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Apostolic Writing

W. E. Roger

It has sometimes been supposed that, while the utterances of the Lord Jesus are authoritative and binding on His people, those of the Apostle Paul are not. His are considered to be the mere expression of the ideas which at times he sought to impose upon the believers. This implication would have no weight with any who regard the whole of the Bible as the Word of God, which indeed it is, but it is liable to unsettle the minds of others who are not well founded in the faith.

The purpose of this paper is not to show the validity of Paul's apostleship. It is, rather, to remind the reader that Paul was aware of the authority of his writings; and that, consequently, he enjoined obedience to them on the part of the saints. It is admitted that this was not a demand for obedience accompanied with a warning of penalties in the event of disobedience, that would have been reverting to the Mosaic spirit. None the less, while disobedience to the commandments written by Paul may not entail any earthly consequences, it will inevitably entail loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Furthermore, it might also result in the disciplinary dealings of God even here and now.

Commandments of Paul

In First Corinthians chapters 12 to 14, Paul sets out those principles and practices which should characterize the local assembly. He knew that carnal believers were likely to affirm that, for example, the restrictive commands as to women were the product of his alleged natural antipathy to them, possibly the result of the thoughts of an embittered bachelor.

He knew also that the restrictive rules as to public speaking on the part of the men would grate on the ears of the carnally and unduly active members of the Corinthian church. He was well aware that there was even in his day, as has proved to be the

case in our own time, the liability of his writings being ignored or misconstrued, or even repudiated. For that reason he said, "*If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord*" (R.V.). Note those important words, "of the Lord"; Paul was only His mouthpiece. Non-compliance with the principles stated in these chapters would be disobedience to the Lord's own words, a much more serious matter than disobedience to an apostle.

The authority of Paul was exercised not only in regard to churches, but also in regard to individuals. Consider Acts 17:15 and Colossians 4:10. In the prosecution of Paul's missionary efforts Silas and Timothy worked under him and were duty-bound to do as he required. This surely is the force of the word "commandment." It does not mean that Paul rode roughshod over the private convictions of fellow-saints, especially fellow-workers, for as in the case of Apollos, he respected his private opinion and was ready to explain to the Corinthians that, although he, Paul, would have liked had Apollos gone to them, his mind at that time was not to do so. In the development of Paul's missionary program, it was essential that his fellow-workers should submit to his leadership.

The Colossian saints in all likelihood knew about the dispute concerning John Mark that had arisen between Barnabas and Paul. Time, nevertheless, had wrought changes in Paul's judgment. Hence he sent a "commandment" about Mark to the believers at Colosse, possibly through Ephras. They were duty-bound, therefore, to receive him and not to allow any past failures to prejudice their welcoming him at that time.

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Timothy, in like manner, was to regard Paul's first letter to him as "this commandment" (6:14) which he was to keep without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Application to us Today

Now, what applies to these persons who have long since gone to their rest, applies to us in our own day and generation. Paul's writings are binding on all God's people everywhere now as much as then. Prompted by a spirit of love and devotion to our Lord, we should gladly obey what Paul wrote seeing that he was not the author but only the transmitter of the Lord's commandment.

Paul also uses another and almost synonymous word, which in the King James Version is translated "command." In the cases cited before, the word was "*entole*." In this case the word is "*parangellia*." We might almost translate it for the purpose of differentiation as "injunction." In its verbal form it is used of God, the Lord Jesus, the Apostle Peter, the Sanhedrin, the Philippian magistrates, etc. Paul uses it when speaking to the spirit of divination that possessed the damsel. He said, "*I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her*" (Acts 16:18). Please note, "*It came out that very hour*." Even that wicked demon could not resist the Apostle's authoritative command.

So, too, Paul speaks with authority to those that are married, showing by this very phrase itself that he was speaking with divine authority (1 Cor. 7:10). He affirms the permanence of the marriage tie; for the Lord had before affirmed, "*What God hath joined together let no man put asunder*." He employed the same word in connection with the Lord's supper. His introductory words in this matter are, "*But in giving you this charge*" (1 Cor. 11:17 R.V.). The word "charge" is the same as the one translated in First Corinthians 7:10 as "command." Paul's apostolic authority covered an extensive field. In addition to the above, it had to do with the behavior of believers who were required by him to be quiet, to do their own business, to work with their own hands, and to walk honorably in the sight of the ungodly who observed them so that they might develop for themselves a healthy independence of all men, although not independent of God (1 Thess. 4:11-12). He had such confidence in the Thessalonians that he was sure they were both doing and would continue to do the things he commanded (2 Thess. 3:4).

