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2 Timothy 3: Part 2

Steve Walvatne

The Sainly Service of Last Days

In this third section of 2 Timothy 3, Paul counters the prior evil by listing nine features of Sainly Service. "What a difference!" writes Guy King. "At one point, weeds – ugly, rank, poisonous weeds; and just around the corner, flowers – sweetly-scented, exquisitely-formed flowers."

The phrase "fully known" (*parakoloutheo*) in verse 10, literally means to "faithfully follow." Paul states it emphatically of Timothy: "But *thou, thou* didst follow..." Unlike the religious professors, Timothy traced Paul's steps and embraced (1 Tim. 4:6, "attained") Paul's way. He followed:

Paul's Communication: "*My doctrine.*" Timothy discerned God's mind in Paul's communication, and like Caleb, "wholly followed" the Lord (Deut. 1:36). Sound doctrine stabilizes. It safeguards against extremes, giving life a proper perspective and direction. Rightly, Paul put it first. "Common sense" like our conscience, is unreliable and can lead us astray. But God's Word is solid; its principles and precepts trustworthy. It cannot deceive.

Paul's Conduct: "*My manner of life.*" What Paul preached, he practiced. Nothing speaks louder. Timothy visualized Paul's doctrine through his conduct. Mere head knowledge is dangerous; it tends to pride (1 Cor. 8:1) and "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Pr. 16:18). Our doctrine is only as good as our conduct. Truth *lived* is truth *learned*. Our deportment at home, school, work, and in the assembly reveals the hold "sound doctrine" has on our life.

Paul's Consecration: "*My purpose.*" Timothy knew what Paul lived for. He didn't serve two masters (Matt. 6:24), but was completely consecrated to God's service: "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Php. 1:21). What

is our purpose? Is it business? Is it pleasure? Or, do the things of God take precedence? Are we like the nobles in Nehemiah 3:5, who "*put not their necks to the work of the Lord*"? Or, are we like Priscilla and Aquila, Paul's "*helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks*" (Rom. 16:3, 4)? Oh that our hearts might echo the sentiment of the hymn writer Van DeVenter, who wrote:

All to Jesus I surrender;
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

Paul's Conviction: "*My faith.*" Some view this as "faithfulness" to Christ, and Paul was certainly loyal in that sense. But the meaning goes deeper. Paul's faith was an inward conviction of truth. Not just saving faith, but a confidence from God, that what he preached and practiced was true. This gave power and weight to his testimony. His teaching was no cold, dry lecture, but part and parcel of his being. You couldn't sit under him unmoved. A man may be fluent and factual, but if his words and way betray conviction, the message will drift. No man should preach beyond his experience.

Paul's Consideration: "*My longsuffering.*" Paul was considerate to saints and sinners even when wronged. He emulated the Saviour, "*Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously*" (1 Pet. 2:23). The word "longsuffering" anticipates continued abuse. An insult is bad, but repeated insults over numerous occasions, are worse. Timothy witnessed Paul's response to vicious attacks. He didn't retaliate or replicate the repugnant behavior of his foes – and neither should we.

Paul's Compassion: "*My charity.*" Paul's compassion ran deep. He exhibited *agape* love – that selfless,

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sacrificial love, which gives unconditionally. It's the love most linked to God. "It indicates love which deliberately, by an act of will, chooses its object, and through thick or thin, regardless of the attractiveness of the object concerned, goes on loving continually, eternally" (Alan Redpath: *The Royal Route to Heaven*). Paul both amplified (1 Cor. 13) and personified (2 Cor. 4:8-16) this love. It's scarce today. Men limit their love: if crossed, they withdraw it. Not Paul. He reveled in God's love (Rom. 5:8) and responded to others in kind. What an example to Timothy. What an example to us.

Paul's Consistency: "*My patience.*" This is "endurance," or "perseverance": the spirit that doesn't despair, but patiently continues regardless of circumstances. "*I press toward the mark,*" said Paul (Php. 3:14). Timothy did the same. And behind them has marched a devoted band of consistent saints. Are we consistent? Or do the slightest obstacles derail us? Take up the histories of men like J. J. Rouse (*Pioneer Work in Canada*) and see their endurance. In fact, that was the theme of an Indian hymn Mr. Rouse received. It had three verses. The first read:

Go on, go on, go on, go on,
Go on, go on, go on,
Go on, go on, go on, go on,
Go on, go on, go on.

The last two read the same.

Paul's Conflict: "*My persecutions.*" "The godly," said John Stott, "arouse the antagonism of the worldly." Paul was scorned, ridiculed, and envied. He knew the sting of the lash, the blow of the rod, the impact of stones, and the crashing of waves. He'd been cold, hungry, thirsty, and weary. He knew how it felt to be ill-clad, even before royalty. And the places of conflict were numerous. Three of them – Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra – were extremely severe. Yet, Paul's confidence in God never waned: "*Out of them all, the Lord delivered me.*" Those "resolved," to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Many professing Christians flee reproach and mimic the world. Some even "will" (or 'determine') to be rich (1 Tim. 6:9), rather than "will" to live godly. But the path of Least Resistance, winds through Compromise Gate and ends in the city called Loss (1 Cor. 3:15).

