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Order in God's House

1 Timothy 5:1-16

Joel Portman

Responsibilities in practical relationships in a local assembly are essential for it to maintain godly order, so Paul now instructs Timothy in these matters. This instruction continues to ch. 6:2 and covers matters that include all who are in assembly fellowship. He suggests a family relationship that exists between believers, since he speaks of fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers, and this includes a personal responsibility toward each one. We note an air of impartiality including righteousness, respect, and responsibility that runs through this instruction. This is important if a Christ-honoring testimony is to be maintained in the assembly.

Respect and Restraint to Saints v. 1-2

Paul is not speaking about "official" elders, such as in chapter 3, but rather of older brethren in the assembly. He will instruct Timothy about "official" elders in verses 17 and following. Even older brethren may need reproof or correction at times since no one is beyond the possibility of error. However, Timothy is to show respect for them and to handle them considerately, being aware of their age and the years of their testimony. One has observed cases when younger elders, only recently recognized in an assembly, publicly and strongly rebuked older men, even preaching brethren, in such a way that was most unbecoming. It may be that Timothy is being warned against this possibility. They should be entreated (begged, beseeched) rather than rebuked (chastised, chided, upbraided or treated harshly). We read the admonition in Lev. 19:32: "*Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God. I am the Lord*". That principle has not ceased to exist, even today.

Even younger brethren should be treated respectfully. A local assembly is not a place for harsh treatment, disdain for, or disregard of believers. A spirit of mutual appreciation and respect should mark our relationships in an atmosphere of righteousness. When saints are treated in this way, they often will not remain in an assembly very long, and the assembly will suffer as a result. This respectful attitude should also mark relationships with older and younger sisters in the assembly. Note that Paul, in connection with sisters, emphasizes the need for purity. Dealings with those of the opposite sex must be with restraint and care, lest any element of suspicion cause difficulties as a result. Carelessness in association with sisters has caused more than one valuable man to fall and to lose his ability to serve the Lord, and wise ones will avoid private contacts in this way that might raise questions by others.

Responsibilities toward Widows v. 3-16

Notably the New Testament, especially Luke, speaks often of widows, such as Anna (Lk. 2:37, the widow of Sidon (4:26), the widow of Nain (7:12), the seeking widow (Lk. 18:3), and the generous, poor widow (21:2). They were generally marked by faith and poverty. Hiebert says that the basic idea of "widow" is "loneliness". The word means they are bereft of a husband, and "widows indeed" indicates those that they have no familial means of support. The subject of widows covers different "kinds" of widows. Those who are "widows indeed" have no family to help them, so the assembly should be a "family substitute" and take that responsibility. They are to be honored (v. 3), which means that they are to receive more than sympathy; they are

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to be appreciated and esteemed, and this is to be displayed by practical support (“taken into the number” seems to indicate an orderly arrangement of supporting a definite group, v. 9). This widow is one who is truly desolate and has no one apart from God in whom to trust, and in that attitude of trust, she is constantly expressing her supplications and prayers to God, v. 5.

These widows must meet certain requisites, v. 9-10. They must have reached an age when personal support through work was no longer possible (60 years of age), and who had been faithfully devoted to their husbands while he lived. The qualification “... wife of one man ...” cannot mean only married once, since that would also exclude any widows who, having lost their husbands when younger, had remarried, as Paul instructs them to do in v. 14. Their lives are also marked by a testimony involving faithful service toward those, especially her own family, who may be without the assembly, as well as her showing hospitality toward strangers and to the saints. Her life has been marked by having “followed every good work”. These widows would rightly deserve the honor and respect of the saints, and they would certainly merit their practical support as they were recognized to have need.

Then, in vs. 4 and 8, we learn that there are widows who have family, and the family is charged with their care, since that is “good and acceptable” before God. They should not neglect their widows and thus leave that responsibility to the assembly. These are not truly “bereft”, and children have a responsibility before the Lord to care for their parents, even as parents are to care for their children. In v. 4, “nephews” is a word that indicates “grandchildren”, and one with a parent or grandparent has this charge to fulfill. In the days of Timothy there were no “old folks homes” to send them to, neither was there Social Security or other means of providing for their needs, so this need was even greater. However, even today, believers should recognize that they should not pass off this responsibility to others if it is possible for them to fulfill it. “Piety” is another word for “godliness” and this is a practical expression of that character which is pleasing and acceptable before God. Clearly, godliness is more than an expression of words or a “pious atmosphere” of life, but rather a practical expression of actions which are according to God and pleasing to Him.

The opposite is in verse 8. One who does not provide for his own has “*denied the faith and is worse than an infidel*” (unbeliever). By ignoring this responsibility, they would express by their actions the opposite of that which faith would produce and thus cast doubt on their profession as a Christian. Vincent says: “By refusing the natural duties which Christian faith implies, one practically denies his possession of faith”. Kelly puts it, “Unfeeling selfishness is

a denial of the faith; for what has not God given to us in His Son?” Having faith will only strengthen and enable those natural sympathies; even an unbeliever, a pagan, has natural affections that will cause him to care for his own relatives. How much more should this be true of a genuine child of God?

