

Doctrinal **Truths for Our Day** Issue: 1103 Devotional To "... strengthen the things which remain..." Revelation 3:2 Date: Mar 2011 Directional To Subscribe (or unsubscribe), send e-mail to truthsforourday@gmail.com

Index of Articles

"Thou Art My Son"	R. Surgenor
1 Corinthians 11a	J. H. Portman
That Beautiful Flock	A. Dryburgh
"Ere the Lamp of God Went Out"	H. Fletcher
Order in the House of God (1 Tim. 3)	Joel Portman

"Thou Art My Son"

Robert Surgenor

In reading the sacred Word the careful student of the Scriptures will often notice the divine expression of delight and favor that flows from the Father's lips in regards to His well beloved Son. No one has ever brought such infinite pleasure and delight to the heart of God as His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In His lowly birth we find announced by the wondering heavenly host, "*Glory to God in the highest*" (Luke 2:14). During His thirty years of obscurity in a little cottage in Nazareth He brought infinite pleasure to the heart of His God, so much so that at the presentation of Himself regarding the commencement of His unique earthly ministry we find the heavens opened and a voice coming from heaven saying, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased" (Lk. 3:22). Not only do we find such expressions of delight and favor in the New Testament Scriptures, but as we turn to the Old Testament we will find such expressions of the Father's delight in His only Son. Psalm 2:7 is an outstanding example of this, found in the expression, "*Thou art My son; this day have I begotten Thee*". What is so unique about this salute in Psalm 2 is that it is quoted three times in the New Testament Scriptures like a brilliant diamond notably placed in different settings. Since we have such a noteworthy expression found in the Scriptures of truth, let us trace its truths with holy wonder and delight.

The Raised Up Prophet

Acts 13:33

The scene is at Antioch in Pisidia inside a Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath day. A man beckons with his hand and stands up, saying; "*Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience*". Thus the great apostle Paul gains his audience and begins his discourse. Solomon once said, "*The preacher*

sought out acceptable words", and if this was true of any servant of Christ, it was true of Paul. The message was geared for the audience, a good example for all who publicly preach the Word today.

FIRST, Paul "baits the hook" by giving his Jewish brethren facts of Israel's history leading up to Christ (verses 16–25). SECOND, he solemnly brings before them the full significance of Christ's death and resurrection (verses 26–37). THIRD, he states the wondrous saving power and grace to those who believe, coupled with warnings to unbelievers (verses 38–41). You will notice how the preacher, in the first section of his discourse, brings before his audience various changes of government. He starts from Moses to Joshua; then from Joshua to judges; and then from judges to kings, the first being Saul, then David, whose seed was promised their true Savior King. A King who would be recognized by a forerunner (verse 24).

The ministry of this coming One would have no rivalry (verse 25), yet He was nationally rejected (verse 27), but vindicated by God (verse 30) and confirmed to His own (verse 31) Paul thus, in five distinct areas, gives the historical details of Christ's manifestation.

When we consider verse 33, where the apostle quotes God's salute of His Son from Psalm 2, we find much conflict of thought as to its true interpretation. However, if we keep our interpretation in the light of the context we will not go astray. In verse 33 the "raising up" of Jesus is NOT a

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Thank you! Joel Portman

reference to His resurrection, as some believe. You will notice how frequently Paul uses this word “raised” in his discourse. It is found in verses 22, 23, 30, 33, 34 and 37. In verse 29 reference is made to the tree followed by the tomb in verse 30. Here we have distinctly the resurrection of Christ in contrast to the slaying by wicked hands. In verse 34, Paul again refers to the resurrection, this time in contrast to David’s death which was followed by corruption. David’s service extended only to his own generation, but the Messiah would have to serve all generations. Jesus is able to do this for He was raised in incorruption, in the power of an indissoluble life to rule forever.

However when Paul uses the word “RAISED” in verse 33 he is using the same train of thought that he expressed in verses 22 and 23. God removed Saul and “RAISED UP” David to be their King (verse 22). *“Of this man’s seed hath God according to His promise RAISED unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus”* (verse 23). Notice, it was according to His promise. Note how Paul refers again to that promise in verses 32 and 33, *“And we bring you good tidings of the PROMISE made unto the fathers, how that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that He RAISED UP Jesus; as also it is written in the second Psalm, ‘Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee’”* (RV).

Many promises of God are found in the O.T. Scriptures of the raising up of the Messiah in the midst of His people. We believe that Paul had in mind the promise of the Lord through Moses (Deut. 18), where that coming Prophet would be Mediator (verse 16), Spokesman (verse 18) and Lord (verse 19). *“The Lord Thy God will RAISE UP unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him shall ye hearken”* (Deut. 18:15). Peter refers to this prophecy in Acts 3:22 and Stephen in Acts 7:37, both in connection with our Lord being raised up in the midst of His people as a Prophet Messiah with a unique ministry to fulfill.

Now Paul resorts to Psalm 2, placing God’s salute in a unique atmosphere. *“Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee”*. **“THIS DAY”** refers to the day of His public manifestation to the Nation of Israel. He had quietly spent thirty years in obscurity in a little cottage in Nazareth, and now the day had come. He stood with majestic and heavenly dignity on the banks of Jordan and God saluted His Son, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matt. 3:17).