Paul's Condition: "*My afflictions.*" Persecution took its toll, weakening Paul's physical condition. But he suffered it proudly, for his wounds declared allegiance – "*I bear in my body the marks (the brand-marks) of the Lord Jesus*" (Gal. 6:17); and came as a gift from God – "*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake*" (Php. 1:29). Today, some believers suffer from burdened hearts that weep over perishing sinners or

wandering saints. Some suffer for faithfulness, at the hands of unscrupulous brethren or ungodly sinners. Others endure physical threats or bodily harm. All are difficult to bear. But the Lord knows each case and His word is: "*Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be*" (Rev. 22:12).

Paul concludes the list with a reminder that "evil men and seducers ('imposters') will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Their *mischievous activity* will be stopped (v.9), but their *moral depravity* will advance. They begin as deceivers, but end up "duped," "for deceit commonly leads to self-deceit" (A. Plummer).

The Sacred Scriptures for Last Days

The final verses of chapter 3 turn us to the Sacred Scriptures. They are "the only sure and safe standing place of the man of God" in last days (J.N. Darby: *Collected Writings*, vol. 5). Yet, in many Christian homes, the Bible has lost its prominence. Entertainment, social events, and business are partly to blame. Harriet Beecher Stowe, writing of 18th century America, said "every man, woman, and child was more or less a theologian" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1858). What an indictment against our generation – one with more Bible study aids than all others combined! Sadly, many of our priorities are distorted and detrimental to spiritual growth.

Timothy was to "continue" in the truth he'd learned and been "fully persuaded" of. "Last days" weren't to deter his faithfulness. Memories of his teachers and their faithful testimonies would fortify and embolden his own walk. Hebrews 13:7 gives similar advice: "*Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the Word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation ('conduct'), imitate their faith*" (JND). We should revere the memories of past teachers. The late Albert Leckie once observed, that "in many places, there's a deep desire to forget those leaders who faithfully ministered God's Word to us – to forget all they taught and to remove the ancient landmarks." If that's our attitude, then we're discounting at great peril, a preservative for last days.

Two of Timothy's foremost teachers were his mother and grandmother (1:5). Paul appreciated the background they'd given Timothy in truth. From "infancy," they'd instructed him from Old Testament Scriptures. Paul writes, "Holy Scriptures" here, a title that's unique. It literally means, the "Sacred Letters," and could be an indirect reference to Timothy's formative education and how he learned to read. One cannot overstate the value of Scriptural teaching in the home. Often, it pays large dividends down the road.

Paul then lists three great attributes of Scripture. He stresses:

Their Divine Illumination: "...Are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Scriptures "illuminate" by "throwing light" on man's guilt and God's grace – on man's poverty and God's provision. Like a signpost, they point sinners to the Savior who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (Jn. 14:6). Yet, "without faith in Christ, salvation and wisdom from above are alike impossible" (Kelly). Though raised on Scripture, Timothy still needed a definite time of Holy Spirit conviction, when by God's Word he believed "unto salvation." Also, in the context of last days, Paul's thought of "salvation" would go further, conveying the idea of "preservation" as in Philippians 2:12. The Scriptures that Timothy learned were able to impart spiritual wisdom needed for preservation in perilous times.

Their Divine Inspiration: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Some versions (for example, the RV, ASV, NEB) mislead readers by translating this, "Every Scripture inspired (or, 'every inspired Scripture') of God is also profitable..." They claim that divine inspiration is *implied* by the passage and not *stated*, but their rendering gives readers a false impression that parts of Scripture aren't inspired. The better reading is: "Every Scripture is God-inspired" or "God breathed," as the AV suggests. The Lord used human instruments (2 Pet. 1:21) of varying backgrounds and abilities, to put in written form, words that were God-breathed. Why is Paul emphasizing this? Perhaps to remind saints in last days, that however the attitudes of men may fluctuate, the Word of God abides unchanged and unequivocal in its teaching.

Their Divine Information: "And is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Scripture can "complete" and "fully outfit" a Christian worker for every good work. No other book, person, or religious entity can make that claim. The Scriptures **teach** God's mind (doctrine), **tell** our waywardness (reproof), **turn** our steps around (correction), and **take** us in the right way (instruction in righteousness). Its information is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (Jas. 3:17). Would that all of us, young and old, esteemed God's Word more than our "necessary food" (Job 23:12).

And so the chapter ends. It commenced under a shroud of darkness, but closed in radiant day – a reminder to us, that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

If it be asked, What is the proof that we digest our spiritual food?—that our knowledge of God's truth turns to growth in grace? The answer is, Does it lead us into communion with God, and submission to His will? Among the marks of true communion with God, two of the plainest are a spirit of thanksgiving and a spirit of confession.
Robert C. Chapman

SOME REASONS FOR NOT VOTING

Anonymous (Words in Season, October 1939)

IF I vote, I join affinity with the world; I am share-and share-alike with them in the election of a government. The "partnership" is clear. My vote counts for as much as the vote of the worldling. Now, the Lord hath forbidden such an affinity. "What communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14). To be joined with the world in a political contest, brings me under an unequal yoke; which yoke God's Word strictly warns me against. God has separated me from the world. How can I go back to the thing from which God has for ever severed me by the death of His Son? (Gal. 6:14) .

"Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20, literal rendering). Ours is a heavenly commonwealth. Therefore the politics of earth do not demand our attention. "My kingdom is not of this world," said Christ; "if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight" (John 18:36). For the same reason they do not engage in political conflict. If His kingdom were of this world, then would His servants vote, and strive for political mastery. But His kingdom is from above. Therefore His servants neither vote nor fight.

We profess to take the Word of God for everything. We refuse to acknowledge infant sprinkling. We say **we must have Scripture for it**. Apply the same rule to voting, and the whole matter is clear. Brother So-and-so tells me I should vote. I want Scripture for it; but there is none. There is just as little Scripture for engaging in politics, as there is for infant sprinkling; and that is none. Scripture does not warrant my pursuing politics; while on the contrary, it commands separation from the world and all that is of the world. If we want to be consistent, let us demand Scripture for voting, as strongly as we demand Scripture for infant sprinkling.

We profess to be separated to the Lord. But where is our separation on the polling day if we are found making common cause with the worldling and rejoicing that "our man" is in? On what principle do we separate from the world's religion, and yet identify ourselves with its politics? Hath not God said, "All that is of the world ... is not of the Father"? (1 John 2:16). Scripture declares that "the whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19, R. V.).

How then can I for a moment think of joining affinity with that world, and, by mixing in its politics, attempt to patch up the very thing that the Lord is going to break to pieces at His appearing and kingdom?

If I vote I thereby acknowledge the principle of ruling by majority—a principle utterly opposed to the teaching of Scripture.

If I vote, I virtually say that my time has come to reign. But our time has not come to reign. Satan is the god of this age, and will continue to be so until he is dethroned by Christ Paul said to the Corinthians, *"I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you"* (1 Cor. 4:8). To the Philippians he says (Phil. 1:29), *"Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer"* (not reign).

Christ has left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Will the example of Christ lead me into the polling booth? Never. When the wily enemy would ensnare Him into a declaration of His politics, He refused to be identified with any political faction in Judea. *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's"* (Matt. 22:21). Divine wisdom shines in that answer. But there is more: there is a divine separation from all that is of the world. Strange that our Lord's answer should be held by some to warrant their voting! This is surely turning Scripture upside down. If we do what the Master did, we shall shake ourselves entirely clear of political strife.

When Christ was rejected, His people were rejected in Him. *"As He is, so are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17). How then can we deny our identity with Him, and so sink our heavenly citizenship as to join with His enemies in forming a government for a Christ-rejecting world?

Scripture says, *"By strength shall no man prevail"* (1 Sam. 2:9). But if I join in a political contest, it simply means that by strength I will prevail.

Old Testament history is sometimes appealed to as proof that we should have a king or a government. But Old Testament history gives no countenance to the politics of today. In the old dispensation the kings in Israel were directly appointed by Jehovah; and there was no election to see what kind of government was to be in power; for the Lord reigned over His people. There is no parallel between their case and the nations of the world today. We do not find Israel joining with the Moabites in the formation of a government for their

mutual benefit. Yet this is what may be seen today. Old Testament history thus gives us no warrant to mingle with the politics of the world. Indeed, if we want a picture today that will correspond with Israel under the kings, we find it in God's heavenly people—His saved ones, under the spiritual rule of Christ.

"Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). If this Scripture were duly weighed, we would hear very little of God's people being at the polling booth. Peter and John, being let go, went to their own company (Acts 4:23). John says, *"the world knoweth us not"* (1 John 3: 1). In the face of such Scriptures, how can we allow ourselves to be reckoned with the worldlings? If the world "knows" us—recognizes us as its own, and claims our help in its political schemes, we may well fear that something serious is wrong.

Think of Peter and John joining with Caiaphas the high priest in bringing forward a new political scheme for Judea! "Impossible!" you say, "the enemies of Christ and the followers of Christ could never put their heads together in that way." But that is the very thing that is being done. Peters, and Johns, and Caiaphases, may be found at the polling booth congratulating each other--rejoicing with each other, and jubilant in the prospect of their scheme being a success. But stay. Where is Christ in all this? He is out of sight. His name must not be mentioned! Ah, but the world finds us believers very useful people at a political crisis to swell up the vote—only the Man Christ Jesus must have an outside place. Keep Him out of the question, and the child

of God and the Christ-rejector will agree! Strange, surely, that there should be such an agreement between light and darkness! But there would be no such agreement if we maintained our place as witnesses for Christ. Let Peter and John still keep to their own company; and let Caiaphas and all "the kindred of the high priest" fight their own battles, while we seek the lowly (it may be the lonely) path of identity with our rejected Lord.

