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2 Timothy 4: Paul’s Close

Steve Walvatne

The letter concludes with assorted matters that we’ll consider under the following headings:

- A. Paul’s Final Wishes
- B. Paul’s Fellow Workers
- C. Paul’s Fervent Warning
- D. Paul’s Faithful Witness

A. Paul’s Final Wishes:

These fall into three categories. (1) **COME**. “*Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me...Do thy diligence to come before winter*” (vv .9, 21). Paul longs for Timothy’s companionship, but he must come quickly if they’re to meet once more on earth. We’d like to think they did. If so, a grand reunion would have occurred in a cell that was “nothing but a compound of mud and blood” (James Stalker: *The Life of St. Paul*). How the tears would have flowed! And perhaps like Paul and Silas in another prison, they’d have “prayed and sang praises unto God” one last time. Real Christian fellowship is but a foretaste of heaven.

(2) **BRING**. First, “*Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry*” (v. 11). The man that failed (Acts 13:13; 15:38) is now favored. John Mark had so recovered and proven his worth that Paul wants him close during the final hours. As A. T. Robertson wrote, “[When] shadows close round us, we wish only real friends about us” (*Making Good in the Ministry*). Paul also requested “*the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments*” (v. 13). The cloak would warm his body, the books and parchments warm his soul. Exactly what these books and parchments contained is unknown, but such was their value to Paul that he wanted them brought to Rome. The words, “especially the

parchments,” could be a reference to the costly vellum skin they were made of. “For all his distracting business, [Paul] remained a scholar, never far away from his books and pen” (A.P. Carleton: *Pastoral Epistles*).

(3) **GREET**. “*Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus*” (v. 19). Prisca and Aquila were friends and fellow helpers of Paul throughout the years: now he sends them a final greeting. Onesiphorus is mentioned in the first chapter as one who selflessly searched for Paul in Rome. Some think he might have died since then, though the greeting to his “household” doesn’t necessarily imply that.

B. Paul’s Fellow Workers:

(1) **THE DESERTING ONE**: “*For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world [‘age’] and is departed unto Thessalonica*” (v. 10). Demas began well (Col. 4:4; Phile. 24), but ended poorly. His name means “popular” – a quality hardly suited to the task of aiding a condemned prisoner. He got his eye on the “present age,” that “floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world” (Trench: *Synonyms of the New Testament*), and the pull was so great that he abandoned Paul and retreated to Thessalonica. We’re tempted to condemn such cold-hearted worldliness until we ponder our own walk and realize the effects this age has had upon it. “Unless you fling out the sandbags,” wrote Maclaren, “the balloon will cleave to the earth...unless we turn the world out of our hearts...there is no room for [Christ].”

(2) **THE DISPERSED ONES**: “*Crescens to Galatia, Titus*

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unto Dalmatia...Erastus abode at Corinth" (vv .10, 20). Paul isn't disparaging these men, only stating their movements. We know nothing of Crescens and very little of Erastus (possibly the person mentioned in Romans 16:23 and Acts 19:22), but we know that Titus was Paul's spiritual child (Titus 1:4) and a "partner" and "fellow-helper" to him in the Lord's work (2 Cor. 8:23).

(3) **THE DEVOTED ONE:** "*Only Luke is with me*" (v. 11). It's interesting that Luke and Mark – both gospel writers – are mentioned side-by-side in the same verse. Luke, the "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) was Paul's frequent companion in service, rendering physical and spiritual aid to Paul. He stuck by him to the end.

(4) **THE DEPLOYED ONE:** "*Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus*" (v. 12). Referred to as "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (Eph. 6:21), Tychicus was often deployed by Paul to carry epistles to their intended destinations. He delivered the Ephesian and Colossian letters (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9), most likely the letter to Titus (Titus 3:12), and doubtless had the present letter in hand as he headed for Ephesus.

(5) **THE DISTRESSED ONE:** "*Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick*" (v. 20). Trophimus traveled with Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4; 21:29) and was evidently with him again after the first Roman imprisonment, but was left behind at Miletum sick. Once again, the selflessness of Paul is evidenced by his concern for a fellow worker.

(6) **THE DESIRING ONES:** "*Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren*" (v. 21). We know nothing substantial about any of these individuals from the Roman assembly. At some point during the current imprisonment, they were in brief contact with Paul, desiring that their names be included in greetings to Timothy and fellow believers at Ephesus.

C. Paul's Fervent Warning:

"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words" (vv .14-15). Some speculate this was the same man mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20 or Acts 19:33, but we can't be sure because "Alexander" was a popular name. In fact it was so popular, Paul identifies this Alexander as a metal worker so Timothy won't mistake him. He did "much evil" or "set himself against" Paul "beyond measure." At Paul's first hearing (v. 16), Alexander must have opposed the apostle vehemently and with devastating effect. Timothy was to "keep an eye on" him and "avoid" him, allowing God to mete out his due reward.