Obedience to the word of the Lord sometimes brings us into circumstances that are not pleasing to the flesh and which, naturally, we would avoid. Notwithstanding, faithfulness has a first claim upon us, and we should not evade it in order to secure temporary ease. If a brother is walking disorderly and not according to the tradition handed down by Paul, he

commanded the saints in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they should withdraw from such a one. There could be no doubt as to what was orderly behavior, for they had seen it exemplified in the conduct of Paul who wrought with labor and travail night and day to be independent of the Thessalonian converts, and to not hinder the work of God in their souls. Indeed, when he was with them he had commanded that if any man would not work neither should he eat. That rule was still to be observed, painful as it might be. Therefore, Paul commanded them that were such that with quietness they work and eat their own bread, not sponging on the kindness of others. If they failed to do this, the rest of the saints were commanded to withdraw from them so that they might be ashamed.

That the force of this word "command," or "charge," or "injunction" has not been overpressed is clear in that verse 14 of this chapter states: "*If any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man*." Note the word "obeyeth." We are not entitled to exercise our own private wish, and to comply or refuse if we so desire.

The reader of this paper should refer to 1 Thess. 4:2 and note its context, for Paul's authoritative command extends also to matters of personal and marital purity. He should also consider 1 Tim. 1:3-5; 4:11; 5:7; 5:18; 6:13-17. He should ponder these references, considering each one quietly and thoughtfully before finishing reading this paper. They will give him an idea of the range of Paul's apostolic authority.

A perusal of 2 Cor. 7:15; 10:6; and Phil. 2:12 will also prove profitable. In these passages the verb "obey" and the noun "obedience" occur. The noun is also found in Phil. 21. Paul required the saints corporately and individually to obey him, not because of personal self-importance or because he would impose his will on others, but because he was deeply aware of the unique position he held under the Lord. He never forgot the vision on the Damascus road to which he himself had not been disobedient.

Pursuant to that vision, and in the execution of the charge then given to him, he required that fellow-workers and fellow-saints obey the communications which he handed to them from the Lord.

There is no doubt whatsoever that, were this more understood and heeded there would be less diversity of judgment in respect of many matters. It seems now-a-days that saints are far more prone to test things by the rule of expediency than by what is written. Some, indeed, affirm that the writings of Paul were designed merely to meet the temporary and local circumstances of his day, failing to recognize that Paul's writings have force at all times, and throughout

all generations while the churches are on earth. Peter indeed ranks them with “other Scriptures,” so that he recognized their inspiration and claim to obedience.

It is amazing what an extensive territory Paul covers! He deals with the domestic relationship of parents and children, the commercial relationship of master and servants, and the marital relationship of male and female, husband and wife. He discusses marital difficulties; he deals with church government and order, with personal manners and dress, with foods and special days, and many other things. Paul speaks with authority, but not in the same sense as did the Lord Jesus. The Lord spoke with authority, not as a commentator but as an originator; Paul, not as an originator but as a communicator.

As one moves about here and there, signs are not wanting that Paul’s injunctions are either being ignored or willfully disobeyed. Maybe it would be more charitable to suggest that younger believers are unaware of what he has written. It also may be that they have been ill-instructed touching his letters because of a failure to understand the power which his apostleship possesses.

Once the fact is grasped that obedience to what Paul writes is obedience to the commandment of the Lord who died for us and rose again, we shall be the more ready not to overlook one item but to seek help from God to comply with all. We must not allow modern customs to mislead us. Live fish go upstream which is to go the contrary way to those that are dead.

**“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness,
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness”
Psalm 17:15**

**And shall I really see thee, glorious Lord
Who though unseen, is worshiped, loved, adored?
What joy and rapture fills my longing heart,
To think that I shall see Thee as Thou art:
Shall stand before Thee-perfect, spotless, whole
Fruit of thy suffering, travail of thy soul,
O joy of joys, O ecstasy of bliss,
What thought can measure such a thought as this?**

Order in God’s House

1 Timothy 6:13-21

Joel Portman

As Paul draws this epistle to a close, he has three more

injunctions to give to his younger son in the faith. Some have commented that the apostle’s tone displays more solemnity as he approaches the end of the epistle. The teaching that he has given to Timothy couldn’t have been clearer, but now to summarize, he speaks to him about

1. Continuation in Testimony vv13-16

2. Confidence of the Rich vv17-19

3. Carefulness regarding the Truth vv20-21

1. Continuation in Testimony vv13-16

Paul’s great concern has been to reinforce in Timothy’s mind the great principles of the faith and his responsibility to maintain them in his service for God after Paul is gone. For this purpose, he gives him a strong, urgent charge once again so that he might be stimulated and continue to preserve and propagate the truth that had been entrusted to him. We have a similar responsibility in our day, and we must be exercised to respond as he, not only as men see us but with God and Christ witnessing our service.

Timothy had been faithful when Paul’s influence was felt, but this command, or order, is to be kept (guarded, held) in his absence. Regardless of men, it is “*in the sight of God ... and before Christ Jesus.*” What greater witnesses could one have to give incentive to faithful service in our day? It is before God, the Giver and Sustainer of life, He who gave him life and would yet sustain his life in service even at all costs. Even if it resulted in his death for Christ, God is the Quickener of life. Christ Jesus and His faithful witness before Pilate is in view as an example, reminding him of His testimony to the truth concerning Himself even when the cross and its suffering was imminent. No greater incentive for his faithfulness could Timothy receive!

