

To "... strengthen the things which remain..." Revelation 3:2

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## What is His Name? Jehovah-shammah

Joel Portman

*"It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, "The Lord is there."  
Ezek. 48:35*

As with some of the compound names of Jehovah that are linked with certain places (Jehovah-jireh, Jehovah-nissi, Jehovah-shalom, etc.), this last title of Jehovah that we find in the Old Testament is one that is connected with the city of which Ezekiel prophesied. These are places that are associated with a particular revelation of some aspect of God to His people. "By His various names, Jehovah had revealed Himself to His people in His wondrous power, protection, and provision. And now by the name of Jehovah-Shammah, God pledges His presence. (L. Strauss, "The Godhead") In this case, while writers differ in their interpretations of the temple and city, it seems that most likely this as a literal city and temple that will be built in the thousand year reign of Christ on the earth, or the millennium. "Some teachers have attempted to explain this verse as pertaining to Israel's past history, while others have tried to fit it into the days in which we live, but we believe that it is a prophecy which points most surely to the future." (L. Strauss, "The Godhead")

This name signifies "Jehovah is there." Surely this is a simple statement, but full of profound meaning. We read concerning this millennial temple that God says in Ezek. 43:7, following the returning glory of the Lord into the house, "*Son of man, the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and My holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile. . .*" and "*I will dwell in the midst of them forever.*" (43:9). It is truly an amazing fact that the Lord would yet desire to fulfill that great eternal purpose to dwell in their midst after the repeated failures and departures that had marked their history. Yet His purpose does not depend on man's ability but rather on His power to accomplish all that

He desires for His glory.

This culminating description of God dwelling in the midst of His people during that period is most remarkable in view of the earlier prophecy of Ezekiel, when he speaks of the departing of God's glory from the temple in Ezek. 8-11. The nation had declined severely from its previous glory, so that the prophecy of Ezekiel is being delivered from the position of their captivity in Babylon. Now the glory of God's presence that they had experienced, despite their constant failure over centuries, finally left the place of His dwelling in their midst. This departure was due to their individual and national sinfulness, epitomized by their blatant disregard for the sanctity of His house and the holiness of His person (ch. 8). They had turned from the true God and were secretly and openly worshiping the gods of the nations around them. This, sadly, had been their consistent practice over the history of the nation, but it had reached a climax so that the Lord could tolerate it no longer. His glory gradually departed from their midst, and they were taken out of the land into captivity in the origin and center of idolatry, Babylon. The glorious temple of Solomon had been destroyed and the wall of the city was broken down. Possibly, due to their brokenness of spirit and sadness of heart, they had lost sight of the possibility of restoration or recovery. Their enthusiasm and desire for that place had ebbed severely. However, as was usually the case, we see that the Lord doesn't leave them there without the prospect of complete restoration to a state far higher than they occupied before. Such are the gracious ways of God with His people then and with us.

### God's Past Dwelling Place

We clearly see that it was God's intention from the

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beginning to dwell in close relationship with men. His creatorial work brought a man into existence who had the capacity to know and experience fellowship with God, being made in “the image of God” (Gen. 1:27), and who had received life by a personal in-breathing by God (2:7). God coming down to walk in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8) and calling for Adam suggests that this had been His practice and enjoyment before sin entered to destroy that fellowship. However, sin entered through the disobedience of one, resulting in that relationship being broken.

However, we read of those who walked with God, such as Enoch (Gen. 5:21) and Noah (6:9), despite the existence of evil in the world, as well as the LORD coming to Abraham’s tent in Gen. 18:1, thus showing that such a relationship with a gracious God was yet possible for those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). What was true then is yet true today, and that privilege to experience the reality of the Lord’s presence with a believer in daily life is yet possible, but the conditions are also the same, since how “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*” (Amos 3:3). Conformity to His holy person and spiritual exercise to seek Him is always an essential feature of this fellowship. In every age or place, individuals who respond to God and obey His Word can enjoy that blessed reality of walking with God; it is always His desire to do so.

The reality of God dwelling amidst His people was one of the main purposes for the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple that Solomon constructed. The words of Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple were, “*The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.*” (1 Kings 8:12-13). Again he said, “*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?*” (8:27). We read in Isa. 66:1, “*Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?*” Again in Acts 17:24, Paul says, “*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.*” His infinite presence fills the heavens and the earth. Yet the truth is that it is His desire to dwell among men, and that presence can be known by faithful saints. He made His presence known through the conditions He demanded in those centers and in the responsive exercise of the people who were so associated with those places. The cloudy pillar of the Shekinah glory of His presence was towering over the Holy of Holies in their midst, a constant reminder of the greatness and glory of the One who was present among them. That presence separated them from other people, for even Balaam had to exclaim, “*The Lord his God is with*

*him, and the shout of a king is among them,*” (Num. 23:21). A consideration of the awesome reality of that presence makes one wonder how they could act so contrary to His Person and depart unto the worship of and practices of false gods with no power or glory. However, we won’t criticize them severely since we recognize the same tendencies in ourselves and realize the same kind of failure to give proper honor to His Name.

