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Problems for Christians: Complacency

Hag. 1:1-13, (Lk. 18:9-12, I Cor. 4:4-8, Rev. 3:15-17, Phil. 3:12-14

Joel Portman

The first significant battle between Federal and Confederate forces in the Civil War of the United States was fought at a small place called Manassas on July 21, 1861. Federal forces numbering about 18,000 arrived to battle Confederate forces numbering only slightly more, but both sides expected that they would win the battle without difficult. In fact, believing that the war was a trifling matter that would be over quickly, a number of government officials and spectators from both sides came in horse and buggy to "observe" the battle, some even packing picnic lunches. The Federal army entertained the same attitude, but by the end of the day, Union forces had lost and they and the spectators were forced to retreat in confused haste. This loss shocked the Federals out of their complacency. Complacency has been the cause of many battles being lost, many kingdoms falling, and many individuals failing. It seems so insignificant to many to have an attitude of self-satisfaction, self-assurance, and a complacent outlook, so that they fail to realize their actual condition and inabilities, but the sad result is ultimate failure, defeat, and disappointment.

A. W. Tozer has well said that often the course of Christian experience is to begin well, but then to slip in a pattern of living and serving by **Rote**, which is followed eventually by being in

a **Rut**, and the result is **Rot**, then eventually **Ruin** ("Rut, Rot, or Revival"). Arnold Adams said once, when speaking in our hearing, that "A Rut is like a Grave with two openings." Yet, many believers, after beginning well and showing great exercise to progress spiritually and to seek to live with devotion to Christ, slip into a pattern that results in a condition resembling death. It might not be without activity, and may, in fact, be filled with much movement and different works, but it can be very superficial and without genuine reality that reflects the exercise of heart. One can be doing right things, with a certain amount of zeal and faithfulness, but for wrong reasons and without right motivation, thinking that simply complying with external activities is enough. They think all is well, feel unconcerned about conditions, have no zeal to make progress, and settle back. Their attitude is that they only need to do enough to "get by" and avoid problems with their elders. This is a problem that exists among many Christians. It can also be a problem that afflicts assemblies. After a Divine work to establish an assembly and then enable it to grow, a period can set in that is actually a spiritual decline. Activities are carried on and there is a lot of talk about "reaching out" and doing other important things, but it can be a facade for lethargy within. There are marks of this condition that we will look at in this article.

We apologize for the lateness of this issue, but are also thankful that it was possible to do so. Recent bilateral cataract surgery made intensive reading more difficult, and that, along with other difficulties, caused the delay. We are thankful that it wasn't necessary to completely cancel this month's issue, but as a result, we will also change the date of it being sent out to correspond, though we may vary the actual date of the month in the future.

We always appreciate the interest of those who read this, and also any efforts to encourage others to subscribe to the monthly emails that we send out. We trust that the Lord will bless and use it.

"Truths for our Day"

is a monthly publication that is freely available on the Internet and is intended to be a help to believers who appreciate the timeless truths of God's Word and who recognize the unchanging principles of God's will for His people. It is primarily intended to strengthen those who enjoy fellowship in local assemblies of believers who are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Editor and Publisher: Joel Portman
1200 Forest Glen Ct. SE,
Cedar Rapids, IA, 52403
Write to: mail@truthsforourday.com

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Thank you

Reality of Complacency

Among young believers this condition may not be seen, but after a few years this can become a real difficulty that we often feel in ourselves and can see in others.

It is most serious, because while it is so easily overlooked and casually tolerated, it actually is the greatest danger for **ALL believers!** It's also a condition that the Lord hates; "because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. . ." (Rev. 3:17). It's the easiest to slip into without knowing it.

