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## Divine Encouragements

"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee" (Joshua 1:5).

God's power to meet changing circumstances among men are unlimited. Emergency measures, so frequent among His creatures, are not necessary with Him, for His perfect understanding of every possible eventuality has enabled Him to make adequate provision therefor. The Bible, because it is the record of God's dealings with chosen individuals as representative of principles always at work within the realm of divine purpose, is replete with illustrations of the fact, and of these one of the most impressive is that which affects the life of Joshua. Moses, the faithful servant of Jehovah, was dead. His departure out of life had been as unexpected as it had been unprecedented. On previous occasions he had disappeared from the host of Israel for several weeks, but at length he had returned to the camp with vigor renewed to serve God and to lead His people. From this last journey there would he no return. The silence of the hills would wrap his going in secret. On Nebo's lonely mountain crest he had at last been put to sleep by the touch of God, his long life ended, his task done. The work he had commenced, and been, by God's help, preserved in, was still incomplete. His own part therein was over, and his successor must now carry on. The situation, from the human point of view, was all the more perplexing because no one had anticipated the sudden vacancy at the head of the nation. All that had taken place was unforeseen. Their leader, one hundred and twenty years old, with eye undimmed and physical vigor undiminished, had been called, without warning, to his reward, himself unaware that his solitary journey up to Pisgah's top would witness no return. But God knew. Omniscience had already planned for the continuation of the task divine wisdom had already chosen the leader to succeed. The choice, moreover, was not arbitrary; it was the culmination of long years of preparation unwitting to the man upon whose shoulders the completion of the work was destined to rest. God never calls a useful servant

to Himself without having already made provision for the work to be carried on to its intended objective. Joshua was ready because God had trained him.

The task facing the new leader was disconcerting in its magnitude. A lesser man would have succumbed to the difficulties inevitable in the test of assuming immediate responsibility. Moses had had trials enough. Rebellion, breaking out in most unexpected quarters, had marked years of pilgrimage, and now that leader had gone, leaving the people still denied the enjoyment of the land promised to their parents forty years ago. Had God abandoned the Chosen Race? Were the people to be allowed to pay the penalty of repeated disobedience? In addition, the acknowledged leaders who had left Egypt with the people had long since passed on, and Joshua had but few to consult. Caleb alone, perhaps, was like-minded with him, and it seems natural to conclude that the prospective leader would shrink from assuming to undertake a task of such gigantic proportions and in such circumstances. New tasks, untrodden paths, always hide surprises. It is the quality of the unknown to provide unsettling elements. Self-confidence can easily underestimate the nature of the demands the future is likely to make, and may develop into the spirit of boastfulness which is incompetent to meet with un-expected problems. So a man may hasten himself to an inglorious collapse. Joshua, however, was made of stuff from which leaders arise, leaders, that is, in the estimation of God. He reckons with his task, distrusts his unaided native abilities, and leaves the issues with God. That is wisdom at its highest.

God knows from the beginning and makes provision for each successive part in the task. He sees the whole, not the sections visible only to the temporary participants. The parts allotted to Moses and Joshua might

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differ, but their Master was the same. The difficulties confronting each might assume different aspects, but the source of wisdom at their disposal was identical. Their temperaments and training might vary, but their inspiration for and power in service were alike. Joshua could rely upon the presence of God. Moses had commenced his career with a similar promise, repeated frequently in the course of his service in words such as, "My presence will go with thee, and I will give thee rest." The new leader had the added encouragement of knowing that God had implemented His every promise to the uttermost degree. God lived to carry on His own work. Joshua was but an instrument.

The situation, despite circumstances which pointed in the other direction, was not without encouragement. Joshua was not an undisciplined tyro. He was a veteran campaigner who had numerous qualifications for the vacated post. His infancy had experienced the bitterness of slavery. His youth had participated in the excitement of a national liberty gained by an act of divine intervention. For years in the desert he had served with Moses, abiding faithful to him and to God when the camp had rocked with disaffection. He had pioneered into the new land about to be possessed, returning convinced of the war-like nature of its inhabitants, of the fruitfulness of the land, but assured that, despite the seemingly insurmountable difficulties, faith, through God, would triumph. In short, he was a man after God's own heart, a man trustworthy because he had learned to trust in God. The long years of training (dare we call them too long?) were but preparatory for the most glorious term of divine employment. God makes no mistakes in His choice, although Joshua may have been fearful regarding his own capabilities. But divine wisdom does not leave even a well trained and equipped man to his own resources and ingenuity. Tasks allotted by God demand supernatural endowments and extraordinary encouragements. Joshua's equipment we know. Let us observe the encouragements he received. They are summed up in one pregnant declaration, **"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."** Nobler words in the situation could not be conceived; more heartening inspiration could not have been uttered. The announcement vibrates with fact encouraging hope, it thrills with reality. **First, God was not dead. Generations pass. He remains.** Servants make their exits from the stage of time, their parts played in the great drama of the divine plan, but God abides, the invisible Supervisor of even; scene. Circumstances and place do not diminish His interest in individuals, nor divert His concern from those represent Him. He knows the end