### God’s Present Dwelling

One expression of that divine purpose was seen when our blessed Lord came into humanity by way of incarnation. “*The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,*” (John 1:14). He was “*Emmanuel. . . God with us*” (Mt. 1:23). It was the very real presence of God upon earth during those years of our Lord’s fragrant and fruitful ministry. He came to reveal the Father (John 14:9), and those who knew Him well recognized in Him a “*glory as of an only begotten with a Father, full of grace and truth,*” (John 1:14, JND).

As in the past, believers today can experience the presence of the Lord with them. We have His promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). Paul knew His presence with Him in the prison and at his trial (2 Tim. 4:17). The disciples were startled and then comforted by His presence when He came walking on the water and then was received into their boat (Mt. 14:25, Jn. 6:19). He comes to His own in times of distress, walks with them in trial, supports them in daily life. His desire is to dwell with them (John 14:18, 21). Believers can enjoy the closest relationship with Him, being individually described as “*temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you,*” (1 Cor. 6:19), and this truth is intended to guard our lives from uncleanness and every form of evil. Again in 2 Cor. 6:16, we read that believers are “*temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*” That being the case, it requires each to live a holy life consistent with His character and expressing the reality of His presence.

Collectively, the local assembly can know the presence of the Lord dwelling in their midst. An assembly that has been gathered to Him by the Holy Spirit is “*house of God*” in character, or possibly better, it is a “*household*” of God. It is a company of believers who know genuine relationship with Him and recognize His presence corporately. We often think of His promise in Matt. 18:20, that in such an established gathering of believers in a location, He is in the midst. This is more than a casual coming together of Christians; it is an established congregation of saints who have come out from other associations that are contrary to His Name and Person and are identified under His Name and submissive to His lordship. They are carrying out the mind of God in heaven

on earth (18:18), and manifesting that this is the desire of their hearts in action. Such a promise of His presence is not to be assumed carelessly, for we read concerning the assembly in Ephesus that the Lord would remove their lampstand if they did not repent (Rev. 2:5). Their cold orthodoxy and correct doctrine wasn't enough to preserve them from suffering the loss of that essential aspect of testimony. The Lord in the midst of the lampstands (Rev. 1:12-13) was there to examine and correct their failures so that they might be restored and maintained in testimony. It is a truth most precious to an exercised child of God to know the genuine reality of the Lord personally in his or her life as well as the same when the believers gather together and compose an assembly of the saints.

### God's Future Dwelling

The careful description of the temple shown to Ezekiel indicates the concern God has that His dwelling among Israel in this earth in that period will be exactly according to His purpose. Much as He gave definite instructions for building the tabernacle and the temple, we find details in this grand temple, which shows us that for God to dwell on earth, the conditions must be suited to His presence. He condescends to dwell among men, but only on His own terms. The only One who could build such a temple is the Lord Himself, so we read in Zech. 6:12-15 that it is the Man whose name is the Branch, the Messiah, who will *"build the temple of the Lord"* and He shall bear the glory as He sits and rules upon His throne.

However, it seems that the city lacks detailed description. Mr. Fred Cundick ("The Book of Ezekiel"), says, "The name of the city is "Jehovah Shammah" meaning, "The Lord is there," declaring that the divine purpose of love is realized. The prophet does not dwell on the purpose of the city, its activities and administration. All that matters to him is the presence of God; this transcends everything. *Ordered living in the presence of God is the pathway to unity.* Perhaps one of the greatest defects in present local assemblies is that they are not sufficiently stamped with the realization that "the Lord is there.""

But if that is true in the Millennial scene, what will it be in the eternal day? We read in Rev. 21:3, as John sees the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, he hears the voice that says, *"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."* We read concerning that city that it has *"the glory of God,"* (v.11), and further that the *"Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."* (v. 23). In that new heaven and new earth, righteousness will reign, and all the vestiges of sin will be removed entirely so that there will be nothing inconsistent with God's character and that great desire of His heart will be realized, "The Lord is there."

May we know something of that blessed reality in our lives and in local assemblies in our day, the presence of the Lord being there, in our midst! §

**It is impossible for God to meet His saints in the way of fellowship, except in the path of obedience. When they are out of that path, He meets them with correction, in order to bring them into fellowship with Himself.**

R. C. Chapman

### Happenings at Bethany, pt. 4

*Gilson Villegas, Venezuela*

(from "La Sana Doctrina" #312, March-April 2011)

Right after the **quality** of the gift is mentioned, we are told that the perfume was "very costly" (John 12:3). Actually, it had much more value than the estimation of Judas ("more than 300 pence", v.5), since we see that here the "very costly" corresponds to her appreciation of God. In human terms, the value of that which Mary offered corresponded to an ordinary worker's salary for a year of his work. Most certainly we can say more, if we take into account that Mary wasn't a rich woman, something we conclude from the fact that she had to do routine housework because there wasn't a servant in the house in Bethany. Remember that Martha was upset with much work to do, so that she asked the Lord to have Mary help her. It represented, therefore, a great sacrifice of that devoted woman; sacrifice, we say, that only eternity will be able to declare its value, but that which the Lord knows how to evaluate justly.

