

Doctrinal

Devotional

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The Impeccability of Christ

Sydney Maxwell

The title of this article, properly defined, means much more than that our blessed Lord was faultless and sinless. The Gospels give abundant evidence and leave us in no doubt about His sinlessness. Impeccability is infinitely more than that. Charles Hodge has stated, "This sinlessness of our Lord, however, does not amount to absolute impeccability; it was rather, He was able not to sin." The humble child of God with the evidence of the Gospel records before him totally rejects such reasonings of liberal theology and says with the utmost confidence and delight, He was not able to sin.

To rest short of anything less than an impeccable Christ is to destroy the foundation of the redemptive work at Calvary upon which all our hopes are built. It will also remove from us the only perfect example of our walk and conduct. The Lord Jesus walked here for God's pleasure amidst the moral corruption of earth. He arrived at Calvary in spotless perfection that was impossible to mar.

Let us look at this holy theme, dependent on the Holy Spirit to guide us in tracing the pathway of the Lord Jesus. Then we will be better fitted to heed the exhortation of Peter, that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). We will view His impeccability in five areas of the Gospel records.

THE MANNER OF HIS CONCEPTION

The reader of the two accounts given in Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 1 will notice that they are independent, yet complimentary. It is noteworthy that neither Mark nor John says anything regarding His wonderful birth. Mark emphasizes His service, while John is occupied with His Sonship. The birth of our Lord Jesus was natural, it is His conception that is supernatural. The Revised reading of Luke 1:35 is

preferred; "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; wherefore, also that which is to be born shall be called Holy, the Son of God."

The One Who existed before the manger in Bethlehem (John 8:58) took to Himself humanity. Thus the impeccability of the Lord Jesus is assured by the union of the Divine nature and the human nature in one glorious and unique personality. The virgin womb was the sphere of a Divine creative act. Every other birth is the creation of a new personality; in His case it was a Divine Person entering into a new sphere of existence. The humanity of the Savior was real, like that of other men, but possessing the character of sinlessness, unlike other men. It should be stated that it is impossible to divorce His Deity from His Humanity at any time. He is God (John 1:1) and He is Man (John 1:14).

This is sufficient to satisfy our hearts. While saints, in circumstances helped by the Holy Spirit may be able not to sin; with our Lord it was vastly different, He was not able to sin, because of Who He is, evidenced by His miraculous conception. May we never at any time seek to divide His personality. He was weary (John 4:6) yet He was the source of the life-giving water (John 4:14). He wept at the grave (John 11:35) yet He raised Lazarus (John 11:43). Glorious Person! "Behold the Man!" (John 19:5). "Behold Thy God!" (Isa. 40:9). We say in worship with Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). If we could understand it, there would be no mystery (1 Tim. 3:16).

THE MEANING OF HIS CONCEALMENT

There is a vast difference between outward blamelessness and impeccability. We have the testimony of the Father and of the Son regarding the sinlessness of Christ. This is evidence beyond question (Heb. 6:18).

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Thank you!

The virgin child is "*called Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*" (Matt. 1:23). How marvelous then to us is His subjection as "*He went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject unto them*" (Luke 2:51). In contemplating this we must also remember His words "*Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?*"

The years of gracious subjection, the details of which are hidden from us, are properly assessed by His Father, under Whose holy gaze He lived. The opened heavens at His baptism (Matt. 3:16-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:32-34) indicate to us the pleasure of the Father in Him, during those years of preparation. Here is the meal offering, the fine flour mingled with the oil (Luke 1:26-35) and anointed (Matt. 3:16) in which there was no leaven or honey but the fragrance of the frankincense in full measure (Lev. 2). The testimony of the Father to the Son in the years of concealment is this, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" This was the fulfillment of the words of the prophet, "*Mine elect, in Whom My soul delighteth,*" (Isa. 42:1).

THE MYSTERY OF HIS CONFLICT

Our Lord had presented Himself at the Jordan for baptism (Matt. 3:13). Seeing it was a baptism unto repentance, the reluctance of the Baptist is understood. Here was One with no sins to confess and nothing of which to repent. The Lord's words are explanation enough: "*Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.*"

From this place of commendation He goes forth to the conflict; in the perfection of His holiness He was to meet the Devil, who can find out every moral weakness in fallen man, who had instigated disobedience in the first Adam (Rom. 5:12). Satan was now to meet defeat in the Last Adam (Heb. 2:14, 1 John 3:8). In the congenial circumstances of the garden the first man proved he could sin. In the barren wilderness among the wild beasts, weary and hungry (Matt. 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13) the Lord Jesus proved that Satan's temptations found no response in Him.