D. Paul's Faithful Witness:

In verses 16 to 18, Paul notes five things about his testimony before the Roman court. He says:

(1) **THE LORD STOOD WITH ME.** Humanly speaking, Paul was alone in the dock. "No one came to be beside Paul, to vouch for his statements...or act as his helper and advocate" (Homer Kent: *The Pastoral Epistles*). The loneliness stung, but Paul bears no ill will, for like his Lord he prayed God "that it might not be laid to their charge" (see Lk. 23:34). Instead, Paul was aided by "a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Pr. 18:24). He found solace in the One who though unseen, was yet present. We can do the same.

*The world's fierce winds are blowing...temptations sharp
and keen,
I feel a peace in knowing...my Saviour stands between;
He stands to shield me from danger...when earthly friends
are gone,
He promised never to leave me...never to leave me alone.*
-Janie Metzgar

(2) **THE LORD STRENGTHENED ME.** Paul knew the enabling presence of God when he rose to speak boldly for the faith. A. T. Robertson translates this, He "*poured power into me*" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*). This infusion of divine power must have electrified the courtroom. "One wonders," writes John Phillips, "if Nero ever slept soundly again" for this was "the closest he would ever come to heaven" (*Exploring the Pastoral Epistles*).

(3) **THE LORD STABLISHED ME.** Paul's words did not fall idly to the ground. His preaching became "fully known" or "fulfilled" in its widespread reach among the Gentiles. "A single occasion is often of the greatest moment" (J. Bengel: *New Testament Word Studies*). This was likely Paul's last opportunity to preach and the words, "*that all the Gentiles might hear*" implies a large hearing.

(4) **THE LORD SAVED ME.** "*And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*" Paul seems to have Daniel in mind. Daniel was cast into a den of lions out of faithfulness to God, but the Lord miraculously "shut the lions' mouths" and delivered him (Dan. 6:22). In similar fashion, the vicious, "lion-like" rants against Paul were silenced and brought to nothing by God's power.

(5) **THE LORD SUSTAINS ME.** "*And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*" Paul isn't thinking of deliverance from martyrdom. Rather, he's trusting God to sustain his testimony to the end of life and preserve it into the future. The Lord, he says,

“will draw me out” of harm’s way and keep me “safe and sound for His kingdom” (Wuest: *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*). When the preacher Harold St. John lay dying, he said, “I am rejoicing in the sentence, ‘The Lord shall preserve thy going out.’ Out from a world rent and saddened by strife, yet brightened everywhere by the faces of men, women, and children who love Jesus. And, ‘thy coming in’; the land we are going to is so beautiful that I wonder why the Lord keeps so many of us here...But when we enter in, there will be no shadows” (James Anderson: *The Collected Writings of Harold St. John*, vol.1). Again, Paul ascribes all glory – eternal glory (“for ever and ever” or “unto the ages of ages”) – to His Lord; “Amen” or “so let it be.”

The letter ends with the benediction: “*The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.*” Hiebert calls this a “double benediction” in that “be with thy spirit” is singular, referring specifically to Timothy, and “be with you” is plural, referring to all the believers at Ephesus. Paul began with “grace” (1:2) and ends with “grace” – a fit summation to a life well run – and a vital virtue for those still in the race. “Amen.”

In trouble, God tries our faith, and then is the time to try His friendship. If we do, we shall find it real, permanent and profitable. This Friend loves at all times, but manifests His friendship most in trying times.

The Resurrected Sin-Purger

Hebrews 1:5

Robert Surgenor

What fragrances of Christ permeate the opening utterances of the Epistle to the Hebrews! We observe God speaking in His Son (verses 1-2), to His Son (verses 5-13) and about His Son (verses 2-4). As the epistle unfolds we find the Spokesman SPEAKING as the representative of God (verse 2), the Creator SUSTAINING all things relative to the vast universe, the Sin-Purger SUFFERING outside the gate, the exalted Lord SITTING on the right hand of the Majesty on high (verse 3), and then the Son SALUTED as God (verse 8). Thus as the divine Spokesman, the universal Heir, the Creator, the representative of the Father, the absolute Controller of the universe, the willing Sin-Purger and the exalted and supreme King, we find a sevenfold expression of the deity of Christ.

The careful reader will also notice the six-fold witness of the O. T. Scriptures relative to the Son.

(1) Verse 5, a quotation from Psalm 2:7, revealing the manifestation of the Son.

(2) 2 Samuel 7:14, showing God’s affection and love to the Son.

(3) Verse 6, taken from Deuteronomy 32:43, displaying the worship and adoration of angels to the Son.

(4) Verse 8, the words of Psalm 45:6-7, the supremacy and deity of the Son.

(5) Verse 10, quoting Psalm 102:25-27, the power of the Son in creation and His eternal character.

(6) Verse 13, taken from Psalm 110:1, bringing before us the absolute judicial power and authority of the Son.

In view of these truths, certainly we can exclaim like the hymn-writer, “Father of mercies! in Thy Word what endless glory shines! Forever be Thy name adored for these celestial lines.”