But, also we can see the public or collective **utility** of that offering, because "the house was filled with the odor of the ointment," (v. 3). This indicates to us how far an expansive wave of profound appreciation from a heart devoted to the Lord can reach. If *"one sinner destroyeth much good,"* (Ecc. 9:18), a worshiper spreads much good. When I study the theme of "filled houses" in the Holy Scripture, I am very impressed with what we have here, because in Ex. 40:34, the glory of the Lord filled the earthly house (the tabernacle) as a response to the obedience of Moses, who did all *"according to all that the Lord commanded him,"* (Ex. 40:16). In Isaiah 6, *"the house was filled with smoke"* (v. 4), as a response to the recognized glory of the exalted Lord, "sitting on a throne, high and lifted up," (v. 1). Also, in the future (as we see in Ezekiel 43), the glory of the Lord filled the house (Ez. 43:5) as a response to the cleanliness of the people that formerly

profaned his holy name with their fornication and idolatry. In the same way, in Luke 14 we have the case of the man who makes a great supper and his great desire is, said he, *“that my house may be filled,”* a desire that will be fulfilled, in one sense, when *“the fullness of the Gentiles be come in,”* (Rom. 11:25). In this case, the house will be filled as a response to the desire of the God of heaven and His work through His servants.

But, to come to the supper in Bethany, the house was filled with the odor of the ointment as a response to the devotion of a simple believer. This should fill our dear sisters with joy and purpose. If there were many more “Mary’s” such as she was who sought to honor their Lord in this way, how much more perfume would fill each assembly?

**Integrity** is another characteristic that Mary’s act displayed, since Mark 14:3 tells us that Mary poured out the perfume on the Lord’s head, but in John, we note that the ointment had descended as far as His feet. This was where Mary stooped to dry His feet with her hair, indicating that the entirety of that ointment, from the top of His head to the feet, converted the body of the Lord into one fragrant object. This is what the bride of the Song did with respect to her beloved (5:11) to whom she describes his graces from the Head (v. 11) to his legs (v. 15). Touching this, there are many glories concerning Him and many aspects of His glorious person that could be considered so that it is sad that, many times during the Lord’s Supper, the saints are occupied with only one aspect of His work and Person. This makes the thoughts of that meeting repetitive. With sadness we say it, but we know brethren that almost never go farther than the wounds in the hands and feet of the Lord.

Leaving this aspect, we continue to notice the **totality** of the offering. Again, looking at the passage in Mark 14:3, we note that this saintly believer didn’t reserve this vase of alabaster that contained the ointment for herself, but that she broke it, completely offering what she had brought to her Lord. In this respect, we are often like Ananias and Safira, in that we express generosity to the Lord and promise much to Him, but, in the hour of truth, we only skimpily give a negligible portion, robbing Him. Honestly, brethren, I tremble to think that, in the Judgment Seat of Christ, it will come to the light not only what we give to the Lord and His cause, but also that which with stinginess we reserve for ourselves.

Also we read in Mark 14:8, where the same Lord says, *“She (Mary) is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying,”* which speaks to us of the **opportunity** of this offering, because it seems like Mary understood, much more than the disciples, that the body of the Lord would not go to corruption and that, also, it would be useless to guard this until the tomb. Contrariwise, other holy women

went with aromatic spices the first day of the week to anoint the body in the sepulcher (thinking that He was dead), but they had forever lost the opportunity. Considering the lessons from this point, I have in my mind many young believers, who think that “some day” they will dedicate themselves to serve the Lord, not understanding that the opportunity is NOW, and that the possibility of a future consecration and service is a sad parallel with the attitude of the unconverted that postpone their salvation time after time. If we say to them that now is the acceptable time, we need to convince ourselves that for us who are saved, so far as consecration and service is concerned, the acceptable day also is today. We remember that it is during the day that we need to work, because *“the night cometh, when no one can work”* (John 9:4). The time for service will pass and the opportunity will be lost forever.

Another detail, often forgotten, is that of the **reciprocity** of what Mary offered. She wasn’t seeking personal advantages when she decided to anoint the Lord. But it is impossible to love Him and serve Him without this implying marvelous spiritual benefits. For this reason, when she anointed and dried the feet of the Lord with her hair, I am convinced, there wasn’t in all of Bethany, for many days, more fragrant hair than that of Mary. In this respect, the expression, “God is no man’s debtor,” has not lost its meaning for much use, and it is here illustrated in the truth in the story of Mary and her offering. It is like the story of the queen of Sheba and Solomon, where she brought great riches to the king: *“And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.”* (1 Kings 10:10), but in the parallel account in the second book of Chronicles we read, *“And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which she had brought unto the king.”* (2 Chron. 9:12). Our heavenly Solomon has a heart more grateful than an earthly and the generosity of His hand cannot be compared with any mortal.

But, stranger that it seems, it is necessary to speak about the **unpopularity** of that offering, because by comparing the story in the three evangelists, we note that what began in the heart of Judas (consider how he despised the offering of Mary) was changed into a collective complaint, showing that the other disciples had been contaminated with that terrible root that in their midst was producing “gall and wormwood,” (Deut. 29:18).

