sort or another (Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19-20). When God leaves a man alone, there is no level too low for him.

v. 25. They were given over to idolatry. Religious honor and worship cannot be given to an idol or a creature without taking it away from the living God.

vv. 26-27. Because of their idolatrous practices, God left them to dishonor their own bodies and natures through homosexuality and perversion, both among men and women.

v. 28. God gave them over to minds so void of judgment that they justify and approve of their evil. Their understanding is so reprobate that they call evil good and good evil (II Thess. 2:10-12).

vv. 29-31. So far were these people from having a righteousness to justify them before God that they were filled with all unrighteousness. A large list is given of the vilest sins being committed by them.

v. 32. All of this evil is aggravated by their knowledge of the will of God (through the light of nature), that these things are contrary to it, and that they are deserving of death—yet they did them and took pleasure in those who committed them.

No respect of persons with God

Romans 2:1-11

To understand the early verses of this chapter, one must read the whole chapter and determine to whom the apostle speaks. In the preceding chapter Paul had described the state of idolatrous pagans. He now passes to the Jews, who (while they rejected the righteousness of God in Christ to which the law and the prophets bore witness) looked for salvation in their relation with Abraham, their observance of the ceremonial law, and their outward morality. Paul shows that the just judgment of God is the same against Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned. Verses 17, 23, and 28 give us evidence that Paul here addressed the religious Jews and not the heathen philosophers.

v. 1. The religious Jews passed judgment upon and condemned the Gentiles, and Paul censures them (not for their judging and condemning sin and idolatry, but for their being guilty in their hearts and oftentimes in their deeds of the same things for which they condemned others). Paul says that the law declares all men to be guilty before God (Rom. 3:19, 23). He has already proved the inexcusableness of the Gentiles, and in these verses he does the same in regard to the Jews. When you condemn the sins of others and are guilty of the same transgression, you condemn yourself and are inexcusable (Matt. 5:21-22; Matt. 5:27-28).

v. 2. God's judgment is according to truth—not appearance, works, nation, or profession. God will punish sin without respect of persons in whomsoever it is found! 'The soul that sinneth shall surely die.' 'God will by no means clear the guilty.' The true believer is free from condemnation because he is righteous. He has fulfilled the law and suffered its just

penalty in the obedience and death of Jesus Christ, with whom he is one (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:25-26).

v. 3. Since God's judgments are true and righteous, since God looks on the heart and not on the outward appearance, since all men are sinners and guilty before God, how can anyone who has not a perfect righteousness and a sufficient atonement hope to escape? (Job 25:4-6.) All must be judged according to their works, and all who are not in Christ shall perish (Rom. 8:1, 33-34).

v. 4. Are you Jews so blind as to trifle with, presume upon, and despise the wealth of God's goodness, forbearance, and patience toward you? Do you not know that the goodness of God to you is intended to lead you to repentance and faith in him? Goodness denotes God's benefits and blessings on them. Forbearance denotes God's bearing with them and not immediately executing vengeance. Long-suffering signifies the extent of his forbearance. They concluded from their position as Abraham's seed, their prosperity under God's goodness, and the delay of his judgment that they would escape condemnation. These mercies and benefits which should have turned them to God in true repentance and faith served only to harden them in their presumption and false profession.

v. 5. But by your stubbornness and impenitence of heart, trusting in your works, traditions, and claims to righteousness, you are storing up wrath and indignation for yourselves on the day of judgment. You are the authors of your own destruction. The benefits and special favor of God which these Jews enjoyed increased their condemnation, for an account of them all shall be required (Rom. 3:1-2; Luke 12:47-48). There is no judgment of God which is not according to strict justice! Mercy and judgment are irreconcilable except in Christ, in whom mercy is exercised consistently with judgment. Righteous and strict judgment admits no

mercy! The acquittal of a believer in Christ in that day will be as just as the condemnation of the ungodly! (Acts 17:31.)

v. 6. In that day of judgment God (who is righteous, holy, just, and true) will deal justly with every person according to his deeds. Every man will answer for himself in all that he thought, said, and did. Punishment shall be universal but not equal, for it is a just judgment (Matt. 11:22-23).

v. 7. These words are descriptive of one sort of person—those who have in faith and perseverance sought the glory of God in Christ, the HONOR which abides in Christ, and immortality in Christ or the resurrection of life (Phil. 3:10-11). God will render to them eternal life!

v. 8. But to those who are self-seeking, self-willed, self-righteous, and disobedient to the gospel of truth, there will be indignation and wrath.

vv. 9-11. The wrath of God will be poured out upon all men who are guilty of sin (whether Jew or Gentile), and the mercy of God will be upon all men in Christ (whether Jew or Gentile); for there is not respect of persons with God (Rom. 3:22-23; Rom. 10:12-13; Col. 3:11).

Both Jew and Gentile under condemnation

Romans 2:12-16

v. 12. Divine justice will deal with sin; in whomsoever sin is found, he shall perish! The Gentiles who have not the written law of Moses shall perish, for they have sinned against the light of nature, conscience, and the law written on their hearts. On the other hand the Jews, who have the written law, shall be judged by that law and condemned. Their having the law, hearing the law, or partially doing the law shall not free them from condemnation, but rather shall increase their misery.

Two objections are generally raised against these words:

1. Since God has not given the written law to the heathen, they ought not be condemned; and
2. Since God gave the Jews his written law and declared them to be a special people, they should be spared. Both of these are dealt with in the next three verses enclosed by a parenthesis.

v. 13. Reading the law, preaching the law, and hearing the law may justify a man in his own eyes and even in the eyes of men; but it will not justify him before God (Luke 16:15; Matt. 23:27-28). If a man would seek righteousness from or by the law, it must be a perfect inward and outward obedience (Gal. 4:21; Gal. 3:10). The commandments of God are not given for consideration, curiosity, or contemplation but to be perfectly obeyed. Without a perfect holiness, no man shall be justified (Matt. 5:20). This righteousness is ours in Christ (Rom. 3:19-26) through faith.

v. 14. This verse supplies the answer to the objection that God cannot justly condemn the heathen since he has given them no written law. Paul

states that though they have not a written law, they have proven by their own deeds that they have a law in themselves, put there by God. The heathen do certain things (though imperfectly) commanded by the law, which proves they discern the difference between right and wrong.

v. 15. Haldane distinguishes between the law itself and the work of the law. The work of the law is the thing that the law does; that is, what it teaches about good and bad, right and wrong. The Gentiles, who institute religious rites, make laws to punish theft, murder, and adultery, and reward honesty and truth, prove that there is imprinted on their hearts the work of the law, which distinguishes between what is just and unjust. The testimony of their own conscience witnesses against them.

‘They accuse or excuse one another.’ This supposes a knowledge of right and wrong. No man can accuse or condemn another if he has no standard of right and wrong, and no man can defend an action unless he has a similar standard. The Gentile is not without law, though he is without the written law of Moses; and he shall be judged and condemned according to light and knowledge (Rom. 1:18-20).

v. 16. These words are to be read in connection with verse 13. They express the time when both Jews and Gentiles shall be judged. As there is law common to the whole human race, there is a common judge, who is God; and there will be a day when God will hold this judgment (Rev. 20:12-15; 1 Cor. 4:5).

‘The secrets of men’ means that this judgment will include all things, even the most secret and most concealed. It is not like the judgments of men which cannot discern the thoughts and the heart. God will not only expose the external but the internal guilt, even the inmost thoughts of men (Eccles. 12:14).

‘By Jesus Christ.’ Jesus Christ will conduct the judgment, for he is the Judge of the quick and the dead; and to him hath the Father committed all things (John 5:22; Acts 17:31; Rev. 1:17-18).

‘According to my gospel.’ That is, the gospel which he preached. The gospel includes everything revealed by Christ, and this judgment is declared therein (Mark 16:15-16; John 3:18, 36).

‘In the economy of Jesus Christ there are two extreme degrees, one of abasement, the other of exaltation. The lowest degree of his abasement was his death and burial. The opposite degree of his exaltation will be the last Judgment. In his death he was covered with reproaches and pierced with the arrows of divine justice. He was exposed on the cross as a spectacle to the whole city of Jerusalem. In the Last Judgment, arrayed in glory and majesty, he will appear before the whole universe in the glory of his Father (Phil. 2:6-11).’ –Robert Haldane

Who may be called a true Jew?

Romans 2:17-29

From here to the end of the chapter the Jews were especially addressed in order to show that all of their external advantages over the Gentiles, such as the law, the ceremony, the prophets, and so forth, would not justify them before God! They were sinners like the Gentiles, and trusting in these external types and privileges only aggravated their condemnation.

vv. 17-20. In these four verses Paul deals with the privileges of the Jews under six particular headings.

1. 'You bear the name of Jew.' They were Abraham's seed. In that name they were distinguished from all other nations and people.

2. 'You rest in the law.' It was not that they loved the law, or obeyed it, or understood the purpose of it, or saw Christ as the end and goal of it for righteousness, but only that they had the law and the ceremony and, therefore, claimed God's favor and blessings.

3. 'You boast that the true God is your God.' The Gentiles worshipped idols; the Jews worshipped the true God. The Gentiles were aliens; the Jews were the covenant people. The Gentiles had no prophets nor tabernacle; God dwelt with the nation of Israel.

4. 'You say that you know God's will.' What he requires, what he commands, and what is agreeable to him.

5. 'You say that you approve of the things of God because you have been instructed by the law.'

6. 'You say that you are guides and teachers of other men.' They felt that they had in their law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, which equipped them to be teachers and instructors.

vv. 21-23. In these verses Paul reveals their hypocrisy. He establishes more firmly what he had said earlier in this chapter that, though they had the law, they did not practice it; and though they boasted of their knowledge of the law, they were ignorant of its spirituality and therefore condemned themselves (Rom. 10:1-4).

Here is a man who says he is one of God's chosen people, who has received and approved of the law, whose boast is in God, who knows his will, approves of the excellent things, who teaches others that they should not steal, lie, commit adultery, or worship idols. Surely this is a man of God! He would have you believe that he is. But under this mask of hypocrisy is a thief, an adulterer, a blasphemer, and an idolater who makes a mockery of the law by continually breaking it.

Whatever advantage the Jews had over the Gentiles, they were, notwithstanding, in the same condition before God—unrighteous, ungodly, intemperate, and consequently subjected to the same condemnation.

v. 24. It is written by your prophets that wherever you journeyed among the Gentiles, your conduct and behavior caused the heathen to mock the name of God (Ezek. 36:20-22; 2 Sam. 12:13-14).

v. 25. Paul here pursues the Jew into his last stronghold; circumcision! This rite was more ancient than Moses and distinguished them from other nations. Circumcision was a symbol of the Lord's covenant and a sign of all the advantages enjoyed by the Jews. They thought that circumcision itself was sufficient to obtain righteousness. Paul declares that in view of obtaining favor with God, circumcision is profitable only if you perfectly keep the whole law (Gal. 5:2-3). If you are trusting the fact that you are

circumcised to reconcile you to God and you do not keep the whole law, you may as well be uncircumcised.

vv. 26-27. This is a hypothetical case, for no man can keep the whole law. But suppose an uncircumcised man should keep the law perfectly. He would be righteous before God, and he would condemn you who have the outward form and letter but transgress the law.

vv. 28-29. A man is not a child of God, righteous before God, and justified by mere name, nationality, profession, and ceremony. True circumcision is not something outward, but it is an inward work of grace on the heart.

A man is a true Jew (or redeemed person) who has a work of grace in the heart, who has renounced his works and looked to Christ, who worships God in spirit and truth, who has the law of God written on his heart and not in his hand, and his praise is from God and not from men (Psa. 34:18; Psa. 51:17).

What advantage then hath the Jew?

Romans 3:1-8

This chapter can be divided into three parts:

1. Verses 1-8 answer objections to the things stated in Chapter Two.
2. Verses 9-19 prove Jew and Gentile are guilty of sin and cannot be justified by the law.
3. The remaining verses state the true and only way of justification—by the righteousness and death of the Lord Jesus.

v. 1. We must read Romans 2:28-29. If a person is not truly a Jew who is born of Jewish parents and is brought up in the customs, ceremonies, and religion of the Jews; but anyone of any nation who is born of the word and the Spirit of God is of true Israel—if being circumcised profits nothing unless the whole law is kept—then of what profit is circumcision? If having the law, the prophets, and the ceremonies adds to the condemnation of Abraham's natural sons and increases their responsibility, what advantage or profit is there in being a Jew? Better to be a heathen, one might think.

It might be asked today in the same vein. Why preach the gospel to the heathen if the majority of them will reject it and be held more accountable for their unbelief because of the light of the preached word?

v. 2. The Old Testament Jews had great advantage over the Gentile nations. They had the oracles of God. The word is used four times in the New Testament. In Acts 7:38 it means the law of Moses. In Hebrews 5:12 and 1 Peter 4:11 it embraces the truths of the gospel. In this verse it includes all the scriptures of the Old Testament, especially as they

regarded the Messiah, Christ Jesus! While the Gentile must discover what he could of God through the light of creation, conscience, and providence, the Jew had the prophecies of the coming Messiah, pictures and types of his sacrifice and atonement in the ceremonies, and the promises of redemption and forgiveness through faith in him. Instead of believing on him, confessing their guilt revealed by the law, and resting by faith in the mercy of God and righteousness imputed, they took the law, circumcision, ceremonies, and Jewish heritage and went about to establish their own righteousness based on imperfect, hypocritical obedience to the form! All laws, rituals, morality, ceremonies, scriptures, and outward form are of no value, but rather are devastating if they do not lead a person to Christ.

v. 3. What if most of the Jews disregarded the promises of God, did not believe the prophecies of the Messiah, despised and rejected him when he came, and sought acceptance through their heritage and rituals? Does this make void the promises of God concerning the Messiah? Does this neutralize the promises of God in Christ? Does this make void God's covenant with Abraham? Does the rebellion and unbelief of the favored nation make of none effect redemption by grace through faith in Christ?

v. 4. God forbid! Let no such thought enter your mind. God's truth can never be changed by want of faith in men. God is true and faithful to his word, to his promises, to his attributes, and to his covenants. On the other hand, man is false, not only because he often violates his word, but his nature is to lie and shun the truth (Romans 8:7; Genesis 6:5).

Paul quotes David (Psalm 116:11; Psalm 51:4). God is just in his Judgments, upright in all that he does, and will prevail regardless of what sinful men say or do!

vv. 5-6. A man may say, 'If my unrighteousness establishes, illustrates, and commends the righteousness of God, then God would be unjust to

inflict his wrath on me.’ This is not Paul's opinion, but it is an objection raised by foolish men. The answer is that all unrighteousness is sin and does not by itself commend or illustrate the righteousness of God! We do not preach that man's evil and sin glorifies God or in itself makes the grace of God glorious. If God used the evil of believers to glorify himself, he could not judge evil in unbelievers. God's mercy to the miserable, grace to the guilty, and pardon of the most unrighteous glorify him. The black background does not give beauty to the diamond on display, but only lets us see the diamond's beauty by contrast.

v. 7-8. Nothing is more opposite to truth than a lie. A lie can never be of any advantage to truth or to the God of truth. A lie is of the devil and punishable by death. The truth of God could never abound through a lie. If this were true, then men could say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come.’ But evil cannot of itself produce anything but evil. The fact that God's glory is manifested through grace to the chief of sinners is not the work of men but the work of God, who, through the righteousness of his Son, turns even our sins to the promotion of his own glory.

There is none righteous, no, not one

Romans 3:9-20

In the two preceding chapters Paul had written of the guilt of the Gentiles and of the Jews separately. Now he takes them together and proves from scripture that all men are sinners and there is none righteous, no, not one. Through these verses he is supporting the conclusion which he had in mind all along and at which he arrives in Verse 20; namely, that by the deeds of the law no man can be justified! And all of this is to set forth the true way of peace as shown in Verses 21-26.

v. 9. The Jews are not superior or any better off than the Gentiles with regard to their state and condition before God. Though the Jews had the advantage with respect to external privileges and revelations, yet, says the apostle, we have already proved that all men, Jew and Gentile, are equally born in sin, are by practice sinners, and are equally condemned before the law of God (Psalm 14:1-3; Eccles. 7:20). All are not only guilty but also in bondage to sin.

v. 10. This statement may be regarded as a summary of all that follows and state the entire case: 'there is none righteous, no, not one.' Not one person possesses a righteousness which can in any way meet the demands of our Holy God. Four times Paul uses the phrase, 'there is none,' and adds twice, 'no, not one!' (Romans 3:23.)

v. 11. Man thinks he is a wise and understanding creature. It is true that he has the faculty to understand things natural, civil, and moral—and that quite imperfectly! But man has no spiritual knowledge of God, no true sense of

himself and his sin, no true understanding of the way of salvation in Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14; John 6:44; Ephesians 4:18).

There is none that seek God earnestly, with the whole heart, or in Christ Jesus. There is none that worship him in spirit and truth and commune with him through the Mediator for his honor and glory! (John 5:40-44.)

v. 12. ‘They have all gone out of the way’ of God and his truth (out of the way of holiness, light, and life) and into their own way of sin and evil (Isaiah 53:6). ‘They are unprofitable,’ becoming corrupt and filthy. They are unfit for that for which God made them—to glorify God. ‘There is none that doeth good’ in a spiritual manner. Sin and self are mixed with all that we do. Only God is truly good. Even our good works are unacceptable and filthy in his sight (Isaiah 64:6).

vv. 13-14. Thus far the apostle has spoken in general terms of man's sin. He now deals with particulars—such as words and actions.

As to our words, he marks all of the organs of speech—the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth. Nothing is more offensive than an open grave sending forth the horrible odor of rotten flesh. The speech that comes from a sinner's throat proceeds forth from a dead, corrupt heart and nature. His tongue is used to form words of deceit, hatred, blasphemy, and exaggeration.

The deadly poison of the snake is ejected forth from his lips as they form words of slander, gossip, and blasphemy. ‘His mouth is full of cursing’ means speaking not only shameful words, but, in particular, blasphemy of God. It is full of harsh words for God, superiors, parents, and all authority. Bitterness, murmuring, and discomfort flow freely.

v. 15. Having shown man's sinful words, Paul turns to his actions! This comes from Isaiah 59:7. The feet represent motion and action; and when

these are said to be swift to shed blood, it denotes the eagerness and readiness of men to sin against God and one another.

vv. 16-18. All the ways men take and the methods they pursue make them miserable and lead to destruction (Proverbs 14:12). The way of sin does not build—it only destroys.

By nature men do not know the way of peace with God in Christ. Christ is the only way of salvation, eternal life, and everlasting peace and happiness. A man can only know this who is taught of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-10).

By the fear of God is not meant a fear of hell, damnation, and the wrath of God, but a reverential awe, worship, and affection which leads to faith and obedience. The natural man has contempt for the Living God as shown by his treatment of Christ. He will not honor God.

v. 19. The law which speaks here is the moral law of God as it appears in the whole word of God, which every man is bound to observe and obey, Jew and Gentile. All mankind is under God's law. This law pronounced every son of Adam guilty and stops every mouth. We have no defense, no alibi, and nothing to reply; for the holy law of God exposes our corruption inwardly and outwardly.

v. 20. Therefore this is the apostle's conclusion: The law cannot save, cannot justify, cannot give us a righteousness. It can only do three things:

1. Shut our mouths and declare us guilty before God,
2. Teach us the depths and darkness of our sin and depravity,
and
3. Shut us up to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 7:7-11).

Just and justifier

Romans 3:21-31

Verses 19 and 20 sum up the things that Paul has said concerning Jews and Gentiles. All are guilty of sin. All are without excuse. None can open his mouth in his own defense or claim any righteousness, but everyone must acknowledge guilt before God. Paul then proceeds to the conclusion he meant to draw from all this: there is no justification of any before God by works or the deeds of the law. The law reveals sin; it cannot relieve sin.

v. 21. 'But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.' 'The righteousness of God' is one of the most important expressions in the Scriptures, and it signifies both the precept of the law and the penalty of the law. That is, the Holy law in every jot and tittle must be honored; and where there is the least offense, justice must be satisfied. We are not talking here of God's own personal holiness, but of that righteousness he has (by his grace) provided for and imputed to guilty sinners through his Son (Romans 10:1-4).

'Without the law;' not without perfect obedience to the law (for this Christ did) but without regard to the sinner's obedience to the law. If there is no imputation of Christ's obedience, no one will be saved (Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 5:20).

'Now is manifested' in the gospel. Why is the gospel the power of God unto salvation? Because therein is the righteousness of God revealed! (Romans 1:16-17.) Christ fulfilled it for us and reveals it to us (Romans 5:19).

Moses and all the prophets testified of this righteousness in Christ (Isaiah 53:11; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Psalm 85:10-13).

v. 22. This perfect righteousness whereby we are sanctified, justified, and received in God's presence as holy and without blame is not imputed to us on account of any work of our own; but it is received by faith. Faith is not a part of that righteousness, but it is through faith that it is received. Before we can have a part of anything in Christ, we must be one with him; and this union is accomplished through faith (Romans 4:11-13; Philippians 3:9; Romans 4:20-24).

This righteousness of God is unto all and upon all that believe, of every tribe, nation, and tongue. There is no difference made between Old Testament people and New Testament people, between Jew and Gentile, between male and female.

v. 23. Why is there not one way of life for one and one way for another? Because all have sinned and come short of God's commandments, requirements, and glory! (Romans 3:9-11; Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 5:12.)

v. 24. The blessing here is justification which stands opposed to accusation and condemnation (Romans 8:31-34). We have the holiness and righteousness of his Son as if it were our own (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 1:6-7).

The cause of this blessing is the free grace of God. He chose us, redeemed us, and called us according to the good pleasure of his own will (Ephesians 2:4-7).

The source of this blessing is the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! Christ, as our Redeemer, perfectly obeyed the law, bore our sins in his own body, was buried and rose again. He sits at the Father's right hand as our Mediator. In him we are complete (Colossians 1:19-23).

v. 25. The word 'propitiation' signifies the mercy-seat (Hebrews 9:5), which was a type of Christ. Christ is the propitiation to God for our sins.

He has reconciled us to God by his obedience and sacrifice (Hebrews 2:17; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

‘The sins that are past’ means that God pardoned the sins of believers under the Old Testament dispensation by the atonement of Christ. They were persuaded of the promises in Christ and embraced them by faith (Hebrews 11:13). It was due to God's forbearance that he did not immediately destroy them but passed by their sins till his law was honored and his justice satisfied by Christ.

v. 26. ‘To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness;’ or to manifest that perfect righteousness provided by Christ for every believer (Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21). We are not only innocent but have the righteousness of God in Christ. God saves men in such a way that his justice and truth are not compromised or violated. He is a just God and a justifying God (Psalm 85:10).

vv. 27-28. There is no room or reason for boasting by Jew or Gentile. All boasting is cast out! By what principle is boasting excluded? By works? Certainly not! Our sins are revealed and laid bare by God's law. We are deprived of all glory. The principle of faith destroys boasting, for faith receives all from God and claims nothing for ourselves (1 Corinthians 1:30-31). The conclusion stands firm—justification is by faith without the works of the law.

vv. 29-30. It is further confirmed that Jews and Gentiles are on the same level with respect to their state before God. He is the Lord God of both; and he justifies both in the same way—through faith in Christ.

v. 31. The law is abolished as a covenant of works. It is fulfilled by Christ in its administration, and it is destroyed as a yoke of bondage; but the law

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remains unchanged in the hands of Christ, where it is honored, established, and fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-20).

Imputed righteousness

Romans 4:1-8

There are three prominent lessons set forth in Chapter Three:

1. There is absolutely no justification for Jew or Gentile before God by the works of the law (Rom. 3:20).

2. There is the righteousness of Christ by which believers are completely justified and sanctified in the sight of God without our obedience to the law. This is free, full, and forever in Christ (Rom. 3:21-22).

3. This perfect righteousness not only justifies the sinner but also honors the law and God's justice, thus enabling God to be just and justifier! (Rom. 3:26).

Paul proceeds in Chapter Four to illustrate these truths, using two men held in the highest esteem by the Jews—David and Abraham.

v. 1. In this chapter Abraham is referred to (in a spiritual sense) as the father of all believers, but this verse speaks of his relationship to the Jews (according to the natural descent) being the first of the circumcision. What did he find as pertaining to the flesh? Circumcision and the law? Did he find the way of life, righteousness, and salvation by his services and performances? There is no answer given; but by what follows the answer is, 'no!'

v. 2. If Abraham were justified by his works, either moral or ceremonial, then, contrary to what Paul had taught, he had something in which to

boast, but certainly not before God, who saw the sins of his heart and who was aware of all his failings (Luke 16:15).

v. 3. Having denied that Abraham (or any man) is justified by works, Paul appeals to the Scriptures. This is our foundation of faith, the rule of faith and practice, and the source of all information about God, sin, salvation, and eternal life—the scriptures! (Gen. 15:6; Gal. 3:6; Rom. 4:20-22.)

But does not James say that Abraham was justified by works? (James 2:21.) Paul and James are not speaking of the same thing. Paul speaks of the justification of the person before God. James speaks of the justification of the person's faith (or claim of it) before men. Paul condemns our works as a cause of justification before God. James praises works as the evidence of our Justification before God. Paul was writing to those who trusted in their works to save. James was writing to those who neglected or denied the necessity of obedience.

v. 4. To the laborer, what he merits or earns can never be called a gift, a favor, or mercy; but rather it is an obligation owed to him. If work is involved at all (regardless of the degree of work), it is a debt and not grace at all! (Rom. 11:5-6.)

v. 5. It is not that the believer does no good works, but that he does not work in order to obtain life and salvation (Eph. 2:8-10; James 1:20). We work because we love Christ, not in order to be justified (2 Cor. 5:14-15). The elect believe God, who justifies the ungodly (Rom. 5:6-8), even Abraham, who in his unregenerate state was ungodly. His faith (not the act of faith but the object of faith, who was Christ) is imputed to him for righteousness. Works mean nothing regarding justification, for even our best works are full of sin (Isa. 64:6). But true faith will produce works of faith and labors of love.

vv. 6-8. David, the chosen king, the man after God's own heart, is quoted on the subject of the blessedness of the man who believes God and seeks acceptance and righteousness in Christ, not in his works! (Psalm 32:1-2.)

1. 'Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven.' They are removed from us as far as the east is from the west; they are cast behind God's back; they are cast into the depths of the sea; they are remembered no more.

2. 'Whose sins are covered.' They are covered from divine justice and shall never be seen again or brought into judgment (Rom. 8:33-34).

3. 'Happy is the man to whom God will not reckon or charge sin.' We shall appear before him without fault or blame and shall be unprovable. We are justified and acquitted (Col. 1:22; Jude 24).

It is of faith – that it might be of grace

Romans 4:9-16

The apostle fully establishes the truth throughout this epistle that a man is justified before God by faith and not by works. In these verses he shows in the most decisive manner that Abraham did not obtain Justification by circumcision, since he was justified BEFORE he was circumcised! Justification has no necessary connection with, or dependence on, circumcision. We are saved by free grace!

v. 9. Is justification only for the circumcised Jew or for the Gentile as well? Why does Paul ask a question such as this? Because the Jews not only believed that justification before God depended (at least in part) on their works, but that this blessing was connected with circumcision, therefore for the Jew only! The design of the following words is to prove that justification belongs to Gentile and Jew, and that it is by faith and not by circumcision. Abraham serves as the example.

v. 10. When was Abraham justified? If righteousness was imputed to him before he was circumcised, then circumcision was not the cause, nor is it necessary to justification. And it may come on the Gentile as well as on Jews. According to the Scriptures he was in a state of righteousness and justification before the birth of Ishmael (Gen. 15:6; 17:1-4; 17:9-14; 17:24-25).

vv. 11-12. If Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, then why was he circumcised? His circumcision and the circumcision of all Jews was a sign or token of that covenant which God made with Abraham and

his natural seed concerning the enjoyment of the land and his favor. It distinguished them from all other nations (Gen. 17:8-11).

Circumcision is also a typical sign of Christ (as all the ceremonies of the law were), of the shedding of his blood to cleanse from sin and the circumcision of the heart.

It was a seal to Abraham that he should be the father of many nations in a spiritual sense and that the righteousness of faith (which he had) should come upon them, Gentile and Jew, after the same manner--by faith (Rom. 4:23-24). While all of Abraham's natural seed were circumcised, it was only to those who had his faith that he was a father in what is spiritually represented by circumcision.

v. 13. 'Heir of the world' means this world and the world to come. Abraham and all believers are the heirs of all things in Christ (1 Cor. 3:21-23; Heb. 11:8-10, 13; Luke 20:34-36).

'Or to his seed.' The covenant, in all its promises in reference to spiritual blessings, was established in Christ, who was Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:16), and was given to all his church in Christ (Rom. 8:16-17).

'Not through the law but through faith.' Not through the law of Moses, nor the law of ceremony, nor the law of circumcision, but by faith in Christ (Gal. 3:21-22).

vv. 14-15. If the Jews, who were seeking righteousness and eternal life by the works of the law, should, on account of their obedience to the law, obtain grace and glory, then faith is set aside; and the promise of righteousness by faith is of no effect. If salvation is by works, it is useless for God to promise life to those who, because of their inability to keep the law, seek it by faith. Salvation cannot be by faith and works (Gal. 3:18; Gal. 2:21).

It is the law broken that brings upon us the wrath of God. The law not only cannot justify (because of man's sinful state) but it curses and condemns the guilty (Rom. 3:19; Rom. 8:3-4).

‘Where no law is there is no transgression.’ This is sort of a proverbial expression. Sin is the transgression of God's law. But the law IS COME! Not only the written law, but that law which is revealed through creation, conscience, and written on the heart.

v. 16. Therefore, righteousness and justification are of faith and not of works. In no other way but through faith can salvation be by grace (Rom. 11:6). A reward must be reckoned either all of grace or else all of debt on account of works performed; these cannot be combined. If God takes into account any works of men, then salvation is not by grace.

Also, the only way that salvation can be sure and the promise of eternal life certain, for Jew or Gentile, is for the whole of the work to be by the grace of God. We are born sinners, by practice and choice we have failed, and the future holds no hope for us apart from his grace (Gal. 3:10; Gal. 4:21; James 2:10).

Abraham – father of many nations

Romans 4:17-25

Verse 16 declares some things that every believer has been taught.

1. Salvation is by faith that it might be by grace alone.
2. Salvation by grace is the only sure way of salvation. If by works, none could be saved.
3. Both Old Testament believers and New Testament believers, Jew and Gentile, are saved by grace through faith in Christ.

v. 17. Abraham, in a spiritual sense, is the father of all believers, not of the Jews only (Gen. 17:4-5), but of believers from all nations. At that moment when Abraham stood before God, though he was not then a father at all, it was as sure to him as if it had already taken place. God willed it, and the result would follow as sure as God calls into existence the things which exist not. For God, according to his eternal purpose, speaks of things which exist not in the same way that he speaks of things that exist (Rom. 8:29-30; Acts 15:16-18).

‘Even God, who quickeneth the dead.’ Faith in God's power to give life where there is no life is the proper ground of believing anything which God purposes to do. If God quickens the dead, can he not give life to Sarah's dead womb? Can he not quicken dead Gentiles? Can he not raise our bodies from the grave?

v. 18. ‘Against hope’ That Abraham should be a father through Sarah was against all natural principles. She was almost 100 years old. But Abraham believed ‘in hope.’ His hope was in the promise of God; Abraham's expectation of becoming a father of nations of believers rested completely

on the word of God! He believed God and hoped for the very thing that God said would come to pass. Our hope of redemption is not just a wish or a desire but expectation based upon the promise of God and the purchase of the Son (2 Thess. 2:16-17; 1 Peter 1:3).

v. 19. 'So shall thy seed be' (Gen. 15:5). Here stands a childless old man with an old wife, hearing God declare that through that wife his seed would be as numberless as the stars of the heavens. Abraham believed God! His age and impotence and the deadness of Sarah's womb did not shake his faith. This example ought ever to encourage our faith. There will always be obstacles and difficulties but none that our Lord cannot overcome! (Gen. 18:14; Matt. 19:26.)

v. 20. Abraham was not staggered with respect to the promise, for it was made by him who cannot lie and with whom all things are possible. He was not staggered by the difficulties and seeming impossibilities which stood in the way, for his faith in God was strong; therefore, he gave God all the glory. How did Abraham's faith glorify God? By ascribing to God all the glory of his faithfulness, his power, his grace, and his goodness. It is important that we glorify God by ascribing to him his attributes and believing that he will act according to them!

vv. 21-22. 'Fully persuaded' means that he was convinced and confident that what God had promised, God was able to perform. Paul spoke in this fashion (2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 7:25; Phil. 3:20-21).

Because he believed God it was imputed to him for righteousness, not for the strength of his faith but because his faith truly rested and trusted in God, not in himself or his works (Rom. 3:21-22).

vv. 23-24. The account of how Abraham was justified and received righteousness was not recorded for his sake alone nor applicable to him

only, but it is by faith that every believer is justified and sanctified. Others were justified by faith before Abraham, but the first recorded testimony respecting the justification of sinners by faith is that of Abraham. He was the first man singled out and designated as the progenitor of the Messiah (Gal. 3:16). Therefore, he is called the father of all believers.

Righteousness shall be imputed to us, as well as to Abraham, if we believe God, who is identified by the fact that he raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. To believe for salvation is not to believe only on the existence of God but to believe on him in regard to his gospel. Saving faith involves the person and work of Christ who was promised of God, sent by God, bruised by God, raised by God, and seated victoriously on the Father's right hand (John 3:14-16, 36.)

v. 25. Christ was delivered up by his Father into the hands of justice and death (according to his divine purpose) to redeem us. Christ died in our stead and rose again as our Head and Representative and was legally acquitted and justified, and us in him. Christ's resurrection did not procure our justification; that was done by his obedience and death: but his resurrection testified of it—sin's debt was paid (Rom. 1:1-4).

The blessings of justification by faith

Romans 5:1-5

In the preceding chapters Paul clearly states and firmly proves that justification before God is not of works but by faith. Now he proceeds to show the blessings that are ours through Christ.

v. 1. We are justified and accounted righteous before God by faith in the Lord Jesus, believing on him as he is revealed in the Scriptures. Therefore, being justified, we have peace with God. This peace arises from the fact that, in Christ, we are righteous, our sins are forgiven, and we are holy and unblamable (Eph. 1:3-4; Col. 1:20-22). Out of Christ men are at war with God and he with them (John 3:36; Rom. 8:7). When we are in Christ, we are reconciled and enjoy peace (Isa. 32:17; 2 Cor. 5:19).

v. 2. By Christ we have access into grace or a state of favor, sonship, and acceptance. Peace and grace are distinguished from one another (1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3). Peace denotes a particular blessing. 'Access into grace' (a state of favor) implies all blessings (1 Cor. 3:21-23; Col. 1:12; Heb. 10:19-22).

'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' The hope of eternal salvation, the hope of being like Christ, the hope of beholding his glory as a joint-heir will produce joy. There can be no true joy without such a hope (Psalm 17:15; 1 John 3:1-3).

Martin Luther said: 'Although I am a sinner, yet I despair not, for Christ who is my redeemer and my righteousness liveth. In him I have no sin, no fear, no sting of conscience, and no fear of judgment; for in him there is no condemnation. I am indeed a sinner as touching this present

life, but I have a righteousness of God which is above this life, who is Christ my Lord—in him I rejoice!’

v. 3. Not only does the believer rejoice in hope of the glory of God, but he rejoices even in tribulation, trials, and afflictions (James 1:2-3; 2 Cor. 12:10). We do not rejoice in the suffering nor the trial itself, for most trials are grievous and difficult; but we rejoice in the EFFECT of the trial. All of our trials are appointed by God, our Father, and are for his glory and our good (Rom. 8:28; Heb. 12:9-11; Psa. 119:71).

‘Trials work patience.’ Patience is submission to the will of God. It is to be content and wait upon the Lord (Heb. 13:5; Psa. 27:13-14). It is the opposite of covetousness, complaining, and haste. It involves not only our attitude toward God and his providence, but also our attitude toward others during the trial.

v. 4. ‘Patience worketh experience’ or maturity of character and proof of genuine faith. Trials do not produce faith, but they reveal faith which is there. Actually trials may detect a hypocrite, harden his heart, and cause him to drop his profession. True faith is stronger as a result of trial.

‘Experience and proof worketh hope.’ As the genuineness of our faith is manifested and confirmed by trial and as we grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, our hope of enjoying the glory promised in Christ is strengthened.

v. 5. Those who possess a good hope in Christ will never be ashamed of that relationship, nor will they ever have cause to be ashamed (for in him they are perfected), nor will they ever be put to shame! A vain hope and a false profession will finally fail, prove to be empty, and result in eternal loss (Rom. 9:33; Rom. 10:11).

It is not our love for God that gives us a strong hope and comfort (although the grace and fruit of love for God and others is quickened in us

by his Spirit); but the Holy Spirit reveals to us God's love for us in Christ; and with the knowledge of that love comes the effects of it—which are peace, access to the presence of God, and rejoicing in the hope of eternal life (Rom. 8:35-39; 1 John 4:9-10).

Christ died for the ungodly

Romans 5:6-11

In the preceding verses the apostle writes about the believer's hope of the glory of God (v. 2) and the fact that those who have that good hope in Christ will never be ashamed of that relationship, nor will they ever have cause to be ashamed, nor will they be put to shame. The truth of God's love to us in Christ and the reality of that love has been put in our hearts by his Spirit. In the next verses he proceeds to give us proof and evidence of God's love for us.

v. 6. 'Christ died for the ungodly.' This is the sum and substance of our gospel and is the great article of faith. Who died? Christ—the only-begotten, well-beloved Son of God in human nature (Rom. 8:34; Matt. 3:16-17). How did he die? A death of shame, under the wrath and judgment of God (Phil. 2:8). Why did he die? He died for, in the stead of, and as a substitute for, all God's elect in order that God might be just and justifier (Rom. 3:24-26). For whom did he die? 'For the ungodly,' not for righteous men, or religious men, or deserving men, but for those who are ungodly in nature and practice (Eph. 2: 1-5). When did he die for us? When we were without strength to obey him, to keep his law, and without ability to help ourselves. We were in bondage to law and to sin and unable to change our condition (Jer. 13:23). He died for us 'in due time,' at the time appointed by the Father (Gal. 4:2-5; 1 Tim. 2:5-6). This is the greatest single proof of love: to give one's life for the object of that love (1 John 4:10; John 15:12-13).

v. 7. There are two types of men mentioned here:

1. A righteous or just man: that is, one who is moral, strict, and religious before men in all his ways, yet not necessarily loved. It is not likely that one would die for such a man.

2. Then there is the good and benevolent man who is gracious, kind, and considerate to all. Among men he is beloved and respected. Some would certainly die for such a man!

v. 8. But God manifested his love for us (gave clear proof and evidence of that love, so that there is no room to doubt it) in that, while we were yet in sin, Christ died for us. This is true in respect to all that are saved, from Abel to Paul to you and me (Isa. 53:6). When Christ loved us, died for us, and redeemed us, we were sinners by birth, choice, and practice, with no love for God (Rom. 8:7-8).

v. 9. If God's love to us is so great and so rich that he gave Christ to die for us when we were ungodly sinners, it is much more certain and sure that being righteous, justified, and free from sin in Christ, we shall be delivered from God's future wrath and punishment (Rom. 8:31-34).

v. 10. If while we were enemies of God (Eph. 2:3; Col. 1:21; Rom. 8:7) we were reconciled to God through the death of Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-21), it is much more certain that, God being reconciled to us and us to God, we shall be daily kept, delivered, and sustained by the resurrected, intercessory life of the Man Christ Jesus. If you can comprehend what God has done for us while we were enemies, try to comprehend the blessings that are ours as his friends and sons—those who are joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17).

v. 11. 'Not only so,' that is, not only do we rejoice in hope of the glory of God (v. 2), not only do we glory in tribulations (v. 3), not only did Christ die for us while we were sinners (v. 8), not only are we saved from wrath

through him (v. 9), not only are we reconciled to God by his Son (v. 10), but we joy in God through our Lord Jesus. We rejoice in God himself as our covenant God, as the God of all grace, peace, and salvation; and we rejoice in his perfections, his providence, and his presence. The means by which we come to this joy and glory is through our Lord Jesus (Col. 2:9-10). It is by, in, and through Christ that we have received the atonement or reconciliation. Full redemption, satisfaction, and expiation is made by his blood for sinners and received by faith.

Death in Adam - life in Christ

Romans 5:12-21

The design of the following verses is:

1. To show how men came to be in the condition of sin, depravity, and inability and
2. To compare the two heads—Adam and Christ. God sees all men in Adam, their head and representative. In his descendants, we are under sin, condemnation, and death. God sees the believer in Christ, his head and representative. In Christ we are redeemed and we live in him. In Adam we died; in Christ we live! In Adam we lost the way, the truth, and the life; Christ IS the way, the truth, and the life.

Adam is a type (in reverse) of Christ. The only way that Adam typified Christ was as the head of a race. The remainder of the comparison is the opposite (1 Cor. 15:45-49).

The First Adam (man)	The Second Adam (man)
A living Soul	A quickening spirit
Of the earth	Lord of heaven
Made sinners in him	Made righteous in him
Death in him	Life in him

v. 12. By Adam's transgression sin entered this world. By representation and imputation, sin and its results (spiritual death, physical death, darkness, disease, and enmity against God) entered into all men. When

Adam sinned and fell, we all sinned and fell. Sin was not only imputed to us but a nature of sin was imparted to us (Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3).

We must go to Verse 28 if we keep to the train of thought, for Verses 13-17 are in parenthesis to explain what he means by ‘for all sinned.’

v. 18. Therefore, as one man's (Adam's) sin led to judgment and condemnation for all whom he represented, so one man's (Christ's) obedience and sacrifice brought justification, redemption, and life to all whom he represented. We were not present physically when Adam fell, but we were in his loins; and we were in him as the covenant head of the human race, therefore condemned. In the same fashion, when our Lord perfectly obeyed God's holy requirements and satisfied God's justice on the cross, we were in him as his seed and covenant people (1 Cor. 15:21-22), and therefore accepted as justified.

v. 19. The words ‘were made’ and ‘be made’ in this verse are important. Adam's sin did not put us on trial and make us only susceptible to sin nor lead us into sin, but by his fall we were actually made sinners. Even so Christ's obedience did not render us savable nor enable us to be righteous before God by our own works, but we were made righteous and sanctified entirely on the basis of what he did (2 Cor. 5:21).

v. 20. Then the law came in to make apparent the evil that was in us by birth and nature (Rom. 3:19-20; Rom. 7:7). The law takes away all excuses and reveals to us what we are—guilty sinners! But where sin overflowed, abounded, and contaminated every faculty, the grace of God in Christ, did much more overflow in justification (Col. 1:21-22), in regeneration (Rom. 8:1), and in sanctification (2 Cor. 5:17).

v. 21. Sin has such power over men in their state of nature that it is said to reign in death. It has dominion (controlling and commanding power) over

voluntary subjects. So in a state of regeneration and righteousness in Christ the grace of God reigns and holiness becomes the governing principle (1 John 5:3-5; Rom. 6:12-14).

Back to Verse 13.

vv. 13-14. Verse 12 declares, 'death passed upon all men.' None can stop it or escape its power, because in Adam all sinned. Even those who lived before the law was given at Sinai were sinners under condemnation. But someone will argue, 'Where there is no law, a man is not accountable.' If this be true then why did death reign? Why did people die (even infants) who did not commit an act of rebellion like Adam? Adam was a figure of Christ in one respect, as we have stated (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

v. 15. Though in one sense Adam is a type of Christ, the fall in Adam and the judgment which followed are not worthy to be compared to the grace of God and the free gift of life which we have in Christ. In Adam we lost all things; in Christ we gained much more than we lost.

v. 16. The effect of Christ's obedience is not to be compared to the effect of Adam's sin.

Christ confers much more than we lost in the fall.

Christ pardons not one sin, but all sins.

Christ justifies in such a way that the believer is righteous and can never perish (John 10:27-28).

v. 17. If through Adam death reigned over us, much more shall those who are made righteous by Christ reign with him (Rom. 8:16-17).

He that is dead is freed from sin

Romans 6:1-10

v. 1. This chapter begins with an objection which Paul knew would be presented against the gospel of free grace. Someone will say, 'If we are justified by the grace of God alone, apart from any works, what is to keep us from continuing in sin? If, where our sin is the worst and our guilt is the greatest, God's grace abounds and is glorified, then let us sin more and more that grace may be glorified.'

To begin with, sin of itself is not the cause of glorifying God's grace. Sin is the cause of wrath and judgment, not grace. God has been pleased to magnify his grace in the pardon of sin. It is not by the commission of sin that grace is glorified but by the forgiveness of it! Grace is glorified by putting a stop to the reign of sin, not by encouraging it. Grace enables men to hate and be done with sin, not to love and pursue it.

v. 2. 'God forbid' is an expression Paul frequently uses to express shock and abhorrence at a thing. 'How shall we who are dead to sin, live in sin?'

1. In what sense are we dead to sin? We are not dead to its influence (Rom. 7:15, 19), nor to its presence (Rom. 7:21), nor to its effects (Rom. 7:24; Psalm 51:3). Our Lord taught us to pray, 'Forgive us our sins' (John 1:9). We are dead to its penalty and guilt; sin cannot condemn us (Rom. 8:33-34). We are dead to sin as a master who rules over us; Christ is our Lord. We are dead to sin as a course of life; it is not looked upon as a friend but as an enemy.

2. How shall we who have this attitude toward sin actually live in sin? Persons are said to live in sin when they give themselves up

to it, when they are bent upon it, when sin is their pleasure and delight, and when they offer no real resistance to it. Living in sin and justifying sin are contrary to the Spirit of Christ and like the world (1 John 2:15-16).

vv. 3-4. In these two verses Paul gives a full answer to the objection set forth in Verse 1 by showing that the sanctification of the believer rests on the same foundation as his justification—union with Christ! There are two baptisms mentioned here.

1. We are baptized into Christ. This is no figure but an actual experience. There is a real union with the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of God in which we are actually one with Christ (John 17:23; John 4:12; Gal. 2:20). I can no more be an ally of sin than Christ can, for we are one.