Luke's description of the temptation is moral. Matthew follows a chronological sequence as can be seen from the repetition of the words "*then*" (Matt. 4:1,5) and "*again*" (v.8). The first temptation was; "Please Thyself", the second "Display Thyself", and the final one was "Glorify Thyself", or in other words to leave the path of dependence, devotion and Divine leading. There was nothing in that Holy Nature to respond to the evil from without. The tempter was repelled by the dependent Man and His use of the Word of God. The question is often asked, why the temptation, if our Lord could not sin? It was to prove He could not sin. "*He Himself hath suffered, being tempted*" (Heb. 2:18)

will ever be a mystery to us. The holier the person, the greater degree of suffering when tempted of evil. Joseph is an example. The purer the metal, the more severe is its test by fire. His impeccability is revealed as He returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee (Luke 4:14). Later He was to return to the Throne of Glory, a suitable and sympathetic High Priest as the result of His temptation and His further great triumph at Calvary (Heb. 4:14-16).

THE MEASURE OF HIS CONSECRATION

As we draw near to the close of His pilgrimage and service, we are made to worship and say with the hymn writer, "Hallelujah! What a Saviour!" Here was impeccability to the fullest degree. His steps were ever in His Father's will; He could look up with perfect confidence and say, "*I do always the things that please Him*" (John 8:29). In this chapter He asserts His Deity and yet claims perfect obedience in Manhood. He could look upon those who continually sought to find a flaw in His Holy Person and ask them, "*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*" (John 8:46).

He stands in the blaze of the Divine Presence, before the searchlight of Omniscience and declares from a devoted heart, "*I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do*" (John 17:4). In John 14:30 He declares with calm assurance, "*the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me*". The Devil had tried before (Matt. 4:1-11) and again through Peter (Matt. 16:21-23) but he had failed. The impeccability of our blessed Lord could not be sullied. Our meditations have revealed that He was a real Man but thank God, not a mere man.

THE MESSAGE OF HIS COMMENDATION

The Mount of Transfiguration saw the Lord arrayed outwardly in what was but the manifestation of inward perfection (Matt. 17:1-8, Mark 9:1-8, Luke 9:28-36). Mark says, "*And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them*" (Mark 9:3). The commendation of the Father on the Mount spanned the brief years from the Jordan to the last week (Matt. 17:5). Great personages of a bygone day, great in their time, but peccable in their character, must be removed and the wondering disciples must see "*no man, save Jesus only*" (Matt. 17:8). In His impeccability He must stand alone, no son of men fit to stand beside Him. The shadows of Calvary cross His pathway now and the prospect of it only manifested the love of His devoted heart, and the Father's voice again confirmed the glory given to Him (John 12:27-28).

We have heard the Divine testimony. In closing let us listen to other voices. Demons acknowledged Him as the Holy One of God, but such testimony He rejected, because of its source (Luke 4:34). The Roman Jurist,

Pilate, acknowledges, *"I find no fault in this Man"*. The thief on the cross adds his testimony, *"This Man hath done nothing amiss"*. The voice of the Roman Centurion cries, *"Certainly this was a righteous Man"*. We look forward to the day when we, morally like Him, shall join our voices around the Throne and proclaim His matchless worth (Rev. 5:9). In the Gospels we have seen outward evidence of His sinlessness, but we need constantly to remember that the Father looked upon *"the fat of the inwards"* and found in Him inner excellencies and perfections that we only faintly grasp.

Thy stainless life, Thy lovely walk
 In every aspect true,
 From the defilement all around
 No taint of evil drew.
 Morning by morning Thou didst wake
 Amidst this poisonous air;
 Yet no contagion touched Thy soul,
 No sin disturbed Thy prayer.

