

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

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The Gospel According to David, Psalm 22 (pt. 1)

Robert Surgenor

Opening your Bible to 1 Peter 1:10-11, you will read these words concerning our great salvation; "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The last ten words of that statement are most vividly seen in Psalm 22 and in Isaiah 53.

We have previously composed a booklet on Isaiah 53 titled, "Isaiah's Immortal Song," and this booklet, "The Gospel According to David," fully completes the vivid picture of the sufferings of our blessed Lord and the glory that would follow. Nowhere in the New Testament writings will you find such graphic descriptions of the inward suffering of our Lord on the cross. In fact only once in the gospels will you find the Lord describing His suffering, and that is in John's Gospel 19:28, where he uttered, "I thirst." However, when we turn to Psalm 22 the manifold sufferings of our Lord, not only from man, but also from God, are vividly brought to our wondering gaze. A serious consideration of this most touching Psalm will produce a number of things in our lives. It may cause silent tears, and rightly so, when we consider what He went through at Calvary, on our behalf. If His vicarious sufferings get a firm hold on our souls they will produce within us a deeper devotion to Him; a greater willingness to obey His commandments; a greater love to our brethren; a smaller estimation of ourselves; a greater appreciation of His assemblies; an increased thirst for His word; and a more compassionate love for the lost. Meditation of the sufferings of Christ will produce a Christ-like, humble, and devoted Christian. If Christians would read this Psalm through with meditation, at least once every week, perhaps we would have far less problems in the

assemblies of God.

It has been conjectured that David perhaps composed this Psalm in time of severe trial when hunted by Saul, or perhaps during the time of Absalom's rebellion. There are expressions in the Psalm that give expression to certain things that David may have experienced to a degree, but there are also expressions that describe the sufferings and the glory that no human being has ever experienced, except one, and that Person was the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the Hind of the morning.

Every careful student of the scriptures recognizes the fact that there are four Psalms that identify themselves with the four main offerings under the Levitical priesthood. (1) Psalm 40 corresponds to the Burnt Offering; (2) Psalm 22 relates to the Sin Offering; Psalm 69 pictures the Trespass Offering; and Psalm 85 contains the Peace Offering.

Psalm 22 is the beginning of a three-fold cord. In this cord we have the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11), and redemption; In Psalm 23 we find the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20), and resurrection; Then Psalm 24 reveals the Lord as the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4) and His return and reward. In these Psalms we also see; Psalm 22, the Cross; Psalm 23, the Crook; and Psalm 24, the Crown.

Thus we have the Sacrifice, the Shepherd, and the Sovereign, beautifully woven together to form a three-fold cord that cannot be broken.

Perhaps nowhere else in Holy Scripture do we find a more graphic description of the inward sufferings of our blessed Lord at Calvary than in Psalm 22. I remember 40 years ago observing a group of archeologists uncovering a barren field in Seneca Rocks, West Virginia. Meticulously they began to remove layers of earth from off the field. As they carefully removed the earth, artifacts began to appear. Amazingly they had come across a treasure of ancient

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Indian works of art. They were elated, for they had discovered a priceless treasure. It took weeks of toil and intensive searching to uncover the vast treasure hidden in that field. They worked methodically and diligently, and consequently were greatly rewarded. I feel that in the eyes of many saints Psalm 22 is a beautiful field to behold, but sad to say that field has never been toiled over with diligent investigation to uncover the wealth of treasure hidden beneath its surface. When we come to various “fields” of scripture, alas, not too many saints are spiritual archeologists, probing beneath its surface.

This Psalm contains four Messianic titles. (1) Verse 6, A worm. (2) Verse 20, My Darling. (3) Verse 22, Leader of praise. (4) Verse 28, The Governor among the nations.

There are also three circles of blessing. (1) Verse 22, “My brethren.” (2) Verse 23, “the seed of Jacob.” (3) Verse 27, “all the ends of the world.”

The names of animals are also employed in describing our Lord’s enemies, namely “bulls” (vs. 12); “dogs” (vs. 16); “the dog” (vs. 20); “lion” (vs. 21); and “the unicorns” (vs. 21).

We find also three sources of our Lord’s suffering. First, suffering from His God, verses 1–6; from man, verses 6–18; and from Satan, verses 19–21.

Portions of this Psalm are quoted or referred to in Matthew 27; John 19; Hebrews chapters 2 and 5, making the Psalm definitely Messianic. In fact many believe when our Lord was on the cross, this Psalm was the meditation of His heart.

The first thing that we notice is the divinely inspired title to this beautiful song. “To the chief musician upon Aijeleth Shahar. A Psalm of David.”