How orderly the divine Author of Holy Writ traces the path of God’s Beloved. He reminds us of His pathway amongst men, telling out the Father (verses 1-2); then His vicarious sufferings on the tree (verse 3); His glorious resurrection (verse 5); His future manifestation in millennial glory (verse 6); His triumphant entrance into Heaven (verses 8-9); and finally His perfection throughout all eternity (verses 10-12). Notice the salute in verse 5: “***Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.***” At the day of His resurrection (“*this day*”) God brings our Lord forth and salutes Him as His Son! This corresponds exactly with Romans 1:4, “*Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*” (Newberry). Let us be careful here. From all eternity He was the Son of God, thus He is God, but during His sojourn here in the flesh, His power in its fullest degree was veiled from view. By means of His resurrection that power manifested itself in all its glory. We believe “*the Spirit of holiness*” refers not to His divine nature in contrast to His unfallen human nature, but rather to the Holy Spirit of God Himself. Christ died unto sin, but now, being raised from the dead through the agency of the Spirit, death hath no more dominion over Him (Rom. 6:9-10), and upon this great event, He who was crucified through weakness (2 Cor. 13:4) has been raised and invested with power along with the assuring declaration of the Father, “*Thou art My Son, this day have I (brought Thee forth) begotten Thee.*” Following this we have another quotation from 2 Samuel 7:14 where the prophet Nathan speaks for God to David in regard to his son Solomon, “*I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son,*” concerning the building of His house. However the prophecy looks farther on to the time when David’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus, would build His Church (Matt. 16:18), the only temple where God would really dwell (Eph. 2:20-22).

The Holy Spirit in the Epistle of the Hebrews delights to portray the superiority of Christ. We find a display of this

superiority over angels in chapter 1; over Adam in chapter 2; over Moses in chapter 3; over Joshua in chapter 4; over Aaron in chapter 5; over the Levitical priesthood in chapter 7; over the Old Covenant in chapter 8; over all the ritual and sacrifices of the Old Testament in chapters 9 -10; and over all the great ones of faith in chapter 11. While in chapter 2 we have the manhood of Christ and His superiority over **earthly beings**. We discover in chapter 1 the deity of Christ and His superiority over **heavenly beings**. Brethren have various interpretations of verse 9, "God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Some believe His "fellows" to be all other kings, while others would narrow it down to just the kings who occupied the throne of David because of the mention of Christ's scepter and His kingdom in the preceding verse. Others believe the "fellows" to be His redeemed in the glory. However, we believe that the primary context of this whole chapter is not the superiority of Christ over all kings, or the kings of Judah, or the redeemed of the Lord, but rather His superiority over angels (compare verses 4-8, 13-14). God does not say to kings or the redeemed "Sit on My right hand, until I make thine enemies Thy footstool," nor to angels (verse 13). So the theme of Christ's superiority over angels continues, thus including the ninth verse. Consequently, we feel the "fellows" ("partakers" or "associates") to be the holy angels of God viewed as co-participants with Messiah in His future sovereignty over a creation that has experienced redemption. They are partakers in the same glorious and sinless state with Himself. The whole argument of this chapter is that the angels are far below Christ in rank. He has been anointed with the oil of gladness above them. We feel that this is not the anointing to consecrate to an office, such as Aaron and his sons experienced (Lev. 8), or the anointing found in Acts 10:38, but rather an anointing attended with many expressions of joy and rejoicing, for it is described as "the oil of gladness," thus a festive and triumphant unction rather than inaugurative. The thought is, His righteous course in humanity has been completed on earth as the Holy One who loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and because of this, upon His entrance back into the glory (taking impeccable humanity back with Him), God anoints Him on that festive occasion in jubilant celebration of His finished course. The divine Guest enters the glory, honored above all. Angels, His fellows, look on that festive occasion with holy wonder and joy! He who is the image of God, by whom all things were created, who was before all things and by whom all things consist, who is the head of the body, the Church, is that One who in all things must have the preeminence! (Col. 1:15-18). Brethren, let us give this Man place in every phase of our lives. (Continued)

The believer's humility is in proportion to his fruitfulness.
The most heavy-laden branches bow the lowest.

That Beautiful Flock

The Local Assembly

Alex Dryburgh

The Liberty of the Flock

Abundant life, marvelous light, glorious liberty, and matchless love are the portion of every true child of God. ". . . I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly", (John 10:10). ". . . Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). We are to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has set us free and be not entangled again with a yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1). We read of "the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). In Rom. 6:18, Paul says, "being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness". 2 Cor. 3:17, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". The Lord says in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." We should never abuse what God intends us to use. "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. 5:13). God intends us to enjoy liberty, not license. Liberty is not lightness, it is not looseness, and it is not legality.

An assembly is seen as a flock, as a family, and as a fellowship. Regarding the assembly as a family, we could think of 1 Thessalonians. It is in that epistle we read about brotherly love. God is seen as Father, and Paul, Timothy, and Silas are seen as fathers as well as nursing mothers, and the thought of 'brethren' runs through the epistle. Then regarding the thought of a fellowship, it is a fellowship of life, light, liberty, and love. The Devil would love to rob us of our liberty. We see this in Gal. 2:4; we read about false brethren brought in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.

