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"As for Me . . ." Pt. 1

Joel Portman

A phrase that we encounter a number of times in the Holy Scripture is this one that seems to express an individual's determination to act in a way that is contrary to the prevailing mores of society. We find it 24 times in different settings, with the Psalms containing the majority of the references. Granted, that it is an expression that the Lord sometimes uses with reference to Himself, such as in Gen. 17:4 when He refers to His covenant with Abraham. In other cases, it doesn't seem to have any particular significance to us, as when Jacob refers to the death and burial of Rachel in Gen. 48:7. However, there are some references from which we can gain lessons that would help us in our day also.

A believer in Christ who can say with fervor and reality, "as for me...", as if to say, "no matter what others who live around me may do, I am going to act differently," is always an asset to the work of the Lord, if they are seeking to do so to honor Him. This was, in different words, the determination of Daniel when facing the pressures of Babylon. It was the character of Samuel in the corrupting environment of Eli's family. It must be the reaction of any believer in Christ who has true devotion to His Lord as his motive.

In a large number of the references, the expression seems to indicate a personal determination that one will demonstrate in his life. It also seems to reflect some aspect of Christian character that is one's response to the truth of the Word and the Work of the Holy Spirit in that life. Those who could say, "As for me," were men who displayed spiritual qualities and exercise in their lives that honored God and bore testimony to the world. They lived and bore testimony (as those who are recorded in Heb. 11), because they had a kind of life and personal convictions that empowered them to go against the current, and not drift with the flow of humanity.

Let's notice thirteen of these references to try to gain some helpful suggestions for our lives as well.

Joshua 24:15 Personal Convictions

These closing words of Joshua to Israel, like other words spoken at the end of a man's life, were very important and carried great weight to those who heard him. As was the case with others who had faithfully led the people and who were now passing off the scene, Jehovah, through Joshua, briefly recounts the history of His dealings with the people from the beginning, when He had called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees. That history had been marked by the exercise of God's sovereignty ("I took," "I sent," "I gave," "I brought", etc.) along with His repeated deliverances from danger and bondage, that expressed God's mercies and faithfulness toward them. The LORD had brought them out, brought them in and had richly blessed them. So that the Lord is emphasizing that His sovereignty had been exercised in His grace and mercy toward them. Surely such a display of the kindness and merciful purpose of God would cause them to yield genuine obedience and fidelity to Him. Far greater displays of God's grace and love toward us in Christ should motivate our devoted surrender as well. Paul could say in 2 Cor. 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

Now, Joshua has ended his period of faithful service to them, and he seems to anticipate their imminent departure after his death. However, like all good leaders of God's people, his concern was for their preservation and continuation in a pathway of faithfulness. Those who have this kind of responsibility should think like he did; their desire should reach beyond the present, to also realize that what they do and how they have ministered to the saints can be effective to strengthen the right ways of God in their

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lives so that future generations will also continue for God. Therefore, the force of his challenge to them was intended to prove to them the importance of determining **WHO** they would serve. They needed to realize that it was no light thing to claim to serve the Lord, for He demanded their full allegiance and would not share His glory with another. Joshua was setting his own example before them, since he couldn't force them to love and serve the Lord, but he could present a consistent pattern on his part. Sadly, they made no mention of putting away the strange gods that were among them, and we learn in Judges that their divided hearts soon moved aside from faithful obedience to the Lord, despite their protestations so loudly made to Joshua.

It was even more powerful, that Joshua could add, "and my house," as if to say that his influence also affected his entire household and descendants, and he knew what decision they would make. It's sad when a leader of the saints seems to have very little power over his own house; we read concerning an elder in 1 Tim. 3:4-5, "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" God's commendation of Abraham was "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment;" (Gen. 18:19). Eli failed in this regard, as also did Samuel and other great men, for they were instrumental to lead the nation, but weak to guide their own families. Joshua, having witnessed the power and providence of God for over 40 years, had already determined what course he would take. May we respond in like manner, and not be like the subsequent Israelites, who "knew not the Lord" and failed to obey Him faithfully.