**Second, God would not relinquish the real direction of affairs.** "I was with Moses . . . I will be with thee." Thus we are reminded that all divine work is primarily God's. He may or may not call human leaders to posts of honor and responsibility, but they are merely

servants of His. Their usefulness is wholly dependent upon their obedience to His commands. The policy is God's. He dictates the methods of operation. Such is always the divine attitude, exemplified again and again in history. One example will suffice Mark records the fact of the ascension of our Lord in these words: "He was received up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God : and they (the disciples) went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." The Acts of the Apostles are nothing other than a commentary upon Mark's declaration. The glorified Lord has not relinquished, during these two thousand years, His interest in the work which He Himself had commenced on the earth. He never will. So every new departure in the service of God can take for its motto the words, "I was with, I will be with you."

**Third, God appeals to the past as an encouragement for the future.** "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." At no juncture in the forty years from Egypt through the wilderness to the borders of Canaan had God failed His servant. Again and again He had called Moses into closest consultation with Him regarding His purposes. Even when the servant had failed Him, yet did He not forsake him. Nor did He turn away when, in a moment of self-will, he might have provoked God to wrath. In no circumstance had Moses found God a disappointment, for He was a Friend with infinite resources. Where others had obstructed the great leader in the performance of his duties, and had attempted to usurp his authority, God had withstood their devices, and vindicated the honor of His servant. No vexing problem arose which did not discover God as an unerring Guide whose wisdom could resolve every perplexity and allay every fear. SURELY, then, there was significance in the four times repeated exhortation, "Be strong and of a good courage." Nothing heartens a Christian for a hitherto unattempted task like the recollection that at his disposal are the identical resources which his predecessors have availed themselves of and by which they have accomplished their services to benefit others. Such observations are but natural to the editor of this magazine, who now assumes responsibility for its continuance from this month onwards. The task is one from which his years would make him shrink. His predecessors were men of matured experience and acknowledged scholarship. Their suitability for their work was unquestioned, and they brought to the discharge of their duties years of service and study which had equipped them in numerous ways. Their labors are over, but the work of their Lord continues, and to that, at the desire of many in various parts of the country, we have set our hand "with fear and trembling." Testing days lie ahead, vexing problems convulse the world, difficulties face us everywhere. We need heavenly wisdom. Our God will not fail.

**If we act only because our path is clear of difficulty, this is not Faith. Faith acts upon God's Word whatever the difficulty; and to walk by faith brings highest glory to God; but it is a crucifying the flesh.**

## **Paul's Epistles Linked with Other Epistles**

*W. Rogers*

While considering the character of Paul's ministry in his later epistles, as compared with his earlier ones, it may be of interest to turn our thoughts to the letters of his fellow apostle Peter. For they in all probability were written shortly after these of Paul to Timothy, and Titus; and since Peter, like Paul, was thinking of his "decease" as being close at hand when he wrote them (2 Peter 1:13-15), we may expect to find in them, too, matters with regard to which that great servant of Christ judged it needful to "stir up the saints by putting them in remembrance" (2 Peter 3:1), in view of his imminent departure.

On comparing them with Paul's last writings, it will be found that they are in much the same strain; special emphasis being laid on conduct (or "conversation," as it is somewhat unfortunately rendered in the A. V.), and solemn warning being given as to false teachers and other evils of the "last days"; just as is the case in 1st and 2nd Timothy. One notable difference there is, however, between them, in the many references Peter makes to a fierce persecution that meanwhile had arisen, a persecution of which both Paul and he ultimately became victims.

The saints to whom Peter's epistles were written included those of Asia (1 Peter 1:1), the province of which Ephesus was at that time the capital city; and since Timothy was at Ephesus when Paul wrote to him, we have here an additional link in connection between these writings. It is, however, but one of many such links in the New Testament, of which quite a large section has association of some kind with Ephesus and its neighborhood; and it will assist considerably towards an intelligent grasp of any one passage or book in that section if its connection with the others and its place in the series are kept in mind.

To begin with, we have in Acts the account of Paul's great work there, when, after having been forbidden on an earlier occasion "to preach the Word in Asia" (16:6), he at length paid Ephesus a brief visit (18:19-21), and shortly afterward returned to commence what proved to be the longest and most successful, though most difficult, piece of service in his entire career (ch. 19). During its course "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word" (19:10), for "a great door and effectual" (1 Corinthians 16:9) was opened to him, in spite of the "adversaries." The troubles that were caused by the latter are described from the outward point of view in Acts 19, and from the inward in 2 Corinthians 1:8-10.