God's charge to Israel was, in Isaiah 64:7, "No man stirreth up himself.." The constant call of the prophets was directed toward stirring Israel and Judah out of their complacent spirit. In Jeremiah's day, the attitude that the people held was that so long as the temple stood and its ordinances continued, that they were secure from the foe, even though the armies of Babylon surrounded the city (Jer. 7:4). "The Jews falsely thought that because their temple had been chosen by Jehovah as His peculiar dwelling, it could never be destroyed. Men think that ceremonial observances will supersede the need of holiness (Isa 48:2; Mic 3:11). The triple repetition of "the temple of Jehovah" expresses the intense confidence of the Jews." (JFB, "Commentary on the Bible"). But in vs. 9-12, he reminds them of what happened to Shiloh, where God had first set His name, then set aside and abandoned because of their sinfulness. We all need stirring, and may God stir our hearts now, we upon whom the end of the ages have arrived! All believers are in constant need of recognition of their true condition, repentance, restoration and revival. This was true in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and in church history up to our day. None can say that they are exempt.

Reading Haggai's stirring prophecy makes us aware of their need for such a stirring that he gave them by the word of the Lord. We find a condition of lethargy, self-satisfaction, complacency and selfishness. The background of his prophecy is obviously the lessened interest and exercise of the people to work, once the beginning had been made. They used the excuse that opposition from those around was

the reason for their cessation of work, whereas it was actually and lessening of their zeal and exercise. "When God's chief interest ceases to be our chief interest, some form of self-consideration inevitably will come in." (C. A. Coates). William Kelly said, "It is an inevitable alternative that we must be occupied, either with the Lord's things, or with our own." Paul said about Timothy, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's," (Phil 2:1).

This remnant had, by God's mercy, been given the opportunity to return to Jerusalem from Babylon. In so returning, they had responded to the Lord's open door, sacrificing much and enduring a difficult journey to arrive at a desolate city, standing in ruins, and requiring much work. They had labored, making a start on the rebuilt temple to the point of laying the initial foundation, and setting up the altar for worship. All began working, but then without much persistence against the enemies around them, they ceased to work and began building and furnishing their own houses. They had expected great things at the beginning, but they were now satisfied with the form, a shell of the temple, and had no exercise to begin again. No Exercise of heart. What a contrast with those in the wilderness who responded with willing hearts to supply all that was needed to build the tabernacle until all was completed!

We see the same condition in the attitude of the Pharisee in Luke 18. He came into the temple, needing nothing (he thought), asking nothing, and receiving nothing. Went away as satisfied with himself as when he came. No wonder the Lord said that the publican went down to his house justified rather than he!

The assembly in Corinth exhibited the same characteristics. In their eyes, nothing terribly wrong existed among them, they never asked Paul or spoke to him about the moral sin, divisions, and breakdown of divine order that existed. In ch. 5, he rebukes them for virtually priding themselves on their toleration of moral iniquity among them! Thankfully, it seems that they responded to his rebuke and teaching and repented, as we read in 2 Cor. 2.

One need not dwell at length on the condition in Laodicea, but reading the Lord's letter to them, it is clear that they evidently thought in themselves that they were doing

well, they needed nothing. Possibly they were active in different works and assembly meetings were going smoothly, but the Lord was OUTSIDE the entire sphere of their self-satisfaction. Divine judgment was soon to fall, but in the interim, the Lord, in His mercy, was standing outside the assembly door and inviting all who listened to His voice to open and allow Him to come in to fellowship with them.

Recognition of Complacency

We can identify the reality of complacency in ourselves by

1. Recognizing our own attitude toward ourselves. A believer should always be satisfied in Christ, and in what he/she has by the grace of God. However, we should never be satisfied with our own level of spirituality. Complacency is marked by that form of self-satisfaction that prevents a believer from seeking to change or be different. One might exist on the same level year after year, with no growth, likely with decline, and not feel concerned about it. That is complacency.

2. Recognizing our willingness to give the Lord less than the best. Some are satisfied, and feel that they have done enough, by just coming to the meetings. Being faithful in attendance is good. But is there any exercise to worship? Do we pray by just saying words? Any careful listener to our prayer meetings will note that many of us simply say the same things as others have already said. Do we pray with real exercise of soul? Few prayer meetings mention our real needs for spiritual refreshment, greater devotion and faithfulness, recovery and deeper exercise of heart. Do we come prepared for receive from a ministry meeting? Sadly, many believers listen to the ministry of God's Word almost like a form of "Christian entertainment." They could very rarely tell one what was spoken the day before, so that it has had no good or positive impact in their lives.