Without doubt, in many circles called “Christian,” the holiness and devotion in the life of believers doesn’t enjoy much popularity. The popular is a free and relaxed life and, sadly, even in the complacent view of the “leaders” of the congregation. Frequently we hear the bitter criticism of those dear sisters that, out of their convictions and devotion

to the Lord, maintain their uncut hair, their honest clothing and their bodies free from the vain jewelry of this world. We say to these that the reward and the approval of God is more certain when those saints are faithful to Him, and carries more weight than the environment of adversity that is around them. The holiness and devotion of the faithful isn't seeking the applause of these "christian" circles, nor much less, the approval of this ungodly world. Aspire to the greater divine reward, the **"Well done, thou good and faithful servant...."** (Mat. 25:21, 23).

So, to follow our meditation, we won't fail to mention the **permanency** of the offering of Mary, because the same words of the Lord say that the fragrance of what Mary did will go on through ages and will transcend all places: *"Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."* (Matt. 26:13). She wasn't thinking that her devoted action to Christ would be entered in the "Guinness" of God and that this mark would remain invincible during all this period of grace, but this is how God appreciates the love of His own!

Finally, the Lord says something that makes us think of the **application** of the offering: *"She hath done what she could"* (Mark. 14:8). In the lips of Christ, this expression has a sense radically distinct from that which any of our mouths has, because, when we want to excuse our own failure or poor performance before some business, we say simply, "Well, I did what I could." But this *"She hath done what she could,"* signifies that Mary put all her will and power into that ointment. The Lord recognizes that, if she could have done more, Mary would have done more. The offering was proportional to the resources that she had. Blessed Lord, who doesn't demand more than our abilities, but who praises when we have used them without reserve for His glory! Because of this, He says, *"She hath done a good work on me."* (Mark 14:6).

Now, when one comes to the last chapter of Luke, we meet with what happened in Bethany, an event that defies any qualification. We refer to the moment of the ascension, when the Lord took his disciples out *"as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them,"* (Luke 24:50). This event closes, speaking chronologically, the activities of the Lord in this dear place, leaving thus, Bethany, in the remembrance of His own as the place where for the last time they received the blessing of their Lord and Savior.

Also, they saw Him leave, but there wasn't a sad note in that separation, because even when *"He was parted from them"* those disciples knew that the Lord was seated *"carried up into heaven,"* (v. 51). The following verses say that after they "worshiped Him" they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, praising and blessing God in the temple. In all this we can see a picture of the interaction of the believers

and the Beloved Savior. Also we have been taken out, and we have been brought to a place where we can appreciate the glories of Him that was *"received up into glory,"* and can receive the blessing of the outstretched hands. (The same hands of the creation – Psalm 19:1, of the redemption – John 20:20, of the protection – John 10:28, now they are the hands of divine blessing). We can bow ourselves before Him in an expression of profound worship, and move in our lives here manifesting the genuine joy that the Savior and salvation produce. And it is before a world that should be invited to receive what we are and have in Him. §

(Concluded)

The chief excellency of Faith is that it brings us into fellowship with God. Abel—the first spoken of in Heb. 11—is commended, not because of any great deed on man's account, but because he worshipped God acceptably. Nevertheless, if we trust God, there is no limit to the power of Faith, whatever the thing to be done.

R. C. Chapman

## Jonah, Part 5

Steve Walvatne

### The Mariners

*"Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them..."* (v.5).

An oft-repeated idiom speaks of "pouring" or "rubbing" salt into a wound, thereby intensifying its pain. In a sense, that idiom strikes close to what we find here. The Hebrew word "mariner" derives from a word meaning "salt," referring to the salty waters on which these men sailed. Thus, the name "salts" or "mariners." Jonah thought to ease his wounded conscience by joining these men on their vessel, but the opposite happened. Because of the storm, these mariners afflicted Jonah's conscience more than ever, forcing him eventually, to admit the error of his way.

We read more of these mariners than we do of the Ninevites, suggesting the importance of Jonah's spiritual recovery. Diverse in nature, all clung tightly to their pagan superstitions, and were judged "the hardest of all people...a profane kind of people...esteemed the Nazareth of the world, out of which cometh no good" (Thomas Fuller: "A Comment on Ruth and Notes upon Jonah"). Yet, Jonah's record of them is praiseworthy, especially regarding their treatment of him. Their feelings and subsequent reactions, however, fluctuate across the page like the waves

that surrounded them. For instance, PANIC led to PRAYER, LOSS to LOTS, INQUIRIES to INTERVENTION, and SURRENDER to SACRIFICE. These we'll briefly examine, by looking at the mariners under eight headings, noting their:

1. Consternation
2. Invocation
3. Elimination
4. Investigation
5. Interrogation
6. Determination
7. Resignation
8. Veneration

### **Consternation**

*"Then the mariners were afraid...exceedingly afraid...the men feared the Lord exceedingly..."* (vv.5, 10, 16). Paul exclaimed in Romans 11:33, *"How unsearchable are His judgments (decrees), and His ways past finding out!"* "[God's] wisdom," said Fred Stallan, "leads Him to choose what ends are best and what are the most suitable means to achieve the ends He determines" (What the Bible Teaches: "Romans"). We trace this repeatedly in Scripture and see it here. To recover Jonah, Jehovah stirred the sea and then the sailors. He might have afflicted Jonah personally, but instead, chose to alter conditions around him, thereby revealing the prophet's rebellion and spurring repentance. Thus, He blessed others, while healing Jonah as well.