We likewise stand and serve in view of our responsibility toward the God who gave us life and who sustains it, as well as before our Lord Jesus Christ, now being responsible to bear testimony for Him and uphold the truth in His absence. It is so easy to abandon principles and compromise practices, especially when there is a cost connected with such faithfulness, but we must keep in our minds the coming moment when we will give account before Him who suffered on our behalf and who has gone before. We would not want to be “*ashamed before him at his coming.*” (1 John 2:28).

This charge (command, urgent appeal) has reference to the tenets of the faith, the foundational doctrines that maintain and direct every aspect of our practices. He (and we) are to keep (guard, preserve) them with all purity (“without spot” refers to Timothy life and character, not the charge) and without possibility of reproach for unfaithfulness in the discharge of this responsibility. Preservation of truth de-

depends on faithful believers who recognize the solemn importance of what has been passed on to them, and their essential part to pass it on to succeeding generations (2 Tim. 1:13-14). May we be found faithful to the truth as Timothy was in his day! This charge is with the future manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ in view, referring to His coming in glory, not the rapture. It is in view of that public display of the saints in glory with Christ, when their faithful service during their Lord's absence will be clearly apparent when He is seen in His revealed glory before all.

It is God, who will act to display that glorious Person in His own time, a time pre-determined in His program and which will be manifested according to His will. He (God) is that blessed (worthy of praise for what He is in Himself) and only (unique and without compare) Potentate, or absolute ruler, King over all kings and Lord over all who are reckoned as lords over men. He is above all, and He will act to display the glory of Christ to a wondering world in His own time when He determines it in His will.

He alone "*hath immortality,*" which means more than simply 'not dying.' He is not capable of nor can He die. He has life in Himself and possesses every attribute of deity, in that He dwells in such brilliant light that no man can come near to, and being essential spirit, He cannot be seen by any man. He is the One who has every right to all honor and everlasting power, and as such, He is worthy of the praise and service of our hearts and lives today.

2. Confidence of the Rich vv17-19

Without question, there were believers in Timothy's day who were rich, as there always will be. They aren't condemned for being rich, nor should they be. If they gained their wealth by legitimate and honest means, they have no reason to be censured. However, there are pitfalls that they must be careful to avoid, traps that a poor believer would not encounter. Those snares include,

Their Attitude toward others: Paul admonishes, through Timothy, that the rich should not have a proud attitude nor "look down" on others who are not rich. It seems that the rich in Corinth were showing disdain for their poorer brethren in the meals that they shared (1 Cor. 11:21-22), an attitude that is destructive to Christian fellowship. To think loftily of self because of material wealth is characteristic of the ungodly of the world and should never characterize a believer toward others. They must seek to cultivate humility of spirit and recognize that possession of material goods is not an indication of God's blessing, nor an expression of spirituality.

Their Confidence in the Riches: Another danger that the rich must avoid is to put their trust in riches, which are

always uncertain and undependable. Many in history who have been rich one day were reduced to poverty the next. James has much to say about riches, material possessions, and rich men (James 1:10, 2:1-9, 4:1-3, 5:1-6), usually in a negative sense. We learn in Proverbs 23:5, "*Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.*" Paul reminds Timothy, and the saints, that we have a much more certain object to trust, and that is a faithful and infinitely rich God, who bestows upon us all things needed to enjoy. If riches are trusted, then they become the idol in one's life that occupies the place that God should have.

Their Activity in view of the Future: Riches have been entrusted to us from God, since all that we possess actually belongs to Him. He allows us to have them and we are only stewards of the things that He has entrusted to us. Thus, we are responsible to use those riches under His direction, seeking how He wants them to be used to wisely share with others and to further His work through that exercise. If this is the case, then riches will not be the object but only the means used to accomplish God's will, and one is thus preserved from a wrong attitude or a wrong confidence. The proper use of the riches will result in full proof of one's possession of eternal life as well as to reap an eternal reward from the hand of our blessed Lord, the One who "... *though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich..*" (2 Cor. 8:9).

3. Carefulness regarding the Truth vv20-21

Paul's final exhortation to Timothy has to do once again with the trust, or deposit that he had received. That trust involved his faithfulness to the truth that he had learned from faithful men (2 Tim. 3:14) through the Holy Scriptures, and his responsible service in Paul's absence. In order to do so, he would need to avoid the empty and fruitless voices of ungodly men who would speak the contrary from the supposed possession of higher knowledge, as men called it. Paul says that those who oppose the truth of the Scripture are only speaking a "false" knowledge that is not based on the reality of God's Word. We are surrounded by this kind of thinking and the talk that results from it, not only in the world in general but also from seminaries and pulpits that are, in some cases, occupied by men who are ungodly and who do not know the truth. Because of their influential position and possession of degrees, they can sway the thinking of many men and even of genuine believers. We need to guard ourselves from such by knowing the truth of God's Word and manifesting its reality in our lives.