There are many varied thoughts on what the title really means. Some think that it describes the type of instrument on which this divine song was to be played. Others believe that it indicates the tempo of the song, while others see it as describing the Person in the Psalm. I prefer the last thought, for “Aijeleth Shahar” means, “the hind of the morning,” or, “the hind of the dawn.” The early morning rays of the sun arising from the darkened sky in the East were likened to the horns of the hind, and as the rays broke forth, dispelling the darkness, an appointed priest would announce the time of the morning sacrifice. It was also likened to the dawn of redemption. The actual hind is a very beautiful, yet defenseless creature, thus a beautiful picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was at the dawn of the day when the hind was hunted, as it emerged from its hidden resting place to drink water and feed. The enemies of the defenseless hind would surround it, then one animal at a time would rush in and bite it, then retreating to the surrounding pack, until finally, so weakened, it would fall totally exhausted. At that point, the pack would then move in and destroy their victim. In this Psalm this is exactly what is pictured as our Lord hung on the cross at Calvary, His enemies enclosed Him (vs. 16).

This monumental Psalm is divided into two sections. Verses 1–21 convey to us the sufferings of Christ, and verses 22–31 reveal the glory that should follow.

Cry of a Surrounded Victim Facing Death, vs. 1

The Psalm opens with a cry of total distress; “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring.”

These words of our Lord are recorded in Matthew 27:46, and in Mark 15:34. At noon, the sun failed. John had left, taking the Lord’s mother to his home. Three hours after the darkness commenced, about the ninth hour (3 PM), this lamentable cry came from the Saviour’s parched lips. The expression is defined as “My roaring.” The description is often used as the roaring of a lion. So intense was His suffering that words fail to express it, thus we have the word “roaring.” When Paul was caught up into Paradise, he heard “unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4). In other words, human language could find no words able to define what he heard and beheld. So it was with the Lord on the cross, no human language could ever fully convey to us the intensity and depth of His vicarious sufferings on our behalf.

The question is asked, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me. “The word “forsaken” is “abandoned.” He answers His own question in verse 3, “But Thou art holy.” The prophet Habakkuk wrote; “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (1:13). Being holy, God could not look upon His only Son, “For He...made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ became the sin offering, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). God treated Him as sin, and as sin, God could not look upon Him. His Son was left abandoned. How does this make you feel? Are you not affected? Does it not melt your eyes to tears? It did Isaac Watts, for he wrote:

“Alas and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?”

Thus might I hide my blushing face,
While His dear cross appears;
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt my eyes to tears.”

Isaac Watts - 1674-1748
(continued)

The speediest confession is the easiest and the best.

The Social Altar

Alcímedes Velasco

Trans. from "La Sana Doctrina" #293, Jan/Feb 2008

God divides humanity into three great groups: Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God (1 Corinthians 10:32). In this same chapter we find three great centers of fellowship that are related to these three divisions of mankind:

A. **Christian fellowship**, represented in the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table, where in figure, Christ is the altar who we remember every first day of the week by taking the bread and the cup (1 Corinthians 10:16, 17, 21).

B. **The ritualistic fellowship**, exemplified by Israel before the destruction of the temple, ("Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (1 Corinthians 10:18).

C. **The pagan fellowship**, manifested by the gentiles sacrificing at the altars of their idols, behind which are demons (1 Corinthians 10:20-22).

The remaining context of the chapter presents us a believer who is tempted to participate socially in the feasts of the gentiles, thus contaminating himself with all that stands behind the idolatrous altar (1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1). Note:

1. The Deceptive Invitation.

The text in question says, "If any of them that believe not bid you. . ." (v. 27). God warned His people in the past concerning this situation; He said to them, "Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice . . ." (Exodus 34:15). This was exactly what Balaam counseled Balak to use to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel by using the Moabites (Numbers 25: 1, 2, 3, 15, 16).

In Corinth there was a great temple of the goddess Venus with her "sacred" priestesses, her rituals that terminated in abominable orgies. From this environment the Lord had delivered the saints in Corinth to a life of separation from that system. The believers were harassed by their old associations, "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you (1 Peter 4:4). By inviting them, they were using the same snares that the Canaanites put before the Israelites in their days. Brethren, the world is never happy to see the believer enjoying full fellowship with the Lord, but wants them to run in the same dangerous activities as they did and these do. It's true that the present circumstances are not the same as then, but today's tactics are more refined and subtle. Now they invite our young people to participate in internet activities with them, and attend their shows, parties, etc

2. The Friendly Participation.

We return to the text: "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go. . ." The great danger that is cloaked in the invitation to attend a social banquet in an old friend's house is that the will of a believer is inclined to respond. The Holy Spirit teaches us clearly, that such a believer wants to go, regardless of the fact that his attendance could be the occasion of causing a brother to fall. The context tells us that there are at least three reasons that would help him justify his presence at the feast. First, twice it says, "For the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. . ." (10:26, 28). His reasoning was, God is the supreme provider. All that which is created in the earth, God has put there for us to enjoy normally. No one can judge me, because I am making legitimate use of its resources. The apostle says, it is true that all things are legitimate, but not all things are advisable, neither edify (10:23; 6:12). Secondly, another argument that he uses is, "I don't have a bad conscience." "Why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? (10:29). "I feel all right when seated there, nothing internally condemns me." The apostle says, "Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other." "But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake," "shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (10:28, 29; 8:10, 13). Thirdly, this is not incorrect. "For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" I am not ashamed to give thanks publicly for the food. The apostle returns to correct this, saying, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Another regulating parameter of our actions, apart from the glory of God, should be, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. (10:30, 31, 33).