Risks for Younger Widows v. 11-15

Then Paul instructs about younger widows (v. 11-15). These are not to receive help from the assembly, because that would tend to produce idleness, with the potential for many problems that would result. “They will marry” in the context seems to indicate that they would marry anyone, even an unbeliever, in their desire to be married again. In doing this, they would cast off their first faith and come under judgment as a result of identifying with a pagan, possibly even denying their profession. Their idleness would also introduce problems into the assembly if they became involved in idle gossip and tale-bearing, saying things that they should not. His counsel is that they should marry (“women” in the context is clearly referring to younger widows), and be occupied with the normal functions of a wife and mother for their own protection and productivity. “Guide the house” is an expression that indicates that the house is her proper domain to rule over, to manage and direct in an honorable way. It is the feminine form of “master of the house” found in the gospels, so it indicates her responsibility and sphere that she is to fulfill. Paul has already taught that her salvation from sin and failure lies in her being occupied with “the childbearing” (2:15). To this day, the same principle applies; God's order is that she should be a “keeper at home”, occupied with that very important work of caring for the household. Her maintenance of a godly atmosphere in the home in an expression of God's order of godliness in the assembly.

(to be continued)

Two men please God.. one who serves Him with all his heart because he knows Him, and one who seeks Him with all his heart because he knows Him not

The Pre-existence, Eternal Sonship of Christ

by J. B. Hewitt

By eternal nature the Lord Jesus is the Son of God. He did not become God's Son at the Incarnation neither when He rose from the dead (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4), though by the latter event His Sonship was fully manifested. He is the “Only-Begotten” of the Father, of the same nature and with the same powers, to Whom equal worship is due.

He is the Divine Logos, in the beginning with God, the full and final revelation of God, and Himself very God (John 1:1; Col. 1:15). If our Lord had no existence prior to His

Incarnation at Bethlehem, the Christian claim that He came to be the living Revelation of God is at once invalidated and His claim to have revealed the Father is abrogated.

Claiming Equality

The Lord's discourse on the Bread of Life is replete with proof of His Preexistence. He is the Antitype of the manna; He is the Living Bread out of Heaven (Jn. 6:50, 51);

Christ in His Person is the Bread of Life (v.35-50); here in verses 51-58, He is the spiritual food of the believers in the Redemptive work of His Death. Verse 62 indicates a relationship prior to Bethlehem condescension (John 1:1). Before Abraham was "I AM" (8:58). He is Jehovah, the eternally self-existent One; the provider and sustainer of Divine life (6:35). The idea of "Sonship" is necessitated by a revelation of the "Fatherhood" of God in the Sacred Trinity. John's Gospel clearly presents the Eternal nature of the Sonship of Christ (1:14, 18; 3:16-18).

The expression "Only-Begotten," used of Christ points to something ABSOLUTE, but "Firstborn" expresses what is RELATIVE.

This title "Only-Begotten" is used five times in reference to Christ. The Lord ever did and ever will occupy this peculiar and unique place in the Father's thoughts and affections. It marks off His unique Sonship from the "sons of God" (v. 12). The title "Son of Man" is used only by our Lord, never by His disciples. It does not refer to His origin from man, but His relationship to them, it links Him with earth (Psa. 8).

Combating Heresy

The error taught at Colosse was undermining the Christian system, it was twofold: doctrinal and practical, theological and ethical. All the glories essential to Deity are the prerogatives of Christ, He is absolutely supreme. His identity as Son (1:13), His image, demonstrating the subsistence of Deity (v. 15). The Invisible and Unknowable God has revealed Himself fully and finally in and through His Son, Who being His Father's "image" has manifested Him. His Infinity is displayed in Creatorship (v. 16). "Who is" in v. 15, and "He is" in v. 17 declare His Preexistence. "HE" emphasizes His Personality, and "IS" His Preexistence and Self-existence. He is prior to creation. Firstborn of all creation, being Originator of all things. Controller of all things, and Perfecter of all things (v. 16, 17).

Hebrews chapter one describes a Personality that precedes time, controlling and governing forces of all history. Everything Divine resides in Him, is manifested in Him and Divine Titles are ascribed to Him. His eternal Sonship as Creator and Heir (v. 1, 2); His Expressed Sonship (v. 2-4);

His Exalted Sonship (v. 5); His Exhibited Sonship (v. 6).

Commending Humility

Phil. 2:6 is not a discussion in technical theology, but a question of practical ethics. In John 8:58 we have His claim to preexistence; in Col. 1:16, it is to priority, here in Phil. 2:6 it is His Divine Personality and His condescending stoop as an example of humility. His example is the sum and life of all morality. In v. 6 the Preexistence of Christ in heaven; v.7, 8 the Incarnation of Christ. In v. 6 we see the heights of glory, implying the Personality of the Son as distinct from the Father. The Preexistence of the Son from all eternity; the full and proper Deity of the Son.