But we pass on to Acts 20:16-38, where we find the account of a meeting arranged by the apostle with the elders of Ephesus, as he went by on his journey to Jerusalem. His solemn address on that occasion is given at length, with its warning of dangers to come from without and within, and its commendation of them "to God and the Word of His grace." In both these respects his speech is a foreshadowing of the kind of ministry he was to give, years afterward, in the pastoral epistles.

Next we think of his great letters to the saints at Ephesus and the adjacent town of Colosse, in which are reached what we might speak of as the highest heights and deepest depths of New Testament teaching; and from those we pass on to the epistles to Timothy, which are also, as we have seen, so far as their destination is concerned, epistles to Ephesus. Following these, we have the letters of Peter, written, as has already been pointed out, to saints in "Asia"; and at last we reach the Revelation, which is addressed, as is well known, to the Assemblies in Ephesus and the district surrounding.

It is doubtful whether even all this exhausts the list of Scriptures that have connection with this part of the Roman world; for since John evidently spent his closing years at Ephesus, it is likely that his epistles, and possibly his Gospel also, were written there.

When all these writings are studied connectedly, they will be found to stress, repeat, and develop certain lines of truth more fully than is done anywhere else. For example, most of the New Testament passages which spring to our minds, when we think of the importance of the Word of God to the believer, are to be found in one or other of them, (Acts 19:20; 20:32; Ephesians 5:26; 6:17; Colossians 3:16; 1 Timothy 4:5; 2 Timothy 2:9, 15; 3:15-17; 4:2; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2:22; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:14; Revelation 3:8; etc.) Again, we meet in them frequent references to love, of which the most noteworthy are the six times repeated "in love" of Ephesians; the various wrong loves mentioned in 1 and 2 Timothy, such as love of self, love of money, love of pleasure, etc., the challenge to the church of Ephesus concerning "first love" in Revelation 2:4; and, of course, many verses in 1 John. On the other hand, they contain numerous references to the activities of Satan, and of the evil spirits associated with him, against God's people. The narrative of the three years' work at Ephesus in Acts 19 gives prominence to his efforts at opposition. Evil spirits were much in evidence (vv. 12-16), as had been the case in Galilee during our Lord's own ministry there and books of Satanic arts were in such profusion that those burned by the converts were valued at 50,000 silver pieces. Again, in Paul's letter to Ephesus he is brought before us in 2:2; 4:27; and 6:11-12; as he also is in 1 Peter 5:8; and most frequently of all in the book of Revelation. But as interesting as any are the references to him in our epistles to Timothy. In 1

Timothy 1:20 certain men are “delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” In 3:6-7 we read of “the condemnation of the devil” and of “the snare of the devil,” the latter of which is again mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:26. 1 Timothy 4:1 warns us of seducing spirits and “doctrines of devils”; while 5:15 tells us that some young women had “turned aside after Satan.” And finally, our adversary the devil is doubtless the “lion” spoken of in 2 Timothy 4:17.

Perhaps the most interesting series of connections between these Ephesian scriptures, as they might be called, are those which set forth on the one hand the value of gifted men when their gift is subject to the Lord and their hearts are true to Him; and on the other, the danger to the saints from such men when this is not the case. Thus in the portions of Acts above mentioned we see, first Paul’s own subjection in refraining from going to Ephesus until God’s time had come, then the character and teachableness of the gifted Apollos (18:24-28); and lastly the warning to the elders (20:30) of dangers to be apprehended from amongst themselves. In Ephesians 4:7-16, which might well be called the foundation passage of all others with regard to the gifts and God’s purpose in giving them, we learn what results are to be effected by their due exercise, while in Colossians 2:4, 8, etc., are depicted the evils which may be wrought by teachers who are not in subjection to Christ. Similarly, in 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 4:6-16 and 5:17-22 we see men of ability and gift acting for God; while in 2 Timothy 2:17-18 we find such men doing the devil’s work. A like contrast is found between 1 Peter 4:10-11 and 5:1-4 on the one hand, and 2 Peter 2:1-3. On the other, while John’s epistles and the letters to Ephesus and the other churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are filled with warnings as to teachers of evil and the mischief that may be done by them.

All these matters have their lessons for saints today, since the same dangers are still existent; the danger of leaving first love; the danger of not giving to the Word of God its due place; the danger from gifted men who have got out of touch with God and acquired an abnormal sense of their own importance. They are dangers into which many of the Lord’s people have already fallen, and to which all of us are exposed. But especially is the stage which had been reached when the epistles to Timothy and Titus were written in various ways similar to that which at present obtains; and therefore we may confidently turn to these writings for both the warnings and the encouragements of which we stand in need.