2. We are baptized in water. What is the meaning of our baptism? We are confessing that we are identified with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. We are dead to the old life, it is buried, and we rise to walk as new creatures with new hearts, new principles, and a new life (Phil. 3:8-11).

v. 5. The nature of baptism is a burial, which signifies not only our being dead with Christ and the blessing resulting from that union, but our being dead to the world and sin even as Christ was done with the sins he bore. The end of baptism is a resurrection. The person does not remain buried in water but rises even as Christ arose, and that in the likeness of his resurrection—no longer under the control of sin and self but under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 5:17). The reference here may also be to life after the resurrection as in Verses 8-10.

v. 6. 'Our old man.' It is called our old man because it is with us from birth and is the old nature received from our father Adam. It consists of parts and members such as will, mind, affection, and actions (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9-10). This old nature can never be improved; it must be destroyed. It was crucified daily by the spirit and grace of Christ that its reigning power might be subdued. It remains with us until death; but we shall not indulge it nor make provisions for it, but crucify it (Gal. 5:24). We serve Christ, not sin (Rom. 6:16).

v. 7. This is not physical death. We shall one day die physically and be freed forever from the very presence of sin; but the reference here is to the fact that, being one with Christ in his death under the curse of the law, having paid the full penalty, we are totally clear of any penalty, curse, or charge. We are not free from the presence of sin, nor from the burden of it, nor from a continual war with it, nor even from it in our best deeds; but we are free from its dominion, from the guilt of it, and from punishment on account of it.

vv. 8-10. Since believers are one with Christ in his death, they have a sure hope of forever living with him. The reference here is to life after the resurrection. Christ, having been raised from the dead, will not die again, so neither will those who have died with him and are risen with him. The law, sin and death have no charge against us: for the full price is paid, the law is honored, and justice is satisfied (Rom. 8:32-34). He died to sin once, because in that death he fully satisfied every charge. He lives unto God in unbroken fellowship with him.

If you do not see complete deliverance from sin's curse, guilt, and dominion in Christ, sin will continue its hold and reign over you. If you cannot see complete deliverance in Christ, you will open the door to unbelief and doubt and leave room for attacks from legalism and self-righteousness.

Servants of sin or servants of God

Romans 6:11-23

In the preceding verses Paul has proved that the gospel of justification by faith does not lead to a life of sin, but, rather, faith in and a love for Christ are the very foundation of and motivation for holiness (2 Cor. 5:14-17). The object of the rest of the chapter is to exhort believers to live agreeably to their union with Christ and consistently with the design of the gospel (Eph. 1:4; Col. 3:12-14). Those who are justified are sanctified. These two blessings are never separated in scripture (Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 4:7, 8).

v. 11. In consequence of our relation to Christ, there are two things we should reckon to be true.

1. *'We are dead indeed to sin.'* Our sin is pardoned, paid for and put away. We do not fear condemnation or death on account of it, nor do we have any fellowship with it, nor shall it be permitted to reign over us any longer.

2. *'We are alive unto God, through our Lord Jesus.'* As justified persons we live spiritually in the sight of God, having the righteousness of Christ and eternal life through him. As sanctified persons (who feel the burden of sin and the corruption of the flesh) we love Christ, his word, his people and his commandments, and walk in the spirit, not fulfilling the lusts of our flesh.

v. 12. Since Christ is our Lord and Master, his way is pleasing to us and his commandments are not grievous. We desire to live for his glory and to manifest his grace. Sin remains in the believer (to his dismay and regret),

but it does not reign as his master. Sin is a struggle; it tries us and troubles us, but does not dominate or control us. Sin is said to be obeyed when we make provisions for it without struggle or opposition.

v. 13. The Amplified Version reads, 'Do not continue offering or yielding your bodily members and faculties to sin as tools of wickedness. But offer and yield yourselves to God as though you have been raised from the dead to life, and your bodily members to God, presenting them as implements of righteousness.' Our hearts ought to be filled with love and kindness – not hatred, envy and complaints. Our thoughts need to be on things pure, lovely and of good report – not on flesh, materialism and the world. Our tongues should be used in praise, encouragement and witnessing – not in gossip, criticism and murmuring. Our hands and feet should be serving others – not employed only in selfish pursuits.

v. 14. Nothing is more certain than this! God's purpose, grace and spirit are pledged to prevent it. We are in the kingdom of his dear Son. Christ is our Lord and sin is dethroned. We are not under law as a covenant, a curse or condemnation. We are under grace! We are under the reign of grace - the principle of grace. True holiness is not the result of law, but the result of grace in the heart (Gal. 5:13-17).

v. 15. The person who suggests that, since we are not under the law but under grace, we should therefore give vent to the flesh and sin, reveals his total ignorance of the grace of God and the work of Christ. Before a man is regenerated, he does love evil and himself, and he hates God and holiness, but after regeneration he loves God, holiness and others. We are not looking for an excuse to sin, but we are looking for strength to avoid it.

v. 16. This is a good way to determine if we have been saved. We should know that if sin masters us, if we delight to do evil, if we enjoy evil companions, if we walk in darkness, then Christ is not our Master. The tenor of our lives reveals our master. What do you really enjoy? In what direction are you really going? Who is really your Lord?

vv. 17, 18. Thank God, we have been delivered from the slavery and bondage of sin. This has been a heart work. It is not just a mental acceptance of creeds, but a heart obedience of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 7:22-25).

In verse 7 the word 'freed' means 'justified'; in verse 18 it means 'liberated' - no longer a slave under sin's control. In verse 7 we are free from the guilt, penalty and condemnation; in this verse we are said to be freed from the control and servitude of sin. Its hold over us is broken.

v. 19. 'I speak,' he says, 'in familiar human terms because spiritual truth is so difficult for you to understand. As you have in the past cheerfully yielded your minds, hearts, tongues and hands to do evil, now cheerfully yield them to God and holiness.'

v. 20, 22. 'When you were the servants of sin, you had no use for or interest in righteousness. What benefit did your sin and evil bring you? The end and result of all sin is death! But now that you are the servants of God and are set free from the love and dominion of sin, you have the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, faith, peace and (the end result) eternal life!'

v. 23. Sin's wages justly earned is death – spiritual, physical and eternal. God's gift (freely given) is eternal life for ever through Christ.

Our motive for obedience –law or love?

Romans 7:1-6

In the preceding chapter Paul said that believers are ‘not under the law but under grace.’ He knew that this would be an offense to the believing Jews who still retained a high opinion of the law. Therefore, at the beginning of Chapter 7 he explains his meaning. The law to which Paul refers in this chapter is not the ceremonial law but the moral law of God—the whole will of God manifested to all mankind.

1. God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience by which he bound him and his posterity to obedience (death being the result of disobedience). All men were placed under that covenant and that law (Gal. 3:10; Rom. 2:14-15).

2. This same law written on the heart continues to be the perfect rule of righteousness and pronounces a curse upon all who fail in the smallest measure (James 2:10). This law was delivered by God upon Mt. Sinai in ten commandments.

3. It is only when the believer is united to Christ that he is freed from this covenant of law. The language of the law is, ‘do and live,’ or, ‘if thou would enter into life, keep the commandments.’ But remember, the law not only reaches the acts of men but also the attitude—not only the manners of men but the motive (Gal. 4:21; Matt. 5:21-22; 5:27-28; 5:38-39). We are bound to that law, married to it, and under it as a covenant until we are freed in Christ.

v. 1. Death frees a person from the obligation of any law to which he is rightfully subject—nothing else can. Law, as a principle of justification and

sanctification, has dominion over a man until (by union with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection) he becomes as a dead man in reference to the law! (Rom. 6:7.) He is then free from the guilt, curse, and dominion of the law.

vv. 2-3. The apostle gives an illustration in which death dissolves legal obligation. The woman referred to becomes dead to the law of her husband, not by her own death, but by his death. If her husband dies, she is no longer bound to him in any sense; she is free to marry whom she will.

vv. 4. The believer's freedom from the law as a covenant of life and death (as a principle of justification or condemnation) is as complete as a dead man is free from the laws of the state or a woman is free from the law of a dead husband.

This freedom from the law is not by our death but by the death of Christ. However, spiritually considered, as we are in Christ and Christ in us, it was our death (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6-8). The death of Christ was a death that answered all the law's demands. As the law has no further demands on him, it can have none on us (Rom. 8:1; 8:33-34).

We are no longer married to the law but to Christ. Our dependence is on him; our happiness is wearing his name; our joy is sharing his love and fellowship. To believers this is so comforting. We are as completely and as blamelessly free from the covenant of the law as if we had never been under it. When Luther discovered this, it gave such relief to his mind that he considered himself at the gate of paradise. He said, 'Our sins are ours no more but Christ's, for God laid them all on him. On the other hand Christ's righteousness is ours' (Col. 1:22). Works that are the results of our marriage relationship to Christ, that are done in faith, and which spring from love are the only true and genuine fruits of righteousness.

Deliverance from the law in Christ is not only necessary for justification but also for sanctification. Men cannot be justified by the law in their natural state, and they cannot be sanctified by the law in the regenerated state (Gal. 3:1-3). The law cannot make an evil man good and it cannot make a saved man holy!

v. 5. When you were in the flesh, what was the effect of the law on you? Did it make you holy? No! Instead of subduing sinful passions and thoughts, it irritated them. We were filled with displeasure toward the law and the law-giver.

v. 6. But now we are discharged from the law and have terminated all intercourse with it, having died to what once restrained us and held us captive. We serve Christ, not under obedience to written rules and regulations, but in newness of life and love. The forced obedience of a man under the law is the obedience of a slave. The obedience of a man set free and adopted is the obedience of a son. The obedience of a wife is the obedience of love (2 Cor. 5:14).

One man with two natures

Romans 7:7-25

There are few passages in the word of God that have caused more discussion and disagreement than the one before us. Some say that Paul is writing of his life as an unsaved man and giving the experiences of an unsaved man. Others say that he is speaking of his own inner conflicts at the time he wrote the epistle and that these are the real feelings and conflicts of all believers. Here is a four-fold summary of what Paul is saying in these verses:

1. *The law (that system which makes obedience the condition of life and makes righteousness depend on perfect obedience) can never deliver a person from the curse and dominion of sin.* If a man is to be justified, he must be delivered from the law as a covenant or method of obtaining life and be brought into Christ who is our righteousness.

2. *The law can tell a person what is right and what is wrong.* It can command a man to avoid wrong and do right. It can threaten, condemn, and curse him if he does not comply; but it cannot eradicate his sinful inclinations (rather, it irritates and stimulates them). So, instead of becoming better and happier under the law, we become more depraved and more wretched as knowledge of the law increases.

3. *The law in the hands of the Holy Spirit does not stop sin; it reveals sin.* It does not give life; it kills. It does not make men holy; it exposes their unholiness.

4. Even now that I am regenerated and in Christ, now that I am brought under influences which make me love and delight in God's

law, *I still feel my inability and my imperfections*. The struggle is like a civil war within me. I did not look to the law for justification, nor can I look to the law for sanctification! I look to Christ for both. Paul proved from his past experience that the law cannot make a sinner righteous. He proves from his present experience that the law cannot make a saved man holy. Both justification and sanctification are in Christ.

v. 7. Is the law the cause of my sin? Is the law at fault because it uncovers and exposes my evil thoughts and passions? God forbid! I would not have known what sin really is without the law of God. Saul of Tarsus looked at the law as most people do, in the coldness of the letter, as an outside thing. He did not see the sin of thoughts, attitude, desire, nature, and will. ‘Thou shall not covet;’ thou shall not only not do evil, but thou shall not even think evil!

vv. 8-10. Without this spiritual knowledge of the law, sin was there; but it was dead to Paul. He fancied himself righteous; but when the light of the Spirit entered his conscience, he saw innumerable swarms of lusts and evil in his heart. I thought myself healthy and sound spiritually. I lived in a state of self-righteousness. But when the true law was revealed, I saw myself dead in sin, dead to God, and under condemnation. The law of God given to Adam to promote happiness and life sentenced me to eternal death!

vv. 11-13. My sinful nature even used the law to deceive me. I was deceived into thinking I kept the law, which made me an even greater sinner—a dead, deceived, self-righteous sinner wrapped in a false refuge! The law of God is just, holy, and good! It forbids nothing but what is wrong and requires nothing but what is right. In its nature, design, and rule it is worthy of its Holy Creator. Is the law then the cause of my condition

of death? Is the law the cause of my misery and inability? No! It is my sin that damns me. The law is the mirror that reveals my sin in its true colors.

v. 14. ‘The law is spiritual.’ It comes from the Spirit of God and reaches to the spirit of men. It requires holiness in the inward parts (spiritual service and obedience, loving God with all of our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves). But I am a creature of the flesh, having been sold into slavery under the control of sin. The nature of the law and my nature of flesh are entirely opposite.

vv. 15-16. The word ‘allow’ means approve. There is not a believer on earth who does not all too frequently do or think that of which he does not approve. This is proof that I acknowledge and agree that the law is good, and I take sides with the law of God; for I condemn my evil and mourn over my transgressions (Psalm 51:3-4).

v. 17. Paul is not denying his responsibility for sin. He is not laying the blame somewhere else. He is saying that the old nature, though not dominant, is still present; and this influence accounts for his sins. When Paul said of his apostolic labors, ‘Not I, but the grace of God that was with me,’ he was not saying that he did not perform the labor, but that he performed it under the influence of the Spirit of God. When he said, ‘I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,’ he was not saying that he did not live, but that he was indebted to Christ for the origin and maintenance of his new life. Even so, sin cannot act. The man must act, but sin is the influence that motivates the act.

vv. 18-25. Nothing good dwells in my flesh. I can will to be perfect but cannot perform it. I have the intention and urge to be perfect but no power to carry it out. He repeats what he said in Verses 16-17 (Gal. 5:17; Matt. 26:41). Nothing could express more fully the dreary struggles that go on

within us. The apostle speaks here of the two wills in every believer—one to absolute holiness, the other to sin.

‘O unhappy, pitiful, and wretched man that I am; who will release and deliver me from the shackles of this body of death? O, thank God, he will! Through Jesus Christ the Anointed One.’

No condemnation in Christ

Romans 8:1-10

There are two things that every believer wants above all else.

1. He wants deliverance from the guilt and curse of sin—to live in Christ.
2. He wants deliverance from the power and practice of sin—to walk in the Spirit.

A saving interest in Christ and our living union with Christ do both.

v. 1. The apostle does not say that we are not condemnable; for there is still sin within us, and all sin is condemnable. But sin cannot bring us into condemnation, for we are in Christ (Gal. 3:13; Rom. 8:33-34). Christ has borne the penalty, judgment, and condemnation for all our sins—past, present, and future (Col. 1:20-22).

‘Who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.’ This is not the reason why we are not condemned but is a description of those who are in Christ. The flesh is not our master nor our guide. Christ is our Lord and the Holy Spirit is our guide.

v. 2. The gospel of Christ (or the covenant of grace in Christ) has forever freed all believers from the law of sin and death (or the covenant of works) (Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:10), for every requirement is met in Christ (Rom. 6:7, 18).

v. 3. The weakness and inability to save does not arise from any defect in God's law, for the law is perfect and holy. The defect and weakness is in

our flesh. The law cannot save because we are unable to keep the law (Rom. 7:18; Rom. 3:10-12). But Christ can justify the ungodly and make righteous the chief of sinners; for as our representative, God sent him here in the likeness of sinful flesh; and he not only obeyed the perfect law but was condemned and punished for our offenses (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).

v. 4. ‘The righteousness of the law fulfilled or fully met in us.’ This is the reason why Christ came to earth—that by his active and passive obedience all believers might be justified, sanctified, made holy, and accepted in him. In Christ we have honored the law and satisfied justice; we are perfect before God (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10).

Again the phrase appears, ‘who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.’ The next ten verses reveal the meaning of this phrase.

v. 5. Unregenerate, unsaved people do mind (are concerned, anxious, and taken up with) the things of this world and of the flesh (Matt. 6:24-33). Health, happiness, and honor for the flesh is their main concern. Not so for those who are in Christ! They are concerned and their thoughts occupied with their relationship with Christ, a growth in grace, a right relationship with others, and attaining unto the resurrection of the dead (Phil. 3:8-11).

v. 6. This carnal flesh-mindedness is a state of spiritual death. The man who is swallowed up in the kingdom of the world is dead; and all that he has, seeks, and attains is already judged and condemned (1 Cor. 7:29-31). The regenerated believer, who sets his affection on things above, is part of a living kingdom. God lives; his kingdom lives; his possessions live; his people live. They not only live but they live in a blessed state of peace and joy (Luke 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:6-11).

v. 7. Flesh-mindedness hates God and reasons against God. Carnal men do not hate their idols (their gods), but they hate the Living God (James 4:4). The carnal mind will not be subject or submissive to the will of God, the way of God, the providence of God, nor the gospel of God (Jer. 13:23; Jer. 17:9). Augustine said, 'How can snow be made warm? Only by making it cease to be snow. The natural mind cannot be mended or modified, only destroyed' (Isa. 55:7-8).

v. 8. Outside of Christ there is nothing that we can be, think, say, or do that is pleasing to God. The elect are accepted and are well-pleasing in his sight because we are in Christ (Eph. 1:3-6; Heb. 11:6).

v. 9. 'Ye are not in the flesh.' This does not mean that we are not human (that we have no passions, appetites, and desires, or that our old nature is eradicated); but it means that we have a new nature and are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ, who is the dominant influence in our lives. To be in the Spirit is to be ruled over, influenced, and controlled by the Spirit. They that are justified in Christ are also sanctified in Christ and have the Spirit of Christ. If a man does not have the life and Spirit of Christ, he is not one of his own.

v. 10. This body of flesh and all that pertains to it is subject to death because of sin; but our spirits which are vitally united to Christ have no stain, no sin, and they enjoy eternal life because of his righteousness.

Holy and happy sons of God

Romans 8:11-17

v. 11. This natural body is a dying body subject to afflictions, diseases, infirmities, and eventually death, because of sin. But if the Spirit of God dwells in us (by grace through faith), death is not the end; for he that raised Christ from the dead shall also, in his appointed time, raise our bodies from the grave (1 Cor. 15:12-22, 42-44). This body shall not always be in corruption and ruin, but shall be raised in the image of Christ (1 John 3:1-3).

v. 12. ‘Therefore’ looks back to Verses 5, 6, and 9. Since our primary interest is not the flesh, materialism, and things of this world, but the kingdom of God and his righteousness—since to be fleshly-minded is a sign of absence of the Spirit of Christ—since our flesh and all pertaining thereunto shall die and we shall be raised in his likeness, we are not obligated to live for the flesh and this world but to live unto Christ who redeemed us. Men who are freed from condemnation and death are not freed from obedience; but to whom much is forgiven, he will love much. We are motivated to holiness by our love for Christ and his love for us (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

v. 13. Such persons who live after the flesh are already dead; eternal death awaits! A person who has received the grace of God in truth cannot live after the flesh, for he does not love sin and the world; he loves Christ and holiness. Because of the Spirit of God who lives in him, the believer's outward conduct and course of life consists of denying the flesh and walking after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1). Believers live in Christ now and shall live with Christ forever.

v. 14. This is the evidence of a union with Christ. We are regenerated by the Holy Spirit; we are baptized into Christ by the Spirit; we are taught by the Holy Spirit; we pray, worship, praise, sing, and live led by the Spirit of God (John 3:6; 1 Cor. 12:13; John 16:13-14; 1 Cor. 14:15; Gal. 5:16-18).

v. 15. 'The spirit of bondage and fear' is an attitude or frame of mind. It is the frame of mind of a slave toward his master or a prisoner toward his captor. 'The spirit of adoption' is the frame of mind in which an affectionate, grateful child regards his father. He loves, respects, trusts, and believes his father, which produces a peace of mind and the feeling of belonging. We are now the sons of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-2). There are several explanations for the use of the word 'Abba.' Some say it is a Syriac word. The word 'father' is a Greek word, so he is Father of Jew and Greek. Some say it is to express the vehemence of the affection. Some say it signifies 'my father.' Some say it is a word only free men can use (according to Jewish tradition).

v. 16. The Holy Spirit (by his presence and through the word of God) bears witness that we are the sons of God. We are always ready to doubt this blessing for two reasons.

1. The greatness of the blessing and
2. Our sinfulness and unworthiness to receive it.

The Holy Spirit bears this witness to our spirits, not to our natural eyes and ears, but to our hearts (for it is internal), to our souls (where faith receives it), and to our understanding (that we may have assurance (1 John 5:20)).

v. 17. Children of the same father, whether natural or adopted, are heirs! By nature we are the children of wrath, but by his will and grace we are children of God (James 1:18). Being the sons of God, we are the heirs of his grace, his blessings, his kingdom, and all things (1 Cor. 3:21-23). Joint-heirs with Christ means that it is through him and with him that we are heirs of God and his glory (Eph. 1:3-7).

‘We suffer with him’ conveys two ideas.

1. Christ and his people are one; and when he suffered, bled, and died, we were in him. Therefore, when Christ died, we died to the curse, condemnation, and charges of sin and the law. Therefore, we are raised with him, are seated in him, and are partakers with him in the blessings of that sacrifice.

2. Because of our oneness with him, there will be suffering for us to bear here for his sake and the sake of his gospel (John 15:18-20). This identification with Christ will result in eternal glory for all of God's sons (Eph. 2:6-7; Phil. 3:20-21).

Full satisfaction in Christ

Romans 8:18-27

Verse 17 says, 'If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.' Three ideas are conveyed here.

1. Christ and his people are one; therefore, when he suffered and died, we were in him and we partook of the efficacy and blessings of his sacrifice.

2. Because of this oneness with him, there will be sufferings for us to bear, for his sake and the gospel's.

3. Being still frail flesh and subject to all of the infirmities, afflictions, and diseases of the body, and eventually death, we shall have to suffer trials on this earth.

v. 18. No trial or suffering is easy. If trials were without pain and discomfort, they would not accomplish the purpose for which they are sent (James 1:2-4). But when we look at all of earth's sorrows, sufferings, and trials in the light of his eternal glory, when we shall be like him, enjoy his presence, and partake in his perfect kingdom, we look on these present inconveniences as nothing. They are not worthy to be compared to that glory (1 John 3:1-3).

vv. 19-22. The word 'creature' in these verses is best read 'creation,' as in Verse 22. There will be a new earth, but the revelation of that new earth awaits the resurrection of God's people. The earth on which we live has become subject to decay, disease, and death because of Adam's sin. This state shall not continue, for the creation shall be delivered from this bondage as we shall be delivered from our corrupt bodies (2 Peter 3:13).

The earth, materially, is the same as before the fall; after the restoration it will be perfect. (Read these verses from the Amplified version.)

v. 23. Not only does the whole creation groan and travail under the weight of sin, but we also are burdened with the old nature and long for the joys of full redemption (Rom. 7:24-25; 1 Cor. 15:42-49).

‘The first-fruits of the Spirit’ means that the believer, under the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, already enjoys a taste of what heaven and life eternal shall be. Heaven will be complete fulfillment and perfection of what we enjoy in part (1 Cor. 13:12-13).

v. 24. Actually, while we are justified, sanctified, and secure in our Redeemer, we are not yet saved to the full extent of that blessed word. Full satisfaction is that for which we long, look, and hope (Psalm 17:15). That blessed hope of being like Christ is not simply a wish or a desire, but a desire based on God's promise and the full expectation of its completion in Christ. A desire already experienced or seen is not hope. When we are in full possession of heaven, hope becomes reality and faith gives way to sight.

v. 25. But when our hope of forgiveness, salvation, and full redemption is in Christ and his blessed promises (though we do not yet see nor possess the fulfillment of all his promises), we patiently wait for them; for his promises are as sure as his word (Titus 1:1-2; Heb. 11:13).

v. 26. The word ‘likewise’ seems to say ‘not only does hope of future glory (in and through his word) lead us to patiently wait for deliverance and resurrection, but the Holy Spirit also bears us up in our weakness.’ We don't know what prayer to offer, what things to ask, or what is the will of God; but the Holy Spirit prays in us and for us with groaning too deep to

utter. He enables us to pray according to the will of God (John 14:16-18; John 16:13-14).

v. 27. 'He that searcheth the heart' is God. No man knows the heart of another, nor does any man fully know his own heart (Luke 16:15). The Lord knows our motives, our thoughts, and our intentions (John 21:17). He knows the mind or the purpose and providence of the Spirit of God, and he makes intercession for the believers according to and in perfect harmony with the will of God for them.

The Lord's purpose – our assurance

Romans 8:28-31

v. 28. ‘And we know.’ This is not a matter of opinion or uncertainty, but we know this as surely as we know that we are redeemed by the blood of Christ.

‘That all things.’ God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all good angels, rulers, and ministers, all evil beings such as Satan, all good events such as peace, prosperity, health, and happiness, and all bad events such as war, famine, sorrow, sickness, and death.

‘Work together.’ All of these things not only are present and operate in us and toward us, but they all cooperate under God's direction and control to fulfill his purpose for us. (Illustration: Joseph's route to the throne in Egypt—Gen. 45:3-8).

‘For good.’ Eternal good is meant here, not necessarily present comfort, ease, and joy. Our ultimate goal is to be with Christ and to be like Christ, and this is what ‘all things’ are working together to accomplish (Psalm 17:15; Eph. 1:10-12).

‘To them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose.’ This promise of eternal good and well-being is not a blanket promise to all men but only to those who have received Christ, who love Christ, and who have been effectually called by his grace to saving faith. There is no mercy or grace outside of Christ (Col. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:30).

v. 29. The word ‘foreknew’ has been translated by some to mean that God foresaw who would believe; but the word (as in 1 Peter 1:2) is fore-ordained, fore-appointed by God from all eternity (Acts 13:48; 2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:3-4). There is a sense in which God knows all men. He

knows all about them (their birth, life, death, and destiny); but in eternal love and grace, he knows only his sheep (John 10:14-16; Matt. 7:23).

God has predestinated or predetermined in his eternal purpose that all whom he saves shall one day be just like his Son, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:4-5; 1 John 3:1-3), that he (Christ) might be the firstborn among many brethren. Under the law the firstborn was the Lord's choice (Exod. 13:2), had authority over all the sons, and acted as the Lord's priest. Christ is the firstborn of the Father with regard to all creatures. Christ is the firstborn of all God's sons (they are chosen in him). Christ is the firstborn from the dead to die no more. His is the chief glory, for all are to be in him and like him.

v. 30. 'He called.' Men by nature do not love God and will not come to Christ, but rather love darkness, evil, and sin (John 3:19; John 5:40; John 6:44). If men are to come to Christ in repentance and faith, they must be effectually called, convicted, and made willing to believe (Psalm 110:3; Gal. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:9-10).

'He justified.' That is, God forgives their sin, blots out their iniquity, and makes them perfectly holy and righteous in his sight by the obedience and sacrifice of Christ (Rom. 5:19; Rom. 3:19-22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:21-23).

'He glorified.' Eternal glory is meant. This is what the apostle has been speaking of in these verses—eternal good, eternal inheritance, and eternal glory. Our union with Christ gives us the right and title to all things (John 1:12; Rom. 8:16-18; 1 Cor. 3:21-23). Actually, in the purpose and view of God, we are already glorified in our Head and Representative—Christ (Eph. 2:6; Isa. 46:9-11).

v. 31. This question reaches back to all that has been said in the preceding verse. What shall we say in addition to these things? Nothing can be added! What shall we say against these things? Nothing! What shall be

inferred from these things? 'If God be for us in eternal love, in eternal grace, in divine calling, in substitution, and in justification—if God has already accepted and glorified us in Christ and is determined to glorify us personally with Christ, who can be against us?' Not the law; it is honored! Not divine justice; it is satisfied! Not Satan; he is judged and cast out!

Conclusions from covenant mercies

Romans 8:32-39

v. 32. God has declared in his word that he will show mercy, that he will redeem and glorify a people and that heaven will be populated with a holy people like his beloved Son (Exod. 33:18, 19; John 6:37-39; Rom. 8:29, 30). Here is the greatest evidence that his promise will be fulfilled. 'He spared not his own Son.' He did not withhold Christ from all that he must be, endure, suffer and accomplish in order to take up our hopeless case and redeem us (Isa. 53:1-6). He gave Christ to be our surety, representative, sacrifice and sin-offering (John 3:16; Gal. 5:4, 5). If God so loved that he gave Christ, and Christ so loved that he came into this world and bore all our sin and shame, shall the Father not give us freely all that Christ purchased for us? Did Christ come in vain? Did he suffer thus in vain? No! Perish the thought! (John 10:27-30).

v. 33. God's elect are the people spoken of in verses 28-30.

1. Are these people not chargeable? Yes, they are! They are charged with Adam's transgressions, with their own sins and lack of righteousness, with a multitude of sins before and after conversion.

2. Does anyone charge them? Yes! They charge and condemn themselves (Ps. 51:3, 4). Satan is the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). But these charges avail nothing! They are all answered in Christ. In him our sins are pardoned, we have a perfect righteousness and justice is totally satisfied (Rom. 5:1; 8:1; Jude 24). He has justified us by death and decree!

vv. 33, 34. Paul states and argues on two foundations the full redemption and security of every believer.

1. It is God who announced and accomplished it. 'It is God that justifieth.'

2. It is Christ that fulfilled every requirement and purchased our redemption by his death. 'It is Christ that died' (1 Peter 1:18-20). The death he died was the death of the cross. The persons for whom he died were God's elect.

'Yea rather, he is risen again.' His resurrection is rather as great a security from condemnation as his death. His resurrection testifies of the accomplishments of his death and his acceptance. Had he not risen, we would still be in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17-22).

'Who is even at the right hand of God.' He entered into heaven to prepare it for us and to take possession of it in our name. He sat down, having finished the work he came to do! (Heb. 10:11-13.) We are seated with him in the heavenlies.

'Who also maketh intercession for us.' By the appearance of his person, by the presentation of his sacrifice, by offering up the prayers and praise of his people, by applying to us the benefits of his death (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 10:19-22).

v. 35. Paul continues this series of questions. 'What shall we say to these things? Who can lay anything to our charge? Who is he that condemneth?' Now he asks who can take us out of the hand of God or separate us from his love. No one! Not tribulation (trials, afflictions and burdens), not distress (of body or soul), not persecution (from the world or false brethren), not famine (want of food and drink), not nakedness, peril or sword (which has not been the lot of many believers). Christ's love for us

is eternal, infinite and unchangeable. Nothing that this world affords can change that love (Rom. 11:29; Mal. 3:6).

v. 36. This quotation is from Psalm 44:22, and the meaning is that for the sake of God, true worship and the gospel of redemption, the people of God have been persecuted, despised and put to death, reckoned by the world as nothing but sheep to be slaughtered (John 16:1, 2).

v. 37. In all these trials and difficulties we are not overcome nor defeated, but actually made better by them (James 1:2-4).

vv. 38, 39. Paul says that he is fully persuaded that nothing in the whole universe (no matter what, good or bad), which is or shall be, can separate us from God's love which is in Christ Jesus. Notwithstanding indwelling sin, the various afflictions, weaknesses, trials or enemies within and without, we have reason to rejoice and look upon ourselves as eternally secure in the Redeemer's love.

The true Israel

Romans 9:1-8

The Jews looked for a Messiah (John 7:40-42), but they expected the Messiah to restore the nation of Israel to world prominence, to restore the great kingdom of David, and to confer upon Israel great favor with God. If any Gentile participated in this glorious kingdom, it would be by becoming a Jew. It is obvious that they did not understand the sacrifices and types; for they did not see the Messiah coming first as a Lamb, a Sin-offering, and a Saviour. They read the Old Testament Scriptures that refer to his triumphant and glorious second-coming (the eternal kingdom of righteousness) and applied them to his first coming and to their nation alone. But Christ came as it was written—the Lamb of God, the righteousness of God, the atonement and sacrifice for sin, for Jew and Gentile (Rom. 10:12-13; Eph. 2:11-16). How did the Jews respond? With few exceptions they rejected him and his message (John 1:11; Acts 13:44-48). As a result of their greatest sin, the rejection of Christ, they have been blinded and the gospel preached to the Gentile nations (Rom. 11:7-10). The Gentiles in great number believed the gospel and were saved. The Jews, for the most part, abide still in unbelief. This is what is on Paul's mind as he writes the following words.

vv. 1-3. There are three things to note in these verses.

1. The solemn vow. I speak the truth as a Christian. I do not lie. The Holy Spirit is my witness.
2. The sincere affection. Paul was happy in Christ; but when he thought of his Jewish brethren in blindness and unbelief, it caused him great sorrow (Rom. 10:1).

3. The startling statement. If his being separated from Christ could secure their salvation, he expresses his willingness. This is most difficult to understand, but Moses said practically the same thing (Exo. 32:31-33).

v. 4. Paul identifies the people of whom he speaks—my kinsmen are the descendents of Abraham.

1. The adoption was theirs. Not spiritual adoption which makes men joint-heirs with Christ; but they were God's chosen nation, separated from idolatrous nations (Deut. 7:6-8).

2. The glory was theirs (1 Sam. 4:22). This glory was the presence of God in their midst—the tabernacle, the ark, the cloud, etc.

3. The covenants with Abraham and David were theirs.

4. The giving of the law was theirs. The law was given to Israel at Sinai.

5. The service of God was theirs. This is the service of the tabernacle, the acceptable way to worship God (Heb. 9:1-8).

6. The promises were theirs—promises of the Messiah, of redemption, and of glory.

v. 5. From this nation came the fathers—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and all the others (Heb. 1:1). But still an infinitely higher honor (of the Jewish nation, as concerning his flesh)—Christ came! He is a direct descendant of David (Rom. 1:3; Matt. 1:1).

‘Who is over all, God blessed forever.’ This is one of the most distinct statements of our Lord's deity—he is God over all! (John 10:30; Heb. 1:8; Acts 20:28.)

v. 6. The unbelief of Israel and their rejection by God does not mean that the divine purpose has failed nor that the promises of God are of none effect; for it is not only the natural descendants of Abraham who make up the true Israel of God, but those who believe in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 3:29-30; Rom. 4:9-12). The promise of redemption was to Abraham and his seed, who is Christ (Gal. 3:16). There are many Jews who are not Israel and many Gentiles who are Israel (Phil. 3:3).

v. 7. We have this illustrated in the case of Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was not of Israel though he was a direct descendant of Abraham. The error of the Jews was that they thought they were children of God by being the children of Abraham. This natural sonship was only a figure of the spiritual sonship of all believers of all nations.

v. 8. The sum is this: men are not the children of God because they are children of Abraham, nor because they are children of believers, nor because they are descendants of any flesh; but they are children of God who are children of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, who are born again (John 1:11-13), who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with the heart.

God has a people, a holy nation, chosen in Christ. To these people he has given his presence, his blessings, and an inheritance forever (1 Peter 2:9). National Israel is a type of this holy nation.

The people who make up this holy Israel are not so because they are people whom God created, or because they name the name of God as their father, or because they go about a form of worship; but they are sons of God who are chosen of God and are children of true faith. Ishmael and Isaac illustrate this. Both were sons of Abraham by natural descent, but one was chosen. God has a chosen people out of every nation.

Not of works – but of him that calleth

Romans 9:9-18

v. 9. The birth of Isaac was by promise; without a miracle, it would never have taken place. The birth of Ishmael was not by promise but in the ordinary course of nature (read Verses 7-8). Ishmael is a type of those who are born after the flesh and are carnal men. Isaac is a type of those who are born of the Spirit and are the children of God (John 3:5-7; Gal. 4:28; Phil. 3:3).

v. 10. Not only does the case of Isaac prove that Abraham's seed are not all the children of God, but a stronger proof is seen in the birth of Jacob and Esau (who were born at the same time) conceived by Rebecca of the same father. The Jews might argue that Ishmael was born of a bond woman and Isaac of Sarah, the lawful wife. But Jacob and Esau were born of the same father and mother at the same time. The great distinction made between the two brothers could only be traced to the sovereign will of God (Exod. 33:18-19).

v. 11. The choice of Jacob as an object of mercy was made before the children were born (II Thess. 2:13). The choice was made before they had done any good or evil (Titus 3:5). The choice was made according to the purpose of God (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:9). This is the foundation and source of all mercy—the sovereign will of God (Eph. 1:3-5).

v. 12. There was only one point in which the sons of Isaac were different. Esau was the oldest and (according to the flesh and natural custom) had priority and power over Jacob. But God chose the younger son to receive his mercy and partake of his grace (1 Cor. 1:26-29). The dominion of the

younger over the elder flowed from God's eternal love to the one and his hatred to the other. This verse teaches the great fundamental doctrines of sovereignty, election, predestination, and reprobation.

v. 13. It is written in Mal. 1:1-3, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.' Men want this to read, 'Esau have I loved less;' but this is not the way it reads in scripture. Those who have some understanding of God's holiness and man's sinfulness understand why God could hate both Jacob and Esau, as well as all mankind. God's love for Jacob, as his love for us, is in Christ (Rom. 8:38-39). God acted in justice toward Esau—in mercy toward Jacob. Out of Christ there is only wrath and judgment (John 3:36).

v. 14. The apostle anticipated the objection of the natural mind to the truth of sovereign mercy. Does not loving Jacob and hating Esau before they were born imply that there is injustice in God? Is it righteous for God to love one who has done no good and to hate one who has done no evil? What is the apostle's reply? 'God forbid!' This is all that he says. God forbid that anyone should charge God with folly (Job 1:22). All that God does is consistent with the perfection of his character (Gen. 18:25).

v. 15. The apostle makes no defense or apology for God. He rests his doctrine solely on the Scriptures and produces God's own words to Moses declaring the truth of sovereign mercy (Exod. 33:18-19). This is enough for the believer; God has spoken. However, we can give several reasons why God must elect, sanctify, and call a people unto himself or none would be saved.

1. All men are lost and dead in Adam (Rom. 5:12, 17-19).
2. Men by nature do not love God (John 3:19; Rom. 8:7; John 5:40).

3. Men count the things of God as foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14).

v. 16. This is the conclusion:

1. Salvation is not of the will of men but according to the will and purpose of God (John 1:11-13).

2. Salvation is not attained by the activities and efforts of the flesh but is accomplished by the work of God's Spirit and word in the heart (Eph. 2: 8-9; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 1:30-31).

v. 17. This verse could be read after Verse 13 as another example of God's absolute sovereignty in the matter of his grace and mercy and in disposing of men as he will for his glory and the fulfillment of his purpose. The birth, situation, power, and conduct of Pharaoh were all by divine appointment (Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27-28) to accomplish the will of God concerning Israel. We know that all sin is with men, but even the wrath of man will praise the Lord; and for his purpose and glory all men and things exist (Psalm 76:10).

v. 18. Paul repeats again that God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy (Matt. 11:25-26). Mercy is a divine attribute! Mercy is sovereign! God must deal in justice with all men; but when God acts in mercy, he is free to deal with men according to his own will in Christ. However, mercy cannot be exercised at the expense of justice (Rom. 3:25-26).

Objections to sovereign mercy

Romans 9:19-33

Verse 18 declares the immutable sovereignty of God in salvation and mercy. If God has the right and power to show mercy to whom he will, then ‘whom he will he hardeneth.’ The scripture declares that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exod. 9:34-35). It also declares that God hardened his heart (Exod. 10:1). God is said to harden men's hearts (much like it is said, ‘God creates darkness and evil,’ Isa. 45:7) by leaving men to their own way, wisdom, and evil desires. If light is not given by God, darkness will reign. If the means of grace are not set forth, evil will abound (Acts 2:23). The same means that result in life and mercy to the elect become stumbling stones and means of greater condemnation to them that perish (2 Cor. 2:15-16).

v. 19. Here is the third objection to sovereign mercy held forth by the natural mind. The first objection (*v. 6.*)—most of Israel perishes, so it seems the purpose and promise of God has failed. The second objection (*v. 14.*)—God is unjust to choose some and pass by others. Now in Verse 19 we come to the third objection—if God shows mercy to some and none can resist his sovereign will, then why does he find fault with sinners? If the wrath of men is so under the control of God that it, too, serves his purpose, then why blame the sinner?

v. 20-23. In these verses the apostle gives three distinct answers to this objection. These answers will not satisfy the natural mind, but they will be sufficient for every believer who receives the word by faith.

1. (v. 20.) ‘O man, who are you to dispute with God? Who are you to question God's providence or hope to understand God's ways? How foolish and arrogant for a finite creature to sit in judgment on God's mercy and justice. The answer to why God does what he does is found in himself, not in our natural wisdom.

2. (v. 21.) The word ‘power’ here denotes right, privilege, or authority. God has a right to do with his own what he will. But it is more than that. God's power is always exercised in a way that is consistent with his righteousness and glory. The chief end of man is to glorify God; therefore, God has the right to do what best serves his glory.

3. (v. 22.) God has determined to make known to this universe two things. He will make known his wrath against sin, and he will make known the riches of his grace and glory.

God had endured these vessels of wrath with much patience as he did the old world before the flood, Pharaoh before he cut him off, and Sodom before he destroyed it. These unbelievers have light which they hate and means of grace which they despise.

The vessels of mercy receive his mercy, love, and grace, not because they are better or wiser than others or because they deserve it, but because God chose to reveal his grace in them and make them objects of his mercy from eternity.

‘It is not wise for the novice to meddle too much with divine purposes and mysteries. Nothing has greater tendency to confound the understanding and to harden the heart than to take strong meat too early. Let us not talk of these matters too lightly. Hidden things belong to God; things that are revealed belong to us. Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out; but he is excellent in power, judgment, and grace. He will not afflict without cause. Let us rejoice that the great truth of divine grace is written in the word and revealed in Christ.’ – M. Luther.

v. 24. The promise of eternal life was not made to the natural seed of Abraham but to the true seed of Abraham—Christ (and all who by grace are in him, whether Jew or Gentile.)

vv. 25-28. The calling of the Gentiles is prophesied throughout the Old Testament. This prophecy is from Hosea 2:23. The Jewish nation was typically the spouse of God; but when the Christ shall come, he will reveal his true seed and call her beloved which was not beloved—that is, the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-13).

Though the descendants of Abraham number in the millions, only a small number are the true Israel of God. These Jews thought that all of Abraham's descendants were the people of God. When the Messiah came and they rejected him (John 1:10-11), after hundreds of years of long-suffering with their idolatry and rebellion, God made a short work of them and has blinded them to this day.

v. 29. Actually the doctrine of election, very far from being a harsh and cruel doctrine, is a cause for rejoicing; for had it not been for God's choosing to save a people, neither Jew nor Gentile would escape the wrath to come. We would have all been destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah.

vv. 30-33. What is the result of all this discussion? The conclusion from the whole is that those Gentiles who are chosen of God, called by the Spirit, and redeemed by Christ have obtained the righteousness of Christ by faith (though they did not seek it and were abandoned to evil), while Israel (who had all the advantages, the law and the prophets, and sought acceptance with God) found it not! Why? Because Israel sought righteousness by works and not by grace—by the deeds of the law and not by faith.

Romans 16

Henry Mahan

Israel stumbled at Jesus Christ. Instead of looking to him (who fulfilled all types, promises, and sacrifices), they rejected him altogether. Had they understood their prophets, they would have embraced Christ. Therefore, they were offended by his words and were ashamed of his cross.

The free invitation of the gospel

Romans 10:1-10

Those who are elected to life in Christ shall be saved (John 6:37-40), but they shall be brought to repentance and faith by the means which God has appointed (2 Thess. 2:13; Mark 16:15, 16; 1 Cor. 1:21). It is on this ground that Paul wrote 2 Timothy 2:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:19-21. A belief in sovereign grace that destroys prayer for sinners, evangelistic and missionary zeal and a sincere invitation to all men to bow to the claims of Christ and receive him as Lord and Saviour is not of the Lord and is false doctrine!

v. 1. The Jews hated Paul and his gospel. They rejected the message of the cross, yet he expresses again and again his deep love for them and prays to God that they might be saved. We must never cease to pray for unbelievers and use God-ordained means to seek their conversion,

v. 2. These Jews were not atheists. They were religious. They had a zeal for the law and the ceremonies, but they were ignorant! They did not know the Father or the Son. They did not understand the spirituality nor the purpose of the law and the ceremonies. How often do we hear people say, 'If a man is sincere in his religion, his creed of no importance? This is not true! (John 17:3; Phil. 3:5-9).

v. 3. They were ignorant of the purity and holiness of God's law, and they were ignorant of the strictness of God's justice (Gal. 4:21; 3:10). They were trying to merit acceptance with God on the strength of their works, deeds and religious duties! Is not this a picture of our day?

They refused to submit to the true righteousness of God, which is Christ! Christ in the flesh, on the cross and in glory is our righteousness. The divine method of acceptance and justification requires nothing but to be submitted to or received (John 1:12; Eph. 1: 6). God does not require you to produce righteousness, but to receive it. God does not require you to produce life, but to receive life in Christ.

v. 4. There are several things suggested here.

1. The embracing of Christ for salvation means the end of the law as a method of justification. We abandon all hope in ourselves and look to Christ.

2. The goal of the law is to bring the sinner to Christ. This is the way it is given in Galatians 3:24, 25.

3. The law contained terms of life: 'Do this and live.' Christ is the end of those terms. We are no longer under the law as a covenant or a curse.

v. 5. The righteousness of the law lies in doing perfectly all that the law requires – not only in deed, but in thought, attitude and motive. The law requires not the best you can do, but the best God can do – perfect love to God and to all his creatures, a perfect heart! This cannot be done by a fallen creature (Rom. 8:3).

vv. 6, 7. The best help on these verses comes from John Brown: 'Do not think that divine justification depends on something to be done by you or anyone else. There is no need to say 'Who shall ascend to heaven to bring the Messiah down?' He has already come and performed the work for which he came. He has finished our righteousness and redemption. There is no need to say, 'Who shall descend into the deep to bring him up from the grave?' He is risen! He is risen for our justification and intercedes for

us. The gospel which reveals it tells you that they are all finished. The all-sufficient Saviour is to be believed and received.

v. 8. The righteousness of faith is the gospel which we preach to you. This is all you need to hear and believe. The gospel is in your mouth and in your heart, and this is explained in the next two verses.

v. 9. To confess Christ with the mouth is to make a sincere, hearty confession to God before men that Christ Jesus is our Prophet to reveal God, our Priest to atone for us, our Lord to reign over us! When this is our experience, we confess it in believer's baptism.

To believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead is to:

1. Believe that he came to this earth as 'God in the flesh' (John 1:14).

2. Believe that he truly died on the cross for our sins (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

3. Believe that the sacrifice was effectual and sufficient, for God raised him from the dead (1 Cor. 15:13-22).

v. 10. The apostle explains the nature of faith. It does not lie in a bare mental assent or doctrinal position, but is a genuine heart work! It is a believing with the affections, the will and the understanding. It is to behold the Son in his glory, his fullness, his willingness and his sufficiency to save. Through this faith we are saved and we are justified (Eph. 2:8, 9; 2 Tim. 1:12).

Preaching the gospel to all men

Romans 10:11-21

v. 11. Several things are evident in this one verse of scripture.

1. The perfect agreement of the Old and New Testaments (Isa. 28:16). As in the case of Abraham, righteousness is not by works but by faith (Rom. 4: 20-24).