The result of this empty and unfruitful talk is that some, becoming occupied with it, have turned away from the truth. We learn that an abandonment of truth opens the way for error to enter unhindered, and when there is error in

doctrine, evil practices will inevitably follow. May the Lord preserve each of His people in the truth, and, as Paul closes, by means of His grace, which alone supplies the need for our feeble exercise to honor our Lord.

Do you want to be contemporary? To be contemporary is to be dated. Popular music is constantly changing. The songs of 50 years ago are not popular today. Advertising is driven by change. Clothing styles change so people will buy a new wardrobe. And popular morals have changed vastly from fifty years ago. But the church is not called to change. It is called to be stable and steady, a rock in a sea of change. The Bible does not change. God's instructions for the churches have not changed. His moral absolutes have not changed. Sin is still sin. Beware of being swept along by contemporary ideas. Cling to God's Word for stability in your life.

Donald Norbie in Choice Gleanings, July 13, 2010

Helps from Hebrews

J. G. Good

This letter was written to deliver from the old order of things, i.e., Judaism, and by virtue of the subject matter of the epistle, prevent a return thereto. The writer contrasts all that pertained to the old order, with the excelling glory of the Son of God, the substance of every shadow, the antitype of every type, the complete and final revelation of God. Again, this One is the Creator, Upholder, Sin Purger, Serpent Crusher, living in the power of an endless life with a priesthood which is intransmissible, of this One and no other can it be said, "*Thou art a Priest for ever*" (Heb. 7:1).

The Hebrew believers were in the crucible of suffering, "*a fight of afflictions*" (10:32), they "*took joyfully the spoiling of your goods*" (10:34). The struggle to renounce that which was God-given, the persecution which would follow such a decision is momentous. The writer in circumstances such as these, would remind them that the loss incurred by them as a result of embracing the rejected Lord Jesus Christ, was temporary; in contrast, the blessings gained were eternal and spiritual. "*We have a great High Priest*" (4:14), "*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul*" (6:19), and "*Ye have in heaven*" (10:34).

To encourage to this goal, the writer, with pathos and feeling, continually exhorts, "*Let us,*" "*also fear*" (4:1), "*hold fast*" (4:14), "*draw near*" (4:16), "*go on*" (6:1), "*draw near*" (10:22), "*hold fast*" (10:23), "*consider*" (10:24), "*lay aside*" (12:1), "*have grace*" (13:13), "*offer*" (13:15), "*go forth*" (13:13).

Three of the foregoing exhortations form the basis of this

present meditation:

1. Let us go ON to Know Him. Ch. 6:1.

The Hebrews had failed to make progress in Divine things, they were spiritual dwarfs, the "full growth" carries the thought of spiritual maturity, this is not in any way connected with age, but with spiritual experience. The Christian life is not static and stationary, but positive and progressive. The words of Paul in Phil. 3:12, "*I press on*" corroborate this thought of experimental knowledge being necessary to spiritual growth. There is a grave danger of thinking that the experience of being saved is sufficient, and the sole requirement of the child of God. The Word of God teaches the opposite, the receiving of God's salvation is only the beginning, and unless we know in reality a "*daily salvation*" (7:25), growing in grace will be a distinct impossibility. There can be no appetite for the Word of God unless there is a laying aside, of those things which retard spiritual growth (1 Pet. 2:1). It is the desire of our God that by growing we shall reach maturity, "*Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*" (Eph. 4:13, Hosea 6:3). There were three things that marked Samuel, the mantle of prophecy, the ephod of priesthood, and the coat of progress. Are we going on to know the Lord, let us 'sound,' (Acts 27:28), and see if a change of course is required to bring us to the desired haven. Of this there can be no doubt that spiritual growth is the forerunner of spiritual prosperity (Psalm 144:12-15).

2. Let us go IN to Enjoy Him. Ch. 10:22.

What a truth is here emphasized, the free way of access in to the Holiest of All, the innermost shrine of God's abiding presence. The boldness of our entrance being the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the basis of this glorious fact, that the veil has been rent in the midst, (Luke 23:45), and from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51), so that it has been removed, the exhortation is given, "*Let us draw near.*" That veil typified the humanity of the Lord Jesus, so that through Him we might go in!

We thank Thee for the precious blood,
Which purged our sins and brought us nigh,
All cleansed and sanctified to God,
Thy Holy Name to magnify.