He eternally existed in the form of God (v. 6). He essentially and eternally was and is, sharer of Divine Nature and bearer of Divine attributes, that is to say, God. He is supreme in being. The word "Form" means literally that He outwardly manifested the inner reality of His being.

Christ's inner reality was Deity. The equality of Christ's Deity is stressed in the phrase, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God". He had it as His right. Yet He determined upon an infinite act of self-sacrifice for others and took upon Himself humanity (2 Cor. 8:9; John 1:14).

The Son's exercise of His Own Will in contemplation of human need, was to effect redemption. This is the humility of Deity. He is supreme in life—"obedient unto death". His death is an indisputable evidence of His divine life. He is supreme in glory for all eternity (Phil. 2:9-11). God wants Him to be supreme in our lives (v. 5).

Conveying Truth

To claim Messiahship was to claim Deity (Psa. 2:6-12; Psa. 24:7-10; Psa. 45:1-8; 110. In Psa. 2:6 God speaks of Him as "my King;" v. 7 "my Son;" v. 12 "the Son;" v. 8 as the Heir, and in v.9 as the Conqueror. Peter applies Psalm 2 to the Lord (Acts 4:25-28). He is the King of Glory and Lord of Hosts in Psa. 24 with 1 Cor. 2:8; James 2:1.

These titles are given Him by God and remind us of His coming in glory. God addresses Him as King, His throne is unchangeable (Psa. 45:6). He is the Eternal God and Creator in Psa. 102:25-27, with Heb. 1:8, 10-12.

The Lord quotes Psa. 110:1, as written of Himself (Matt. 22:42-45), Psa. 110 is the most quoted Psalm in the N.T. always referring to the Lord Jesus. He is the Priest (Heb. 5:10). As Jehovah of Hosts (Isa. 6:1-3); His glory is revealed (John 12:41).

His eternal Sonship guarantees redemption, priesthood,

Kingship, Headship and every blessing associated with these glorious titles of Christ.

God provides resting places as well as working places. Rest then, and be thankful when He brings you, wearied, to a wayside well.

“Filled with All Joy”

Sidney J. Saword

In Isaiah 12 we are told of the joy and singing awaiting Israel in that day when the Lord Jesus assumes His rightful place on David's Throne and establishes His millennial kingdom, as predicted in the preceding chapter. That misguided people, who 1900 years cried out, “*Away with Him, away with Him, crucify*”, when Pilate presented Christ to them their King, have been ever since reaping the terrible harvest of their ruthless demand. The hatred which they meted out to God's beloved Son has returned to their own bosom in full measure. They sowed the wind and have reaped the whirlwind. As one considers the sad plight of the Jewish people today: despised, maligned, robbed and persecuted, they present a forlorn picture of woe and misery. Nevertheless, God has not forgotten them and the glorious future predicted for the nation is drawing near, when with repentant hearts they will welcome their true Messiah. The weeping “*may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*” (Ps. 30:5).

When the child of God assigns to the Lord Jesus Christ His rightful place of government in the heart and life it results in a condition of joy and singing. The obvious reason why so many of us are not experiencing this happy state is that worldliness and carnality are usurping the place that belongs to our Lord.

The six brief verses of Isaiah 12 suggest to **six phases of spiritual joy** that constitute the birthright portion of God's people:

v. 1 The Joy of Salvation, when the soul experiences peace with God and pardon of sin; when the Word of the Gospel enters with all its comforting virtue and the troubled conscience finds rest in the atoning Work of Christ. May we be preserved the simplicity of love as never to outgrow this unspeakable joy and never tire of singing: “O happy day that fixed choice, on Thee my Savior and God”. Poor David forfeited that joy when he strayed into the path of sin, and at last from the depths a contrite heart he cries out: “*Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation*”. Apart from this there can be no effective testimony for God. It is like the man who lost

the axe head; the handle was a useless instrument for felling trees!

v. 2 The Joy of the Lord. “*For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song*”. In Nehemiah 8:10 we read: “*For the joy of the Lord is your strength*”. The faithful ministry of God's servants at that time produced true contrition in the hearts of people so that “they all wept” when they heard the words of the law, led them back to their God. The joy of the Lord does not consist of being occupied with the blessings, but rather with the Blesser: finding one's delight the Person of Christ Himself.

v.3 Joy in God's Word. “*Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of Salvation*”. When the two foregoing joys are present in the believer's life, he can say with the Psalmist: “*I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil*” (Psalm :162). His appetite keen for the Word of God, like that of a healthy school-boy for his dinner, and the result is seen in spiritual growth and divinely inspired energy. On the contrary, when the spiritual digestion has been impaired by over-indulgence in newspapers and kindred literature, the believer eventually loses his appetite for the Word and the language of his soul is that of Israel in regard to the manna: “*My soul loatheth this light bread*”.