If God's precious truth is held in an easy, careless way, the result soon will be an unholy familiarity with eternal things. It is sad to reflect that many who profess a great acquaintance with the Scriptures, seem to tremble less at the Word than the Christless worldling!

The path of faith may be called a simple one; but it is not by any means, an easy one. Many choose it for its pleasantness, and then give it up because of its ruggedness. But the true child of faith treads the path of faith simply because it is God's path.

Order in God's House

1 Timothy 1:12-20

Joel Portman

In this section of this important epistle we find

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|---------------------------|------------|
| 1. God's Mercy Expressed | vss. 12-14 |
| 2. God's Mercy Emphasized | vss. 15-16 |
| 3. God of Mercy Extolled | vs. 17 |
| 4. Exhortation to Timothy | vss. 18-20 |

God's Mercy Expressed

Paul's contrast of law-teaching and the gospel (1:11) turns his mind to the results both messages have had in his life. As he assiduously followed and faithfully served the law, he was only a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. He was a **blasphemer** in his **Words** (speaking evilly, reviling the Lord Jesus), a **persecutor** in his **Acts** (his treatment of believers), and **injurious** in His **Attitude** (hateful, despiteful, insulting). This was the result of his adherence to the law, which these teachers were seeking to impose on the believers in Ephesus. Law and legalism always produces hard, bitter, difficult individuals who hinder God's truth as expressed in the gospel. We should always guard against a legalistic spirit that solely rests on law without appreciating God's grace in salvation. Spiritual growth individually, and order collectively is not by legalistic requirements but by growing "*in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Despite what he had been, the Lord had empowered him (v. 12) for service in every sphere, but especially in the gospel, because, despite his ignorance and unbelief of former days, he was faithful and the Lord could put confidence in him. As he was so zealous in his law-keeping days, he also was in his exercise to serve the Lord faithfully. In every period of testimony, there is always a need for believers who are faithful and dependable in character, useful in service, and spiritually exercised. Appreciation for God's mercy in salvation, if constantly remembered, will produce believers who desire, like Paul, to respond wholeheartedly to the Lord through submission to His will and obedience to His Word.

God's Mercy Emphasized

In contrast to the cold legalism of the law, Paul rejoiced in the warm declaration of God's grace to all, including Him, who was the "*chief of sinners*". This Christ-centered and Christ-honoring message is the only absolutely dependable message that man could receive, and it is so important that ALL should receive it. "*Faithful is the saying*" is unique to the pastoral epistles (1 Tim. 1:15, 3:1, 4:9, 2 Tim. 2:11, Titus 3:8). That it is faithful, or dependable, is because God has declared it, Christ has accomplished it, Paul had received and proven it, and centuries of gospel preaching have emphasized its effectiveness. "All acceptance" teaches that it is worthy to be accepted universally by all men and "in every way, without reservations, without hesitation, without the least doubt" (Lenski).

"*Christ Jesus came*" clearly teaches His preexistence, that His coming was from another sphere and that His existence predated His coming. This is an essential doctrine and must be stressed and upheld. The eternal deity and sonship of Christ is attacked by

many, but if it is not true, we have no Savior to offer to men. His coming emphasizes His eternity, but from eternity and out of heaven, He came into Time and into the World in His first coming. That coming was for the clearly defined purpose of saving sinners. Those who center all their attention on His words and works in life fail to realize that the essential point of His coming was to accomplish salvation for sinners. Previous acts of mercy and power along with His impeccability only displayed His suitability to accomplish this greater work. "Save" emphasizes that sinners cannot save themselves; it is active on His part and it is HE who has done and does the saving.

The law could save no one, since it made nothing perfect, or complete (Heb. 7:19) because of the desperate weakness of its objects, sinners. Our condition demanded a Savior who had complete capability to do this great work apart from any ability in ourselves. Those who, like Paul, depend entirely on His work can rejoice in the salvation that they have received by faith alone.

Paul considered himself as the chief, or foremost, of sinners. In one sense, everyone who has trusted Christ and is now saved says the same thing; it is our estimation as a result of seeing ourselves in God's sight, condemned, unworthy and helpless. This comes from understanding what He had to accomplish to save us and as a result, one's thoughts of self are lowly and those of the Savior are exalted!

Paul continues to appreciate God's salvation in v. 15. He had obtained mercy so that he might be a pattern (outline, example) to others who would also believe on Him to everlasting life. He was a pattern in his salvation, spiritual growth, service, sacrifice, and sympathy with the saints. One would do well to follow that pattern, (1 Cor. 11:1: "*Be ye imitators (followers) of me, even as I also am of Christ*")!

Those he refers to in this verse clearly include all others who would believe on Christ, whether Jew or Gentile. It might also suggest that he has in mind a future day when Christ will be directly revealed to the Jew in the future, when there will be those who will be saved, as he was, by recognizing the Jesus Christ is the true Messiah and thus be brought into this same spiritual blessing.