3. Noticing our attitude toward others. We can be like the Pharisees, who compared themselves with others, always with those who were assumed to be on a lower level than they. By this means, they felt superior and more faithful. We can also judge, and even condemn

Envy is blind and knows nothing except to depreciate the excellencies of others.

others for what they do, but fail to judge the same in ourselves. We very readily condone failure in our own lives by making excuses. That's complacency.

Results of Complacency

1. We Decline personally. There is not the eager expectation, ambition to make progress, grow, rise. Study is not directed as it should be toward increased knowledge of Christ. We don't use opportunities in spiritual matters that the Lord affords us.

2. Assembly degenerates. There is no growth, either numerically or spiritually, saints are not edified, Spirit of God is grieved, souls are not saved, unsaved not spoken to. Meetings become dull, dry, humdrum, routine, lackadaisical, only a form.

3. Christ is dishonored because the glory of His person is not upheld, His Purposes are not fulfilled, His Power is not realized, Spirit of God is quenched, Testimony is diminished.

Requirement of the Complacent

1. Must be awakened out of sleep. Note Eph. 5:14: "Awake . . ." We need a good dose of self-judgment in the light of God's Word with confession as the result.

2. Zeal and Exercise must be stirred. Response to the Spirit's dealings so that the pattern of simply continuing in the outward practice of what is right is recognized as that which which the Lord doesn't accept, so that there is an inward crying out for more.

3. Devotion to Christ must be deepened. There needs to be more longing for Him, more Love for Him, more Desiring for Him and His presence. Ps. 42:1 reminds us of the deep thirst of the deer for the water, and the psalmist equates that to his own longing for God. Do we have that?

4. Need to realize more of the Spirit's Purposes. He wants to develop and see growth in each Christian. We really never reach the end in spiritual development. Christian living is a constant process of learning more of God's Word, more of Christ, and more of His purposes for us. We must make progress right to the end (Phil. 3:12-17).

Recovery from Complacency in Haggai

We notice that in Haggai's short, powerful messages to the people, he . . .

1. Stripped their excuses. Exposed them for what they really were. Remember Elijah, and how God used him in his dark day of departure to expose the root of the problem.

2. Exposed their true condition. He made no mention of opposition or difficulty, but he showed that their self-interest had caused this neglect.

3. Reminded them of the cost of neglect. What resulted was because of their complacent attitude. They were fruitless, joyless, resourceless, and dissatisfied. God can hardly bless and use a believer who is not yielded to His control and exercised about His responsibility to Him.

4. Exhorted them specifically, told what to do (v.8) Called for a response, their own personal exercise to go up to the mountain and bring wood (no easy task). Shake off their lethargy and "seek first the kingdom of God..." Recovery and forward progress is never an easy matter; it requires desire, activity, and labor for God.

5. Reinforced them with His own promised presence with them (v.13). What a precious promise for them to hear, "I am with you." (Hag. 1:13). Perhaps one of the shortest messages out of the five in this book, but certainly the sweetest and most encouraging.

May the Lord help us to recognize the danger of this condition, and remedy it!

How to Dwell in the Fire of God, pt. 2

Alexander McLaren

And now, look next at the prophet's answer. It is simple. He says that if a man is to hold fellowship with, or to face the judgment of, the pure and righteous God, the plainest dictate of reason and common-sense is that he himself must be pure and righteous to match. The details into which his answer to the question runs out are all very homely, prosaic, pedestrian kind of virtues, nothing at all out of the way, nothing that people would call splendid or heroic. Here they are: -'He that walks righteously, -a

short injunction, easily spoken, but how hard!- 'and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppression, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, that shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.' Righteous action, righteous speech, inward hatred of possessions gotten at my neighbour's cost, and a vehement resistance to all the seductions of sense, shutting one's hands, stopping one's ears, fastening one's eyes up tight so that he may not handle, nor hear, nor see the evil-there is the outline of a trite, everyday sort of morality which is to mark the man who, as Isaiah says, can 'dwell amongst the everlasting fires.'