THE JEALOUSY OF GOD

Charles R. Keller

According to Exodus 34:14, the name of God is Jealous and the Lord is a Jealous God. There is much said in the Scriptures concerning jealousy. There are two words closely connected and they seem like the same words but their meaning is different; they are "Envy" and "Jealousy". Envy has to do with that which belongs to another; one could be envious of another's possession. Jealousy has to do with that which is one's own. Jealousy is spoken of in two different ways in the Scripture—the right and the wrong way. The wrong way is found in Song of Solomon 8:6: *"Jealousy is as cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame."* Jealousy can put people in their grave. The right kind of Jealousy is that which defends the honor of another. An example of this was the Apostle Paul who could say concerning the Lord's people, *"I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I might present you a chaste virgin unto Christ."* The Apostle was so jealous of the Lord's people that he was ready to defend them and fight for them against any that might lead them astray. There are a number of things God is jealous of and He will seek to defend the honor of the same.

God is jealous of the Person and Name of Christ

Read Matt. 17:1-5. In Matt. 16, we have the universal aspect of the Church which began on the day of Pentecost. Read Acts 2. In the 18th chapter of Matthew we have the local aspect of the church, that is an

assembly gathered together unto the precious Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In between these two, in the 17th chapter, we have the Transfiguration scene. The Lord takes with Him Peter, James and John and goes up into the mount, and for a brief moment they got a glimpse of His glory. Peter was so entranced by the sight that he said, *"Let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses and one for Elias."* How solemn to think that Peter was putting Christ on the same platform as the men—Moses and Elias—who had appeared unto them on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Immediately God showed that He was jealous of the Person and the Name of His Son and was going to defend the honor of that Person and Name and a voice spoke from heaven in audible tones, *"This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him."* Whether it was the church universal as seen in Matthew 16, or whether it was the local assembly as seen in Matthew 18—Christ's Person and Name alone were to be the ground of gathering and the theme and center of worship, and not Man even though they may have been good men in their day and generation.

It is a blessed privilege to be associated with that Person and Name. Nothing needs to be added to it or taken from it. It is a Name that need not be dropped, but can be carried straight through to Heaven. *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME"* (Phil. 2:9).

God Is Jealous of His Word 1 Kings 1:3

Jeroboam had built an altar at Bethel and Dan. A man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel. One cannot but help admire the man of God for his faithfulness in so doing. Jeroboam said, *"Lay hold on Him."* Those who cry out against departure from God's path will not be popular with the Jeroboams. He has many followers today amongst leaders. But God laid hold upon Jeroboam and withers his hand. The man of God shows grace and prays for him and immediately his hand is restored to its normal condition. Jeroboam invites him to go home with him and receive a reward but the man of God declines as he had the direct Word of the Lord not to eat bread or drink water in that place. One can pray for those who have departed from God's path, but cannot fellowship with them.

There was an old prophet dwelling in Bethel. What he was doing there is a mystery—he must have departed with Jeroboam. He evidently knew what was the right path. No real man of God can remain with those that have departed from God's way and truth. The old prophet went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak. He said to him, *"Come home with me and eat bread."* Again the man of God refused, reminding him that he had the direct Word of the Lord not to eat bread or drink in that place.

Then the old prophet resorted to craft stating that *"An angel spake unto me by the Word of the Lord saying, 'Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water.' 'But he lied unto him".* It is wonderful the craft and lies those who are like this old prophet in the wrong place, will resort to in order to gain their ends to have men of God fellowship with them and approve of their departure.

So the man of God went back with him and did eat bread in his house and drank water. How solemn to think that the very man—the old prophet—who was responsible for the man of God disobeying the direct Word of the Lord should foretell judgment that was coming on the man of God for his disobedience to the Word of God. And when the man of God was gone on his way a lion met him and slew him. God was jealous of His word and judgment fell on the man of God who disobeyed it. It is a very solemn thing to disobey the Word of the Lord. One might run well for years but God is no respecter of persons and where there is a direct transgression of the direct Word of God judgment will follow sooner or later.

God Is Jealous of His People Psalm 105:12-15

The people of God are very dear to the heart of God. Saul was persecuting God's people and was touching the apple of God's eye—a tender spot—when he was so doing. The Lord met Saul on the Damascus road and spoke to him from heaven saying, *"Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou Me?"* God reproves Kings for Israel's sake, saying, *"Touch not Mine anointed, do My prophets no harm."* That is the reason why we should be careful in our attitude toward the Children of God. They are God's heritage and He is very jealous of them and will defend their honor.

God Is Jealous of His Work 1 Chron. 13:6

David was bringing back the Ark on a new cart. He had learned this from the Philistines. This was not God's way of carrying on His work for He had instructed Israel that the Ark was to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites. And they had singing and harps and psalteries and cymbals and trumpets.