God of Mercy Extolled

Paul (and every believer) could not restrain himself as he thought of this grand and glorious message, so He turns to the Planner, Provider and Purpose of this salvation and bursts forth in one of his doxologies of praise. It is to the great King, God Himself, that his spirit rises in praise and ascribes to Him five very vital and precious attributes. He is the King, speaking of His Sovereignty. He is King of the Ages, emphasizing

His unoriginated, eternal existence. He is immortal, or incorruptible, indicating his essential Purity; invisible, thus He is imperceptible to sight; the ONLY wise God, thus emphasizing His absolute Deity, He is the Only God (W. E. Vine). He is the only one worthy to receive honor and glory, and it is and shall pertain to Him eternally. All the redeemed echo such words, for they flow from hearts that are filled with adoration and wondering praise for the great God of eternity who is the God of our salvation. What more can Paul say? Only **“Amen.”**

Exhortation to Timothy

He received a charge, or a solemn responsibility (v. 3). God had indicated to Paul and others of Timothy's assembly through prophecy that He had special purposes for Timothy which he was responsible to fulfill. God had indicated His mind regarding Timothy; now it was Timothy's responsibility to faithfully discharge that service, which had the nature of a warfare. He was facing strong and inveterate enemies who were determined to undermine his ministry and cause ruin in the assembly. He needed spiritual power to combat them and give needed strength and help to the saints to preserve them.

Our service for the Lord today involves a similar warfare against spiritual enemies, and if a believer is not prepared to combat them through anticipation of their wiles, with alertness and care, and with alacrity and activity of heart and soul, he or she will certainly fall under their determined attacks. We need to have the same spiritual determination to resist the devil and all his forces that are against God's people today as well. His ways and wiles should be known so that we are aware of how he would trip the saints and cause them to fall in their pathway of testimony.

That warfare required faith and a good conscience in contrast to some who had abandoned (violently and willfully thrust away as having no desire for them) both of these essential factors and as a result had made shipwreck concerning the faith (the body of revealed truth). Faith directs one's attention toward God as the only resource upon which one can depend, and it must be held fast, while a good conscience makes one inwardly sensitive to anything that is contrary to God and His Word. In v. 6, Paul reminds him of those who had turned aside because of no desire for the truth, and these have discarded both faith and a good conscience. This will always result in spiritual ruin on the rocks of unbelief, departure, denial of truth that is normally characteristic of those who are not saved.

Paul gives two specific examples of those in two men who had done so, and because of doctrinal error, Paul had delivered them to Satan (note a similar action in

1 Cor. 5:5 for moral sin) so that they might be taught not to blaspheme. Exactly who these two men were is beyond our purpose but they were well known to Timothy and Paul. They were subject to apostolic condemnation and likely were put away from the local assembly, as they should have been. Their antagonistic language against the Lord involved propagating wrong doctrines relating to His Person and work, as Paul had done in his unsaved days (v. 13). An assembly is responsible to act against all who are guilty of this behavior, and though apostles are not present, we act on their teaching and with the authority that the Lord has given to a local assembly, and believers should have nothing to do with any who are undermining the doctrinal truths of God's Word lest they should be harmed as well.

(to be continued)

Smooth paths are not always safe paths, for in them we become careless, selfish and proud; then comes a fall or an affliction. It is the rough path that makes us cautious, prayerful, and dependent on God; then we are safe.

WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?

Robert Surgenor

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4).

“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-20).

Lately my son interviewed a successful businessman in our locality. This particular individual owned and operated a business for seventeen years. Starting in 1994 this business in its best year turned over 1.75 million dollars in sales. Most of the money was put back into the business, but not all. The federal government took \$80,000 in taxes, and the state of Ohio claimed \$26,000 in taxes. That amounted to \$106,000 in taxes. The sales profit amounted to \$200,000. Out of his \$200,000 profit, an additional 35% tax was

imposed, amounting to \$70,000, leaving the man with \$130,000 profit.

In order to stay solvent, he was compelled to borrow money to meet the tax requirements, thus going deeper and deeper into debt each year. The government kept increasing his taxes. In 15 years he had payed the government 3 million dollars, just to stay in business. Finally, after 17 years he saw that if he continued in business much longer that he would be completely broke, so he sold his "successful" business for 1.4 million. Using that money to pay his debts, he ended up with \$420,000 cash. He thought that he could retire on that amount by careful investing. He was fooled, for the federal government came along and informed him that he must pay a capital gains tax on his \$420,000. They took \$147,000 and the state took \$26,000, leaving him with only \$247,000 as a result of 17 years working up to 120 hours every week.

This hard-working individual echoes many industrious people in this world. It is honorable to be a diligent and hard-working person, God never condones laziness. Whether or not this man was a Christian, I am not prepared to say. However, consider many unsaved business men that can echo this man's tale of woe. Let us look at their plight in the light of Holy Scripture. The first thing we want to consider is, what is their relationship to God? What part does God play in their busy life? What are they living for? What is their ultimate goal? One is reminded of the rich, and diligent farmer in Luke 11. What did all his labors amount to? Absolutely nothing, for he went into eternity a pauper. He had shut God out of his life and Christ called him a fool. He had no treasure in heaven. God cast him into hell.