We have three words used in this chapter, used in connection with the worshipers, worthy of note in the second verse, "*once purged*" i.e., cleansed, (v10), "*sanctified,*" i.e., separated to God, and in v14, "*perfected*" i.e., to perpetuity, (Newberry), once for all, the thought of finality, a finished fitness for the presence of God, not for a particular period of time, but FOREVER. This grand truth of the ever-open way into the presence of God, is enjoyed so little! Why? The reality of heavenly things, and the experimental knowl-

edge of God's presence with us, will only be our portion in the measure that we "draw near." Is the Lord Jesus Christ, the living bright reality. He is prepared to be, to each one of us? This is a glorious possibility, if we are prepared to draw near into the peace of His presence to enjoy Him!

3. Let us go OUT-to be With Him. Ch. 13:13.

"Let us go forth unto Him," the magnetic Person of Christ. How suggestive are the words recorded by Mark in the first chapter of his Gospel, and verse forty-five, "and they came to Him from every quarter." The mal-contents of the nation of Israel went to the cave of Adullam, (1 Sam. 22:1). Why? David was there! Have we gone forth unto HIM? The 'camp' mentioned here refers to Judaism with all its religion, we must remember that the temple was still functioning when this epistle was written. The 'camp' today would indicate a place, where the Lordship of Christ is denied, and the Word of God has not its rightful place. Christendom at large would fall into this category! The writer uses strong language, as if in a final appeal, "we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle," (v10). The Levitical priesthood has no part in the Cross Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, to partake of the blessings of the sin offering of Calvary, there must be a forsaking of the camp of Judaism, these indeed were solemn words to the Hebrew, and reproach of necessity would follow such a step.

Lord, it belongs not to my care
Whether I die or live;
To love and serve Thee is my share,
And this Thy grace must give.

If Life be long, I will be glad,
That I may long obey;
If short, yet why should I be sad
To soar to endless day?

Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before;
He that into God's kingdom comes,
Must enter by this door.

Come, Lord, when grace hath made me meet
Thy blessed face to see;
For if Thy work on earth be sweet,
What will Thy glory be?

Then shall I end my sad complaints
And weary sinful days,
And join with the triumphant saints
Who sing Jehovah's praise.

My knowledge of that life is small;
The eye of faith is dim:
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.

Richard Baxter

The sin offering of Lev. 6:30 reminds us that when the blood was brought into the Holy Place by the High Priest, the flesh was not eaten, but burned without the camp. The place of separation and rejection is the portion of all who would be identified with the One who suffered without the gate. Let us go forth UNTO HIM!

The Scholar In God's School

T. E. Wilson
Isaiah 50

In this chapter Isaiah pictures the Lord Jesus as the Scholar with the opened ear, and then he discusses the four lessons the Lord had learned. The Man Christ Jesus was awakened every morning by His Teacher to receive the instruction of His Father God.

The subject at the beginning of the chapter is the nation of Israel, Israel that as the wife of Jehovah had drifted away from God into spiritual adultery. Because of their dreadful national declension, when the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and when later as an adult He appeared among His own people, they received Him not. Prophetically the Lord says concerning this, "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?" (to receive Him) "When I called, was there none to answer?" "Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering." Here is Deity; God incarnate in perfect manhood!

Although the One born in Bethlehem is God's holy well-beloved Son, He declares, "The Lord hath given Me the tongue of the learned, ... He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." How could it be that the Lord Jesus was a scholar in the school of God? The Word of God makes it absolutely plain that while, on the one hand, He was the Son of God, on the other He was a helpless babe in the arms of Mary. As the Son of God, He was Omniscient, and this word means to possess full and complete knowledge, but as the dependent Man, there were lessons He had to learn by experience. These He learned in order to be a merciful and faithful High Priest able to succor the tempted. Let us now consider the lessons learned by the Lord Jesus:

The Lesson Of Sympathy

The Lord Jesus learned to "know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (v4). It is impossible to properly sympathize with another person unless you have had some experience. The Lord Jesus in order that He might be

our present High Priest had to learn to sympathize with man in everything. He was hungry, thirsty, and He shed tears on at least three occasions. Sympathy means to suffer together, and comes from a word that means suffering. A young couple serving the Lord on the mission field lost their only child. Many of their friends tried to console them, but only one could really comfort; she, a young mother had likewise lost her baby. She put her arms around the sorrowing mother, and said, "I know just how you feel." The two young mothers then wept together, the one in grief, the other in sympathy. There is One in the glory Who knows exactly how we feel and can sympathize with us.

The Lesson Of Silent Suffering

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. 53:7). These were not the sufferings of the cross, but the sufferings immediately prior to the cross. Before He went to Calvary, the sweat fell down to the ground in Gethsemane, and He had the humiliation of being betrayed by one of His own disciples. On the way to the cross His hands were bound, and the Roman lash tore into His flesh; yet, He never uttered a word. He suffered silently, leaving us an example, *"that ye should follow His steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21).