There are many things that you and I have to beware of as God's people. We have to beware of **Bluntness**. Ecc. 10:10 says, "If the iron be blunt". It is the thought of an ax that has lost its keen edge. We have to beware of **Blindness**. The last of the judges was blind, as seen in Samson. The priests were blind as seen in Eli. The last of the kings was blind, as seen in Zedekiah. The last of the churches was also blind, as seen in Laodicea. There is a cause of blindness and there is a cure for blindness. We should beware of **Barrenness**. "For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," (2 Pet. 1:8). We should beware of **Bitterness**. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice," (Eph. 4:31). Nothing will hinder spiritual growth more, and nothing will divide an assembly sooner than an embittered spirit. We need to beware of **Bondage**. "Stand

fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free and be not entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). We can lose our purity. “Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk. . . Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets” (Lam. 4:7-8). We can lose our power. We can lose the sense of the Lord's presence being with us. You remember Samson. He lost his light; his eyes were bored out. He lost his liberty; he was bound in chains of iron. Then he lost his life. He lost the sense of the Lord's presence being with him. He went out as at other times and he wist not that the Lord had departed from him. We can lose our joy. “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation” (Ps. 51:12).

Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul refreshing view of Jesus and His word?
What quiet hours I once enjoyed, How sweet their memory still;
But they have left an aching void the world cannot fill.

Love is also essential for a beautiful flock. Love beautifies. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they could have many things. But if they didn't have love they had nothing. Love builds up (1 Cor. 8:1); Knowledge puffs up, Love builds up and love binds up. In Lk. 10:34, the Samaritan came to where the man was, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. Love binds up; *“Above all these things put on charity (love) which is the bond of perfectness,” (Col. 3:14)*

The Oneness of the Flock

Time and again Israel in the old Testament is presented as one man. In the book of Ezra we see them as one man in worship, (3:2). In Neh. 8:1, we see them as one man in ministry. In Phil. 1, we see believers as one man in the preaching of the gospel: *“Stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”*. In Psa. 133, we see that unity is sweet, it is strength, and it is salvation. Three times in the Thessalonian epistle we read the word ‘together’. In ch. 4, we are going to be together with loved ones in the air. *“Caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”*. We are going to be together with Christ in heaven. *“Whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him,” (5:10)*. We should be together on earth. We are to *“comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as ye also do” (5:11)*.

Sometimes in your Bible you read of that which is good and profitable. For example, godliness is profitable in this life and in that which is to come. (1 Tim. 4:8). We are to be careful to maintain good works. *“These things are good and profitable. . .” (Tit. 3:8)*. Sometimes we read of what is good and pleasing, or acceptable. In Rom. 12:2, it is a separated life: *“Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that*

good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” A life of supplication and a sanctified Christian are both good and pleasing (acceptable) to God. In 1 Tim 5:4 it is a life that shows piety (godliness) that is good and pleasing, or acceptable, to God. Sometimes we see that which is good and perfect. *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,” (James 1:17)*. Sometimes you get the thought of good and pleasant. Unity is pleasant to God because he planned it. It is pleasant to Christ, for He died for it, *“to make in Himself of twain (Jew and Gentile) one new man, so making peace,” (Eph. 2:15)*. It is pleasant to the Holy Spirit for he makes it. We don't make unity; we have to keep it (Eph. 4:3). It is pleasant to angels, for they behold it. It is pleasant to you and me, for we enjoy it. And it's pleasant to the world and they admire it. An assembly is participated in by everybody, monopolized by nobody, where everybody is somebody.

Characteristics of the Flock

In John 10 we notice that the sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd. Because they know the voice, they know the Shepherd. Samuel heard the voice. Mary knew the voice, David knew the shepherd; *“The Lord is my shepherd.”* They go in and out and find pasture. They are safe and secure in the hand of the Shepherd, and in the hand of the Father. Notice where the sheep are in relation to the Shepherd. In Isa. 40:11, we see the sheep in the bosom of the Shepherd. It is the place of affection. Then in Luke 15:5, the sheep is on the shoulders of the Shepherd; it is the place of strength. Then, they are in the Shepherd's hand and in the hand of the Father, the place of security, (John 10:29). In Rom. 8:1, there is no condemnation, and in 8:35, no separation. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Notice that all the Godhead is for us in Romans 8. *“The Spirit itself (himself) maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (8:26)*. Then Christ at the right hand of God also maketh intercession for us (8:34). Then “if God be for us who can be against us” (8:31).

Keeping the Flock

“Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee,” (Prov. 2:11). *“Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life,” (Prov. 4:23)*. There are things that we ought to guard. We have to guard ourselves. *“Keep yourselves from the accursed thing lest ye make yourselves accursed” (Josh. 6:18)*. There is a list of things mentioned in Acts 15:29 *“from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well”*. *“Little children keep yourselves from idols,” (1 Jn. 5:21)*. *“Keep yourselves in the love of God,” (Jude 21)*. We have to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, (James 1:27). If we don't keep ourselves, little use of trying to keep any other thing. Are we courting this world, cruising with this world, or are we conquering this world? Are we flirting with this world, floating with this world, or are we fighting this world? Are we conformed to this world or are we

transformed? Are we going against the tide or flowing with the tide? So we have to guard ourselves. We have to guard the person of Christ. Three score mighty men guarded Solomon's bed (Song 3:7-8). Every man had his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. We have to guard the truth of God. We have to guard the assembly of God. Adam was put in the garden to dress it and to guard it. Because of adversaries, we have to guard the flock of God. In Luke 2:8, the shepherds were abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. We have to build walls, fences, bars, doors, and gates but not to keep the people of God in. If the Person of Christ does not keep me in the assembly, nothing else will. Those things we have mentioned are to keep the enemy out.