2. Whosoever (whether Jew or Gentile) believeth shall be saved. The Jews had a difficult time including Gentiles in the kingdom of God.

3. The certain connection between faith and righteousness (confession and salvation) is evident. Those who believe in Christ with their hearts and confess him as their Lord shall be saved.

4. Those who believe shall not be ashamed of him nor will they ever be put to shame. His robe of righteousness covers our nakedness.

v. 12. Not only is the Gentile not excluded from the mercy of God, but there is not the slightest difference in God's sight between Jew and Gentile. All have sinned (Rom. 3:22-23), and all are in need of the righteousness of Christ. God is able to supply the needs of all who truly call upon his name (Heb. 7:25).

v. 13. This is from Joel 2:32. The name of the Lord signifies the Lord himself. His name reveals who he is, what he has done, why he did it, and where he is now! And none other name can save (Phil. 2:6-11).

Jehovah-jireh 'The Lord will provide' (Gen. 22:13-14).

Jehovah-rapha ‘The Lord that healeth’ (Exo. 15:26).
Jehovah-nissi ‘The Lord our banner’ (Exo. 17:8-15).
Jehovah-shalom ‘The Lord our peace’ (Judges 6:24).
Jehovah-ra-ah ‘The Lord my shepherd’ (Psalm 23:1).
Jehovah-tsidkenu ‘The Lord our righteousness’ (Jer. 23:6).
Jehovah-shammah ‘The Lord is present’ (Ezek. 48:35).

To call upon his name is to humble ourselves before him, to recognize his majesty, to believe his promises, and to hope in his mercy.

v. 14. In this verse Paul insists on the necessity of preaching the gospel to sinners. None can be saved who do not call on the Lord. None can call upon the true name of the Lord if they do not believe he is willing and able to save. None can believe he is willing and able to save if they have not heard of his grace, his death, and his redemption; and none can hear these things unless these glad tidings are preached to him! (Mark 16:15-16; James 1:18; John 5:24.)

v. 15. These ambassadors of Christ who preach the glad tidings of salvation are sent by the Lord. They deliver his gospel under his authority and by the power of his Spirit (Matt. 28:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:20-21). The greatest blessing God can give to a people is a faithful preacher of the true gospel.

v. 16. Though the gospel was to be preached both to Jews and Gentiles with the promise that whosoever believeth shall be saved, yet all who heard it did not believe it! This should not seem strange to those who are familiar with scripture. Isaiah said, ‘Who hath believed our report?’ (Heb. 4:2; 1 Cor. 2:8-10.) The gospel must be revealed by his Spirit (John 6:44-45).

v. 17. So then faith depends on hearing. One cannot trust an unrevealed Christ. We must hear, not with the outward ear only, but with the heart. We must hear with desire, hear with understanding, hear with a need! (Matt. 13:15-16). Faith depends on hearing and hearing depends on the word of God. It is essential to hear the word!

vv. 18-21. These last four verses deal with four things:

1. The preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles (Psalm 19:4).
2. Old Testament prophecies of the call of the Gentiles (Deut. 32:21).
3. Israel should have been aware of this (Isaiah 65:1).
4. The rejection of God's mercy by the Jews (Isaiah 65:2).

The election has obtained it

Romans 11:1-7

After writing the words recorded in Chapter Ten, Paul saw an objection arising from his adversaries. Has God cast away all of his people who are called Jews? Where is his covenant with Israel? How are his promises to Israel to be understood? What hope can the Jew have of obtaining salvation? Paul proceeds to deal with these questions.

v. 1. In his usual way, when objection is contrary to scripture and very displeasing to him, he exclaims, 'God forbid' (Rom. 3:3-4, 3:31; 6:1-2). 'Has God cast away all Jews?' 'God forbid; I am a Jew.' The Lord was pleased to save Saul of Tarsus who was of the seed of Abraham and of the little tribe of Benjamin. God even made him a minister of the gospel.

v. 2. Here is the most important statement: 'God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew' among the Jews or Gentiles. There is a sense in which all mankind are God's people. They are certainly his creatures, his subjects, his to do with as he will. But all are not foreknown; all are not objects of his eternal love and grace (Rom. 8:28-30). Many will hear him say, 'I never knew you.' Even so, Israel was chosen from among the nations. They were called the people of God and were blessed with the promises, the prophets, the law, and the sacrifices; but all were not foreknown, for most of them perished in unbelief (Heb. 4:2). Elijah made intercession, not for Israel but against them.

v. 3. Instead of praying for them as prophets were accustomed to do, Elijah was obliged to complain against them for their idolatry, contempt, and unbelief. He, too, thought that God was finished with Israel and would

totally abandon them, for ‘they have destroyed the altars of God;’ and he felt that he was the only Israelite left who worshipped the true God (1 Kings 19:10).

v. 4. How did God answer Elijah? (1 Kings 19:18). ‘You are not alone—I have seven thousand men in Israel who know my name and seek my glory.’ God had not completely cast Israel away then, nor has he cast all Jews away now. Sincere men, like Elijah, are often wrong when they despair for the cause of God and truth. When the church and the cause of Christ seem at the lowest (idolatry, superstition, and error are seemingly in full command), God always has a people whom he foreknew, redeemed, and called.

v. 5. Even so, at this present time there is a remnant (there are some); there always has been, is now, and always will be. Elijah was not the only Jewish believer in his day; and Paul says, ‘I am not the only one today.’ The number may be small (Rom. 9:27), but God has his people, ‘According to the election of grace’ (Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13).

1. God chose us.
2. God chose us in Christ.
3. God chose us from eternity.
4. God chose us to be like Christ.
5. God chose according to his own will (John 1:12-13; Rom. 9:16).

Almost every religionist believes in some sort of election. He must, because election is a Bible term. But the election taught in scripture is not based on works, foreseen merit, nor man's will; but God elected us according to his will, purpose, mercy, and grace (2 Tim. 1:8-9). Left to

ourselves we would not love God, seek God, nor come to Christ (John 5:40-44; 1 Cor. 2:14).

v. 6. Salvation is by the pure, unmerited grace and mercy of God. The works, efforts, and deeds of men are not involved (John 1:12-13; Rom. 9:15-16). If salvation comes to us because of our works (however small), then it is not of grace. If you can find any reason why God should save you other than that by his grace in Christ he was pleased to show mercy, then you are advocating salvation by works.

v. 7. ‘What then?’ What can be said to this point that the apostle advocates? It is as clear as the sun. God has not cast away all the people of the Jews nor any whom he foreknew and gave to Christ of any age or period of time.

‘Israel hath not obtained what they sought’—that is, carnal Israel (the body and bulk of that people who sought life and righteousness by the deeds and ceremonies of the law); for this is impossible (Rom. 3:20; Heb. 10:4). They sought righteousness in the wrong place, in the wrong way.

‘But the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded.’ Paul divides Israel into two parts—the election and the rest. These chosen ones obtained mercy, grace, and righteousness in Christ as the apostle himself did, and the rest were left in darkness (2 Cor. 4:3-6).

Has God cast away the Jews?

Romans 11:8-36

This is a difficult chapter, demanding the most careful and prayerful consideration, free from preconceived theories and prophetic systems. I can see five divisions.

1. (vv. 1-7.) Has God totally rejected and disowned the Jews? Of course not! Paul gives himself as an example. He says that he is a Jew and that God brought him to a knowledge of Christ. Elijah thought he was the only believer left, but God told him that he had seven thousand men who knew him. Even so, right now, there is a remnant according to the election of grace!

2. (vv. 8-10.) The Jews had the prophets, the law, the tabernacle, the types and the promises of redemption through Christ. They refused to hear, see or embrace the promises. Even when Christ came they rejected him (John 1:11), wherefore God delivered them to spiritual blindness to this day (Ps. 69:20-25). They rejected their Messiah, wherefore the Passover table and all the types became meaningless to them. Rather than being the means to point them to Christ, these types became a trap serving as their refuge.

3. (v. 11.) Have they stumbled that they should fall irretrievably? God forbid! Will they always remain in this blind condition? No! God used their rejection of the gospel to send the gospel to the Gentiles! (Acts 13:44-48; 28:27, 28).

‘To provoke them to jealousy.’ Paul mentions this three times (Rom. 10:19; 11:11, 14). They will see what they have lost in rejecting Christ and

what the Gentiles have gained in receiving him! God uses means to accomplish his purposes.

(vv. 12-15) If through their fall and blindness God's grace has come to the Gentiles and through a handful of Jews God turned the world upside down, think what the blessings would be to the world if God opened the eyes of a greater part of that nation!

He repeats the argument of verse 12. If every Jew became an evangelist (a believer in Christ), it would be life from the dead, not only of the Jews but of the Gentile church, which in this day is in a state of deadness. It would produce the greatest revival the world has ever seen. The results of Christ being revealed to the Jew would be unparalleled blessing to Jew and Gentile.

v. 16. This is the third argument that God has not totally cast away Israel.

1. The first-fruits of the harvest were given to God and this sanctified the whole harvest.

2. If there is life in the root of the tree, the whole tree may appear dead and every branch withered and broken, but life in the root can produce new branches! These first-fruits and root are Abraham, David and the apostles.

4. (v. 17.) In these next verses Paul warns the Gentile believers against being puffed up against the Jews on account of our blessings and their blindness. The Jewish nation was God's olive tree; Abraham was the root! The greater part of God's true people were chosen out of them. By their unbelief some of the branches are broken off and we, from the wild tree, have been grafted in to partake of the root and the fatness (Rom. 1:16; John 4:22; Rom. 3:1, 2; 9:4, 5).

v. 18. Read the Amplified Version. Remember the Jews were the first believers. The Jews have received no advantage from the Gentiles, but the Gentiles much from the Jews. The first preachers were Jews, and of Israel Christ came!

(vv. 19-24.) A haughty spirit goes before a fall. If God spared not the natural branches, this is a good reason for us to be humble and fearful, lest he spare not us. Unbelief caused them to be cut off and faith in Christ will restore them. The same applies to us.

5. (vv. 25-32.) These verses seem to indicate the future conversion and restoration of the Jews. This mystery is revealed to prevent us from being puffed up against the Jews and forming our own opinion about God's purpose in relation to the nation of Israel. This natural blindness is temporary until the full body of Gentiles is called (Luke 21:24).

v. 26. Some say this is spiritual Israel (Jew and Gentile believers), but it does not fit the context, for it is dealing with the Jewish people. (Look at vv. 27-29.) As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for the sake of the Gentiles, but as touching the election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers (Deut. 7:6-8). God's gifts and purposes never change.

vv. 30, 31. 'At one time you Gentiles did not believe but you obtained mercy. Now the Jews do not believe but they will obtain mercy.'

v. 33-36. In these closing verses Paul reminds us of the impossibility of our comprehending the wisdom, knowledge, judgment and mind of the Lord. We are foolish to try to put the infinite God in a mould or to try to chart his unsearchable ways and designs. He will do what he will, with whom he will, when he will, and all that he does will be right because he does it. When we think that we have all of the answers and understand the

ways of God, we have but revealed our ignorance and foolishness. Let our faith be summed up in the words of Eli: 'It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good' (1 Sam. 3:18).

The believer's walk through this world

Romans 12:1-8

Paul, having taught in the preceding chapters the great doctrines of redemption by grace through faith, now turns to the results of redemption – the life of grace and godliness, or the believer's walk, conduct and conversation in this present world. Our attitude and duties to God, to the church of God and to all men may be summed up in one word – love! He loved us (1 John 4:16) and we love him (1 John 4:19) and we love one another (1 John 4:20, 21). If we do not understand this and are not motivated by love, we fail before we even begin our discussion of duties and works (Gal. 5:13, 14).

v. 1. 'I appeal to you, brethren, by the mercies of God.' Whatever we are called upon to do, say, be or give is not by way of threats, fear or even bargaining but because of the mercy of God to us (1 John 4:11; Eph. 4:32; Luke 6:35, 36).

'That you present your bodies a living sacrifice.' Paul is talking about just what you think he is talking about – our human faculties. Let our tongues be employed in praising God. Let our feet take us to worship, to the assembly, to the door of others to minister. Let our arms be used to embrace and lift the needy. The believer, as a priest, offers himself to God as a living sacrifice. 'Here am I, Lord, send me' – to preach to the lost, to care for the sick, to support the missionary, to cheer the faint, to comfort the weary – but somehow use me to accomplish your purpose! Is that not our reasonable service, since we are not our own, but bought by his blood?

v. 2. The word 'world' means the nature, character, opinions, goals and attitude of unregenerate men. The worldly man seeks the praise of men;

the believer seeks the praise of God. The worldling thinks only of himself; the believer considers others. The worldling cares for the body; the believer cares for the soul. The worldling looks only upon that which is seen; the believer looks on that which is unseen. The worldling cares for what he shall eat, drink and wear; the believer seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

This spiritual attitude can only be accomplished by a renewing or regenerating work of God in the mind and soul. It is contrary to the nature of flesh (2 Cor. 5:17; Phil. 2:12, 13). As old leaves drop off a tree to make room for the new ones, so the renewing work of the Spirit in our minds and hearts pushes out pride, envy, malice and covetousness. In this way we both experience and manifest what is pleasing and honoring to God (Eph. 5:9, 10).

v. 3. Paul exhorts us to cultivate a crowning grace – humility! (Jer. 9:23, 24; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5.) We need to remember that our gifts, knowledge, ability and even faith are the gifts of God (1 Cor. 4:7; 15:10).

vv. 4, 5. The apostle illustrates the union of believers by the human body. The human body is one, but it has many members; and each member is placed there in proportion to the others for the good of the whole body. The eye sees, but it does not hear. The ear hears, but it does not breathe. So we are one body in Christ and are in a union together, having gifts and ability differing but serving the same purpose – the good of the body and the glory of Christ.

v. 6-8. Several of these gifts are mentioned, not all by any means!

Prophecy – At this period prophecy is the proper understanding of and preaching of the Scriptures. This is done according to God-given ability.

Ministry – This is service, such as deacons and others who minister to the needs and welfare of others. There is no need to restrict this to official office, but it applies to all who are devoted to the needs of the body of Christ.

Teaching – Fitness to teach others the word is the gift of God; and if one possesses the gift, it should be used diligently.

Exhortation – I suppose this would fall mainly to the pastor or elders, but it is certainly the duty of all believers to give a word of encouragement, warning and comfort (Heb. 3:12, 13).

Giving – This does not mean that some are to give and others not, but some are blessed with the ability to give more, and it should be done liberally, without fanfare and with simplicity.

Ruling – This is the place of leadership and responsibility, such as pastor, elders, deacons, husbands, fathers, taking our responsibility seriously and ruling in love.

Mercy – This is a gift all possess and it involves kindness, forgiveness, a good word and understanding. We should not be reluctant to exercise this grace, but do it cheerfully!

Our attitude toward others

Romans 12:9-21

This chapter seems to fall into three divisions: verses 1-2, our consecration and dedication to God; verses 3-8, our consecration and dedication to duties and gifts in the body of Christ; and verses 9-21, our general attitude and behavior towards another.

v. 9. 'Let your love be sincere,' without pretension and hypocrisy. Our love to one another, like our love to Christ, must be genuine and sincere and from the heart - not in word only but in deed and truth (1 John 4:7, 8; 19, 20).

'Hate what is evil.' Believers sin, but they do not love sin either in principle or deed, nor do they excuse or justify it in themselves or in others (Ps. 51:3, 4). The word 'cleave' means to 'be glued to' or to 'keep company with.' Walk with God and with those who know God. Hold to the principles of godliness, associate with people and go to places which contribute to your spiritual growth (Read in Amplified Version 15:33).

v. 10 The believer will in truth love all men. There is no room in a regenerate heart for hate, grudges and bigotry, but there is a special love for those who are called brethren. The word here is 'love one another as members of the same family, giving precedence and honour to one another' (Phil. 2:3, 4; 6:10). In making others happy, we find happiness. In giving, we receive. In promoting another's welfare and honour, we are honored. A man's character is not always revealed in what others say about him, but in what he says privately about others.

v. 11. There are two opinions here; both are true.

1. Make the Lord's glory your rule in everything. Whatever you do, do it as unto the Lord. If you are engaged in secular work for wages, or if you serve the public, work as if the Lord Jesus is your employer (Eph. 6:5-7; Col. 3:22, 23).

2. Let not the worship and business of the Lord degenerate into a cold formalism. Let our religious duties (such as study, prayer, witnessing, singing, giving and preaching) be always motivated by fervent zeal and interest.

v. 12. 'Rejoicing in the hope' we have of eternal glory in Christ (1 John 3:1-3). Someone said, 'Rejoicing in hope is placed between serving the Lord and being patient under trial because nothing tends to motivate a believer to serve God and to endure trials with patience like the hope of being like Christ.'

Let us learn to expect trials and bear them without murmuring against God, who sends them (for our good) and without being bitter against men, who are but his instruments (John 16:33). Prayer is needful at all times (1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 5:19, 20).

v. 13. When another believer is in need, the church will respond to that need. We are to clothe the naked, feed the hungry and see that the family of God is provided for. Our homes are to be hotels of hospitality open to all believers (Matt. 25:34-40).

v. 14. Many Christians, through the years, have had to bear real persecution. We know little of this, but we do have opposition and unkind feelings for the sake of the gospel. We are to pray for our enemies as our Lord did, 'Father, forgive them,' and as Stephen, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'

v. 15, 16. When brethren are of one heart, they are able to identify with one another in joy and sorrow. A strong love produces a strong interest and concern for one another.

‘Be of the same mind one toward another.’ John Brown said, ‘Be united in your affections, sentiments and goals.’ It is difficult to love every Christian with the same degree of love, for all are not equally lovable and amiable, but we can love with the same kind of affection.

‘Mind not high things.’ Be not haughty and snobbish, but readily adjust yourself to people of every station and give yourself to humble tasks (Jer. 45:5; Matt. 23:8-11). We ought to cultivate habitually a deep sense of our own unworthiness and ignorance.

v. 17, 18. Private revenge is contrary to our gospel. We are not to repay evil words for evil words or evil deeds for evil deeds. Providing things honest in the sight of all men has to do with our business dealings, our clean conversation, our conduct in public and our faithfulness to family, civic and business duties.

‘If possible, as much as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.’ We are not to disturb others nor let them disturb us. The first is in our power – the second is not. The chief offender in this warfare is the tongue!

v.19, 21. Here is the cause of most unrest: people taking on themselves to avenge themselves. To get even or to strike back is our nature. ‘Give place to wrath,’ yield to it, do not resist it, keep out of its way and let it spend itself. Do not brood over misunderstandings or keep them warm. Let them die. God will someday settle all accounts!

Your anger will never win the heart of a foe, but your kindness may reach his heart and conscience.

Do not let evil men and evil thoughts dictate your course of action. Do not let hatred and hard feelings get the better of your Christian principles. Do not let evil revenge displace the divine light of forgiveness.

Our attitude toward authority

Romans 13:1-7

In Chapter 12 the apostle taught the duties, responsibilities, and proper attitudes incumbent upon believers with respect to one another, with exhortation in reference to our conduct in the world and our attitude toward all men. In this chapter he deals with our duties and attitudes as members of an ordered society. This chapter has to do with our attitude toward all authority, especially civil authority.

Some of the reasons why Paul had to deal with this subject are:

1. The early Christians were charged with sedition and thought to be enemies of the government. Christ was accused of being Caesar's enemy.

2. Some of the early Christians were Jews, the seed of Abraham, who resented any Gentile ruler.

3. Some of the early Christians had the idea that since most rulers, magistrates, and people in authority were wicked and profane men, therefore children of God's kingdom should not obey or be subject to them.

v. 1. 'Let every person be loyally subject to civil and governing authorities.' These kings, presidents, governors, policemen, or whatever are called higher powers because they are vested with authority over others. To be subject unto them is to show respect, obedience, and honor suitable to their stations and to obey their lawful commands with submission. It is also to pray for them rather than to rail against them (Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13).

‘There is no authority except from God.’ God is the fountain and source of all power. All authority is by his permission and appointment. This verse refers mainly to civil authority but is true of all authority, such as husbands, parents, employers, elders—they all get their right to rule and lead from God. Evil men may abuse, misuse, and corrupt authority; but government and leadership is necessary and must be obeyed.

v. 2. The person who resists, rebels against, or sets himself against proper authority in any of these places is resisting the order and ordinance of God. Authority resisted, in the faithful and right discharge of office, will bring God's judgment on the offender. However, this does not include those officers who set their rules and laws above the law of God. The scripture says, ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord’ (Eph. 6:1). When men set themselves in defiance of God's law, they are to be resisted (Heb. 13:17).

v. 3. Authority in any area is not a terror to people of right motive and good conduct. Authority is only hated by those whose works are evil. Would you have no dread or fear of those in authority? Then do what is right and you will have their approval.

v. 4. Persons in places of authority (whoever they are) are the servants of God for the general welfare of all. What would a home, school, office, factory, city, or country be like without authority? Think about a game without a referee. What chaos would reign if there were no laws and no power to enforce them!

If we are not willing to follow God's order and his proper chain of command, if we are not willing to submit to authority, then the authority is designated by God to deal with us by his own hand, and in so doing he is God's instrument of wrath and judgment.

v. 5. Therefore, believers are subject to authority not only through fear of punishment or to avoid wrath, but the believer approves of authority and respects it as a matter of conscience, wisdom, and principle. Our consciences not only tell us that God's way of rule and order is right, but we approve of and love his way.

v. 6. 'For this cause.' It is ordained of God, it is for the general welfare and good of all, and we understand and agree with the need for leadership and authority. We are to pay our taxes and that which is required of us for the support of governing officials and magistrates. Leaders in government, such as presidents, senators, city and county officials, policemen, firemen, teachers, etc., promote the general welfare of the society and are to be supported by the taxes of the people. They, too, are God's servants in full-time, continuing work.

v. 7. 'Render to all men what is due unto them.' Whatever authority a man has entrusted to him is a sacred trust for which he shall give an account to God. That is his business. But our responsibility is to obey, respect, and submit to them as unto the Lord. Pay taxes to whom taxes are due, give respect to whom respect is due, and give honor to whom honor is due.

Love – the believer's rule

Romans 13:8-14

v. 8. ‘Owe no man anything.’ This verse has been used to discourage buying on credit or borrowing money, but this is not the application at all. Most people could never own a home, car, or continue in business if borrowing money was forbidden in scripture. The verse left in the context continues the instructions to make good on all obligations, whether of a civil or natural duty. Obedience, respect, honor, and service are debts which are to be paid. Parents are due respect and obedience. Husbands and fathers are due submission. Leaders are due honor and support. These duties are to be fulfilled.

‘Love one another.’ This is the answer to all of the above. He who truly loves God and others will fulfill what God requires of him (Matt. 22:35-40; Gal. 5:13-14).

v. 9. The first table of the law has respect to God. The second table, which is listed here, has to do with our neighbors. Our love for God will certainly lead us to worship him, have no idols, nor take his name in vain; and if we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we will put forth every effort to treat him as we would be treated. We certainly will not steal from him, covet his wife or property, lie about him, nor take his life.

v. 10. The man who truly loves his neighbor will not willingly harm him, rather he will do all within his power to promote his neighbor's happiness. Therefore, the whole law is comprehended or fulfilled in the word LOVE!

v. 11. ‘Knowing the time.’ This is a special time; it is a critical hour. This is the day of salvation. This is the day of grace and mercy in Christ (2 Cor.

6:2; Heb. 3:12-14). While the gospel is preached, while we have our faculties, it is time to seek the Lord (Isa. 55:6; Prov. 1:24-28). The primary reference in this verse, though, is to believers who may have grown careless or indifferent in their responsibilities and their relationship to Christ and the church. It is time to awake out of indifference, carelessness, or divided attention and be about the Master's business! Final deliverance and our eternal rest is much nearer than when we first believed. Some of us will be called away from this earth in a very little while. Our relationship with Christ should be our main concern!

v. 12. The present time of life is far spent for most of us (Psalm 90:12). It is called 'the night' because this life on earth, at best, is filled with the works of darkness. Error, hate, sin, disease and death, war and poverty are the lot of those who walk this valley of death and darkness. Our glorious day of deliverance is near, and we need to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. Let us spend less time on the things of flesh and more time seeking the kingdom of God. Fling off those things that do not contribute to your spiritual well-being (Eph. 6:11-13).

v. 13. Let us live, walk, talk, and conduct ourselves in an honorable and godly manner as being exposed to all men in broad daylight—not in carousing and drunkenness, not in immorality, not in quarreling and jealousy. These things are forbidden and are unbecoming to any believer, but especially to the believer who is on the threshold of glory. Our pleasure and delight ought to be the fellowship of the gospel, and our companions, those who are redeemed by Christ.

v. 14. 'Clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ.' This is not only to be clothed in his spotless, imputed righteousness by faith and to make a strong, public confession in him, but it is to imitate him in the exercise of

grace—to walk as he walked, to love as he loved, to forgive as he forgave, to submit to the Father's will as he submitted.

‘Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.’ That is, give less thought and attention to this body of flesh. As we think of the flesh, as we dwell on the passions and lusts of this body, we somehow arrange for those desires to be met (Phil. 4:8).

Conflicts over Christian liberty

Romans 14:1-9

This chapter deals with our attitude toward one another in regard to disputes and disagreements in reference to the observance of certain days, the eating of certain foods, and conflicts over things that are not specifically commanded or forbidden in the Scriptures. The subjects of conflict may vary today, but the principles laid down can apply to all.

v. 1. Welcome the weak believer or the babe in Christ into your fellowship, not to criticize his opinions and his convictions. This statement is addressed to the mature, strong, knowledgeable Christian. If we are instructed to grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, it can be safely assumed that there are weaknesses and immaturity to develop! Receive the weak in faith and the immature into your fellowship; take notice of them; bear their ignorance patiently rather than demanding that they know immediately what it took you years to learn.

v. 2. One man's faith permits him to eat anything, while another is troubled about meat sacrificed to idols or meat forbidden under the law, so he limits his food to vegetables.

v. 3. The mature believer who understands that the kingdom of God is not in meat and drinks but righteousness and peace—that it is not that which goeth into the mouth but that which cometh out of the heart that defileth—must not look down upon nor despise the man who does not understand these things and is still bound by a ‘touch not, taste not’ tradition. Let not the man who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God hath received and welcomed both (Matt. 15:17-20).

(a) The disagreement is not over the gospel of substitution.

(b) The disagreement is not over the moral law of God.

(c) The disagreement is not over repentance, faith, love, or godliness.

(d) It is over meats, drinks, and things regarding the flesh and not the spirit. The natural man's religion lies in works, deeds, and self-approval before God. When he comes to Christ, it is difficult for him to realize that our entire acceptance is in Christ, not in our own righteousness and works. These grave clothes are hard to shed.

v. 4. The believer, whether weak or strong, is the Lord's servant. He is not my servant to condemn or to judge. He stands or falls before the Master. He is chosen of God to his salvation and his service. The Master will order his own household, and the weaker brother shall not fall but shall grow in faith and grace as the mature believer will also grow stronger in Christ. Let all criticism, condemnation, and judgment of one another in things not pertaining to the gospel of righteousness cease!

v. 5. This is another instance of differences of opinions in the church about the observance of Jewish laws. He is speaking of certain days appointed by Moses, such as the Passover, different feast days, and the Sabbath. These were holy days in the Old Testament, and these traditions were hard to break. One man observes a strict Sabbath; another esteems everyday the Lord's day and orders his life in prayer and praise continually.

v. 6. He who observes a strict Sabbath or a special holy day does so in honor of the Lord. The man who considers all days equally holy does so in honor of the Lord. We must be convinced in our own minds; for to serve or worship only in imitation of someone else is folly; and to do something

without being convinced in heart would be destructive. He who eats gives thanks to God, and he who abstains gives thanks to God. Since both parties are concerned with the glory of God, they should be patient with one another. Several things might be included here, such as styles of worship, order of worship, singing of hymns or psalms, personality differences, mode of dress, etc.

v. 7. I am not a separate tree planted on a hill, but I am a branch (along with other branches) in Christ Jesus. I am not a building which stands separately and alone but a stone (along with other living stones) in the Living Temple—Christ Jesus!

Also, I don't live by my duties, services, or sacrifices. I live in Christ! I don't live by my personal righteousness—but his! No man dies to himself (Phil. 1:21-24). My life belongs to Christ and his body and so does my death.

v. 8. The Father gave us to Christ. Our Lord purchased us by his obedient life and substitutionary death. We are his, not our own and not another's. Whether we eat or don't eat things formerly forbidden, whether we observe a day or don't observe a day, whether we live or die, it is to our Lord. We are his bondslaves and are not to be despised, judged, or ordered by men in the things of God.

v. 9. This is why he died—that he might be Lord of every believer, whether living or dead. He bought us from self-service and evil slavery. He redeemed us from sin and other masters which had dominion over us. He is the supreme Master of all believers, so we are to cultivate peace and love among ourselves.

Christ alone is our judge

Romans 14:10-23

v. 10. ‘Why do you judge your brother?’ These words are spoken to the man who thinks it is wrong to eat things prohibited by the law, who still keeps holy days. He is asked why he takes it upon himself to judge and condemn the brother who differs from him.

‘Why do you set at nought your brother?’ These words are to the strong in faith and Christian liberty—to him who is apt to be puffed up with his superior knowledge and to look down on the weaker one.

Christ alone is our judge. To judge one another and to despise one another because of differences not only reveals lack of understanding and love but invades the area of Christ's Lordship. Each Christian is to follow the Lord, for Christ alone is the final authority on what is right and what is wrong for a believer.

v. 11. This passage is from Isaiah 45:23. It is by Christ that all men shall be judged (John 5:22; Phil. 2:10). Neither we, nor our creeds, nor our laws, nor our religious organizations are the judges of believers or unbelievers. Christ is the sole Master and Judge!

v. 12. ‘So then.’ The apostle concludes that every individual is answerable to Jesus Christ—believers and unbelievers! Though our sins are blotted out by the blood, we shall not indulge in sin; for we are accountable to our Master for our conduct and stewardship; and our desire is to glorify him, be a good witness, and keep his commandments.

v. 13. This is the conclusion: let's don't set ourselves up as critics and judges of the conduct and lives of other believers. Let's don't spend our

time finding fault with one another, picking out weaknesses, and exaggerating differences of opinions and practices; but rather, let us spend our time endeavoring to help one another and to avoid doing and saying things that may cause another to stumble. We can do this by making our fellowship to be in Christ (not in form), by loving one another in spite of differences, and by avoiding collisions on the points where we differ.

vv. 14-15. This is not a private opinion, but I have been taught by the Lord Jesus that our relationship with God and our spiritual condition is not determined by meats and drinks or what goes in the mouth (Matt. 15:11-19). But if a person eats or drinks or does what he thinks is forbidden by God, he is guilty with respect to God as really as if the thing were forbidden. Teach a man liberty, but don't encourage him to violate his conscience.

Example: if meat offered to idols is available to you and you see no harm in eating it, don't eat it if you are in the company of a brother who will be offended. Don't destroy his confidence in you and his fellowship with you just for the sake of appetite. You can do without it.

v. 16. It is good to be free from form and Pharisaism. It is good to have the liberty and peace of Christ, but be careful to use it in such a way that it does not offend and become the occasion for division among the people of God.

vv. 17-18. Men are so prone to cling to the externals in religious worship (1 Tim. 4:1-4). These things have nothing to do with eternal life. But the righteousness of Christ (imputed and imparted), the joy communicated by the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the peace purchased by his blood have everything to do with eternal life.

He that in these things (righteousness, joy, and peace) serves Christ and is a bonds slave of Jesus Christ is accepted in the Beloved and approved by those who know God. True believers recognize true godliness.

v. 19-21. Let us emphasize and dwell upon these things that bring us together in fellowship and avoid those things which divide. Let us preach, practice, and discuss those things that build up and strengthen men in faith.

If you have liberty in regard to things indifferent, yet you have brothers who are offended, then leave it off! His fellowship is worth more than these things.

v. 22. If a man is not bound by superstition, holy days, meats and drinks, rituals and ceremonies, but finds his joy, righteousness, and peace only in Christ, he is a happy and contented man (Gal. 2:20-21).

v. 23. But the man to whom the full extent of Christian liberty has not been revealed must walk in the light he has. The word 'damned' is not eternal condemnation but disfavor. Whatever we do must be done with the conviction that it is agreeable to the will of God. This applies not only to meats and drinks but to all things.

Mutual affection and unity among believers

Romans 15:1-7

The apostle Paul continues in this chapter his plea for mutual affection and unity among believers. He is not talking of unity among all religious people. Our Lord condemned those who sought acceptance with God by their own righteousness, saying, ‘Leave them alone, they are blind leaders, whited sepulchres.’ Paul would not tolerate those who departed from the gospel. ‘If any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.’ Paul is pleading for love and forbearance among those who know and love the Redeemer—who find their peace and hope in the sacrifice of Christ.

v. 1. ‘We then that are strong.’ These mature, believers are not strong in themselves (2 Cor. 12:10); but they are strong in the faith of Christ—strong and sure of their deliverance in Christ from meats and drinks, the observance of days, and the bondage of ceremonial law.

‘Ought to bear with the doubts and fears, the failings and frailties of the weak.’ Their weakness arises usually from immaturity of faith (babes in Christ) or from a lack of knowledge of their freedom and blessings in Christ. Welcome them, love them (1 Peter 4:8; Prov. 10:12), and don't seek only to please yourselves (Gal. 6:1-2); but seek to make all brethren feel wanted, needed, and appreciated.

v. 2. No part of the gospel is to be sacrificed for peace. No part of the revealed word of God is to be denied to keep weak brethren happy. This would certainly not be for their good or edification. We don't edify a man by encouraging him in doctrinal or moral error. But in the matter of

personality, temperament, things indifferent, meats and drinks, we should sacrifice our liberty and rights to make all comfortable and happy, while seeking to instruct one another in the word.

v. 3. Our Lord sought not his own comfort, ease, profit, nor glory. He subjected himself to every inconvenience and suffering for the good of his people. If our Lord acted in such a manner, how it ought to condemn us when we indulge our own rights and desires at the expense of the whole family of God! He had no sins; it was for our sins that he was subjected to evil and death. 'He was rich, yet he became poor for our sakes.' I suppose we should be able to deny ourselves a few personal rights and desires for the general welfare of others.

v. 4. The previous verse 3 is a quotation from Psalm 69:7-9. When the apostle teaches a doctrine or exhorts us to a practice or principle, he proves it by the word of God! (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:2). We ought to read the Scriptures not to gratify our curiosity or to prove our position but to nourish and increase our hope in Christ (Romans 10:17).

v. 5. In verses 5 and 6 Paul offers a prayer for all believers. It would be well for us to spend much time with this prayer!

'Now the God of patience and comfort.' This is his attribute. He has been patient and long-suffering with Adam's race, with his church, and with you and me. He has borne our sins, healed our backslidings, and heard our confessions. He has comforted us! All real, solid comfort comes from him against whom we have sinned. He has comforted us in every trial, stood by us through every fall, and encouraged us in every error.

'Grant you to be like-minded one toward another.' May God make you patient, long-suffering, forgiving, and a source of comfort to one another.

'According to his example.' The example is Christ (Eph. 4:30-32). When I have forgiven every wrong against me, when I have borne every

hard word or thought, when I have overlooked every weakness and comforted every fallen friend, I still have not endured one atom of what Christ bore for me and from me! (Matt. 18:21-22.)

v. 6. God is glorified when the perfections of his nature are recognized, when the work of his hands is praised, when his mercy and grace in Christ are received, when his people approach him in worship and adoration, and when our lives and conversation are agreeable to his calling! How can we glorify him when we are divided in heart, spirit, and doctrine?

v. 7. 'Wherefore receive one another' into your hearts and affections. Embrace one another, Jew and Gentile, weak and strong, old and young, male and female.

'As Christ received us' just like we were—unlovely, weak, sinful, and having all the infirmities of human nature (Rom. 5:8).

'To the glory of God.' This ought to be the motive and chief end of all that we do!

The glory of God – The believer's concern

Romans 15:8-17

This study must begin with Verse 7, ‘Receive ye one another.’ Welcome into your hearts, communion, and fellowship all believers in Christ whether weak or strong, poor or prosperous, male or female, bond or free, Jew or Gentile. Welcome and love them all as Christ loved and received you into himself for the glory of God!

v. 8. It is true that the Lord Jesus was born a Jew, made under the law, circumcised and obedient to the laws of Moses. He was the promised Jewish Messiah, the seed of woman, of Abraham, and of David. This was to confirm and fulfill every promise, prophecy, and type given to Israel regarding the Messiah. But this was not to indicate (as some thought) that his mercy and salvation were not for the Gentile. He disproved this himself in Luke 4:25-27.

vv. 9-12. These prophecies from the Old Testament reveal that the Gentiles were included in the purpose and redemptive work of Christ. ‘That the Gentiles might glorify God.’ This is the highest object of all of God's work—his glory!

Another word here is mercy. All believers glorify God for his mercy in Christ. There is not a word in the scripture anywhere to encourage either Jew or Gentile in hoping for salvation through his own merit or righteousness. Salvation is God's mercy to the unworthy. These prophecies are from 2 Sam. 22:50, Deut. 32:43, Psalm 117:1, and Isa. 11:10. Also read Rev. 5:9.

v. 13. Paul (as in Verse 5) expresses another prayer for us.

‘Now the God of hope.’ God is called the God of hope because all true hope with respect to forgiveness of sin and divine favor is from God and is effected in the human heart by God himself. Any hope of which he is not the Author and Giver is false and fatal!

‘Fill you with all joy and peace in believing.’ True joy and peace are the gifts of God in Christ and are not the natural effects of human nature. Joy and peace generated by human philosophy and fleshly comforts are temporary. (‘There is pleasure in sin for only a season.’) The joy of redemption and the peace of Christ are eternal and are real even in the midst of human misery and severe trial.

‘That you may abound in hope.’ The more believers know the joy and peace of Christ, the greater will be their hope. Joy and peace, as well as all spiritual blessings, come from God through faith and in proportion to faith. The more we are able to rejoice in our blessings in Christ and enter into the peace of Christ, the stronger will be our confidence and hope of future glory.

‘Through the power of the Holy Ghost.’ The Father gives hope. He is the God of hope; but he gives it through the agency and power of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18).

v. 14. ‘I am fully persuaded and confident that you are full of goodness,’ not naturally (for Paul himself said, ‘In my flesh dwelleth no good thing’); but what they had was of the Holy Spirit, whose fruit is love, joy, peace, goodness, and kindness (Eph. 4:32). We are filled with all knowledge—knowledge of our own infirmities, of our own dependence on his mercy, of our completeness in Christ. This being known, we are able to counsel, admonish, encourage, and sympathize with one another.

v. 15. Nevertheless, though I know you are aware of these things and are concerned for the glory of Christ, as the minister of Christ Jesus, I boldly write all these things to you to remind you of them. A person may be acquainted with them but still require a minister of Christ to exhort him to practice them.

v. 16. I was made a minister of Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15) of the gospel of God, ministering not the service of the tabernacle, nor the law of Moses, nor the tradition of the fathers, but the gospel of Christ that the Gentiles themselves might be acceptable to God, through Christ, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We are 'accepted in the Beloved,' the Holy Spirit setting us apart and calling us to faith in him through the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:17).

v. 17. In Christ Jesus I have reason to rejoice and glory in the things which God has accomplished through me. God does use men. He uses these vessels of clay to preach the gospel, to take the gospel to those he shall call (Rom. 10:13-15); and we can rejoice in what God is pleased to do through these human instruments. But I will not take to myself any of the praise for the work of others. I have preached and God had been pleased to bless the word (Phil. 1:14-18).

Laborers together with God

Romans 15:18-33

v. 18. The apostle would not take unto himself any praise for the labor and success of others. He spoke only of the success which Christ had given to his own work. Many people suppose that it is wrong to give any praise to the Lord's servants for their labor, ministry, and works of faith. They say it will encourage self-righteousness and pride. This is wrong and not from God. Christ wrought it! All of our success is in Christ, as well as our ability and desire to labor. Faith is the gift of God! Faith is not to be ascribed to him who preaches nor to him who hears, but to Christ, who opens the heart. But the preacher, or teacher, or witness is employed as an ambassador of Christ. Christ brought about the obedience of the Gentiles through Paul, and God praises faithful servants (Matt. 25:21; Matt. 25:34-40).

v. 19. God confirmed the ministry of the apostles with signs and wonders (Mark 16:15-20; Heb. 2:3-4). From Jerusalem to other countries I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. This is the supreme test of our ministry, our labor, and our efforts for the glory of God and the good of our hearers. Have we fully preached the gospel of Christ? (1 Cor. 1:17; 9:16; Gal. 1:8-9).

v. 20. Paul was a pioneer missionary. His calling and desire was to occupy new ground for Christ and preach the gospel to those who had never heard. He who builds on the foundation is not inferior to the one who lays the foundation, but Paul was a foundation-layer (1 Cor. 3:5-10).

v. 21. This prophecy is from Isaiah 52:15. Paul knew that God had raised him up for this work—to preach to the heathen. He gives his servants the earnest desire to be the means to accomplish his divine purpose (Rom. 1:14-16).

v. 22. For this cause I have been hindered from coming to Rome where the gospel had been preached by others. Paul was the apostle and missionary, not the pastor! (Eph. 4:11-13.) Happy is the person who knows what God has called him to do and does it with all his heart unto the Lord, rejoicing in the ministry of others.

vv. 23-24. My work here is done; so when I go to Spain, I will come to Rome; for I hope to see you and be delighted and blessed with your company. True believers delight in the companionship of other believers wherever they are found. We need the fellowship of one another, and we rob ourselves and others of a rich blessing when we forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:24-25; Heb. 3:12-13).

vv. 25-27. The apostle wanted to go to Rome and to carry the gospel to Spain, but first he would go to Jerusalem to carry to the poor believers there money and gifts which had been provided by the believers of Macedonia and Achaia! (2 Cor. 8:1-4.)

This was not a church tax or a required offering, but a generous gift from the hearts of the believers in these cities to help their poor brethren in Jerusalem. These Gentiles had benefited from the Jewish believers in things pertaining to God, and they felt indebted to them to share their material blessings (Gal. 6:6-10).

vv. 28-29. When I have performed this task, I will come to see you; and my visit with you will be blessed of God to you and to me. We will rejoice together in the gospel of Christ.

v. 30. Paul requests their prayers for himself. He bases it on two things.

1. For the sake and glory of Christ. This must always be the foundation for any prayer—for Christ's sake (Eph. 4:32).

2. Because of your love for me which the Spirit has worked in you.

This is sincere, meaningful prayer. We genuinely love one another, wish the best for one another, and pray the blessings of God on one another for Christ's sake! The word *strive* here is a fervent, strong exercise. Prayer is not a formal exercise, but a sincere, fervent desire laid before God in the name of Christ (Eph. 6:18-19).

vv. 31-33. What was Paul's prayer request?

1. To be delivered from danger.

2. That his gift to the saints at Jerusalem should be received in the Spirit of Christ. This shows the feelings among the Jews for the Gentiles. It was not commendable in many cases.

3. That he may visit them by the will of God. Pray about everything (Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:18).

. . . and in conclusion

Romans 16

The greater part of this chapter is taken up with salutations or greetings from the apostle to a number of the believers in the church at Rome.

It is to be noted that several of those mentioned were faithful women. While they did not preach or usurp authority, they did teach the children and other women. Paul referred to them as being a blessing to him and to many (v. 2), as helpers in Christ (v. 3), and as laborers for him (v. 6) and with him in the gospel (v. 12).

While all praise and glory for all things is to be first given to the Lord (for we are nothing—God giveth the increase, and whatever gifts and graces we show are of the Lord), yet it is Christ-like and commendable to be grateful for one another and to one another for every work of faith and labor of love. Paul is saying to these people, ‘I appreciate you, and I appreciate your faithfulness to our Lord and to me’ (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

The people of God are also to be an affectionate people. Four times he exhorts us to greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26). Peter says this in 1 Peter 5:14. He calls it a holy kiss as distinguished from that which is lustful and that which is common among relatives. Much ridicule and criticism has been cast on a show of genuine affection between believers, yet it was practiced by the early churches.

Believers are more to one another than holders of a common doctrine. They are brethren in the family of God and genuinely love each other with a deeper affection than natural men can know. If you are a stranger to this affection, you may also be a stranger to his love; for he said, ‘This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you, and, ‘By this

shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another' (1 John 3:14-18).

v. 17. Be on your guard concerning those who create dissension and division among you in opposition to the doctrine and teaching which you have been taught. Paul is referring to all that he has written to them in this inspired book.

1. No flesh is justified by the law, but by faith in Christ.
2. Righteousness is imputed by faith, not by works.
3. Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.
4. The ground of our hope is the sovereign grace of God—sovereign mercy!
5. Salvation comes by faith through the preaching of the word.
6. Charity and love to be given to Jew and Gentile, weak and strong.
7. Follow after those things that make for peace, unity, and edification.

When you are aware of those who teach contrary to these things, avoid them. Shun their ministry, their company, and their conversation!

v. 18. They have not the glory of the Lord Jesus nor the good of his church at heart. They sow seeds of dissension and division by their oily words and reasonable criticisms; and, unfortunately, they deceive simple people who cannot discern their motives and hypocrisy. It is their own glory they seek and their own pride and recognition which they feed. When you hear these fair speeches that divide the family, rebuke them and then avoid those who make them!

v. 19. Your faith and obedience are well known to other churches, and I rejoice over you; for I would have you to be well-versed and wise in acts of kindness, charity, and promoting good. But I would have you to be simple and naive (unaffected, artless, and unsophisticated) in the ways of evil and deceit. Craftiness and manipulating others are unbecoming to believers (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21).

v. 20. Were it not for the overruling power of our Lord, his people would never have any rest or peace in this world. But the Lord Jesus rules and gives his people peace in the midst of their enemies. The battle is not ours but his, and he will defeat Satan (John 16:33).

‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.’ This is repeated again in Verse 24. It implies that there is a constant supply of grace to be communicated from Christ to his people at all times. We need his grace to redeem us; and we need his grace every moment to believe, to stand, to live, to love, to persevere, and to die! He told Paul, ‘My grace is sufficient for you’—right now!

1 Corinthians

Bible Class Commentary

A Work
of
Henry Mahan

To the church of God at Corinth

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul taught in Corinth for a year and a half (Acts 18:1, 11). He left Corinth and sailed to Syria. During his absence false teachers crept in and disturbed the church with false doctrine and unscriptural practices. The church fell into factions and divisions and misuse of gifts. Questions arose about marriage and going to law with one another. The resurrection was doubted by some, and the ordinances were abused. They flaunted their learning, grew careless in their conduct and purity of doctrine began to decline! This epistle deals with these issues and many more problems confronting this young church.

v. 1, 2. We have the usual salutation or inscription. The writer describes himself by his name and his office: 'Paul, called to be an apostle.' His call to the apostleship was 'by the will of God.' No one ought to take such an office or responsibility unless he is called and appointed to it by God (1 Tim. 1:12; Acts 9:15). Sosthenes was the ruler of the Jewish synagogue at Corinth. Luke mentions him in Acts 18:17. Evidently he had been converted and was with Paul, for Paul calls him his brother.