The fact that seasoned sailors were "afraid," underscores the peculiar nature of this storm. Never had they encountered something so magnificent and mysterious. As things worsened, they trembled more; not just at the storm, but at the Person behind it. They were jolted to a belief in Jehovah's existence and gained a profound respect for His authority and power. Says Proverbs 1:7, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge..."* A wholesome fear of God is commendable in saints and sinners. The current "do-as-I-please" attitude pervading society and affecting Christians, signals gross moral decline and spiritual ignorance. *"Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear"* (Heb. 12:28).

### **Invocation**

*"Then the mariners...cried every man unto his god..."* (v.5). Prayer was undoubtedly rare among these sailors, yet now they're convening a prayer meeting in a most unusual place. They "cried every man," or literally, "cried out, each one" (NET Bible), showing all were involved. While their pleas were misdirected, their intent was worthy. In fact, prayer was their first response after fear gripped them.

We believe embedded in the constitution of every individual is the innate sense of a Supreme Being. Sin, however, has blurred man's thinking, leading to a host of false notions concerning Deity. Particularly therefore, when men are in trouble, they cry out like these mariners – every man to "his own god." But as Calvin states, "There is no need of any law, there is no need of any Scriptures; in short, there is no need of any teaching, to enable men to know that this life is in the hand of God..." (Calvin's Commentaries, vol.14). *"For from [the] world's creation the invisible things of Him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both His eternal power and divinity – so as to render them inexcusable"* (Rom. 1:20, JND). This "God-consciousness," as seen in our passage, can humble the hardest hearts, culminating in a fuller knowledge of God and His ways. Only a fool would presume to say, *"There is no God"* (Ps. 14:1).

### **Elimination**

*"Then the mariners...cast forth the wares that were in the ship..."* (v.5). Dire circumstances demanded dire measures. When life is threatened, "things" lose value. The mariners threw all excess cargo, however costly, overboard. It was no easy chore. As Douglas Stuart writes, "There was presumably plenty of cargo on board to retrieve from the hold," and he cites Ezekiel 27:25 as an example, rendering it, *"...ocean-going ships...filled with heavy cargo"* (Word Biblical Commentary, "Jonah"). Perishing sinners feel much like these sailors when they realize their precarious standing before God. Whatever the cost or however great the struggle, their only thought is, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:30).

The apostle Paul also witnessed sailors eliminating goods while on his journey to Rome: *"But the storm being extremely violent on us, on the next day they threw cargo overboard"* (Acts 27:18, JND). That entire scene was illustrative of Paul's life as a Christian. Around him daily was constant turmoil. When he entered Macedonia, for example, he said, *"Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears"* (2 Cor. 7:5; see also, 2 Cor. 6:4-10; 11:23-28). He held to "things" with a light hand, *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ"* (Php. 3:7). In a day when "things" are so prevalent, it might be wise to "lighten our ship," by getting back to the basics of Christian testimony. In Jonah, however, something more needed elimination and that precipitated an investigation.

### **Investigation**

*"...Let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us..."* (v.7). The mariners now looked inward, among themselves, to find the storm's cause. Desperate, they hurriedly employed an old method of discovery

– the casting of lots. “They could have been sticks of various lengths, flat stones like coins, or some kind of dice; but their exact nature is unknown” (Herbert Lockyer: “Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible”). That said, Jehovah “condescended to point out the true author of their sufferings, for ‘the lot fell upon Jonah’” (George Young: “Lectures on the Book of Jonah”). “Jonah!” The name must have stuck to the tongue of every sailor. “Jonah – thou art the man!” The prophet could never have envisioned this, for all seemed safely concealed until now.

We could headline the moment in bold print – **“and be sure your sin will find you out”** (Num. 32:23). The eye of Omniscience sees all, and no amount of subtlety can cover unjudged sin for long. Soon, as here, the charade unravels: *“The lot fell upon Jonah.”* An escaped criminal once thought to elude authorities by running down a forested hill. Just when freedom looked certain, he stopped and surrendered before officers even approached him. Why? “Because,” said he, “I thought every tree was Almighty God,” (B. Carradine: “Jonah”). Jonah likely felt similar emotions, when every eye on deck suddenly punctured his shameless facade.

### Interrogation

*“Then said they unto him...”* (vv.8-11). The incriminated prophet was showered with questions. Not mere curiosities, for life threatening conditions forbid such folly. Five questions appear in verse 8. First, the mariners wondered, “Why the calamity?” Was it due to their actions, or was Jonah the sole offender? From there, they focused exclusively on Jonah, probing his capacity, activity, nationality, and nativity. They sought any clue that might identify the cause of their problem, for as of yet, Jonah had remained silent.