Unto him the homeless stranger,
 Outside the camp
 Forth we hasten, fear no danger,
 Outside the camp
 His reproach far richer treasures
 Than all Egypt boasted treasure
 Drawn by love that knows no measure
 Outside the camp.

A disposition to praise God is a sterling evidence of grace, and a proof of our meetness for heaven; nothing pleases God more, or is more essential to our happiness than this, and yet how seldom we manifest it.

The Lord's Supper and Man's Supper

1 Cor. 11:17-22

John H. Portman (dec)

I take this title from verses twenty and twenty-one in which the Lord's Supper is mentioned and also the words "his own" supper. In verses seventeen to twenty-two the Apostle deals with disorders at the Lord's Table which made it merely man's supper. From twenty-three to the end he speaks of discipline and the Lord's Supper. Verses twenty-seven to thirty-four make a subdivision, if one cares, in which the subject of discipline is mentioned in connection with the Lord's Supper. The section of twenty-three to twenty-six gives the order of the supper.

This portion of the chapter will need careful attention if we are to adequately deal with such an important matter as the Lord's Supper. In the remaining verses of this chapter we find the most complete teaching regarding the ordinance instituted by our Lord on the night He was betrayed. In the Gospels there is only a brief narrative without any exposition of what the celebration of the Supper should mean. Here there is a more detailed doctrinal discussion instead of mere narrative.

In the verses from seventeen to twenty-two the Apostle gives teaching from the negative side. In the remainder, he speaks from the positive angle.

It is fortunate for us that so many things went wrong in this Church at Corinth during Paul's lifetime because we are given the benefit of apostolic teaching and authority to correct our faults. I believe that everything troubling us today was present in incipient form, if not active, in the early church. The same disorders at the Lord's Table are present in our churches today in similar, if not identical form, to those the Corinthians experienced. Of course, this is true of everything Paul had to correct and not only in this particular chapter. But there is more misunderstanding about this subject than perhaps any other, and certainly it is a most important one if the punishment for its neglect is what we find outlined in verse thirty.

The Supper of the Lord occupied a very large place with the early believers. They were surrounded by pagans and exposed to persecution. Believers came from all positions in life, some of them had less time of leisure and others less of material things, being of the poorer class. Many were bond servants and had very little of this world's goods, while others were wealthy.

Very early in the church, perhaps arising from the example of the disciples in Jerusalem who had all things common, there arose the custom of the "agape" or feast of love in which a supper was partaken of in connection with the Lord's Supper. To this meal all brought such things as they had. With spiritual Christians, who would reflect the love of Christ, this meal would be a true feast of love. All would feast together in the bond of love and afterward partake of the bread and wine of communion. But because of the presence of carnal believers, and especially the large proportion of such in Corinth, there would be disorders and a lack of love. Jude 12 mentions difficulties arising from disturbers in these gatherings.

Such was the condition of the meetings for the Lord's Supper at Corinth. From building up the saints these feasts had become such as would tear down and destroy their spiritual growth. Paul deals with this situation in no uncertain terms and sharply reproveth their conduct. In verse seventeen he says – far from praising them for their meeting together, which they confidently expected – that their meeting together was not only of no profit, but actually for the worse. We shall see how he brings this out in the following verses. His word translated "declare" is too mild for New Testament usage. It is rather, "I command you" (Vincent, Alford, Godet).

The meeting for communion with the Lord is intended for a

testimony -- a preaching (vs. 26, Gr.) of the Lord's death till He come. If it is not a testimony from which God can receive honor, glory and true worship, it had better be discontinued. Christians are not compelled to meet for this Supper; it is intended for a spiritual feast in which our own souls are rejoiced and the outsiders see a testimony to Christ's death for the world.

Verse eighteen takes us back in thought to 3:3 and 1:11,12. Carnality in the Corinthian Church manifested itself in divisions and strife which were fostered by the party-spirit. The divisions of verse eighteen were the splits or schisms that come about when there is a following of human leaders in the church rather than looking to the One who is the head of the body which is the Church. Certainly they could not manifest the body (10:17) if they were divided. Paul could not commend such a meeting.

There is a reference here to a report that reached Paul. Perhaps it was the household of Chloe that brought the word to him. It is evident that the Corinthian elders would not put such things in their letter to him. He heard this evil report of their state from the lips of others. Bad news travels fast and so does the word concerning something wrong in the household of God. No doubt it was known all over Corinth and in other places as well.

Paul is certainly tactful in saying, "I partly believe it". He had every reason to believe all of it because he knew the carnality that was present in this place. Saying it thus in an understatement leaves them the leeway of feeling his love and sympathy for them even in their babyhood. They hadn't grown much, as he well knew.

Verse nineteen can be compared with Matt. 18:7. The heresies -- better, factions or parties -- must be because of the divisions that were among them. The factions were the logical outgrowth of the schisms. See 3:3 where "zelos" (envying) and "eris" (strife) complement one another in a similar way.