Now, if at your leisure you will turn to [Psa 15:1-5](#) and [Psa 24:1-10](#), you will find there two other versions of the same questions and the same answer, both of which were obviously in our prophet's mind when he spoke. In the one you have the question put: 'Who shall abide in Thy tabernacle?' In the other you have the same question put: 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?' And both these two psalms answer the question and sketch the outline {and it is only an outline} of a righteous man, from the Old Testament point of view, substantially in the same fashion that Isaiah does here.

I do not need to remark upon the altogether unscientific and non-exhaustive nature of the description of righteousness that is set forth here. There are a great many virtues, plain and obvious, that are left out of the picture. But I ask you to notice one very special defect, as it might seem. There is not the slightest reference to anything that we call religion. It is all purely pedestrian, worldly morality; do righteous things; do not tell lies; do not cheat your neighbor; stop your ears if people say foul things in your hearing; shut your eyes if evil comes before you. These are the kind of duties enjoined, and these only. The answer of my text moves altogether on the surface, dealing only with conduct, not with character, and dealing with conduct only in reference to this world. There is not a word about the inner nature, not a word about the inner relation of a man to God. It is the minimum of possible qualifications for dwelling with God.

Well, now, do you achieve that minimum? Suppose we waive for the moment all reference to God; suppose we waive for the moment all reference to motive and inward nature; suppose we keep ourselves only on the outside of things, and ask what sort of conduct a man must have that is able to walk with God? We have heard the answer.

Now, then, is that me? Is this sketch here, admittedly imperfect, a mere black-and-white swift outline, not intended to be shaded or coloured, or brought up to the round; is this mere outline of what a good man ought to be, at all like me? Yes or no? I think we must all say No to the question, and acknowledge our failure to attain to this homely ideal of conduct. The requirement pared down to its lowest possible degree, and kept as superficial as ever you can keep it, is still miles above me, and all I have to say when I listen to such words is, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

My dear friends, take this one thought away with you:-the requirements of the most moderate conscience are such as no man among us is able to comply with. And what then? Am I to be shut up to despair? am I to say: Then nobody can dwell within that bright flame? Am I to say: Then when God meets man, man must crumble away into nothing and disappear? Am I to say, for myself: Then, alas for me! when I stand at His judgment bar?

Let us take the Apostle's answer.

God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.' Now, to begin with, let us distinctly understand that the New Testament answer, represented by John's great words, entirely endorses Isaiah's; and that the difference between the two is not that the Old Testament, as represented by psalmist and prophet, said, 'You must be righteous in order to dwell with God,' and that the New Testament says, 'You need not be.' Not at all! John is just as vehement in saying that nothing but purity can bind a man in thoroughly friendly and familiar conjunction with God as David or Isaiah was. He insists as much as anybody can insist upon this great principle, that if we are to dwell with God we must be like God, and that we are like God when we are like Him in righteousness and love.

'He that saith he hath fellowship with Him, and walketh in darkness, is a liar!' That is John's short way of gathering it all up. Righteousness is as essential in the gospel scheme for all communion and fellowship with God as ever it was declared to be by the most rigid of legalists; and if any of you have the notion that Christianity has any other terms to lay down than the old terms-that righteousness is essential to communion-you do not understand Christianity. If any of you are building upon the notion that a man can come into loving and familiar friendship with God as long as he loves and cleaves to any sin, you have got hold of a delusion that will wreck your souls yet,-is, indeed, harming, wrecking them now, and will finally destroy them if you do not get rid of it. Let us always remember that the declaration of my first text lies at the very foundation of the declaration of my second.

What, then, is the difference between them? Why, for one thing it is this-ISAIAH tells us that we must be righteous, John tells us how we may be. The one says, 'There are the conditions,' the other says, 'Here are the means by which you can have the conditions.' Love is the productive germ of all righteousness; it is the fulfilling of the law. Get that into your hearts, and all these relative and personal duties will come. If the deepest, inmost life is right, all the surface of life will come right. Conduct will follow character, character will follow love.