The last two questions in verses 10 and 11, bounded between astonishment and despair. *“Why hast thou done this?”* The prophet’s actions were incongruous even to a heathen crew. Ignorant souls are quick to discern discrepancies in a believer’s walk. Jonah’s unfaithfulness weakened his testimony. When he did speak, his words were few. *“What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?”* It was their final inquiry; they rested their case. Let the prophet pronounce his own punishment, lest they shed “innocent blood” (v.14) and face greater condemnation. In answering, Jonah might have quoted King Saul, *“...Thou hast dealt well with me...”* (1 Sam. 24:18). The man, whose heart was hard towards Nineveh, stood rebuked by the kind regard of just such a people. Jonah would have seen the irony in that.

### Determination

*“Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land...”* (v.13). Jonah’s response to the mariners’ last inqui-

ry didn’t sit well. Perhaps the inconsistency of his walk left them wary of his words. Pressed to throw him overboard, they “rowed hard,” or literally, “digged” (hatar) to reach land once more. The word is used to describe burglars who “digged” or “forced” their way into homes. These sailors tried to “force” the vessel to land, but ultimately failed because God stood in their way. As Doctor Gamaliel said to the men of Israel, *“...If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God”* (Acts 5:39).

How different was the Saviour’s indictment from that of Jonah’s! Surrounded by a bloodthirsty mob in Pilate’s judgment hall, he could say, *“I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none”* (Ps. 69:20). The throng’s determined sentiment was, *“Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!”* (Jn.19:15).

He stood condemned in Pilate’s hall,  
He heard the rabbles’ cry;  
The King with none to own His cause,  
My cause would not deny.

A.D. Ackley

Pilate *“had judged that He should be let go”* (Acts 3:13, JND), but the crowd wouldn’t hear of it. “Even pagan Pilate was better than the Jews,” writes Lenski in his Commentary on the New Testament (Acts).

### Resignation

*“So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea...”* (v.15). The mariners finally conceded, bowing to Jonah’s verdict. Their strenuous efforts had gained little. They had tried to force the boat, but circumstances now forced them into using their final option. Jonah must go overboard to what surely was certain death. No one relished the thought, for as already mentioned, they feared shedding innocent blood, for that was murder. But Jonah was guilty, unlike the “Greater than Jonas” (Matt.12:41) that stood before Pilate (Matt. 27:24).

An eerie sort of silence must have settled on the boat, as one after another, the fearful sailors moved forward to encircle Jonah for judgment. Together, they grasped the willing victim, and with a mighty swing, heaved him into the churning flood below. Instantly, the prophet was gone. Yet before anyone could reflect on his plight, the winds ceased and the waters stilled as if there had never been a storm at all. “What a sight!” writes William Kelly. “What solemnity must have filled these poor Gentiles! Thereon, we are told, they ‘feared Jehovah’...If they cried to Him in their danger, they feared Him yet more when the danger was over” (“Jonah”).

## Veneration

*“Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows”* (v.16). Their fear of Jehovah produced sacrifice and vows, or in essence, worship followed by service. The sacrifice may have happened on shore, once the requisite items for offering came to hand. Their vows or promises to God, in lieu of His grace to them, were long-term commitments and may suggest as Douglas Stuart writes, “that the sailors’ fear of [Jehovah] was not short-lived.” Others agree. G.C. Willis says, “For these heathen men the result was a complete and entire turning to the true and living God” (“Lessons from Jonah”). John Butler adds: “It was the day of days in their lives. We do not hear of them again in Scripture, but the last thing we hear of them – fearing God, sacrificing, making vows – certainly speaks well of them” (“Jonah: The Parochial Prophet”).

Where Jonah failed, God prevailed. Thus it is always, when men are at work. *“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness”* (Jdg. 14:4). The blast that battered the backslider’s boat was a bearer of mercy to all in its path. While the mariners discovered the true God, Jonah discovered more of God’s truth. As Joseph told his brethren: *“God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive”* (Gen. 50:20). §

*(continued)*

**May God teach us our folly and our sin and give us grace to humble ourselves before Him on account of it.**

## Epaphras

*Thomas Hay*

*“Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.”* Colossians 1:7

The personal names of saints recorded on the pages of the Scriptures shine like the stars of heaven, and like the stars differ in glory. As in nature *“one star differeth from another star in glory,”* so it is with the saints of the Bible. The moral glory contained in the life of Abraham, “the friend of God,” differs from that of Paul, “the bond slave of Christ.” Again, the glory of Moses or Joshua differs from that of Peter or John. God has been pleased to give us a wealth of reflected light in the characters of these well-known saints. All, in their allotted spheres, shine, some nearer to us, and some farther from us, according to the revelation the Spirit of God has given concerning events during their lives.

Among these illustrious names, perhaps not so near as some others, is that of Epaphras who shines so brilliantly in his own sphere. The Lord has given him a place of honor on the page of Inspiration. His name occurs only three times in the New Testament, twice in the Epistle to the Colossians and once in the letter to Philemon, but this threefold mention of him is an encouragement to all who are truly exercised of heart.