The trouble did have a good end in that it served to show those who were approved among them. God makes all things work together for good, and even heresy can have a useful end. It has always worked thus. Those who are not approved (see 9:27) may be led astray by factions, but those who are in earnest about living for Christ will only stand out the clearer and will be drawn closer to Him. 2 Pet. 2 is the passage warning of heresy in the Church. Those of unsettled minds will be drawn away, but the gates of hell will not prevail against the true Church.

Verse twenty shows how far the carnality which was evidenced by factions and parties had gone. They came

together for the purpose of remembering the Lord in His Supper but were so lost in their strife and divisions that they could not demonstrate the unity of the one body. They met together but they could not partake of the Lord's Supper.

Taking verse nineteen as a parenthesis, the word "therefore" connects verse twenty with verse eighteen. Because of the divisions among them, when they came together, it was not to eat the Lord's Supper. Some commentators read "It is not possible" in place of "it is not" as also the A.S.V. translates it. We need not take "esti" (is) in the sense of "epitrepo" (it is allowed), as if Paul meant that in these circumstances it is no longer morally possible to celebrate the communion rightly. It is simpler to understand the words in this sense: "To act as you do (vs. 21) can no more be called celebrating the Supper; it is indeed to partake of a feast, but not that of the Lord." (Godet).

The words "in one place" seem to have definite reference to the "church" of vs. 18. Paul contrasts this one place with houses in vs. 22. The church gathering was not the place for each to eat his own supper if they were to eat in this manner, but the place for the Lord's Supper.

It was certainly their object in coming together to eat the Lord's Supper, but their manner of eating was the subject of censure. They had the custom of the common meal taken with the Lord's Supper which was called the agape, but their carnality evidenced itself in divisions so that those of one group ate together and would not share with those of another group. The rich brought food in abundance (verse 21) and reserved this for themselves while the poor had to go hungry. Those who loved wine brought that in abundance and went so far as to be drunken. The imagination can hardly suggest anything so shameful in connection with the Lord's Supper. The Apostle does not cover over or excuse them but brings to the fore their unrighteous actions.

"Kuriakos" (Lord) in verse twenty is a more general term than "kurios" (Lord) of vs. 27 and perhaps includes the whole meal (Robertson, Shore). The same adjective is used in Rev. 1:10 of the first day and in patristic writings.

Verse twenty-two is the Apostle's judgment on their conduct. It is difficult to express the two negatives in English but a translation which brings in Paul's irony would be, "Surely it is not that you do not have houses to eat and drink in, do you?" The answer expected by "μη" (what?) is "no". They did have houses.

Those who have not are not those without houses but those not having sufficient food -- the poor. If the rich would not share their abundance, at least they need not shame the

poorer believers by eating before them.

(continued)

When unerring Wisdom, Infinite Love, and Omnipotent Power continue, the confiding heart may enjoy unruffled repose. Unless we can find some circumstance too big or too little for the Almighty God, we have no proper base on which to form a single anxious thought.

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

W. M. Lincoln

From the eleventh chapter of 1st Corinthians to the end of the epistle there is treated the subject of Church fellowship. Subjection to the Lord is first glanced at, and the Lord's people on the Lord's day, assembled at the Lord's Table, are beheld. Thus is the subject commenced. And, in order that obedience to this way of the Lord may be pressed on the soul, the writer specially informs us that about this supper he received his instructions direct from heaven. While "Do this" is His one and only command about this aspect of worship, this command He has thought good to repeat from yon throne. Is our entire worship called a supper? That suggests to us how we should rejoice and feast before the Lord! To the world it is a witness that this whole dispensation is but a night.

Then in chapter, 12 we see what the gifts in the body are. In 14 how those gifts are to be exercised, and under what power and authority; whilst most beautifully, in the midst of these instructions, we have chapter 13 looking at the moral fitness for the proper exercise of gift. The "gifts" of chapter 12 must be baptized in the love of chapter 13, to be exercised in grace as in chapter 14; for chapter 13 is like the Red Sea for gifts, in which the flesh is left at the bottom.

Here then we have, as we are expressly informed, and not without a slight peremptoriness of tone, "the commandments of the Lord" (14:37). Here is the Lord's precise instruction how as believers we are to behave ourselves before Him when we come together en ekklesia—that is, "in assembly."

Ours is no accidental meeting: it is the Holy Ghost who Himself has gathered us, according to Matt. 18:20. So Acts 20:7 should be translated "gathered together." We are gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is to say, unto His own immediate presence. (Compare 2 Chr. 20:9 with 1 Cor. v. 4).

We come together to "break bread", "to eat the Lord's supper". We require no priest, nor any authority from any synod; our warrant is His plain precept. If we do it not, through being fretted by a human system, then we are making void

God's Word to keep man's traditions. Largeness of numbers is not essential; "two or three" are sufficient. Still, the idea of an assembly, as in Hebrews 10:25, certainly conveys the idea, generally speaking, of more than two or three. But our great joy is His distinct pledge that He is "in the midst," as our Savior, our Lord, and our Head. "We see Jesus." From Him flows the Spirit of God, who sways the assembly, as the wind moves an Aeolian harp.