When the oxen stumbled Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza and he smote him because he put his hand to the ark; and there he died.

God is very jealous as to how His work should be carried on. Many new carts are being introduced, organs, pianos, harps, methods, etc. God does not wish his people to adopt means or music to make the Gospel, as they say, more attractive. The Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation and it does not need these new embellishments.

God Is Jealous of The Assembly Numbers 25

One of the children of Israel introduced moral evil into the congregation of Israel. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest saw it and used stringent means to stay the plague from the children of Israel. Twenty-four thousand died in the plague. But Phinehas' act had the approval of God Who said, *"He hath turned away My wrath from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for My sake among them that I consumed not the children of Israel in my JEALOUSY."*

There is not a more blessed place on earth than a gathering of the Lord's people unto the Name of Christ where they are seeking to continue according to God's holy, precious Word, but I don't know of a more solemn place on earth if sin is brought into the assembly of God: it will sooner or later be visited by the judgment of His Son, for God is jealous of the assembly and will surely defend the honor of the same.
(WIS Nov 1941)

Order in God's House

1 Timothy 2
Joel Portman

Scriptural Order in God's House

- 2:1-8 Holy Priesthood of Assembly: Prayer
Godward for Men
Public Function of Brethren
- 2:9-15 Royal Priesthood of Assembly: Conduct
Manward for God
Public Features of Sisters

From Paul's exhortation to Timothy in this chapter we learn that an assembly is a priesthood, praying to God on behalf of men and displaying conduct toward men that expresses God's purposes toward them. His desire is that all men will be saved, and our character that we display to others testifies to the reality of the gospel message.

The Importance of Assembly prayer

2:1 Paul implies its importance in his exhortation, which is his earnest plea to them. It means that Paul beseeches saints, pleading with believers to recognize the importance of prayer as well as modest and appropriate conduct and dress. "The exhortations as to prayer and demeanor center in the fact of God's will for the salvation of men and for their instruction in the truth (verse 4)" (1 Timothy, W. E. Vine). We should respond by recognizing the place that this must have in our assembly and personal lives.

The Variety of Prayer

2:1. It includes supplications, which are those requests that come from burdened hearts as we plead with God

to meet a present, urgent need. Such a prayer is expressed in specific terms, not in generalities such as "Lord, bless so and so" . It rises from an awareness of desperate needs that only God can meet.

Prayer is more general, a request for the needs of men in view of continuing weakness. Though general, it also includes the thought of reverence in our approach to God. Intercessions also form part, indicating the privilege that believers have to speak to God in heaven on behalf of others. It is not limited to prayer on behalf of others, since it is also the word used in ch. 4:5 and translated "prayer" . D. Edmond Hiebert says that it includes a confident attitude toward God based on having qualifications to approach unto Him. Having access to God's presence implies a responsibility to represent, as priests, those who cannot draw near to God as we.

Giving of thanks should be an integral part of our prayers, our not failing to recognize God's answers to prayer and our acknowledging the goodness and mercy of God to answer His people. We often ask, but perhaps fail to thank God when those prayers are answered!

A spiritual assembly will be marked by the atmosphere and activity of prayer. The expression, "be made" indicates that this is to be the continual practice of an assembly. This condemns the dryness and silences that are found in our prayer meetings, doesn't it? It seems that we are not sensitive to the groaning of a burdened creation, of men who are suffering, believers who are in trial. We often seem to come together with few burdens to express to God. Our prayers are not for specific things. God always wants to bless; therefore, we need not ask Him to bless one or the other. How should He move to bless them? What is that which they need? What is the problem they face? What about the pitiful state of the lost and their need? We have many areas for prayer, and if we realize the great needs that exist in this life, we would be more lively and intelligent in our praying.

Objects of Prayer v. 2

A Jew wouldn't pray for the Gentiles, whether kings or other men of the surrounding nations. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records that a refusal by Jews to pray for Roman magistrates led to the war which involved their national overthrow, (1 Timothy, W. E. Vine). Their sphere of exercise was altogether too small! God's heart goes out to all men, for He desires for "all men to be saved" . We, as God's people, have the privilege and responsibility of praying representatively on behalf of a world of men who cannot properly pray and hardly know how to pray. As a priesthood, we represent men before God and our hearts must be as wide as possible in this regard. Without this activity, our separation can become

haughty pride and legalism that repels others, whereas God desires our hearts to be wide with an earnest desire that others also will come to the same salvation as we. We do not pray only for the common man of the world, but for those in high places of authority, for those who have the ability, under God, to determine the course of man's affairs and the conditions of man's lives. If, as is likely, Nero was the tyrant on the throne at the time of this epistle, then this impresses the responsibility all the more; it is not only for the good, but also for the froward. "*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will,*" (Prov. 21:1).