The labor of this gracious brother was twofold; first, the preaching of the gospel and the ministry of the Word among the Colossians (Col. 1:7); and, second, the work of intercession on their behalf (Col. 4:12). In both aspects of his work, his heart was earnestly engaged for the well-being of the church at Colosse and the testimony there. The second aspect of his ministry should be especially interesting to all who are concerned with the welfare of God’s beloved people. The picture of Epaphras drawn by the Holy Spirit is that of a warrior engaged in combat. In chapter 4:12 he is seen on his knees agonizing, not in the posture of defeat, but in close triumphal grips with the enemy. The battle is for the Lord’s heritage. He prays so that the saints may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. This would mean, not merely God’s will for them as to their personal lives, but the full knowledge of His comprehensive purposes of grace. Epaphras reminds us very much of one of David’s mighty men, “Shammah” whose name means renown. This man of faith defended a patch of lentils, a God-given inheritance, against the Philistines, and through his valour, the Lord gained a great victory and wrought salvation for Israel (2 Sam. 23:11-12). Surely, Epaphras stands spiritually as in the place of Shammah, and, likewise, through him the Lord gained a mighty victory. Shammah fought that God’s earthly people might possess and enjoy the “heritage of the Lord,” Epaphras in his turn labored to a similar end, that God’s heavenly people might possess the knowledge of, and have great delight in, the riches in Christ.

There was error abounding at Colosse so Epaphras sought out the Apostle in order to inform him of this departure and to counsel with him. He then gave himself to prayer that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Surely we need such ministry among the churches today. We need saints who will lay hold in intercession for the people of God, the people of His possession. Happy is the assembly that has an Epaphras in it! It is difficult to fully understand why God exhorts to intercession, but clearly He does. Moreover, it is evident that no assembly is making spiritual progress without an Epaphras-like ministry.

There is still another point in the history of this godly man; his biography contains in itself a promise to all who engage in similar ministry. An earnest prayer life is an

arduous exacting service (chap. 4:12), and much time which might be otherwise spent in legitimate things will have to be sacrificed. Nevertheless, according to the Divine principle, *“Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly”* (Matt. 6:6).

God, during this present period, has openly rewarded this devout and humble brother by placing his name before all saints throughout the many centuries. Intercession is a ministry known only to the Lord, it is a hidden ministry, but, eventually, on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will gain His full approbation and His *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”* §

Don't be afraid of obscurity. God likes obscure people. He often drags them out of obscurity into the light of day. Don't be alarmed. No good man can be buried alive. He will shine in his own chosen center, however small that may be. When man is most alone, God is with him. Out by Horeb, Moses was honored with this vision. It was while out on the plains, keeping their flocks, that the shepherds received tidings of the birth of Jesus. Moses saw more of God in the desert than ever he had seen in Pharaoh's court.

## Exercise of Spiritual Gift

*William Rogers*

(excerpted from “Notes on St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians”)

**W**e now pass to the third form in which irreverence was being shown in the meetings of the Corinthians, which was in the misuse of the spiritual gifts they possessed. It is in ch. 14 that the actual evils existing, which evidently had been reported to the apostle, are mentioned and dealt with; but as already stated, the subject really begins with the general discourse on spiritual gifts contained in ch. 12, and is contained in the teaching as to the importance of love in ch. 13.

The connection between the three chapters may be expressed thus. In ch. 12 the gifts are distributed in the power of the SPIRIT; in ch. 13 their ministry is to be in the love of CHRIST; and in ch. 14 their exercise is to be in the

will of GOD. This same threefold order, as has often been pointed out, is observed in 2 Tim. 1. 6, 7, where Timothy is exhorted to use his gift in the spirit of POWER (Compare ch. 12), and of LOVE (Compare ch. 13), and of a SOUND MIND (Compare ch. 14).

Indeed a somewhat similar arrangement is suggested here by Paul himself, when introducing the subject in the opening verses of ch. 12. In vs. 4-6 (R.V.) we read, *“There are diversities of gifts, but the same SPIRIT; and there are diversities of ministrations, but the same LORD; and there are diversities of workings, but the same GOD Who worketh all things in all.”* And these divisions of his might even more fittingly be used to distinguish the great gift passages of his epistles, than of our three chapters here.

As is well known, Paul’s writings contain three prominent portions which deal with the spiritual gifts bestowed on the Church, one in Rom. 12, and one in Eph. 4, as well as this in 1 Cor. 12. Between them we notice some striking similarities, while at the same time there are interesting differences, caused by the differing point of view from which the subject is approached. In Rom. 12 the gifts are considered in connection with that great salvation, so fully described in the earlier part of the epistle; and they are spoken of as **given by God the Father** (v. 3). In Eph. 4, on the other hand, they are viewed as leading on to the future glorious accomplishment of the Lord’s purpose concerning us; and they are said to be **given by the risen and exalted Christ** (v. 7).

But our passage in 1 Cor. 12, which, as was remarked in a previous chapter, is the longest and fullest of the three, starts neither from the past point of view-what God has done for us, nor from that of the future-what He is yet going to do with us. It does refer to our past in v. 2, and to our future in the end of ch. 13; but the introduction of the subject is simply in connection with the abuses then present at Corinth; and in keeping with this the gifts are set forth as **given by the Spirit** (vs. 3, 4, 7).