The epistle is addressed to 'the church of God . . . at Corinth' – a congregation of believers joined together in fellowship, worship and the preaching of the gospel. Paul's letter is intended for those who are 'sanctified in Christ Jesus,' set apart from all eternity to grace and glory and justified by the blood and righteousness of Christ (Heb. 10:10-14). Not only are they chosen and justified, but they are 'called to be saints.' They are called by his spirit and by his word to repentance toward God

and faith in the Lord Jesus. The epistle is intended for all other believers; in all places, who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus! Paul says, 'Christ is my Lord and their Lord!'

v. 3. Nothing is more desirable than to have God reconciled to us through Christ, and this is signified by the word 'grace.' Then to have peace with God, peace of heart and conscience and peace among ourselves, even in a world of trial and trouble, is indeed the greatest blessing. The foundation of all grace and peace is the favour of God through the merits of Christ.

v. 4. 'I always' (as often as he thought of them) 'thank God for you and for the grace of God given to you by Christ.' This includes all sorts of grace (electing, justifying, regenerating and sanctifying grace) and every grace of the Spirit (as repentance, faith, hope, love, etc.); for all are the gifts of God in them (1 Thess. 2:13). No work nor gift of grace is by man's free will or merit, but all are owing to God's grace and come through the hands of Christ (1 Cor. 4:7).

v. 5. This is a continuation of the thanksgiving. 'In Christ in every respect you are enriched and provided for.' Not only did they have a spiritual, experimental knowledge of the gospel of Christ, but many of them had been richly qualified with gifts to preach and teach the gospel. Some had the gift to speak in other tongues and other gifts of the Spirit.

v. 6. By the 'testimony of Christ' is meant the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8). This gospel had been preached to the Corinthians and was confirmed and established among them by the signs and miracles with which it was attended and by the Holy Spirit's applying it to their hearts (Heb. 2:1-4).

v. 7. The Corinthians were not only honored with the light of the gospel, but God endowed them with many gifts and graces so that they were not inferior to any of the churches. However, Paul does not ascribe unto them such abundance as to leave nothing to be desired, but merely as much as will suffice until Christ comes and they shall be made perfect (1 John 3:1, 2; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

v. 8. Paul lets them know what hope he has of them as to the future. 'The Lord will never forsake you but will complete what he has begun in you' (Phil. 1:6). The love of God to his people always continues. Their interest in Christ will never be lost. Grace in them is eternal life, and they will never totally be moved away from the hope of the gospel. In the day of our Lord Jesus every believer will be presented blameless, not in themselves, for no man is without fault and sin; but in Christ's righteousness all the elect are blameless, being justified by his blood and clothed in his righteousness (Col. 1:20-22; Eph. 1:3, 4; Jude 24, 25).

v. 9. When the Scriptures speak of God as 'faithful,' the meaning in many cases (and here especially) is that what God purposes and promises, he provides. He shall not fail (Rom. 11:29; Mal. 3:6). 'He has called you into the companionship and fellowship of his Son, and he will faithfully discharge every promise to Christ and to you' (John 6:37-39; 10:27-29; Rom. 4:20-25).

Let there be no divisions among you

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

v. 10. Up to this point Paul had handled these Corinthians mildly; now he begins to deal with some of the problems that existed among them. 'I urge you and appeal to you by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.' That name must have had weight and influence among them, for it is by his name they were called, justified and accepted by the Father. Christ is precious to every believer, and it was his honour and interest which was at stake by their divisions and errors. Paul was not acting in his own name, nor seeking to preserve his reputation as a preacher, but he was concerned for the glory of Christ and the testimony of the gospel (1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:5; Phil 3:17, 18).

The apostle exhorts three things:

1. 'Speak the same things. Profess the same truths and preach the same message of grace in Christ.'
2. 'Have no divisions and quarrelling among you.' Nothing is more inconsistent on the part of believers than to be at odds with one another.
3. 'Live in harmony together.' The foundation of harmony is for all to be agreed in mind and judgment, not only on matters of doctrine, but on other matters also.

v. 11. Chloe was evidently a woman member of the church whose husband was dead, for Paul refers to the household by her name. They were probably a family of great influence and integrity in the church and had

written to Paul concerning the problems in this church. Paul says, 'My information comes from a good source.'

v. 12. Some of the church members were divided into factions. One group said, 'We are of Paul. He was instrumental in our conversion. We like his way of teaching. He is our pattern; we won't hear anyone else.' Another group said, 'We don't care for Paul; we like Apollos,' while another claimed Peter as their champion. Still others said, 'We are of Christ; we don't need the pastors and teachers at all.'

v. 13. The body of Christ is not to be divided! He is our Lord and Master; he was crucified for us and we were baptized in his name, not in the name of his ministers. We are all one in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28). The minister has his gifts, as all others have theirs, and one is not to be exalted above the other (1 Cor. 12:12-20).

vv. 14-16. The apostle did not dislike the ordinance of baptism, nor was he discounting its value or importance. But because he was an apostle and was held in great esteem for his faith and his gifts, he was thankful that he personally baptized so few, lest he be charged with having a personal following, or lest people whom he baptized find some cause for pride or comfort in the fact that they were baptized by Paul himself.

v. 17. He anticipates an objection that he was neglecting the Lord's command to 'go and teach all nations, baptizing them.' So he says, 'Baptism is not the chief and principal business of the ministers, but their main business is to preach the gospel of Christ' (1 Cor. 2:2; 9:16; Gal. 6:14). And that preaching of the gospel was not with man's wisdom, human eloquence and oratory, or in a show of vanity and false piety, but in a plain, humble and modest manner. The method of preaching which he pursued was the opposite of show and ambition; it was very simple and to

the point, for which the false teachers despised him. When men's ears and minds are tickled and entertained by our human wisdom and eloquence, the gospel of Christ is pushed aside, and nothing remains but dead theology. The issues are clouded, the simplicity of Christ is misunderstood and the faith of our bearers stands in our wisdom, not in the person and power of Christ (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Cor. 2:4, 5).

v. 18. The preaching of salvation by the grace of God alone by the crucified Christ, the preaching of righteousness, peace and reconciliation by the blood of his cross, the preaching of a sufficient sacrifice and atonement by Christ offering up himself on the cross in our room and stead is sheer nonsense to those who are perishing, whether they are in the church or the world. But unto us who are being saved by the power and grace of God, this gospel is both the power of salvation and a revelation of the wisdom of God. We see in Christ crucified our deliverance from the curse of the law, and we see in Christ crucified how God can be both just and Justifier of those who believe (Rom. 8:1, 33, 34; 3:19-26).

He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord

1 Corinthians 1:19-31

In verse 18 Paul declares that the preaching of the gospel of Christ is foolishness to natural men. The mysteries of grace are hidden from the wise and prudent (Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 2:7, 8). So it is nothing unusual for men who are distinguished for wisdom in other areas to reject totally and despise the gospel of redemption.

v. 19. In a quotation from Isaiah 29:14, Paul shows how unreasonable it is to question the gospel of the cross on the ground that the so-called wise men of the world call it foolishness. God says, 'I will render useless their wisdom, learning and philosophy.' Men who are wise in their own esteem become fools, men who profess to see by the light of human wisdom are struck blind and the wisdom of this world becomes vain and worthless when it exalts itself against God (2 Thess. 2:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:18).

v. 20. Where is the wise man, who boasts of his superior wisdom and knowledge? Where are the scribe and the scholar? Where is the debater and disputer of this world, who derives his wisdom, not from the Holy Spirit, but from human understanding? They are not to be found among those whom the Lord uses to minister the gospel, to write the Scriptures, or to lead his church. Without Christ all sciences are vain, all roads lead to ruin and all human wisdom is foolishness. The gospel exposes all worldly wisdom to be what it is – foolishness (Rom. 1:18-24).

v. 21. When the world (with all of its earthly wisdom) failed to recognize and know the living God by means of its own, God (in his wisdom and purpose) was pleased to reveal himself and his salvation (purchased and

provided by Christ) through the very means the world calls foolishness - preaching of the gospel! While the wise men of the world left to perish in their sins (ignorant of God), the gospel they despise has become the power of God unto salvation to all that believe in Christ (Rom. 1:14-17).

v. 22. The Jews required a sign from heaven that Christ is the Messiah. Though miracles were wrought and Scriptures fulfilled, they required their own signs in their own way. The Greeks (those distinguished by superior intelligence) seek after that which satisfies human intellect.

v. 23. We preach a crucified Christ, bearing our sins in his body on the tree, forsaken of God and rejected of men. To the Jew this message is a scandal and an offensive stumbling-block, and to the Greek it is sheer nonsense and absurd.

vv. 24, 25. But to those who are called, enlightened and of God, Christ crucified is not only 'the power of God' to save, but 'the wisdom of God.' We see in Christ the law honored, justice satisfied and every attribute of God glorified, enabling him to be just and Justifier (Rom. 3:19-26). What men call foolish (if it is of God) is wiser than men, and what men call weakness (if it is of God) is stronger than men.

vv. 26-28. 'Consider your own calling; look about you in the church. Not many of you' (he does not say none of the noble and mighty are called, for some were saved) 'were considered to be wise according to human standards; not many of you were influential, powerful, or of a high and noble birth. But God chose those whom the world calls foolish to put the wise to shame. God chose the weak to put the strong to shame. God deliberately chose the low-born and those branded with contempt, even those looked upon as nothing, that he might bring to nothing the high.'

v. 29. God's purpose in choosing and calling these is to banish for ever any glorying in the flesh, that no man may attribute his salvation to anything in himself, but wholly to the sovereign grace and good pleasure of God. There is nothing left us in which we may glory in his presence.

v. 30. It is not of us but totally from God that we are in Christ and that we have life in Christ. Christ is our 'wisdom,' revealing to us the mysteries of godliness and spiritual truth. Christ is our righteousness making us upright, and putting us in right standing with God. Christ is our 'sanctification,' making us pure, holy and unblamable. Christ is our 'redemption,' providing our ransom from the curse and condemnation of sin.

v. 31. So then it is written: 'He that boasts, rejoices and glories, let him glory only in the Lord!' (Jer. 9:23, 24).

Faith not in wisdom of men But in the power of God

1 Corinthians 2:1-8

Paul, in this chapter, continues to teach that the gospel does not need the wisdom of men. It is far above the wisdom of men, it is made known to men only by the Spirit of God and it can only be known and discerned by spiritual men (vv. 14, 15).

v. 1. 'When I came to Corinth to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ' (the gospel, which is called 'the testimony of God' because it bears a testimony to his love, grace and mercy in giving his beloved Son to be our Saviour and Redeemer), 'I did not preach this message in lofty words of eloquence, or human philosophy, or man's wisdom' (Acts 18:5).

v. 2. Though Paul was well educated in Jewish learning, had a good knowledge of Greek literature and was capable of conversing with almost anyone on current thoughts and issues, he was resolved to make nothing, the subject of his ministry and message 'save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' That which was the greatest offence to others was the most delightful to him because salvation comes only through and by the obedience and death of Christ (Gal. 6:14; 2:20, 21).

v. 3. By 'weakness' Paul may mean his bodily presence (2 Cor. 10:10; 12:7-9) or his humble and lowly existence among them, for he worked with his hands to minister to his necessities (Acts 18:3), not exerting his office nor authority as an apostle of Christ (2 Cor. 11:5-9; 1 Cor. 9:1-14). By 'fear and trembling' I doubt that the apostle meant that he was afraid of

what men would do to him, though I am sure he was concerned about the violence and persecution that threatened his life (Acts 18:9-11). It may be that he refers to the greatness and awfulness of the ministry in which he was engaged. He was deeply concerned that he preach the truth of God and that men receive the truth (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1).

v. 4. As Paul determined, so he acted! His subject matter was not nature, arts, sciences, philosophy, nor dry morality, but salvation from sin through the crucified Christ. So his style of preaching, his language and his messages were delivered, not in human logic, wisdom and persuasion, but in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit (John 6:44, 45). It is not by human wisdom, wit, or will that the gospel is believed and received, but by the regeneration and revelation of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 5; 1:12, 13; Matt. 16:15-17).

v. 5. This is the key statement - the conclusion of the whole matter. Paul knew that conviction of sin, a revelation of Christ crucified, risen and enthroned, saving faith in Christ alone (apart from merit or works) and a living, vital union with Christ are heart works performed in individuals by the power of God. When this work is accomplished by his spirit and by his power, the confidence and assurance of the believer are not in the preacher, nor in his persuasion, nor in his personality, but in Christ alone (Phil. 3:3).

vv. 6, 7. 'But lest you think that the gospel of Christ is unworthy of regard and notice because of the simplicity of it or the lowliness of its ministers and its followers, I declare that the gospel of the crucified Redeemer is the highest wisdom a man can imagine. It is the very wisdom of God, and those who are mature in faith recognize it as such.' This gospel is not the philosophy, plan and wisdom of this world, nor of the leaders and rulers of this world (which wisdom is foolishness and will mean nothing); but it is

the setting forth of the eternal wisdom, grace and mercy of God, which was given us in Christ before the world began. This redemptive plan was hidden in promises, prophecies and types, but is now revealed in Christ (Heb. 1:1-5).

v. 8. None of this world's rulers, religious leaders, nor philosophers saw the wisdom of God in Christ, or they would never have crucified the Lord of glory. There is no neutral state regarding the person and work of Christ. It is either foolishness, or it is the wisdom and power of God! (1 Cor. 1:18; Matt. 12:30.)

Spiritual discernment

1 Corinthians 2:9-16

v. 9. This is a quotation from Isaiah 64:4 to prove that the gospel of Christ is mysterious and hidden wisdom, unknown to the wise and prudent of this world. This is not speaking of the happiness of heaven, but of the blessings and benefits of Christ, as the context shows. Though God's mercy to sinners in Christ is to be seen, read in scripture and heard by preaching, the eye, ear and heart of natural man can neither see, hear, nor understand it (John 3:3; Matt. 13:13-16). The gospel must be revealed (1 John 5:20).

v. 10. Since the gospel is unknown to natural men (it is beyond the understanding of the wisest of them), how can any be acquainted with these spiritual mysteries? The answer is here in this verse. God has made a revelation of his purpose to save, of the person and work of Christ, and of how he can be just and Justifier by his spirit (John 16:8-15). Our Quickener, Teacher and Comforter, the Holy Spirit, has a complete and perfect knowledge of everything that is, or belongs to, the gospel of Christ (Eph. 3:8-11).

v. 11. 'What person knows and understands what passes through a man's thoughts except the man's own spirit within him?' A man's designs, purposes and intentions can never be known by another man unless the man's own spirit reveals them. Even so, the eternal purpose of God, the hidden wisdom of God and the mysteries of his love in Christ are known by no man. But the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of his heart, his purposes, will, ways and decrees.

v. 12. 'We have not received the carnal spirit which belongs to this world (that is, the carnal wisdom, philosophy and thoughts of natural men, which lie in the wisdom of worldly things and follow them for worldly advantage); but we have been given by God, and have received, the Holy Spirit of God' (1 Cor. 1:19-21). He is the Spirit of truth, of illumination, of adoption and of comfort, and he is the seal and earnest of future glory. 'God has given us his spirit of truth that we may know, understand and appreciate the gifts of his divine favour and blessings so freely given to us by God in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 1:16-20; 1 John 1:1-4; Matt. 16:15-17).

v. 13. 'And we are setting forth these truths in our preaching, not in words learned in the schools of philosophers or with the logic taught and understood by natural men, but we preach and teach the gospel in the language of the scripture written by the Spirit of God.' We interpret spiritual truth in spiritual language to spiritual people. The best interpreter of scripture is scripture (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). We compare the New Testament with the Old Testament, and their truth and harmony are seen (Luke 24:44-46; Acts 10:43).

v. 14. The natural, unregenerate man (whether in the world or in the church) will not receive, understand, nor believe in his heart these truths of God and the revelation of the Spirit of God. The gospel of grace, of a crucified Redeemer, is sheer nonsense to him. He is incapable of understanding these mysteries of God because they are understood in a spiritual manner, by spiritual light and by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. As there must be natural faculties to understand natural things, so there must be spiritual faculties to understand spiritual truth.

v. 15. 'He that is spiritual includes every person who is born of the Spirit of God, breathes after spiritual things and has a saving interest in Christ. He discerns, not all things natural or all things spiritual (there are many

things he does not know), but all things necessary to faith and salvation. These truths of sin, sovereignty, substitution and satisfaction in Christ are plain to him. The spiritual man himself is not understood by natural men. They do not know who he is, what he is, or why he believes as he does' (John 15:17-21).

v. 16. 'Who has known the deep counsels of God? Who knows the purpose of salvation in Christ? Who knows the hidden mysteries in the types and shadows of the Old Testament that he may instruct this spiritual man? It is certainly not the philosophers or the wise men of this world. But we apostles are abundantly qualified to instruct him, for we have the mind of Christ' (Eph. 4:11-15).

God gave the increase

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

In chapter 3 Paul returns to the subject of divisions and problems in the church, which was the occasion for this epistle.

v. 1. Quite frankly, Paul is saying to the Corinthian brethren (he softens the harshness of his rebuke by calling them 'brethren'), 'I have not been able to talk to you as I would talk to mature, spiritual men and women because you are indicating by your attitude and behavior that you are mere infants in the faith. More than that, you are acting like natural, worldly people. You behave as non-spiritual men of flesh in whom the carnal nature predominates.' Sometimes the term 'babes in Christ' is taken in a good sense (1 Peter 2:2; Luke 18:17). Here it is not good, for it refers to the understanding and the attitude (1 Cor. 14:20).

v. 2. Paul refers more to the manner and form of his teaching than to the substance of the doctrine, for Christ is both milk to babes and strong meat to those of full age. But there is a growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ which was hindered by their attitude and carnality. The wise teacher begins with the first principles of Christ and moves higher in the mysteries and wisdom of Christ as the hearer is able to follow (Mark 4:33; John 16:12). The gospel of Christ contains everything necessary to be known. Spiritual growth enables a person to drink deeper, comprehend more of the riches of Christ and mature in faith and conduct. We don't have one message for young believers and another for elders. The elders are able to see and understand more of the riches in Christ because of their maturity. This was the Corinthian problem – growth impeded by carnality and childishness.

v. 3. To prove that the carnal nature prevailed in them and that they were not spiritually mature believers, Paul calls attention to their 'envy, strife and divisions.' These are fruits of the flesh and, where they prevail, it is evident that the partakers are not spiritual but carnal! (Gal. 5:22.) 'You are behaving like unregenerate men.' From envy comes strife, and strife leads to open divisions and factions.

v. 4. Paul specifies the particular form of division. One group was a fan club for Paul and set him up as their master above all others. Others said, 'We prefer Apollos; we don't care for Paul.' Some preferred Peter (1 Cor. 1:12), while others rejected all ministers and claimed only to be followers of Christ. 'Is not this a demonstration of carnality and flesh?'

v. 5. 'Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? What are they? They are only ministering servants of the Lord Jesus through whom you heard the gospel.' They are not masters, nor party heads, nor lords. They are only instruments in the hands of the Master to feed his flock (Matt. 23:8-12). The pastors are to be respected, heeded and followed as they follow Christ, but they are not to be sources of contention, nor are they to lord it over God's heritage (Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

v. 6. If the earth is to bring forth fruit, there is need of ploughing, planting and watering. But after all this is done, our labour would be in vain unless the Lord from heaven gives the increase by giving life through the sun and by his secret influence. In like manner, the word of God is the seed. His faithful servants plough, plant and water, but life is the miracle of divine grace! He who has received the seed has need of watering until full maturity is reached. Apollos, then, who succeeded Paul in the ministry of Corinth, is said to have watered what Paul had sown.

v. 7. 'So neither is he who plants anything special, nor he who waters, but only God, who makes it live, grow and become greater.' Ministers of the word are laborers together with God, ministers of Christ and stewards of the grace of God, and are to be loved, respected and heard. But they are nothing in themselves! They have nothing except what they have received. All their gifts are from God. Nothing is to be ascribed to them directly, but all glory is to our Lord (1 Cor. 1:31).

v. 8. The planter and the waterer are one. They preach one gospel. Their views, aims and end (which are the glory of God and the good of the church) are one! They have the same love and affections for one another, so there is no reason for the church to be divided over them. 'Every man will receive his own reward according to his labour.' While the servants' labors are different, their goal is the same – not to catch the applause and approval of the world, but to please and glorify the Lord. This is not a reward of debt (for our labors are by no means meritorious) but to hear him say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'

v. 9. This sums up what has gone before and is the best argument of all, 'We are all fellow-laborers, fellow-workmen and joint-promoters with and for God. It is the Lord's work in which we are employed, and it is to him we devote ourselves and our service. You are God's garden, field and vineyard under cultivation; you are God's building. We ministers are but his laborers' (Isa. 60:21).

Ministers of the gospel exhorted

1 Corinthians 3:10-23

It is quite obvious that most of what is written in these verses is directed to, or talking about, those who minister the gospel.

v. 10. Paul attributes his gifts, his usefulness and his success as a laborer and builder in the church to 'the grace of God' (1 Cor. 15:10). Ministers are instruments God makes use of, and they labour in vain unless the Lord builds the house (Ps. 127:1). Paul calls himself 'a wise masterbuilder' in respect to the foolish false teachers and because he was the chief apostle to the Gentiles. 'The foundation' he laid is Christ (his person and work), and he warns those ministers who follow him to be careful how they carry on the work of building on this foundation.

v. 11. This statement consists of two parts. First, Christ is the only foundation of the church. Second, this Corinthian church had been rightly founded upon Christ through Paul's preaching (1 Cor. 1:23, 24; 2:1-5). Christ alone is our righteousness, redemption, sanctification, wisdom and satisfaction for life and glory (Eph. 2:19-21). Any other foundation is sand and will perish (Isa. 28:16).

v. 12. Paul and the apostles have laid the foundation, which is Christ. Those ministers who follow (preaching the gospel of his grace, the valuable truths of the gospel which agree with the foundation) are said to build lasting and permanent fruits, such as gold, silver and precious stones. The fruit of their ministry will stand the test of time and the fires of judgment. Other ministers' works are compared to wood, hay and stubble, which can survive neither time nor fire. It is doubtful that Paul refers to

heretical doctrine, denial of Christ, or another gospel which would overturn the foundation, but these ministers, while professing Christ, preach empty, useless and trifling things, such as philosophy, intellectualism, form, ceremony and traditions. Without any bad design, through education, ambition or ignorance, these elements may find their way into a man's ministry and produce bad results.

v. 13. The doctrine a man preaches and the fruits of his ministry will sooner or later be made manifest to himself and to his hearers, who shall dearly see the deformity of the building and the false hope created by these fleshly efforts. Certainly the Day of Judgment will reveal the false and the true, but some believe that Paul is saying that in this world, before the great day of the Lord, true hope and true union with Christ, as opposed to false profession, will be revealed. By 'fire' is meant, not the destruction of the world and all evil, but the fire of trial, affliction and testing, which is for a revelation of true faith (James 1:2, 3). If a man is a true minister of the gospel, before the end of his life, he and his hearers will know whether what they have built on Christ, the foundation, is lasting, precious material or wood, hay and stubble.

v. 14. If a minister's work and doctrine will bear the test of the word, the test of time and the test of trial and affliction. It will shine all the brighter for being tried and he will receive the reward of personal joy, the gratitude of those to whom he ministered and the praise of Christ, who will say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'

v. 15. If a minister's labour and work crumble about him and prove to be false professions and useless human religion, he will suffer the loss of all labour, efforts and praise which he received from man. He will see the folly of whatever drew him into the way of preaching. But he, himself, shall be saved (notwithstanding all the imperfections of his ministry) upon

the foundation of Christ. He will be like a man burned out of house and home; he escapes with his own life but loses all about him.

vv. 16, 17. The church is 'the temple of God.' God dwells in them and with them. 'If any man by the wisdom of the world (through philosophy, vain deceit, bringing in false doctrines and heresies) corrupt their minds from the simplicity of Christ, and make divisions among them, him shall God destroy, body and soul, in hell.' God's church is holy, or sacred to him. He will not hold him guiltless who defiles it with error.

vv. 18-20. Here Paul puts his finger on the true sore! The whole mischief originated in this – preachers and people were wise in their own conceit. Carnal and worldly wisdom must be discarded as dull and foolish. For a man to be wise in a spiritual sense, he must be convinced of his own sinfulness, folly and inability, and must embrace the gospel of Christ, which is foolishness to this world and despised by men. He must deny his worldly wisdom and his righteous self and wholly rest and rely on Christ (Jer. 9:23, 24).

vv. 21-23. The apostle goes back to the beginning of this theme (1 Cor. 3:3, 4). 'Let no man glory in ministers, who (even the best of them), are but men. All ministers and all they are endowed with are for your benefit and advantage and for God's glory. All things are for your good and your eternal salvation (Rom. 8:28-31). All that God does in and with this world is for your sake. Life, death, things present and things to come are designed to make you like Christ, because you are Christ's and he is God's Beloved, Anointed and Heir, in whom God has vested all things.'

Stewards of the grace of God

1 Corinthians 4:1-8

It was a matter of grave concern to Paul to see the church torn by factions because of liking or disliking certain ministers, so he continues his discussion as to the ministry of the word. Four things are especially prominent:

1. Paul describes the office of a pastor.
2. He sets forth the duty of a pastor.
3. He calls all servants of Christ before the only true judgement-seat.
4. He ascribes every gift to the grace of God.

v. 1. Let pastors and teachers be looked upon as ministering servants of Christ – qualified, called and sent forth by him to preach his gospel. Since they are his servants (his ambassadors), they are to apply themselves to his work, not their own! (2 Cor. 5:18-21.) Since they are servants, they are to be respected, esteemed and heard for his sake. When ministers are treated with contempt, contempt for the word of God follows; but when they are exalted above measure, they are in danger of abusing the office.

These ministers are stewards (a person put in charge of the affairs of an estate) ‘of the mysteries,’ or the secret purposes, ‘of God.’ It is their business to dispense and make known the mysteries of divine grace. Through them God communicates to men his word, his gospel, and the directions for his church (Acts 8:30, 31; Eph. 4:11-15).

v. 2. It is not enough for a pastor to fill an office, undertake the duties of the ministry, or be a steward, if he is not a good and faithful servant – faithful to God's word, to the gospel to those under his care (Acts 20:18-21, 24-27). Everyone who knows and preaches the truth is not necessarily faithful; only he who studies, prays, labors and gives his whole life to this glorious calling.

v. 3. Paul knew his call to the apostleship (1 Tim. 1:12, 13; 1 Cor. 1:1). He examined his own heart, ways and motives, determined that he had indeed been faithful to his charge (2 Tim. 4:5-8). Therefore, it mattered very little to him personally that these Corinthians should judge him and his ministry. He chose not to stand or fall by their judgment, or any other human judgment (even his own).

v. 4. Staying with the context, which is 'faithful in the ministry of the word,' Paul says, 'I know nothing against myself; I am free from the blood of all men; I have kept back nothing profitable to you. However, I am not vindicated by my own opinion; it is the Lord himself who examines and judges me as a servant and minister.'

v. 5. 'Therefore, be slow in your judgment and be not hasty to pass sentence nor to censure one another, particularly your ministers.' There is a time fixed for the judgment of all things, that is, the day of our Lord's return. When he comes, he will bring to light the secret things that are now hidden in darkness and will disclose the aims, motives and purposes of hearts. Then every regenerate soul, every true believer and every faithful minister will hear God say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' However much a true minister is despised and criticized now, in that day he will be exalted.

v. 6. 'I have applied all this discussion about factions and divisions to myself and Apollos (1 Cor. 3:4-7) for your sakes, so that, from what I have said of us, as illustrations, you may learn to think of ministers and all men according to the Scriptures' (Rom. 12:3). Learn to appreciate men's gifts and usefulness; yet do not ascribe too much to them lest some be puffed up, inflated with pride and begin to set one against another.

v. 7. This question and that which follows are addressed to the members of this church who were glorying in and setting one minister against another. 'Who distinguished you? Who called you out of darkness into his grace? Who gave you the gift to minister, to hear, or to believe? Therefore, you ought not to glory in yourselves nor in your ministers, but in God!' He is the fountain of all grace and knowledge. To glory in any mercy, favour, or blessing, as if it were owing to human wisdom or power, betrays wretched pride and ignorance (John 3:27; James 1:17).

v. 8. 'In your opinion you are full, you have arrived, you feel no need of growth, instruction and correction. Like the Laodiceans you say, 'We are rich and have need of nothing.' You think yourselves rich in spiritual gifts and graces. You think you reign as kings, without any need for counsel or instructions from the apostles and ministers. You have ascended your throne and come into your kingdom, I wish the reigning time for the church had come, then we would all reign with Christ and you! But alas, it is evident from your behavior that you are neither full, rich, nor do you reign, but rather you have need of much teaching and correction. You are but children in understanding, needing milk instead of meat. You are far from being what you think yourselves to be' (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Be ye followers of me

1 Corinthians 4:9-21

These Corinthians were lifted up with pride. In their opinion they had arrived and needed no instructions, correction, nor guidance from Paul and the other apostles. They thought themselves rich in gifts, knowledge and grace. It was evident from their behavior that they were neither full nor rich, but were children in understanding, far from being what they thought themselves to be (Rom. 12:3).

v. 9. 'It seems to be that God has made an exhibit of us apostles.' He may refer to the great triumphal processions when conquering armies marched through the city. Their slaves and enemies, sentenced to death, were at the end of the line, taunted, prosecuted and jeered by all spectators. 'We are made a sport and spectacle to wicked men and before the angels.'

v. 10. 'We are looked upon as fools for our devotion to and our preaching of Christ crucified, but you, supposedly, have made such use of worldly wisdom and carnal policy in your religion that you have gained the favour of the world and escaped persecution. We are weak in body, influence, worldly goods and fame, but you are strong! You have property, earthly credentials, friends in high places and much influence and acclaim. You are honored among men for your learning, your riches and your success, but we are held in contempt and despised of men.'

v. 11-13. In an effort to curb their pride and to warn them against the friendship of this world, Paul continues to describe the real attitude toward and the treatment of a devoted witness of Christ by this world (Isa. 53:3; Luke 6:22-26; John 15:18, 19). 'We have gone both hungry and thirsty; we have few clothes; we are scourged and beaten and wander about

having no place to call home. We have to work with our hands to make a living. When men revile, curse and ridicule us, we bless them. When we are persecuted for Christ's sake, we take it patiently. When we are slandered, we try to answer softly. We are considered to be the rubbish and the filth of this world – the scum of the earth.’

v. 14. Paul did not write these things to put the Corinthians to shame, though they certainly should have been ashamed of the vain opinion they had of themselves. He wrote to warn them of the dangers of compromise, worldly wisdom, being lifted up with pride and discounting the ministry of the apostles (Gal. 3:1-3, 9-11).

v. 15. ‘Though you have many preachers and teachers (some false and some true), yet you only have one spiritual father, who was the instrument of God to bring you to a knowledge of Christ. It was under my ministry that you were regenerated and brought to faith. It was not the ministry of law and works but the gospel of Christ which was the means of your salvation’ (Rom. 3:19-26).

v. 16. ‘So I urge and implore you not to depart from my teaching but to abide in the doctrine of Christ. Do not follow those who would draw you away and cause divisions among you. Follow me as I follow Christ’ (Heb. 13:7).

v. 17. ‘Because I care for you and your spiritual welfare and growth, I sent Timothy unto you. Timothy is like a son to me and is a faithful steward of grace and the gospel of Christ. Timothy will bring to your remembrance my way of preaching, the doctrines I taught and what should be the manner of life and conversation of believers. He will remind you that the sum and substance of faith, life and hope is Christ. This I teach and preach everything in all churches.’

v. 18. 'Some are conceited, arrogant and puffed up over their gifts, their stations in the church and their human wisdom, hoping that I will not come back and call them to account for their errors.'

v. 19. 'But I will come if the Lord is willing, and I will understand the truth about these proud boasters, not observe the outward show, the fine words and the claims to fame, but I will expose the truth about them that their power is not to the glory of God, the good of the church and the conversion of sinners' (2 Tim. 3:5).

v. 20. The kingdom of God consists not of fine talk, human words and wisdom, philosophy and vain show, but in the powerful efficacy of the Spirit attending the preaching of the gospel. God awakens, convicts, converts and brings men to Christ, making them new creatures inwardly (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

v. 21. 'Now which do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod as an apostle of Christ, to set things straight in the church? Or shall I come to you with the affection of a father, with a pleasant countenance and a meek spirit, rejoicing over your determination to set matters straight?'

Church discipline exercised

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Having rebuked the Corinthians for the divisions and factions among them, the apostle gives another reason why they had no right to be proud and arrogant. They allowed members of the congregation to live in sin and open transgression without condemning or disciplining them.

v. 1. 'It is common knowledge in and around Corinth that there is sexual immorality among you. The church cannot plead ignorance in the matter, for it is known by all.' This particular incident was a man living in open incest with his father's wife. Almost all writers agree that it was his stepmother, for there is a distinction between a mother and a father's wife (Deut. 22:30; 27:20-23). Such conduct was not even permitted among pagan Gentiles.

v. 2. Equally shocking to the apostle was the fact that the church was not grieved by this man's actions but rather held him in esteem and overlooked his way of life. He may have been a teacher, preacher, or gifted man, and the church applauded him, rather than praying that he be removed from their midst.

vv. 3-5. Paul declared that though he was absent from them in body, yet certainly with them in spirit, he had already decided what should be done about this situation.

When the church is met together in the Spirit of Christ, with the power and authority of Christ, this man is to be delivered into the hands of Satan for the destruction of his body that his soul may yet be saved in the day of

our Lord Jesus (1 Tim. 1:20). Let us exercise care here because this is apostolic authority and power, not to be played with by just anyone. Paul said in verse 3, 'I have judged this case.' And in verse 4 he said, 'When you are gathered together, and my spirit, with authority of Christ.' The 'destruction of his flesh' is the shaking, afflicting and buffeting of his flesh that he might be brought to repentance and restoration.

v. 6. They gloried in their prosperity, in their riches and wealth, in their ministers and in their wisdom and gifts. Even in the midst of such immorality, they gloried! This is not good! You know that a little leaven, permitted, let alone and uncorrected, will affect the whole body. Whether this be false doctrine, a carnal spirit, immorality or ungodliness, if a stop is not put to it, it increases to more evil and ungodliness. We are to be compassionate, understanding and forgiving, but known sin is to be judged, condemned and put away.

v. 7. 'Purge out the incestuous person as the Jews of old purged their houses of leaven just before the Passover' (Exod. 23:18; 34:25). (Leaven is a small piece of fermenting dough and is typical of corruption and decay. It was forbidden in all sacrifices.) 'Rid yourselves of this open evil that you may appear to be what you profess to be – new creatures in Christ, walking in newness of life, keeping the true and spiritual Passover, for Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us.'

v. 8. 'Therefore, let us keep the Lord's Table, worship our Lord, fellowship in the blessings and benefits of his grace and preach his gospel, not in the old, sinful, worldly manner of life as before conversion (with malice, division, strife and immorality), but in godliness, holiness, sincerity and truth (2 Cor. 5:17).

vv. 9-11. ‘I wrote you in another epistle not to associate closely and habitually with wicked men who openly compromise the principles of righteousness.’ Evidently the apostle wrote other epistles that are not included in the Scriptures. ‘I do not mean that you are to have no dealings commercially or in conversation with fornicators and evil men who make no profession of religion. In order to obey such a command, you would have to get out of the world altogether. But if a man professes to know Christ, is a member of the body of Christ and is known to be guilty of immorality, greed, idolatry, has a foul tongue, is a drunkard or a thief and remains impenitent, you are to separate him from your company.’

vv. 12, 13. ‘It is neither my business nor yours to judge people outside the church. We have no power over them. God is their judge. But it is the business of the church not only to exhort, encourage and edify one another, but to rebuke, reprove and correct the things that are contrary to the word of God. Therefore, this man who lives in incest is to be put out of the church.’

Brother against brother before unbelievers

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

In these eight verses the apostle exposes another fault in the Corinthian church – taking one another to court before unbelievers to settle their differences. The rebuke consists of two parts:

1. Our differences ought to be settled among ourselves on the basis of love and grace, not before the wicked, who know nothing of either. Not to be able to do this makes the gospel we believe to be held in contempt by wicked men.

2. True believers ought to endure injuries and misunderstandings with patience, love and forgiveness, rather than seeking revenge and compensation.

v. 1. Paul expressed surprise that one believer, with a complaint against another believer, would dare to take the matter to a court of law to be decided by unbelievers. He is not condemning courts of law or magistrates (who must administer justice to all) nor those who are summoned to court and must appear to maintain their cause. He is rather condemning those who bring their brethren into such situations when it is in their power to employ other remedies.

v. 2. When we seek the judgment and advice of unbelieving lawyers and magistrates, we are insinuating that there is no one in the society of the godly who is qualified to settle our disputes. True believers are endowed with spiritual wisdom and will one day judge the world, for they shall reign with Christ! Are they then not capable or worthy to deal with minor, personal matters? Noah, by his faith and obedience, in a sense judged and

condemned the world (Heb. 11:7). The judges of this world are not qualified to judge spiritual matters. The basis of their judgment is ‘an eye for an eye,’ while the foundation of our judgment is mercy and grace (1 Cor. 2:14, 15).

v. 3. Even the angels are subject to the word of God which we preach (Gal. 1:8). But the reference here is probably to the fallen angels who are already under judgment (Jude 6). When we believe the word, bow to the will of God and look to Christ for redemption (while they do not), it is clear that we act in wisdom and righteousness (and they act foolishly). This is to judge them and their action. If, by the grace of God, a believer can discern heavenly things, can he not much more deal with the things which pertain to the earth?

v. 4. The Authorized Version is not as clear on this verse as some others. All agree that Paul continues his rebuke and is saying, ‘When you have cases of everyday life to decide, why do you set these matters before such men as lawyers, judges and outsiders, who have no standing in the church, have no esteem and are of no account to the church?’

v. 5. ‘I say this to move you to shame. You certainly ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Can it be that there is not in your fellowship one wise man who is competent enough to decide grievances, disputes and quarrels between brothers? You boast of your wisdom and gifts, yet you deny it all by your actions.’

v. 6. The brother relationship here is spiritual, for we are all sons of God, born again and one family in Christ. ‘Brother goes to court against brother, and that before unbelievers.’ This is a serious and shameful thing, for it brings reproach on the name of Christ and on the church.

vv. 7, 8. ‘This is not only shameful, but it indicates a serious defect in you. It admits to defeat and is another evidence of carnality (1 Cor. 3:3). Instead of seeking revenge or legal settlement, why not rather take the wrong? Why not let the brother have his way? Rather than go to court, cause division or upset the fellowship, bear injustices patiently and thereby glorify Christ’ (Luke 6:27-36). It is more advisable for a believer to suffer wrong, and even to be cheated, than for him to go to court with his brother.

Instead of this, it is you who do wrong and defraud your own brethren by treating them in this manner.

Ye are not your own

1 Corinthians 6:9-20

In the preceding chapters and verses Paul dealt with a matter of incest – open sin in the assembly. Then he warned them about keeping company with those who profess Christ, yet are fornicators, covetous, idolaters, drunkards and extortioners. In this chapter he expresses shock over the fact that some of them were taking fellow-believers to court before unbelievers. In the verses before us he contends that such behavior, if not repented of, shows that such persons are destitute of the grace of God and unfit for the kingdom of God, regardless of their profession!

vv. 9, 10. Without the righteousness of Christ, there will be no entrance into the presence and kingdom of God (Matt. 5:20; Heb. 12:14). Christ is our righteousness and sanctification (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30). But he is also speaking of an imparted righteousness and a new life which every believer has experienced in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:12-15). Do not be deceived nor imagine that you shall be saved while you continue to live in sin and wickedness. Those who practice these evil deeds shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

v. 11. ‘Some of you who are now children of God, saved by his free grace, were guilty of these very sins, but you have been washed, cleansed and forgiven in and by the blood of Christ. You have been sanctified.’ He is not speaking here of the fact that they were set apart by the Father in divine election (though they were), or of the fact that in Christ they have a perfect righteousness and sanctification imputed to them (though they did); but the sanctification of the Holy Spirit (which lies in a principle of new life, new nature, new heart and new desires) has been created in the

believer. He does not just claim to be a new person; he is a new person. He loves holiness and hates sin! (Rom. 7:22-25.) ‘You are also justified before God. All sin is put away and you are accepted in the Beloved, not by works, but you also delight to do his will and glorify his name.’

v. 12. ‘All things are permissible for me’ (certainly no fornication, idolatry, drunkenness, adultery, or such), that is, the things which are not explicitly forbidden in the word of God (such as foods, drinks and material pleasures). ‘But all these things are not necessarily helpful to me nor good for me. When these indifferent things destroy my fellowship, peace and comfort, or cause a weak brother to stumble, they become wrong. Therefore, I will not become a slave to my appetite, desires or fleshly wants. I regard even the indifferent things of the world in the light of my relationship with Christ and his church and can set them aside for his glory.’

vv. 13, 14. Though food is intended for the body and the body for food, yet this cannot be said of sexual immorality, which some of the Corinthians and the Gentiles took to be as indifferent as food and drink. We must satisfy the craving of the body for food and drink, whatever food is available, but sexual desires are to be met in a state of marriage, not promiscuously (1 Cor. 7:2). Our bodies are intended to serve and glorify him in righteousness and holiness and at the last to be raised by him and made like to his glorious body (Phil. 3:20, 21).

vv. 15-17. We were chosen in Christ, given to him and made one with him, our bodies as well as our souls. We are redeemed by him and in union with him. ‘Shall I take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?’ This would be an absurd and sinful thing. One who engages in union with a prostitute becomes one with her, even as the Lord spoke of husband and wife (legally and spiritually) becoming one flesh. But he who

is united with Christ by grace and faith is one spirit with him. This union is a spiritual one, complete and perfect.

v. 18. 'Shun immorality and all sexual looseness; flee from impurity in word, thought or deed.' Most sins that a man commits are committed by the abuse of other things and do not bring hurt and reproach on the body as sexual immorality does. The body is defiled, dishonored and disgraced by immoral conduct.

v. 19. What is said in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 of saints in general is said here of our bodies in particular. The Spirit of God dwells in us, and we are not our own; we belong to him. We are not our own masters to live to satisfy our lusts, nor to abuse these temples. We are his by creation, by choice and by covenant.

v. 20. We were redeemed by Christ; therefore, we are to glorify him in all things! (Col 3:17.)

Building a happy marriage

1 Corinthians 7:1-11

Some of the Corinthians had written to Paul asking his advice and counsel on matters pertaining to marriage. In these verses Paul talks about the advantages, nature, duties and permanence of marriage.

v. 1. It is not unlawful to marry, nor sinful to lie with a woman in wedlock (Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:18-25; Heb. 13:4). Paul is simply saying that if a person has the gift of self-restraint and no need for sexual expression, he would be better off unmarried. While a good marriage produces happiness, fulfillment and companionship, it carries with it heavy responsibilities, personal sacrifice and certain troubles and sorrows in the flesh (v.28).

v. 2. ‘To avoid sexual immorality and unlawful relationships, let every man have a wife to love and enjoy and let every woman have a husband to share her life and meet her needs.’

v. 3. ‘Let the husband render unto the wife all the offices of love – tenderness, kindness, provisions, protection and respect.’ But the chief reference here is to the marriage bed and her sexual needs. Likewise, the wife is to be aware of the needs of her husband and to meet those needs willingly; otherwise, she is called by the ancient writers ‘a rebellious wife.’ According to the Song of Solomon, this relationship, when properly understood (free from traditional guilt and false piety, and knowing it is ordained of God with his blessings), ceases to be a duty and becomes joy and pleasure.

v. 4. A wife does not have exclusive authority over and ownership of her body to refrain the use of it from her husband, to give it to someone else, to neglect it, nor to abuse it. The husband has a power over and right to her body. The same is true of the husband's body, to which the wife has certain rights. Better to recognize this as a joy rather than a duty or an unpleasant task. Happy are the wife and husband who find delight in pleasing each other with an attractive, clean and loving person and personality.

v. 5. 'Fraud' is a strong word, but to refuse love and affection where it is needed and to deprive each other of that which it is in our power to give is selfish and evil. A lazy husband who will not work and support his family fails as a husband; likewise, a wife who fails in her marriage responsibilities to her husband is a fraud. 'You may interrupt marital relationship in time of special spiritual burdens, trials and fastings, but only by mutual consent and only briefly, lest one of you be tempted to find satisfaction elsewhere.'

v. 6. What Paul says in verse 5 about parting for a time and coming together again is not a command of God, but he speaks it by permission. This time of separation (for whatever reason) is neither essential nor required, but only according to their own wishes.

v. 7. Paul speaks here of the gift of self-control and abstinence, which he covets for all believers that we might not be in danger of temptation and that our minds and thoughts might be more on Christ, not the flesh. It would be a blessing to be rid of all fleshly thoughts and desires, yet each has his own special gift from God, one of this kind and one of another.

v. 8. If a man or woman is unmarried and chooses to remain that way (not that it is sinful to marry again), it would be better for them; for they would

be more free from the cares of this life, have less trouble and be free to serve Christ. Paul was unmarried, had no home nor children, and was free to devote his entire time to the gospel (vv.32, 33).

v. 9. If a person does not have the gift of self-control in this area, he should seek a wife, and the woman a husband. It is much better to marry than to be aflame with passion and tortured by desire.

v. 10. As indicated, some of the above was spoken by permission and given as good advice; but this is a commandment! What he is about to say, we are under obligation to observe, because this is a law of God! 'A wife is not to leave her husband!' (Matt. 19:6; Gen. 2:24.) Marriage vows are not to be taken lightly. Neither husband nor wife is at liberty to separate from the other because of disagreement, disease, or even differences in matters of faith.

v. 11. If a person cannot be prevailed upon to remain with his or her partner but leaves for some reason, that person is to remain unmarried; his departure does not make the marriage void, 'Remain unmarried or be reconciled to your husband or wife.'