v. 3 The joy of witness bearing. “*Praise the Lord . . . declare His doings among the people*”; When Israel walked near to their God they were a testimony before the nations, so that even the queen of Sheba undertook her long and strenuous journey to behold the manifestation of God's power and wisdom through Solomon. Then her testimony was: “*Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants*”. When the Apostles stood up on the day of Pentecost and witnessed to their risen Lord their joy was so conspicuous that the mockers said, “*These men are full of new wine*”. The irrepressible joy of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail found expression at the midnight hour in songs of praise. The inevitable result was the earnest appeal of that convicted jailer to be shown the way of salvation. Very little time was required to convince him. No doubt the heavenly joy seen in the countenances of those two patient sufferers was an overwhelming argument to the mighty power and reality of the Gospel. Service for the Lord unaccompanied by holy delight like “*gold that has become dim*” (Lam. 4:1) .

v. 5 The Joy of Worship. “*Sing unto the Lord*”. The book of Psalms embodies a volume of praise and worship, and **JOY** forms the keynote of it all: “*My mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips*” (Psa. 63:5). Mary was joyful worshiper: “*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*”. In John 20:20, when Jesus stood in the midst of His disciples in the upper room and revealed Himself unto them, we are told that: “*Then were the*

disciples glad when they saw the Lord". How grieving to the heart of God must be that insipid, joyless form of worship which reduces an assembly to the Laodicean state!

v. 6 The Joy at His coming. "*Cry out and shout*". The great climax to Israel's joy will be the realized, visible presence of the Lord in their midst in all His glory. Undoubtedly their joy know no that day, but we believe it will be eclipsed by the unspeakable joy that be ours at the Rapture, when His glorified church, without spot or wrinkle, will be caught up to see Him face to face, to be with Him and like Him throughout eternity. How wonderful will be the personal link in that moment, when with Paul we will recognize Him and exclaim: "*The Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me!*" "*For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout*", and that shout will awaken its kindred joy in the hearts of the countless multitudes of the redeemed. May our souls be so weaned from worldly vanities that we may ever be on the tiptoe of expectation, breathing out that yearning desire: "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*". "*Now the God of hope fill you with ALL JOY and peace in believing*" (Rom. 15:13).

We are not told to be holy to be saved; we are saved in order to be holy.

The Camp of the Saints

Numbers 5-6

Harold St. John

In the early chapters of the book of Numbers, the author has invited his readers to consider three classes in the camp of Israel. The warrior enrolled at twenty years of age, the Levite enlisted at twenty-five, and the priest's service opened on his attaining his thirtieth year. Each of these has its counterpart in Christianity. There are still many good soldiers of Jesus Christ who take their share of hardness in the ministry of the gospel; many shepherds who labor in the Word and doctrine; and here and there we meet priestly souls who give themselves to a ministry of ceaseless praise, intercession, and worship.

In the Old Testament, the persons were distinct and not allowed to trespass on the service of one another, but in the present, every saint is called to discharge the functions of all. Yet in actual practice, we tend to develop one special line of service and offer it as our contribution to the welfare of the Church.

Moses has often been called the "father of preventive medicine", and it is certainly remarkable to find these careful precautions against infection in writings so remote from our

times. Even today many in the world are far behind the hygienic system of the Pentateuch in matters dealing with personal cleanliness and the spread of disease.

The cases selected as illustrations are leprosy, hemorrhage, and contact with a corpse. Spiritual leprosy has eaten deeply into the texture of the writer's system, and none of his readers are unconscious of its workings in their own lives. The Hebrew word *tsara*, translated 55 times in the Old Testament "leper", "leprous", or "leprosy", is derived from a root which means "to strike" and was viewed by the Jews as a stroke of God. Indeed, the widely held rabbinic belief that Messiah would be a leper was based on Isaiah 53:4 -- "smitten of God".

Both Jewish and Christian expositors have recognized that leprosy represents sin in its mysterious workings and hideous manifestations. One famous rabbi remarks, "If a man considers this, he will be humbled and ashamed because of his sin. Every sin is a leprosy, a spot upon the soul".

The apostle Paul describes an outbreak of moral leprosy among the church at Corinth and shows, when the thing is certain and the sinner unrepentant, that only expulsion from the camp will meet the demands of divine holiness and safety for the saints.

The second case cited is that of "an issue" where the life of the sufferer is slowly being drained away and where the work of many physicians has been in vain (see Mk. 5:36). In these cases the discipline was far less severe than with leprosy and merely involved exclusion from the camp until sundown, in minor cases, or for a week in more acute ones.

An outbreak of passion might easily suspend happy fellowship for a limited season, but as soon as the "clothes are washed", that is, when the action of the Word is welcomed and the sin judged, there may be immediate recovery and restoration.

The wise man tells us that he who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city. His father David could do the latter, but neither the son nor the father was able to govern themselves. This problem of self-control is one of the hardest and loneliest which we have to face.