The purpose is that an environment might prevail that will not hinder the public testimony of the saints that enhances the gospel's effect. Kenneth Wuest says that the word "quiet" indicates "quiet, arising from the absence of outward disturbance The word may here imply, keeping aloof from political agitations, and freedom from persecutions." "Peaceable" denotes tranquility within, even in the midst of the tumult of this world. It is to be a life characterized by godliness (piety, attitude toward God, " God-fearing"), while "honesty" (decent, gaining respect) would be toward those around us.

Purpose for Prayer v. 3-6

Such prayer is that which God desires by His people because it He is a Savior God, and His desire is for all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. It is His gracious desire that is realized through the testimony of the saints and the preaching of the gospel. Our lives in their entirety impact the effectiveness of the gospel, whether our prayers or our conduct. One must be consistent with the other. "If men are lost, it is through their own will opposing the truth; it is not God's will," (*An Exposition of the Two Epistles to Timothy, W. Kelly*).

Men need to be saved, even as we did, and it is accomplished through their coming to the knowledge of the truth. Some see this coming to the knowledge of the truth as the result of salvation, and that is true, but perhaps both are involved. One must see and accept the truth that God gives in order to be saved and then truth continues to be given. In one sense, also, Christ Himself is the truth that one must come to know. John 17:3.. "*this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, who thou hast sent.*"

There is only one God, not many, not a God for the Jews and one for the Gentiles. The unity of God is established repeatedly in the Old Testament; the plurality of persons within the godhead is advanced in the New. God's attitude is the same toward all, for He is "no respecter of persons", since there is one God for

all men. Since that is true, there is also only One Mediator and He is exclusively the One who is God and also man. God from eternity, and without ceasing to be God, He became man, personally entering into humanity so that He might give Himself a ransom (an equivalent or adequate purchase price paid to deliver) on behalf of all. That price, as we know, was His precious blood given when He died, suffering on the cross for our sins. Because of that ransom, He is the solitary Mediator to the exclusion of all others, regardless of what others might teach.

Paul continually delighted in God's great purpose in the gospel, so that he could exclaim in verse 7, that he was appointed a preacher (herald) and an apostle (messenger) and a teacher of the Gentiles. He was a herald to proclaim the message, an apostle to give authority to the message, and a teacher to expound the message. It was a wide and heavy responsibility, but he had gladly received it and sought continually to discharge his responsibility in it, and he did so in faithfulness and truthfulness (W. E. Vine).

Order in Prayer v. 8

Because of this, Paul exhorts that the males (not men as humanity, but specifically, the males among the saints), should pray in every place. They are to take the lead in public prayer and to fulfill their priestly activity audibly on behalf of the assembly. It seems that this is only possible in a local, scriptural assembly, since, while the priesthood of all believers may be taught in many other places, it is seldom practiced in church gatherings, since one man or a limited number alone have this privilege. That practice could be considered to be a sin against the Holy Spirit, in that it quenches His prerogative to use whomsoever He would chose. It also stresses that brethren in assemblies should and must rise to this responsibility and appreciate the privilege of praying publicly in assembly gatherings. "Everywhere" would logically emphasize the local assemblies in their different meetings, but it also suggests that in every place where public prayer is made, the brethren have this responsibility. Sisters are to be in silence in such assemblies according to the teaching and pattern of Scripture. This, of course, does not include a man and wife in a home, but even in that setting, the man should be taking the lead in this activity.

The males in the Levitical priesthood had priestly conditions to meet, and in like manner, brethren who would pray have requisite standards regarding their

1. Manner of life. It is to be holy, or pious, pure, clean, marked by separation from sin and evil.
2. Maintenance of proper relations with brethren, not having wrath or holding issues with other believers.
3. Manifesting confidence toward God, without doubting as in James 1:6-8, not holding reasonings

or questionings as to God's ability or desire toward man.