3. The Sinister Contamination.

Even if one that attends the gathering, along with the previous arguments, he adds, "an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one," the apostle says in this portion that we are considering, "What say I then? that the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils (demons), and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils (demons)." (10:19). The matter isn't as guileless as they believe, neither can we believe this way now. Behind the altar of Venus, or of any other ritual, and in the apparently innocent pagan ritual, or whatever can appear to be a ridiculous religious presentation, there is the power of darkness in action. Even in the past, the prophets warned

Israel of the danger of involvement in gatherings of the Canaanite altars. The prophet Hosea said, “My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.” (Hosea 4:12). We ask ourselves, was it really an inert piece of wood that spoke to give an oracle? Clearly not! The sound came from something spiritual that was hidden behind the statue. Because of this the Lord says, “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?” (1 Corinthians 10:21-22).

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. . . the whole world lieth in wickedness.” (1 John 5:19,21).

When peace reigns in the Conscience, there is always power over sin. Peace is like a sentinel that keeps guard at the door of the heart; if the sentinel be off his post, either the tumult within drowns the voice of the Spirit, or, because of the stillness of death, his voice is not heard.

JUDE, pt. 3

Joel Portman

As Jude continues to warn believers of the reality and risks of the apostates, he begins in verse 3 to give specific examples of Old Testament apostates in the heavenly and earthy sphere. Specific examples of those who incurred God's judgment because of their rebellion and evil behavior can have more impact on our minds than abstract truth. He enlists three examples, one from a heavenly sphere, and two from the earth. Those that are of earth also divide into two groups: those who were pagan idolaters, immoral and ungodly, and those who were unbelievers among Israel. We learn immediately from this that apostasy can be found in every sphere of existence and in different degrees of enlightenment with differing responsibility. Jude is warning his readers of men who possibly had high places among the saints, as the angels did who fell from their position. He warns them of unbelievers who are found in association with the saints of God, possibly unrecognized, as were those in Israel. And he reminds them of their utter ungodliness, who since they have turned away from God

and rejected His authority, are, and will be, like Sodom and Gomorrah

Other general observations of these men make us realize that Jude is linking these examples with the descriptions that he gave in v. 4. Unbelievers in Israel (v. 5) link with the “ungodly men” who lack reverence for God. The fallen angels who rejected God's authority link with “denying the only Lord God”, and Sodom and Gomorrah can be joined with “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness”.

We also see the progress of apostasy illustrated in the three groups. In Israel, we think of the Beginning of Apostasy. It begins with unbelief and a lack of confidence in God's power. The angels who fell remind us of the Development of Apostasy; it continues with rebellion and disobedience combined with dissatisfaction. Sodom speaks to us of the Climax of Apostasy, since it culminates in lawlessness and gross immorality.

His use of these examples can remind us of the development of apostasy in Christendom. Unbelief and lack of simple subjection to the principles of God's Word resulted in an attitude of rebellion and dissatisfaction with the position that God has for His people, along with the desire for higher attainments among men. This results in what is so prevalent today, a morally-degenerate condition of lawless living that is even justified by religious leaders.

Every example shows that God has no mercy on such who deliberately turn away from the knowledge of truth that He has given to them. There is a judicial form of darkness that results, so that they are dammed and there is no hope that remains.

We can also see another suggestion in these examples: Israelites who believed not remind us that Association with the saints doesn't preserve. The Angels who fell tell us that High Position and Power doesn't preserve anyone, and the Cities of the plain teach that Large Numbers who are involved make no difference. Nothing will preserve one except adherence to the faith, fidelity to Christ and faithfulness to what we have learned from God's Word.

Unbelieving Israel

In several passages (Hebrews 3-4, 10:28), God used the example of Israel in unbelief as an illustration to warn His people in this dispensation. We read of their five privileges in 1 Corinthians 10:1-10, but we also find those privileges followed by five failures that caused them to be overthrown in the wilderness. They had been brought out of Egypt, but they never entered into the land of promise. We see something of these in 2 Peter 2:20, when we read of those who had clean escaped the pollutions of the world, but who are later entangled therein and overcome. It shows us that among those who applied the blood on the night of the Passover, there might have been those who were never genuine believers, or that there were some who never applied the blood, but still came out among the mixed

multitude.

These Israelites had seen God's power to deliver them from Egypt and to bring them through the Red Sea, and they had also experienced His sustaining power in the wilderness. If God had done so much, how could they fail to rely on Him to do the rest, to bring them into the land that He had promised? This was deliberate sin, showing irreverence toward God and displaying unbelief. They were sinning against the light that God had given to them.