The hardest battles ever fought,
The greatest victories won
Are fought with never a comrade near,
And never a shot or gun.
It may be a battle with terrible pain,
Or a struggle with mind or soul,
But God, who is watching His soldiers, knows
The names on His honor roll.

The third evil which unfitted its victim from the fellowship of the camp was known as “defilement by the dead”. This subject is one of the main topics of the book and is dealt with in six important passages: 5:2; 6:9; 9:6; 9:10; ch. 19; and 31:19. We find what answers to “the camp” in the Christian assembly of our times and the direct teaching of the New Testament fully agree with the shadows of the law. There can be no allowance of open sin, no room for lawless self-indulgence, nor can the purity of the fellowship be compromised by deliberate association with known evil.

If we allow things that are unsuited to that holy Presence which indwells the church, then we shall find, to our grief and shame, that the glory will slowly and unwillingly leave the threshold of the Temple (see Ezek. 10:4; 11:23 and Rev. 2:5) and Ichabod will be graven on the walls of our house.

It is important to note that defilement could only be transmitted by one who had direct contact with a corpse: his touch defiled all that was in his tent and also those who sought to apply “the water of purification”, but there is no hint that the uncleanness could be handed on to a third party.

The theory of second-hand defilement is a false and malignant heresy and its applications have wrought endless havoc among Christian people. The idea is untrue to Scripture, false to the facts of life and experience, and is condemned by the witness of nature and the findings of science.

After considering the cleanness of the camp, the writer turns to the important matter of honesty in our relations toward others. Neglecting this lesson has worked incalculable havoc among God's people, and it behooves us to face frankly the provisions which Jehovah made then, and still insists on today.

The case of a personal trespass is supposed and there are three stages in the recovery of the offender. First, he must make full confession of the wrong done. Then an adequate restitution must be offered, and lastly a “ram of the atonement” would serve as a recognition both of the inward state that made such a sin possible and as a reminder of the death of Christ by which the stain was effaced.

It will be noticed that four parties were involved: God, the priest, the sinner, and the one whose rights had been violated. In like manner every dispute or trespass among brethren will take into account the character of God, the spiritual man who can deal with the matter (Gal. 6:1), and then the two opposing brethren. (See the same four parties in Mt. 18:15-20.)

The Lord Jesus again and again referred to these discords among brethren and yet we must all sadly own that we have

not heeded His words. We find that the “churches of the saints” are distressed and often riven asunder because of some strife between two or more Christians which remains unsettled for years.

In the Royal Proclamation recorded in Matthew 5, we find one searching passage in which the King reveals His will in the following terms: *“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”*.

Note that the Lord suggests that the worshipper's conscience will be acutely sensitive as he approaches the holy courts. This will be appreciated by every thoughtful mind, for there is nothing like the Cross to awaken the memories of past weakness and failure.

It is when the offerer has led his lamb up to the priest that he remembers that his brother has something against him, so tying up the animal, he leaves it and hurries through the city to his brother's home, and there insists on a reconciliation before returning to carry out the ritual.

In such a case, as a matter of mere geography, one would seem to be traveling away from the altar, but in fact one is approaching all the eternal values of the symbol; as so often in life, the long way round is really the nearest way home.

I expect most of us remember some hour in “life's little day” when we found ourselves suddenly arraigned before the “eyes of His glory” and we were pierced with an arrow of conviction as to some act of dishonor. We shall never forget what a crucifixion of our pride it cost us to unload our breasts of all the unclean stuff, but equally we shall always remember the cleansing sense of relief that followed.

There is a tendency in us all to brush aside these claims of our Lord Jesus and to say they are “Jewish”, or we imagine that we can dispense with obedience in one matter because of “costly and higher service” in some other direction.

We need to learn that our professed loyalty to Christ is always tested in little things. For many a Christian in the days of Domitian's persecution the casting of a handful of incense upon a brazier before an idol altar seemed a little thing, and yet the great gates of life swing upon frail hinges such as these. The Lord give us to listen to Moses and to Christ.

When we cease to worship God, we do not worship nothing, we worship anything.

Reconciliation

2 Cor.5:17-21

Peter Simms

Meaning of the Word

Reconciliation means “to change, exchange (especially of money); hence, of persons, to change from enmity to friendship, to reconcile”. (W.E.Vine). Reconciliation has to do with the putting away of an enmity, and the bringing together of the parties who were formerly hostile to one another. The Bible states plainly that sinners are ‘enemies’ of God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21-22; Rom. 1:30). We should not minimize the seriousness of these and similar passages. The world does not simply dislike God, but is directly opposed to Him and all that He stands for. It is this world that God through Christ has reconciled to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19) and in doing so did not imputed to them their trespasses. But rather, He, through Christ, (Col. 1:20-22), made it possible for enemies to be personally reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:20), by simply receiving the reconciliation He accomplished for them through Christ on the cross (Rom. 5:11).