Continue in the station wherein you were called

1 Corinthians 7:12-24

In the preceding verse the apostle gave a strong and direct commandment to married believers: 'Let not the wife depart from her husband and let not the husband put away his wife.' There is no debate nor argument to be heard.

vv. 12, 13. To the believer who is married to an unbeliever, Paul offers his counsel and advice. He is saying that he has no commandment from the Lord in regard to this matter, but if a believer is married to an unbeliever and that unbeliever consents to live in harmony and peace with the believer, do not depart.

v. 14. The unbelieving husband or wife is espoused or legally married in the eyes of God to the believer. They are rightly and legally husband and wife regardless of their differences concerning the gospel. If a person is converted to Christ and his partner is not, this does not dissolve the marriage nor make it unholy in God's sight. If their marriage were not legal and holy, children born to them would be illegitimate. But children born to this type of marriage are, in a legal and civil sense, as holy as children born to believing parents.

v. 15. If the unbeliever should leave the believer on account of the gospel (in hatred of it) and will not live with the believer unless Christ is denied or truth compromised, let him leave. The deserted person may live in peace, being not to blame; for a brother or sister is bound in conscience to

obey in things pertaining to worship and the service and glory of Christ. Nor is the believer bound to remain unmarried in such cases but is free to marry another, only in the Lord. Desertion in such cases (for the sake of the gospel) is a breach of the marriage contract; otherwise, a brother or sister would be in subjection and bondage to the rebel for the rest of his or her life. God has called us to a peaceful life in the church and in the home.

v. 16. If a believer is married to an unbeliever and they can build a life of peace together, it may be that the unbeliever will, by the witness and behavior of the believer, be brought to a saving interest in Christ. 'Continue to live together, if possible, for the glory of Christ and the eternal welfare of all concerned.'

v. 17. This word is placed here with regard to all that is said before and all that follows. It has respect to every man's proper gift and station in life, whether as a single person or married, whether married to a believer or an unbeliever, and to the examples which follow. God has distributed our gifts as to nature and grace. He has given us the place we are to fill, the business we must follow and the area of usefulness in his kingdom. So when he calls us and reveals his grace to us, wherever we are and whatever we are, let us be content with his good providence and walk with him.

vv. 18, 19. If a man is a Jew, being circumcised in infancy, and has embraced the Lord Jesus, there is no reason for him to be uneasy or take methods to remove this mark from his flesh because it has been fulfilled and abolished by Christ. If a man is a Gentile, has never been circumcised and is called by grace, let him not submit to circumcision for religious purposes. In the affair of justification before God, circumcision is nothing! It cannot make a man righteous or unrighteous before God. The

commandments of our Lord and Saviour are to be observed from the principle of love and with a view to the glory of God.

v. 20. Coming to know Christ does not require that a man change his business, his marriage, or his station in life as a servant or master, unless that station in life is unlawful according to the word, or dishonest, or detrimental to his Christian life and testimony (2 Kings 5:18, 19).

v. 21. 'Were you a slave or a servant when you were called to Christ? Do not be troubled by it or be anxious to be otherwise. Be a good servant, serve your master faithfully, and do not look upon a lowly position or hard work as a contradiction of your call. If you are able to gain your freedom and better your position, avail yourself of the opportunity.'

v. 22. The reason a believer should be content to be a slave, a servant, or whatever, is because he that is called by grace, though a servant in a civil sense, is the Lord's freeman in a spiritual sense. He that is free in a civil sense when called, is the bond-servant of Christ (Rom. 1:1).

vv. 23, 24. We are bought with the price of Christ's blood and, whether servants or masters, we are the servants of Christ, not of men. So in whatever station, state or condition of life we were when called, let us continue there until it please God in his providence to change it.

More about marriage

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

v. 25. In these verses the apostle returns to the subject of marriage and addresses first those who have never been married. What he is about to say to them is not by a law or commandment of God, but is his own opinion and advice, with sincerity, as one counted faithful by the Lord himself.

v. 26. 'My opinion?' declares the apostle, 'is that, because of this time of persecution, affliction and distress, it would be better if believers remained unmarried.' Believers were put in prison, driven from place to place and life in general was most difficult.

v. 27. He advises those who are married by no means to desert one another nor seek to dissolve the marriage bond; on the other hand, if they are free from a wife, it would be better not to seek one.

v. 28. If a person who has never been married, or one who has been legally freed from a wife, think it fit to be married, he commits no sin. It is not a sin to be married. But those who choose married life shall have physical and earthly troubles, and Paul is concerned that they be spared from these troubles.

v. 29. Our days on earth are so short and full of trouble that an unmarried state is preferable. As for those who are married, it would be wise for them to give themselves to the worship of God, his gospel and his glory, both publicly and privately, and not be taken up overmuch with family and personal cares.

vv. 30, 31. Every worldly relationship, sorrow, joy, possession and care is fading and perishing (Job. 1:21). Nothing about this world is permanent nor lasting. We may weep, but weeping endures for the night; joy comes in the morning. We may rejoice in earthly treasure, but only temporarily. We may buy and sell, but we really own nothing. Let us use the world and its material and physical qualities with a loose hand, neither too much depressed by its sadness nor too much elated over its joys. It will all pass away.

v. 32. The apostle's earnest desire is to have believers as free as possible from entangling physical, emotional and material cares that accompany marriage. The unmarried man is more at leisure and can more conveniently care for the things that have to do with grace and glory.

vv. 33, 34. The married man must attend to business, provide food and clothing, educate and discipline children and make his family comfortable. He must be involved to a greater extent in the world than the unmarried man. The same is true of women, as stated in verse 34.

v. 35. Paul said these things to them for their own welfare and profit, not to put restrictions and burdens on them which they could not bear, but to promote their comfort and good, that they might attend to the things of God without distraction from worldly cares.

v. 36. If a man's daughter reaches the age for marriage and desires to be married, he should not take this opinion of the apostle and force her to remain unmarried. The father should give his blessing to the marriage. No one sins in this regard, neither the father nor the couple.

v. 37. But where there is no necessity for marriage, where the woman or man has the gift of continency and is determined not to be married, there

is no shame nor reproach in remaining single any more than in being married.

v. 38. The parents who give their daughters and sons in marriage do well. The parents who are not pressured by tradition or custom and allow their children to remain unmarried with parental help and blessings, do better.

v. 39. While a husband is living, the believing wife is bound by God's law to continue to live with him, but when he is dead, she is free to marry whom she will, providing that he, too, is a believer! No true believer is free to marry an unbeliever and expect God's blessing.

v. 40. In the apostle's opinion, a widow will be happier if she remains unmarried. He adds, 'I think I have the mind of the Spirit in this matter.'

Christian liberty with love and wisdom

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

In this chapter the apostle deals with the subject of eating meat which has been used in sacrifices to idols. Pagans offered sacrifices of sheep, oxen and other cattle to their idol gods and then used the meat for food at feasts in their temples, in their homes, or else sold it in the markets. The question arose among the Corinthians whether it was lawful for believers to eat this meat. Evidently some were buying the meat for use at home and some were even going to the feasts in the temple of idols and eating the meat there. This question was also considered in the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:28, 29).

v. 1. 'Now about meat offered to idols: of course, we all know that an idol is nothing but a block of wood or stone and cannot defile a believer, but some of us do not think it fit to make use of this knowledge of Christian liberty to the wounding and grieving of other believers.' Some of the weaker brethren were convinced that it was wrong to eat this meat and were offended when they saw it done. The reply they received was 'We know an idol is nothing!' Paul says, 'We all know that, but knowledge without wisdom, love and consideration for others leads to pride, conceit and division.' 'Love edifies,' that is, a man who has knowledge joined with love for God and others will seek that which is edifying and profitable to others. Without this attitude and spirit, his knowledge is worthless.

v. 2. This is true in any matter. If anyone imagines that he has come to know and understand much of divine things and does not use that knowledge with wisdom, love for others and regard for the glory of God

and the peace of the church, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. If he did, he would know that even the Lord pleased not himself (Rom. 15:1-3).

v. 3. If a man truly loves God, he will show that love for God by loving his brother (being careful not to hinder or offend him), making use of his knowledge and liberty for the edification of others (1 John 4:20). That man will be approved of God, blessed by God and used for God's glory.

vv. 4-6. 'We know that a pagan idol is nothing;' it has no real sacrifices of sheep, oxen and other cattle to their idol gods and existence, no meaning, no power, no value. 'We know that there is no god but the living God' (Deut. 6:4, 5). There are so-called gods of pagan men, whether in heaven (sun, stars, angels, dead men and women who are venerated) or earth (creatures, statues, or whatever). Yet for us there is only one God, the Father, who is the fountain and source of things (Acts 17:28). There is one Redeemer, the Lord Christ, by whom God created all things (John 1:3; Col. 1:16-18), by whom God redeemed the elect, and by whom he reconciled the world to himself.

v. 7. 'But there are some Christians (former idolaters) who were all their lives accustomed to thinking of a certain idol as real and living, who, if they saw you eat this meat, would be offended, and if they ate of it, their weak consciences would be injured.'

v. 8. What the Christian liberty advocates asserted is positively true. The type of food we eat will not cause our acceptance by God nor will it separate us from God. Whether we eat this meat or leave it has nothing to do with our relationship to God in Christ (Rom. 14:17).

v. 9. But we are to be careful that our personal liberty and understanding do not become a hindrance or a cause of stumbling to a weak brother. This would be a violation of brotherly love (Rom. 14:13-15; Gal. 5:13, 14).

vv. 10, 11. ‘Suppose a weak brother (who does not have a clear understanding of Christian liberty) should see you (who are learned, mature and knowledgeable) sitting eating in an idol's temple. He may be led by your example to do the same thing against his conscience, knowledge and understanding. In doing so, he violates his principles, which may lead to other careless and more serious infractions and the ultimate ruin of a dear brother for whom Christ died.

v. 12. ‘When you, by example, draw men into practices contrary to their consciences and principles, you sin against Christ.’ Knowing that the brother is offended and that eating this meat is against his judgment, leading him to do so is not love for Christ or the brother; therefore, it is sin.

v. 13. ‘Therefore, if my eating a certain food is the cause of my brother's falling or hinders his spiritual growth, I will not eat this meat lest I cause him to stumble.’

Supporting the ministry

1 Corinthians 9:1-14

In the greater part of this chapter Paul continues speaking on the subject of Christian liberty and its proper use. It is our duty to deny ourselves of even that which is lawful if it is genuinely offensive to our brother. He uses himself as an example, having denied himself in three things: eating and drinking at their expense, marriage and requiring financial support for his labour among them. All were lawful to him, but he denied himself for their sakes who were weak in the faith.

vv. 1, 2. Some denied that Paul was an apostle because he was not one of the original twelve. He refutes the charge saying, 'I am free.' No man had authority over him. He was chosen, ordained, taught and sent forth as an apostle by Christ (Gal. 1:11, 12, 15-18). 'I have seen the Lord.' All apostles were eye-witnesses of his glory (Acts 10:39-42; 1 John 1:1, 2). Paul saw Christ on the Damascus Road and when he was taken to the third heaven. 'But' he adds, 'if others deny my apostleship, surely you Corinthians will not; for the effects of my ministry among you puts you past denial. You are living proof of God's hand on me.'

v. 3. This is his ground of defense, the vindication of his apostleship and himself to those who would criticize and question him: 'I have authority directly from Christ. I am an eye-witness of his glory. The fruits of my ministry are proof of apostleship!'

vv. 4, 5. Having proved his apostleship, Paul proceeds to establish his right to support and maintenance as a gospel minister. 'Do I not have the right to food and drink at the expense of those to whom I minister? Do I not

have a right to take along with me a wife, as do the other apostles – James, John, Peter and those who were near kinsmen to our Lord?’

v. 6. ‘Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from manual labour for a livelihood, in order to give our full time to the gospel ministry?’ Paul worked with his hands in his trade at Corinth (Acts 18:1-3; 20:33, 34; 1 Thess. 2:9). While at many places he did not exercise his right of support, he nevertheless defended it.

v. 7. By three examples commonly known among men, Paul shows it to be reasonable that ministers of the gospel should be supported by the people to whom they minister.

1. What soldier serves in an army and goes to war for a nation at his own expense?

2. What man plants a vineyard and does not eat some of the fruit?

3. Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk and eat the meat?

v. 8. ‘Do I say this as a man reasons and only on human authority? Does not the word of God teach the same also?’

v. 9. ‘It is written in Deuteronomy 25:4: ‘You shall not put a muzzle on an ox when he treads out the corn, in order to keep him from eating of it.’ God looked upon this as an act of cruelty. Does God care more for oxen than he does for his ministers?’

v. 10. It is true that Deuteronomy 25:4 mentions oxen in particular; but it is a principle that is to be applied to all our dealings with those who labour and serve us, especially those who minister the all-important word of God.

He who ploughs for another ought to work with the hope of getting bread for himself, 'and he who works in the threshing-floor ought to labour in the hope of being cared for by those for whom he labors' (1 Tim. 5:17, 18).

v. 11. 'If we have studied, preached and taught you the doctrines of the word of God and you have profited spiritually through our constant labour, is it asking too much if we share in your material possessions, such as food, drink and clothing?'

v. 12. 'Other preachers among you justly claim and enjoy your support. Do not Barnabas and I have an even greater claim, being the first ministers to preach the gospel to you, and I, being an apostle of Christ? Yet I did not exercise this privilege of support while I was laboring among you, lest someone charge me with covetousness and hinder the spread of the gospel.'

v. 13. 'You can understand the mind and will of God under the New Testament by studying the mind and will of God under the Old Testament. God has a ministry under the Old Testament (the tribe of Levi), and he appointed a livelihood for them' (Num. 18:20, 21; Deut. 18:1).

v. 14. God's will for his ministers is the same under the New Testament. It is his will that those who have set aside worldly employment to spend their time in the study and preaching of the gospel should have a livelihood from their labour.

Total dedication to his gospel

1 Corinthians 9:15-27

In the preceding verses the apostle clearly shows from 'the Scriptures that the Lord's apostles, ministers, evangelists and missionaries (who are engaged full time in the study and preaching of the gospel) should be supported and cared for by those to whom they minister.

v. 15. 'Though I have the right to marry as well as others, to forego secular labour and to expect maintenance by those to whom I preach, yet I have not made use of these privileges; nor am I now writing and suggesting that these things be done for me.' Evidently Paul had been accused of preaching for gain and for his own profit and advantage. He continually rejected and denied the charge! That is why he chose to work with his hands, providing his own upkeep and taking nothing from the Corinthians (Acts 20:33, 34; 2 Cor. 11:7-10; 12:17, 18). Paul gloried and rejoiced in the fact that no one could accuse him of using the ministry to get gain, and now he had rather die than be deprived of this personal satisfaction.

v. 16. 'Though I do preach the gospel of God's glory and grace, I have no room nor reason to glory, nor even to feel that I have done anything unusual or commendable; for I am a servant of God, under divine orders, and exposed to severe penalty and woe if I do not preach the gospel.'

v. 17. 'If I preach this gospel and endure the trials and labour in the Word with a willing spirit and a cheerful heart, I have great satisfaction and compensation; but if I do so reluctantly and under compulsion, I am still a servant of Christ, entrusted with a sacred and holy commission, whether with pay or without pay, whether willingly or reluctantly. None of these

things changes the fact that I am a servant of Christ with divine orders to preach the Word.'

v. 18. 'What then is my present compensation and reward? just this: that I am so in love with Christ, so convinced of the truth of his gospel, so burdened for all men, that I surrender my rights and privileges as a preacher of the gospel and give my services free to all. I cannot be accused of profiting from the gospel or abusing my privileges.'

v. 19. Paul declared that he was free from all (the word 'men' is not in the original text), from the curse of the moral law, from the yoke of the ceremonial law and from the maintenance and support of believers. Yet he considered himself the willing servant of all, catering to them in every way that he could in order to endear himself to them and bring them to faith in Christ.

vv. 20-22. The ceremonial law died with Christ (Eph. 2:15, 16). Believers are not bound by circumcision, Sabbaths and rituals prescribed under the law, but Paul observed some of these in order to have an open door to preach to the Jews (Acts 16:1-3; 21:19-24). To the Gentiles, who were under no obligation to the ceremonial law, Paul could freely discourse and fellowship as one under the law of Christ. With the weak (those without discernment and maturity), who were troubled about meats, drinks and various forms of liberty, he identified, surrendered his liberty and played down his knowledge, that he might gain their confidence. In short, he became all things to all men that he might, at any cost to himself and in any way, bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ.

v. 23. Paul had two great ends at which he aimed in this denial of himself in these many points of liberty: chiefly, for the gospel's sake, that is, for the glory of God, for the spread of the gospel to the eternal glory of our

Redeemer; second, that Jew and Gentile (men of all sorts) might share with him in the blessings of eternal life (2 Tim. 2:9, 10).

v. 24. The reference in this and the following verses is to the Grecian games, such as running, wrestling and fighting. Many start the race, many run for a while, but the one who obtains the prize is the one who finishes the race first. The object of running is to gain the crown given to the victor. Believers are to run the Christian race, persevering with one object in view, and that is to reign with Christ and be made like him (Ps. 17:15). Nothing is to divert their attention or interest from this goal.

v. 25. Every athlete who competes in the games is mindful of need to discipline himself in food, drink, pleasures and idleness. He restricts himself to temperance and moderation in all things in order to win a temporary and corruptible crown. The believer's faith, dedication, temperance and sacrifice are for a higher and nobler purpose – to gain an incorruptible Crown! (Heb. 12:1, 2.)

vv. 26, 27. 'Therefore, I do not run as one who is out jogging with no goal or destination, but as one who strives to cross the finish line. I do not box as a man shadow-boxes, who has no opponent, but only strikes out at the air. I have a real enemy – the flesh! So I discipline my flesh, my mind, my body and bring them into subjection to the Spirit of Christ. I subdue this flesh with its desires and infirmities, lest while preaching the gospel to others, I myself should fail the test and prove to be reprobate' (2 Cor. 13:5).

Warnings from the wilderness

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Many in the church at Corinth were puffed up with their knowledge, their gifts and the great privileges with which God had blessed them. They had a good foundation laid by Paul (1 Cor. 3:10, 11), they knew the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4) and theirs was a mighty church, respected and well known by all. But factions, divisions, open sin, intellectualism, and all sorts of ideas and wrong practices had crept into their midst. Therefore, to warn them of vain presumption, false confidence and indifference to holy conduct and practice, Paul sets before them the example of Israel, the church in the wilderness. All of these Israelites enjoyed great God-given privileges, the special favour of God and were exposed to the gospel of Christ in type, yet most of them perished under God's judgment in the wilderness.

v. 1. I would not have you to be ignorant nor uninformed concerning the matter of perseverance in faith, in obedience in conduct becoming a believer. All of the people of Israel led by the cloud (in which God's presence went before them), and every one of them passed safely through the Red Sea.

v. 2. 'Every one of them allowed himself to be baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea,' which was an acknowledgement of their regard unto him as their guide and governor, is a picture of our baptism, which identifies us with Christ.

v. 3. Those who perished in the wilderness all ate the same (supernaturally given) food which Moses, Caleb and Joshua ate (who went into Canaan). Manna is called spiritual food, first, because it was bread that came down

from Heaven (John 6:31, 35) and, second, because it signified Christ, who is the true bread from heaven. They actually ate the same spiritual bread we eat, they in type and we by faith.

vv. 4, 5. ‘They all drank the same water from a spiritual rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ’ in type and picture. Paul is saying to the Corinthians that all of Israel in wilderness days were an informed people, a privileged people, who were partakers of things that revealed the gospel of redemption in Christ, and yet the people who enjoyed those privileges were not pleasing to God nor accepted of him, but perished in the wilderness. This is a solemn warning (Heb. 3:6-14).

v. 6. These people are an example to us who enjoy the blessed privilege and revelation of the gospel. The punishment inflicted upon them was designed as instruction for us to avoid the like sins, that we may not equally be condemned. The word ‘lust’ is to covet, crave, or desire and may be used in reference to all sin, for lust is the root and foundation of all (Rom. 7:7; 1 John 2:15, 16).

v. 7. ‘Do not be worshippers of idols, images and false gods, as some of them were’ (Exod. 32:1-6). Three thousand of them fell that day (Exod. 32:28). Our God is one God, is a jealous God and will not share his glory nor the love and worship of his people.

v. 8. We must not gratify evil, fleshly desires and indulge in immorality, as some of these people did, which resulted in the death of twenty-four thousand (suddenly) one day (Num. 25:1-9; 1 Cor. 6:15-20).

v. 9. ‘To tempt.’ in the general sense of the term, is to make a trial of God in reference to his power, his faithfulness and his goodness - to try his patience and be critical of his providence. It is not to be satisfied with his

will and way, but to challenge him and provoke him. This Israel did in Numbers 21:5, 6.

v. 10. ‘Murmuring’ signifies speaking against God out of impatience, discontent or covetousness. We learn from Exodus 15:24; 16:7 and Numbers 14:26-29 that it was a sin of which the Jews were very much guilty.

v. 11. These recorded punishments came upon Israel, not by chance, but by the will of God (as their idolatry and murmuring deserved) and were recorded for our admonition, that we may be warned to avoid the one and escape the other. Israel, blessed above all nations, presumed upon the goodness of God and suffered. We who live in the latter days before Christ's second coming are warned against such an attitude.

v. 12. Since the Jewish fathers (who enjoyed such special favors and great privileges) by their sin, idolatry and rebellion brought upon themselves the judgments of God, it would be wise for all today (who think themselves safe; secure and above these sins) to take heed lest they also fall (Gal. 6:1; Jude 24). Our strength is not in ourselves or our knowledge, but totally in Christ (John 15:5).

v. 13. The word ‘trial’ may include trials such as afflictions, testing and all things disagreeable to nature (James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6), or temptations that arise because of our sinful natures. These are all common to believers everywhere. We do not expect to be free from the common trials of all men. But God has promised strength and assistance to his people (Matt. 7:11; 2 Thess. 3:3). You may be tempted beyond your strength but not beyond his!

Do all to the glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:14-33

v. 14. 'Flee from idolatry' of any sort, which is particularly offensive to our Lord! Not only avoid the worship of idols and the acts of idolatry, but believers should avoid that which gives even the appearance of idolatry, such as eating things offered to idols in an idol's temple. That this is what he especially had in mind we can judge from the following verses.

v. 15. Whereas he was speaking to intelligent, sensible men, he gave three arguments against associating themselves with idolaters in their temples of worship and eating with them at their feasts.

v. 16. The first argument is taken from the Lord's Table. When we sit at the Lord's Table and drink the wine and eat the bread, it suggests that we have a blessed union and communion with Christ. In like manner, when a man sits in an idol's temple and eats meat sacrificed to that idol, it indicates to all that he has a communion with that idol.

v. 17. The second argument is taken from the believer's union and communion in Christ with one another. No matter how numerous we are or whether we be Jew or Gentile, when we meet around the table of the Lord, we are saying that we are one body, one bread, one hope. In like manner, those who associate with idolaters and eat their sacrificial meat give the appearance, at least, of being one with idolaters.

v. 18. The third argument is taken from the Jewish nation. When they ate the flesh of sacrifices offered upon God's altar, did they not by that act manifest that they were members of God's assembly, that they believed in

the God of the altar and that they accepted this way of worship? In like manner, eating sacrificial meat in an idol's temple indicates the owning of that idol and a participation in the altar of idols.

vv. 19, 20. What is Paul saying? That an idol has any reality at all or that these sacrifices offered to them have any meaning? Certainly not! But these pagan sacrifices are offered (in effect) to demons and not to God. The nature of idolatry is to turn from the living God to the creature, to will-worship, to idols, and this is instigated, promoted and directed by devils, which makes any worship, except true worship of the living God, to be devil-worship! 'I do not want you to fellowship or have anything to do with diabolical spirits' (Deut. 32:16, 17).

v. 21. It is impossible to sit at both tables, to recognize the true God and a false god, to live in two bodies, or to trust in the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifices to idols.

v. 22. 'Are we foolish enough to provoke the Lord to jealousy, anger and indignation? (Exod. 20:3-5; 34:12,14.) Do we think that we are stronger than he, that we should defy him? How foolish!'

vv. 23, 24. 'Many things are lawful for me which are not wise. Many things which are not sinful in themselves may be detrimental to me and to others. What is permissible is not always advisable. What I can do, without sinning, is not always what I should do!

Let us not then seek our own pleasure, profit and advantage, but the welfare and good of others. 'Love seeketh not her own.'

vv. 25-28. 'When you go to the market or butcher's shop and meat offered to idols is sold in common with other meat, it may be bought and eaten with no questions asked, because the earth and all that is in it are the

Lord's, and his people have a right to it through him. If an unbeliever invites you to eat with him, you may eat what is set before you, so long as no issue is raised about the meat's being from the idol's temple. Nor must you inquire about the source from which the meat was secured.

However, if someone tells you, 'This is meat from the idol's temple,' do not eat it. Do not eat it for the sake of the one who made the point and for the sake of a weak brother who may be offended. There is plenty of other food without it.'

vv. 29-31. 'Why should my way of life be determined by another man's conscience? Why should my behavior be guided by another man's principles? Why should I allow my liberty to be suppressed by another man's weakness? If I am guided by the Scriptures and give thanks for all that I have or do, why should I be criticized? The whole matter is resolved in this: whatever I eat, drink, or do, I must consider first the glory of God!'

vv. 32, 33. 'If I have the glory of God as my chief concern, I will be careful not to offend needlessly the Jews, the Gentiles, nor the church of God.' Paul gives himself as an example in these things. He was careful not to seek only to please himself, but made every effort not to hinder others in order that they might come to know Christ.

The head of the woman is the man

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

v. 1. The apostle exhorts the Corinthians to follow his teachings, his example and his advice only as he followed the teachings and commandments of Christ. The words of our Lord are our only certain rule of faith and practice. Our ministers and leaders are only to be obeyed and followed as they teach and practice the teachings of Christ.

v. 2. He praised them that, even in his absence, they remembered his ministry and kept the doctrines, traditions and instructions that he had delivered to them when he was among them.

v. 3. Christ is the head of every individual human being (John 17:2; Rom. 14:9; Matt. 28:18), but in this sense we understand 'every man' to mean every member of his body, the church (Col. 1:18). 'The head of the woman is the man' (Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:34, 35; Eph. 5:22,24). 'The head of Christ is God,' not as to his divine nature, for in that respect they are one! Christ is equal to the Father and is possessed of the same divine perfections; but in respect of his office as Mediator, the Son is come to do the will of the Father. In Christ there is neither male nor female in respect of essence, nature and position; but as to office, leadership and authority in the church and in the home, the woman is in subjection and under the rule of the man (1 Tim. 2:11, 12).

vv. 4-6. Interpreters rightly agree that this and the following verses are to be interpreted in the light of the customs of countries as long as the principles of the Scriptures are not violated or compromised. In those Eastern countries it signified either shame or subjection for a person to be

‘veiled.’ A woman never appeared in public without a covering on her head and a veil over her face. If she did, it was an act of rebellion against authority and a demand for equality socially with men. This is not true in our generation where being bare-headed speaks of subjection and being covered betokens superiority and dominion! For a man in Corinth to pray or worship with a covering on his head would indicate that he recognized some human head or authority other than Christ and would be dishonoring to Christ, who is the only head of men. For a woman in Corinth to take off her covering in prayer and worship would indicate that she did not agree with her part in the Fall, nor the authority of her husband over her, nor the commandment of God to be in subjection. This would dishonor her husband and would be as shameful as if she had shaved her head. For her to appear in the dress and manner of her superior would indicate her rebellion against God's order.

vv. 7, 8. The sexes should not attempt to change places. The order in which God has placed persons is best, and to endeavor to change it is to introduce confusion (Deut. 22:5). The woman should keep to the rank God has chosen for her. She was made out of man, made for man and made to be the glory of man. She should always conduct herself according to this divine plan in the home and in the church.

The man was first made and made head of the creation here below, and therein he is the image or representative of God's dominion. The woman was made out of the man to be his helpmeet, to be in subjection to him, and therein she is the glory of her husband and his representative. A woman's attitude and behavior are a reflection of her husband, either for glory or for shame.

v. 9. Man was not created for woman, to be ruled by her nor for her benefit, but woman was made for man's use, help and comfort, and naturally made subject to him (Gen. 2:18, 22, 25; Eph. 5:22-25).

v. 10. A woman should behave in such a way (in this case and country the veil was considered the symbol of subjection) as to show her subjection because of the presence of angels. Some say these are the evil angels. The woman was first in the transgression, being deceived by the evil angel, Lucifer (1 Tim. 2:14; 2 Cor. 11:3), and the presence of evil spirits among us would capitalize on a woman's effort to again usurp authority. Others say these are the elect angels who minister to and among us (Heb. 1:14), who would be grieved.

vv. 11, 12. Nevertheless, lest this order of the sexes be carried too far and men become overbearing, harsh and independent of women, and women become slaves without spirit, lose their spiritual interest and initiative and hesitate to witness, pray and serve the Lord, Paul declares men and women need each other! They were made to be a mutual comfort and blessing to one another in the Lord (1 Peter 3:5-7). As woman was first formed out of man, the man is ever since born of woman, nourished and comforted by her.

vv. 13-15. 'Consult your own reason; listen to what nature teaches. Should there not be a distinction kept up between the sexes? The man - the leader, the provider, strong and masculine; the woman - in subjection, feminine, with longer hair, which is a natural sign of her character and person. But for a man to dress or wear his hair as a woman is a token of softness and effeminacy.' It should be our concern in our assemblies to break no rules of natural distinction.

v. 16. 'Now if anyone is disposed to be contentious about this matter, let him know that the apostles and all the churches hold this position.'

The Lord's table

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

In this passage, Paul rebukes the church for their conduct in respect to the observance of the Lord's Table. We are told by ancient writers that in some of the early churches observance of the Lord's Table was preceded with a love feast which led to some improper behavior.

v. 18. 'In the matter I will deal with now, I do not praise you but must condemn you; for when you meet together to observe this ordinance, you are doing more harm than good. You are not edifying and instructing; but rather you are indulging the flesh in intemperance, causing division, factions and even heresies.'

v. 19. There will always be divisions, factions and heresies in churches because Satan is always busy sowing tares, false prophets and teachers are plentiful and human nature (being weak and wicked) is easily led astray. These things do not come forth by chance but through the providence of God, who allows Satan to show himself and allows men to discover the evil of their own hearts in order that those who are genuine (whose doctrine and conduct are according to Scripture) might be recognized plainly.

vv. 20, 21. 'When you gather together for your love feasts and so-called observance of the Lord's Supper, it is not the supper instituted by our Lord that you observe.' According to some writers, as Christ did eat the Passover supper before the Lord's Supper, in an imitation of a sort, they would prepare lavish meals at home and bring them to the meeting-place. Some had much to eat, some had little or none, some even drank too much

wine and none of them shared with, or waited for others. These love feasts turned into unlovely debaucheries.

v. 22. ‘Do you not have private homes in which to eat, drink and indulge your appetites? Do you have contempt for the place where the church meets? Do you have contempt for the poor people of the church, who are not blessed as you are?’ It is a good thing for a church to bring food, come together for fellowship, equally sharing and waiting one for the other in feasts of love and fellowship, but certainly not in conjunction with the observance of the Lord's Table.

v. 23-26. Paul then sets forth the Lord's Table as it should be observed by the Lord's church.

1. He tells how he came by the knowledge of it – by revelation from Christ!

2. He sets forth the Author of it – the Lord Jesus himself!

3. He gives the time of the institution – the same night he was betrayed and arrested.

4. He lists the materials of the supper – bread and wine (Luke 22:14-20). The bread represented his body, broken, and the wine his blood, which was shed for us. Nothing is said of the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation. The bread and wine do not actually become the body and blood of the Lord, but only represent or symbolize his body and blood. ‘This do in remembrance of me,’ said our Lord, in order to keep fresh in our minds and hearts his sacrifice for our sins and his intercession now on our behalf. We not only remember his death for us, but we ‘show,’ declare, or proclaim his substitutionary work (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

5. It should be observed frequently, no time is specified; but, 'As often as you observe the table, you remember and proclaim his death.'

v. 27-29. Whoever eats the Lord's Table in a way that is unworthy of Christ may be said to be guilty of the body and blood of Christ, inasmuch as he violates this important ordinance, despises the precious blood of Christ and treats lightly the sufferings of our Lord. Let each person examine himself concerning his own knowledge of Christ - who Christ is, what Christ did, why Christ suffered and where Christ is now. Let him determine his experience concerning repentance, faith and love for the Redeemer; then let him eat. For an unworthy person (not a believer) to come to the table, or for him to come in an unworthy manner (as the Corinthians were doing), or to come for an unworthy purpose is to bring God's wrath upon himself. This is no ordinary supper, but a most holy time.

v. 30. Because of their unworthy treatment of the Lord's Table, God had visited some of them with afflictions and even death.

vv. 31, 32. 'If we will examine ourselves, as directed in the above verses, confess our sins, condemn ourselves and look to Christ alone for forgiveness through his blood, we will not come under divine judgment (1 John 1:9; 2:1, 2). But when we are under the trying hand of the Lord, let us be comforted to know that God deals with us as a Father disciplines, corrects and instructs his children, so that we shall not finally be condemned with the world of unbelievers.

vv. 33, 34. 'When you gather together to observe the Lord's Table, meet together as one body, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat

at home.’ This is not a time to satisfy fleshly appetites, but a time of worship and remembrance of our Lord.

The nature and use of spiritual gifts

1 Corinthians 12:1-14

v. 1. The church at Corinth evidently abounded in special, God-given spiritual gifts, such as wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Some were discouraged because they did not have these gifts, others were elated and puffed up by their offices and abilities, and some abused and misused them. Paul writes concerning the Author of gifts, the excellency of them and the nature and true use of them, and says, 'I don't want you to be misinformed about this matter.'

v. 2. 'None of you has any reason to be proud or lifted up with your knowledge and gifts. God found you in heathen idolatry; so that, if you are favored with any spiritual wisdom or gift, it is owing to his grace, not to your merit' (1 Cor. 4:6, 7). Let us ascribe all to the free grace of God and be humble under a sense of unworthiness.

v. 3. Every believer has the Holy Spirit, who regenerated us, called us, sanctified us and who indwells us (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:12). Whether we have unusual gifts or not, we have the Spirit of God, evidenced by the fact that we acknowledge with our lips, hearts and lives that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. No man has this knowledge or confesses this truth except under the power and influence of the Spirit of God (John 16:13, 15).

v. 4. There are different gifts; none have all, but all have some and, while we are not all alike, it is the same Holy Spirit who gives gifts and graces

as he pleases (vv.11, 18). Let those who have much be humbled and let those who have little be thankful.

v. 5. There are different offices or ministries in the church. One ministers as pastor, another as elder, another as deacon, another in this or that capacity; but all serve the same great Lord of the church. It is his church, his vineyard and his will that we seek.

v. 6. There are different effects, workings, or accomplishments (2 Cor. 2:14-16), but it is the same God who uses us, when he will, where he will and in the way that he will.

v. 7. The gifts, offices and operations of the Spirit are not to make gain of (like Simon Magus), nor to encourage pride and envy, nor to cause division, but for the glory of God and the profit and good of the whole church.

vv. 8-10. In these verses Paul identifies some of those spiritual gifts.

1. 'The word of wisdom' – a knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel and the ability to explain them. It might also mean good judgment in decisions.

2. 'The word of knowledge' – a universal knowledge of Scriptures wrapped up in the types, prophecies and doctrines of the Word (1 Cor. 2:12, 13).

3. 'Faith' – the faith of miracles, or faith in the divine power and promises, whereby they are enabled to work miracles.

4. 'The gifts of healing' – the healing of the sick, either by laying on of hands, or anointing with oil, or with a word.

5. 'The working of miracles' – power to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, or even to raise the dead.

6. 'Prophecy' – the ability to foretell future events or to explain scripture.

7. 'Discerning of spirits' – power to distinguish between true and false prophets, or to discern what is of God and what is of Satan.

8. 'Tongues' – ability to speak the gospel in a language they had not learned.

9. 'Interpretation of tongues' – when a discourse was delivered in another language, some had the power to interpret it to the people.

v. 11. These gifts and abilities are given by the Holy Spirit, not to all believers, but one gift to this man, another gift to another man, as the Holy Spirit pleases. He is sovereign in the distribution of gifts and grace.

v. 12. The human body has many parts, such as hands, feet, ears and eyes. As numerous and different as these members are, they are, nevertheless, parts of the same body. They make up one body. So it is with the church, the body of Christ.

v. 13. Whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, old or young, male or female, every believer has been baptized into the body of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Head and we are his body. We are all partakers of one spirit, one life, and one goal – the exaltation and glory of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:16-18; 1 Cor. 10:17).

v. 14. 'The body is not one member,' however important, such as the eye, the ear, or the arm. The body consists of many members, different but necessary to form a complete body. So the body of Christ is not one person nor one sort of person; but there are many members, some in a high station, some low; some of great gifts, some less; some Jew and some

Gentile; but all are one in Christ and all are related to, and needful of the others.

The body of Christ – the church

1 Corinthians 12:15-31

v. 15, 16. It appears from this statement that these special spiritual gifts, offices and operations had caused divisions in the church. Some of the members felt inferior, unnecessary and slighted, because they were not gifted and did not have a prominent ministry. Others who preached, taught, or were especially gifted looked down upon those who did not have certain gifts and abilities. This is unreasonable, says the apostle, for the body is not made up of only one member, but many members, all different but all performing their necessary duties. The foot is not a hand and does not serve in the same manner, but it is necessary to the body's function. The ear is not an eye, but it is as necessary as the eye!

vv. 17. What if every believer were a preacher? There would be no hearers! If every believer were an organist, there would be no singers! If every believer were an elder, there would be no custodian! If every believer were an overseer, there would be no workers, no givers, no teachers, no children! If everyone were young and zealous, there would be no patient counsel which only experience and age can provide.

vv. 18-20. The infinitely wise God made the body of man and put every member of man's body where it is, doing what it does for the proper functioning of the body. So the Lord has put us, as members, in his mystical body, the church, in such a place and part as it pleased him. Every member ought to be content with his place, gift and usefulness because it is God's will for him and because, without all of the necessary members, there would be no body. Now we are different in parts, places, gifts and service, but one body in Christ!

v. 21. The eye is vital to the body's well-being, but it cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.' Nor can the head say to the foot, 'Because you are a lowly member which does not speak, reason, or hear, I do not need you.' Every member is of use to the whole body.

v. 22. Actually those parts of the body such as the liver, intestines and stomach, which are not displayed, recognized, or talked about, are as necessary to the body's life and usefulness as any other part. Even so, all believers in the church, the strong and the weak, the recognized and the unrecognized, the leaders and the followers, are necessary (2 Cor. 12:9, 10).

v. 23. There are parts of the human body which are considered less comely and less honorable, which we do not expose to the public, but upon which we bestow honour and recognition, for we clothe them carefully and attractively; and to us they are important and beautiful as God's creation. So, in the church body, let those who appear less honorable and less outgoing be clothed with love, grace and kindness.

v. 24. Our eyes, ears, hands and face have no need of special adornment or attention, for they are constantly seen, honored and cared for. But don't forget or neglect those other parts of the body without which we have no life. God has composed the church in such a way that all members are beneficial and necessary to the life of the church, and he bestows his honour and glory to all equally (1 Cor. 1:26-29). He will humble the gifted and lift up the lowly.

vv. 25-27. By 'schism' is meant division. Though members differ in office, honour, gifts, personality, etc., yet all should have the same care and love for each other as though they were of equal importance, for,

indeed, they are. When one member suffers, all suffer with him; when one member is honored, all rejoice. As with the human body, a broken arm is felt by the whole body. We are members of the body of Christ, therefore we are one body joined together. How can we not be affected by the pain or rejoicing of a part of ourselves?

vv. 28-30. In his sovereign purpose God has given to the church apostles, prophets, teachers, men and women with this gift and that gift, with this ability and that ability. Are they all the same? Are they all alike? No more than the human body can be all eyes, or ears, or hands. There must be the presence of all organs, faculties and members to make a human body; so there must be many different members in the body of Christ.

v. 31. This verse must be joined with the first verse of chapter 13, so will be covered in the next lesson.

The greatest of these is love

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

At the close of the last chapter Paul exhorted the Corinthians to desire the best spiritual gifts for the glory of God, the preaching of the gospel and the good of the whole church. But there is something better than supernatural gifts! There is something to be desired more than knowledge, unusual spiritual talents and offices, and that is true, sincere, heart love to God and men.

v. 1. 'If I could speak with the tongues or languages of every nation on earth and express myself as the angels do, yet have not that God-given (Rom. 5:5; 1 John 4:7, 8), heart-felt brotherly love (a true root of love for men which flows from a true love for God), I only make an irritating noise with my mouth, which will be of no use to me or to others.'

v. 2. 'If I had the gift of prophecy, whereby I could preach the mysteries of scripture and even foretell the purpose of God in reference to the future, and though I have a vast knowledge of the most sublime and hidden things and a faith of miracles to accomplish most unusual things (Matt. 17:20), if I have not this brotherly love, I am nothing!' I may be great in the eyes of men, but in the account of God, I am nothing!

v. 3. 'If I give away all my possessions to feed the poor.' Why would a man do this if he did not love the poor? He might, like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-5), or the Pharisee (Luke 18:11, 12), do it for praise and self-righteous purposes. If I give my body to be burned, or die as a martyr for the cause of orthodoxy and religion, 'it will all profit me nothing!' No actions, no human sacrifice and no human sufferings are

sufficient to entitle any soul to heaven. If I have not love for Christ and for men, all of these gifts, offices and self-righteous efforts are vain and useless! Love is the commandment of Christ (John 15:12). Love is the evidence of salvation (John 13:35). Love is the fruit of the indwelling spirit (Gal. 5:22). Love is so essential that, if a man has everything else and has not love, he is nothing. Love is not the prerogative of a few; it must be the possession of all.

v. 4. 'Love suffers long,' that is, it makes a man patient and longsuffering with the faults of others. He is not easily offended and given to wrath. Love is kind; tender and compassionate. Love wishes to bestow the best that it can on the object of its affection (Eph. 4:32). Love envieth not, or does not boil over with jealousy, but is made happy by the prosperity and happiness of others. Nothing is more adverse to love than envy. Love vaunteth not itself; it is never proud, conceited, or arrogant. What do we have to be conceited about? 'Who maketh thee to differ?' (1 Cor. 4:7.) 'Love is not puffed up!' (Rom. 12:3, 10.)

v. 5. 'Love is not rude and unmannerly.' Pride, conceit and self-righteousness beget rudeness, but love produces humility and courtesy. 'Love seeketh not her own way,' rights and will (Phil. 2:3-8). 'Love is not easily provoked.' Love is not touchy, resentful, easily offended. 'Love thinketh no evil.' It does not carry about a suspicious nature looking for faults, but rather it thinks the best of others.

v. 6. 'Love rejoices not in the fall and failure of others, but rejoices in goodness and truth.' Love is never glad when others go wrong. What a man is, he wishes others to be. If he is evil, he delights to point to evil in others.

v. 7. 'Love beareth all things.' The word is 'Love covers with silence all things' (Prov. 10:12; 11:13; 17:9). 'Love believeth all things' (James 3:14-

18). It is better to believe the best of a brother and be disappointed than to believe the worst and destroy a friendship. 'Love hopeth all things.' What love cannot see, it hopes for; it never gives up! 'Love endureth all things.' It will endure trial, sorrow, sickness, disappointment, hurt feelings and offence.

vv. 8, 9. 'Love never fails.' It will endure to the end. It never ceases in this life nor in the life to come. It is of God, the gift of God and the life of God in a man (Eccles. 3:14). Someday the gifts of prophecy, tongues, healings and even knowledge shall vanish away, for we only know in part and prophesy in part. So much of divine mysteries and knowledge is unknown to us, but love goes on in glory. The most knowledgeable and gifted man is but a babe. But love is love and will grow, but not be superseded.

vv. 10-12. When perfect knowledge of God, of Christ, and of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven shall be ours in heaven, our imperfect knowledge, our weak faith, our so-called excellent gifts and rare talents will appear to be but children's toys in the sight of what we shall know and be.

'When I reached manhood, I put away my childish toys, thoughts and behavior;' even so, when believers shall see Christ and be like him (perfect, mature saints), tongues shall cease, prophecies shall fail, limited knowledge shall vanish away.

v. 13. There are three main graces – faith, by which we look to Christ, receive Christ and live upon him; hope, by which we wait for the fulfillment of every promise in Christ; and love to God and all men – yet love exceeds the others as to its duration and use. Faith shall give way to sight, hope to reality, but love shall only expand.

Speaking in other languages

1 Corinthians 14:1-17

In this chapter the apostle writes concerning the right use of spiritual gifts and prefers prophesying, or preaching, to every other gift.

v. 1. 'Follow after that love to God and toward your brethren about which I have been speaking. Make love your aim, and at the same time covet spiritual gifts.' Because love has the pre-eminence does not mean that we are to despise or neglect these gifts (2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Tim. 4:13, 14). Of all the gifts, the gift of preaching the word (the ability to open the Scriptures and the gift to explain the Old Testament prophecies, promises and types fulfilled in Christ) is of the greatest value to the church.

v. 2. The word 'unknown' is not in the original Scriptures. It has been supplied by the translators. By a 'tongue' Paul means a language not known or understood by most of the hearers. Suppose a person has the gift to speak or preach in another language (Acts 2:4-8) and, whether to show off his gift or for whatever reason, he uses that language to speak to the congregation. He speaks not to them, for they do not understand him. God understands him, for he is the Author of all languages. He may preach, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, great and wonderful mysteries, but it is of no profit, for no one understands him.

v. 3. He who preaches to men the gospel of Christ in the common language edifies men. There is an increase in knowledge and understanding. He exhorts them to walk in faith, obedience and holiness. He comforts the people of God who are troubled and burdened. God gives

a blessing through the preached word, but the blessing cannot come through a language not understood (Rom. 10:13-15; 1 John 5:20).

v. 4. He that speaks in a language not known by the hearers may warm his own heart and bless his own soul (if he understands what he is saying), but he that preaches in an intelligible language and style is a blessing to all who hear him.

v. 5. Evidently all did not have this extraordinary gift of the Spirit to speak in a language they never learned, and Paul says he would be happy if they did have it. However, more than this, he rather wished that they all had the ability to open and apply the Scriptures to men's understanding; for he who preaches and teaches the word of God in a man's own tongue is more useful and important than the man who speaks in an unknown tongue, unless he interprets what he says, that the people might be edified.

v. 6. 'Suppose I come to you speaking in a language you do not understand. What good would it do you? Unless there is a revelation of Christ to the heart, a knowledge of our sins, his mercy and his will of redemption, a telling forth of his purpose in Christ and the doctrines of grace, my ministry among you would be fruitless.' Men cannot believe what they do not hear.

vv. 7-9. When a person plays a musical instrument, he must play certain notes which are set in order according to a prescribed time, or no one will know the song he is playing. The trumpet was used by armies to sound charge or retreat. How will the soldiers know whether to charge or to fall back if there is no clear, understandable note sounded?