The efforts of men to make themselves pure, and so to come into the position of holding fellowship with God, are like the wise efforts of children in their gardens. They stick in their little bits of rootless flowers, and they water them; but, being rootless, the flowers are all withered to-morrow and flung over the hedge the day after. But if we have the love of God in our hearts, we have not rootless flowers, but the seed which will spring up and bear fruit of holiness.

But that is not all. Isaiah says 'Righteousness,' John says 'Love,' which makes righteousness. And then he tells us how we may get love, having first told us how we may get righteousness: 'We love Him because He first loved us.' It is just as impossible for a man to work himself into loving God as it is for a

man to work himself into righteous actions. There is no difference in the degree of impossibility in the two cases. But what we can do is, we can go and gaze at the thing that kindles the love; we can contemplate the Cross on which the great Lover of our souls died, and thereby we can come to love Him. John's answer goes down to the depths, for his notion of love is the response of the believing soul to the love of God which was manifested on the Cross of Calvary. To have righteousness we must have love; to have love we must look to the love that God has to us; to look rightly to the love that God has to us we must have faith. Now you have gone down to the very bottom of the matter. Faith is the first step of the ladder, and the second step is love and the third step is righteousness.

And so the New Testament, in its highest and most blessed declarations, rests itself firmly upon these rigid requirements of the old law. You and I, dear brethren, have but one way by which we can walk in the midst of that fire, rejoicing and unconsumed, namely that we shall know and believe the love which God hath to us, love Him back again 'with pure hearts fervently,' and in the might of that receptive faith and productive love, become like Him in holiness, and ourselves be 'baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' Thus, fire-born and fiery, we shall dwell as in our native home, in God Himself.

By these things examine yourself. By whose rules am I acting? In whose name? In whose strength? For whose glory? What faith, humility, self-denial and love of God and to man have there been in my actions?

Spiritual Growth, pt. 1

Robert Surgenor

Opening your Bible, you will find that there is much contained therein concerning spiritual growth. In fact Peter likens the word of

God as milk to facilitate spiritual growth.

In the secular world you will find records of various individuals that made history through the stature of their physical bodies. Chandra Bahadur Dangi, a man in his seventies, captured the attention of the world due to his stature. He lived in Nepal where the tallest mountain in the world is located, but Chandra was the shortest man in the world, for he was only 1 foot 7 inches tall! On the other end of the scale was Robert Wadlow who weighed 490 pounds, and was 8 foot 11.1 inches high.

Coming to the spiritual realm, I also find dwarfs and giants. In the spiritual world, a person may be less than five feet tall physically, and yet a giant, and a person may be seven foot tall and yet a dwarf. Regarding size, the material world measures the human body, but the spiritual world measures the person's spirit to determine size. Speaking in the spiritual realm you are either a dwarf, or average, or a giant.

Henry Ford

When Henry Ford first began to make automobiles on an assembly line he ran ads in Michigan newspapers to hire dwarfs. He needed very little people to wire up things behind the dashboards of his Model T. Fords, because of the access limitations.

At Willow Run, Ford Motor Company built B-24 bomber planes for World War II using automobile mass production techniques. Airplanes were much more complex than cars. They required constant design changes poorly suited to a standardized assembly line. Ford overcame these difficulties and, at the plant's peak, Willow Run crews produced an average of one bomber every 63 minutes. Dwarfs were employed to assemble units inside the wings. I remember the late William Warke saying; "Henry Ford may have needed dwarfs to help build cars and airplanes, but God doesn't need any dwarfs in His assemblies." A spiritual dwarf cannot help to build a healthy assembly.

The Assembly at Corinth

It is amazing that the assembly of God at Corinth would still be spiritual babes after being saved five years. In chapter one of his epistle to them, Paul thanks God for what He had

bestowed upon them, but in chapter three he rebukes them. Notice his inspired remarks in chapter one. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor.1:3-7).