1 Samuel 12:23 Personal Responsibility

Samuel had fulfilled the functions of prophet, judge (the last), and shepherd of the people. Now at the close of his service and despite his faithfulness, the people demanded a king so that they might be like the nations around. This desire for human leaders always seems to pervade the human heart, and it has been the tendency through centuries of church history also. With the Lord granting permission for Samuel to identify a king, and with the selection of Saul, now Samuel reminds them that their determination was a rejection of the Lord's singular authority. His address follows a similar pattern to that of Joshua. Samuel **Challenges** them to prove any unfaithfulness in his service (12:2-5), and this forces them to confess that they found no fault. Next, he **Recounts** the Lord's faithfulness to them (12:6-12), and surely they couldn't fault the Lord's kindness and mercies. Then he **Warns** them lest they should turn aside from following the Lord, which would result in God expressing His power against them in judgment. Finally, he **Assures** them of his continuing

faithfulness despite their departure.

Samuel displays the kind of exercise and understanding of shepherd responsibility that should characterize every man who has a care for the saints of God. They had asked him in v. 19 to pray for them as they witnessed the display of God's power. Samuel responded as if in indignation, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. . ." It had been his unceasing occupation, to pray intercedingly on their behalf, nor would he cease to do so. It was not a beginning of an activity that he had not already been occupied with. Paul expressed the same in Acts 20, reminding the elders of the assembly in Ephesus of his incessant labors among them and now his warnings to them. We have read of those men of God in older times, who wore grooves in the wooden floors by their bedsides as they spent entire nights in prayer for those who were entrusted to them. Without doubt there is failure and departure in ourselves as well, and the general tendency in our day is to reject divine authority. But the constant activity of intercession in prayer by one like Samuel is vital. In saying this, he was also recognizing his responsibility to the Lord ("God forbid. . . against the LORD"). It was more than his responsibility to the people; it was a burden that was part of his work for them for which he must give account to the Lord. However, the work of intercession for them out of genuine love for their welfare would be accompanied by his teaching them the "good and right way," for these two, his prayers and their obedience, would preserve them from coming under God's judgment.

His continued ministry in this way was a refreshing interlude between the callous self-seeking of Eli's sons and the self-centered ambitions of Saul. It's amazing that the people, after suffering the oppression of those priests failed to appreciate the unceasing ministry of Samuel, but their hearts were in a condition at that point that they failed to recognize the value of such service. May we appreciate and esteem those who give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:4, 1 Tim. 5:17).

1 Chron. 22:7, 28:2, 29:17

Personal Devotion, Liberality

God called David, "a man after my own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14, Acts 13:22). One of the reasons for Divine approval of this man was because of David's fervent desire for the house of the Lord. God's house always seemed to be very precious to David. From the time when he was following the sheep on the hills of Bethlehem, he longed for the ark to be back in its place (Ps. 132:5-6), and his exercise involved building a habitation for the Lord before he rested in his own house (132:3-5). In 2 Sam. 7, after David had built his own house, he was reminded of his prior vow that he had made, and his desire was quickened to build a grand and glorious house for the Lord. The fact that he was at ease in his own house while the ark of the Lord was in a tent that

he had erected for it in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:17) convicted him of putting himself ahead of the Lord. It's not hard to apply that to conditions that might exist in our lives, (though a Gospel Hall is only a building for an assembly to meet in, yet it is identified with His Name in the eyes of others), for we might have much better places that are identified with our names, while that which is identified with His Name is not cared for. But it is more than that, in that we can give sacrificially, as David did, of his time, wealth, abilities and even to the extent of all that he possessed, to establish a glorious testimony to the Name of the Lord. His example should convict us, for it is normal to put ourselves and our interests ahead of the needs of a local assembly. There is much that often needs to be done, but it is like Paul recorded, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21). Note conditions in Hag. 1:3-6.

David recognized the incongruity of this, and so he expressed the desire of his heart in these two references. Note that in both cases, the word used is for the heart (Strong #3824), so it reflected the deepest, most sincere exercise that he had. In the first case, he was speaking privately to Solomon to prepare him for the work that would fall upon him, and in the second, it was his public address and appeal to the people. Dates in some Bibles suggest a 2 year separation between the two; his heart's desire had not changed from boyhood to manhood, and the welfare of God's house was yet foremost in his mind, as he expresses in Ps. 26:8, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth." This should be the expression of our heart's devotion, and if it is, then, as David, when all is done, we will be able to say, "As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things," (1 Chron. 29:17). If this were so among us, the house of the Lord, that is the testimony that is linked with His Name, would be honored and would be more effective before others.