The word “begotten” refers to the change from John’s ministry to Christ’s, also the fact of His being brought forth, as Son, to be manifested as Savior. Thus Jesus was publicly declared, publicly acknowledged and publicly saluted to be God’s Son before He commences His public ministry to the

Nation of Israel.

Finishing the divine salute, Paul brings before his Jewish audience the resurrection of Jesus from the dead in verses 34 and 35. *“And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He saith on this wise, ‘I will give you the sure mercies of David’”* (quoting from Isaiah 55:3). Wherefore He saith also in another Psalm, *“For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption”* (Ps. 16:10). Concerning His resurrection you will notice that Paul chooses Isaiah 55 and Psalm 16, not Psalm 2, and rightly so. *“The sure mercies of David”*, or, *“The sacred promises of David”*, are fully realized in our blessed Lord, because He will never be affected by corruption; and as Isaiah 55:1–3 is an invitation to the Gentiles, so the covenant made with Israel will be realized by them also. David’s greater Son shall rule His throne and His kingdom forever. Thus we have Christ, who eternally was the Son of God, brought before us as One being raised up of God in the midst of His people, publicly announced by God as the Son upon the commencement of His public ministry, then slain, but raised by God to the highest pinnacle of glory and government.
(to be continued)

Beauty of Christ

Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises, like the garden of Eden, into one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colours, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness in one; O what a fair and excellent thing would that be? And yet it should be less to that fair and dearest, well-beloved Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths. Christ is heaven and earth’s wonder. John Flavel

1 Corinthians 11

John H. Portman (dec)

1 Cor. 11 begins a new section of First Corinthians. Hitherto Paul has been speaking of disorders in private life; here he takes up those disorders in public worship. This chapter deals with the question of headship and of the position of woman in. verses one to sixteen, and then the question of the Lord’s Table is discussed in verses seventeen to thirty one.

We need to understand what gave rise to the difficulties Paul found in the Corinthian church that he sets right in the early part of this chapter. The position of women in the world before Christianity has ever been, and was then, one of subjection and servility. Greek women were accustomed to strict seclusion, coming into public only on occasions of

festal processions (Vincent). The natural thing on their part was to throw off this restraint and subjection when they learned that women as well as men received the Holy Spirit when they believed, and that in Christ Jesus was no male or female. How easy it was to come to the conclusion that there was no difference in worship where all are before God. Paul found such a state within the Church and had to straighten out this mistaken idea that was disrupting the order their worship.

Verse one of chapter eleven seems to be the conclusion of the statements in chapter ten. So most commentators take it, but some prefer to make it the introduction to Paul's discourse beginning with verse two. If it is so made, it introduces and forms the basis for Paul's statements which follow. "*Be imitators of me*" is a better word than "Followers". The thought behind this statement is that the Corinthians had never seen Christ; yet as Paul himself was an imitator of Christ, they could imitate him. They were to see in him who was their spiritual father and apostle the life and love of Christ shining forth to those round about him. So it should always be with the true spiritual leader. He is enjoined to set an example for the flock (Tit. 2:7).

Verse two begins what Paul wants to say in regard to headships and proper decorum in worship. "*Hold fast the traditions*", or as it may be rendered, "keep the things delivered". Ordinances is too strong a word to be used here. Traditions may be evil or good. In Matt. 15:2 and Mark 7:8 the word is used in a bad sense. Christ rejected tradition because in the one place it transgressed the law of God and in the other it was used in preference to the law of God so that by contrast the traditions were kept and the law rejected.

The traditions here were the things Paul had received from Christ and given over to them. Notice the play on words. Both "paradosis" (ordinances, traditions) and "paradidomi" (delivered) are from the same root and have similar meanings. The noun signifies a thing handed over while the verb is in the aorist tense, showing that the action of giving over is viewed as a point in time.

Paul praises the Corinthians because they remember him in all things and show their remembrance of him by holding fast the things he taught them. We do not read that the believers in Corinth ever remembered Paul as the Philippians did in giving their means. On the contrary, he would not accept a gift from them lest they should have occasion to glory (Phil. 4:10, 14-16, 1 Cor. 9:16). But he was pleased that these with whom he had labored so long should continue to keep their remembrance of him. False teachers were there who would lead the flock to forget Paul and especially his teaching if they could. The praise he has for them is tempered by the admonitions which follow. He

could not praise them wholly as he did others.

Headships

In verse three Paul comes directly to the matter of headships. In his statement there is censure for those who had not been abiding in their proper place. This is a contrast to the praise of verse two. This is the key verse of this section. The whole matter of the conduct of women in the church hangs upon the order of authority or headship in creation. Note that Paul does not speak of order in the New Creation but in the old. In the New there is neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, neither marrying nor giving in marriage. We are members of the New Creation but not yet is the universe living under its order. We are in a dual position. In spiritual things we are governed by the relationship we sustain to Christ who is the head of the New Creation, but in our relation to the world we must still observe the laws which govern the world.

The order of authority is significant. There is a reason for it. Paul says the head of the woman is the man, the head of the man is Christ; and the head of Christ is God. Now we know that God and Christ are equal in every respect; yet God is said to be the head of Christ. The reason for this is the same as the reason men elect a man chairman of a board; not that he has more power or authority but that proper order may be observed. There is no hint of inferiority but rather of responsible authority.

Verses four to six tell us how this authority of the man over the woman should be shown. There should be some outward sign upon the woman that shows the pagan or unconverted that a Christian woman respects the place God has given her and does not try to throw off authority. In this her example is Christ. He took the place of subjection and humbled himself because it was the Father's will. So the woman wears the veil or covering upon her head because she recognizes the divine order which has made her thus.