The Lesson Of Self- Restraint Under False Accusation

The leaders of Israel judged the kind works of Jesus as being wrought by the power of the devil, and they called Him a blasphemer. Some of God's servants have been called upon to pass through similar experiences. Job's friends called him a liar and a hypocrite, and in this they were absolutely wrong. They also said that he was suffering because of some secret sin in his life, and that God was dealing with him because of this. We should not make hurried conclusions or say unkind things against God's beloved people. What did the Lord Jesus do? *"When He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously"* (1 Pet. 2:23). The saints of God might well raise the challenge, *"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth"* (Rom. 8:33). Jesus could say, *"He is near that justifieth Me."* We can likewise leave our case in God's hands and He will eventually vindicate the right.

The Lesson Of Confidence In The Lord

All of God's people have difficult experiences which they cannot understand; for all such we have the word of encouragement, *"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God"* (Isa. 50:10).

A small deaf and dumb boy in a French school was asked by a visitor, "Who made you?" The little fellow wrote on the blackboard, "God." The visitor then enquired, "How do you hope to get to Heaven?" The boy answered by writing, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son." The visitor then submitted his last question, "If God made you, and the blood of Christ cleanses you, why did God make you the way you are?" The reply was forthright and clear, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

Our blessed Lord, from the darkness of the cross cried, *"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"* He was forsaken that we might trust in the Name of our Lord, and stay upon our God.

The Wonderful Book

**WHENCE but from heaven, could man unskilled in arts,
In different ages, born in different parts,
Weave such agreeing truths. Or how, or why,
Should all agree to cheat us with a lie?
Unmasked their pains, unwelcome their advice,
Starving, their gains, and martyrdom their price.**

Spiritual Growth

Jim Walmsley

In the beginning (Acts 2), the apostolic doctrine was that which formed the fellowship that included all those who were saved by grace without the works of the law.

The apostolic writings reveal that there always was opposition to those doctrines. *"... who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth,"* (Gal. 3:1). *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you..."* (2 Pet. 2:1). *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."* (Acts 20:29-30). *"For there are certain men crept in unawares . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Jude 4).

It wouldn't be easy for false brethren to infiltrate every and all assemblies gathered to the Name of the Lord. But, it isn't difficult to infiltrate the institutional works such as publishing houses, schools, missionary societies, etc. They work in the long term by way of changes that are impercep-

tible to the large majority of those, even who are genuine. The simple and direct form that these employ to annul the apostolic teaching at local levels is by means of commentaries that say things like, “this was written for those times, but now there is more light ... now the people are educated ... now everything has changed, etc...”

The apostle John, probably the last of the apostles to live, took note of the changes that were being introduced during his lifetime. He begins his first epistle by speaking of different confessions and making a clear distinction between those who are false, those that are not of the Lord, and the genuine believers.

The message that clears up every case is simple: --*“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”* (1 John 1:5). Wherever there is the rejection of the clear teaching of the Scriptures or a small mixture of error with the truth, that teaching is not of God.

The application of this norm revealed that some were lying and *“were not practicing the truth”* (1 John 1:6). Others were deceived and *“the truth wasn’t in them”* (1 John 1:8). Others were making God a liar (1 John 1:10). Those that loved the world didn’t know the love of the Father, (1 John 2:15). Many antichrists had gone out, --because if they had been of us, *“they would, no doubt, have continued with us”* (1 John 2:19).

He also says, *“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you,”* (1 John 2:26), because, living in the midst of deceivers and liars, the Holy Spirit imparted discernment to the genuine children of God. The apostle affirms of these, *“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”* (1 John 4:6). In these times when many, with lightness, forsake the Word of God, the genuine child of God trembles before the Word (Isa. 66:5), and with joy, submits himself to its teachings, without finding it grievous to himself. (1 John 5:3).

When the apostle says, *“it is a last time,”* (2:18), he indicates that every manifestation of opposition to the apostolic doctrine was present, and that it would continue thus until the end. In these two thousand years, no form of opposition to the apostolic doctrine has appeared that wasn’t known by the apostles; so that the apostolic teaching with respect to error in its different presentations is clear. The Word of God proves to be a sufficient guide to direct the believer, even though he walks amidst deceivers and liars.

The message to Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-21), describes the religious conditions of our times. In the first place, the church of Laodicea is the only one of the seven that com-

ments on its own condition and praises itself. The picture changes dramatically when the Lord comments on its true condition. The church disseminated propaganda favorable to itself, beginning with the assertion, *“I am rich . . . and have need of nothing.”* Among other things, it didn’t feel any necessity of the presence of the Lord, who was outside the door (3:20).

The picture cannot be more exact, then, as it deals with a Christianity without Christ, exactly that which exists in our days. Many speak of their capabilities, with lukewarm indifference and accepting everything less than the truth! Churches filled, in which they do not distinguish the sexes, where the attire and clothing appropriate to the woman is not required nor seen, where the cutting of her hair is more than short, it is unisex, almost equal for everyone, and where it is a rare thing to see a woman with her head covered. Churches where the meeting for worship has been converted into an interlude of instrumental music and consequently, the Lord’s Supper isn’t known.