(continued)

Peter said to our Lord, How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? (Matt, 18:21, 22.) What warrant had Peter for saying, How oft? Had he been standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, he might have said, How oft? Standing in the covenant of grace, we say, Seventy times seven.

Josiah, concluded

Robert Surgenor

His Appreciation and Authority

As the eyes of the LORD beheld the king, He said, "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same" (2 Chron. 34:27,28). This word of approval and assurance so affected the king that "he sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. . . and went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD... and he stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it" (2 Chron. 34:29-32).

Moreover the king kept a Passover, and "there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept" (2 Chron 35:18). The Word of God had enlightened him how to hold the Passover in a scriptural way. There are seven Passovers mentioned in the Scriptures. The first being in Egypt, where it was instituted (Ex. 12). The second mention is in Numbers 9 where it is held in the wilderness of Sinai. The third occasion was in Gilgal (Joshua 5), the fourth during Hezekiah's reign (2 Chron. 30:15), the fifth during Josiah's reign, the sixth after the dedication of the second temple in the days of Haggai and Zechariah the prophets (Ezra 6), and last of all, the seventh, when the Lord kept the Passover with His own prior to His crucifixion. To those of us who are saved in this dispensation of grace, we too have a Passover. "Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). Considering this, the apostle adds, "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (vs. 8). Always connected with the Passover was the feast of unleavened bread. All leaven was to be purged from their homes for a seven-day period prior to the Passover. The seven days speaking of a complete period of time. Since leaven is a picture of uncleanness, and the Passover

would speak of the death of Christ for our redemption we have this spiritual picture, that Salvation and Sanctification go together. When souls trust Christ for salvation (the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover Lamb), they are expected to purge from their entire lives anything of an unclean nature. There is literature in this world that is defiling. The television and the internet can be avenues to usher uncleanness into our homes, producing defilement in our minds and heart. There are many sources of defilement and the child of God is enjoined to avoid contact with such. Paul exhorted the Corinthian saints — “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

The unleavened bread of sincerity and truth can be explained this way. The word “sincerity,” as strange as it may seem could be translated, “without wax.” Let me explain. When a Corinthian would go to the sculptor's shop to buy a top of the line marble bust of a prominent individual, he would be given the guarantee that there were no cracks in the product. Paying full price, upon taking his prized purchase home he places it on a stand before a window. The next day, as the sun shines in, the heat of its rays begin to melt the wax that the merchant has carefully worked into a crack. Low and behold, what the customer paid full price for, turns out to be a flawed piece of art. He is furious. He has been deceived, the merchant was not sincere. Paul says to the saints, now you be “without wax.” Be sincere, be genuine, do not be a hypocrite. Be absolutely transparent before men. Be open and real before God to which all sympathy toward evil is foreign.

Paul then mentions the bread of truth. In other words, let us be righteous, let us be inflexible and firm in maintaining that which is good. Let us never make compromise with evil. Josiah kept the Passover!

It is also interesting the various definitions we have of the Passover in the Holy Scriptures. We find them in Exodus 12. (1) A Memorial — for their memory (vs. 14). (2) A Feast — for their fellowship (vs. 14). (3) An Ordinance — for an appointed law (vs. 24). (4) A Service — for their ministry (vs. 26). (5) A Sacrifice — for their worship (vs. 27).

There is a noble account of Josiah's association with the Passover found in 2 Chronicles 35:2, which states. “And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD, And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel.” Let me ask you, are you in the habit of encouraging others? That young man that has given up his income and has launched out into the great harvest field for God — have you encouraged him? His wife and little children abide at home while he goes into the regions

beyond to win souls for Christ. Do you send of your substance to help feed his little family, pay their utility bills, furnish them with clothing, pay the taxes or the rent?

Or the widow or widower. Do you take some of your precious time to visit them with a little word from the Lord and share with them your thoughts of Christ? Do you pray with them, commending them to the Lord for His safekeeping?

What about the recently bereaved? Do you sit down and write them a letter that will encourage their souls that they may experience the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness? Or are you too busy with your temporal things?

Yes, fellow-believer, we can walk the malls window shopping, but we seemingly can't walk the sidewalks to front doors with a gospel tract. We can spend our money on sight-seeing tours, but we can't seem to gather even a couple of dollars to help fuel a gospel messenger's vehicle.