At an earlier period our assemblies—those which then existed—were given much doctrinal ministry, which was indeed what they most required. Truths that had been almost buried for centuries had, so to speak, been dug up again at that time, and were being set forth

clearly and fearlessly—truths as to the character of the present dispensation, the heavenly calling of the Church and its unity, the coming of the Lord for His people, the future of Israel, and others of similar nature. These were what had brought the saints out from their sectarian associations and drawn them together, so that naturally they were given prominence in their meetings and much appreciated.

Such doctrinal ministry is still required, and always must be, so long as assemblies continue and grow. In comparatively few of them is there a sufficiency of it at present. But as time has passed the same developments which were seen in the churches of New Testament days have again been manifested, the profession without much outward evidence of life, the turning aside after a time of some who appeared to start well, the rising up in our midst of various kinds of troublers, and above all a growing spirit of world conformity. This being so, there is surely needed also a ministry of warning, with an increased emphasis on the practical bearings of the truth we claim to hold and it is in this connection that Paul’s last written epistles have a special value for today.

My **FUTURE** upon earth is to me all unknown. I only know that I have

The Hidden Secrets of God in front of me,  
The Wings of God to overshadow me  
The Hand of God to lead me,  
The Presence of God to cheer me,  
The great Lord, to whom past, present  
And future are all like, to be  
Guide and Guard forever.

## Paul’s Warnings to Saints

*Joel Portman*

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:28-31)

**I**n His ministry as an apostle, Paul labored fervently to bring the gospel to the Gentiles to which he was primarily sent. He could speak as an apostle and as an elder among

these elders as he summoned them to Miletus, as one who had labored night and day, teaching and warning them as he faithfully brought before them all the Word of God. He had set a pattern as a faithful evangelist, a fitted teacher, and a fervent shepherd among them. He also had knowledge of the future and the coming apostasy that would occur after his departure, so we find him warning these elders of what he anticipated would take place with enemies from without and from within.

What he predicted in these verses occurred very shortly after the departure of the apostles. We can find the entrance of those who came into the church from without, unsaved, ambitious men, who were determined to destroy the flock of God. In addition, there was the rise of those from within, from among those who were genuine believers and who had a place of leadership in the churches, who were seeking power and influence over others, even to the point of twisting the Word of God to attain their own ends. This is certainly a fact of history that should serve to warn us in these days of departure and weakness.

However, those conditions that took place early in church history can be and are repeated in our day, as we near the end of this age. The attacks of the enemy of God and God's people haven't changed, and we yet need the warning and admonition of the apostle today, **“Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock. . . Therefore watch, and remember”** (vs. 28, 31).

### **Grievous Wolves from Without**

“I know this,” (v. 29) is a word that, as Mr. Vine indicates, signifies clear and certain knowledge of a matter. It is a knowledge either derived from observation of circumstances or conditions (“to see”), or it can also suggest knowledge that has been received by understanding of the truth of God's Word. It was already clear that the work that God had established through his preaching was under the attack of spiritual enemies. Satan is continually opposed to anything of God. Paul said that “we are not ignorant of his devices,” (2 Corinthians 2:11). Paul's discernment of approaching attacks was clear, and he desired to warn these elders so that they might also be on guard and alert against every attempt to cause havoc among the saints.

“Grievous wolves” is an expression that indicates their ferocity and complete lack of compassion for the welfare of the sheep. They were violent and rapacious, intent on destroying the testimonies that had been established through the work of the Holy Spirit. This characteristic indicates those who were motivated by the “roaring lion” who goes about seeking to devour any and all who are contrary to his ambitious plans. True shepherds are responsible to guard the flock and to recognize any attempts by those of this nature to enter, and to repel them at every point (Titus 1:10-11). Peter charges the elders to “feed the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2), which means that they must fulfill all

the responsibilities of a shepherd who has the welfare of the flock in his heart.

Discernment and understand of the times and conditions is most important in any age, and sadly, when that is lacking among responsible men, it makes the entrance of those who would seek to harm the flock possible. We have mentioned that Peter spoke of Satan going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour (1 Peter 5:8) and in view of that relentless attack, the elders and believers to whom he was writing were warned to be sober and vigilant. They were to resist him. The direct attacks of those from without are easier to detect, but Paul also wrote of Satan's ministers transforming themselves into ministers of righteousness, even as Satan, like a chameleon, also transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). This kind of attack is more difficult, since it can be subtly introduced without believers being aware of it. His approach to Eve in the garden wasn't as an enemy, but as a supposed friend who wanted something better for her than what God had given. There are those who would interject thoughts into the minds of believers that are completely opposed to the principles that God's Word teaches, and which would supplant them with the use of carnal, worldly methods.