The man who wears a covering on his head dishonors his Head which is Christ (Ironsides). Perhaps the literal head is also meant since the Apostle goes on to speak of the hair. But the woman who prays uncovered dishonors her head who is the man.

Now if a woman refuses to obey the injunction to be veiled, she must be shorn. It was the custom among Greeks for a slave woman to have close cut hair. Women of modesty wore veils, those of immodesty went about unveiled. For the Apostle to command something as strong as this shows the offense must indeed be grievous. It would shame a free woman to wear short hair as though she were a slave. Among the Jews a woman convicted of adultery had her hair shorn (Vincent).

Verses seven to nine speak of the reason why the man should be uncovered and the woman veiled. Both men and women are made in the image of God. In Gen. 1:26, 27 the sexes are not separated in creation. It is true that man was formed from the ground and woman from the man as chapter two tells us, but in chapter one they are seen together. Paul speaks here of the difference between the sexes which goes back to creation. Man is the glory of God in a particular sense which woman does not share. He is the head of the woman and has authority over her. His is the moral likeness of God in the right exercise of which he is the glory of God. His is also the prior place in the order of creation. Woman was formed from man and is the glory of the man so that she came from the man. However, since Adam, all men came from the woman - in birth.

The tenth verse has given trouble to expositors. The word translated “power” also means authority. There is nevertheless a close approximation in meaning, no matter which is used. The sign of authority which the woman had on her head because she was subservient to him came also to be her power, as Ironside points out. A woman who has thrown off authority also is unprotected and therefore without power.

Because of the angels who observe Christian worship and who would not understand the lack of submission to authority which women unveiled would show, women cover their heads. The seraphim, though holy, cover their faces in the presence of God. How much more should women be covered when before Him in worship. The New Testament teaches us that angels take a great interest in us, even desiring to look into the things which God is doing on this earth, (1 Cor. 4:9; Luke 15:7,10; Eph. 3:10; 1 Tim, 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:12). They are ministering spirits unto those who are the heirs of salvation, (Heb. 1:14).

The two verses, eleven and twelve, temper somewhat the division made between the sexes. In the Lord men and women are both the members of the body of Christ. There is a community of interest in prayer, spiritual aid, and active cooperation. The statement of verse twelve is not an exact repetition of the similar one of verse eight. There the order sprang from creation, here the mutual dependency is brought out from the fact of generation. Both sexes are equally necessary for reproduction, and therefore the one is dependent upon the other.

Verses thirteen to sixteen complete the argument. Paul here appeals to nature and to their own sense of propriety. “*Judge in yourselves*” is a phrase not infrequently found. Paul appeals directly to them as though they ought to know what should be done without coming to him. Compare 10:1,5.

(>>Page 5)

Please Note the danger of a Modern Translation:

If one uses the **ESV Bible**, as some are highly recommending, they should notice that this translation takes away from the significance of this passage in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. If a person follows this translation, it would teach that this matter of a head covering in the assembly or our sisters allowing their hair to grow applies only to women who are married!

1 Co 11:1 *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a **wife** is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every **wife** who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a **wife** will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a **wife** to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a **wife** ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a **wife** to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.* (ESV)

It is true that the word “gune” can be translated as either “wife” or “woman” as also “aner” could be “husband” or “man”. However, it is clear from the context that the teaching pertains to men as men and women as women in the assembly, dealing with gender and not marriage relationships. (Eph. 5 is different.) If “gune” means wife in this passage, then “aner” means only husband. However, we believe that men, married or not should have short hair and uncovered heads in the assembly while women, married or not, should allow their hair to grow uncut and be covered when gathered in the assembly or where the Lord’s people have come together for spiritual activities.

How would brethren handle this issue if using the ESV Bible?

The appeal to nature is a direct appeal to the constituted order of things. While among most animals, and especially birds, the male is given the splendid covering; with humans it is the female who has a covering of hair for her glory. It is a rare exception to find a man who has hair which attracts or which is even luxuriant in its weight and quality. It is true of women that their hair is their glory. So God teaches us that it is proper for woman to have long hair and improper for man. The Nazarite vow involved a man's wearing long hair for the very reason that each was contrary to nature and would by this act show the man's devotion to the Lord, to whom he had vowed this vow. In the ancient world a man dishonored himself by wearing long hair.

The woman's hair is her covering, her veil. It is not in place of a veil but for a veil. Her hair is her glory. The veil or covering she wears on her head corresponds to this natural covering which is given her by God in creation. Thus we see that it is right for a man to worship with head uncovered because his head reflects the glory of God, but it is wrong for a woman because her hair is a covering which teaches her that she should cover her head. If she has no use for a covering (the sign of her subjection), let her also remove her hair. Paul's argument is very strong. There must be a correspondence between long hair and the sign of subjection. Without the sign the woman signifies that she has forsaken the place God gave her, and she needs also to cut or shave her head or she is taken for a lewd woman. Basically, a harlot is one who has thrown off restraint; such also is a woman who does not recognize her place.