Theirs was a deliberate act that showed rebellion against the authority of God in Moses and which abused the grace of God and His kindness toward them. This is what apostates do; they willfully reject the light of truth and the grace of God that they have been exposed to and deliberately go on in their own self-will against God. For such, there is no deliverance or mercy.

This example contains two reminders of the power of God: first, His power to deliver and then, His power to destroy the unbelievers in the wilderness.

The reminder of this act should solemnize them and us, resulting in care lest we would act in a similar manner. Refusing to act in obedience to God's command will result in genuine loss for believers under God's discipline, but for the lost who are in such a position, theirs is eternal ruin. Privilege and relationship demands that there must be a corresponding response to God's Word, faith in His power and continuation in those things that mark obedient people of God.

Angels who Sinned

Next Jude moves into the celestial sphere to illustrate the danger of rebelling against the position and privilege that God gives. Jude couldn't choose a higher example of created beings who fell such a great distance as the angels who rejected the authority of God and fell. We recognize the differences of opinion concerning these angels, when they fell and what rebellion this is referring to, but the purpose of his giving this example isn't to pinpoint exactly what event this refers to. It does seem clear that, since these angels are kept under chains of darkness, they are likely not the angels who fell with Lucifer, since they are actively working under his direction and control in the world today. This example is intended to give us a spiritual lesson and to illustrate the characteristics of those who act in like character as they did.

Jude tells us that these angels "kept not", or they abandoned, left behind, their first estate (a word also translated "beginning, origin"). They deliberately turned their back on the place of service and responsibility God had given to them, and chose another in its place. This wasn't due to ignorance, but rather was a decision of their will. This was what apostates did. As a result, their present state is without hope, since God has "kept" them under everlasting chains of darkness as they await the judgment of the great day. Peter refers in a similar manner to those who have been

cast down to hell (Tartarus), as they also await God's judgment. For apostates as Jude describes, who have deliberately sinned against light, theirs is a condition of judicial blindness and darkness, (Matthew 6:23, John 12:40) without hope of recovery, but rather an anticipated day of judgment that God has determined.

Evil of Sodom and Gomorrah

Jude has reserved this example until last to illustrate the ultimate result of apostasy, which is a condition of gross immorality. The evil that was perpetuated in these cities of the plain is stamped on men's minds, and sadly, the same is being perpetuated in the world today and justified by religious leaders who are also apostate. Without the restraints of believing God and submission to God's authority, man is capable of every form of evil behavior and deviation from the Divine pattern for humanity. Again, it is not due to ignorance of truth, but it is the result of rejection of truth by intelligent men. Paul traces the descent of mankind in Romans 1, as they, having begun with the knowledge of God, deliberately rejected that knowledge so that repeatedly we read that God "gave them up", to experience and work out the results of their determination. Man, who rejects God's Word and authority, has no restraints on his behavior. Everything becomes a matter of his own opinion, and all behavior is relative. The essential, unchanging standard for behavior must depend on authoritative truth, and when that is abandoned, there are no limits on evil. We are seeing that in our world today, and the sad end will be the same, destroyed by God under His judgment of evil.

Verse 8 summarizes their characteristics. We see that, like Israel, they "despise dominion" (lordship), as angels, they "speak evil of dignities" (majesty, splendor), and like the cities, they "defile the flesh". We notice that all of these acts are done deliberately, the active work of the will that is contrary to God. Jude is emphasizing that an apostate is not one who has been beguiled or deceived, but he is a person who has made a deliberate choice to reject God's Word, turn aside from the knowledge of God, and to despise God's authority. What a warning to men today!

Restraint of Michael

Michael's attitude and words expressed in his encounter with the devil are a contrast to the preceding examples. This refers to an event that is not found in Scripture, and speculation as to the reason and what was involved are not essential to our understanding of Jude's reason for including this. Michael, though the only archangel and thus the highest created angel remaining in his position, in this dispute with the devil about Moses' body, used restraint as he spoke to God's enemy. This seems to be due to his recognition of the position that Satan had as Lucifer before he fell. Even though he was a fallen angel and not worthy of anything except the sentence of judgment that will be his,

Michael didn't condemn him, but his judgment was reserved to God. "The devil, though now fallen, was once a high dignity in the angelic realm, and until he is finally dispossessed by God his dignity is to be respected. Even so high an angelic dignity as Michael respected it. He did not take it upon himself to rebuke him, but left the Lord to do it." ("Jude", F. B. Hole). This demonstrates a contrast to the apostates; Michael was satisfied to trust God to reprove Satan, he wouldn't presume a position that wasn't due to him, nor would he stoop to degrading language, regardless of the circumstance. His behavior under such circumstances is a warning to apostates and an example to us.