This desire on the apostle's part is an expression of the will of God, since it carries that authority with it and we are called upon to obey and carry it out in our lives. We trust that every assembly will be marked by faithful and fervent prayer.
(to be continued)

SOME REMARKS ABOUT PRAYER

By John M. Bernard, Boston, Mass. (WIS, July 1934)

In Luke's gospel, our Lord is brought before us as the Dependent Man and as such we find him often praying. In chapter 6, He is about to appoint the twelve Apostles and before doing so, He spends a whole night in prayer (v. 12). Incidentally, this shows us the importance of serving the Lord in any public way. When the Priests and Levites were set apart for service, it was done with the most solemn ritual—see Ex. 28, Lev. 8, and Num. 8. Men and women should only be commended to service at home or abroad after much heart searching and much prayer. It is evident that mistakes have been made.

In Luke 9:29, the Lord goes to a mountain to pray. Peter went to the house top—Acts 10. The farther up and away from the noise of earthly things, the better able we will be to give ourselves to this holy business. Fasting and prayer are put together in the Scriptures; Peter went to pray before eating and this is certainly better than after eating. Our praying should be done if possible before bed time. Let us give God the best of our time.

As the Lord prayed, His countenance changed. Prayer changes things but better still prayer changes persons. Our Glorious Lord needed no change, but how much most of His followers require to be changed. Our worldly looking hard faces could do with being changed.

In Luke, chapter 11, the disciples are impressed with the way the Lord prayed and said, "*Teach us to pray.*" If we never learn to pray, we will never be of much use in either the church or the world. The Lord here speaks to His disciples about having a forgiving spirit when they pray. Paul writes to Timothy about "*lifting up holy hands without wrath.*" (1 Tim. 2:8). Matthew 6:15, informs us that—if we do not forgive others who wrong us, our heavenly Father will not forgive us, and how then could our prayers have any answer? The proper time to forgive is when the wrong is done—"*Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*" The story about the man on a journey is to impress upon us that relation-

ship with God is not enough to get answers to our prayers; there must be importunity.

In Luke 18:1-6, importunity is again brought before us in the story of the widow woman and the unjust judge. God would have us trouble Him with our own troubles and the troubles of others. He loves to be troubled with such troubles and the difficulty with Him is not to give, but to withhold from giving. The word speedily in the story would remind us of Is. 65:24, "*Before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.*" Jam. 1:5, tells us that our God gives liberally and upbraids not. Let us take God at His word as we did at the very first and we will find that— "*it shall be even as it was told me*" (Acts 27:25). When we pray we are to imitate the poor tax gatherer and not the proud Pharisee--humble and contrite, deeply conscious of our sin and need of rich mercy.

In Ezekiel 36, we have the "I wills" of God in His grace to Israel in connection with the Coming Glorious Kingdom. It is a great chapter of great blessing to Israel and the world; and in verse 37, God tells us that "He will be inquired of by the house of Israel for all *this*." The 66th Psalm runs parallel with this great chapter and also tells us of the glories of the coming kingdom and here we are informed that all this blessing will come in answer to prayer—(See Revised Version of verse 18 and the Authorized of the following verse). The whole thing is spoken of as done. "*Thy kingdom come*" is part of the prayer the Lord taught His disciples in Luke 11:2, and in Revelation 11:15, we have this part of the prayer fulfilled.

In Ps. 109:4, the Lord Himself is heard to say "*I give myself to prayer,*" without the words in italics, "I, a prayer." If we take the place of His disciples, we should also seek to learn of Him in this important respect. We need to take this important matter very earnestly to heart and not go about it in any haphazard way. David and Daniel were both men with much business on hand, yet they prayed three times a day. They did not know the value of the Lord's work on the Cross and His present work on the throne in the way that we know it.

If our days are prayerless, our lives will be powerless. We need to be careful that we do not spend our leisure playing instead of praying. Timothy was to company with people who called upon God with a pure heart. (2 Tim. 2:22). Do you company with such a people? If the assemblies are made up of prayerless men and women, the dry rot will be in them. Andrew Miller at a meeting for business men asked an audience of some hundreds if those who spent a half hour daily in prayer, would put up their hands. Not a single hand went up. Then the preacher brought it down to fifteen minutes and a few hands went up. Then he brought it

down to five minutes and nearly all put up their hands. But one man came to Andrew Miller at the close of the meeting and made the confession that he had put up his hand for five minutes when he did not even spend that long.