What turned man against God, and brought about this attitude of rebellion has been clearly identified as sin. It has been taught by some, that God is partly responsible for the alienation that exists between Him and man. It is God they tell us that set up the barrier between them, by demanding obedience, and when failing to get it, sentencing the offender to death. Condemnation however is a natural reaction on God’s part to sin (Rom. 1:18). For, being infinitely holy, He will react to sin by condemning the one who commits it. God never changed towards the sinner. It was the sinner who put himself in a wrong relationship with an infinitely holy and immutable God. It is as a pot of boiling water that has absolutely no inherent evil or moral weakness in it. But if I put my hand into it, my hand will be scalded. Do I blame the boiling water for my wound? The boiling water never changed, it remained what it ever was, boiling water. And if I do not want to be scalded by it, I must not put myself in a wrong relationship to it. I must change my attitude toward it, not it towards me. For it is by nature, boiling water, and cannot act in any other way, and if it does, then it ceases to be boiling water. So God is infinitely holy and immutable, and if we sin against Him we will die (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). It is the sinner who must be reconciled to God, and not a mutual reconciling of one to the other, as if both were at fault.

It has often been pointed out that there is only one way to reconcile two opposing parties who have been alienated one from another, and that is to identify the cause of the alienation, and then effectively deal with it.

Reconciliation is a work of God on behalf of mankind (2 Cor. 5:19) “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.*” It is God who has taken the initiative. Being a realistic God, He knows that man will never, nor can he ever, deal with that which has alienated him from God: this is, first of all, his sin; secondly, the law; thirdly, the old man. God identifies these three things as the cause of the alienation and then, through His Son, effectively deals with them in such a way that His enemies can be reconciled to him if they so wish.

1. Sin. Heb. 9:26: The Lord Jesus in His incarnation became our representative before God and through the sacrifice of Himself put away sin. So sin has been effectively dealt with by Christ on the cross.

2. The law Col. 2:14-15; having canceled the written code (the law as an instrument of condemnation, or a legal note of indebtedness for which we were liable, but the demands of which we were unable to satisfy), with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us, he took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. (Christ by His death paid the debt, canceled the note, and took it forever out of the way) This written code, the Law, was like a handwritten “certificate of debt” (NASB). Since we were not able to keep the Law, it was like a bill of indebtedness, and being unable to pay the debt we were constituted criminals. But Jesus took away this criminal charge, this certificate of indebtedness, by His death. It is as if He were nailing it to the cross with Him, showing He paid the debt. He wiped the slate clean. As Krishna Ral put it: “Jesus for me a body takes, my guilt assumes, my fetter breaks, discharging all my dreadful debt; and can I then such love forget?” (TBKC).

“Cancelling the written code against us in decrees” The word cheirographon, found only here in the NT, is used of a handwritten bond of debt (cf. Philemon 19). The author of Ephesians explains the “decrees” as those of the Law (2:15). The indebtedness may be the necessity of paying the penalty for an infraction of the Law; death was the punishment for disobedience (Gen. 2:17; Deut. 30:19). (JBC)

3. The old man Rom. 6:6; 2 Cor. 5:17. “*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin the flesh*”. The old man must be displaced with a new one. (John 3:3)

The conclusion: 2 Cor. 5:20-21 The only thing needed now is for man to receive (Rom.5:11) the reconciliation that has been freely and effectively provided for him by God through the sacrifice of His Son.

The clear mandate for all who seek to see others reconciled to God, which is the great mission of the Church, is, “*we beseech you in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled unto God*” 2 Cor. 5:20. All this is based on the truth of 2 Cor. 5:21.

A Lesson on Leanness

(2 Samuel 13:4)

“*Why art thou, being the king’s son, lean from day to day?*” (2 Sam. 13:4). Jonadab did not just say, “Why art thou lean from day to day?” Rather, he asked Amnon, “*Why art thou, being the king’s son, lean from day to day?*” What makes the question important is that Amnon was the king’s son, and being such, there would surely be nothing withheld from him that would be for his benefit. As heir to the throne, the health of the king’s son would be of the greatest concern and would be zealously guarded lest anything should detract from his having a healthy, robust, vigorous body. His food would be especially prepared for him and suited to his particular needs in order that he could readily assimilate it and grow to maturity. It would be of the utmost folly for him to be fed with that which would cause him to become lean from day to day, to grow weaker and weaker, and to become unable to function in his kingly capacity when ultimately called upon to reign. This is only common sense and apparent to all of us.

Now, we are the sons, not just of a king, but of the King of kings. How is it with us? Are we becoming lean from day to day? The Apostle Peter has said that our heavenly Father has provided “*all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue*” (2 Pet. 1:3). He has saved us, sealed us with His Holy Spirit, given us His Holy Word, cast our lines in pleasant places, and has provided all other things needful for us. Why, then, should we become lean from day to day?

It must grieve our Lord to see any one of His children becoming lean from day to day, since there has been no lack of sustenance provided that we might assimilate it and develop normally. Though we are the King’s sons, are we neglecting the spiritual food He has provided for us in His Word? Is what we are feeding on leaving us weaker and weaker, so that ultimately we will be unable to stand and resist the adversary in the day of testing? Is it possible that we find the leeks, the onions, and the garlic of Egypt’s enslavement more palatable than the manna supplied by our Father in Heaven?