It is possible that the entry of grievous wolves was anticipatory of the periods of direct persecution that took place after the apostolic period. Peter seems to see that the conditions that the saints were experiencing in his day, which seem to be of a lesser nature of opposition but still serious, were an indication of the coming persecutions. This frontal attack from without can take many forms, but it is always directed toward undermining God's work and ruining the testimonies of His people.

The Lord spoke of the reality of men like wolves, seeking to destroy, even to the extent of entering the flock (John 10:12, Matthew 7:15, Luke 10:3). This calls for the need of vigilant shepherds, who are on guard and caring for the flock with tender concern. This is a need in any day.

### **Ambitious Men Within**

Even more serious was the rise of men who were part of the churches, evidently genuine believers, who had ambitions to promote themselves by using the Word of God perversely to draw away followers after them. It would seem that the expression “of your own selves” indicates that these were already considered to be leaders among the saints, some from the body of those like the elders who Paul is addressing. This would only increase their possible influence, since the saints naturally tend to recognize the authority of those who have been given such a place and who can possibly handle God's Word more adroitly than they. Those who are in responsibility, whether elders, servants, or full time preaching brethren, must carefully consider their objectives in view of the potential to cause

blessing or harm. Sadly, as older men have warned us, **there is enough carnality in any of us to hinder or harm the work of God.** Self-seeking has always been a human failure. Paul begins this warning by telling them to “take heed therefore unto yourselves” and this is most essential. Mr. Kelly comments, “The first of all duties is to take heed to our own selves, whatever may be our position, and this an overseer is more particularly to weigh. For what can be more dangerous than activity about others when there is carelessness as to ourselves? It is not from the word abstractedly, but from its shining on the path of our own experience that most is learnt practically. Undoubtedly we may learn from others, and through others; but how can there be reality, unless we take heed ‘unto ourselves’?”

Peter also speaks of those who would rise from among the believers, who were false teachers who would bring in damnable heresies and cause many to follow their pernicious ways (2 Peter 2:1-2). Jude also takes up a similar note of warning by speaking of those who have crept in unawares among the believers (Jude 4). Again, Paul warns Timothy of the evil results of men like Hymenaeus and Alexander in 1 Timothy 1:19-20. So the rise of those of which Paul is speaking wasn’t unexpected, and saints need to be on guard and warned against them.

There is a great need to carefully assess that which is said publicly or suggestively in private. Sometimes suggestions can be made by an individual that are intended to cast doubt on another’s testimony or exercise. More than one good brother has been hindered in his work or ruined in his fellowship with others as a result of someone who is opposed to him or who is seeking to influence other believers to align themselves with him. We surely need Paul’s closing admonitions in our day as much as these men did who were listening to him.

### **Paul’s Remedies to Apply**

The faithful apostle closes his message to these men with four essential practices for their safety:

**1. Watch.** The verb is in the present tense, so it indicates that this must be a constant exercise of heart, maintained with vigilance. “Keep on watching” might be one way of expressing it. This requires wakefulness, alertness, and awareness of the reality of such attacks that can take place at any moment. Paul commands them to maintain this condition, not lapsing into lethargy, not assuming that all is well when it isn’t. This is most essential. Sadly, one of the charges of the Lord against the assembly in Laodicea was that they were completely unaware of their actual condition. At ease, self-satisfied, and without any concerns had left them in a state that was completely dissatisfying to the Lord. Old Testament prophets were like watchmen on their posts, charged with alerting the people to coming dangers and responsible if they failed (Isaiah 21:6, 11-12; Ezekiel 3:17, 33:2, 6-7).

These elders were charged with a similar responsibility, and they will give account for their faithfulness or lack thereof (Hebrews 13:17).

**2. Remember the warnings.** Paul had faithfully warned these men as well as all the saints of the dangers that they would face. They needed to continue to remember those warnings. How easy it is to forget what has been said in the past, and then when we most need that counsel at a moment of crisis or peril, we fail to gain the benefit of it. He had done so with tears, for they were very dear to him. Sadly, we find in Revelation 2 that the Lord again warns the same ones, and reminds them that what was most essential, maintaining their first love, was what they had lost. Do we remember the truths that have been ministered to us by faithful men of the past, or do we forget them and fail to recognize the dangers of the present conditions?