Many successful businessmen have given up. Many of them are in tears. One cannot but feel sorry for them. However, where was God in their thriving business? Perhaps outside of it all. Many have worked feverishly to lay up treasures for themselves on earth. As they rise out of their beds early every morning, do you think that they slip to their knees and pray to God for guidance, while also thanking Him for His Son Who died for their sins? This is foreign to the ungodly. Do they quietly spend at least one hour a day listening to the voice of God through reading the Holy Scriptures? Of course not! Their mind is on earthly things. They seek to make a name for themselves through hard work. They strive to establish a business that will enable them to lay up treasures on earth. The man that was interviewed worked hard, but there was a fly in the ointment. That fly was the federal and state governments. They were the moths, the rust, and the thieves of Matthew 6, that broke through and stole his earthly treasure. He, like those in the tower of Babel's day, had high hopes at the commencement of his project. Those in the days of Babel did not need God,

nor did they desire God. Civilization today does not need God. Their language is the same as those before Noah's flood, "*Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways*" (Job 21:14). That same language prevails in our sophisticated day. Christians need to be aware of this!

The tower of Babel conveys another message. The Bible teaches that city life, and its outlook and view on human life, is always basically opposed to God. Unlike the farmer, the city man does not have to look to God for the weather to bring his crops to fruition. Ah no. All he has to do is go to the grocery store and purchase what he needs. The idea of trading with one another gives him a kind of independence. God is behind the weather. But if you live in the city, you need not worry about the weather. You get your bread from the baker. It is all so organized. It is so simple. Basically, such organization is an inducement and an encouragement to forget God.

City life is busy. Man rushes off to his employment. Ten hours later he is back to his dwelling. If his dwelling is a mansion, it is his idol. The nightlife lies before him. He wines and dines, laughing his way through the evening hours. Or perhaps he simply slumps into his plush easy chair and becomes a little slave to his TV, watching all that this godless world has to offer. Even country life has changed, becoming more like the city life. Man is kept so busy that he has no time left to think about God. Even the Christian can be swept up in the rushing current. How difficult it is to find time to pray and to read devotional books and to read the Bible. The sad cry goes forth, "We can't find the time to do these things."

Society has a false sense of security. They feel that because we are all huddled together we are somehow safer and are protected against the various calamities that befall the heathen. Those in the days of Genesis 11 built a city for protection and for a name. Look at our big cities today. Consider how they brag. New York City calls themselves, "The Big Apple." Ah yes, "We are big! We are powerful. Look at our commerce. Look at our theaters. Look at our importance in this world. Come to us for the best in entertainment. Walk our streets to view the best in merchandise. We are strong, we have made our bricks and mortar. We shall endure forever." This perverted attitude always has been and always will be in the human heart. There is no room for God. That is what the people in Genesis 11 were doing. They had shut God out. They were going to live a self-sufficient life – what you and I today tend to call a *civilized* life."

God speaks to man through calamities, but mankind heeds not. When the Twin Towers were destroyed, did New York City turn to God? Why no! Instead they turned to their own resources to better themselves.

There was no repentance for sin. No humbling before God. Pleasure was sought to keep them happy without God. God was not in all their thoughts. Instead of glorifying God by humbling themselves in the dust, they eulogized the brave firemen who sought to rescue poor souls trapped in those towers. True, the firemen were brave and worthy of note, but what I am trying to show you is, that all the attention and praise went to those men who died in that calamity. But where was God? Where was the broken spirit of repentance? Where were the crowds kneeling in prayer, acknowledging their sin?

The whole city of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and sat in sackcloth and ashes. The king called upon all to cry mightily unto God, and for everyone to turn from their evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands, hoping that God would repent of His fierce anger that they perish not (Jonah 3:8-9). But we are more civilized today. We have advanced beyond those ancient days when men were not as educated as we. That's the attitude, is it not? "Why humble ourselves, we are self efficient. We have done nothing wrong. We are great people!"

Did you read of the "churches" being packed to capacity? Not at all! All over the country American flags graced millions of cars. Patriotism rose to its zenith. The whole nation was suddenly proud of itself. But where was God? Where was there a contrite spirit in men turning to God for mercy and salvation? Well, my friend, true to fallen humanity's form – it was not there!

Where was praise rising up to Him for the greatest death that ever took place – the death of God's beloved Son at Calvary? It was not there, for their mind was not there. Man praises his fellow man, but invariably he leaves God out. God is not in all their thoughts. This is civilization, my friends.