This assembly had experienced the gift of grace and peace from God their Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was not desiring that they might have grace and peace, he was recognizing that grace and peace were already theirs. That is the reason for his thanksgiving. He is not thanking God for the things manifested in them, for there were many things in their behavior that were very grievous to the Lord and to Paul. However, he was thankful for the possibilities that were theirs. Grace was at their disposal in Christ Jesus, in everything they had been enriched in Him, in all utterance and all knowledge, and they came behind in no gift. They were "enriched." This is a tremendous bestowal. I trust that you understand what it means. The word is ploutizw (ploutizo), which means, "to be made rich, to be richly furnished." This is the word from which we derive our word "plutocrat," which means, "extremely wealthy." They were enriched in all utterance and knowledge. They were given skill in speaking. They had a message given by God to declare.

Not only this, God had given them the understanding of that message, so that it would, in wisdom, sound forth intelligently. These people were wealthy. They had been given a message, a message that they were responsible to utter to others. God's deposit was given to them not only for their personal possession, but that it might be used for the benefit of mankind. I believe that in various degrees, this gift of utterance and knowledge has been given to every born again soul. You, as a witness have been entrusted with the gospel message, and you have a solemn responsibility to make known that message to others. The late Paul Elliot, a professional bar-

ber, gave up trimming the ears of men with a clipper to go out and fill the ears of sinners with the gospel. His favorite way of approaching a sinner with the gospel was to simply tell them how he was saved by the grace of God. Let me ask you, how many people this month have you told your conversion, or given a gospel tract? Remember, you are a spiritual plutocrat. God had given the Corinthian saints all that was needed to fulfill their functioning as witnesses. He has done the same for you, and for me.

The Corinthians were, "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Why is this mentioned at this particular time? Simply to remind them, that when the Lord comes "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). They had been held responsible to make profitable use of the gifts that God had entrusted to them, and at the judgment seat of Christ they will either reap a reward or lose it, depending how they responded to their given gift. How true the words of C. T. Studd; "Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." Remember, we too, shall give an account of all our time in that day when we shall stand before Him.

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" (1 Cor. 3:1-4).

At Corinth, the potential for great accomplishments for God was there, but seemingly not harnessed. The Spirit had imparted to them manifold gifts. They were richly furnished by the Lord, but something was sadly lacking. In spite of their spiritual blessings, after five years they were still carnal. Instead of developing into mature saints, they were still spiritual babes. Their minds were still immature, consequently their actions were immature also. This is manifested by the varied conditions that prevailed in

the assembly. These sad conditions were a prompting factor in Paul writing them.

Most problems plaguing the assemblies of God today, are the result of immaturity. When you find immaturity in the saints, you will find problems resulting from the activity of the flesh, and when you have immaturity in shepherds, resulting in a lack of discernment and spiritual knowledge, you will find more problems over already existing problems. When a problem cannot be addressed and solved by shepherds, the problem becomes greater. The assembly at Corinth had manifold problems, and Paul rebukes them, writing; "Are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" (1 Cor. 6:2-5).

Feeding in the Scriptural Sense

Feeding sheep and lambs involves far more than publicly reading the word of God, and making a few comments in a Bible reading. The work of shepherding calls for the spiritual capacity to solve one's problems, give solemn advice to those erring, counsel young saints contemplating marriage, opening the scriptures and expounding intelligently the contents to the spiritual benefit of the assembly. How many shepherds do you know that teach the saints the holy scriptures by holding a week or two of meetings on a particular subject, such as: the Tabernacle, or Egypt to Canaan, or the Seven Feasts of Jehovah? Has any shepherd in your assembly ever held a week or two of ministry meetings on a New Testament epistle? If not, why? Feeding the flock also involves more than just preaching. It also involves caring in a monetary way for those in need. Paul exhorted the Ephesian shepherds; "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

The Shepherd in Ezekiel & Daniel

The shepherd's model is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Good Shepherd; the Great Shepherd, and the Chief Shepherd. He is spoken of by Isaiah and Ezekiel; "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa 40:11). "I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick" (Eze. 34:15-16).