If any unbelievers are present, they hear us proclaiming the Lord's death, yet testifying that He is risen and about to return to receive us to Himself. And thus as we assemble, and persist in assembling, around an invisible Head now; so we shall be gathered all together around that same Head and Lord visibly very soon. (Compare the word, episunagoge in Hebrews 10:25, of our gathering now, and the same word in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, of our gathering then). Only in these two places, throughout the New Testament, does this word occur—that is, of our two gatherings, here and there.

In the old dispensation, the worshipers had to seek God. But now God is seeking worshipers. Then He railed Himself off, and instructed worshipers to keep at a distance (Exo. 24:1), but now He Himself has come forth to us in fullest grace. To worship Him, we must be consciously in His presence.

Observe His way of grace. Note the expression, "in the midst", as used of Christ in the Word. First it is said, that two malefactors were crucified with Him, and "Jesus in the midst". Next, the veil, that is to say, His flesh, was "rent in the midst" (Luke 23:45). Thus had He fully reached us. Now at His resurrection, we read of Him taking this wonderful place among the disciples (Luke 24:36, John 20:19). So the following week He did the same again (verse 26). And such is His way of grace still (Matt. 18:20); also in the judgment of the churches He retains His position, "in the midst" (Rev., 1:13 and 2:1) Such, too, is His chosen place in the future with us, as He says, "*In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee*" (Heb. 2:12).

Now realizing His presence, we can worship Him. But what is worship? It is neither prayer nor praise in its highest sense. In prayer we are occupied with our wants, in praise with our blessings, but in worship we are occupied with Himself. Scarcely can we worship Him when a care unuttered is pressing on our hearts.

To worship God, we must be quite conscious of His love and grace. The more conscious we are of this, at the time, the freer and happier is our worship. So we must first sit at His feet and hear the story of His love. We must have the Spirit to show us the things of Christ. We must sit at His table and partake of the "fatted calf". Then we can be "merry" with Him. Worship is the overflowing, and only the over-

flowing of our hearts, when under His eye we admire and adore Him. In His presence is “fulness of joy”.

Therefore, worship, in its fullest and highest sense, must be in the assembly and united. When we are full to overflowing in our adoration of Him, we naturally desire and delight that others should aid us worthily to extol Him. For we are conscious, that individually, we cannot adequately set forth His love. But the united way, as at present commanded, is at the Lord's table. There where the Spirit has free scope for “where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty”—we shall find that the Lord is faithful, and there shall have rich communion with Himself!

WIS Jul 1943

No man can estimate the greatness of the love of Christ, or the merit of His precious blood; except that he can fathom the depth of his own sin, and see clearly the extent of his own ingratitude.

Order in God's House

1 Timothy 3:14-16

Joel Portman

Having instructed Timothy concerning responsible men who must maintain scriptural order in the assembly, Paul now emphasizes the essential aspects of truth connected with that responsibility. Conduct of the saints is an essential part of the testimony of the assembly, along with the doctrine that is believed and taught, so he emphasizes that first.

Let us notice that Paul writes about an

1. Anticipated Coming (v. 14)

Paul clearly longed to come to Ephesus to see Timothy and the saints of that assembly. He had parted from them in Acts 20, likely about 5 years previously, expecting never to see them again, but he still longed to come to them. Whether he did or not is not recorded in Scripture, neither if he ever saw Timothy (note 2 Tim. 4:9). Such a strong desire was only normal, and was also a truly spiritual exercise on his part as he bore the burden of the saints and his son Timothy on his heart. Yet he was subject to the will of God and did not come without the Lord opening the way before him. Did he or not? We don't know.

2. Admonished Conduct (v. 15)

We are constantly reminded that the local assembly is a place of order and controlled conduct. We learn some of the reasons in this passage. Some think that an assembly is simply a place of convenience where they can partake of the Lord's Supper and enjoy the ministry of the Word without recognizing that such fellowship places restrictions and demands on their personal behavior. To be in an assembly,

which has “house of God” character, means that there is conduct that is becoming to that testimony.

“Behave, or conduct oneself” (lit.) includes all believers, not just Timothy. The original word (anastrepho) is found 11 x in our New Testament variously translated as conversation, live, behave, and, since it is in the present tense, it indicates the daily pattern of behavior in the saints even as Eph. 2:3 describes the daily pattern of our behavior in sins (“we all had our conversation (behavior) in times past”). Our daily behavior as believers represents the character of what pertains to the Lord and the testimony of the local assembly. What others see reflects on the entire assembly. What do they see in us? Peter reminds the believers that “the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, etc.”) 1 Pet. 4:3). Some might say that they don't do those things, but is there really any difference between our lives and that of the unsaved world around? Is our separation only a matter of degree, or do we manifest a clear distinction?

But one might say, “I behave reverently and respectfully when I am in the assembly”. But when are we in the assembly? Is it only when the saints come together, or are we in “house of God” every day? Is it not correct to say that we are in that relationship, seen as a part of the assembly, every hour of every day of our lives from the moment that we are received into the assembly until that fellowship might end? Before the nations, Israel was constantly identified with God's house which, in that day, was a physical structure in their midst and to which they were linked. Jacob saw the implications of Bethel, or “house of God” in Gen. 28, and he recognized that that place had solemn requirements which he never forgot and eventually returned to. We have a continuing responsibility to conduct ourselves in a manner that is becoming to the house of God, which, in our day, is expressed in a local assembly.