Verse sixteen closes this portion with the Apostle's word to any one who is still contentious after hearing his argument to notice they are alone in their contention. They may think as they please, but the churches are with Paul. They have no such custom – that is, the custom of women being unveiled in worship. Corinth is the only place where Paul addressed such remarks. Evidently the problem did not arise in the other churches. *(to be continued)*

That Beautiful Flock

Alex Dryburgh

The Beauty of a Local Assembly

Next to the beauty of Christ, who is altogether lovely, is the beauty of the church or the beauty of the local assembly. As we think of Christ we are reminded,

Chiefest of ten thousand.
Fairer than the fair.
Altogether lovely,
Great beyond compare.

Lord of all creation.
Man of Calvary.
The Son of God, who loved me,
And gave himself for me.

Ever altogether lovely,
Ever all most sweet,
Richest fragrance ever,
Rising round his feet..

In the Book of Ruth we see beautiful features in a young woman as seen in Ruth. It would be right to say that Ruth wore five garments that every Christian ought to wear. We see that she wore (typically), the breast plate of faith, the girdle of humility, the robe of righteousness, the garment of holiness, and the great overcoat of love. In Isa. 52, We read about beautiful feet as seen in the Lord Jesus. His were feet that never strayed, never stumbled, never slipped, never wandered, and never wavered. They were feet that were never defiled.

A perfect path of purest grace
Unblemished and complete,
Was He, the spotless Nazarite,
Pure even to the feet.

In the verse before us we read about a beautiful flock. In Hag 1:8, we read about the house being built. *“Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house”*. Solomon was a man that built his own house, the house of God, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. In Ezra 7:27, you have the thought of the house being beautified. In Jer. 52:13, we see the house being burned. So the house that was built and the house that was beautified was the house that was burned. An assembly can fall. To the Ephesians we read (Rev. 2:5), *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen”*. The thought is that here was an assembly that had reached high heights spiritually speaking, but it fell into a carnal state. An assembly also can be consumed. (Gal. 5:15), *“If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another”*. An assembly can become dead. Sardis (Rev. 3) had a name that they lived, but were dead. An assembly can be leavened; *“Know ye not a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”* (1 Cor. 5:6). You read that in the Corinthian letter there was moral sin and you read in the Galatian epistle about doctrinal sin. So an assembly can lose its beauty. *“Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?”* (Lam. 2:15). It was that at one time but it lost its beauty, it lost its joy, and it was because of sin.

Most often when you read about a flock in the scriptures you always see an adverse element. In 1Pet. 5:2, We have the thought, *“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight”*. It is in that same v. 8 that we see the devil as

a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour. As the angel of light he deceives, as a roaring lion he devours. In Acts 20 we read, *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over (in) the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the church of God”*. It is in that same chapter that we read that grievous wolves shall enter in among you not sparing the flock. In Song of Solomon 2:16, we read, *“He feedeth (his flock) among the lilies”*. We read about the little foxes that spoil the vines (Song 2:15). David in 1 Sam. 17 speaks about his father's sheep; it is in that chapter that you read about a lion and a bear (v. 34). An assembly can be defiled and can be divided and despised. Three things mark the pastors (the shepherds) in Jer. 23:2. They scatter the flock, they drive them away, and they don't visit them. As believers, we are not ignorant of his (Satan's) devices, his thoughts, his plans, his schemes, or his designs. As the serpent he beguiles. *“The serpent beguiled me and I did eat”* (Gen. 3:13). As the serpent beguiled Eve, Paul warn the Corinthians that they be not beguiled from the simplicity and the purity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). As Satan, he binds; *“Whom Satan had bound to these eighteen years”*, (Luke 13:16). Satan also buffets, he torments, and harasses with blow after blow. As the prince of this world he blinds. *“The god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not,”* (2 Cor. 4:4). The lion devours; the wolf spares not the flock, the bear hugs, the fox spoils (Song 2:15). He is out to deceive the sinner, to defile the man of God, to divert the servant of God, to divide the assembly of God, and to displace the Son of God.

The Feeding of the Flock

If we are going to have a beautiful flock it has to be fed and it has to be watered. We are never told to fleece the flock of God, but we are told to feed it. *“Feed the flock of God which he has purchased with his own blood (the blood of his own)”*. (Acts 20:28). If the flock of God is going to be beautiful, it has to be fed with pasture: green pasture, good pasture, the fat pasture of the word of God. Green pasture is that which is fresh; fat pasture is that which is rich; good pasture is that which is nourishing. There are men who weary the saints. There are men who worry the saints. There are men who water the saints. Jacob was a man who watered the flock. In Gen. 29:10, Jacob rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock. Moses was the man who sat by the well and who watered the flock. Apollos was a man who watered the flock. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but it is God who gives the increase. *“He that watereth shall be watered himself.”* If you refresh others, you yourself will be refreshed. It says about Philemon, *“The hearts of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother”*. There are those that watch the flock. The shepherds in Luke 2 were abiding in the field, keeping watch over the flock by night. We need a ministry that

rebukes, we need a ministry that restores, we need a ministry that revises, we need a refreshing ministry like that of Philemon if we are going to have a beautiful flock.