You older believers, do you encourage younger believers. Young saints need models, examples, and they need not only words of correction, but they certainly do need words of encouragement. How long has it been since you complimented that young brother for the way he prayed at the breaking of bread, or at the prayer meeting? How long has it been since you praised that young sister to her face on the way that she was raising her little family, having her children in subjection? I would say that when you see a young couple sitting at the breaking of bread and their little family sitting reverently with them in total subjection, with no need of coloring books and silly toys, you should feel obligated to compliment that couple, thus encouraging them. Have you ever told a young sister how beautiful was her uncut hair? It won't cost you a penny and it will encourage her. Let us be tender brethren and observing, and also free with worthy compliments. Josiah encouraged the priests.

You will also notice, that seemingly all the days of departure, the Levites bore the ark upon their shoulders. It could not be associated with an unclean house, no matter what that house was called. Is their not many so-called “churches” today that are unclean? In the true sense they are not churches at all, but rather social clubs. The traditions of men are taught and the Holy Scriptures claim very little or no place. Christ (the Ark) is on the outside. You cannot command the presence of the Lord in the midst, in divine approval, unless the pattern is scriptural and the people are sanctified. Christ said, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). The real sense is, “Where two or three, having been, and being, drawn by an unseen force together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” It is not a matter of setting up a table on vacation, or two or three Christians casually coming together to conveniently break bread. That will never do, and that is not the thought of the

passage at all. The thought is, that there has been a divine planting of a church that is continuing. Saints are divinely drawn to this place by the Holy Spirit, through His teachings relative to a local assembly. Thus you have a “called out from” company of believers which is the meaning of the word “church”.

Josiah saw two important things at this point. The first was that God’s house must be a clean place. Secondly, that God’s house commands the presence of God (the ark). I trust that the assembly that you are associated with is of this nature, for it is only in such a place that we can scripturally claim the Lord in our midst in approval. Josiah appreciated the nature of the house of the LORD.

His Absence

Years later the day came — “he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations” (2 Chron. 35:24,25). Jeremiah writes of his appreciation of Josiah in the following words. “The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen” (Lam. 4:20). Such an influence was this unusually spiritual king that the godly felt the wings of his protection, resulting in their survival among the heathen. What a tremendous influence Josiah had upon the nation. I have known such men in our assemblies. Men that fear God. Men that give the saints a secure feeling. Men that preserve the testimony. Oh to be more Josiah-like in this aspect alone. I close this writing with deep searching of my own heart. I feel condemned in the presence of Josiah. How do you feel? Let me take you outside the confines of Holy Scripture and project to you what the Rabbis said of him. “The memory of Josiah is like costly incense and sweet as honey in the mouths of all.” Goodbye Josiah, until we meet on the heavenly shore!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The more love we give away, the more we have.
Counting time is not as important as making time count.
The resurrection assures what Calvary secures.
Feelings are no substitute for facts and faith.
He who forgives ends the quarrel.
There is only one way to avoid criticism; say nothing, do nothing, be nothing.
The harder you work at what you should be, the less you'll try to hide what you are.

—Anthony Orsini.

The Preacher and His Pupils, pt. 1

H. Roades

I Thessalonians, Chapter 2

The seventeenth chapter of the Acts of the apostles supplies us with the historical background to this letter of Paul’s to the church at Thessalonica, and should be read carefully prior to the closer study of the letter itself. Paul adhered to the practice of going to the Jew first and then to the Gentiles, so that after three weeks, witnessing in the synagogues, and being harassed and driven out by the Jews, ch. 2, verses 15 to 17, he turned to the Gentiles and found a more ready response, for many believed. Because of the jeopardy which he had placed himself and others in, he left Thessalonica hurriedly, though reluctantly, and went on to Berea. From there he went on to Athens, but in heart he was still in Thessalonica. How were they faring? Would they endure the persecution he knew them to be suffering? Had his hurried departure been misunderstood? Would he be misjudged as to his motives? It was for this cause he sent Timothy back while he himself went on to Corinth. There he waited patiently for his return, which when he came brought news that was both comforting and encouraging and he writes to tell them so, and to instruct them in things he had obviously been unable to do because of his hurried departure, ch. 3:1-8.

Of the 89 verses that comprise this letter, some 26 refer to Paul and his associates, 45 to the Thessalonians, and the remainder to Christian doctrine, chiefly in relation to the Lord’s second coming, from which we gather that Paul’s desire is to see the features of Christ reproduced in them. (See chapter 4, verses 1-12). In pursuance of this one aim, he unfolds to them some of the deep underlying motives for his behavior, for example is better than precept.