(continued)

Christ passes often by palaces to visit the poor cottages. Pilate missed Christ on the bench, while the poor thief finds Him, and Heaven with Him, on the cross.

A Name

F. Butcher

"Let us make us a name," Genesis 1:1:4.

"God hath given Him a Name," Philippians 2:9

Man's natural heart, character, and inclination had in no way been changed by the overwhelming water judgment that had overtaken the world. If a sobering influence had thereby been brought about for a time it was soon thrown off, and man plunged further along the path of separation from, and independence of God. This is plainly and simply told out in the few words in Genesis 11:4. He wants to be admired. Pride and ambition have ineradicable roots in his whole being. How often do we hear such words as these, "He has made a name for himself in the world." How proud he is who succeeds in doing that, whether in the political, religious, or business world: and that is just what these early rebels against God intended doing. Their idea was to become celebrated, famous, consolidated, and well known. In our day this is just what the heart of man craves for. Who but the Spirit of God could have drawn, by a few masterly strokes, so correct a picture?

Let us ask ourselves whether we, who profess to be Christ's, and to be with Him outside the camp, have not very often distinct traces of this sketch upon us? Rome, in

the religious world, has this spirit in the fullest measure. And down to the smallest denomination something of it is to be found. Let our church buildings be of beautiful imposing architecture: let our preaching be eloquent and learned: let us have something men can admire: at all events we will make ourselves a name, and adopt high-sounding titles.

God in merciful judgment came down and restrained the schemes of those flourishing builders on the plains of Shinar. He overturned their vain imaginings. In infinite wisdom he stopped them, so simply, by confounding their language. The solidarity of man, about which he was so enthusiastic, was suddenly destroyed. What irony is here! They wished to make themselves a name and they got a name, "Babel," which means confusion. And men can't get rid of it; it sticks like a leech: and the most magnificent capital of man's greatest empire was called "Babylon".

It is confusion still, to be eventually eternally confounded. The name is indelible. The apostle reads it clearly upon the head of the harlot arrayed in purple and scarlet, (Revelation 1:7). He had the mind of Christ and so could distinguish what was printed there; although even he marvelled with great admiration. How few, even amongst believers, see that condemning name upon man's boasted worldly-religious systems! Their eyes are dazzled by her splendor instead of being anointed with the eye-salve of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. Yes, those primitive men wished to make themselves a name: and they received one that they had not anticipated: one that has lasted all these centuries, but will be destroyed finally, the religious part first, then the political at the appearing of the great God and our Lord Jesus Christ. "With violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all," (Revelation 18:21).

Can we read the name clearly upon all the great swelling ideas of men, whether in the political or religious world? Or are we so glamoured by the vision of what man has set himself to accomplish that we would be disappointed if the Lord came for His own now, and upset all men's schemes of world-advancement? What those men, after the flood, intended doing is just what is becoming so prominent in these last days of unions and confederations. The wheel is back to the starting point, and Babel, confusion, is still stamped upon it.

Let us turn our gaze from this sickening spectacle of pride and rebellion to look upon the Man in whom Jehovah is well pleased, whom He calls "My Servant." He made Himself of no reputation, although His name is as ointment poured forth, filling the lowly heart of faith with divine perfume. How different from the stench of Babel's foul miasma! He seeks nothing for Himself: has no desire to make a name. He does not sit upon a gaudy beast, but humbly rides upon an ass's colt. The religious leaders ask superciliously, Who is this? His name is branded with

shame in three tongues over His cross of suffering and ignominy. The contrast between life and death, light and darkness is not greater than between Him and poor, proud, fallen man. What man grasps with eagerness is what He turns away from; it has no attraction for His heart. Let us look long and lovingly at Him, so that we may be changed into His image. Because he sought no name for Himself, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name. The world's maxim is that we must make the best of ourselves, but He made nothing of Himself.

Having these two pictures before us, drawn by the Holy Spirit, let us ask ourselves which attracts us most? After which are we going to model ourselves? We profess to be Christ's, and are quite willing to be saved from wrath eternal by Him: but are we willing to take our Lord's estimate of man and all his so-called noble aspirations? In His presence; changed into His likeness, we shall see branded upon all man's high flown schemes, inherited from Shinar's plain, that fatal word "Babylon." Do we see it? Do we see that the end of it all is confusion? That finally, under the coming man of sin, when it looks as if man's ambitions were at last to be realized, that it is just the ripening of the vine of the earth, to be hurled into the winepress of the wrath of God? Then will He appear, who has a name written that no one knows but He Himself; and His name is called the "Word of God:" and "on His vesture and on His thigh a name written:—King of kings and Lord of lords."