There are two ways in which sheep can be fed. First a sheep is that which feeds itself. Gideon was a man who fed himself. He threshed wheat in the wine press to hide it from the Midianites. Ruth was a woman who fed herself. She gleaned and she beat out that which she gleaned. She labored in the field and she received handfuls She lay at Boaz's feet and received lapfuls. We as the people of God have to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby. *“Thy word have I hid in my heart that I may not sin against thee,”* (Ps. 119:11). Then we have to be fed by others. Ruth was fed and refreshed by others. She had to drink of the water which the young men had drawn. The young men had to let handfuls of purpose fall for her. In Psa 23, we see the thought of the sheep feeding itself . . . *“Maketh me to lie down in green pasture”*. There we see the sheep feeding itself. *“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.”* Here is the thought of the sheep being fed by others. In 1Pet 5, the elders are to feed the flock of God. We must stress the value of the word of God. It is by the Word of God we have been born again. *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”* (1 Pet. 1:23). The Word of God keeps us clean. *“Now ye are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you,”* (Jn. 15:3). *“Where withal shall a young man cleanse his ways? By taking heed there to according to thy word”* (Ps. 119:9). By the Word of God we are built up. *“I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32). As the engrafted word we have to receive it: *“Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls”* (Jms. 1:21). As the sincere milk of the word we have to desire it: *“As new born babes (earnestly) desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby”*. (1 Pet. 2:3). As the faithful Word we have to hold it fast: *“Holding fast the faithful word”* (Tit. 1:9). As the Word of life we have to hold it forth. As the Word of truth we have to rightly divide it.

Feed on Christ, the living bread;
 Drink of Him, the fountain head;
 Think on why his blood was shed,
 and go on.

Bear in mind that what you know;
 Proves its worth by which you show.
 Ever let your light aglow,
 and go on.

If the Savior's won your heart;

And for heaven you've made a start;
Keep your eye upon the chart,
and go on.

Buy the truth and sell it not;
Hold for God the piece you've got;
Be content what ere your lot,
and go on.

The best use of the Bible

Bible knowledge fetched in by prayer, well watered by meditation, makes the mind humble and serious. "Read it through, note it down, pray it in, live it out, pass it on". (Henry Pickering). We should meditate upon the Word like the man in Ps. 1. "*In his law doth he meditate day and night.*" We should love it like the writer of Ps. 119. "*I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved. I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold.*" We ought to treasure it like Job. "*I have treasured up the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food.*" We should declare it like Paul: "*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*". In 1 Pet. 2:2, we desire the Word: "*As new born babes earnestly desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby*". We have to delight in it: "*Whose delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law doth he meditate day and night*". We have to devour it. Jer. 15:16, "*Thy words were found and I did eat them*". The thought is devour them. We have to defend the word of God 2 Tim. 1:4: "*That good thing which is committed unto thee, keep (or guard) through the Holy Spirit*".
(to be continued)

Some assemblies of believers, which are continually hearing pleasant things and pandered to by their leaders, are like a pretty keepsake covered with glass only to be admired. They are of no use whatsoever to God.

"Ere the Lamp of God Went Out"

1 Sam. 3:3

H. Fletcher

In looking at this sad subject we require to go back a little in the history of Israel. In the last chapter of Judges we have the words, "*In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes*". There was no subjection to Divine authority, and the word of God was not obeyed. In the first chapter of Ruth we read, "*Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was a*

famine in the land". The judges had failed in their individual lives for God, and in consequence they were unable to check the declension of the nation, and God in His governmental dealings sent a famine, to reach the hearts and consciences of His people.

When we come to the days of Elkanah, Samuel's father, we find declension both in the priesthood and nation. In Hannah there was the maternal desire for a son, but more, the condition of the priesthood and nation was such that she longed for a man-child that she might "*give him to the Lord all the days of his life*". Samuel had a godly mother, with the result that Hannah had a godly son. Would that there were more mothers like Hannah and Eunice. Her great desire was that Samuel might be of use to the Lord.

Previous to the statement, "*ere the lamp of God went out*", we have the significant words, "*and the word of the Lord was precious in those days, there was no open vision*". Because of departure from His word, God was silent to His people. There was nothing coming down from heaven, and spiritual famine prevailed. This condition occurs in our days. There may be much preaching and many meetings, but no blessing—nothing from heaven. Preachers like Eli, whose eyes were dim, may be able to give very interesting addresses, but they do not reach the heart and conscience. "*Where there is no vision, the people perish*", or become lawless (marg. Newberry), Prov. 29:18.

It is evident that both priests and people were indifferent to the command of the Lord of Ex.27:20-21, "*Thou shalt command the children of Israel that they bring thee pure oil olive, beaten for the light to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord*". There had been neglect in the reading of the "law of the Lord". While the priests were careless about their duty, they were keen enough about their portion of the sacrifice. Some today are very much like this. If they were doing the work of the Lord they would be worthy of their portion, for "*the laborer is worthy of his hire*". "Like priests, like people," and so the people were negligent in bringing the pure oil olive, beaten for the light, which would involve both labor and self denial. The principle is the same today. For the assembly to be a lampstand, there must be vital godliness, love and devotion to the Son of God, and godly exercise of soul. Each one should add his light to the Assembly's testimony. There should be no drones in an assembly of God.

In connection with the Tabernacle, the measurements are given; but with the lampstand, weight and value only are given, "*of a talent of pure gold shalt thou make it*". It is not the size of an assembly that counts with God, but its weight

and character as a testimony, or light-bearer. One feels the importance of whole-hearted men of God being raised up to minister to God's people; not merely gifted men, but devoted and zealous men for the honor of the Lord. *"Them that honor me I will honor."* Such men will help to keep the lampstand burning. How much are we individually adding to the weight and value of the assembly's testimony? Has the lamp gone out?