'So it is with preaching or teaching. If you speak in a language no one understands, he will not know what you are saying. You will just be talking into the air.'

vv. 10, 11. The whole earth was originally of one language (Gen. 11:1); but God gave them many languages (Gen. 11:7), so that now there are many tongues and languages, and the words in all languages are significant to those who understand them.

Therefore, if the language is not known to both speaker and hearer, they will be like foreigners to one another.

vv. 12. The Corinthians were very ambitious of spiritual gifts; therefore, Paul advises them to concentrate on seeking those gifts and the proper use of them so that the church may be edified. ‘Seek to excel and abound in gifts for the glory of God and the good of the church.’

v. 13. In 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 30 it appears that the gift to speak in tongues and the gift to interpret were distinct. Evidently a man could have one without the other. A man may be able to preach in another language and yet not be capable of translating it into the common language of the people. Therefore, if one speaks in another language, let him pray for the ability to interpret what he has said.

vv. 14, 15. ‘If I pray in the assembly in an unknown language (whether I understand, as some think, or do not understand, as others think), my spirit (by the Holy Spirit within me) does truly pray. But it bears no fruit and helps nobody if no one understands me, nor does it edify me if I do not understand.

What is to be done then? Here is the reply: ‘I will pray with the influence and aid of the Spirit of God, but I will also pray in a language that I myself and others may understand what I say.’ The same thing is applicable to what we sing.

vv. 16, 17. 'If you praise God and render thanks led by the Holy Spirit, how can the man who does not understand what you are saying worship with you and say 'Amen' to your prayer? You give thanks and are blessed, but he is not edified.'

Worship in an orderly fashion

1 Corinthians 14:18-40

vv. 18, 19. Paul lets them know that he did not despise the gift of tongues, nor did he discourage them from desiring the gift nor using it. He had this gift and used it in the many countries to which he traveled and preached. He could speak in more different languages than anyone, yet he says that he had rather speak a few words to the congregation in a language they understand than ten thousand words in a language no one understands. If men understand our words, we can communicate to them the doctrines of the gospel and the mysteries of grace.

vv. 20. There are some things in which it is commendable to be like little children. Children are usually tender-hearted, ready to forgive, willing to be taught, free from pride and vain glory and without guile and hypocrisy. 'But in your thinking and judgment, don't act like babies; act like mature men.' His chief reference here is to the way they were acting in this matter of gift, behaving with childish vanity and immaturity!

v. 21. There is no reason to be over-excited about speaking the word of God in other languages, for in Isaiah 28:11, 12 the Lord says, 'By men of strange languages and by lips of foreigners I will speak to these people (in their own tongue – Acts 2:5-8) and not even then will they listen to me.' Men are not converted by signs and wonders but by the Spirit and the word (Luke 16:29-31).

v. 22. The power of the apostles and other early preachers to speak supernaturally in other languages is not a sign for believers (who need no miracle to gain their attention or to confirm their faith), but these gifts and

miracles bore witness before unbelievers that these men were sent from God and preached a message from heaven (Heb. 2:3, 4; John 3:2). Inspired preaching and teaching (interpreting the divine will and purpose of God in Christ) serves to edify believers – not unbelievers, who must first be regenerated and given ears to hear.

v. 23. ‘If the church be assembled together and all of you are speaking in whatever tongues and languages you are gifted to speak and one comes in who is unlearned and untaught in the things of the Spirit, he will think you are all crazy.’

vv. 24, 25. ‘But if you preach the word in the Spirit and with the understanding, and people are present who are unbelievers, yet who understand your words, it may be that they shall hear the word of God, be convinced of sin, be brought to see the glorious gospel of Christ and fall on their faces in worship and faith, declaring that God is among you in very truth.’

vv. 26-35. ‘What then is the right and proper order of using these gifts which you have? When you come together in the assembly and different ones have different gifts and abilities, how shall they all be used for the glory of God and the good of the church? All things must be done for edification, instruction and the good of all.’

1. If men speak in another language, limit the speakers to two or three, with each taking his turn while another interprets what he says.

2. If there is no one present who can interpret what is said, let the person keep silent in the assembly and speak quietly to himself and God.

3. Let two or three preachers, who are gifted to teach or preach, speak in the service while the rest pay attention, weigh and discern what is said.

4. If a man is inspired of God to speak, if a message is laid on his heart, then let him wait until the first one is silent, or let the first one be silent and allow him to speak.

5. We are not to sing, preach, or pray all at the same time, but one by one, to avoid confusion and disorder. Men cannot learn or be comforted in disorder and confusion.

6. The gifts, abilities and talents a man has are subject to the man's wisdom and should be controlled by him. God is not the author of confusion, but he is the author of peace, order and wisdom. If a man cannot use his gifts in a sane, orderly fashion for God's glory and the good of all, it is a sign that the Spirit of God is not in him.

7. What has been said before does not apply to women, for they are to keep silent in the assembly. Women are not authorized to teach, preach, nor usurp and exercise authority over the men in the church, if they have a problem to be resolved or a question to be answered, let them have it resolved by their husbands at home (1 Tim. 2:11, 12). This is what the Old Testament teaches also (Gen. 3:16).

v. 36-38. Here is a sharp rebuke to those in Corinth who thought themselves wise, spiritually grown and beyond the instructions of the apostle Paul. He asks, 'Did the gospel originate with you? Did the word of God come to you only?' There were churches in Jerusalem and in other places before there was a church at Corinth. 'If one among you is lifted up with pride and claims to be a prophet and spiritually wise, he must acknowledge that I am an apostle and what I am writing to you is the command of the Lord. But if any man refuses to own these words to be the

commandment of Christ, let him be treated as an ignorant man, shunned and rejected.’

vv. 39, 40. ‘Wherefore, brethren, desire to preach and teach the word. Do not despise nor forbid men to speak in other languages if they are so gifted, but let all things be done decently and in an orderly fashion.’

The resurrection of the dead - I

1 Corinthians 15:1-19

In this chapter the apostle proves the resurrection of Christ and with different arguments he establishes the resurrection of all men. Evidently another problem that had risen in the church was the denial by some of the resurrection (v. 12; 2 Tim. 2:17, 18). The doctrine of the resurrection is a fundamental article of the gospel; without it we have no gospel (v.17; 2 Tim. 2:8). Much of the wrath and persecution that came upon the apostles from the Sadducees, the Jews, the philosophers and the Gentiles was because they preached the resurrection (Acts 17:31, 32; 24:14, 15, 21).

v. 1. 'Let me remind you, brethren (since it seems to have escaped some of you), of the gospel which I preached unto you when I first came among you. This is the gospel which you received with faith and joy - the gospel in which and for which most of you stand, though some of you have been seduced and warped by false teachers' (Gal. 1:6-9).

v. 2. 'By believing and receiving the gospel of Christ, you are saved. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:15, 16), but not unless you persevere (keep in memory what I preached) and continue in the faith of the gospel (Col. 1:21, 23; Heb. 3:6, 13, 14). Unless you continue in faith, your profession (your so-called faith) is all in vain' (1 John 2:19).

vv. 3, 4. 'I delivered (or preached) unto you what I received from our Lord himself (Gal. 1:11, 12), how that Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, died that he might satisfy divine justice for our sins (Rom. 3:25, 26; Isa. 53:4-6), was buried and rose again the third day, and all of his work on our

behalf was according to the Old Testament Scriptures. Every promise, prophecy and type recorded in the Law and the Prophets concerning the Messiah had its fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 24:27, 44, 45). The Old Testament contained the New Testament in picture and prophecy, and the New Testament is the Old Testament fully and plainly revealed (Acts 10:43).

v. 5-7. In these verses Paul calls forth the eye-witnesses of the resurrected Lord. The Scriptures say, 'In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established' (2 Cor. 13:1). The Lord appeared to Simon Peter, then to the Twelve. (Though Judas was dead, they went by their original name, the Twelve - John 20:24.) Later Christ showed himself to more than five hundred brethren at one time (Matt. 28:16, 17). 'Most of these people who saw him are still alive,' Paul said, 'but some are dead,' for this epistle was written twenty-six years later. He appeared to James and then again to all the disciples when he was taken up into heaven (Acts 1:1-3, 9, 10).

v. 8. The last appearance of the risen Lord was to Paul (Acts 9:3, 4). To be an apostle one must have been an eyewitness of the glory of Christ and must have received his gospel directly from Christ. Paul had both credentials. His revelation of Christ came after the others (after Christ had risen and ascended) as an abortive birth or one born at the wrong time. His sight of Christ was not according to the pattern established with the other apostles.

v. 9. 'I am the least of the apostles,' not in office, dignity, gifts, or labour, but deserving the least esteem because he had not stood with the others in the early days but was (with the Pharisees) a persecutor of the name of Christ and the people of God (Acts 9:1-3).

v. 10. 'By the unmerited favour and blessings of God, I am what I am.' Paul defends his authority and magnifies his office by declaring that these gifts and grace bestowed on him were not fruitless and in vain, for he labored more abundantly and had more success than any of the others. Yet he is careful to ascribe nothing to himself but all to the grace of God, which enabled him both to believe and to serve God (1 Cor. 4:7; John 3:26, 27).

v. 11. Therefore, it matters not whether they heard those who saw Christ first or Paul, who saw him last. The subject matter of their ministry was the same – namely, the incarnate, suffering, risen Redeemer. Christ, not the preacher, is the object of saving faith.

v. 12. If both the Old Testament and the New Testament declare his resurrection, if the apostles (who were eye-witnesses of his resurrection) preach the resurrection, if the gospel declares the absolute necessity of Christ's resurrection, how is it that some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? This is an absolute denial of the Scriptures, the gospel and the word of Christ's apostles.

vv. 13-19. Then follow several severe consequences of such teaching:

1. 'If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.' Christ became a man, died in the flesh and was buried. If men do not live again, then he is not alive.

2. 'If Christ be not risen, all of our preaching is in vain and amounts to nothing, and your faith in God is devoid of truth and will profit you nothing.'

3. 'We apostles and preachers have misrepresented God, for we have testified of God that he raised Christ from the dead, whom he did not raise, if the dead rise not' (Acts 2:23, 24, 32).

4. He repeats for emphasis, 'If the dead are not raised, then Christ is not raised.' He is still in the tomb and proved to be an impostor.

5. 'Your object of faith, Christ, is not raised; therefore, your faith is worthless, you are not saved, you know not God, you have no mediator, and you are still in a state of unregeneracy and guilt.'

6. 'Those of your number who have died believing in Christ and trusting him to save them are perished and eternally lost.'

7. The fashion of this world fades and believers in Christ are persecuted, hated and cast down. Our hope is not in this world but in the world to come. If these promises are not true, our hopes are in vain and we are the most miserable and frustrated of all men.

The resurrection of the dead – II

1 Corinthians 15:20-34

v. 20. The first-fruits were what first sprang out of the earth, were soonest ripe, were reaped first, gathered in and offered to the Lord (Deut. 26:1-3). So Christ first rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and presented himself to God as the representative of his people. There were others who were raised from the dead before him, but Christ was the first to be raised to immortal life. All of these others died again. He is the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence (Col. 1:18). Our resurrection is secured by him, our Representative (John 14:19).

vv. 21, 22. The first man, Adam, was the representative, the covenant and federal head of all men. We all lived in him and died in him when he sinned (Rom. 5:12). Sin, disease, physical death and eternal death came upon us through Adam's disobedience. So Christ is the Representative, the covenant and federal Head of the elect, and because he became a man, obeyed God's law perfectly, died for our sins and rose again, in him we have righteousness, redemption and eternal life (Rom. 5:17-19). All who are 'in Adam' die; all who are 'in Christ' (by grace, divine purpose and faith) shall live.

v. 23. God has appointed the order of the resurrection of his people. Christ is the first-fruits of this harvest, rising from the dead to die no more. Afterwards, at his second coming, all believers shall rise together (1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 John 3:2).

v. 24. 'Then cometh the end' - that is, the accomplishment, completion and perfection of all things: the end of the world as it now is; the end of all evil

power, authority and activity; the end of all earthly rule, authority and divisions, such as nations, families and races; the end of all ecclesiastical rule, authority and power. There will be no more prophets, apostles, bishops and pastors and teachers. But the mediatorial kingdom of Christ is referred to here mainly. The grand design of the Father in creation, providence and salvation is to have a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, populated by a holy people perfectly conformed to the likeness of his Son. This he gave to Christ, in the eternal council and covenant, to accomplish, to perfect and to deliver to him at the end (Luke 22:37; John 17:4; 6:38, 39).

vv. 25, 26. The Lord God has decreed that Christ should (as Prophet, Priest and King) reign over his people, over all flesh (John 17:2), over all things (Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:16-18; Ps. 110:1), until every contrary creature, word, thought and imagination are conquered. The last enemy to be destroyed will be death, for we shall rise to die no more.

v. 27. Paul refers to Psalm 8:4-6, and according to Hebrews 2:6-9, this is Christ. But the apostle adds that when God said, ‘All things are put under his feet,’ the Father is not included!

v. 28. When all is accomplished, God's design in redemption is complete and all evil is cast out, then nothing shall appear but the essential kingdom of God, the power by which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (three persons though but one God) shall reign.

v. 29. The apostle returns to his subject, the resurrection of the dead. ‘If the dead are not raised, then why do we submit to believers' baptism, which declares that we died with Christ, are buried and are risen with Christ?’ This is a meaningless ordinance if there is no resurrection.

vv. 30-32. ‘For that matter, why do we expose ourselves to ridicule, suffering and even death if we entertain no hope of eternal life? If there is no resurrection, we would not only be of all men most miserable but also most stupid. I face death every day. If the dead rise not, what advantage do I have? If we have no hope of resurrection, let us live as the heathen live.’

v. 33. ‘Do not be deceived by those who deny the resurrection and by such denial argue for a sinful course of life. If you listen to these people and are influenced by them, you will be corrupted, for evil companions, associations and communion have a bad influence on the lives and practices even of good men.’

v. 34. ‘Awake from this condition of sleep and carelessness. Awake to truth, righteousness and godliness. Don't be deceived by the false teachers who deny the resurrection, for there are some among you who have not a true knowledge of God, the gospel of Christ and the hope of eternal life. I say this to your shame.’

The resurrection of the dead – III

1 Corinthians 15:35-44

v. 35. There were some who denied the resurrection of the dead (v.12). The question is presented: ‘How shall dead bodies be raised which have been in the earth so many years?’ They have been reduced to dust, and this dust has undergone a thousand changes. With what bodies do they come out of their graves? Will they be the same bodies?

v. 36. Paul does not answer in anger nor call them fools in violation of Matthew 5:22, but he calls them foolish people who claim to be wise in the Scriptures and yet are ignorant of the power and ways of God (Gal. 3:1). He takes them to the farmer to learn the answer to these questions. When the farmer sows grain (whether wheat or corn), it must be put into the ground before it produces a stalk of fruit. The seed, being buried in the earth, corrupts, rots and dies; and in time it rises up as stalk, blade and full ear. This shows that the decaying of the body by death is not an objection to the resurrection, but really necessary to its resurrection. If God is able to quicken a grain of corn that is entirely dead and rotten, why should it be thought incredible that God should quicken dead bodies?

v. 37. The farmer does not take a full stalk of corn with full blade and ear and plant it in the earth; he only plants the bare grain. In other words, that which we plant is not the finished product but only bare grain. When a believer rises from the grave, it will be, in a sense, the same body but with infinite glories and excellencies, as the new stalk of corn is so much greater than the bare seed which was sown!

v. 38. God gives to the seed the kind of body which pleases him; yet none can deny that the body of corn or wheat which comes up is from the seed sown, though with a different body in respect to quality, beauty and usefulness. It is not the farmer, nor the sun, nor the rain, but God, by his power and sovereignty, who gives the seed a new and glorious body. So the resurrection of the dead is God's work. All the glory in which our bodies shall rise springs from his free grace and is bestowed on the same person who is buried in the grave.

v. 39. Paul is showing in these next verses that, though God will raise our bodies from the grave with flesh and bones, we shall rise with qualities and conditions much different from the flesh and bones which we now know. There is now a difference in flesh. All flesh, as we know it, is not the same. Humans, beasts, birds and fish are all flesh, yet not the same.

vv. 40, 41. 'There are celestial bodies' (such as the sun, moon and stars) 'and terrestrial bodies' (men, beasts, birds and other elements). The celestial is greater than the terrestrial. Even in the celestial bodies, the sun has a greater glory than the moon, and the moon greater than the stars. He is not saying that there will be a difference in the risen bodies among themselves, but he is only stressing the great difference in what we shall be compared to what we are now!

vv. 42-44. 'So is the resurrection of the dead.' The resurrection of the dead will be in real flesh, in our own flesh as to substance (the way we know it now), but as to its qualities, as different as human flesh from fish flesh! Our vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body (Phil. 3:21, John 3:1, 2; Luke 24:36-43).

1. Our bodies are buried in corruption, sickness and disease and are subject to decay and putrefaction, but when we are raised from

the dead, our new bodies will be immortal, no longer subject to disease, decay, nor corruption.

2. We are buried in dishonor and shame. We were conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, brought forth from the womb speaking lies. Our whole existence from birth to death (in thought, word and deed) is sinful, shameful and dishonorable (Isa. 1:5, 6; Rom. 3:10-18). We shall be raised in glory – in perfect beauty and comeliness, physically and spiritually. There will be no cause for shame in any way (Gen. 2:25).

3. We are buried in weakness. We come into the world in great weakness. What is weaker than a new-born babe? When we become adults, we are weak before disease and injury. We are weak and frail and subject to thirst, hunger, weariness and finally death. We are weak before Satan, the world and our own passions (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:24). We shall be raised in power! We are raised by the power of God but with great power in ourselves. We shall no longer be subject to these enemies of the flesh, no longer dependent on food, nor subject to evil (which shall be no more). We shall know weariness no more; we shall know as we have been known (1 Cor. 13:12). We shall be raised in spiritual, physical and mental power.

4. We are buried a natural (physical) body. We shall be raised a spiritual (supernatural) body. Now we have a body generated from another body, supported by food, water, breath and sleep. We are limited to time, places and information. When we are raised, our bodies will be as the body of Christ is now, not subject to nor dependent on these things. Our bodies shall be beautiful, incorruptible, free from infirmities, not subject to hunger, thirst or injuries, not needing meat, drink, clothes, nor marriage, but bodies which perfectly obey – the soul made perfect.

The resurrection of the dead – IV

1 Corinthians 15:45-58

In the preceding verse Paul says that our resurrected bodies will be spiritual bodies. As we now bear the image of the first man, Adam (from whom we descended), having a natural body like his, so we shall one day bear the image of the second man, the Lord Jesus, having a spiritual body like his!

v. 45. Adam was the first man made, the parent, head and representative of all his posterity. Adam had a body which was animated by the soul, which was supported by eating, drinking, sleeping and which was capable of dying. The last Adam is the Lord Jesus Christ, called Adam because he is really and truly man. He was raised from the dead with a spiritual body - not that it was changed into a spirit, for it still remained flesh and bones (Luke 24:36-40); but it was no longer supported in an animal way nor subject to the weaknesses of animal bodies. It is called 'a quickening spirit' because it has life itself, and he is called a quickening spirit because he gives life (John 14:19).

vv. 46, 47. It is not the spiritual life which came first, but the physical and then the spiritual. The first man was formed out of the earth (Gen. 2:7), and the word there signifies red earth. He had an earthy constitution, like the earth out of which he was taken, and he was doomed to return to it. The second man is the Lord from heaven, in distinction from the first man, who was of the earth. Though he was formed in the womb of the virgin, was flesh of her flesh and was supported by earthly means, yet he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and is very God of very God.

vv. 48, 49. As was Adam's body, so are the bodies of those who descend from Adam. They are houses of clay which rise out of the earth, are maintained by the things of earth and will return to the earth. As in Christ's spiritual body after his resurrection (in which he now lives in heaven and in which he will come again), so will be the resurrected bodies of all (Acts 1:9-11; 1 John 3:2). As we have borne the frailty and mortality of our representative, Adam, a body subject to sin, infirmity and death, so we shall one day bear the image of our representative, Christ Jesus, a spiritual body created in righteousness and true holiness (Rom. 5:1 7-19).

v. 50. 'Flesh and blood' here signifies our bodies in their present state. These cannot inherit the kingdom of God; they are corrupt, subject to disease, supported corrupt by things and dying. We must be changed; we must put on incorruption and immortality and be raised a spiritual body.

v. 51. Someone may say, 'But there will be many saints alive on earth in natural bodies, when Christ returns, who shall not be buried in the common way.' That is true, but they must be changed. Their natural bodies must be turned into spiritual bodies.

v. 52. This change will take place in a sudden moment. When the trumpet sounds, when Christ returns, when the dead are raised incorruptible, immortal and made like Christ, those who are alive shall also be changed (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

v. 53. God has decreed, and heaven requires, that our bodies be changed from their present state of mortality and corruption to immortality and incorruption before we can enter into eternal glory.

v. 54. This quotation is from Isaiah 25:8. Christ (by his obedience, death and resurrection) has obtained a full victory for all his elect over sin, the

curse and condemnation of the law, death, the grave judgment and hell. So when this glorious change takes place at his coming, this promise shall become a reality. He will swallow up all death in victory.

v. 55. The reference may be to a bee or a wasp which, having lost its sting, can do no more harm and is no longer feared. When believers arise from the grave, they shall fear the sting of death no more – it is gone. The grave gets its victory over all men, for we shall all lie there one day. But in that resurrection morning, when death is swallowed up in victory, we may reasonably ask, ‘Now, grave, where is your boasted victory?’

v. 56. Death has a sting and it is sin, which is the cause of death (Rom. 5:12). If it were not for sin, death would have no power over us. Sin gives death power over us. The strength of sin is the law of God, without which there would be no sin. Sin is the transgression of the law. It is the law which binds sin upon us, pronounces us guilty and condemns us to death (Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:10).

v. 57. ‘Thanks be unto God, who has given us the victory,’ over the law by answering in perfect obedience all of its demands, and over death and the grave by dying and rising again. He lives for evermore; and because we are one in him and with him by God's sovereign mercy and grace, we shall never die (Rom. 8:33-39).

v. 58. ‘Therefore, my beloved brethren, because we have such a blessed and certain hope of resurrection, victory over death and the grave and perfect conformity to the image of Christ Jesus, let us be steadfast and unmovable in the doctrines of the gospel, in our walk with Christ, in the preaching of the gospel and in encouraging one another; for your faith, labour and hope are certainly not in vain.’

Collections, courage and comfort

1 Corinthians 16:1-24

This chapter concludes the epistle with some directions concerning a collection for the poor believers, with a word about his intentions to visit them again and with exhortations to watchfulness, courage and love.

v. 1. ‘Now concerning offerings and collections of money which are to be given by believers for the support of ministers, for the preaching of the gospel here and in other lands, for the relief of the poor, for widows and for orphans: you are to do the same as I have instructed the churches of Galatia to do.’ The Lord's people are generous, sharing with others what God has given to them (Acts 4:34, 35; 2 Cor. 8:7-9; 9:6, 7).

v. 2. It is plain from this and other scriptures that the early churches assembled on the first day of the week (John 20:19; Acts 20:7). When they assembled on this day, offerings were to be received.

1. The persons giving – everyone.
2. The spirit of the gift – willingly (2 Cor. 8:12; 9:7).
3. The amount given – to be based on what a man has and in proportion to his blessings (2 Cor. 8:12, 13). Paul did not want to take up any collections when he visited them lest people accuse him of covetousness.

‘When I arrive, I will send those whom you approve to Jerusalem to carry your gifts of love, and if it seems wise for me to go with them, I shall do so. I intend to pass through Macedonia, and it may be that I will

spend the winter with you that you may provide the things necessary for my journey.'

The apostle is careful to base all of his journeys and his work on the will and providence of God. 'I will visit you, I will tarry with you, if the Lord permits' (James 4:13-15). We desire only that which is agreeable to the will of God.

vv. 8, 9. Pentecost was the Feast of Harvest observed fifty days from the Passover. It is mentioned by the apostle, not as a feast that believers observed (for Christ fulfilled all those) but to point out the time he would stay in Ephesus. He desired to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost, not to keep it, but to preach the gospel to the many Jews from everywhere who would be there (Acts 20:16). 'I will remain this time in Ephesus, for God has opened to me here a great and effectual door.' By God's grace, Paul's ministry at Ephesus brought many to faith in Christ. 'I have many enemies here,' as there always are where the gospel is preached.

vv. 10, 11. 'If Timothy comes to Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17), see that you put him at ease, receive him well and care for him properly, for he is a minister of the gospel and engaged in the same work of the Lord that I am.' Paul always showed a deep love and concern for other preachers and a strong interest in their work. He told Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul (Philem. 17).

v. 12. Apollos was known to them and had preached among them (Acts 18:24-28). He is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:4-6, and some think he left because of the divisions. Paul wanted him to go back and preach at Corinth, but he did not feel led to go at this time. However, he would come when he had opportunity.

vv. 13, 14. ‘Watch ye.’ Be on guard against false doctrines and false teachers, set a watch on your hearts, tongues, actions and entire conduct, watch over one another to encourage, edify and comfort. ‘Stand fast in the faith,’ do not depart from the grace of faith (Heb. 3:12; 10:38, 39) or from the doctrine of faith (1 Cor. 15:1, 2). ‘Quit you like men, be strong,’ or behave like mature men, not like children whom the least opposition will terrify and throw down, but be courageous in the face of adversity. ‘Let all things be done with charity.’ Let all things be done in true love to God and others, motivated by God's love for us (Eph. 4:32; 2 Cor. 5:14).

vv. 15, 16. ‘Brethren, you know that Stephanas and his household were the first converts in your country (1 Cor. 1:16) and that they consecrated and devoted themselves to the service of God's people. I exhort you to respect such leaders, submit to them and follow their example, as well as everyone else who co-operates with us and labors in the gospel’ (Heb. 13:7, 17).

vv. 17, 18. It seems that the church had sent these men to Ephesus to visit Paul, to acquaint him with the state of the church and to encourage him. He said that their visit made up for his absence from them and refreshed his spirit as well as theirs. Such men are to be appreciated, acknowledged and honored.

v. 19. This verse carries greetings to the church at Corinth from the churches in Asia and from Aquila and Priscilla and the church which met in their house. Aquila was a Jew of Pontus and Priscilla was his wife (Acts 18:2, 3).

v. 20. ‘Salute one another with a sincere kiss of love and friendship.’ It is a holy kiss denoting true and pure motives (Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12).

v. 21. Some think that Paul had someone write for him, but to prevent counterfeits, and that the church might be assured this was from him, he wrote his salutation with his own hand.

v. 22. If any man does not love our Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be (anathema) accursed. Our Lord shall come! (Maranatha)

vv. 23, 24. 'The grace, favour and spiritual blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. I love you all in Christ and for Christ's sake!'

2 Corinthians

Bible Class Commentary

A Work
of
Henry Mahan

Comforted to comfort

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

It is evident from the salutation that the apostle Paul is the author of this epistle and that it was written to the church at Corinth, probably from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, a year or so after the first epistle. In this epistle Paul defends his office and gospel against false teachers, urges the church to comfort and restore the fallen brother, writes of the true glory of God and reconciliation to God which is only seen in and accomplished by Christ Jesus, tells of his sufferings and afflictions in the service of Christ and gives perhaps the fullest instructions concerning collections, offerings and giving to be found in the New Testament.

v. 1. Paul identifies himself by name and office. His salutation is much the same as is found in other epistles and reveals that the true servants of Christ are not fond of fancy titles, before or after their names, and they ascribe their offices and authority to the will and call of God. God put Paul in the ministry and gave him his gifts (1 Tim. 1:12-14). In humility (characteristic of Paul) he includes young Timothy in this greeting, calling him 'our brother' in the grace of God and the ministry of the gospel. The epistle is addressed to the church at Corinth and to all believers in that region.

v. 2. 'Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.' Paul prays for an increase of grace, for every grace is imperfect in us, and those who have the most stand in need of more (2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 1:1-3). By 'peace' is meant peace with God through Christ, peace and contentment in our own hearts and peace among

believers and with all men. The Father is the giver and Christ is the fountain of all grace and peace in this life and throughout eternity.

v. 3. The word 'blessed' means to praise, to thank, to speak of in the highest adoration and to give all glory to our eternal God. He is described as 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' not by creation, as angels and men, nor by adoption as believers, but by eternal generation, having the same nature with him and equal to him in perfection, power and glory (John 1:1-3). The title 'Father' denotes his covenant relation to the Mediator and his seed (Gal. 3:16). He is called 'the Father of mercies' even as life, love, light and all mercies are from God (Micah 7:18), physical, material and spiritual! And he is called 'the God of all comfort.' There is no comfort nor rest except from him and in him. Whatever comfort believers enjoy, they have from the Father, who is their covenant God, through Christ, who is their Redeemer and Mediator and by the Holy Spirit, who is called the Comforter.

v. 4. Two things are evident from this verse.

1. The apostle attributed all comfort, strength and grace; which he experienced in trials and tribulations, to God (Heb. 13:5, 6) as the fountain of mercies.

2. The gifts, grace and comforts which God bestows upon us are not merely for our own use, but in order that we may help and comfort others by the comfort we have from our Lord.

v. 5. 'The sufferings of Christ' are not those which he suffered himself in our stead, but the persecution, afflictions and trials which ministers and believers endure on earth because of the gospel and opposition from men (2 Cor. 4:7-10). Christ called Saul's persecution of believers a persecuting

of himself (Acts 9:4; Matt. 25-40). God multiplies his comfort in Christ according to the measure of his trials. As our afflictions increase, so do our comforts in order that we may comfort others and not be overwhelmed with grief.

v. 6. The afflictions and comfort, the sufferings and blessings of the apostles and other ministers of the gospel were all for the good of believers, who saw their boldness, submission and courage in trial, heard their comforting words (Phil. 1:13, 14) and were encouraged to endure with faith the same trials. The spirit and attitude we exhibit both in trial and comfort have a great and lasting effect upon those to whom we minister the word (Phil. 4:11-13; 2 Cor. 4:15-18). God uses men as ambassadors and examples (1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Peter 5:3).

v. 7. ‘Our hope for you’ – that is, ‘our confident expectation the good work of God in regeneration, sanctification and in Christ, which is begun in your souls, will be carried on and perfected. You will continue in the faith and not be moved away from your profession of Christ by the afflictions and trials which you see in us and experience yourselves. Just as you share and are partners in our sufferings, you share and are partners in our comfort.’

vv. 8, 9. We are not sure about the troubles Paul refers to in this verse but, whatever they were, he says they were so great he despaired even of life, for these trials were above his natural strength to bear them. It was his opinion that he would die, but God brought him to this extreme condition that he might lay aside all trust and confidence in human strength, wisdom and power to survive and be encouraged to trust in God alone, who raised the dead. If he is able to raise the dead, so he is able to deliver us at all times. Abraham believed this (Heb. 11:17-19).

v. 10. The Lord in mercy delivered us from this heavy affliction and, knowing that we are continually exposed to danger and death, he will continue to preserve and protect us! All three tenses - past, present and future - are mentioned, which shows Paul's confidence in God's goodness in delivering of troubles for his glory and our good. This confidence can also apply to our redemption. We have been saved (Eph. 2:8, 9), we are being saved (1 Cor. 1:18), and our salvation is nearer than when we believed (Rom. 13:11).

v. 11. Faith in God's purpose, power and sovereignty ought not to discourage prayer, the use of means, nor intercession for one another (James 4:2; Matt. 7:7, 8). 'You prayed for us and God was pleased to deliver us. Therefore, for this gift bestowed upon us by the means of many praying, many ought also to give thanks to God on our behalf.' We ought to pray for those in distress, but we ought also to give thanks when prayers are heard.

All God's promises in Christ are yes

2 Corinthians 1:12-24

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:1-7), Paul indicated that he would stop in Corinth on his way to Macedonia and, after he had finished his business in Macedonia, he would come back to Corinth and spend a long time with them. Although these were his plans, the Lord ordered otherwise and Paul did not visit them. This change of plans caused many problems. Some accused Paul of levity, unfaithfulness, going back on his word and several other things. The enemies of Paul and the false teachers tried to capitalize on this and destroy Paul's influence with the Corinthian church.

v. 12. Paul answers the charge that he had falsified his word in not coming to Corinth as he had promised, by appealing to his own conscience, integrity in the faith and sincerity towards the glory of God and his church. 'I rejoice to inform you and all others that my conscience and conduct, my heart and mouth behave together in simplicity (not double-mindedness) and Godly sincerity (as opposed to hypocrisy); not with fleshly wisdom (craftiness to accomplish selfish ends) but by the grace of God dwelling in me, I have acted in the world and especially towards you in sincerity and truth.'

v. 13. 'There is no double meaning to what we say or write. The things which I write are what you know and must acknowledge to be truth (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Peter 1:20, 21). I hope you will acknowledge them to be true to the end of your lives.'

v. 14. 'In part' may refer to persons or things. 'A part of you have owned us to be sincere ministers of God and have rejoiced and blessed God that you heard us, though others of you have abused us.' Or, 'You have in part (at one time) owned us and had cause to thank God for us. When the Lord Jesus shall come to judge the world in righteousness, I shall rejoice that my labour among you has not been in vain.' What a blessing when ministers and people rejoice in each other here, and their joy shall be complete in that day!

vv. 15, 16. 'Therefore, being persuaded of your affection for me and my rejoicing in you and your love for Christ, I fully intended and promised to come to visit you on the way to Macedonia. The benefit you received from my first visit was to hear the gospel and be converted to Christ, so a second benefit would be your edification and growth in grace! I planned to visit you on the way to Macedonia and on my return, and to have you help me on my way to Judea.' Yet, for some reason, Paul changed his plans. He deals with the matter further in verse 23 and chapter 2:1-3.

v. 17. 'When I originally planned to come to you and put it in writing, did I do it lightly and carelessly, with no regard to God's will and your good? Did I not say, 'If the Lord permit?' (1 Cor. 16:6, 7.) Do I purpose according to the flesh? Do I consult my own interest and advantage? Do I say, 'Yes,' when I may mean, 'No?' Do my lips say one thing and my heart another?'

vv. 18, 19. The false teachers and enemies of grace had suggested that since Paul had not kept his word in coming to them as he promised, then he was not to be depended upon in his ministry. Paul declares that as God was true to his promises, so he had taught Paul to be true to his words to them. He calls the Lord to be his witness that his words preached among them and his personal words to them were true, honest and sincere - not

‘yes’ and ‘no.’ ‘Our intentions and plans are subject to the will and providence of the Lord; his promises in Christ are not subject to change (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29). For the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ our Surety, Redeemer, Mediator, Prophet, Priest and King, whom we preached to you and in whom we have life through his person and work, is not ‘yes’ and ‘no,’ but all of God's promises in him are ‘yes’!’

v. 20. God has made many promises to believers. These promises are all in Christ, since only he existed when they were made and since he has fulfilled all conditions by his obedience and death. Therefore, these promises are all ‘yes’ and in him ‘amen’ or ‘so be it.’ ‘Christ fulfilling, our preaching and your believing are all for the glory of God’ (Eph. 1:6, 12).

vv. 21, 22. Now it is God who chose us in Christ, redeemed us in Christ, called us in Christ and secures us for ever together in Christ. It is God who anoints us with his spirit and presence in regeneration and in ministerial gifts. It is God who has owned us as his own, putting his seal upon us (Phil. 1:6). It is God who has given us the Holy Spirit himself as an earnest or pledge of the heavenly inheritance (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13, 14).

v. 23. Paul gives a hint as to the reason why he did not come to visit them. ‘I call upon God as my soul's witness; it was to avoid hurting you that I refrained from coming to Corinth. With all the disorders among you, I would have had to come with the rod of correction. I am hoping for a reformation among you that when I do come, it may be with joy.’

v. 24. ‘Not that I have dominion over you or your faith; Christ is the author and object of faith.’ The minister can neither give faith nor sustain it. We are but helpers, or means and instruments, which God uses to preach the gospel and to instruct believers (1 John 1:3, 4; 1 Cor. 3:5-9).

Who is sufficient for these things?

2 Corinthians 2:1-17

In the early verses of this chapter the apostle gives a reason why he did not come to Corinth as was expected. He was unwilling to grieve them or be grieved by them. He preferred to have a cheerful visit to them, and this would have been impossible with the divisions, disorders and unjudged sin among them. He desired to have his instructions, which were given in the first epistle, carried out so that his next visit might be to teach and not to bear the rod.

vv. 1, 2. Paul made up his mind that he would not go to Corinth in sorrow and heaviness, rebuking and censuring them for their disorders. He had already done this in the previous epistle, which was a sort of coming to them and by which he made them sorry. If his visit was to be one of rebuke and conflict, which would be the means of fresh grief and sorrow, what pleasure and joy would he have among them?

v. 3. This was the purpose of his first epistle, that when he came again to Corinth, he might not be pained by those who ought to make him rejoice. He had written in confidence that they would correct the things that were amiss among them.

v. 4. Paul preached in Corinth eighteen months. After he left Corinth, false teachers crept in and disturbed the church with false doctrine and unscriptural practices. The church fell into divisions, factions and misuse of gifts, questions arose about marriage and going to law with one another, members were allowed to live in open sin without being disciplined, the resurrection was questioned, ordinances were abused and they flaunted

their learning and gifts. Paul wrote the first epistle to them out of much sorrow, distress and tears, not just to cause them grief but that they might realize the great love he had for them. True ministers and other believers who reprove and rebuke error of doctrine, spirit and conduct show their love for us and their concern for our spiritual welfare.

vv. 5-8. In these verses Paul deals with the matter of the man who was guilty of incest (1 Cor. 5:1, 2). The man, evidently a preacher, teacher, or gifted man, was living in open sin with his stepmother. Equally shocking to Paul was the fact that the church held the man in esteem and overlooked his conduct. Paul instructed them to discipline him strongly (1 Cor. 5:3-5), which they evidently did, for he now instructs them to comfort, forgive and receive him back into their fellowship. 'The man's behavior has not only grieved me but in some measure all of you.' Now the public rebuke and excommunication by so many was sufficient punishment. The man was broken, humbled and truly repentant. Therefore, they ought now to forgive him, comfort him and reinstate him to keep him from being overwhelmed by excessive sorrow and despair (Gal. 6:1). Paul exhorts them to reinstate him and to express their love to him in the most kind and tender manner.

v. 9. This was my purpose in writing you then and my purpose in writing now that I might prove your faith, love and obedience to Christ, his word, and his apostles in all things! When the apostles write these epistles under the power of God's spirit, God speaks! (Luke 10:16; 1 John 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:16.)

vv. 10, 11. 'Remember that when you forgive and comfort this man or any other, I forgive them, too. I readily forgive for Christ's sake, in the name of Christ, and in conformity to his teaching and example (Eph. 4:32; Mark 11:25, 26). I also forgive for your sake or for the good and advantage of

the church, before the presence of Christ! I am aware of Satan's ways and devices.' He will use any means against the Lord and his church. If he can foster division, an unforgiving spirit, harsh feelings, or pride in the church, he will do it. He will, under pretence of showing indignation against sin, keep a strict and harsh attitude towards offenders, destroy souls and convince men that they are serving God in their self-righteous (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

vv. 12, 13. When Paul journeyed to Troas (Acts 20:6) to preach the gospel of Christ, God was pleased to open the door for him. This indicates the liberty he had to preach, the hearing he received, or a measure of success which God gave to his ministry (1 Cor. 16:9). Paul was grieved that his brother (in the faith), Titus, was not there to give him an account of the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 7:5-7). He journeyed on to Macedonia, where Titus met him and refreshed his spirit with a good report from Corinth.

v. 14. 'Blessed be God and thanks be unto God, who, though we have many enemies, yet through Christ makes us more than conquerors and accomplishes his purpose through us. In every place we preach, God reveals the sweet fragrance of Christ. As when a box of priceless perfume is opened, the fragrance fills the place and everyone smells it or is aware of it.

vv. 15, 16. To those whose hearts are opened by the Spirit of God, who feel the guilt of sin and who see the beauty of Christ, the substitute and sin offering, this gospel is the sweet fragrance of life unto life -- spiritual life now and life everlasting. But to those who are perishing, whose hearts are hardened and who are filled with pride and unbelief, this fragrance of Christ is an offensive odor. Their rejection of our gospel only adds to their condemnation. Eternal death is added to spiritual death; death for sin is added to death in sin. 'Who is sufficient for these things?' What man is

sufficient for such a mighty work, such responsibility, such an awesome task? Who is worthy to speak for God? No one! But our sufficiency is Christ (2 Cor. 3:5).

v. 17. Paul declares that he does not, like so many hucksters, false preachers and flesh merchants, make merchandise of and deal deceitfully with the word of God. But in sincerity and with the purest motive (for the glory of God and the eternal salvation of men), he preaches Christ and him crucified in the presence of God and by the power of God!

Ministers of the new covenant

2 Corinthians 3:1-6

In the preceding verses the apostle Paul spoke very plainly in defense of his ministry, having stated that God always caused him and his fellow ministers to triumph in Christ, that they were a sweet fragrance of Christ unto God and to their hearers and that they did not corrupt the word of God (as some did) but preached faithfully the gospel of God's grace and mercy in Christ.

v. 1. 'Are we bragging about ourselves? Are we guilty of vain glory? Are we seeking to commend ourselves, or are we recommending ourselves to you and seeking letters of recommendation from you to others? Some preachers may feel the need of credentials and letters of recommendation from place to place, but we do not need them.'

v. 2. 'You are our credentials; you are our letters of recommendation.' Paul was God's messenger to them and the instrument God used to bring them to a knowledge of Christ (Rom. 10:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:20, 21). Their embracing the gospel of Christ, their faith, holiness and love and their perseverance in grace were testimonials to all men that God was with Paul and that God had sent him. They were written in his heart, not statistics and glowing reports on paper!

v. 3. He told them in the previous verse that they were his epistles written on his heart and did more to recommend him than all the reports on paper. But he is careful to ascribe to the Lord Jesus all the glory, for he says here that they are really the epistles of Christ! Paul is only the instrument the Lord used to preach to them. It was Christ, who, by his spirit, wrote his

law on their hearts, shed abroad his love in their hearts and saved them by his grace (Rom. 5:5-9; Eph. 2:8-10). The law of Christ is written not on tables of stone, as at Sinai, but on the heart of the believer (Ezek. 36:26, 27; Jer. 31:33).

v. 4. 'This is the hope, trust and confidence that we have through Christ toward, and with reverence to God. God has saved and called us to preach, and through our ministry has called you to faith and has given us all access to his throne of grace through the person and work of Christ, our Lord. This is our hope and confidence (Col. 1:12-23; 2:9, 10).

v. 5. Although Paul strongly defended his call to preach and declared that the Corinthians were proof and the fruits of his ministry, he would not leave the impression that he ascribed anything to himself, to any power or sufficiency in himself. He says that we are not sufficient even to think (which is the lowest human act) anything truly and spiritually good, much less sufficient for so great a work as the conversion of a soul. 'Our power, ability and sufficiency are of God. His grace is sufficient to enable us to repent, believe, embrace Christ and preach, and to enable you to receive our gospel (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). God did not find us sufficient, but he made us sufficient. The best preacher of the gospel is no more than what the grace of God makes him (1 Cor. 15:10).

v. 6. 'God has made us, or qualified us, to be ministers of the new covenant, or the covenant of grace, of which Jesus Christ is the Mediator and Surety.' In the following verses the apostle makes a comparison between the old covenant and the new, the law of Moses and the free grace and gospel of Christ (Heb. 8:6; 12:24; 13:20). The covenant of grace is called 'the new covenant,' not because it is newly made (for it is the everlasting covenant) nor even because it is newly revealed (for it is revealed in prophecy, promise and types throughout the Old Testament)

but because it is now fulfilled in the person and work of Christ. It is now manifested clearly in the gospel message (Rom. 3:21, 22), and it is forever new, it will never give way to another covenant (Heb. 10:9, 10). 'We are ministers, not of the letter of the law' (Rom. 7:6), which shows what is to be done, thought and said and what is not to be done, without giving any ability to obey its commands and with no power to sanctify or justify those who are under it (Rom. 3:19, 20), 'but we are ministers of the gospel which, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, gives spiritual life, and eternal life.' The bare letter of the law kills, in that it reveals sin, inability and enmity (Rom. 7:7-10; Gal. 3:10). The gospel of Christ is the Spirit who gives life, quickening dead sinners, working true repentance toward God and faith in Christ, writing the commandments of God on the heart and mind, and who actually justifies, sanctifies and makes the believer a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:22). We must be careful not to minister the gospel in letter and doctrine only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

The veil removed by Christ

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

In verse 6 the apostle observed the difference between the old covenant and the new, and the excellency of the gospel over the law. The law is a killing letter; the gospel is a quickening spirit. In the following verses he reveals other ways in which they differ and further shows the glory of the gospel of Christ above the law of Moses.

vv. 7- 9.

1. The Old Testament dispensation was 'the ministration of death.' It discovered and revealed sin; it showed the wrath and curse of God; it showed man his duty, but gave no strength to perform it. The New Testament is the ministration of the Spirit and life in the gospel of Christ, which reveals Christ as our righteousness and which reveals the grace and mercy of God through Christ unto life everlasting. The law shows God above us and against us; the gospel reveals Emmanuel, 'God with us.'

2. The law was written and 'engraved on tables of stone,' whereas the gospel is written on the heart (Heb. 10:15, 16).

3. The law and the giving of the law were 'glorious' (Exod. 20:18-21; 34:29, 30). Much of the glory and majesty of God attended the giving of the law - the glory of his presence, justice and holiness. But the gospel reveals the greater glory of God - the glory of his grace and mercy and the glory of his beloved Son in substitution and satisfaction for guilty sinners (Exod. 33:18, 19). This gospel is ministered by his Holy Spirit.