As a Christian, I am compelled to expose to those I meet, or come in contact with, their condition before God. The message is purely negative. "*The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*" (Romans 8:7), consequently, the faithful Christian is frowned upon, he is shunned. The ungodly will never feel comfortable in the company of a faithful child of God. That makes it all the more easy for the Christian to live a pilgrim and stranger-type of life in a godless, Christ-hating and depraved world. "*Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake*" (Luke 6:22). Let me ask you, do the ungodly feel uneasy in your company? If not, perhaps there is something wrong with your testimony. Remember, "*All that will live godly in Christ Jesus SHALL suffer persecution*" (2

Timothy 3:12). If you, as a Christian, are not suffering persecution, ask yourself – "Why?" "Oh," you might say, "But we are living in more civilized times than when Paul wrote those words." Is that so? Is man any better than he was 2,000 years ago? Not one bit! In fact, he is worse! Trace the history of the human race, adultery, hate, murder, thievery, deception, immorality, and ask yourself, are we any better today? A thousand times NO! Look back a couple hundred of years to the Victorian Age. Notice the modesty in woman, the church attendance in families. Where do we see that today? We don't! Consider the pornography flaunted on the internet, the vilest in the theatrical world, the open cursing on the radio and TV, and try to tell me that the human race is progressing to some sort of a utopia? It almost makes me laugh to think there are people that sincerely believe that the human race is improving, or even can improve. No, my friend, it is rather the opposite. Man's pathway is downward, and as the human races continues, all avenues of the ungodly life continue to worsen. True Christianity, and faithful witnessing are hated just as much today as in Paul's day. Again I unhesitatingly repeat, "*All that will live godly in Christ Jesus SHALL suffer persecution.*" You can't sidestep it, you can't avoid it. Persecution will befall you if you faithfully witness. If an ungodly neighbor can relax in your presence for an evening of leisure with you – something is drastically wrong.

All this brings us to what Solomon observed. "*Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun*" (Ecclesiastes 2:11). So where does the Christian's future lie? Are we living for the present city? Has the earth so gripped us that all our aspirations, and all our thoughts are centered here? What does the Lord have to say about it all? Notice; "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*" (Matthew 6:19-20). It is interesting to compare the outlook of those in Genesis 11 with Abraham. He too was interested in a city, but that city was not one of earthly slime-mortar and clay bricks. Ah no! "*For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*" (Hebrews 11:10). His eyes were on the right thing. He looked upward and saw a city that was not only unsurpassed in glory and beauty, but also a city that was eternal. What a sight! Are your treasures laid up in that city? Or, are you groveling about earth, laying up your little nest egg for self? Where do your interests lie my friend; in politics, entertainment, lucrative business, socializing with the ungodly, or even your security here? Ah, if so, your

eyes need to be turned upward to that celestial city. Remember our Lord's exhortation, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). "*Abraham, who is the father of us all*" (Romans 4:16), has left us an example. Let us follow it to God's glory, and to our everlasting blessing and good.

There are many portions of Scripture which we do not understand at the time; yet they are quite clear to us afterward in the hour of trial. We are quick learners in the day of visitation.

LOVE THAT PASSES KNOWLEDGE

Sidney J. Saword, former Missionary to Venezuela
(Words in Season, Oct. 1935)

In that exquisite passage, Eph. 5:23-27, the believer finds himself feeding upon Christ as the Roast Lamb, "*the head, with the legs, and with the purtenance (in-ward parts) thereof*", which constitute a perfectly balanced diet for his soul.

The **head** comes first (v. 23), teaching us the primary importance of recognizing His authority in all things (see Col. 1:18). This is laid down by our Lord Jesus Himself as an essential requisite for progress in spiritual understanding: "*Take My yoke (signifying His lordship) . . . and learn of Me*", also "*If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine*". Many of us are dunces in the school of God because we have failed to comply with this divine principle. The real place of learning is in subjection at His feet.

The precious truth of v. 27 also links up with feeding on the head. This implies our intelligent enjoyment of His wondrous thoughts and purposes in relation to us; here our minds are enlightened as to the glorious future: it is the prophetic side of doctrine. One has said that the child of God can see more on his knees than the philosopher on his tiptoes. This is true, but is conditional, i. e., that we draw near in the spirit of reverential humility, like John in Patmos, otherwise our knowledge of prophecy, however elaborately worked out, will be devoid of any God-glorifying value.

The **legs** of the Roast Lamb form the second item of spiritual diet, speaking to us of our walk, or the practical side of doctrine. Vs. 24-25 contain a practical precept in regard to home relationships, that the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything, and that the husbands love their wives. There is not a more ideal starting place for practical christianity than in the home. V. 26 also takes up the

practical side of doctrine. It shows us our Lord's personal interest in the present process of preparation to which we must be subjected in order to become later on a fit bride for the Lamb. He has provided the means of cleansing for us: "*His blood cleanseth from all sin*"; His Word is the laver of purification, and "*if any man sin*" He is ready as our Advocate to plead on our behalf. "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

Lastly we are invited to partake of the "**inwards**" of the Lamb, or that which refers to the affections. This is the devotional side of doctrine. "*Christ also loved the church*". What a rich and sweet addition is thus provided in the spiritual feast! What other theme could stir up our inmost being like that which is revealed to us from His inmost Being—that love which could not be quenched, which endured to the end and which triumphed in the fight!