**3. Depend on God.** The only dependable resource for the child of God is their confidence in God. Outward conditions can deceive, self-sufficiency will always fail, but those who wait on the Lord will always be sustained. Paul, now leaving them, was entrusting them to the care of God and expecting that He would guard and guide them as they faced changing conditions in his absence. Men may come, and those of the past are deeply appreciated as well as those of the present; however, we cannot depend on men. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5), and “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat. (Proverbs 28:25). Those who put their trust in the Lord will be made safe (Proverbs 29:25). He is always faithful!

**4. Obey His Word.** It is the word of His grace through which there is a constant supply for every need that we face. This is often the point of failure in our lives. Like Adam, we know what His Word says, but we fail to obey it. The difference between the house of the wise man and that of the foolish in Matthew 7, lay in the fact that the wise man obeyed and DID His sayings, whereas the foolish man didn’t. It’s not enough to know; it’s essential to practice in our lives daily. James tells us that a man who is only a hearer of the Word and not a doer, is one who deceives himself, (James 1:22). The sphere of our protection is in the effective practice of the truth that we know from God’s Word. May He enable us to practice what we know and go on to know the Lord.

## **The Emmaus Journey**

*W. McCracken, Cleveland, Ohio, WIS June 1942*

*Read Luke 24:13-19, 25-32, 36-41, 49-53*

**T**his is a very precious portion of the Word of God. If you read through the 24th chapter of Luke, and if you

are in any measure in touch with God, your heart would dance for very joy. The reason that it is so precious to the child of God is because it is full of Christ from beginning to end, and that which is full of Christ is dear to the heart of every child of His. This chapter begins with the resurrection of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ and it ends with His ascension—with His glorification and His ascension into heaven—and between the commencement and the close it is full of revelations of Himself to His beloved people. There are revelations of Himself from His own precious Word as they company with Him by the way; as He breaks the bread to them; as He stands in their midst and shows His pierced hands and feet; and again as He is about to be taken from them to go into the presence of His God and Father.

### **Their Theme**

I want to look at this little journey down from Jerusalem to Emmaus which these two were taking, and in what way Christ revealed Himself to these disciples. You notice they were walking and talking together, and we might ask the question, “What were they talking about?” What was the theme of their conversation? Christ! There had been strange happenings in Jerusalem during the past week, but they weren’t talking about any of these. Very sad things had happened among their own little company, but they weren’t speaking of any of these things. They might have been talking about Peter’s denial of Christ. Peter was the one who was always in the forefront—full of courage—and yet remember in the time of testing he failed and he denied his Lord with oaths and curses. But they weren’t talking about Peter’s denial, nor of the treachery of Judas the betrayer, nor of the failure of their brethren. They had a grander and better subject. They had something that filled their minds and souls even though they were sad by the way. What were they talking about? They were talking about Christ. Christian, what is the theme of your general conversation and mine? As we meet together and converse together and visit in each other’s homes and by the way, what do we talk about? The failures of our brethren? We thank God He has graciously hidden many of our weaknesses and failures even from the eyes of our brethren, and we shouldn’t talk about the failures of our brethren. There is only one ear that you should ever pour the failures of our brethren into and that is the ear of your Father in heaven. If you see their wickedness and the things that grieve your soul, take it into the presence of God and tell Him all about it, and pray for your erring and failing brethren. We are to be faithful to them. Don’t talk to one another about the failures of your brethren. God knows we have enough of our own, and sometimes some of us like to get in the judgment seat and pass judgment on this and that one, and we very often are far, too far from home. If we knew more how to deal with ourselves unsparingly, we would have far less to say about the failures of our brethren.

These two disciples had a grand theme to talk about. This is the theme that never gets stale. You will never get out of subject matter as far as the theme is concerned. It will always be sweet and fresh and dear to the heart of God, and it will always liven and freshen and bless your own soul if Christ is the theme of your conversation. Is He? How much do we speak of Christ, that blessed One who went all the way to Calvary just to shed His precious blood for us, and the One who died to take us home to be forever with Himself? Do we often talk about Him?

### **Their Companion**

Then Christ was not only the *theme of their conversation*, but He became their **Companion**; and do you know that where two are talking about Him, He is very, very near? He is always pleased to draw near and go with them. He is never very far away from the heart that is full of Himself. He drew near and went with them. It is grand to be in company with our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and if you want to have a pleasant, a short and an enjoyable journey, get good company. “Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them.” Christian, I wonder how much you and I know from day to day of having Christ as our Companion? I am afraid there are a lot of us like the parents of the blessed Lord Jesus, when they went up to the temple, and after they had offered their sacrifices they went home, but Jesus stayed behind and He got in among the lawyers and doctors of the law in the temple and He was hearing them and asking them questions, and there His parents supposed He was in their company. They took it for granted He was walking with them, that He was one of their number in their midst, but when they began to seek Him, they didn’t find Him. He was absent, and they began to seek Him, sorrowing. They lost Him one day and it took them three days to find Him. Is He with you day by day? Is He speaking words of comfort and consolation? Does He walk and talk with you, and does He cheer you on life’s way? When He is our companion, He defends us, He supports us, He guides us and comforts us by the way. The Christian life is a sad and dreary pilgrimage if Christ is not in it.