There are those who promote groups that cover over these characteristics and, in a deceptive form, add the name “assembly.” Moreover, they associate the superficial symbol of the cross with their meeting place and call the building a “church.” An older lady in Venezuela, recently saved, was visited by a “pastor.” Having heard that she was a believer, he took the opportunity to inform her that he was building a church. It happened that the woman knew more of the Bible than he, and she responded, “We are the church, and what you are going to do doesn’t interest me.”

The majority of some magazines include photos of women missionaries who are heavily adorned and “made up.” They are deceived, thinking that beauty is bought in a beauty shop. Obviously they are persons that don’t put any importance on the Biblical beauty; to the contrary, there is not one woman in all the Bible that is recommended for her physical beauty. Of the woman most praised in Prov. 31:29-30, it says, *“Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.”* With this, the teaching of Peter is in agreement: *“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”* (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

All the characteristics of the apostasy were present in the days of the apostles, but how much more now! 2 Thessalonians 2:3 deals with the full unfolding of the apostasy when the nations of the west will abandon the Word of God and openly walk so that the man of sin will be exalted. The

moral and spiritual degeneration of the present time are preparing all for his coming and are omens of worse things that will not wait to present themselves.

Before the public apostasy of that time comes, the Lord will have fulfilled His promise and taken to Himself His people that He bought with His own blood, (2 Thess. 2:1-2). Until He comes, the Lord will guard and strengthen His people, so that everyone of His can say, *"the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me,"* (Heb. 13:6).

(to be continued)

O Lord, Thy fingers fashioned Calvary's hill;
Those skull-like stones were surely Thine intent.
Well did'st Thou know, Thy Body dead and still
Would crown its slopes and ev'ry rock be rent.

O Lord, 'twas in Thy mind, the tree was born,
With living strength to point men up to Thee.
Yet did'st Thou know, Thy members strained and torn
Would hang from lifeless wood, and lifeless be.

O Lord, 'twas Thou, who molded common dust;
Breathed forth Thy life into this house of clay.
Yet did'st Thou know mankind, corrupted, must
Thine own pure vessel mar and cast away.

O Lord, my parts were written with Thy pen,
Ere I was formed within my mother's womb.
Lord of my life, 'twas I who slew Thee then,
My sin and curse inscribed, which sealed Thy tomb.

Enough O Lord! Thy conquest is complete.
Thy love foreknew yet bore the shame for me.
Mine outpoured soul shall lave Thy piercéed feet;
Thy great forgiveness bind my soul to Thee.

*Geoffrey Bull, From the days of solitude in
Chungking, while confined there by the
Chinese Communist Army in spring 1951*

Man's Total Depravity

Peter Simms

This is a truth that has fallen upon hard times. It's true that the first three chapters of Romans are not very pleasant reading, for it is describing how sin has left the human race morally sick and depraved before a holy God (Isa. 1:5-6). In this repulsive state he is condemned, the verdict being death both spiritual and physical. (Rom. 5:12; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1).

The catastrophic and far reaching results of sin as set forth

in these chapters must be understood before an appreciation of the love of God and His grace displayed in the gospel can be appreciated. When dealing with sin and sinners, we must start here with the spiritual state in which God sees him. It is much more plausible to the natural mind to tell the sinner how much God loves him, rather than to upset his conscience by telling him how he stands morally and spiritually before God, I hope, with the Lord's help, to show in this article that depravity is the correct place to start. I must have a proper understanding of man's true spiritual condition before God, before telling him of God's love and remedy for his sin. Romans 1-3 sets the stage for all that the apostle later taught relative to the great truths of the gospel. I do not diminish the value of preaching the love of God to the unsaved (John 3:16). However for the ungodly to appreciate that love, they must first understand what it is that God is loving. Anyone can love a beautiful bouquet of roses, but it takes a particular kind of person to love a bouquet of stink weed. Rom. 3:12 says *"they are together become unprofitable or worthless"*; this is a quote from Ps. 14:3; Ps. 53:3; cp Job 15:16. Here we are told that the unregenerate man, alienated from the life of God, (Eph. 4:18) stands before Him in a state of moral putrefaction and corruption. (See William Newel on his Roman epistle page 82, and *What the Bible Teaches* on the Roman epistle page 61, v12. To this worthless human race God declares His love, and displays it in the giving of His Son as a sacrifice for our sins (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The above remarks are, of course, for the mind of the believer first. Then with this understanding we can go, using sanctified tact, to seek to make the sinner understand how desperate and precarious his condition is before a holy God. The apostle used great skill in his exposition of the gospel in his letter to the Romans. But we must remember, he started with God's condemnation of sin (Rom. 3:19), and not the love of God (Rom. 5:8). We cannot do better than follow his example. The lessons taught by our Lord in Matt. 13:3-8, 18-23 concerning the sower are of vital importance in this context. The love of God will not stir up a man's conscience about his sin and guilt. Unpleasant as it may be for us to accept, depravity does play an essential part in the preaching of the gospel. And those who leave it out do a great injustice to the gospel, and are not being faithful as stewards of the glorious message, nor to the sinner. It is our responsibility, as stewards of the gospel, to know the message thoroughly, and then teach its great fundamental truths. As a young preacher, I was told by my older colleagues to preach **"man's ruin and God's remedy"**; many years have come and gone since then, and I see no reason to change my mind on their advice. The awesome wonder of God's love and grace finds its superlative glory in this very truth, **depravity**. That God could love such totally depraved humans as we demands our deepest re-