3. Assembly's Character (v. 15)

Paul gives a threefold description of what an assembly is in this verse. Every expression (according to Mr. Newberry), indicates “characteristic” since the absence of the definite article in each case indicates its characteristic. He says, “The absence of the article before a word in Greek, signifies, that this word is not to be understood as objective, but characteristic...it expresses the character of something.” Thus, the assembly has the character of “house of God”, “assembly of the living God”, “pillar and ground of the truth”. Each expression sets the local assembly apart from all else that might claim any religious ground, especially, in Ephesus, against the temple of Diana which was NOT any of these things. Only that small (?) gathering of saints was identified as distinctly being recognized by the Lord.

House of God is not a building. It signifies a household (a term similar to one used in Eph. 2:19 regarding the entire church). At all times, there has only been one thing that answers to “house of God”, whether in Gen. 28 or in other parts of Scripture. It is the place where

1. God’s presence is known and His authority recognized. This is only true when there are conditions expressing obedience to His Word that are suitable to His presence. When Israel grievously departed from the Lord and His truth, the Lord’s presence departed from them in Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:22-23. He is “Lord” in the house, the Master of the House.

2. God’s Blessing is Known as in Gen. 28 where God promised to bless Jacob despite his unworthiness. That blessing is not seen in numbers of people, size of buildings, or activities, but rather in spiritual strength and spiritual character extolling the Lord and drawing saints to Him.

Assembly of the Living God in contrast to the idolatrous image of Diana in her grand and physically glorious temple. What a distinction! Identified with a Living God, One with power, knowledge, judgment and reality. He is not like dead idols who had no power, as Isaiah reminds the people in Isa. 40-46. This imparts solemnity to our behavior, but also inserts confidence as we move in fellowship with Him. This is a gathering that is

1. The result of His Work and not man’s, though men have a part in that work. Man may build religious organizations of his own devising, but only God builds by His Spirit.

2. A Gathering with a Real Person in the Midst. 1 Cor. 14:25 reminds us that spiritual ministry in the assembly would convince one who enters that “God is in you of a truth”. Matt. 18:20 is often quoted, but it also should be a felt reality that is represented in our conduct and exercise.

Pillar and Ground (Stay, bulwark) of the Truth in contrast to all that is false of idolatrous or man-centered worship that sets aside the truth concerning the Lord Jesus.

As pillar of the truth, the assembly exists to display and represent those great doctrinal truths concerning Christ. Most pillars of our Bible were memorials, or for display. The pillars in Diana’s temple were for display as well as support, (Hewitt, *Collected Writings*) and they added to the grandeur of that structure. Jacob was a man of pillars, memorials that marked vital points of his life and fellowship with God. The assembly is to manifest Christ and to display by doctrine and practice the great truths that pertain to His blessed Person.

It is also the ground, or stay, of the truth. That is, the assembly is responsible to uphold, protect, and maintain these great truths. It is sound doctrine that upholds the assembly and upon which it is based; that sound doctrine is

to be defended and supported by the assembly. All doctrine is related in some way to the truth of Christ Himself, so it forms an integrated whole that must be defended by clear teaching in the assembly.

If we truly appreciate this character of the assembly, it will most certainly control and direct our conduct before others as we represent Christ before those who know Him not.

4. Acknowledged Confession (v. 16)

This is the confession of the assembly (and the entire church). Possibly it distills the essence of a hymn or worship that expresses the common belief or consent of saints that cannot allow differences in belief. This is foundational. The expressions form the mystery of godliness, which is Christ manifested as God in humanity. This is truth, like all mysteries, that is only revealed by the Spirit of God and known by believers. Certainly, whether stated directly or indirectly, the only One who was manifested in flesh was the One who was eternally God. This is truth that doesn’t pertain to any angel or other being. His deity and humanity are both in view in this blessed statement.

These six statements include every essential aspect of truth pertaining to our blessed Lord, truth that is often denied by men. However they are arranged, (and there are many ways), there seems to be a contrast between what is linked with the visible and the invisible worlds. We can see that they emphasize the reality of His incarnation in flesh and justification (vindication) in Spirit. Man only saw what He was in the flesh but failed to appreciate His greatness, apart from those who knew Him, as John did (John 1:14). What He really was could only be seen and His claims vindicated in Spirit, as God saw Him. This was expressed many times, but especially in His resurrection. Angels saw Him, and they must have bowed with wonder to see their God and Lord in human form, but He has been proclaimed among the nations when the gospel and its truth has set forth His person and claims. He was believed on in the world, but eternally has been received up “in glory” as the climax of His finished work on the cross. He who came in humility and lowliness is now exalted and extolled to the right hand of God, where He has set Himself down in glory.

He is the focus of the local assembly and forms the basis and reason for its existence. He, who voluntarily humbled Himself unto the cross death, is now the object of our worship and praise, now exalted and given the highest place as a glorified Man. This Person is the essence of the assembly’s testimony. This great statement forms a fitting conclusion to this section that emphasizes the importance of the local assembly upholding and manifesting sound doctrine as a witness to our blessed Lord.

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