### **Their Teacher**

But He was not only their **Companion**, but a little later on He became their **Teacher**. What did He teach them? “He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.” I have wondered again and again and have sometimes tried to fancy in my mind where He would begin and what He would take up and say about these things, and I wonder sometimes if He went back to the Garden of Eden and then to Abel’s lamb, and to the blood-sprinkled door in Egypt. God has graciously given to us a wonderful Book, and all the Scriptures are full of the things concerning Himself. It is only an anointed eye that can see it and the Spirit-taught soul that can take it in—the things concerning Himself. As they were traveling by the way, their hearts

began to warm and their spirits began to get stirred, and maybe one would be nudging the other and saying, “Did you ever hear anything like that before?” There is no Teacher like Him! **Man’s teachings only fill the head with emptiness and pride, and fill an individual with a knowledge of his own importance. Christ’s teachings always humble, and Christian, you will never get a swell-head if you are learning from Him!** If you want truth that is going to stick, and refresh and uplift you, you must learn it from God, and God can give you more food for your soul out of one verse than a Bible school could give you out of a course of lectures, though right they may be in their own place. Have we been learning of Him, and learning from Him? If we have, I am sure of this, that we are more godly and Christ-like and more like our Lord Jesus intended that we should be.

### **Their Guest**

Then the One who became their *Teacher* later on became their *Guest*. He went in to tarry with them. It is a nice thing to have Christ in the home. What a home ours would be if the consciousness of the presence of Christ were in it and with us at all times! It would guide us and make us careful in our conversation; it would make us careful of our acts, where we went and what we did, and of what and how we spoke, if Christ came in as in this case to tarry with them. Christ is one who brings His own repast. He spreads the feast and you and I have the privilege of sitting down and feasting with Him. He feasted with them, and as He put His hands out to break the bread, He was known to them. And immediately they began to say, “This is our blessed Lord and Master, the One who has died. Look at His wounds. This is the One we longed for and we feared we had lost Him, and He is with us again!” Then He departed out of their sight; He left them for the time being. But He left them with rejoicing souls and praising tongues and with all their sorrow and grief gone, for He was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

### **Their Comforter**

Then the One who became their *Guest*, became their *Comforter*. They were in sorrow and trouble again in the upper room, and the door was shut for fear of the Jews, and Jesus came in and stood in the midst and they were terrified and afraid, but He spoke to them words of tender rebuke. “Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.” “I am the one who loved and died for you, and do you think I will leave you now?” He showed them the tokens of undying love, the tokens of eternal compassion for them, and He showed unto them His hands and His feet. Christian, are you ever troubled? Does the look of trouble ever cross your face and you wonder which way to turn, and how you are going to get out of this and that, and no one knows your trouble but God? Did He die for you, brother? Is He living for you? Then why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your

hearts? Do anxious thoughts ever arise in your hearts? “Behold my hands and my feet;” that should silence every question and put an end to every trouble and still every fear. Christian, He is still the Comforter of His people. Christ sent the Holy Spirit into the world to be the Comforter of His people, but Christ can comfort His people still.

### **Their Blesser**

Then a little further down the one who became their *Comforter* becomes their *Blesser*. He led them out as far as to Bethany and lifted up His hands and blessed them. He often blessed them during His pilgrimage on the earth, but this was the last blessing He was going to bestow upon them before He went back to heaven. But He is going to come again, and come as the great and eternal Blesser of His people and He is going to bless His people and take them home to be with Himself forever. God is the great Blesser of His people!

We used to sing “*Count your many blessings, name them one by one, Count your blessings, see what God hath done; Count your blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*”

Have you ever tried to count the blessings He has bestowed upon you? “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation” (Psalm 68:19). He brings a fresh load every day and just burdens us down with the load He lays upon us. Brethren, has He blessed you? Has He blessed you in temporal things, such as with a strong physique, and a healthy body and sound mind? Has He blessed you spiritually? He has always been the blesser of His people, and He is going to bless them throughout the unending ages of eternity. What a blessed Lord Jesus Christ is ours—the blesser of His beloved people.