Here are six things that characterized this prince of preachers, which, if observed by all would-be preachers today would greatly enhance their effectiveness in the Lord’s work.

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|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. HIS CONFLICT. | See ch. 2. verses 1 and 2. |
| 2. HIS CONVICTION. | See ch. 2. verses 2 and 3. |
| 3. HIS CLARITY. | See ch. 2. verse 5. |
| 4. HIS CONSCIENCE. | See ch. 2. verses 5 and 10. |
| 5. HIS COMPASSION. | See ch. 2. verses 8 and 9. |
| 6. HIS CONDUCT. | See ch. 2. verses 9 and 10. |

His Conflict

The memory of the shameful treatment and outrage suffered at Philippi as well as the experiences at Thessalonica must have been fresh in his mind, but was never strong enough to deter or discourage him from his task of preaching the gospel. Paul had been fortified against this from the very first. The words of the Lord Jesus through Ananias at his conversion was “I will show him how great things he

must suffer for my sake.” After a very brief period of witnessing in the synagogues at Damascus, the Jews there were so infuriated at his preaching that they watched the city’s gates day and night to kill him. Acts 9:1-25. Wherever he goes it is the same: Antioch in ch. 13. Iconium, Lystra, Derbe in ch. 14. Philippi in ch. 16. Corinth in ch. 18. Ephesus in ch. 19, etc, in every city, bonds and afflictions abide me, he says. “Yet none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself.” Acts 20:22-24.

To take sides openly on the side of Christ in an hostile world will involve persecution in some measure, but ought we not to expect it? should we run away from it? If any man suffer as a Christian the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon him. He that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Tim. 3:12.

There is also another aspect of conflict, i.e. the spiritual, see such scriptures as Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 10:3-4. From this there is no discharge.

Conviction, v. 4

The dictionary definition is ‘a settled belief.’ Paul was never in doubt as to the dignity conferred upon him in being entrusted with the gospel, of which he was not ashamed, v. 4. “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak”; In 2 Tim. 1:11 he speaks of being appointed a preacher, and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles. Again, in 1 Cor. 4:1, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” As such, he is aware that he will one day give an account of his stewardship. In writing to Timothy he enjoins him to keep that which is committed to his trust. 1 Tim. 6:20, and again. The things which thou hast heard of me the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. Is this the reason why he uses the phrase ‘This is a faithful saying’ so much in the pastoral letters? To Paul there could be no substitute for the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Nothing could be added to make it more attractive.

Are we today losing confidence in the message we preach? or determined not to know anything among men save “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” 1 Cor. 2:4.

(Continued)

“She Hath Done What She Could”

(Mark 14:8)

S. R. Stokes

This expression would seem to imply that there was much that she could not do, and was not expected to do. She did what she was able to do; a service which was her privilege to perform, and in the fulfilling of which she received the highest commendation.

A critical reading of the accounts in the four Gospels suggests that three women felt compelled to anoint the Lord Jesus Christ (the Anointed One) with precious ointment. There is the incident recorded in Luke 7. Here was one who was forgiven much, and nothing, no one, was allowed to stand in her way in showing her gratitude to the One who came to call sinners to repentance. Unlike the betrayer who so deceitfully kissed his Master on the cheek, she kissed His feet, anointing them, having washed them with her tears. She may have been unaware of Isaiah’s prophecy, but she knew something of the truth of the words Isaiah wrote. To her, how beautiful were the feet of Him who had brought her the good tidings of Salvation—God’s regard. and God’s provision for those burdened with sin!

Then there are the three references in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and John 12. Some say that, conforming to the characteristics of each Gospel, each of the writers record a different aspect of the same occasion. In this then there are difficulties. For example:

(1) The timing. Mark records that the incident took place within two days of the celebration of the Passover. John says, “six days before the Passover.”

(2) The location. Matthew and Mark state specifically that it was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper. John seems to imply that, certainly in Bethany, but perhaps in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, for Martha was busily serving.

(3) Matthew and Mark do not name the woman, but they agree that the very precious ointment was poured on the Lord’s head. John says that it was Mary who anointed His feet, and wiped them with her hair.