Prayer is a great privilege. Never let us think of prayer as a mere duty. Prayer is Worship—see Rev. 8:3 with Ps. 141:2—and worship is the highest kind of service. Christ's death is a propitiatory sacrifice, allowing God to be favorable to us. Our prayers can only get answer on the ground of Christ's death. If we are intelligent as to the value of the work of the Cross, then we can exercise faith. James speaks of "*the prayer of faith*". This is the kind of prayer that God will answer. The Words of the Lord should abide in us forming our desires—see Jn. 15:7. True prayer thus begins with the Lord and His Word. It is certainly more important for the Lord to speak to His people than for His people to speak to Him. "*Hearken unto me, that God may hearken unto you.*" Jud. 9:7. The man himself is the prayer more than the words he utters: What we are has great influence with God. Moses, Samuel, Noah, Daniel, Job, Abraham—Eze. 14:14, 20; Jer. 15:1; Genesis 18--all had great influence with God. Evidently God finds it easy to say NO to some, while to others He finds it hard. Jacob prayed and the tears on his face showed his earnestness; and Jacob got his way and was blessed.

Unanswered prayer is a great subject and yet we are not altogether left in the dark as to this. Jam. 4:1, reveals the awful foolishness of our hearts in asking God to serve with our sins. The prayer of the lawless is an abomination to God—see Prov. 28:9. Obedience to God in every way will open the way for God to give answers to our prayers. The difficulty with God is never in the giving to us but in the withholding from us. "*No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" Ps. 84:11. Righteousness has been the characteristic of the men who have moved the hand that moves the universe— "*the effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much*". Jam. 5:16. "*Lifting up holy hands without wrath,*" 1 Tim. 2:8. It is good to let God look at our hands.

We can pray too much as well as too little. Paul prayed three times and rightly stopped, 2 Cor. 12. The Lord prayed three times also and stopped, Luke 22. "*Thy will be done*" should ever be our language when we pray. Jeremiah was told to stop praying for Judah, (Jer. 11:14; 14:11; 15:1). Judah would not repent of their sin and God would allow the Chaldeans to carry them away to Babylon. Foolish to assure our children that God will answer our prayers for them. Far better to assure the children that they will be in hell if they go on sinning against God.

The curse of public prayer is that it is too long, and of private prayer, is that it is too short. Prayer without effort is hypocrisy and effort without prayer is infidelity. We need to be suspicious of ourselves when we pray much about temporal things and little about the far more important things. Paul in his great prayers in Ephesians 1 and 3 does not mention material things. In chapter 1, Paul prays for spiritual intelligence and in chapter 3, he prays for spiritual state. Epaphras is an outstanding man of prayer in the New Testament and prays along the same line as Paul, see Col. 14:12.

Enos means "frail, weak, mortal man," and it was when this man with this name came upon the earth that prayer was first spoken about, see Gen 4:26: *"Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord."* Is your name "Enos" ? Then keep at this holy business.

It is well to think for the encouragement of your faith of the outstanding answers to prayer in the Scriptures. Elijah brought down fire upon his sacrifice, shut the heavens and opened them again. Peter is brought out from between a number of soldiers and from prison. Joshua makes the sun stand still. Samson gets water out of the dry jawbone of an ass. Samuel changes the usual order of the weather and brings thunder and rain in harvest. Moses saved the nation of Israel from being blotted out in Exodus 32. Only when we are in heaven will we see and know how much God answered prayer.

The Spiritual Conflict

Everyone saved by the grace of God is aware of the fact that the Christian pathway brings one into daily conflict with the enemy, and that unless he is going to take a strong stand, he is going to be overcome. It is the desire of the Lord Jesus that each one be an overcomer in the conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

There is a portion in the Old Testament that might be a help in this very matter: *"When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save*

you. And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her. And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart" (Deut. 20:1-8).

Four things are mentioned here which may serve as illustrations of how we are to cope with our enemies. First, there is the matter of the undedicated house; second, that of the untasted vineyard; third, the case of the man who had engaged or betrothed a wife, but had not taken her; then, last of all there was the faint-hearted person who would discourage his brethren. Let us see if we can learn some spiritual lessons from these things.

The Undedicated House

The officer gave instruction that if there was a man who had built an house and had not dedicated it, this he must do before going into the battle. A man who has failed to carry this out can be visualized going into battle; as the conflict waxes hotter, and the foe presses harder and closer, he thinks about his house, the house he had not enjoyed. Finally, completely frustrated by thoughts of that house, he throws down his weapons and runs away, the house having become a snare to him.