In Adam and Eve we have the first type of Christ and the church. Adam looked upon her as part of himself, fashioned from his own rib, and could appreciate her as an object worthy of his best love and protection. But in that awful moment when divine justice had to discover and punish sin, Adam's love for his fair bride miserably failed, and, stricken with fear, he laid the blame on her, thus trying to save his own skin. He was not prepared to answer for and bear her guilt, although he was an accomplice in it. How different with our Lord Jesus! His was the greater love, in that He made Himself answerable for all our guiltiness, suffering "*the Just (One) for us the unjust that He might bring us to God.*"

Again, there is the case of Abraham and Sarah. She was a beautiful woman, and is commended in Holy Writ for her obedience and subjection to him, thus being well worthy of his best love and greatest protection, nevertheless on two occasions (Gen. 12:12-13 and 20:11) we behold him shrinking from the danger of being slain for his wife's sake. He was not prepared to die for her, so abandoned her to the disposition of alien kings. Not so with our adorable Lord. We had no merits like Sarah, but were unlovely, unclean and unworthy, with open rebellion stamped in our foreheads, but notwithstanding all this, His love was so overwhelming that He willingly died for our sake, so that no alien hand can reach us or separate us from His bosom. The Good Shepherd that died has pledged His Word: "*They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.*"

The sad story of human love's weakness is repeated in the case of Isaac. Rebecca his wife had nobly responded to his appeal, and left all that was dear to her for his sake. He was longing for her and when she

arrived he took her into his mother's tent and "loved her". However, the day came when his love was put to the test, but he was not ready to die for her, (See Gen. 26:9). His lie exposed her to the danger of being disgraced and taken from him. What a claim Rebecca had on Isaac's devotion to her! But human love was unequal to the stern requirements of the occasion. How this incident throws into bold relief the story of our Isaac! Before there was a spark of love in our hearts for Him, He set His heart upon us, and we can say with the Apostle: *"The Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."*

One more example merits our consideration. No one could question the intensity of Jacob's love for Rachel; he served in all 14 years to win her, but when charged by Laban with having stolen his gods, there was no intention on Jacob's part of shielding the guilty party. He replied: *"With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live."* He unwittingly passed the death sentence upon the most cherished object of his heart, and only by her own astuteness did Rachel manage to escape from the consequence of her crime. In our case the all-searching eye of divine justice had found us out. The crimson stain of guilt upon our hearts could not be hid, and there was no escape from the thundercloud of holy wrath. Then the love of our Lord Jesus Christ was brought into wondrous display. In perfect agreement with Jehovah's righteous claims against us, but at the same time in tenderest pity for us the guilty ones, He made Himself fully answerable to God for us, and *"bore our sins in His own body on the tree"*.

What response does such amazing, unquenchable love awaken in our hearts? Would we be going too far if our reply were framed, unboastingly, in the following language:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my heart, my life, my all?

It is the Last Hour.

Franklin Ferguson

This present period of time, from the Cross to the Coming of the Lord, is looked at in two ways, viz., it is a day to be followed by a night; it is a night to be succeeded by a day (Isa. 21:11-12).

Speaking of His service as the perfect Servant of God, our Lord said, *"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work"* (John 9:4). Judging of the times we are living in, we may indeed say, *"The day goeth away, for the*

shadows of the evening are stretched out" (Jer. 6:4). It is quite evident there remains very little "daylight" now, ere the darkness closes in, and we are compelled to rest from our labors for the Lord.

The great Apostle Paul, viewing things from a different standpoint, says, *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand"* (Rom. 13:12). In the Gospel of Mark we find the night divided into the four watches—even, midnight, cock-crowing and morning (chap. 13:35). The **"Sun of Righteousness"** set at Calvary in a stormy scene, and the night set in—long, dark and dreary; no light anywhere visible, but as seen by faith in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:3-6).

The question of Isa 21:11 is given in the margin of the Revised Version as, *"Watchman, what hour of the night?"* Not the state of the night, as in the text, but what is the time? Weary watchers are longingly looking for the "break of day", and the rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). What joy thrills the heart as the watchman's cry is at last heard, "The morning cometh!" which means the long night vigil is ended.

To all who compose the Church, the Coming One will first appear in the morning watch as **"The Bright and Morning Star"**, the forerunner of the day (Rev. 22:16). They say, "The darkest hour is just before the dawning"; and as this world state seems to have reached its darkest, then let us comfort our hearts by the words of the beloved apostle John, *"We know that it is the last hour"* (1 John 2:18, R.V.). The hour is made up of moments, quickly passing. It may be any moment now, and we shall hear the thrilling "shout" of our descending Lord, and we shall be *"caught up" (the raised and the living saints together) to meet Him "in the air," in the "twinkling of an eye"* (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58).

But what of the night? Christ who is the only source of Divine light, is *"despised and rejected of men"*; therefore spiritual darkness covers the face of this evil world, notwithstanding man's boasted light and knowledge. Make no mistake about this age: it is an age of grossest darkness and fearful retrogression, having rejected the true Light. *"The morning cometh, and also the night."* We look for the dawning of a perfect day, without clouds; afterward will come the night of outer darkness for the wicked, that will know no morning!

One hour with Christ is worth an eternity of all earth's best joys; and communion with Him is the best, the surest, and the most ecstatic foretaste of the bliss of heaven.