Ichabod, or the Glory is Departed

Although Samuel was raised up at this dark period in Israel's history, and *"the Lord did let none of his words fall to the ground"*, yet the declension continued. The Philistines still had the ascendancy over Israel. Israel sought to overcome them by bringing the Ark into the battle. When they were right with God, the walls of Jericho fell down as the Ark was taken around the city. **Then** they had the presence and power of the Lord with them, but now that is gone although they still have the Ark; and they rely upon **it** saying *"that it may save us out of the hand of our enemies"*. What a sad change from **He** to **it**. An assembly may keep up the form, but lack the presence of the Lord in the midst. The ordinance of the Lord's supper may be kept, but it is nothing more than bread breaking *"not discerning the Lord's body"*. From such He turns away. He must have reality from that which professes to be a testimony, or else He will spue it out of His mouth. What was it but this sad condition that caused the Ark to be taken; and the religious world to mock? And so now, had the spiritual condition of assemblies been maintained, and the Lord's honor esteemed there would have been no occasion for separation amongst assemblies. To profess fellowship with that which the Lord spues out of His mouth is not fellowship in the Lord. It is our conviction that Laodicea is a degeneracy from Philadelphia, with the Lord no longer in the midst. And to maintain Philadelphian faithfulness there must be separation from Laodicean unfaithfulness. *"Him that overcometh I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out"*.

After the Ark was taken we have Phinehas' wife's lamentation, *"Ichabod—the glory is departed from Israel, and the Ark of God is taken"*. The divine presence and the glory are very closely connected. This was seen in the wilderness. Over many professed assemblies today it could be written 'Ichabod'. They are no longer gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus; and He is no longer in the midst, as according to Matt. 18:20. They have let go His precious word concerning truths and principles of a God gathered assembly. The lampstand has been removed; the salt has lost its savor; the glory has departed; the power has gone.

"Make Us a King" 1 Sam. 8:5

We now consider a third aspect of the departure of the people of Israel—one stage leading on to another. Samuel

was old, and he made his sons judges over Israel. But they walked not in their father's ways, but took bribes and perverted judgment: and so the people asked for a king to judge them, like all the nations. Samuel saw the evil of their desire, and it displeased him. He knew that it was a setting aside of the absolute authority of Jehovah. No longer were they going to be a peculiar people in this respect—no visible head over them. Edom had had its king for years; but God was Israel's King, as Elimelech's name signifies "My God is King".

In the wilderness Balaam had to say, *"The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them"*. Where the word of God is obeyed, and the Lordship of Christ acknowledged in an assembly, this will still be true—the Lord with them, and the shout of a King among them. Help will be given them in the ministry of His word, and His voice will still be heard.

While God told Samuel to hearken unto their voice, He significantly adds, *"for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them"*. A carnal, or natural man cannot walk by faith; implicit trust in an unseen one is beyond them. They must have some visible head for the flesh to glory in, some one with gifts such as learning, or eloquence, not realizing that the Lord alone, by His spirit, is sufficient to meet the needs of His people on every occasion. How we ought to guard against any person usurping the place or authority of the Lord Jesus. He himself is very jealous of anything that usurps His place. He condemns those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes (rulers of the laity), Rev. 2:15. How insidiously this doctrine creeps in when there is laxity, and lack of godliness in an assembly! Believers cease to be exercised as to their individual responsibility, and as to the priesthood of all believers. Those who could once lead in the assembly in thanksgiving and worship are now silent: and those who could once minister the word to edification now cease to do so. As in the days of Malachi, interest in the things of God ceases and the people say, *"Behold what a weariness is it!"* The Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched by the lethargy of the saints, and so little of the power of God is amongst them, that they push some man or men forward to be their spokesmen, to do their praying and preaching, and what was an assembly sinks to the level of what is called a "Mission". To make up for the lack of the power of the Holy Spirit, an arm of flesh is relied upon. The carnal are catered to by music, solos and choirs. The men go after their worldly ambitions; the women after their social pleasures; the dress and deportment of all denote a low spiritual condition. The word of God ceases to govern in the assembly, in the home, and in the business. Usually the end of such (as we have seen it) is to be *"carried away beyond Babylon"*.

A return to implicit obedience to the word of God, and a bowing to the authority of the Lord Jesus, is the only corrective for the failure and departure of our day, as it has always been in days of declension in the past. If the lamp is allowed to go out, 'Ichabod' will soon be written on the assembly of testimony; and God rejected, the people will soon begin to say, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations".

Order in God's House

Deacons 1 Tim. 3B

Joel Portman

The latter part of 1 Timothy 3 deals with "deacons", or those who serve in an assembly. They function in fellowship with the elders, and in fact, some of the work elders do would also be included in this as well. "**Deacon**" is a transliteration of the Greek word, "**diakonos**" which is normally translated as minister, or servant. It expresses the servant in his capacity to accomplish a work, to meet the requirements of one he is serving and a work he is doing. It looks at the servant in relation to his work, his fitness for that work, rather than any idea of compulsion or even voluntarism, or bondage as "doulos" (slave) would signify. The exact rendering of "diakonos" signifies "a runner, servant, messenger, assistant". This indicates one who is **competent** and **capable, trustworthy** and who can represent and carry out faithfully the interests of his superior in a proper manner. Often it has the idea of responsible representation, more than simple menial service.