sponse in wonder and worship. Samuel Davies wrote

Great God of wonders!
 All Thy ways display Thine attributes divine;
 But the bright glories of Thy grace
 Above Thy other wonders shine:
 Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
 Or who has grace so rich and free?

John expresses it well in his remarks in 1 John 3:1.

Depravity Viewed Negatively: *What it has not done.*

1. Not left man destitute of a conscience (John 8:9).
2. Not left man unable to do good (Mark 10:21).
3. Not left every individual guilty of every form of sin (Rom. 2:14).
4. Not left man without a free will (John 5:39-40).

Depravity does not mean that all men are as bad as they can or could be, nor that they have not in their natural condition, certain good qualities, nor that they may not have virtues in a limited sense. (Isa. 64:6; Acts 10:22; Titus 3:5).

Depravity Viewed Positively: *What it has done.*

1. Left man void of the life of God (Eph. 4:18)
2. Left man void of the love of God (John 5:42).
3. Left man as a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God (2 Tim. 3:4).
4. Left man as a hater of God (Rom. 1:30).

Depravity does mean that sin affects the whole man. This is set forth in Romans three where seven members of the body are mentioned, and all contribute to his total depravity, including his throat, tongue, lips, mouth, feet, mind, eyes.

The world stands guilty before God on fourteen charges (Rom. 3:10-18).

In vv12-13 God Is The Judge

Vv10-12 Depraved in character: (What he is).

V10 *"As it is written"* It is God's verdict and no man may challenge it effectively.

"There is none righteous, no, not one" (Ps. 14:1-3; Ps 53:3)

V11 *"There is none that understandeth"* (1 Cor.2:14).

"there is none that seeketh after God" (or seeks out God) Isa. 53:6. It is because he hates God (Rom. 1:30), and any feelings that he might have toward God are solely the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart (John 16:8-11).

V12 *"They are all gone out of the way,"* (Isa.53:6, they have abandoned the laws of God).

"They are together become unprofitable"; become useless or worthless (NIV, used only here in the NT) Used by the Greeks to describe rotten fruit (William Newell on Romans; F E Stallen, *What the Bible Teaches*). It is the same as being

lost in Luke 19:10. As long as an object is lost, it's useless till found.

"There is none that doeth good, no, not one." corruption rather than holiness; selfishness rather than consideration for others; cruelty rather than kindness, or "benevolence in action"; cf. 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22.

In vv13-15 God Is The Physician

Vv13-14 Depraved in speech: (What he says).

Notice here the total depravity of every individual person, seen in the mention of the seven members of the human body through which sin is expressed (vv13-18). These verses describe the vileness and wickedness of man expressed in various parts of his body, indicating figuratively that every part contributes to a person's condemnation.

V13 *"Their throat is an open sepulchre"* Ps. 5:9. Emitting from their mouth all that an open grave suggests to the mind, a horrible picture indeed.

"With their tongues they have used deceit" Ps. 140:3. Deceit means to lure by setting a trap.

"The poison (venom) of asps (serpents) is under their lips" The fangs of a deadly serpent generally are folded back behind his upper jaw, but when it throws back its head to strike, its hollow fangs drop down and the pressure of the bite squeezes the poison from a sack under its lips through the fangs into the wound

V14 *"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"* Ps.10:3.

In vv16-18 God Is The Historian

Vv15-18 Depraved in conduct: (What he does)

V15 *"Their feet are swift to shed blood"* (Isa.59:7-8).

V16 *"Destruction (the act) and misery (the result of that act) are in their ways"*

V17 *"And the way of peace have they not known,"* the way of peace is found only by living in submission to God's will.

V18 *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."* (Ps. 36:1)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10).

All this describes man as a perversion of what he was originally intended to be. After he fell morally in the garden of Eden, he and his descendents became depraved and corrupt. This led him down the dark and sordid alleys of corruption and depravity from which state he could find no escape. He became depraved and perverted in his mind (2 Tim. 3:8) as the servant of corruption and depravity (2 Pet.2:19). Unless God moves in mercy (Eph. 2:4) and provides a remedy for our sin, we are all doomed to the lake of fire forever (Ps. 9:17; Rev. 20:11-15).

(to be continued)