The Human Body's Parts

In a human body there are many different parts all working for the healthy functioning of that body. The same principle exists in a scriptural assembly, there are people of all sorts of temperaments and aspirations. Some are soon given to anger; others are touchy, and easily hurt; while others are extremely timid and withdrawn. Others are known as "Mr. Important." Permeated with pride, they seek to rise above others to be seen and heard. They crave to be admired. Then we have "dark sided" individuals, who always look on the gloomy side of things as they dwell on "Doom Street." Others have a tendency to dwell on the faults and shortcomings of others. But in spite of all this diversity the Spirit has divided to every man spiritual gifts severally as He will. If Christians remain dwarfs, the gifts given to them will never develop and the assembly will be the loser. Notice Paul's exhortation regarding this; "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." (Rom. 12:6-8). The Spirit imparts the gift, but that gift must be used to develop.

Every assembly planted has been endowed with spiritual gifts to assist that assembly in its growth and survival. Every Christian has a gift, non excluded. Seeing that teaching is one of many gifts, why do some assemblies

have no teachers? The reason is, there are persons in that assembly that have been given the gift of teaching, but they have been too lazy to develop that gift. Too lazy, or indifferent to set aside hours for the intense prayerful study of the scriptures. Or, perhaps they have too many material possessions to take care of, leaving no time for God. Thus, they have remained dwarfs. J. Hudson Taylor, famous missionary to China, in speaking of material possessions, remarked, "Oh the happiness of having little to care for." He was a wise man.

(continued)

The Christian life never was an unending series of successes, a triumphal course of activity, or a quiet acquisition of knowledge. Suffering and seeming defeat have always been part of the lot of the faithful. Here is restraint at least to the flesh.

Is Death Avoidable?

E. W. Rogers, edited

THERE are not a few who wish that it were avoidable, because they fear that which follows it. Others desire also that it were avoidable so that they might prolong their earthly pleasures. Others, however, only wish that it were, but that is conditional upon an improvement of circumstances of life. But all are agreed that it is not, except a few who at times may be heard to sing such words as

"Oh, joy, Oh! delight! should we go without dying,
No sickness, no dread, no death and no crying;
Caught up in the clouds with our Lord into glory
When Jesus receives His own."

Now the question forces itself, Is this sentiment a justifiable one? Is death avoidable? and if so, for whom? The only

authoritative source of information on the matter is the Scriptures, which answer the inquiry in the affirmative, furnishing for us,

A historic precedent.

A specific promise.

A prophetic forecast.

The historic precedent is Enoch; or one might think of Elijah; these were two men who avoided death by translation, thus establishing the principle that, if only one man avoided it, death is avoidable. The precedent establishes the principle.

The specific promise is that of the Lord Jesus in John 11:25, that "he who liveth and believeth in me shall never die." This is a promise that those who possess two qualifications, viz., physical life and spiritual faith will at a given moment avoid death.

The prophetic forecasts are in 1 Cor. 15. and 1 Thess. 4, each of which passages speak of a day when a company will avoid death. "We shall not all sleep." The mortality of the living will be swallowed up in immortality. The "living" shall be "changed", that is, not die.

The conclusions to be derived from this are :

1. That death is avoidable by translation—a change of locality, for Enoch who was translated changed his place while He continued to keep his company—He walked with God.
2. That that avoidance is for a special class—those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ : personal trust in Him and His work.
3. That not all of that class will avoid death, but only those who are alive when the Lord Himself comes.
4. That the date of that coming is not revealed, it being an ever present hope, and likely to occur at any moment.

But another question arises as the result of those conclusions. What about those who believe and have died?

The Scriptures again answer, that death is nullifiable by resurrection. Death is to be destroyed. (1 Cor. 15:26).

This is proven by the same line of evidence:

1. Historical precedent, i.e., the resurrection

of the Lord Jesus.

2. Specific promise—John 11:25.—"though he were dead yet shall he live."

3. Prophetic forecast,—"the dead in Christ shall rise first": "this corruptible must put on incorruption" (1 Cor. 15.; 1 Thess. 4.).