It is otherwise with one of the other soldiers. In the heat of battle he may think that his life is going to be cut off, but he has no worry about his house for he has dedicated it to the Lord. Inasmuch as he has turned it over to the Lord, he is able, without further thought, to detach himself from it and concentrate his efforts on the war, able to fight on furiously until the victory is secure.

No Christian can fight successfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil unless everything in his life has been turned over to the Lord Jesus. Too many Christians are attempting to fight the battle with things in their lives which have not been dedicated to the Lord Jesus. There are some among the Lord's people who have made an idol out of their homes and the things in their homes; consequently, they have no time in which to exert an effort in the service of the Lord. An older brother used to say that the saints were suffering from an overdose of "good-housekeeping" and "better-

homes-and-gardens" . When hearts are too taken up with these things, the energies are spent which should be used in the work of God. Where a Christian has dedicated his house to the Lord, we are sure that the house will be open to the people of God. It is sad when the spirit of hospitality ceases, and when there is no home open for the entertainment of the servants of the Lord.

Even an automobile, if it is dedicated to God, can be a wonderful blessing, but if it is not dedicated to the Lord, it can be a dreadful snare.

The Untasted Vineyard

According to Jewish law, when a vineyard was planted it was left for three years. On the fourth year all the fruit was for God, and on the fifth year, the owner received his portion. In those far-away times, any man who had enjoyed the fruit of his own vineyard would fight the harder for that parcel of ground. The vineyard from which a harvest had been reaped might suggest that when one has appropriated the truth of God, he will be very slow to relinquish it. From the New Testament we learn that in the closing days, men will be giving up the truth of God little by little simply because they had never actually tasted the blessedness of God's revealed will. We might well appropriate Paul's charge to Timothy: *"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning (the) faith have made shipwreck"* (1 Tim. 1:18-19).

The Betrothed Wife

There is also the hindrance of the unfulfilled vow: *"What man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another take her."* Here is the danger of the unfulfilled pledge. There are obligations that we have the one to the other and to the Lord; unless these are fulfilled, we cannot expect to have courage to face the conflict. We must learn to expel the things which would crowd out of our hearts love to the Lord Jesus.

The charge against the Ephesian church was that she had left her first love. How many have followed her bad example since then! If this has been our bitter experience, may the Lord in His grace draw us back to Himself. May we never again allow anything to rob Him of His rightful place in our hearts.

We have an obligation to the people of God, and if we but remember that, it would save us from forming little cliques of our own. Similarly, we have an obligation to the world. The love of Christ should constrain us in our work among the unconverted. If we were possessed of a true love to the Lord Jesus and a real

love to the unsaved, at the close of our Gospel meetings, we would not gather in clusters and leave poor visitors standing around looking this way and that. We would greet them with a warm handshake, and let them feel the power of the love of Christ in our hands. They will learn the truth of God more easily, if they feel that it passes from your heart through your hand to them with a little love, a little warmth, and a little consideration.

The Faint-Hearted Person

To fail in real dedication to the Lord, to come short in an appropriation of the things of God in Christ Jesus, to shun the obligation to the Lord, His people and the world, is to develop into a faint-hearted Christian. Such a person can only be a discouragement to his brethren. In doing little or nothing for the cause of Christ, one becomes a great hindrance to others who are attempting things for God.

If we can face the enemies with a consciousness that we have submitted to the Lordship of Christ, that we have yielded our all to Him, ours will be an assured victory. If we fail to defend that which He has entrusted to us, that which we may have enjoyed at one time, but now fail to taste, well might we expect defeat. May we heed the call to Ephesus: *"I have somewhat against thee, because thou had left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works"* (Rev. 2:4-5).

If you have been just playing in the vineyard, and have not been really feeding upon the Word of God, confess this, and take up the Word of God in the spirit of Jeremiah: *"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart"* (Jer. 15:16). Then strength, courage, and wisdom will be yours, and you will realize as maybe never before, *"Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4).

May we strive for the apostle John's commendation: *"Ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one"* (1 John 2:14).

The shortest way is not always right, nor the smoothest the safest; therefore be not surprised if the Lord choose the farthest and roughest; but be sure of this, He will choose the best.

Trials teach us what we are; they dig up the soil, and let us see what we are made of; they just turn up some of the ill weeds on to the surface.