4. The law is ‘the ministration of condemnation’ only, for it cannot forgive, cleanse, nor offer any hope. Now if this be glorious, think how glorious is the gospel of Christ, which provides a perfect righteousness and right standing before God and produces love and obedience to God (Gal. 3:13, 14; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30).

v. 10. In view of this fact, the glory of the law and the glory shown in the face of Moses have come to have no glory and splendor at all because of the overwhelming glory of the gospel of God revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:5, 6).

v. 11. If the law of Moses (fulfilled in and by Christ), which was but temporary and has been done away, was glorious, how much more glorious is the covenant of grace and righteousness in Christ, which abides for ever! (Heb. 10:9-14.)

v. 12. The word ‘hope’ here is more than a wish or a good prospect. It is a confident expectation based on the sure word of God and the person and work of Christ. The meaning of the verse is ‘Since we have a certain and confident expectation of acceptance by God in Christ, of everlasting righteousness and of eternal glory which can never pass away, we are neither ashamed nor afraid to preach this gospel to all men.’

v. 13. We preach the gospel of the glory of God (1 Tim. 1:11) freely, openly and boldly and not like Moses, who put a veil over his face, not so the people could not look, but because they could not bear to look upon even the reflected glory of God (Exod. 34:30-35). And because of their unbelief and hardness of heart, they could not see the end or goal of that law, who is Christ (Rom. 10:1-4).

vv. 14, 15. Moses' covering of his face with a veil signifies the righteousness of God in Christ, which is hid from generations because of unbelief and hardness of heart (Col. 1:26, 27; Rom. 11:7, 8). To this day that same veil remains, and they do not see the glory of the gospel nor Christ, the end of the law. They read the Old Testament Scriptures but cannot see Jesus Christ in them (Acts 10:43; Luke 24:27, 44-46). This veil can only be removed through the light of the gospel of Christ shining in the heart. When a person sees Christ by faith, he sees the unveiled glory of God (John 14:9).

v. 16. Nevertheless, when a person (Jew or Gentile, one person or a nation such as Israel) shall turn from unbelief, idolatry and salvation by the works of the law to the Lord Jesus Christ in true repentance and faith, that veil of blindness shall be removed. Some understand this of the whole of the Jews in a future day (Rom. 11:25, 26), and it may be, but all men are spiritually blind who have not seen the glory of God in Christ. When we see the Son in his redemptive power and work, we see the fulfillment of the law, satisfaction of God's justice and the glory of God!

v. 17. The Lord to whom we turn when the veil is taken away is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the man Christ Jesus, but not only a mere man; he is that Spirit or he is God (John 4:24). He is the Spirit of grace, peace and life. He is the giver and the gift of the Spirit, and where he lives and dwells, there is liberty - emancipation from the bondage of the law, the curse of the law and the penalty of the law. 'If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.'

v. 18. The Israelites saw the glory of God in a cloud, in the tabernacle and in the types and shadows, but all believers with unveiled and open faces beheld the glory of God with eyes of faith in the face of Christ Jesus. Not that we look upon the full majestic glory of God himself, for no man could

do this and live (Exod. 33:20). But we behold his glory as in a mirror (1 Cor. 13:12), and by looking to him in faith, we grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ. From one degree of grace and faith to another, we are changed, and the image of Christ is formed in the believer. This comes by the Spirit and power of God.

The face of Jesus Christ

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Because of much persecution, suffering and affliction, Paul had to battle against the accusations by false teachers that he was not a true apostle of Christ. These men tried to prejudice the minds of the people against Paul and his friends. In this chapter, he declares his uncompromising zeal and integrity in preaching the gospel, so that if any did not see the glory and truth of it, it was because they were blinded by Satan and the hardness of their own hearts, not from want of a true minister and a true message.

v. 1. 'Therefore, seeing we have this ministry of the Spirit and life (written on the heart, not in letter but spirit) of justification and a perfect righteousness through Christ, this ministry of the redemptive glory of God in the person and work of Christ, we do not get discouraged nor faint in our spirit because of difficulties and trials (John 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12; Phil. 1:29).' Our call to the ministry is by the mercy and grace of God, as is our strength and power to persevere through many hardships' (2 Cor. 12:9; Acts 18:9, 10). The best man would faint under the work and perish under trial and burdens without the mercy and grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10).

v. 2. 'We renounce the hidden things of dishonesty' - that is, they were the same men in private as they were in public. In regard to conduct, conversation and doctrine, they were open and above board (Matt. 7:15). The false teachers have much to hide in motive, manners and methods; they speak one thing in secret and another in the congregation. 'We do not walk in craftiness, practicing trickery and cunning, using people to further our gain and glory, disguising our true goals.' There are many hucksters and merchandisers of souls who use religion and the gospel to promote

themselves and not the glory of God (2 Peter 2:1-3). 'We do not handle the word of God deceitfully,' corrupting it with human work, tradition and philosophy. 'We do not keep back a part of it, twist it to suit the flesh, and cry 'peace' when there is no peace (Gal. 2:21; Acts 20:20, 27). We commend ourselves (in the presence and sight of God) to every man's conscience by preaching with plainness and boldness the truth of the gospel as it is revealed in the Lord Jesus' (Heb. 13:17). An upright way of life and a true message of Christ crucified are all the recommendations a minister needs before men and women who know God.

v. 3. The apostle calls the gospel 'our gospel' because he was saved by it, he was an instrument of God called to preach it, he was in love with and obsessed by it and he was entrusted with it (1 Tim. 1:11, 12). If that blessed gospel of the grace of God be hidden so that men do not understand, receive and believe it, the fault is not in the gospel nor in the preaching of it, but in the men themselves. For they are lost, blind, dead, natural men who have no spiritual perception nor taste for the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14, 15). All mankind are in a lost condition by birth and because of sin. God has purposed to save the lost through Christ (Luke 19:10). He chose some, Christ redeemed them and the Spirit calls them by the gospel. However, many will be lost for ever, left in blindness and sin under the dominion of Satan. Some writers believe these who will be lost for ever are the people referred to in verses 3 and 4.

v. 4. 'The god of this world' (because of the context and the work of deception and blinding man's eyes to the gospel) can only refer to Satan. Nowhere else do we find him called by this name, but our Lord twice referred to him as 'the prince of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30). What he blinds is 'the mind' - the understanding. Those who believe not are under the influence of Satan (Eph. 2:1-3), who penetrates hearts and minds with prejudice, pride, error and ignorance. By divine permission, he bears great

power in the world and in the hearts of men. His design is to keep men in darkness and ignorance and, while he cannot keep the gospel out of this world, his business is to keep it out of men's hearts. The glorious gospel is the gospel of God's glory (Exod. 33:18, 19) in Christ. Christ, who is the express image and revelation of God, is the sum and substance of the gospel (Rom. 1:1-3) and salvation is having Christ revealed to and in us (Gal. 1:15).

v. 5. We preach not ourselves, our opinions, our philosophies, nor do we preach to promote ourselves nor supply ourselves with life's necessities. We preach Christ Jesus, the Lord (1 Cor. 2:2). We preach Christ, the Messiah, Prophet, Priest and King, fulfillment of every Old Testament type and promise; Jesus, Son of man, Man of sorrows, numbered with the transgressions, tempted in all points; the Lord, very God of very God, King of kings and Lord of lords. We are your servants for his sake' (Matt. 20:26, 27).

v. 6. In the creation of the world, God made something out of nothing. He commanded light to shine in darkness (Gen. 1:3). So in the new creation in Christ, God makes something out of nothing and commands the light (Christ is the light) to shine into our darkened hearts to give us the true knowledge of God and his glory (1 John 5:20). As light was the tint production in creation, so the light of Christ is the first thing in the new creation. Conviction of sin (John 16:8-10), the honoring of the law (Rom. 5:19), the satisfaction of God's justice (Rom. 3:25, 26), and faith (Gal. 2:20) are all accomplished in the sinner in relation to Christ Jesus. Even our spiritual growth is in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). So from the new birth to perfect conformity to Christ, the whole of the work of redemption is relative to Christ.

Cast down but not destroyed

2 Corinthians 4:7-18

v. 7. The gospel of Christ is called a 'treasure' in that it contains rich truth; it has rich blessings, such as redemption, sanctification and justification; it consists of rich and precious promises; it shows forth the riches of God's grace and mercy in Christ. This treasure is 'in earthen vessels,' meaning the ministers to whom God entrusts the gospel and through whom he sends the gospel to sinners. They are weak and frail creatures, subject to like passions and infirmities as other men (James 5:17; 1 Cor. 2:5-7). God makes the most unlikely his instruments of grace, that he might have all the glory (1 Cor. 1:26-29). The weaker the vessel, the stronger his power appears to be. Whatever is accomplished in the proclamation of the gospel by frail men is the work of God and not men, that he, not they, might be praised and glorified.

vv. 8, 9. 'We are troubled' and oppressed in every way. We are never free from one trial or another. We are in the world and expect tribulations (John 16:1-4, 33; 15:19, 20), yet we are 'not distressed.' We have the peace of God, the manifestations of his love and care, a freedom to the throne and sufficient for every trial (2 Cor. 12:9). 'We are perplexed'; the word signifies doubting and uncertainty. We are often uncertain and in doubt about what will happen to us; and sometimes we know not what to do, which way to take, nor how our needs shall be supplied, but we are 'not in despair.' We do not despair of the leadership, help, presence and support of our Lord. We are 'persecuted' of men, cursed, threatened and despised because we profess Christ and preach Christ crucified, risen and exalted. But we are 'not forsaken' of our Lord, who owns us and causes us always to triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). Neither are we forsaken by

those who love Christ, for they support us in prayer and provisions. We are 'cast down' like an earthen vessel is sometimes cast out or thrown to the earth, seemingly forgotten and deserted. But we are 'not destroyed.' We live by the mighty power of God and are immortal until his work in us, through us and by us is done. Whatever the condition of God's children in this world, they have a 'but not' to comfort them. Their case may be bad, but not hopeless; for he is their hope!

vv. 10, 11. Paul speaks here of the sufferings and afflictions the disciples themselves endure in the flesh. We are liable to the same hatred, suffering and putting to death that our Lord suffered. We are one with him, and the world, which hates him, hates us. We don't expect any better treatment than was afforded our Lord. There is one great consolation: 'Because he lives, we shall live.' The power of our Lord's grace, strength, comfort and peace is in us daily, manifested to us, to the church and to the world. The apostles and ministers of the gospel seem to be a special target for Satan's hatred and the world's enmity, but even these trials God uses to call out his sheep (2 Tim. 2:9, 10) through their word.

v. 12. 'Our death is your life; our sufferings are for your advantage. This gospel we preach at the expense of persecution, trial and even death is the means of bringing the gospel of life to you.'

v. 13. Paul declares that he and his fellow laborer's have the same spirit of faith as David, who wrote in Psalm 116:10, 'I believed, and therefore have I spoken.' We, too, believe God, his eternal purpose in Christ, man's utter ruin and inability, the person and work of our Lord Jesus, the resurrection to eternal life of believers and the resurrection to eternal condemnation of unbelievers. Therefore we speak these truths. The Old Testament saints are our examples (Rom. 4:19-25).

v. 14. We are assured that God, who raised our Lord Jesus from the grave as the first-fruits of them who sleep, shall by the same power flowing from him who sits at his right hand also raise our mortal bodies from the grave. We know that Christ was raised and his resurrection is an assurance of ours (1 Cor. 15:20-27). We shall all meet in the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:13-18) and shall, by Christ, be presented unto God, redeemed by his life and washed in his blood (Jude 24, 25).

v. 15. 'All these things' that the apostle has mentioned (from the eternal purpose of God in electing a people; the prophecies, promises and types of the Old Testament, the incarnation, obedience, death, resurrection and exaltation of our Lord, to the calling, preaching and sufferings of the apostles) 'are for your sakes!' The more the grace, favour and blessings of God are revealed to multitudes, the more honour, glory and praise are given to our God (1 Cor. 1:30, 31).

v. 16. 'Therefore, we ministers of the gospel do not become discouraged, nor do we have thoughts of quitting the conflict. Our outward flesh is progressively decaying and wasting away, but our inward man, created in Christ Jesus, everyday grows stronger and stronger in the grace and faith of Christ.'

v. 17. Paul calls our sufferings in the flesh for the sake of Christ 'light afflictions.' That which the flesh calls heavy, burdensome and grievous, faith perceives to be light and but for the moment. When we are being used of God, supported by his grace, favored with his love, and know that these trials are for our good and his glory, we are able to call them 'light afflictions.' Then when we compare these afflictions and time on earth with the glory that shall be ours, they become even less important (Rom. 8:18).

v. 18. Someone once said that two things support the believer who is under trial: first, seeing the Lord's purpose and hand in it all (Heb. 11:27; Rom. 8:28) and second, looking by faith beyond this world to that glory which God had prepared for those who love him (Heb. 11:9, 10). The things of this world that we see, feel and taste by faith through the grace of God are eternal.

Absent from the body – present with the Lord

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

This chapter continues the subject dealt with in the closing verses of chapter 4. Two things support the believer under trial and suffering: seeing him who is invisible and seeing the glory which is to follow this brief life on earth. Our confident hope of an eternal, blessed life with Christ hereafter makes us indifferent to our temporary troubles and encourages us to seek our Lord's approval.

v. 1. These are things which 'we know.' The body in which the soul dwells is an 'earthly house' because it is from the earth (Gen. 3:19) and shall return to the earth. It is called a 'tabernacle' or tent because of its frailty and short existence. It must soon wear out, be folded together and finally destroyed (Heb. 9:27). When this comes to pass and the body is laid in the ground, the spirit returns to God (Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:23). We have 'in the heavens' a house, or habitation, or dwelling-place made by God, through the righteousness and death of Christ (John 14:1-3). It is a 'building of God' (worthy of its Author), 'eternal' (in that it shall never perish), and it will be enjoyed immediately after this tent is dissolved.

v. 2. Two things are evident here.

1. The believer groans under the burdens of this life. He groans because of the nature and corruption of sin which remains in him (Rom. 7:24, 25).

2. The believer longs and desires to be free from all sin and to be like Christ (Ps. 17:15). He does not desire death just for the sake of being done with life's burdens and trials, but he desires to put on immortality and to enter into the eternal joys of his Lord.

v. 3. We shall enter into the presence of the Lord clothed in the shining, pure and perfect robes of Christ's righteousness and shall not be ashamed (nor cast out) being naked (Matt. 22:11-13).

v. 4. While we are still in this tent of flesh, 'we do groan, being burdened' with the body of flesh and sin and desiring to be with Christ, which is far better. It is not that we desire to cease to exist nor cease to live in God's universe and kingdom, but that we long to live truly in glory, holiness and immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-54). There is death about us and in us, and we long to be done with it. Death is not to be desired for its own sake, but even in the flesh we rejoice in the Lord and in his good providence. But death is to be desired because it leads the believer to that glorious change into the image of Christ.

v. 5. It is our sovereign Lord who has chosen, redeemed and called us to that glory and immortality (Rom. 8:28-31). We can be sure of that inheritance, for God, in his unchangeable purpose (Mal. 3:6), has determined to populate the new heaven and new earth with a people like Christ. He gave his Son to redeem them and to provide for them a perfect righteousness, and he has given us his Holy Spirit as a pledge of that promise (Eph. 1:13, 14). Salvation is of the Lord in its plan, its execution, its application, its continuation and its ultimate perfection.

v. 6. Because God has foreordained us unto eternal glory in, by and through Christ, and has given us the earnest of his Spirit, we are confident and assured that we shall enjoy those blessings. We know that while we

are sojourners on earth in this natural body we are absent from the glorious presence of God and the full enjoyment of that for which we have been redeemed. We are not absent from his general presence, which is everywhere (and particularly with his people), but we have not yet entered into our inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5).

v. 7. Our lives, conduct and expectations are regulated by our firm conviction and belief concerning God's mercies and grace to us in Jesus Christ. We see nothing here (by the eye of sense) but misery, sin and death. Faith is spoken of as seeing. 'He that seeth the Son...' We see with the God-given eye of the soul which looks to Christ for all things.

v. 8. 'We are confident of our future happiness and quite willing to depart out of this world and to be present with the Lord' (Phil. 1:23, 24). Those who are born from above, whose hearts and treasures are above, whose affection is set on things above, inwardly desire to depart from this strange country and live above.

v. 9. 'We labour actively in the service and kingdom of the Lord preaching, witnessing and serving, and we labour passively, submitting to his divine providence, that whether living or dying, whether at home in the body or present with the Lord, we may be accepted in the Beloved.' This is the one concern, the one desire of the renewed heart – to win Christ and be found in him (Phil. 3:8-11).

v. 10. All sons of Adam must appear before the judgment seat of Christ (Heb. 9:27). All judgment is committed to the Son (John 5:22). All judgment is relative to the Son (Rom. 2:16). Men and women who have no interest in Christ, who have not the righteousness of Christ, shall give account of and stand responsible for every secret and open sin. Those who believe on Christ have no sin, therefore no condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Our

sins have been both judged and put away in our Lord's sacrifice (Heb. 10:12-17).

Constrained by his love

2 Corinthians 5:11-17

v. 11. 'Being confident that there shall be a great and terrible judgment of the Lord, before which all must appear (Heb. 9:27), the Lord Jesus himself being the Judge (v. 10, John 5:22), at which men shall give account for all that they have thought, said and done in the flesh, we persuade men to venture on Christ and believe on him to the saving of their souls. Salvation is only by Christ, who is both able and willing to save the chief of sinners (Heb. 7:25). If a man is in Christ by faith, there is no judgment nor condemnation awaiting him (Rom. 8:1, 34). If men are not persuaded and do not believe us, God knows our hearts and the sincerity of our mission. He knows that we labour for his glory and the good of men. I hope that our faithfulness and honesty are known to you also.'

v. 12. The apostle is not praising himself nor commending himself to them, nor does he defend the sincerity of his ministry for their sakes, for they knew him. But he writes these things that they might have a reply for those false apostles and prophets who reproached Paul and gloried in outward show, in circumcision, in learning, in appearance only and who knew nothing about heart conviction, repentance and faith (Rom. 10:9, 10; Luke 16:15; Gal. 6:12-14).

v. 13. Paul's zeal and enthusiasm concerning Christ and the gospel of God's grace led many of his adversaries to call him a frantic, even a madman (Acts 26:24). He tells them that his great zeal and diligence were for the glory of God and the good of the church. 'Whether we be mad, as some say, preaching with great ardour and forcefulness, or whether we be

calm and lowly, it is to promote God's glory and your eternal good' (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17).

v. 14. All ministers of Christ and all believers in the Lord Jesus are under the sweetest and strongest constraint to do what they do. They are motivated by 'the love of Christ' – his love for them and their love for him. It is not fear of hell, desire for reward, nor concern for acceptance that excite believers to their duty, but Christ's eternal love, which led him to redeem them by his life and death, and the love of God which is shed abroad in their hearts (John 21:17; 1 John 4:19). His love for us is the chief motive, for we know that if he died then we were all dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). If we had not been dead spiritually, he would not have had to die. Also, if he died for us, we died in him – to the world, to the claims and curse of the law and to ourselves (Gal. 6:14).

v. 15. How will men whom Christ loved and for whom Christ died live, labour and conduct themselves? Certainly not to themselves to serve their own profit, honour and ambitions, nor to the flesh to fulfill its lusts and cravings, nor to the world which hates Christ, but to him who died for them and rose again (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). The end of Christ's sacrifice was to redeem us from sin and make us holy (Eph. 1:3-5; Titus 2:14). It is unreasonable to suggest that a person chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son and regenerated by the Spirit will disregard the commandments of his Lord and live a self-centered, sinful and worldly life.

v. 16. The word 'know' in this verse means to approve, acknowledge, or esteem. Paul is saying that he values no man from a human point of view, in terms of natural standards. Whether a man be a descendant of Abraham, circumcised, learned, rich, gifted, or weak, he regards no man with respect to any fleshly consideration. Christ has taken away all distinctions of the flesh and brought us into a spiritual kingdom (Col. 3:10, 11). Christ was

once a man, walked perfectly upon this earth and we did esteem him as such, but we have other thoughts and apprehensions of him now. He is our exalted Saviour and Redeemer, whose kingdom is not of this world. We do not make images and pictures of Christ as a man and use them in worship, but we love and worship him in spirit and truth (Phil. 3:3).

v. 17. 'If any person is in Christ,' not in religion, in the church, or in moral reformation, but in Christ, by faith in Christ, by a new birth wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, in Christ through electing love, redeeming grace and a living union, he is 'a new creature' (Gal. 6:15). This new creation describes a creation work, not of man but of God (Eph. 2:8-10; Col 3:10). It is a new nature, a new man and a new principle of grace and holiness, which was not there before and is distinct from the old nature, the old man, with which we are born in the flesh (John 3:5, 6; 1:12, 13). 'Old things are passed away' - the old way of life, which loves and serves the flesh, the old legal righteousness and religion, old companions and acquaintances, old desires for riches, honour and human philosophic, and old foolish thoughts of God, self and future glory. The new man thinks and acts from new principles, new rules, with new goals and objectives and in a new fellowship. He has a new commandment of love, a new name, a new song in his mouth, even praise to God, a new and living way opened by the blood of Christ, and an inheritance in the new heavens and new earth. In the new creation absolutely nothing of the flesh is needed, used, nor continued. Our Lord said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'

All things are of God

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

There are only four verses in this section, but if, by the grace of God, a person can lay hold of the things taught in these verses, he will have a foundation which will not be shaken, a sure hope in Christ Jesus and the greatest comfort in every trial.

v. 18. 'And all things are of God.' Paul probably referred to the preceding statement: 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,' for this complete change, which is wrought in conversation is certainly not of ourselves, but of God (John 1:12, 13). We have a new name, a new heart, a new nature, new principles and a new family, which are all of grace by the power of God. But on a wider scale all things are of God – all things in creation, in providence, in redemption and in the world to come. He is the first cause of all things!

There may be second and third causes and instruments used by God to accomplish his purpose (Acts 4:27, 28), but he works his will in heaven and earth and gives it to whomsoever he will. 'He hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.' Those who were enemies by birth, by nature and choice are now made friends and sons. Reconciliation indicates a quarrel or separation, and sin is responsible for that separation. 'Your sins have separated you from your God.' The law of God is violated, the justice of God must punish the guilty and the holiness of God will not permit acceptance or fellowship. But God is not only willing to be reconciled, he has appointed his Son the Mediator of reconciliation (1 Tim. 2:5). He set forth his only begotten Son in his purpose and decree to be our representative, our righteousness, our sin-offering and our atonement (Gal. 4:4, 5) that by his obedience before the law and by his suffering and death

the law might be honored, justice satisfied and peace made between God and the elect.

He reconciled us to himself as being the party offended, whose law was broken, whose justice required and demanded satisfaction (Rom. 3:19-26). And he 'hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation,' which is the gospel. By the inspiration of God, the Scriptures were written (2 Tim. 3:16_ 17) which contain the word of reconciliation, showing that peace and eternal life are in Christ. God also sends forth his ministers to preach the gospel of mercy and grace in Christ (Rom. 10:13-15; 2 Tim. 1:8-11; Mark 16:15-16). This ministry of reconciliation is God-given.

v. 19. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' This phrase declares what is the ministry of reconciliation, its author, its means, its subjects and its consequences. Christ is God (John 1:1-3; Acts 20:28). In the person of Christ, God was actually providing himself a lamb, a ransom and an atonement. He did not charge our sins to us but to Christ, having made Christ to be sin for us (Isa. 53:4-6, 11, 12; 1 Peter 2:24). The word 'world' does not mean that Christ effectually bore the sins of every person and reconciled every son of Adam to God by his death. If this were true, no one would finally be lost. He reconciled the world in the sense that he redeemed a people out of every tribe, kindred and nation - not of the Jews only.

John Owen said, 'If Christ died for all of the sins of all men, then all men will be saved; if he died for some of the sins of all men, then no one will be saved; but if he died for all of the sins of some men, then some men will be eternally saved.' This message of substitution and satisfaction by the obedience and sufferings of Christ has been committed to faithful ministers of the gospel. We dare to preach it and dare not preach any other message (Gal. 1:8, 9; 1 Cor. 9:16). Inasmuch as Christ is our righteousness, God does not call upon us to produce a righteousness, but to receive his righteousness by faith. Inasmuch as Christ is our Surety and

Substitute, God will not require satisfaction from us but accepts us in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6, 7).

v. 20. Since God has reconciled his sheep by Christ and has given to his ministers the gospel of reconciliation, then they are certainly the ‘ambassadors,’ or representatives ‘for Christ.’ They come sent of him, empowered by him and speaking for him. To hear a true servant of Christ speaking by his Spirit in keeping with his word is to hear Christ (1 John 4:6). The minister of the gospel speaks in the name of Christ, for the glory of Christ and for our eternal good. His message is that God is reconciled in Christ; Christ died for sinners; there is peace and life to be had through faith in Christ: ‘Be ye reconciled to God.’ God is reconciled to us in Christ, but before regeneration and conversion we are still at war with God. Our natural mind is enmity, not subject to God, loving darkness and hating light (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7). This is the message of God’s ambassador: ‘God is reconciled; lay down your arms of rebellion, kiss the Son and be reconciled to God.’

v. 21. Christ our Lord had no sin, knew no sin and did no sin. He was perfect before the law of God (1 Peter 2:22; Heb. 4:15). Our sins were reckoned to him. He was identified and numbered with the transgressors and, though he personally had no sin, yet by imputation he was the world’s greatest sinner and was dealt with as such and died under the wrath of God (Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:28; Rom. 8:32). All of this was done that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ and, by our identification and oneness with Christ, justified. Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we, who have no righteousness, might be made righteous before God in him (Rom. 10:1-4). With his spotless garments on, we are as holy as his Son (Isa. 45:24). Someone said, ‘The gospel can be summed up in two words – substitution and satisfaction.’ Christ, as our Substitute, made

Romans 16

Henry Mahan

full and complete satisfaction for us before God's holy law and righteous justice. In him we are wholly sanctified, completely and eternally saved.

The ministry of the gospel

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

v. 1. The ministry of the gospel of Christ is a work in which every believer is engaged, whether in preaching, teaching, praying, giving, or witnessing. It is a work which requires perseverance, faithfulness and diligence. We are not in competition, but work together in unity with one common goal – the glory of God (Phil. 1:14-18). However, the meaning here is that we are fellow laborers with Christ. He is the Chief Shepherd; we are under him. He is the Master; we are servants (1 Cor. 3:5-9). Redemption is his work alone ('Salvation is of the Lord'); yet there is a ministerial part which lies in witnessing (Acts 1:8), preaching (Mark 16:15, 16) and teaching (Eph. 4:11-14). In this regard, we are 'workers together with him.' 'We beseech you to receive the gospel we preach; believe it, embrace it and walk therein.' For to hear the gospel, or to be exposed to it, or only to give lip service to it, or to profess to believe it and then turn back is to receive it 'in vain'! (Heb. 10:38, 39; 2 Peter 2:20-22.)

v. 2. This is a quotation from Isaiah 49:7, 8, and these are words spoken by the Father to Christ! 'I have heard thee.' He heard him when he stood as our eternal Surety, the Lamb slain from the beginning; he heard him in his priestly prayer recorded in John 17; he heard him in the garden, on the cross and now at his right hand interceding for us. 'In a time accepted,' or in a time of peace and good will from the Father to men, for God was pleased in the fullness of his own time to send Christ to this world (Gal. 4:4, 5; 1 Tim. 1:15). 'In the day of salvation have I succoured thee.' While Christ was on this earth working out the salvation of his people by his obedience, suffering and death, he was helped, strengthened and empowered by the Father through the Holy Spirit. Paul cries, 'Behold,'

before each sentence in order to get their undivided attention. 'Now is the accepted time.' It is the time of God's mercy and grace to men in Christ. 'Now is the day of salvation.' The work is done, righteousness is brought in and God is reconciled in Christ. God has purposed, promised and pictured this day throughout the Old Testament. It is all fulfilled in Christ (Heb. 3:6-12).

v. 3. To 'give no offence' is to avoid actions, words, habits and conduct that might be a stumbling-block to others and hinder the success of the gospel preached. The words can be a general precept to all believers, as in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, especially to ministers. There are persons who are awaiting all opportunities to reproach the gospel and discredit the ministry of the word. Let us not give them reason to do so. The next verse seems to bear out the fact that Paul is speaking to ministers of the gospel.

vv. 4-5. It is not only essential that a minister avoid words and actions that might be a stumbling-block and an offence to others, but that he should actively, by all means and ways, prove and show himself to be a true and faithful preacher of the gospel. This is done through 'patience,' under trials sent by God without murmuring, being gentle and kind in dealing with the infirmities of men and waiting on the Lord to accomplish his purpose. 'In afflictions' let him be an example to the flock. Let him depend on God to supply his 'necessities,' for they who preach the gospel are to live by the gospel (Phil. 4:19; Gen. 14:22, 23). Even the minister must endure 'distresses,' both in body and mind, not knowing what to do nor which way to go (Ps. 37:5). Let him show courage and faith under persecution for the gospel, even in stripes (2 Cor. 11:23, 24), in prison or bonds for Christ's sake and in tumults or uproars and opposition from the people. It is essential that ministers show themselves to be his servants in constant labour. God will not own nor bless laziness. A true minister will be known for watchfulness, guarding the pulpit and assembly from error

of doctrine or spirit, and he will be faithful in fastings, whether voluntary or involuntary!

v. 6. The apostle in the preceding verses exhorts ministers to show themselves to be such by way of life and conduct; he now deals with the inward or unseen attitude and spiritual behavior. If any believers demonstrate 'pureness' of motive, doctrine and heart, it should be those who teach others. Their 'knowledge' of the Scriptures and the mysteries of grace and their wisdom in leading God's people come by prayer and study (2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 6:4). The minister must not easily be provoked to anger but by 'longsuffering,' patience and 'kindness' must demonstrate the Spirit of Christ. Who is sufficient for these things? Who is able to produce such ideals? None in themselves; but by the Holy Ghost and by genuine, unfeigned love for Christ and his sheep it is possible.

v. 7. True servants of Christ are also revealed by preaching 'the word of truth,' the gospel of our Lord Jesus (1 John 4:1-3; Isa. 8:20). They are known by 'the power of God' accompanying their preaching (1 Thess. 1:5, 6). 'The armour of righteousness' probably refers to the whole armor of God, as in Ephesians 6:13-17, or especially to the shield of faith in the left hand and the sword of the Spirit in the right.

vv. 8-10. The ministers of the gospel must expect to meet with many different alterations of their circumstances and conditions in this world. They will not be treated, received, nor regarded in the same way by all. They will be loved by some and hated by others. It will be a great evidence of their integrity and faith to behave properly under whatever conditions (Phil. 4:11-13). The apostle met with honour and dishonor, good reports and evil reports. He was a 'true' minister, yet counted by some to be a 'deceiver.' He was 'unknown' and unrecognized by most men, but 'well known' to believers. He was a dying man, yet in Christ

alive evermore; 'chastened' by God and men, but not yet given over to death. Like his Lord, the minister is a man of great sorrow (Rom. 9:1, 2) over his sin and the unbelief of others, 'yet always rejoicing' in the Lord (Phil. 4:4). It is generally the lot of God's preachers to be 'poor' in this world, but they are the instruments of grace to 'make many rich' spiritually. They have left all to follow Christ and, therefore, have little or 'nothing'; but in Christ pertaining to true life!

Be not unequally yoked together

2 Corinthians 6:11-18

v. 11. The apostle, having dealt at length with those who teach, preach and minister the word of God, exhorting them to fulfill their ministry, to walk in integrity of life (inwardly and outwardly), to preach the word of truth in the power of the Spirit (all of which he encourages by his own example), now addresses the whole congregation saying, 'My mouth is open to you, to speak freely and openly to you all the counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 27) and to deal with you faithfully and plainly. My heart is enlarged. I speak openly and plainly to you because I love you! This strong love for you is what opens my mouth toward you, for I desire your eternal good.'

v. 12. 'I have no difficulty finding room in my heart for all of you; the trouble is with you. Because of outside influence, doubts concerning my office and authority and the fact that I have had to rebuke and correct you for various errors, you cannot find room in your hearts to love and accept me and my words' (Gal. 4:16).

v. 13. 'Now, by way of return, grant to me the same recompense; repay me with affection; let love be returned for love. I speak to you as children.' As a father should love his children, so children should love their father. 'Open wide your hearts to me as I have opened my hurt to you' (1 John 4:7-11).

v. 14. 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' This metaphor is taken from horses or oxen which, being joined together by a common yoke, must walk and pull together in the same direction and with the same goal or have serious problems. Believers and unbelievers do not have the

same principles, natures, nor goals. They cannot walk together in harmony because they are not agreed on the vital issues of life, sin, salvation, God's glory and the gospel (Amos 3:3). Therefore, the believer is unwise who marries an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:39), who forms a business partnership with an unbeliever, who seeks social fellowship and companionship with unbelievers, who attempts to worship or conduct religious projects with unbelievers. This is not to be understood as forbidding any contact with unbelievers in civil society, conversation, or vocation and grade. If that were true, the believer would have to leave the world. Also, God put us in the world as salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16) to witness to all men and to be an example of his grace, even to those who despise his name. But to seek an unnecessary alliance and partnership with one who does not know nor love our Master is foolish, for what fellowship, companionship and agreement can righteousness have with unrighteousness? What an absurdity to think of joining together for comfortable communion darkness and light, or fire and water! (1 Cor. 10:20, 21; Eph. 5:5-11).

v. 15. What harmony can there possibly be between Christ and the devil? The word 'Belial' is only used this one time in the New Testament but very often in the Old Testament and signifies a very wicked person. Most agree that the reference here is to Satan. Christ, who dwells in us and we in him, has no fellowship nor agreement with Satan; therefore, how can we enjoy unnecessary communion with those who manifest themselves to be children of the devil? Christ Jesus is our life, our part and portion; the infidel's part and portion are sin, self and eternal damnation. Therefore, what do we share in common that would give us any common ground for communion?

v. 16. The argument for believers to quit the company of wicked persons, to separate from them and to avoid being joined unequally with them in unnecessary communion is further enforced by asking, 'What agreement

can there be between a temple of God and idols?' We are certainly the temple of God; for God said, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21, 22). 'We are the temple of the living God.' Idols have no life but are dead things and are representatives of dead men. What agreement or place can life have with or for death? We can no more walk with the living God and find joy and comfort in communion with unbelievers than we can bring dead idols into the temple of the living God! The apostle is not just setting forth the rules and laws concerning unnecessary communion with unbelievers. He is wondering why the believer would seek such alliances and what possible agreement or communion could come of these partnerships! They have nothing in common.

vv. 17-18. Paul does something here that is done in other places in the New Testament. He quotes the Old Testament, not word for word but keeping to the true teaching; in the same quotation he uses another passage (Isa. 52:11; Jer. 31:1, 9). Israel was a special, chosen nation (Deut. 7:6-8) and so were commanded to separate themselves from idols and idol worshippers, from heathen people and their evil ways. The believer is chosen of God, loved, redeemed and called to a life of righteousness; therefore, he ought to and will separate himself from superstition and will-worship in the matters of the soul. He will separate himself from the evil customs and manners of the world, conducting himself as a child of the King. He will separate himself from wicked and immoral persons, not wishing to keep company with them in their sins nor to be exposed to their evil by association. He is not our Father because we separate ourselves from worldly associates and associations, for he is our Father by grace and adoption by his own will in Christ, but he will care for us as a father cares for his children in their every need (Matt. 6:31-33).

Perfecting holiness in the fear of God

2 Corinthians 7:1-7

v. 1. ‘Dearly beloved, since we have the great promises of God in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20) (adoption, God is our Father and we are his children; justification, we are righteous, redeemed and sanctified (1 Cor. 1:30); glorification, we shall be like Christ and reign with him for ever (Rom. 8:16-18), let us cleanse ourselves from everything that would defile body and spirit.’ By the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10), through the word of God (Ps. 119:9-11), with the aid of God's Spirit, let us keep ourselves clean, not only from fleshly corruption such as intemperance, drunkenness, profanity, dishonesty, sexual impurity and idolatry, but also from error of spirit such as pride, envy, covetousness, malice, evil thoughts and self-righteousness. ‘Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.’ By holiness is not meant the work of perfect sanctification of the believer before God, for that is wholly the work of Christ, who is our sanctification and righteousness (Heb. 10:14; Rom. 3:19-22; 10:3, 4). But this is holiness of life, walk, conduct and conversation to which we are called and which is the mark and evidence of a true believer (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:21-24). This walk of obedience is motivated not only by God's love for us and our love for him (2 Cor. 5:14, 15), but ‘in the fear of the Lord’ (Prov. 3:7; 16:6). The fear of the Lord for a believer is not slavish fear, or a fear of wrath and hell, but a reverential affection as a child for a father. The fear of the Lord arises from awe, trust, respect and dependence upon him, and a view to his glory and approval (2 Cor. 5:9).

v. 2. ‘Open your hearts to us as the ministers of Christ,’ Paul writes. ‘Receive us and love us as we love you; for we have not wronged you, we have corrupted no one by our doctrine, and we have not cheated nor taken

advantage of you.’ He is saying that he had done nothing to forfeit their esteem and goodwill (1 Cor. 2:1, 2; Acts 20:20, 27, 33). He could not understand their alienation of heart when he had done nothing to deserve it, but rather had given himself for their eternal good (2 Tim. 2:9, 10).

v. 3. Paul did not call attention to their faults and infirmities only to condemn, reproach, or expose them, but because he loved them (Gal. 6:1, 2; 2 Tim. 2:24, 25). He said, ‘You are in my heart and you will remain there; neither death nor life shall change that love nor destroy our fellowship’ (John 13: 34, 35).

v. 4. ‘Great is my liberty of speech toward you. I open my mouth to you and speak freely even of your faults,’ for this is the sign of true friendship and love (Prov. 27:6). We are more reserved and on guard with those who are not close to us. ‘Great is my glorying (or boasting) of you to others, I rejoice in your faith, your love and your liberality. I am filled with comfort especially with the coming of Titus and the report he brought concerning your state. In spite of the persecution and tribulation we endure for preaching the gospel, my heart is comforted and I am overflowing with joy because of the grace of God manifested in you and other believers’ (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

vv. 5, 6. The apostle met with trouble and persecution in Macedonia from without (that is, from the Gentiles and religious Jews) and from within the church, being troubled by prophets and unfaithfulness among believers, as well as within his own heart (1 Cor. 2:3-5). The road of faith is not an easy road. The believer is subject to all of the trials brought upon men by Adam's fall (Gen. 3:17-19), and in addition to these, he will be hated, oppressed and persecuted for the sake of the gospel (2 Tim. 3:11, 12; Matt. 10:34-39). ‘Nevertheless God, who comforts, refreshes, encourages and gives strength to those who are depressed and troubled, comforted me.’

Paul is careful to give the glory and praise to God, who is our Comforter. Though the Lord chastens his people, puts them through great trial and suffering for their good and the fulfillment of his purpose, and though he allows the enemy to try them, as in the case of Job, he never leaves them, never forsakes them but gives them grace and strength to sustain and comfort them (Heb. 13:5; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Cor. 10:13). The visit of his brother, Titus, brought Paul great comfort. God is pleased to comfort and strengthen his people in various ways, sometimes by his word, by his special providence, or by encouragement and fellowship of other believers. But whatever the instrumental cause of joy and comfort, God is the principal cause – he comforts and is our comfort?

v. 7. Paul was glad to see Titus. However, it was not just his visit that rejoiced the heart of Paul, but the news that he brought. Titus had visited the church at Corinth and had been received with respect and kindness. Titus was greatly encouraged by what he found at Corinth in regard to the things Paul sought to correct by his first epistle – the divisions, the incestuous affair, going to law before unbelievers, disorders at the Lord's Table and misuse of gifts. Titus told Paul of the earnest desire of the church to do the will of God, of their mourning over the sins among them, of their fervent love for Paul and desire to carry out his instructions. This good news rejoiced the heart of the apostle and abundantly exceeded his troubles and afflictions. Nothing rejoices the heart of a minister or a true disciple of Christ more than a good report from others who name the name of Christ (2 John 4; 3 John 3, 4).

Godly sorrow worketh repentance

2 Corinthians 7:8-16

v. 8. The apostle refers to his first epistle to the Corinthians. He had to deal with so many errors of the spirit and the flesh that had risen in the church that he was sure he had offended others and caused all to be shaken somewhat. He did not regret writing the letter, for he wrote under divine inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16), but he regretted the sorrow it caused. However, that sorrow was only for a little time, for it led them to repent and correct the errors of which Paul wrote.

v. 9. Paul did not rejoice in their sorrow and grief. No one can be glad when a brother weeps and is afflicted, even under the chastening hand of the Lord. But Paul rejoiced in the effect and results of this experience. Their sorrow led them to acknowledge their error, to repent toward God and to correct these abuses of which he wrote. 'Ye were made sorry after a godly manner' - that is, their sorrow was of the right kind. They had not just offended Paul and wronged one another, but their sin was against God (Ps. 51:3, 4; Acts 5:4). We may grieve and wound others by our evil conduct and words, but we sin against God; therefore, true repentance is toward God and is born of love for God and a desire to do his will. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. The church suffered no loss nor harm by what Paul did; rather they gained, because they repented and corrected matters.

v. 10. These words prove that Christians and churches suffer no harm but rather profit by rebuke and correction from faithful ministers (2 Tim. 4:1, 2). 'Godly sorrow,' which is a work of his grace and spirit, which springs not from fear of hell and damnation, but from a love for God and grief

over offending him and which looks to Christ in faith for grace and mercy, leads to salvation and deliverance from evil. Repentance and faith are inseparable. You cannot have one without the other. They are like a sheet of paper - there must be two sides (Acts 20:21). No man has ever believed on Christ without repentance, and no man will repent apart from true faith in the Lord Jesus. True repentance will never bring regret, only rejoicing. 'The sorrow of the world worketh death.' Esau was sorry that he lost his birthright, not that he had sinned against God. All men are sorry when they lose worldly riches, honour, comfort and reputation, but their sorrow has nothing to do with their relationship toward God, therefore, it results not in true repentance, nor faith, nor forgiveness, only death upon death. True repentance has to do with my relationship with God, not with this world and its influence (Isa. 55:6, 7).

v. 11. Godly sorrow, which works repentance and leads to deliverance, produces many evidences of the sincerity and genuineness of it (1 Thess. 1:4, 5, 9). 'What carefulness, to correct our behavior before God and to avoid future offences in this area. 'What clearing of yourselves,' not by denying our guilt and sins, but by confessing them and seeking forgiveness (1 John 1:9). 'What indignation,' not against God because of his holiness and law, nor against God's servant for pointing out our sins, but against ourselves for our folly and our rebellion (Job 42:5, 6). 'What fear,' not of hell and damnation, but of God, of incurring his displeasure and of bringing reproach on Christ (Prov. 1:7; 16:6). 'What vehement desire' to honour God, to right that which is wrong and to live for the glory of Christ in this present evil world (Phil. 3:10-14). 'What zeal' for God and his glory, for the testimony of the gospel and for the unity and holiness of the church. God forbid that we should be the occasion for stumbling on the part of one of his sheep or the occasion for the gospel's being ridiculed by outsiders (2 Sam. 12:14). 'What revenge,' not against persons in a private way, for that belongs to God, but against sin and

disobedience, whether found in us or others. This may refer especially to discipline exercised in the matter of incest found in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. In that matter they acted in accordance with Paul's counsel and cleared themselves by dealing firmly with the offender.

v. 12. Paul declared in this verse that he did not enter into the problem of the incestuous person for the guilty man's sake only (though he needed to be disciplined, corrected and restored to obedience), nor for the sake of the father who had been wronged, but for the welfare and good of the whole church, lest the church suffer for permitting such a scandal to continue. His chief concern was for the glory of God and the good of Christ's Church.

v. 13. What comfort and encouragement Paul received when he learned that the church at Corinth had grieved over their errors, repented toward God and corrected the abuses he had exposed in his letter! True believers grieve over sin and faults, not only in themselves, but in others, and are overjoyed when matters are corrected. They restore the fallen with great joy (Luke 15:10; Gal. 6:1, 2). Paul was especially delighted at the joy of Titus, for he was able to give Paul a good report of the church when he came to visit (2 Cor. 7:6, 7). Believers weep with those who weep and are comforted with one another's comforts.

v. 14. Evidently Paul had boasted to Titus of the faith, liberality and devotion to him which the church at Corinth had demonstrated. They had not disappointed him, nor proved his words to be false. Titus came to him with a report from the church which confirmed all of the good things he had said of them. Love enjoys a good report and always grieves over any sin (Cor. 13:6, 7).

v. 15. ‘The heart of Titus goes out to you more abundantly than ever as he recalls and reports to me how submissive you were to his teaching and leadership (Heb. 13:7, 17). You received him and his words with humility and respect.’

v. 16. The apostle rejoices that he could write and speak to them with confidence that they would hearken to his exhortations in the future as in the past. He may be saying this partly to commend them and partly to pave the way for what he has to say in the next chapter concerning giving.

Abound in this grace also

2 Corinthians 8:1-11

In this chapter the apostle praises the churches of Macedonia for their liberality and generous spirit in the matter of giving, and he uses their example to encourage the Corinthians to abound in this grace of giving. Actually, who should give, how we should give, how much we should give and to whom we should give form the main theme of the next two chapters of this epistle.

v. 1. 'Brethren, I want to tell you more about the grace, favour and spiritual blessings of God which have been bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia, arousing in them love for others and the desire to give alms and aid to those in need.' The phrase 'to wit' means to inform, make known, or to give knowledge of a thing. Their liberality was the result of the grace of God in them, for his grace is the fountain of all the good that is in us or done by us at any time (1 Cor. 15:10; Eph. 4: 32). These churches were Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and others.

v. 2. Although these churches were under great persecution from Jews and pagans, although they had endured great trials and were in deep poverty, this did not keep them from taking up a collection and sending gifts to their needy brethren in other places. They had little themselves but freely gave generously of what they had (Mark 12:41-44).

v. 3. Two things the apostle points out concerning the generosity of these churches.