(4) Matthew registers protest from the disciples; Mark from “some” who were there. John names Judas Iscariot as the one who protested, and adds the reason why Judas should do so.

All three Gospels record the intervention of the Lord, but with some enlargement in Matthew and Mark. In His estimation the woman had wrought a good work, beautiful in His eyes, and a work which would be spoken of for a memorial of her, wheresoever the gospel should be preached throughout the whole world. Could any commendation be of a higher order than that? And, apparently, a ministry suitable, and appropriate for a woman.

But further. John quotes the Lord as saying, “against the day of my burying hath she kept this.” Mark

“It is always the case that those who think much of Christ think little of themselves, while those who think little of Christ think much of themselves.”

F. B. Hole in comments on Laodicea

records the statement, “she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.” And we know that, in Old Testament times, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed, and indeed the Tabernacle, and all in it. The holy anointing oil (Exodus 30) was to be used, as indicated by the Lord God, in the appointment to a specified ministry. In that connection, Exodus 40, and 1 Kings 19:15,16 come readily to mind. Was there something of this in the woman's mind when she anointed the Lord's body to the burying, remembering that burial is the true certifying of death? Was she Divinely taught? Had she a degree of understanding, that the Father had appointed His Son to this sacrificial death? If this is a true assumption, then she was in advance of those who later declared that He was “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” That all was done in accordance with “whatsoever (God's) hand and (God's) counsel determined before to be done.”

She represents a silent, devoted sister, who needed not to covet ministry reserved for the brethren, but who had an understanding of the Divine will and purpose, doing what she could, and which was entirely appropriate for her to do, and delighting the heart of the One who was to her pre-eminent above all others.

Others also DID WHAT THEY COULD and will receive an abundant reward—

PHEBE—Our sister, servant of the church, succourer of many, including Paul.

PRISCILLA—a fellow helper, laid down her neck for Paul, the local church met in her house.

MARY bestowed much labour on the saints.

TRYPHENA and TRYPHOSA were labouring in the Lord.

THE BELOVED PERSIS had laboured much in the Lord.

THE MOTHER OF RUFUS had at some time “mothered” Paul. (Romans 16).

Purity, according to Webster, means: “Entire separation from heterogeneous and extraneous matter; clear, free from mixture; as pure water, pure air, pure silver or gold.” The idea is that which is pure consists of one thing; it is uncompounded, without mixture or adulteration. It has all that belongs to it and nothing else.

A pure heart, then, contains nothing adverse to God. For where there is mixture, there cannot be purity.

Thomas Cook

“Not Forsaking the Assembling of Ourselves Together”

Anonymous

In Hebrews 10:24-25 we read “*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much*

the more, as ye see the day approaching”. In relation to exhortation to the Hebrew converts addressed in this epistle, the conclusive negative opposite (those forsaking the assembling of themselves together) may be linked perhaps with Hebrews 6:4-6 and 1 John 2:18-19, those that permanently left the Christian gatherings as apostates. By contrast, the purpose of this short message is to draw an application from the verses cited at the onset with respect to an increasing tendency noted today toward a casual and optional approach to assembly meeting attendance on the part of many who would still be considered “in fellowship” as far as the assembly “roster” is concerned. Generally, this subject of assembly meeting attendance tends to carry with it an added or undue provocation designed to shame those that have absented themselves from assembly meetings, those protesting that the meetings conflict with their business or personal schedules, or even more lamentable, and possibly more honest, the meetings are just not that important to them. We would seek to steer away from blame or guilt and rather, but rather to stir within each heart a revived exercise (for the right reasons) to make every effort toward attending all scheduled assembly meetings. While Hebrews 10:24-25 use the words “provoke” and “exhort”, note that the word “love” is also penned and should not be lost on us when dealing with this subject. Loveless pressure is neither godly provocation, nor true exhortation. We can start this study by looking at key elements whereby we are attracted to the assembly meetings and make every effort to be there.

The first key element is broad, general, and perhaps the most compelling, that being the fact that the Lord promises to be in the midst of His people whenever they assemble in His name (Matt. 18:20). We love the Lord because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). While there may be other reasons that attract us to assemble, the Lord's presence should stand clear as being first and foremost. I'm there because the Lord is there! It should be noted that this promise is not limited to the breaking of bread meeting, but includes *all* meetings where the saints are gathered together in His name: prayer and bible study, oversight, missionary, gospel, ministry and discipline meetings. The Lord does not sanction a hierarchy, or level of meeting importance. Some maintain that the breaking of bread is the only “commanded” meeting, the others are only “suggested” yet other types of meetings are clearly supported in the scriptures, and were not met with reluctance, but carried out willingly, recognizing their place and need. We do well to regard them likewise today.