In the light of these differences might we not, as already suggested, say that in 1 Cor. 12 we have *“Diversities of gifts, but the same SPIRIT”*; in Eph. 4, *“Diversities of ministrations, but the same LORD”*; and in Rom. 12, *“Diversities of workings, but the same GOD Who worketh all things in all.”* I think the context in each case will be found to bear out this distinction.

As for the points of likeness in the three passages, the most noteworthy are:-

1. Each illustrates the teaching given by the figure of a body. See Rom. 12:4, 5; Eph. 4:4, 12, 16; 1 Cor. 12:12-14. And this is what might be expected, for of the three great figures of the Church in the New Testament, that of the Body is most suited to the purpose of illustrating the gifts. Neither Bride nor Building would fit so well, although in the local sense in which these, as well as the Body, are

found in the Corinthian epistles, it is to some extent in connection with the exercise of gifts that they occur.

Thus in ch. 3, where he says of the Assembly, "*Ye are God's Building,*" we have various gifted men working on this building, some with good results and some with bad. And even in 2 Cor. 11:2, where he writes, again to the Assembly, "*I have espoused you . . . as a chaste virgin to Christ,*" he is dealing with teachers who taught wrong things. Here, however, where in v. 27 he says, "*Ye are (the) body of Christ,*" he is able to develop the figure very fully throughout the chapter.

2. Each passage emphasizes the need for lowliness of mind in the exercise of the gifts. In Rom. 12:3 Paul writes, "*I say . . . to every man . . . not to think of himself more highly, than he ought.*" In Eph. 4:2 he begins with, "All lowliness and meekness." And here in 1 Cor. we have a whole chapter given to the love which vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up.

3. Each passage makes clear that every believer has been given gift of some sort. In Rom. 12: 3 we read, "*GOD hath dealt to EVERY MAN*"; In Eph. 4:7, "*Unto EVERY ONE OF US . . . the gift of CHRIST*"; and in 1 Cor. 12:7, "*The manifestation of the SPIRIT is given to EVERY MAN.*" It is important that this should be understood and believed, for many excuse their apathy and laziness in connection with the things of the Lord by the plea that they have no gift.

The manner in which Paul introduces his subject in 1 Cor. 12 is somewhat remarkable, in view of what is said of these saints elsewhere in the epistle. In ch. 1:7 he writes, "*Ye come behind in no gift*"; and in ch. 14:12, "*Ye are zealous of spiritual gifts*"; so they not only possessed them in abundance, but were deeply interested in their exercise. Yet the apostle's first words to them here suggest that there was among them much ignorance with regard to the matter, and it is on the ground of this that he proceeds to enlighten them.

It is clear therefore that saints may have both gifts and zeal in plenty, and yet be in ignorance of the very things it is most necessary to know with regard to their use.

If it be asked why the apostle assumed this lack of knowledge on the part of the Corinthians, I think the answer is, because of the abuses connected with the ministry mentioned in ch. 14. How we act is the ultimate test of what we know; and the knowledge which does not produce right actions, is no true knowledge at all. Judged by this principle the Corinthians had ignorance enough; and in the light of it we, the people of God today, have little to boast of, since in all spiritual matters we claim to know far more than we practice.

Take, for example, this very matter of the gifts. Amongst most of the so-called Christian churches the custom is to carry on as if practically all the gifts could be exercised by a single individual whom the rest of the company pay more or less adequately for doing this. When put

alongside what is taught in these Scriptures, that of course is seen to prove an extremity of ignorance, and many of us are thankful that we have been delivered therefrom. But in our recoil from such absurdity, have not some gone to an opposite extreme, and acted as though they believed that any saint may exercise any gift at will, whether he possesses it or not? Anyone has a right to take the gospel meeting. Anyone can get up and minister at a conference.

Now if the passages concerning the gifts have any meaning at all, this attitude is just as absurd as the one first indicated, and shows that those who act upon it are badly in need of the apostle's, "*Brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*" For indeed it has been the means of ruining many an assembly gospel meeting, and of spoiling many a conference.

But let there be no misunderstanding with regard to this. Apart from any question of gift, all God's children are responsible to do everything that lies in their power for the spreading of the gospel, and for the helping of their fellow believers. This, however, can be done without in any way stepping out of the place for which one is fitted, and the Lord Himself alone knows how much has been accomplished in both these respects by dear saints whose voices were never once heard in a public meeting.

But if you are gifted, even to a small extent, for public gospel preaching, or for public ministry to saints, your gift will make room for you amongst your brethren, and you will have no need to push yourself to the front by forwardness. Your help will, sooner or later, be sought for and esteemed. Moreover, your gift, if it be real and not a "false gift" (See Prov. 25:14) will grow with exercise, and as Paul says to Timothy, your progress will be manifest to all. Where this is not the case there must surely be something amiss; and yet are there not those who, through many years of public preaching, have made no progress whatever? The same dozen or so of addresses are used in turn, over and over again, with the same illustrations set in the same places, and usually the same quaint or jocular remarks as well. They may have aroused interest or raised a smile when they were first heard; but after one has got to know them and expect them, how stale and dry they become. §

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