Occurrences in the New Testament

Gospels: Used for servants usually. The Lord spoke of the disciples' relationship with each other as servants (Matt.20:26, Jn. 12:26). It refers to common household servants, (John 2:5,9) and servants of the King (Matt. 22:13).

Acts: Generally assumed to apply to "the Seven" in Acts 6 but never directly used as a title of them, only called "the Seven". (Acts 21:8). However, in Acts 6:2, "serve tables" is the verb form of the noun and their work is generally connected with deacon work in this instance.

Epistles: Used of functioning government officials (Romans 13:4) as servants of God (v.6) to carry out that responsibility. They are seen in their capacity to accomplish that work that God has determined is necessary for the maintenance of order in society and execution of judgment on evil doers.

Used of Christ in relation to His work to carry out God's will (Rom. 15:8) He is spoken of as a minister of the circumcision, never a slave (doulos) to men but serving His God as a doulos to accomplish a work for their benefit and fulfillment of God's purposes toward them.

Used for apostles and other servants who were actively

involved in service for the Lord and His people, whether in ministry or in the gospel. This includes Phoebe (Rom 16:1), a servant of the assembly in Cenchrea, Paul and those with him (1 Cor. 3:5, Eph. 3:7, 1 Tim. 4:6 (Timothy)).

Aspects Regarding "Diakonos"

In the Gospels, it typically applies to Spiritual qualities, i.e., the pictures presented illustrate to us what should be true of everyone seeking to serve the Lord in any capacity.

In Acts, the original aspect was for a physical service. However, it involved more than a simple work. Consider the tremendous implications of the work they were being called on to do in Acts 6. A serious problem had arisen which called for great wisdom and care to make sure that it would not result in lasting consequences that would produce division among the saints at this early stage. The work involved responsible representation of the entire company to distribute funds for the care of destitute widows and thus would have personal, emotional and spiritual implications.

Notice in this case the **extremely high qualifications** that were required in these men:

1. Good testimony (honest report), the same as in 1 Tim.3:8 regarding deacons. They could not have anything about their lives that would cause any charge against them or reproach about the work they would be involved in. It is a word related to witness or capability to be a martyr for the truth, giving faithful testimony without compromise. Same as Acts 16:2, regarding Timothy and in 22:12, Ananias from all the Jews.

2. Full of the Holy Spirit or subject to and being controlled by the Spirit. Not carnal or fleshly men, but those whose lives displayed spiritual power. This is not displayed by gift; nor by ability to perform miraculous works. It was seen in a life that exhibited the spiritual qualities that show that one is subject to spiritual control, displaying that fruit that would be the evidence of it.

3. Wisdom characterized them. Possessing excellence in attitude and action. This included knowledge and godliness, a striving after the highest by the best means. It expresses a proper outlook on life that applies spiritual, eternal principles to decisions, priorities, ambitions and expectations. It is the characteristic of taking account of knowledge and observations and resolving conflicts and difficulties in a spiritual context with the proper application of truth to every aspect.

It is clear that their work went beyond a function in physical necessities to that which fulfilled spiritual responsibilities in testimony, primary exemplified by Stephen and Philip.

We learn from this that deacon work is more than simple physical assistance in a local assembly, more than the “menial” tasks such as cleaning the hall or arranging the chairs. It is a work that involves representation of the assembly, responsibility in serious matters, an expression and fulfilling of which requires spiritual qualities.

If not, then we would have to require that anyone who does anything of any nature in an assembly must possess the spiritual qualities that are called for in the NT regarding deacons. Either that or we must lower the standard to allow those not so qualified to be involved in such service.

In the Epistles, the verb form (#1247) is used in several ways that would include material ministry as well as spiritual. Rom. 15:25 Paul going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints (material help)

2 Cor. 8:19, the collecting of the gift for the assistance of the Jewish saints.

2 Tim. 1:18 Onesiphorus and his service to Paul when he was in prison in Rome.

Philemon 18 Onesimus who might have served Paul when in prison.

The Noun, #1249 diakonos, is used

Re. Satan’s servants carrying out his bidding (2 Cor. 11:15)

Re. Governing agents (Rom. 13)

Re. Christ toward Israel (Rom. 15:8)

Re. Apostles and others with them who were serving the Lord in a spiritual capacity. (noted above)

Conclusion:

The primary emphasis in the epistles is on those who fulfill a spiritual work that represents Christ in ministry of the Word to sinners as well as to saints. This is entirely true in passages that speak of a deacon in service toward a local assembly. There never seems to be any aspect of this truth involving what we might think of as deacon or service work in the more menial aspects of it. However, one cannot totally rule out the other physical aspects of material service to the saints. It does seem that in relation to assembly function, this is not the primary teaching and if it is in any case, it is in a capacity that involves responsibility and representation of the assembly as a whole, i.e., handling of assembly finances or serving in a capacity that represent the assembly and its collective aspect.

Qualifications in 1 Timothy 3

Note that the deacons in this passage are directly linked with the overseers or elderhood. In this sense, it might be noted that they likely labor with the elders in the responsible care of the assembly. Elders function in spiritual pastoring, shepherding care while deacons are involved in spiritual ministry or service to the saints. So these are the individuals

who function in their own spiritual capacity as the active arm of church government in its ministry to uphold and enable the saints in their collective functions for the Lord. Their qualifications are very high, almost the same in certain areas as that of elders. “Likewise..” or “in like manner” indicates that these are similar to the elder in the high standards that are expected. With these high standards, there would be corresponding care needed to discern them. They are to be

1. Grave Inspiring awe, respect, is venerable and recognized for qualities. In Phil. 4:8 it is translated “honest”. Implies a serious bearing that causes his ministry to have weight among those who hear him. More than an “outward appearance” or something put on, it is the character of the man being seen in his life before others.