Closely related to the first reason why assembly meeting attendance ought not to be seen as an unwanted burden, but rather as a great privilege is that “the love of Christ constraineth us” to serve and honor Him in every way possible (1 Cor. 5:14). Notice how verse 17 is just three verses away from verse 14, “If any man be in Christ,

he is a new creature...”. The indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit will enable us to enjoy each of the various assembly meetings as He points us to Christ, thus drawing our hearts toward Him as He has, and continues to exercise His heart toward us. We are constrained, that is, both captured and motivated by the love of Christ to follow Him where He promises to be: where we are gathered to His name, regardless of what type of meeting. Not attending assembly meetings could eventually grieve or quench that same Spirit, and can even have an adverse, discouraging effect on those who do attend regularly.

As well, observe the little phrase in Acts 2:42 “...they continued steadfastly” and a little further down in verse 46 “...they continued daily with one accord...”. In joyful and united spirit, they looked for (yearned for) opportunities to be together relative to the furtherance of their newfound spiritual comradery. How is it with us today and such yearning? Instead of putting a week between their times together or half-weeks, they spent every single day together! What a draw, God’s people! Once again, John writes in his first epistle (3:14) “We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren...”. So we observe that another attraction to the assembly meeting is based on the mutual link with Christ by faith we share (and not by common secular interests which can potentially divide an assembly rather than foster unity). There are no people like the Lord’s people, with all our peculiarities and differences. We love who the Lord loves. And notice, they continued with one accord, not each sounding out their own trumpets to be heard over the top of each other. They were like the Bereans in Acts 17 (whom we will address next) and humbly carried out the tenets of Philippians chapter 2.

Those noble Bereans! Did they devise excuses to miss assembly meetings? Oh, no! What marked them in their desire to be together? “...They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily...” (Acts 17:11). Peter tells us to “desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2). A desire to learn God’s ways should mark every one of us as believers. This Spirit-wrought desire should also cultivate a further desire to be present where the Bible is opened and taught from. Inversely, the absence of such desire would tell me I am content to remain a spiritual dwarf with a crooked back, deformed feet, and flat nose. The midweek meeting (which is only once a week, not daily) provides an opportunity to learn that which I might not otherwise ever discover. Brethren, think of what we miss when we absent ourselves! Such meetings also help foster unity in the assembly as the saints learn the same passages together. In most assemblies, there is also collective prayer made, another tremendous reason to be present at such an arranged time. What power was seen in Acts 4:31 when they prayed where they were all assembled together!

There is also an outward testimony to the world to be considered. The neighborhood looks on. They might wonder about a Wednesday night meeting, but alas, there are only four or five cars seen in the parking lot. They see many more cars on Sunday morning (which the world would expect) but so few during the mid-week. How would we expect them to interpret this? How do we interpret it to our own hearts? Would we feel comfortable telling them what we’ve told ourselves? Take that one big step further. Are we comfortable telling the Lord the reason we choose not to attend the midweek meeting?

Overseeing brethren, note Proverbs 27:23. Meet regularly. The exhortation is to “be diligent” and “look well” to the flock. Keep those arranged appointments to meet collectively to discuss important assembly matters. Hebrews 13:17 states that there is to be an account given to the Chief Shepherd regarding the souls of the flock. Administrative matters are important but the spiritual health of, guidance, and care for the Lord’s heritage cannot be overemphasized. Again, this exhortation is not to shame elders into action but as a reminder that the love of Christ constrains us to carry out these duties cheerfully and with a definite desired end, that being, the glory of God by tending to His purchased possession. It is, after all, **His** assembly.