Or is it possible that we are wholly unconscious of the fact that we are becoming lean from day to day? Or, if we do not know it, does it not alarm us as to the consequence of continuing in such folly? Is there no way, are there no guide

lines, to enable us to measure the state of our spiritual health? Are we left alone to aimlessly drift in the dark after we have been saved? Or does the Word of God supply us with the answers? We believe it does.

Some Causes

The Scriptures tell us much about the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Which one gets the victory is up to us personally, for we have a choice in the matter. The Lord has said, “There will always be war with Amalek,” so the fight will never be over this side of glory. One of the clues to living a victorious Christian life is found in Galatians 5:16, where we read, “*walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.*” And Galatians 6:7-8 reminds us, “*Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*”.

Why, then, should we, being the King’s sons, be lean from day to day? Here are five reasons, any one of which might contribute to our becoming lean.

1. Neglecting prayer. The beginning of our backsliding can almost with certainty be traced to the time when we left off praying to God. Communion with Him, seeking renewed strength at the beginning of the day, is among the top priorities of our Christian life. We need to pray.

2. Neglecting to read God’s Word. The Word of God is that spiritual food needed by the “new man” in Christ in order that he may grow spiritually. Reading and meditating on the Scriptures are necessary for its assimilation so that we may grow to maturity.

3. Neglecting the assembly meetings. The words of Hebrews 10:25 exhort us as follows: “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*” The flock needs shepherding and feeding — the whole flock — not just a few of them. If we neglect the regular meetings of the local assembly we need not be surprised if we become spiritual paupers.

4. Neglecting to keep short accounts with God. In 1 John 1:9 we read, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” We should confess our failures to God as soon as we are conscious of them. Putting it off until later may well cause us to forget most of them, and then how can they be confessed? Nor can we confess them, as it were, in a bundle. Asking forgiveness for our sins and actually confessing (i.e., naming them) is a very different thing.

5. Mixing too freely with the world. In 1 John 2:15 we are exhorted, “*Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*” We are saved eternally, if we are saved at all. However, we can and will become just like those who are going down to the Pit if we do not periodically take stock to see how we stand with God and put things right when it is necessary to do so.

Some Things to Avoid

There are three things in our relation with the Holy Spirit that we are told to avoid. First, we are instructed, “*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*” (Eph. 4:30). Sin, where tolerated in a Christian’s life, destroys spirituality. The Spirit’s main work on our behalf is to guide and instruct us in the Word of God, but this ministry is interrupted when He is grieved. He leaves off doing this to plead with us to repent and confess our sins so that we might return to our first love. Where this is neglected, His instruction ceases for the time being and our spiritual progress is stunted as a result. Second, we are exhorted in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 to “*Quench not the Spirit.*” How can we quench the Spirit? When we say no to God, it is like throwing water on a fire. We suppress and subdue the Spirit in our unyieldedness to God’s known will. Third, we need to avoid limiting the Spirit’s ability to use us. This is perhaps the most common failing of all. We get an opportunity for some service for God, but we are too timid to step out. We thus limit the Spirit’s ability to use us and we end up doing nothing — and later regret it.

These are but a few things that could make us lean from day to day, and perhaps there are others you yourself know only too well. Beloved, there is an urgent need for revival in our midst; a humbling of ourselves as individuals and as assemblies; a soul-searching to find out why we are so lean, why, as it were, God is hiding His face. Each of us needs to ask himself the question, “Is there anything in my life that is causing God to withhold the blessings I so earnestly need and desire?”

Tell me, “Why art thou, being the King’s son, lean from day to day?”

The servant of Christ should always be a learner. There is much, very much, we do not know.

Assembly History

Eugene Badgley

The following article traces assembly testimony covering a period of about 140 years, dating back to gospel work in

Scotland in the mid 1800’s.

As important as it is to know **Biblical history**, so it is important to know our **assembly history**, “*the things most assuredly believed among us*” (Lu. 1:4). History is the evidence of how God has sought to maintain testimony throughout the centuries.

Much of the history of assembly testimony I am giving comes from various articles and books written on this subject. One source in particular is from a message that Mervin Paul gave a number of years ago that was recorded on audio cassette. The date is unknown. A couple from the assembly in Guelph Ontario, who recently went home to Heaven, presented the transcript to me a number of years ago.

Mr. Paul, said, “It was not until the 1st quarter of the 1800’s that we have any record of the revival of the New Testament assemblies which had disappeared from view to all intents and purpose in Emperor Constantine’s day”. That is not to say that there was no scriptural testimony prior to then, for God has always had a remnant testimony.

Before I present our history it is necessary to relate some information about another movement that originated in Dublin that began differently.