1. They gave according to their ability and even beyond what they were able to give – they gave sacrificially.

2. They did it voluntarily and willingly. They were not told to give or how much to give, but rather gave freely and cheerfully motivated by a love for Christ and the brethren.

v. 4. They brought what they had collected among themselves to the apostles and begged them to take the responsibility of distributing these gifts to believers who were in need.

v. 5. The apostle expected something from them, even in their condition of poverty and affliction, but what they gave was far beyond his expectation. Here is the reason for their faith and generosity – they first gave themselves to the Lord, to the care of his providence, trusting him to provide for them and resting in his care (Phil. 4:19). Then they gave themselves and what they had to the servants of Christ to be directed and used according to the will of God (Ps. 37:23-25).

v. 6. Paul instructed Titus to go to the church at Corinth and receive alms and assistance for those in need. Evidently Titus had dealt with this matter of giving when he was with them before, but the work was not completed, so Paul urged Titus, through the example of the Macedonians, to go to Corinth and encourage among them the grace of giving.

v. 7. The church of Corinth excelled and abounded in every grace, according to Paul. He commended their ‘faith,’ by which they had received the Lord Jesus and for which they had courageously stood (1 Cor. 15:1, 2), their ‘utterance’ or speech, by which they preached the gospel even in other languages, their ‘knowledge’ of God, Christ and the truth of the gospel, their ‘diligence’ in discharging their duties to God men and their ‘love’ for him and the ministers of the word. ‘See that you abound

and excel in the grace of giving as well,' for as faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence and love are graces, work of God within us, so also are kindness, generosity and liberality. None of these can be exercised properly without the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:22).

vv. 8, 9. 'I am not commanding you to give,' nor does God give a commandment fixing certain sums and times when believers are to give. The Lord has certainly revealed his will concerning giving. There is to be a willing mind (v. 12); everyone is to have a part (v. 13); and that part is to be as God has prospered or enabled them (1 Cor. 16:2). But Paul seeks to motivate them by three things: by pointing out the example of other believers, by urging them to prove the sincerity of their love to Christ and others (James 2:15-17), and by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ - our Lord gave all for us. Through his love, kindness and grace, he, who was rich beyond description, became so very poor so that by his poverty we might have every spiritual need abundantly supplied. 'Let this mind be also in you which was in Christ' (Phil. 2:5-9). How can we, who are loved in such a way, not also love? How can we, who are the recipients of such grace and mercy, not be gracious and merciful to others?

v. 10. 'It is then my counsel and advice, and it is profitable and fitting for you, to complete this work which you willingly began a year ago.' A good beginning and a willing mind are good, but not enough. We must persevere and do it. Words and good intentions are fine, but the doing of it is essential (1 John 3:18).

v. 11. 'Now, therefore, finish what you began. You showed before that you had the will to help those in need; now perform the doing of it according to your ability or as God has prospered you. Give out of that which you have, be it little or great. No man is expected to give that which he does not have.'

First – a willing mind

2 Corinthians 8:12-24

v. 12. In the matter of giving, the motive and spirit in which we give are of greater importance than the amount. There must first be a willing mind. If what we give springs from a cheerful and willing heart, it is accepted of God, it be little or much, for the Lord does not require of us that which is not in our power to give. The widow's mite and a cup of cold water given willingly for the glory of God are well-pleasing to God (Phil. 4:18).

vv. 13, 14. The apostle's meaning is that the burden of the collection or offering should not be carried by some while others are excused from giving, but that everyone should give according to his ability (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). Also, the meaning is that there should be an equality between givers and receivers - share and share alike. 'At the present time your brethren are in need and your gifts will supply that need. At another time their surplus may be given to supply your want' (Acts 2:44, 45).

v. 15. This is a quotation from Exodus 16:17, 18 and refers to the manna which God gave for food in the wilderness. Each morning it was gathered by the people, by some more, by others less; yet when it was measured, every man had his omer and no more. The man who gathered much shared with those who gathered less, and every need was met. If we are blessed of God to have an abundance of material blessings, he surely intends us to share with those who have less strength, ability, or blessing. This does not excuse nor justify laziness and an unwillingness to work (2 Thess. 3:10). The true believer does not look upon giving for the preaching of the gospel and the relief of the needy as a duty, but as a privilege and a

blessing (Acts 20:35). What we give is not really ours but the Lord's. We are but his stewards and servants (1 Chron. 29:12-14).

vv. 16, 17. Paul requested of Titus that he go to Corinth for the purpose of receiving a collection and to assist them in the matter of giving, but God had already laid the matter on the heart of Titus, and though he made the journey at the suggestion of the older apostle, he willingly did so of his own accord. How blessed is the service of the Lord when it is motivated by a willing heart!

vv. 18, 19. Who this brother was is difficult to say. Some have suggested Luke, Barnabas, Silas, Apollos, or Mark, but one thing is clear, he was a brother who faithfully preached the gospel. Also, he was one chosen by the churches to travel as Paul's companion when he carried a large gift for distribution among the needy. On that occasion, as now, Paul's end was the glory of God and to show his readiness to help others.

vv. 20, 21. Paul is careful to have another brother, designated by the church, with him when he is entrusted with gifts and money for distribution. This is not only to provide things honest in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men. Paul would not handle so large a gift alone lest someone should think that he had applied it to his own use or did not distribute it to those for whom it was intended. Paul could be trusted and he certainly trusted Titus, but he did not know what men say; he therefore takes along or sends along a witness. Let us be careful to pattern our methods in the handling of collections in the same way (2 Cor. 13:1).

v. 22. Paul mentions sending another brother of good report and faithful service along with them.

v. 23. This verse contains Paul's words of recommendation for Titus and the brethren sent to Corinth to make up their collection and gifts for the needy in other places. In the matter of preaching the gospel, Paul, on another occasion, discounted letters of recommendation, saying that the gospel he preached and the fruits of his ministry were his letter of recommendation (2 Cor. 3:1-3). But in the matter of handling finances and receiving to hand large gifts to be taken to other places, Paul feels it necessary to express his personal confidence in these men and to assure the church at Corinth that they can be trusted fully. 'As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper, and the other two brethren are chosen messengers of the churches and a credit and glory to our Lord.'

v. 24. 'Therefore, when they come your way, receive them and show to them (before all) the reality and truth of your love to Christ, to others and to me. Show also that I have good reason for boasting about and being proud of you.'

God loveth a cheerful giver

2 Corinthians 9:1-15

In this chapter Paul continues his teachings on the subject of giving, with directions concerning the acceptable way and manner in which this grace should be performed, as well as some fresh arguments and encouragements for being diligent in the grace of giving.

v. 1. Paul thought it unnecessary to say much more to them about the offering or collection to be received for the poor and needy. He had covered the subject quite well and had sent three brethren to them, who knew the subject well and were capable of instructing them.

v. 2. He also was well acquainted with their willingness and had boasted of their zeal and enthusiasm in this matter to the churches of Macedonia. He told these other churches that Corinth was prepared last year to get on with this business, and this stimulated the majority of them to do likewise.

v. 3. Yet, knowing the frailty and changeableness of human nature, knowing the power of the enemy, knowing that men are prone to grow cold and indifferent and knowing the need for constant encouragement and teaching in spiritual matters, Paul sends the three brethren on their mission to Corinth (Matt. 26:41; Heb. 3:13, 14). 'I want you not only to be ready in heart, but in hand, lest our boasting of you be in vain.'

v. 4. Paul writes, 'If I should come there and some of the brethren from Macedonia (to whom I had spoken so proudly of your charitable work) should come with me and find that you had done nothing, only talked

about giving and sharing, I would be ashamed, to say nothing of your own embarrassment.’

v. 5. ‘Therefore, I thought it necessary to send Titus and the brethren to you before I came down, that they might make arrangements in advance for this gift of yours which has been so much spoken of, that it may be received and ready. It must be a willing and generous gift, not a matter of extortion nor given reluctantly’ (Exod. 35:5; 1 Chron. 29:9).

v. 6. A covetous person may think when he gives money, goods and alms to others that the amount given may be charged to loss, but not so! It is no more loss than the seed planted by a farmer is lost. The farmer must turn loose of the seed, give it up and bury it in faith that God will multiply it according to his will. So it is with giving. We willingly part with our gifts generously, sharing that which God has placed in our hands, knowing that he will supply our needs according to his will. The farmer must also be free and generous with the seed, for the more seed sown, the greater the harvest. If we give sparingly and grudgingly, we will reap the same, but if we are moved by God's grace so that blessings may come to others and we give generously, we shall also reap bountifully.

v. 7. ‘Let every person (not just the prosperous or a few) give as he has been led of the Spirit, as he has made up his own mind, as he has determined in his own heart and, of course, in proportion as God has blessed him. Let him give cheerfully and joyfully, not reluctantly nor out of duty and necessity, for God loves, takes pleasure in and blesses a willing, cheerful giver’ (Prov. 22:9).

v. 8. Generous men do not lose by giving to others, for God is able to make all sorts of gifts (both spiritual and temporal) come their way (James 1:17; Phil. 4:19). ‘As you are enabled by God and moved in your hearts to

give, the Lord will provide for you in all things and will also enable you to abound in other good works.’

vv. 9, 10. This is a quotation from Psalm 112:9 and declares that the benevolent person who is merciful, generous and gives to others shall be blessed of God, and the fruit, influence and results of his work and example will live for ever. ‘God, who provides seed for the sower and bread for food, is both able and willing to supply you with whatever you need and bless your acts of kindness for his glory and the eternal good of those to whom you minister.’ It is God who gives us a willing heart, who supplies us with means to give and who uses the gifts we give for his glory.

v. 11. Works of charity and grace do not impoverish us, but rather are means to enrich us. Can a man lose by doing that which pleases God and that of which our Lord himself is the great example? (2 Cor. 8:9.) Give liberally with humility and simplicity, and God will enrich you in all things and your generosity administered to others will bring forth much thanksgiving to God.

v. 12. The two great ends of every believer's life are the glory of God and the good of others. As Paul and the apostles disperse the gifts to needy people, both of these ends are served. The needs of many are met and the people glorify God and give thanks to him.

v. 13. Most believe that this collection and these gifts were for the poor believers in Jerusalem and, being sent by these Gentile churches, would only cause them to glorify God the more and be strong proof of the Gentiles’ subjection to, and love for, the gospel of Christ. True Christianity is a submission to the gospel of Christ, is evidenced by labors

of love and works of charity and results in praise and glory to our God (Matt. 5:16).

v. 14. ‘Those whose needs are supplied by your generosity will respond and make the best return they are able, by loving you, longing for your presence and fellowship and praying for you.’

v. 15. ‘Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift, our Lord Jesus Christ – the giver of every gift, the fountain of all blessings and the only Saviour of sinners.’ This gift is indescribable, inexpressible and beyond telling.

The weapons of our warfare

2 Corinthians 10:1-7

Paul met with much opposition at Corinth from false preachers and teachers. He had many enemies there who boasted in themselves and refuted both Paul and his doctrine. They envied him and did all that they could to undermine him and lessen his influence. They represented him as a harsh, mean-spirited man and insinuated that he had neither the authority nor the courage which he claimed. In this chapter he vindicates himself and arms the Corinthians against these self-seekers.

v. 1. Paul's enemies evidently had charged him with being meek, gentle and humble when he was present with them, but when he was away, he wrote forceful, bold and condemning letters. Is not this the example of our Lord, who never compromised the truth about men, yet was meek and gentle, kind and patient toward all? When we find ourselves inclined to be rough or angry with men, let us think of the gentleness of Christ, be sensible of our own infirmities and yet be bold in our quest for Godliness in spirit and deed (2 Tim. 2:24, 25; 4:1, 2).

v. 2. He urges them to hear him, follow him as he follows Christ and submit to his teaching, that he might not, when he comes among them, have to use that power and authority given him by Christ (Heb. 13:7, 17). He does not want to deal boldly with them all in general, as he plans to deal with some who have accused him of acting according to the flesh (1 Cor. 4:21). These false preachers accused Paul of the very thing of which they were guilty, that of seeking his own worldly interest and secular advantage and employing craftiness and fleshly wisdom and methods to accomplish it (2 Cor. 1:12).

v. 3. There is a difference in walking in the flesh and walking after the flesh or warring after the flesh (Rom. 8:1, 4-6). Every believer walks in the flesh, in the body, in a state of imperfection, attended with many weaknesses and infirmities, but he does not walk after the flesh in that his fleshly appetite, desires and pride are not his end, goal and objective. The glory of God and a godly way of life are the desires of every renewed heart (Phil. 3:10-14). Nor does the believer war after the flesh! The work of the ministry and the Christian life are spiritual warfare (1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3, 4), but this battle is not fought upon fleshly principles, using fleshly methods, nor for fleshly honour and glory. We seek his glory and the true salvation of sinners (Jer. 9:23, 24; 1 Cor. 10:31).

v. 4. The goal of the Christian ministry is not carnal but spiritual. We seek not lip-service from men but heart love to Christ. It is not our goal to bring men to outward morality and reformation alone, but that they might be new creatures in Christ, delivered from the kingdom of evil to become bond-slaves of Jesus Christ, motivated to holiness and godliness by new and spiritual inward principles. Therefore, our weapons and methods are not carnal nor of the flesh, but spiritual (John 6:63). The strongholds of Satan are ignorance, prejudice, vain imagination, carnal wisdom and beloved lusts. These can only be pulled down by the mighty Spirit of God, bestowing grace and life through the gospel. Our weapons in this warfare are the sword of the Spirit (the word of God), prayer, gifts of ministering and love to Christ and his people (Eph. 6:11-15). We dare not depend on anything the flesh can produce. If God does not work in us and through us, we labour in vain.

v. 5. The preaching of the gospel of Christ is the power of God to destroy the strongholds of Satan in the minds and hearts of men, casting down every proud thought of self-righteousness, every high and lofty reasoning

of human wisdom, as opposed to his revealed truth, every reliance on our works or deeds which might be a rival to his grace in Christ, every high and haughty look or feeling of confidence in what we were or have become, and bringing us, mind and heart, thought and attitude, into a full and complete dependence upon and obedience to Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:26-31; Col. 2:9, 10). Repentance is the gift of God; faith is the gift of God; eternal life is the gift of God. All that we are, know and shall ever be are gifts of God and the work of God in us through, by and for the glory of our Lord Jesus (Eph. 2:8-10). We have nothing of which to boast in the flesh (1 Cor. 4:7). What we do is in response to what he has done in us and for us (1 John 4:19).

v. 6. The apostle refers here to church censure and excommunication to be exercised upon those who depart from the gospel of God's grace. Paul would not tolerate another gospel, the dishonoring of the name of Christ, nor a disorderly walk among church members. These offenders are to be dealt with by the church, not hastily, but prayerfully, patiently and only after our own submission and obedience to Christ are secured and complete. Church censure and excommunication are painful but necessary where the honour of Christ, the glory of God, the well-being of the church and the testimony of the gospel are concerned.

v. 7. 'Do you look upon and judge men by outward appearance?' (1 Sam. 16:7; Luke 16:15.) Are you so weak in spiritual wisdom that you judge men by their faces, their outward appearance, their claims and their voices and words? A man may appear to be gracious and not have the principle of grace in his heart. A man may appear to be learned in the Scriptures and not know Christ. Don't be misled by the outward appearance of some; redemption is a heart work. 'If any among you is confident that he has an interest in Christ, is redeemed by his blood and is a believer, let him reflect and remind himself that on the same basis (which is the mercy and

grace of God in person and work of Christ) we, too, have a saving interest in him.' We must not think that none belong to Christ but ourselves. By the grace of God we are what we are, and his grace is effectual to save even those who differ from us.

He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord

2 Corinthians 10:8-18

Paul defends his ministry against the false preachers who despised him, opposed him and judged him by appearance. Spurgeon once said, ‘The best way to expose a crooked stick is to lay a straight stick down beside it.’ Every generation is plagued with false preachers and religious hucksters (Matt. 7:15; 2 Peter 2:1-3).

v. 8. When God calls a man to be a prophet, an apostle, an evangelist or a pastor (Eph. 4:11-13), he is pleased to give that man gifts, ability and certain authority (2 Cor. 13:10; Heb. 13:7, 17). This power is not for the destruction, oppression, nor discomfort of the flock, but for their edification, to promote their faith, holiness, comfort and eternal salvation. Paul was not ashamed to speak of, nor to exercise this authority. Let all who have office or authority in the church remember that with authority goes responsibility to edify and unify, not destroy.

vv. 9, 10. This was the charge against Paul which came from his enemies and false preachers: ‘When he is absent and writes to the church, his letters are weighty, powerful, forceful and demanding of obedience to God, yet when he is present, he does not impress men with his appearance, grandeur and forceful oratory, but rather his bodily presence is small, frail and old, and his speech is humble, without impressive persuasion and contemptible to those who are looking for a hero to worship.’ What they thought to be an insult to Paul was a strong recommendation of his true call of God (1 Cor. 15:9, 10; Eph. 3: 8; 1 Tim. 1:15; Phil. 3:3). God never intended us to be impressed with men, to adore men, nor to be obsessed with preachers, but to worship only Christ (2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Cor. 2:4, 5).

v. 11. Paul declares, 'But those who judge by appearance only and think, because I walk in humility before God and men, that I am not an apostle with due authority, let those people realize that what I say in letters, I will put into deeds when I am present.' There comes a time to deal forcefully with rebellion and disobedience (1 Cor. 5:4, 5).

v. 12. Paul refuses to evaluate either himself or his ministry by the method used by these teachers of false religion to commend themselves. They were pleased with themselves, prided themselves on their righteousness and estimated their value in the kingdom of God by comparing themselves with themselves and others. Paul denounces this as unwise (Isa. 65:5; Luke 16:15; 18:9). If we have any grace, gifts, or ability, they are given and sustained by God, and even at our best we are all altogether vanity in his sight (1 Cor. 4:7; Ps. 39:5). Feeding our egos by comparing ourselves with others is foolish.

v. 13. They had among them men who boasted immeasurably, or beyond the gifts which they had. Paul had a better rule for his conduct: not to boast of any gifts, graces, or authority other than those God had obviously given to him and not to go beyond his God-given commission as to duties and place of service. His authority and ministry included the Corinthians. What an important lesson for all believers! Each member of the body has a place and a service to perform. Learn what it is and seek not to be otherwise nor to envy another (1 Cor. 12:12-18).

v. 14. Paul declares that he had not gone beyond the bounds set for him by the purpose and providence of God in edifying and instructing the church at Corinth, for he was indeed sent by God to them (Acts 18:1, 9-11). Another evidence of his being in the will of God by ministering among them was that God had blessed his labors with success (Matt. 7:16).

vv. 15, 16. When Paul rejoiced in the Corinthians as his children and converts (whom he had begotten through the gospel of Christ), he was not taking credit for the labors of other men, as did these false preachers, who, when they came to Corinth, found a church planted with many believers. Yet these men claimed the Corinthians as their own, belittled Paul, and troubled the church with their errors. His hope concerning this church was that as they were grounded in truth and grown in spirit, his field of labour would be enlarged greatly, and both he and they would be the instruments of God to preach the gospel in regions beyond, where the name of Christ was not known. He was not interested in interfering with, nor boasting in, work already done by others before he came on the scene.

v. 17. But none of us really has anything in which to glory (Jer. 9:23, 24; 1 Cor. 1:29-31), neither Paul who planted nor Apollos who watered, for it is God who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:5-7). We have no reason to glory in ourselves nor in our works, but only to thank, praise and give glory to God, who is pleased to use human vessels to accomplish his divine purpose.

v. 18. It is not the man who praises and commends himself who is approved and accepted, but it is the person whom the Lord enables, approves and commends (Prov. 27:2). Self-commendation means nothing; rather than lifting us, it really lowers us in the estimation of true believers and is nauseous to God.

The simplicity that is in Christ

2 Corinthians 11:1-8

In this chapter Paul continues to expose the false teachers in the churches who sought to lessen his influence and who were preaching another gospel. He calls them false apostles, deceitful workers and ministers of Satan. In denouncing these false apostles, he feels it necessary to defend his apostleship and his ministry among the Corinthians and to call their attention to his dedication to the gospel of Christ and his own sufferings in the service of Christ.

v. 1. Matthew Henry wrote, 'As much against the grain as it is with a proud man to acknowledge his infirmities, so much is it against the grain with a humble man to speak in his own praise.' What Paul here calls 'my folly' is his effort to speak in his own defense and his own commendation. This is foolishness unless a man has a good reason. Paul knew that he had a good reason, which was to preserve these believers from being corrupted by false preachers who had crept in among them. He knew that he was the Lord's messenger to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15, 16), and he knew the tragic results if these men were successful in discrediting him, so he begs them to bear with him as he speaks of himself and the ministry God has given him.

v. 2. Jealousy is a feeling within a person which demands exclusive loyalty and resents a rival or competitor for the affections or attention. Paul's jealousy toward the Corinthians was not so much on his account nor with a selfish motive, for he called it a 'Godly jealousy.' He was instrumental in bringing them to Christ, to believe on him and to be joined with him in union as a husband and wife are one (Eph. 5:23-25). He desired to present

them to Christ, and only to Christ, as a chaste virgin comes to her husband, single in their love to him, sincere and upright in their worship of him and faithful, not having their minds and hearts distracted in any way from him by these false teachers of law and self-righteousness (Gal. 6:12-14).

v. 3. This godly jealousy in Paul was a mixture of love and fear. He loved them, deeply desired their eternal good and feared lest they should be corrupted by these deceivers. Satan used the serpent to seduce Eve from her obedience to God (Gen. 3:1-6). He was crafty, skilful and deceptive, as are those men who do his bidding under the guise of righteousness (vs. 13-15). Believers are complete in Christ, who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Satan's one goal is to corrupt the mind and turn the heart away from this singleness or simplicity of Christ. It matters not to him if it be law, morality, tradition, ceremony, or whatever (good or bad), just so as there is a rival for Christ's pre-eminence and his sufficiency. Christ plus anything in redemption is not the gospel of God's glory and grace (Col. 2:9, 10) but is another gospel (Gal. 1:6, 7). The foundation of great Reformation was the Scriptures alone, grace alone and Christ alone. Nothing needs to, or should be added to these (Rom. 5:1, 2; 2 Cor. 5:21). In Christ believers are perfectly justified and righteous before the Father.

v. 4. Some interpret this to mean that 'If some particular preacher comes to you preaching another Jesus, another spirit, or another gospel which is more for the glory of God and the comfort of believers than the Christ, the Spirit, and the gospel which Paul preached, you might well follow and honour him.' I cannot imagine Paul even supposing such a ridiculous thing, since there is one Lord, one Spirit and one gospel. But Paul was troubled because he knew that these false apostles were preaching another Jesus, another spirit and another gospel, which was a mixture of works and

grace and of law and faith, and he was greatly concerned lest the people hear these men and be persuaded by them to turn from the simplicity of Christ (1 Tim. 2:5; Eph. 4:4-6). How prone the flesh is to listen to the wrong voice and reject the true messenger? (John 5:43.)

v. 5. 'You would do well to bear with me, for I am not one degree inferior to those who were apostles before me (2 Cor. 12:11), such as Peter, James and John.' This he says in answer to those who questioned his apostleship, since he was not with the original twelve (Gal. 1:17; Rom. 11:13), and also to show how foolish the Corinthians were to prefer these false preachers before him.

v. 6. The apostle Paul was intelligent, highly educated, skilful and at home among kings or common people (Acts 22:3; 26:24). However, he did not in his public ministry use philosophy, human wisdom, flowery words and oratory, but spoke in the plain, popular style of the common people to whom he ministered (1 Cor. 2:1-5). Though I seem to some to be simple in my speech (2 Cor. 10:10), yet I am well taught in the knowledge of Christ and his word' (Gal. 1:11, 12). Too often flowery words and sermons are used to cover a deficiency in the knowledge of Christ. Even our blessed Lord spoke to the people in parables, stories and illustrations which they understood in their heads, if not in their hearts. 'God has been pleased to own my ministry among you,' he declared, 'and clearly reveal to you, by your own conversion and growth in grace, that he sent me, and my gospel is his gospel.'

vv. 7, 8. It seems that some in this church highly valued the false apostles, who compromised the gospel, flaunted themselves in pride and authority and made merchandise of the people, and they treated with contempt this true servant of Christ, who had freely and humbly preached the gospel to them. He asks, 'Where did I offend you? Was it because I came to you in

fear and trembling, without pride and arrogance, using a popular tongue suited to the common people, working with my own hands as a tent-maker, that I might not be a burden to you? Rather than being offended, you ought to be grateful. I took wages of other churches and accepted more than their share of my support to preach to you' (1 Cor. 9:13-15). What fools we are to judge things spiritual by outward appearance and claims of men! (2 Cor. 10:7, 18.)

Speaking in defense of the ministry of God's servant

2 Corinthians 11:9-21

v. 9. There are always those who are eager to charge the ministry or churches with covetousness, greed and 'being in religion for what they can get out of it materially.' When Paul ministered in Corinth for nearly two years, he deliberately took nothing from them in order to dispel any doubts concerning his one objective – to preach the gospel for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners. He made tents for a living (Acts 18:1-3) and received help from the brethren in Macedonia. He had never been a burden to them and resolved never to be.

vv. 10-12. Mature 'believers are taught by the Spirit and the word of God that those who study, preach and labour in the gospel are to live by the gospel and are to be supported comfortably by those to whom they minister' (1 Cor. 9:11-14; Gal. 6:6). Paul was determined to take nothing from the Corinthians, but to labour at his own expense, as he did in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:5-9). He informed them of the reason for this conduct and the reason why he boasted openly of the fact that he preached without charge to them. It was not because he did not love them, nor was unwilling to receive tokens of their love and friendship, but it was to avoid giving his enemies occasion to accuse him of preaching to enrich himself. This put the false apostles, whether rich or poor, on the spot. They claimed to be equal or superior to Paul, so, in the light of his willingness to be abased or to abound, to labour with his hands and to take nothing from men, let us see if they will work on the same terms that Paul worked - only for the glory of God and the eternal good of men.

v. 13. Unfortunately, there have always been and are now many ‘false apostles’ (Matt. 7:15, 16; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1), who pretend to be sent of God, but are not. They are ‘deceitful workers,’ who not only lie about their call and serve themselves and not Christ, but they handle the word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2). They never were apostles of Christ; they only pretend to be.

v. 14. This is no marvel nor strange thing; for Satan himself, in order to deceive men, appears as a messenger of light, truth and righteousness. Pretending friendship, he designs ruin; under a cloak of religion and morality, he promotes evil; under a show of partial truth, he introduces great error, idolatry and superstition. Too many people look for Satan only in bars, nightclubs and dens of open evil. This is more of his deception. He does his most effective work in the pulpit, in religion, promoting self-righteousness, tradition and substituting any hope other than Christ's righteousness and effectual sin-offering, which is the sinner's only hope (Heb. 10:14-18).

v. 15. Since Satan, in order to receive men, pretends to be what he is not, so those who are his ministers, who seek their own profit and not the glory of God or men's salvation, will pretend to be what they are not. They pretend to be ministers of righteousness, but if you examine carefully, you will find that the righteousness they preach is not the righteousness of Christ but the righteousness of law, human works and deeds of religion (Matt. 5:20; Rom. 3:19-23; 10:1-4). Their end will correspond with their deeds, or their reward at last will be according to their works.

vv. 16, 17. Referring back to what he said in verse 1, Paul expresses the hope that no man would think him to be unwise and guilty of foolishness in commending himself and his ministry to them and vindicating himself

against the false apostles. If they did not think him to be a fool, then he asked them to bear with him in this folly; for he felt it necessary for the sake of the gospel and for the good of the church not to allow these insinuations against him to go unchallenged. He did not have a special command of God to defend or commend himself. God's servants are taught to be humble and to commit their ways unto the Lord, but Paul felt that the glory of God and the best interests of the church would be served by his speaking plainly about his credentials, even if some thought it to be foolish boasting.

v. 18. It is a fact that most men glory with respect to things external, such as their birth and families, their riches and possessions, their beauty and strength, or their education and influence. The apostle says, 'I will glory also, not in these things, but in the grace of God in me and the power and gifts of God upon me' (Jer. 9:23, 24; Phil. 3:4-9). Paul detested this sort of thing, for he kept saying, 'I speak as a fool' (vs. 21, 23), but he felt it necessary to call attention to his integrity in the word and put to silence these false preachers.

vv. 19, 20. 'Notwithstanding all of your so-called wisdom' (1 Cor. 4:9, 10) (the Corinthians prided themselves on both their natural and spiritual wisdom), 'you gladly bear with these false preachers, these proud boasters who bring you again under the bondage of the law and works, who exploit you, who take your money and possessions, who proudly exalt themselves over you and who belittle you like a slap in the face' (Gal. 2:4; 4:9). All of this was taken in good part by many so that they rejected Paul and came under the influence of these false preachers.

v. 21. Paul says, 'I reply to the reproaches they bring against me, claiming that I am weak and contemptible, for indeed I am less than the least of all, the chief of sinners, but not in my doctrine or in the ministry I have among

you, for where any man may be bold, I am bold! I speak foolishly as does anyone who speaks to his own praise, but I must tell you the truth that you may know God has sent me.’

If I must needs glory

2 Corinthians 11:22-33

For the glory of God, for the sake of the gospel, for the good of the church at Corinth and to expose the false prophets for what they were, Paul continues to vindicate himself and to defend his ministry and his message of justification by faith (Rom. 3:28). They said that he was weak and contemptible, that his speech was rude and they urged the people to reject Paul and follow them. So Paul was forced to expose them (vs.12-15) and defend himself (vs.16-18).

v. 22. 'Are they Hebrews? So am I.' Evidently these false preachers were Jews who sought to bring into this Gentile church their traditions and impose on the Corinthians the ceremonies and requirements of the law (Col. 2:16, 17; Gal. 3:1-3; 5:1-6; Rom. 10:4). They boasted that they should be heard because they were Hebrews, descendants from Jacob (Israelites) and sons of Abraham (John 8:33). Paul declared that his credentials in this regard matched theirs (Phil. 3:3-7).

v. 23. 'Are they ministers of Christ?' Paul might have denied that they were true ministers of Christ, since they did not preach Christ, they put down the true apostle to the Gentiles and they sought their own things, not the things of Christ nor the good of the church. This a minister sent by Christ would not do! But Paul chose not to do battle with them on this point (by pointing out their inconsistencies and errors) but rather to show in himself the spirit, sufferings, motives and dedication to Christ and the church which are characteristic of a genuine apostle and preacher. He regretted having to commend himself ('I speak as a fool'), feeling that it would be misunderstood (vs. 16; Prov. 27:1, 2), but there was a reason for

it - to stop the mouths of these vain boasters. He was more than a minister of the gospel; he was an apostle who labored more and suffered more than even the other eleven apostles. Therefore, he was far superior to these who found fault with him.

1. 'In labors more abundant.' He traveled more, preached and wrote more, established more churches and even worked with his own hands. He was a tireless evangelist.

2. 'In stripes above measure.' He suffered more for the gospel (being beaten, whipped and unmercifully afflicted) than any other.

3. 'In prisons more frequent.' Who spent more time in prison for the sake of the gospel than Paul? Certainly not these false apostles!

4. 'In deaths oft.' He was always in danger of death. The afflictions, evils and dangers to which he was constantly exposed threatened death (2 Cor. 1:8.10).

vv. 24-27. In proof of his love for Christ, his dedication to the gospel of God's glory and grace and the fact that God had counted him faithful in the ministry of the word, the apostle reveals some of the things he had suffered for the testimony of God. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles and for that reason was hated of the Jews and among the Gentiles he also met with great persecution. Five times he was whipped by the Jews (Deut. 25:1-3); three times he was beaten with rods (Acts 16:19-23); once he was stoned (Acts 14:19); three times he suffered shipwreck (we read of only one - Acts 27:18-44). 'A night and a day I have been in the deep' may refer (as some say) to a dungeon, but most likely it refers to being adrift on the sea after a shipwreck. If he journeyed by land or by sea, he was always in danger, for it seemed that everyone wanted to silence his voice. Satan used every means, from bandits to false brethren in the church, to add to the toil and hardship of Paul. He suffered hunger, thirst, cold, exposure

and lack of clothing. When we are tempted to complain of our lot in life, it would do well for us to review these verses and consider how little we have suffered for what we believe (Heb. 12:4).

v. 28. Besides those afflictions and trials which were brought upon his flesh and body (his outward man) by people who had no relation to Christ or to the church (1 Cor. 5:12, 13), the apostle was burdened in heart and mind with the care of all the churches. He was not an ordinary pastor with the responsibility of preaching to and overseeing one church, but he was the Lord's apostle in these earliest days of the conversion of pagan Gentiles, who had to be taught the ways of Christ, and the conversion of traditional, legalistic Jews, who had to be taught that Christ was the fulfillment and the end of the Mosaic law. Not having the completed New Testament as their rule and guide, all of these early churches looked to Paul and the inspired apostles for guidance, instruction and correction.

v. 29. 'Who is weak that I do not feel his weakness?' There was not a weak believer struggling with problems of foods, days, inner conflicts, or temptation, with whom Paul did not sympathize (Rom. 12:15). There was not an offended believer, hurt and wounded by what he did or said or by the words and actions of someone else, that did not cause Paul pain and grief until the cause of the offence was removed. This oneness with, and compassion and sympathy for, members of the body of Christ are not only the minister's responsibility, but should be the feeling of all believers (1 Cor. 12:25, 26).

vv. 30-31. What Paul says in those verses is that if he must commend himself and if it becomes necessary for him to prove his apostleship and the integrity of his ministry, he will do so, not by pointing to his unusual gifts, such as the different languages he spoke, miracles he had performed, churches he had established, or the great numbers of people who had been

saved by his gospel, but he chose to glory in the things he had suffered for his faithfulness to the gospel and to glory in his genuine love and concern for the people of God. He calls on God as his witness that he speaks the truth (Rom. 1:9; 9:1-3).

v. 32-33. He mentions one incident in the past in which he was in great danger, but God delivered him. This was his first great difficulty and the rest of his life was more of the same (Acts 9:21-25).

My grace is sufficient for thee

2 Corinthians 12:1-9

The apostle Paul continues in this chapter to vindicate himself and his ministry against the false preachers, taking notice of a very remarkable and unusual experience with which God favored him and of the method God used to keep him humble and to keep him from being exalted. Yet for all this, he chose rather to glory in his infirmities and hardships for the sake of the gospel.

v. 1. It is neither comely nor is there anything to be gained by our boasting in our works, our gifts, or our accomplishments (Jer. 9:23, 24), nor would Paul do it except when it was necessary for the glory of God and the overall good of the church. Having spoken of his hardships and great sufferings for Christ, he comes to visions and revelations which God gave to him. His conversion was the result of what he called a 'heavenly vision' (Acts 26:19). At Troas a vision appeared to him, in which a man of Macedonia called him there to preach (Acts 16:9). The Lord spoke to him in a vision, revealing to him that he should remain in Corinth, for God had much people there (Acts 18:9, 10). These visions were for his instruction, direction and encouragement in the ministry of the gospel. We have no need of special visions and voices from heaven, for we have the completed word of God. All that we need in order to know Christ and have eternal life is revealed by the Holy Spirit through the word of God (Rom. 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23).

vv. 2, 3. Paul speaks of himself in the third person instead of the first. The men whom God used to write the Scriptures often did this. Verse 7 clearly indicates that he referred to himself. He says, 'I knew a man in Christ,'

that all the glory and honour might be to Christ, for no heavenly blessing nor heavenly revelation can come to any man except in, by and for the glory of Christ (Eph. 1:3). Paul was taken up to 'the third heaven,' the seat of divine majesty, the abode of holy angels, where the glorified Christ is and where departed believers go following death. In verse 4 he called it 'paradise' (Luke 23:43). Some say the third heaven is above the heaven where the birds fly and above the starry heaven which is adorned with stars and planets. Whether he was taken there in body and spirit, or in spirit only, he did not know - only God knows!

v. 4. Paul did not speak of what he saw there but only of what he heard, calling the language and words unspeakable (either impossible for a man to utter, or impossible for men in the flesh to comprehend, or both). Though they were spoken in the presence of a man, yet they could not be spoken by him! Not that it would be sinful for him to speak these heavenly words, but that it was impossible for him or for any earthly creature to understand, enter into, or participate in this heavenly state until they are changed to his likeness (1 Cor. 15:50, 51). This exposes as falsehood the testimonies of people today who claim to have died and who come back telling what they saw and heard. Heavenly glories are as impossible for the human mind to comprehend and express as music, art and science are above the understanding and communication of a dog. Only glorified people can speak of or understand the true glories of heaven.

v. 5. In this experience the Lord greatly exalted and honored Paul, and though he might and did lawfully glory and rejoice in the Lord who had so highly favored him, yet he knew that it was not owing to any merit or worthiness found in himself. He found all grace and mercy in Christ and only for the glory of Christ. If he gloried in anything of himself in his present state, it would be in his infirmities and weaknesses, those things

which he had suffered for the glory of God. He had been faithful to the gospel even under the most difficult circumstances (2 Tim. 4: 5-8).

v. 6. Again the humility of the apostle shines forth in this verse for he says, 'Should I have a mind to boast or glory in this unusual experience, I would not be foolish braggart (as some might interpret it); for I would be telling nothing but the truth - a true account of what really happened. But I forbear, suppress any desire to relate all of the revelations and visions God has given me, lest anyone should take me to be more than I am – a sinner saved by the grace of God' (Eph. 3:7, 8; 1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 7:24).

v. 7. God took care of any tendency in Paul to be proud or puffed up over the greatness of his gifts and revelations by giving him a thorn in the flesh. Pride is naturally in every man's heart and believers are not without it; therefore, to prevent this sin, which God hates (Prov. 6:16, 17; 16:18), God gave Paul a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass him. We know that God permitted this affliction; we know that it had to do with Paul's flesh (human nature). Whether it was sickness, weakness, temptation, lust, or appearance, we do not know, but we know that it was a messenger of Satan, or, as God was pleased to put Job in the hands of Satan, he was pleased to allow Paul to be tried sorely and afflicted by the angel of hell. The plain and evident purpose for this severe trial in the flesh was to keep Paul from becoming proud, puffed up and exalted above measure. Instead of being a hindrance, this thorn was a help to the apostle, as our infirmities, afflictions and trials are for our eternal good (Rom. 8:28; 1 Peter 1:6, 7).

vv. 8, 9. Three times in definite, dedicated and sincere prayer, Paul asked God to deliver him from this affliction, to remove it from him, but the Lord refused, telling Paul that his grace was sufficient to support him, strengthen him and uphold him under any trial or circumstance. Besides,

God's strength and grace are never more glorified or appreciated than when we realize our own weakness and inability! Therefore, Paul said, 'I will all the more rejoice in and accept my weaknesses and infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon and be revealed in me' (2 Cor. 4:7).

We seek not yours, but you

2 Corinthians 12:10-21

When Paul prayed three times for God to remove the thorn in his flesh, the answer God gave him was wonderfully satisfactory to him. 'My grace is sufficient for you,' to strengthen, comfort and bear you up under and through whatever trial or affliction it is my purpose for you to experience (Phil. 4:11-13). The Lord's strength and grace are more manifest, are more glorified and are more appreciated in the light of our weaknesses (Luke 7:47). Paul considered himself to be a weak, feeble, sinful creature and the power and grace of Christ to be his refuge, his salvation, his shield and his strength.

v. 10. 'Therefore,' he said, 'I take pleasure in the infirmities of the flesh, in reproaches from Satan and men, in the common necessities of life (such as hunger, thirst and nakedness), in persecutions from the enemies of the gospel (whether in the church or out), in distresses of mind and heart and for all things that I am called upon to suffer for Christ's sake; for when I am weak in myself and aware of my inability and the arm of flesh provides no help, then my Lord strengthens me, meets my need and reveals his grace, and this is my real strength.' When we have nothing to say, to contribute, or to find comfort in, we will look to Christ and find that in him are all things! To live, we must die; to be full, we must be emptied; to be rich, we must become poor!

vv. 11, 12. Paul declared that in calling attention to his revelations, his office and his sufferings, he felt like a foolish person, for it was against the principle of grace, against his humble spirit and against the truth of divine providence for him to boast (1 Cor. 4:7). But these people forced him to

do it by listening to the false preachers and taking sides against Paul. They ought to have spoken in his defense, for he was the instrument of God in their conversion, and he was not one whit behind the greatest apostles in call, gifts, labors, or suffering, though in himself he knew that he was nothing (1 Cor. 3:5-7; 15:9, 10). Indeed, the signs and credentials of a genuine apostle were performed among them by Paul and revealed in wonders and mighty deeds (Rom. 15:16-19; Heb. 2:3, 4).

v. 13. 'You have not been neglected, not treated any differently than the churches where Peter or James or the other apostles ministered. You have heard the same gospel, witnessed the same miracles and been enriched in the same spiritual gifts. The only difference is that I took no financial support from you, but provided for my own support by laboring with my hands. If this offended you, I apologize' (2 Cor. 11:7-9).

vv. 14-15. Paul planned to visit them again and lets them know that he was coming to them with the same resolutions, not to be a financial burden to them. His chief reason for this determination was to impress upon them the fact that his only concern was their salvation, their growth in grace and their fellowship in Christ, not material, nor physical, nor personal gain for himself. He looked upon them as his children and, though children ought to help parents who are in need, yet it is the duty of parents to provide for children. He declared that he loved them so exceedingly that he would spend all that he had and be willing to labour and even die for their spiritual welfare, though it seemed that the more he loved them, the less they loved him.

vv. 16, 17. 'You must admit that I did not burden you at all, and the false accusers will admit it also, but they suggest that I was crafty and sly, making use of other persons to get your money, while I professed to preach the gospel freely.' Paul desires them to name even one person of

the many messengers he sent their way who had received anything from them for him. Enemies of the gospel seek their own and are not only cruel in their accusations, but usually have no regard for truthfulness.

v. 18. He urged Titus to visit them and sent a brother with him. He asked, 'Did Titus take advantage of you in any way? Did he not act in the same spirit in which I acted and take the same steps, seeking your good and not his own?' God's true ministers all are of the same spirit. They seek the glory of God and the good of the church, not their own gain, glory, or welfare (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

v. 19. Did Paul speak all these words about his ministry, his labors and his sufferings only to defend himself against false charges, to build himself up in their eyes, or to gain their favour? No! It was for their sake, for their edification, because he loved them, that they might be grounded on the true foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ, built up and established in the faith of the gospel. He spoke in all sincerity, without deceit, before God as one in Christ. He was fearful lest they be led astray by listening to the wrong voice. God speaks through men, but since there are so many false preachers; we must try them and their message (1 John 4:1-3; Rev. 2:2).

vv. 20, 21. Paul closes this chapter by expressing the fear that when he visited them again, he would find things in the church not honoring to Christ and contrary to holiness, such as quarrelling, envy, wrath, strife, selfishness, gossip, pride and disorder. 'If I find you in these things, you will not find me to be so co-operative, but quite severe in my dealings with those who will not repent of their sins and walk in Godliness.' This would cause the apostle great distress, grief and sorrow of heart to have his visit concerned with discipline instead of comfort. 'Put away these things from among you and walk together in love and purity, that the name of Christ be not slandered' (Eph. 5:1-4).

Examine yourselves

2 Corinthians 13:1-14

v. 1. Some understand the words, ‘The third time I am coming to you,’ to mean his one visit to them in person (Acts 18:1, 9-11), his first epistle and now this second epistle. This is probably what he meant, for he called to their attention the law concerning witnesses in any matter (Deut. 19:15). Our Lord also referred to this rule in Matthew 18:15, 16. The gospel he preached, the things he taught, the way of life he had called them unto and the correction and rebukes for their errors had all been established by the Spirit of the Lord in the mouth of two or three witnesses (John 5:31-39; 1 John 5:7, 8). We would do well to use the same rule in all matters before us today.

v. 2. He means that he had in the first epistle faithfully told them of the evils that existed among them (the divisions, false preachers, fornication, going to law with one another, divorce, misuse of gifts and bad behavior at the Lord's Table) and had warned them to correct these errors. Now, being absent, he writes the second time to the whole congregation, and especially to the guilty parties, that if these matters are not corrected by the time he comes to them in person, he will use his powers as an apostle to deal with the offenders. This was one of the reasons he had been reluctant to visit them; he wanted his visit to be pleasant and not tumultuous (2 Cor. 1:23). Those who love Christ love and enjoy peace and unity. They do not delight in conflict and division.

v. 3. Some of the members of this church, prompted by false apostles and teachers, had called into question Paul's authority (his apostleship) and had suggested that perhaps he did not speak for God at all. Of all men, these

Corinthians had the least reason to question Paul's ministry, for he had been the means and instrument God used to bring them to faith in Christ. Christ's message of grace, spoken through Paul, was certainly not weak but mighty in them. It was the power of God unto salvation to them and was attended among them with signs, wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit. True converts are living proof that God speaks through a minister. Those who make a false profession are the fruits of false prophets (Matt. 7:15, 16).

v. 4. 'Our Lord is not weak but mighty; his gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). His blood is effectual, his righteousness is sufficient, his spirit is invincible, and those whom he has purposed to save will be saved (Ps. 110:3; John 6:37-39; 10:23-30). There was a time when Christ was weak and was crucified in weakness (Isa. 53:1-3). He was made flesh and numbered with the transgressors, but by the power of God he arose and ascended to heaven, where he lives and reigns for ever. We apostles are weak like he was, and for his sake bearing reproaches, persecutions and afflictions as he did in the day of humiliation, but we are strong in Christ (Phil. 4:12, 13) and through Christ, who enables us to perform the gospel ministry' (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

v. 5. 'Now instead of examining me and seeking proof of Christ's speaking through me, examine yourselves! Determine by the word of God if you are in the faith of Christ. Don't spend your time proving others but prove yourselves! (2 Peter 1:10, 11). Do you not know your own hearts? If Christ dwells in your hearts by faith, you have become new creatures, his spirit is within you, his graces and fruit are manifested, his love is shed abroad in your hearts and you have a good hope. If not, you are counterfeits, worthless and rejected.'

vv. 6, 7. Paul expresses the hope that the Corinthians would know that he was not counterfeit, rejected of God and a hypocrite. He also prayed to God that they would believe the word, love Christ and walk in the Spirit of God – not just to make him appear to be something great or even to vindicate his claims, but that they might know and love the Lord Jesus and be redeemed even if his ministry was never accepted and men considered him to be a counterfeit.

v. 8. The gospel is true! God is sovereign! The will of God in covenant mercies and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ shall be victorious! Neither Paul, the Corinthians, nor any man, nor all men, nor the forces of evil can do anything to alter God's purpose or defeat his truth. Whether in obedience or rebellion, we contribute to his greater glory! (Isa. 46:9,11; Acts 4:27, 28; Rom. 9:15-18; Ps. 76:10.)

v. 9. The apostle declares that he was glad to be weak, to be afflicted and to bear reproaches for Christ's sake that the power of Christ might rest upon him and result in their becoming strong in faith and active in the exercises of grace (2 Cor. 12:10; 2 Tim. 2:9, 10). This was his desire above all things that they know Christ and reach maturity in faith (Eph. 4:11-15).

v. 10. Therefore, he wrote this epistle while he was absent from them, that they might set things in order among themselves (Phil. 2:12, 13), that when he did visit them in person he would not be forced to use his apostolic authority and rod which the Lord gave him. The Lord put him in the ministry to edify men, not to destroy and trouble them.

vv. 11-14. The apostolic benediction: 'Brethren, be mature believers, not babes which are always in need of correction and rebuke. Be of good

comfort in your trials and afflictions, knowing they are for God's glory and your good (Rom. 8:28). Be united in mind and heart, in purpose and affection, live together in peace among yourselves and as much as possible with all men, and the God of love and peace will bless and be with you. Greet one another with mutual love and genuine friendship. Don't avoid others and hold grudges but show your love openly. The saints in other places greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all' (Num. 6:24-26).

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