These are just a few strong magnets to draw us out of our own ceiled houses (Haggai 1:4, 9) and away from preferred personal plans to meet collectively and keep the assembly strong. May God help instill in our hearts a renewed love for His courts, the New Testament local church with all its meetings, especially if we have hung our harps upon the willows and find ourselves presently singing the world’s funeral dirge, entangled in its relentless web. In a spiritually depressed frame of heart, it is sadly possible to invent every possible reason, whether truly valid or not, to absent ourselves from assembly meetings. Brethren, let’s start counting the reasons we should, and are privileged go to every scheduled gathering we can reasonably attend! As we grip the steering wheel on the way to our next assembly meeting, may the thoughts come forth, “Christ is there! The brethren are there! The truth is there! That’s where I ought to be! And not only this, but that’s where I *want* to be!” Lord, put the old song back in our hearts that we once sang on the bank of the Red Sea...and the new one to sing aloud as a rehearsal for the eternal song “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”.

Seeing the Glory of God

Edwin Adams

The Christian’s highest privilege is to know the Lord. Regeneration means a revelation from the Divine Spirit to the human spirit, which is awakened out of its sleep of death and endowed with a new power of perception. “I

beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,” was the intense longing of Moses. And our Lord’s desire, as expressed in His High Priestly prayer, was that those who belonged to Him should see His glory. The glory of God is in His character, His Word, His works; it is His “self-expression”. We discern God’s power and intelligence in nature: “The heavens declare the glory of God.” It is well to cultivate openness of soul towards God’s great picture-book of nature; the things that are seen are representations of the things not seen, as our Lord constantly pointed out.

But the Word of God satisfies as the works of God never can do, for in the Word we have the inspired record of what God told men about Himself. “A glory gilds the sacred page,” the glory of the self-revelation of its Author. Every regenerate person sees the glory of God in the Bible because he knows its Author. It is chiefly in Christ, the living Word, that we see the glory of God. Through Him we know God as Father, and of Him John wrote, “We beheld His glory . . . full of grace and truth.” To the believer the name of Jesus is a song in one word, a strain of heavenly music.

Consider His moral glories as revealed in the Gospels. In Him truth is mellowed by grace, and grace is strengthened by truth. In Him we see a perfect blending of majesty and meekness, dignity and humility, holiness and compassion, righteousness and love. “O the love of Christ,” said one, “we cannot understand it now, but what a beautiful study it will be for eternity!” In the ages to come we shall enjoy the boundless wealth of the lovingkindness of God in Christ. And here and now, as we grow in grace, we are learning more and more of its everlasting strength.

The Cross is the supreme achievement of the Captain of our salvation. The Cross tells us how much God cares for righteousness, and what He thinks of sin; and the Cross is the supreme act of God’s self-giving love; it tells how much He loves His world, and how much He suffers for it. The Cross solves the stupendous problem, “How can a just God forgive sins?” Let us make the Cross central in our thinking; it is the foundation of all our hopes. We see the glory of God in our own redemption. When Barnabas saw “the grace of God” in the disciples at Antioch, he rejoiced.

The Church is God’s supreme achievement, His masterpiece. And each individual Christian is a fresh thought from God to the Church, and a living illustration of His power and love. And all progress and victory in the Christian life exhibits the glory of God; it is the result of the impact of the grace of God upon human personalities. It is a great joy to see God at work in the life. When Israel was being pursued by Pharaoh, and when destruction seemed inevitable, God through Moses commanded His people to “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.”

And we today behold His glory as He changes the things that oppose, and works deliverance for those who trust and obey. According to John 11:40 it is those who believe that see the glory of God. For faith is “the evidence

of things not seen.” And the Lord reveals Himself especially to the obedient. Faith is a condition of His working in and through us. God is active where faith is. May it be our ambition to grow continually in the knowledge of God and of His will, and to see His glory, with ever increasing perception.

A Surrendered Life

A curious bit of history is related about that wonderful violinist, Paganini. One night, in Paris, where he was to play before a great crowd, as he was tuning his violin, he broke one of the strings—there was tremendous disappointment over the vast audience.

Paganini paid no attention to it, but worked with his thumb again for a while until he broke a second string—then the people began to hiss him slightly. But he went on, and by and by broke a third string—this time they were uproarious against him.

Quietly stepping to the front he said: “Ladies and gentlemen: One string and Paganini,”—and he began to bring such wonderful music out of that one string that the audience strained their necks that they might catch it all—he sat down with the whole house applauding because he had brought so much out of so little.

“One string and Paganini”—a Surrendered soul and God Almighty. Are you willing, are you ready? Because, thank God, the very best is going to be made of your life when you surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**"The dearest idol I have known
Whate'er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee."**

**"So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb."**

William Cowper