Early Assemblies

In 1825, in Dublin, a saved lawyer named Parnell, afterwards called Lord Congleton, became dissatisfied with the church systems of the day and met with another brother to break bread and to fellowship together over the Scriptures. A year later, in 1826, Edward Cronin came up to Dublin to study and, being a saved man, he sought to receive communion, as it was called, in a certain evangelical group of churches but they would not permit him to enjoy this privilege as a mere visitor and insisted that he join their church. Dissatisfied with the systems, he refused to join anyone. Later he went to another communion service and again was refused admittance; but one of the church officers, H. Hutchinson, sided with him and left the church in protest. Thereafter the two met in Hutchinson’s house. Eventually Lord Congleton and a few others learned of this interdenominational meeting of believers and were brought into fellowship. This is the beginning of such gatherings and the date was the winter of 1826/27. Other outstanding men would join this meeting, namely, Anthony Norris Groves, J. G. Bellett, J. V. Wigram and one outstanding man, John Nelson Darby. Mr. Norman Crawford said, “These men, separated from all ecclesiastical systems, came together in the name of the Lord Jesus, owning the presence and Sovereign action of the Holy Spirit in their midst. They were deeply impressed

with the truth of Matthew 18:20”.

J. N. Darby

At this point we should state some information concerning J. N. Darby. He was an Anglican clergyman, and was thrown from his horse and badly hurt one day while visiting his parishioners, and so was laid aside for some weeks. During his recovery, Darby discovered the truth that all believers regardless of their denominations were in the Church which is His Body. This precious truth and the theories he developed from it, became in time the central features of all his teachings.

When he was able to go about again, he began a search for some body of Christians who would give practical expression to his new ideas. He realized that there were many in the Anglican Church who were not ‘born again’, but who, nevertheless, were members of that church because they had joined it. What he now sought was some church where the only membership recognized would be membership of the church which is Christ’s body. He found none. Finally he learned about the gathering of believers in the Hutchinson house. This was what he was looking for, so in 1832, he left the Anglican Church and gathered with those believers. Their grounds of gathering were solely on the grounds of being in **the one body**. This has been called ever since ‘gathering on the ground of the one body’, **or, as it also has been referred to, as life not light being the only qualification.**

Darby began evangelizing at once and the Spirit of God worked through him, calling out believers to be gathered unto the name of Christ. Thus before long, Mr. Darby was recognized as the outstanding teacher in this new movement, now identified as distinct Christian assemblies and (later) designated as Plymouth Brethren. Meetings, as he called them, were established in Plymouth and London England, Switzerland, France and Germany and possibly one in Boston in the USA.

Controversy

In 1840 a controversy developed between Darby and Benjamin Newton, who was a leader in the very large meeting in Plymouth, England. This created a division in 1846. The outcome of this controversy was that Darby demanded that all other meetings should separate from the ‘heresy-defiled’ meeting at Plymouth. Those who held to Darby’s teaching were then designated exclusives. Those who did not follow Darby were termed ‘open brethren’ (according to his thinking). From 1846 these two groups went their respective ways.

Darby and the exclusive brethren believed the church was in ruins. He believed that since every dispensation failed,

therefore the visible church failed; just as only a remnant of Israel will be saved, so only a remnant of the church will be saved! So it was impossible, as far as he was concerned, to restore assemblies of God as they were in apostolic times. All that could be expected was a remnant testimony, a **‘meeting of believers’**, meeting together on the grounds of the one body or meeting together on the ground of their membership in the one true church.

Mr. Paul said, “The ‘open brethren’, after the separation, began a re-examination of the scriptures to see what actually was written; they discovered that the theory of gathering on the ground of the one body was found to be without a single sentence of scriptural authority. Hence, they recognized that instead, local assemblies were authorized to gather together on the ground of all the scriptures revealed respecting the local assembly. They saw there were distinctions between the church which is His Body and the local church”.

For the next 45 years there was great expansion to the gospel efforts of the Open Brethren until another division came into being called the ‘needed truth division’.

Gospel Work in Scotland

However, our heritage as assemblies in North America cannot be traced back to Dublin, or Plymouth, or to great men such as John Nelson Darby, but to a work that began in Scotland. It began differently. Men and woman were saved through gospel preaching; taught believer's baptism and gathering to His Name alone, outside of all denominations, to worship God by the Spirit and keep the Lord’s Supper according to the Scripture pattern.

Few parts of the world have been more favored with seasons of revival and times of visitation in awakening and conversion than Scotland. This for the most part was the outcome of the great revival of 1859. From 1859 to 1870 there was continuous blessing among the fishing villages and towns in Scotland. God worked in such power that in some places all secular employment was suspended for weeks and scarcely a fishing boat put out to sea. Meetings were held at least twice a day, and on everyone’s lips was the burning question, “What must I do to be saved?”. One of the songs of the revival was

What’s the news, what’s the news?
 the Lamb was slain on Calvary,
 that’s the news, that’s the news;
 T’was there He shed His precious blood;
 T’was there He bowed His sacred head,
 And now He’s risen from the dead;
 that’s the news, that’s the news.

(to be continued)