Ah! He is the one who was of no account on the earth: whom they mockingly called "a king:" and He is going to write His new name upon the overcomers of the church of Philadelphia: for they have not denied His name. They too rejected the thought of making a name for themselves here below. The question for each is, Am I content to be like Him here: to be associated with perhaps only a few despised brethren, who are following a despised Lord: to be a nameless assembly of saints: to have no name in earth's politics? The more truly we follow Him in these matters, the more will He rejoice in that day to write upon us His glorious new name. The world cannot understand our nameless position, nor our ambitionless mind, but neither did it understand Him; and it is enough that the disciple be as His Lord.

How easily we get influenced by the spirit of the age, and desire to be of some account; to make ourselves a name, instead of warring with spiritual weapons to cast down, in ourselves, imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. Jacob humbled, lame and helpless at the feet of the one whose name was not divulged, received a beautiful new name—"a prince of God."

May we then, by His grace, resist, the natural tendency of our hearts to be something in this world, that

Christ may be formed in us; that His mind may take possession of our whole being. In thus following the lowly One rest is found for the soul; rest from all ambitious schemes, and strivings for greatness. He had none. Now He is highly exalted. In that day He will exalt His own; and that is enough for our hearts.

**There is something sweet in being pruned
by a wounded hand.**

Abraham; one of Seven Men

George Duncan

Genesis 14:10-24

In the book of Hebrews chapter 11, we find the names of seven men recorded, whose lives are found in the book of Genesis. If we were to combine what God has to say in Hebrews 11, concerning these men, we would doubtless have a perfect Christian. Among those seven men we have Abraham and he occupies thirteen and one-half chapters in the book of Genesis. No less than three times Abraham is called "The Friend of God." He is the only man to whom that name is given, therefore how outstanding he must have been, when God could speak of him in that familiar way.

In the above chapter we find a very interesting incident in the life of this remarkable man. In the previous chapters Abraham and Lot have come back from the land of Egypt. They have abundance of everything; in fact, their herds were so numerous that the land could not hold them and they had to separate. It's nice to see how thoroughly Abraham was restored to God; not only restored back from Egypt, but restored in soul, because he said to Lot, "Take thy choice." "If thou go to the east I will go to the west, etc." He was just simply content to take what Lot left, and it's more remarkable considering that Lot was the younger man. Abraham could well afford to let Lot take his choice, for after Lot turned toward Sodom, God said to Abraham: "Lift up thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward and eastward and westward for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever."

In chapter 14 Abraham is still in the plains of Mamre, or Hebron, which means "fellowship." Here we have a true child of God in the place of fellowship with God. Lot chose to pitch his tent toward Sodom and in this chapter he is altogether in Sodom. These two individuals are spoken of in Scripture as righteous men, for the New Testament tells us that Sodom vexed Lot's righteous soul from day to day as he saw and heard their ungodly deeds. Over and over again we find God speaks of himself as "The God of Abraham", but never as the "God of Lot". When Abraham is brought

down to die we read concerning him that “he died an old man of many days;” the revised version says, “Full of years,” but the original is just “full” or “satisfied” (Genesis 25:8) Wouldn't that be a wonderful epitaph to put on his tomb! But the last mention of Lot was his sin. Both righteous men, but Oh! so different. These things were written for our learning and instruction. Many today are going to have an abundant entrance to the glory for their testimony has shone brightly all through the journey, and there are those who shall be saved, so as by fire. God would seek to encourage us by the life of Abraham to so live that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming, and to shun a life of partnership with the world as was Lot's.

Chapter 14, opens with warfare. Four kings are grouped together in conflict against five kings. Sometimes one on top, then the other. If Lot, the nephew of Abraham had not been taken captive at this time we would not have heard of this warfare, for God only mentions other nations when in connection with the children of Israel. It is a very noticeable thing to see the Kings' names. First and foremost is the king of Shinar, which is the old name for Babylon, meaning “confusion.” In the Old Testament God's people were carried down to Babylon when they sinned against Him. In the New Testament we find in Revelation that Babylon is termed, “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots”. Then there was the King of Sodom and Gomorrah. These two places are often spoken of in Scripture of that which is ungodly. These two groups which war against each other is a picture of what we find in the religious world today. The religious world, fights against the ungodly world and sometimes one is on the top, sometimes the other, but notice here that the man who is used for God is outside the whole thing, for he dwells in the plains of Mamre. He is not entangled in this terrible mix-up. The one group overcomes the Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot, who now dwells in the midst of Sodom, is taken captive. Many of God's people are taken bondage by the religious world. Word is brought to Abraham (the Hebrew). This is the first mention of this word which means “a passenger” or one passing through. That is just what Lot should have been, but instead he dwells in Sodom. When Abraham heard that Lot (his brother) was taken captive he armed His trained servants, born in His own house and pursued. Abraham and Lot were brothers in a spiritual sense, being both righteous men. Abraham's servants were born in his own house. The men whom God uses are only those born again, and not only that, but men whom God has trained, not in a religious seminary but in the school of Christ; in the secret place, there learning, to trust God.