2. Not Double-tongued or, consistent in speech. Only here in the NT. Implies his not speaking to cater to individuals, saying one thing to one person, another to others. Righteous in speech, dependable.

3. Not given to much wine or temperate, having physical desires under control. In environment where wine was normal aspect of drink, and usually diluted, he was not known to linger over or be one to drink much.

4. Not greedy of money Quality of an elder also; not ambitious for monetary gain, or occupied with materialism and all that is associated with it. May not necessarily have money but forbids covetousness as well. Not a “money lover”.

5. Clear in Doctrine with a

1. Consistent life that supports genuine convictions. Needs to have a life that supports that truth, showing that he is genuine holding fast the truth he preaches or teaches. His conscience is pure, undefiled by knowledge that he is not practicing what he preaches.

2. Steadfast adherence to truth of God’s Word. If teaching, his teaching must be consistent with truth of God and dependable. In this regard, must have studied and learned truth, able to handle it properly and with some understanding so it might be profitable to his hearers.

6. Proven or tested by various functions of lesser importance, shown to be faithful by previous conditions of life.

7. Found Blameless or without ground for any charge against them by others. Inconsistencies of any importance in life would hinder effectiveness of ministry and dependability of practical functions to the assembly. Does not mean he is perfect! However, it does mean more than just being cleared of charges; it is that no charge has been made against them that is valid.

8. Husbands of one wife or, like elders, devoted and involved with only one woman in his life. Not a philanderer or flirtatious person but faithful to only one woman who is his wife. Not necessarily that he is married, though

language of vs. 11 seems to indicate so.

9. Ruling houses and families well as an evidence of their ability to exemplify Christian standards and lead properly in their own families, maintaining order so that their own testimony is evident.

Vs. 11 intervenes and has different interpretations. Some think it refers to women deacons, but that is relatively hard to support from the substance of the text as well as from the pattern of the early church. **Phoebe** might be mentioned in this regard, but exactly what her function was in the assembly and what type of work she maintained is hard to say. She may be seen as a servant of the assembly in the more general sense as is already observed.

Spiritual qualifications and the position of the passage along with its wording seems to indicate clearly that Paul is referring to the wives of deacons. If this is true, and if it is primarily the intent of the passage, then it indicates that such men must have wives who reflect their own spiritual qualities and are a suitable companion to help them in their work. This would be particularly true if, and likely so, they would assist their husbands in any ministry involving sisters of the assembly. But it is also indicating that the respect and weight that a deacon's ministry would have is linked with the demeanor and spiritual quality of his own wife. A lack of this would be a hindrance to his ability to function properly and effectively for the work of the Lord in the local assembly.

Work of a Deacon

In 1 Tim. 3:8 "the deacons" is literally, "those who serve". They would correspond to the Levites who assisted the priests in their service in the holy place and toward the people. This service has various capacities, but must be seen as any sphere of particular service toward the entire assembly that carries with it any responsibility or representative capacity.

It would involve (in general):

1. Handling assembly funds for the assembly.
2. Writing letters on behalf of assembly. Not necessarily work of elders.
3. Serving the saints in their needs as one might represent the assembly in its service toward the needy.
4. Ministry of the Word in teaching the saints.
5. Teaching Sunday School as this represents a capacity of the assembly to teach the young.
6. Preaching the gospel might also come under this list, though this is not necessarily an assembly function and would move into the area of evangelistic qualifications.
7. Public service for the assembly such as handing out books, greeting people at the door, functioning so as to represent the assembly in its service

One conclusion seems to be that there are areas of assembly service that are not under the definition of "deacon work". They are areas of work and involvement that can include every believer in fellowship in the assembly so that there is a sphere of service for all to do. Not all qualify for what might be truly called "deacon work". Everyone of the Lord's people should be exercised to function in whatever capacity they are qualified for and recognized in. We often want some "higher level" of service but are not willing to assist the Lord's people in what might not call for as much recognition.

Dangers that are a concern

1. Including those who are not qualified spiritually and scripturally to do what is truly deacon work. This only lowers the standard for this work and "cheapens" the importance and impact of the work of a deacon.
2. Calling simple service in physical tasks about the hall "deacon work" takes away from what that work should involve. If this is deacon work, then only those who fulfill the qualifications should be involved. However, there is also work that every believer can do and in which all should be involved.
3. Considering this as an office or position. It is, like that of the elders, a work to do and service to the Lord and His people.

Finally, the assembly platform or other responsible teaching function in an assembly is not open to every person, neither is it restricted to only a small class of individuals. Elders are responsible to maintain the standards for such spiritual service by their example and teaching so that the character and quality of the assembly might be strengthened and preserved in a degenerating world.

(to be continued)

It is always a mercy when God takes away from us whatever keeps us from Him; we never like to part with it, but God sees it to be necessary, and He will not spare for our crying.

God made us for eternity; and His aim in all He does is to bring us happily to it. Hence the necessity of pain, sickness, crosses to break the strong chain that binds us to the world, and to force us to take part in His grand design.

It is our present faith, not past experience, that keeps us from fainting in the hour of trial.