From these passages certain conclusions, emerge :

1. That death is nullifiable by resurrection involving a change of condition from the disembodied state to an embodied condition. (see 2 Cor. 5.).

2. That resurrection is of two kinds—for some, to life everlasting, and for others to judgment. Between these a space of time of at least a millennium exists ; the former resurrection being in several stages. (See Rev. 20. 13 and John 5. 24-30).

3. That the initial moves of the "first resurrection" are taken when the Lord Jesus comes to the air at a moment not divulged.

Yet another question may be raised. In which company will the writer and reader be, supposing that each is a believer in the Lord Jesus?

It is impossible to say. All should hope to be alive when the Lord Jesus comes, but none can say for certain that he will be so. To this point are the following words of the late Dr. Neatby: "Death MAY come, the Lord WILL come."

"The Scriptures leave room for delay, but they bid the heart of the believer to wait for Him from the moment He left them."

"From the moment of conversion the Christian waits for the Son of God from heaven."

"Remark well that Paul never said that he personally would be alive when the Lord comes but he takes the place of then waiting for Him."

So that while none can speak with certainty as to themselves, yet the proper attitude is always to be looking up for the Lord to come and not down for death to come.

"The sky, not the grave, is our goal." Not so much the "coming" should be the object of the heart as the "Person" who is to come. "Even so come Lord Jesus." This was the encouraged attitude of the Thessalonian converts (see 1 Thess. 1:10). This was the admitted attitude of the early Christian leaders (see Phil. 3:20, and note "we" not "you.>").

The time of His coming is now nearer by

almost two thousand years than when it was first spoken of. Each one then should personally await His Lord, keeping the garments unspotted, the lamps burning, and the heart single.

times, and what He has done even for us.

Alex Rattray Hay (Early 20th Century Scottish Missionary, from Hay, *The New Testament Order for Church and Missionary*, Wipf & Stock Pub., 396-97)

Few books can stand three readings. But the Word of God is solid; it will stand a thousand readings, and the man who has gone over it most frequently and the most carefully, is the surest of finding new wonders there.

NT Church Pattern

The New Testament method was admirably adapted for the establishing of independent congregations. It insisted upon making the local church directly dependent upon the Holy Spirit. That produced, in the shortest possible time, experienced leadership. It set every convert to work immediately using the gifts of the Spirit given to him for service. Responsibility was thrust upon the churches and they were forced to function. They were revisited when necessary to give them encouragement and instruction but, so long as all went well, the Evangelist took no responsibility for their direction or work. If anything went wrong, effective aid was given at once, and the spiritual order restored, but never did an Evangelist consent to remain permanently with a church.

This method required a very real and active faith on the part of the Evangelists. They had to believe that the Holy Spirit could and would do His work in and through the converts. To a great extent, [the modern] method is the outcome of lack of faith; we fear that the Holy Spirit will not be able to do His part until we have made the way easy for Him. The New Testament Evangelists had their eyes upon God and upon His power and faithfulness; what looms large to us is rather the unpromising nature of the material to be used. We find it hard to believe that God can do for them what He did for similar converts in New Testament

The Model Church.

How beautiful that church must be
Where Watchful is the Porter;
Whilst Prudence has the Oversight,
With Patience as Exhorter.

Where Harmony conducts the Praise,
And Reverence the Worship;
Whilst Loyalty accords to Christ
The undisputed Lordship.

Humility pervades the place,
And Piety sweet smileth;
Whilst Purity her fragrance breathes,
And Gentleness beguileth.

Simplicity adorns the walls,
And Grace all captivating;
Benevolence is prominent,
Whilst Zeal is operating.

Here Mercy wears her diadem,
And Meekness conquers friction;
Whilst Truth exerts its influence,
Joy adds her benediction. — T. Baird.

When all is said, it may easily be that the great difference between professing Christians (the important difference in this day) is not between modernists and evangelicals but between those who have reduced Christianity to an intellectual formula and those who believe that the true essence of our faith lies in the supernatural workings of the Spirit in a region of the soul not accessible to mere reason. A. W. Tozer