In due course, they overtake the Kings and God gave Abraham the victory. Now he is coming back laden with the spoil. If we are to win the victory it will only be as you and I are living in some measure in fellowship with God. When one gets the victory over the enemy, the spirit, the flesh and the devil, we are quite pleased that God has given us the victory,

and it may be, we are taken off our guard, and Satan lays a trap for our feet and we fall miserably but not so with Abraham. Two men meet him. First the king of Sodom and the other man, Melchizedek, the priest of the most High God. Melchizedek meets him first and blessed Abraham in the name of the most High God and gave him bread and wine. We sometimes sing, “Bread to strengthen, wine to cheer”. Melchizedek is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ in his present priestly work for “He is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 7:21). There is no mention of Melchizedek's mother or father, his birth or his death. We don't question however that he was born and died like other men but God leaves that out in order to picture the Lord Jesus Christ. He blessed him and gave him bread and wine. This reminds us that the Lord Jesus Christ is now in the presence of God for us and He ever lives to make intercession for us. In difficulty and in turmoil, when winds are contrary and waves are beating high just remember there is a Man on the throne, “who tends with sweet unwearied care, the flock for which He bled”. He too, was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He too knew what it was to hunger and thirst, to be weary and worn. He as a man endured these things, yet without sin. Now He sits at God's right hand, ever living to make intercession for us. And, I am perfectly sure, we shall never know the value of that present intercessory work of our Lord Jesus Christ until we reach home, then we shall know how many pitfalls and snares we have been spared from. Then we shall see “He led us by the right way”.

On Lord's day morning we do not come to remember the Lord in order to receive strength. We come to praise and adore Him whose body was bruised for us and His blood shed to cleanse us from all sin, but who shall say we do not go away strengthened and cheered for our toil and warfare till Jesus comes. After Abraham received the bread and wine and the blessing He gave tithes unto Him who was God's representative. This is the first occasion of giving tithes unto God.

The second man goes out to meet Abraham and makes a proposition. “Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself”. This offer might have sounded all right to the worldling but Abraham answers, “I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich”. Abraham, the man of faith had strength to refuse. There are three men in the Word of God who had strength to refuse. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Hebrews 11:24-26). Moses choose rather to link himself up with a nation of slaves rather than be the King

of Egypt. But was not this refusal worthwhile for we read in Revelation 15:3: “And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” How wonderful to think this man Moses has his name associated in a future day with the “Lamb,” the King of Kings”.

Naaman in his gratitude for cleansing offered Elisha a large sum of money, but He had the strength to refuse saying, “As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none”. And Naaman urged him to take it, but he refused. Gehazi was not of the same mind as his master and followed after and succeeded and claiming some of the riches, but Oh! how solemn his punishment for Naaman’s leprosy came to him and his seed forever. Faith oftentimes in the child of God causes him to refuse the overtures of the world, if they interfere with his fellowship with God. So let us remember,

He always wins who sides with God,
With Him no chance is lost,
God's will is sweetest to him, when,
It triumphs at His cost.

In chapter 15, we read, the Word of the Lord came unto Abram saying, “Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward”. Was not that ten thousand times better than all the goods brought from the battle? These things were written for our learning so that we may learn from warnings and failures recorded in the Old Testament. We find even after all this, Lot didn’t take the lesson for He still dwells in Sodom. God never identifies His name with Lot. In the book of Esther there is not a single mention of God’s name. Why? the people were quite content to dwell in the land of Babylon. So we see that God identifies His name only with those who seek to go on in fellowship with Himself.

Let us like Abraham dwell in Mamre, for in chapter 18 we still find him in the place of fellowship, and how wonderful to think the closing remarks of Abraham's life was “He died an old man of many days and satisfied”, not with himself, or with his testimony but satisfied with God.

Filling with the Holy Spirit

“In the Heavens,” Epistle to the Ephesians

H. A. Ironside

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” Ephesians: 5:18

In this passage he puts two things in opposition, the one to the other—drunkenness with wine and filling of the Holy Spirit. Why does he contrast these two things, these two conditions? The man who is drunk with wine, is controlled by a spirit foreign to himself. Men, when they are under the influence of the spirit of alcohol, do and say things that they never would do in their normal condition. People say, excusing them, “Oh, well; you mustn’t hold it against him;

he is drunk, he is not himself.” The apostle says that that condition should never be true of a Christian, but on the other hand the Christian should be dominated and controlled by a Spirit other than himself. He should be controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. The filling of the Holy Spirit ought to be the normal experience of every believer.

What is the filling with the Holy Spirit? Some people think that it is some strange, ecstatic, emotional experience that comes to them at a given moment and then later passes away and has to be repeated again. That is not it. This is the normal experience of the Christian life: “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31). They were dominated and controlled by the blessed Holy Spirit of God, and this does not necessarily result in any special emotional breakdown, but rather preserves one in the path of orderliness and common sense. The man who is filled with the Holy Spirit does not go off into some wild, fanatical state, but walks thoughtfully and carefully with God, and his testimony has power with men.

Turn to the Epistle to the Colossians, chapter 3:16, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Notice the “effect” there of the Word of Christ dwelling richly in the soul. Now turn back to Ephesians and read these verses again. Do you observe that you get the exactly the “same results” in Colossians when the Word of Christ dwells in you richly that you get in Ephesians when you are filled with the Spirit? What then is the inference? There is an old rule in mathematics that “things equal to the same thing are equal to one another.” If to be filled with the Word is equal in result to being filled with the Spirit, then it should be clear that the Word-filled Christian is the Spirit-filled Christian. As the Word of Christ dwells in us richly, controls all our ways, as we walk in obedience to the Word, the Spirit of God fills, dominates, and controls us to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do not get the idea that you must have some remarkable outward demonstration, some amazing sign that the Spirit of God has actually taken possession, but remember that He dwells in every believer, and as you give Him room, He cleanses out of you everything that hinders. As you let Him take full possession you are filled with the Spirit. One will be fullness of joy. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of gladness, the Spirit of joy. Now do not misunderstand me, there is a difference between holy joy and mere natural merriment. Take the life of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Even though He was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, as we read the records in the four Gospels we cannot help but be impressed with the fact that we are not reading the life of a sad Man but of a glad Man. “At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, Father, I thank Thee.” That is characteristic of the blessed Lord. In

spite of all the grief and sorrow that He bore He was joyful. But having said that, let me remind you that in these records you do not see depicted what the world calls a jolly man. His was no mere worldly jollity, no mere worldly merriment, but a deep-rooted gladness that was based upon unbroken communion with the Father, and that is the joy that you and I should possess. The one who is filled with the Spirit will be a glad, joyous believer.

Many choose rather to be great than humble, forgetting that only they who choose to be humble, are truly great.

Three Positions of John

B. Currie, Assembly Testimony, July/Aug 1989

Of all the apostles who companied with the Lord Jesus on earth John appears to have been the closest. This may have been because he likely was the youngest and therefore required more support, assurance and friendship than the others who were more mature. He is found in at least three position relative to the Lord Jesus:

His feet in the Lord's hands — John 13:5 —

For Cleansing

His head in the Lord's bosom — John 13:23 —

For Communion

He lay at the Lord's feet — Revelation 1:17 —

For Communication

The order of these is most significant since without cleansing there will be no communion and without both cleansing and communion there will be no communication.

Cleansing

This short paper would be insufficient to develop the deep meaning of the Lord's actions in John 13. The reader may wish to compare His movements in this chapter with those delineated in Philippians 2. Sufficient it is to see that this cleansing is the first thing brought to our attention by John in his account of the upper room, thus implying its foundational character.

The feet were the only part washed. When Peter requested full washing (v.9), the Lord clearly indicated that such was required only once but feet washing was a constant need. The meaning of the Lord's words "He that is washed (bathed all over) needeth not save to wash his feet" can be understood from Old Testament ritual. When the priests were being consecrated they were washed or bathed by

Moses, Exodus 29:4. In this Moses was acting for God and this never was repeated. This equates with the new birth, the washing of regeneration of Titus 3:5 and having "our bodies washed with pure water", Hebrews 10:21. We are only born again once and since there is no such thing as falling away, it can never be repeated. However the priest had to constantly use the laver in order to remove the defilement contacted as he walked through the wilderness. We too require daily cleansing from defilement by the application of the word of God — John 17:17. "Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth." Thus we learn that for cleansing the daily application of the word, not the blood, is vital.

Communion

It is full of significance that before John's head lay in the Lord's bosom his feet had been cleansed. The world in which we live is a corrupt and sinful place and it is becoming worse. It is in the midst of such that we long to have sweet and holy communion with the Lord. What a privilege for John to be so close as to hear His heartbeat and feel the very throb of His pulse. How we would long to know Him better! The knowledge of Him is Christian maturity. In 1 John 2:13,14 the fathers, i.e. the mature Christians, are identified by this, "ye have known Him that is from the beginning." Even after many years of Christian experience and service Paul could still say "that I may know Him", Philippians 3:10. It is unfortunate but true, that the words of the Lord Jesus to Philip apply to so many of us, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" John 14:9.

Communication

It is as John lies at His feet that he is commissioned to "Write the things which thou hast seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter," Revelation 1:19. It was at His feet that Mary heard His word, Luke 10:39. It was at the feet of Boaz, a type of Christ in exaltation, that Ruth was blessed. If we could cultivate the secret of being at His feet in quiet contemplation then we would receive much more from Him and be able to say "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened unto us the Scriptures?"

After the high priest had been to the altar in the Tabernacle and was approaching the holiest of all, there were three articles of furniture in a straight line, one after the other.

The laver — CLEANSING,

The golden altar — COMMUNION,

The mercy seat — COMMUNICATION.

For intelligent and happy Christian living this must be the order.