The last word is, Christ as their *Lord*. They worshiped Him, and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, acknowledging the Lordship of Christ. Brethren, Christ is not only your Savior and mine, but He is our Lord. Do we own His Lordship; do we acknowledge His Lordship; do we bow to the things He says? Blessed be God, He will be our Lord forever and forever! It is our privilege to worship Him on Lord’s Day morning while sitting at His table, but brethren, it is also our privilege to worship Him during the week as our Lord as well. He should be Lord of all, and I should be acknowledging Him as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

May we remember that God would have us to have  
 Christ as the Theme of our conversation  
 Christ as our Companion  
 Christ as our Teacher  
 Christ as our Guest  
 Christ as our Comforter  
 Christ as our Blesser and  
 Christ as our Lord.

May we do it now, and if we do, it will be to His glory and to our profit and blessing!

God's schools are everywhere. He will not forget those committed to His care, and there is no ill to ourselves or those dear to us He may use for education in that which is highest and noblest. No circumstances are so unpromising, no surroundings so difficult that through them God cannot teach wonderful lessons to those He is training

### **“That Which is Perfect is Come!”**

*Enoch Coppin, New Zealand*

**M**iraculous signs are explicitly stated to have been Divinely given credentials of the Word by the Apostles “at the first” (Hebrews 2:2-5). These signs were not expected by the Apostles to continue after the canon of Holy Scripture was complete or “perfect” (1 Corinthians 13:10). “The Scripture came as Holy men of God were borne along by the Spirit.” Till the Bible was entirely written, there was need to give heed to prophesyings, revelations, tongues, interpretations, knowledge, healings, etc.

Even these were, in apostolic times, being counterfeited by Demons, and the believers were exhorted to “try the spirits whether they be of God,” and “Despise not prophesyings, but prove all things and hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5: 20; 1 John 4:1). For counterfeits of the Holy Spirit read 1 Timothy 4:1, 2. Some appear to think that the only test to be applied to spirits and teaching is whether or not they acknowledge “Jesus Christ come in flesh.” God has at least five tests, which are:

1. The Incarnation; 1 John 4:2, 3; 1 Tim. 3:16.
2. The Oneness and Equality of the Son with the Father. 1 John 2:22
3. Redemption and reconciliation by blood. 2 Peter 2:1; Romans 5:11; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:23.
4. The Sovereign Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jude 3, 4; 1 Corinthians 12:3.
5. The Coming again of Jesus Christ in Flesh. 2 John 7, (Bagster Greek).

The undoubtedly supernatural (or subnatural) phenomena sometimes following what some wrongly call a Baptism of the Holy Spirit is really Emotionalism or Demonism. Though speaking in the Name of Christ and professing to be energized by the Holy Spirit, it is really “seducing spirits” and the associated teaching is a “doctrine of demons.” We need not be surprised at this, for we learn from 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15 that Satan is transformed into an angel of light, and his ministers into ministers of righteousness. The

earnestness of those “deceiving and being deceived” is unquestioned, as also are their ecstatic feelings and irrational babblings when the powers of darkness grip them. A man of unsound mind may experience all they experience. The work and power of the Holy Spirit is characterized in the believer by a “sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Nothing could be more plain than the teaching of 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, in regard to gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge, etc. Chapter 12 describes the gifts. Chapter 13 tells us that as the “in part” period of the canon of scripture gave place to the complete or “perfect” completion miraculous signs such as prophecies, tongues and knowledge would “fail,” “cease,” and “vanish away.” Chapter 14 contains instructions as to the relative place and careful use of these signs and gifts in the church while they should last.

We have a complete Bible. That which is “PERFECT” is come!

The three portions which deal particularly with spiritual gifts are Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Let us note how, as the Bible neared the “Perfect” completion, the miraculous gifts, necessary as credentials and revelations from God at the first (Hebrews 2: 3, 4) become less common till they ceased. Romans, reckoned to have been written later than 1st Corinthians, omits some from the list. Even at this stage the Bible was not complete and some inspired utterances would be expected. Hence we have the warning of 1 Thessalonians 5, “Quench not the Spirit,” “Despise not prophesyings; Prove all things, Hold fast that which is good.”

Even before the Apostles passed off the scene there had been a subsidence of the miraculous phenomena which had been active at the commencement.

The period in which the Church depended for direction partly upon writings, and partly upon inspired utterances is past. We have a complete Bible! With, or even before, the passing of the Apostles, the gift of prophecies failed, the gift of knowledge vanished away and the gifts of tongues ceased. It is significant that one class of religious professors which the Lord says will be outside the closed Door (Matthew 7:15, 22) will be composed of many who have claimed to be prophets.

The epistle to the Ephesians shows the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to be adequate “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the Body of Christ.” When the New Testament was complete, the Word of God was no longer “in Part” written and in part oral, so there is no use for further apostolic and prophetic utterances. Hence the last written portions warn against any who might claim to be apostles or prophets with such gifts.

**“The Perfect has come”** (1 Corinthians 13:10).

Infancy and the conditions of it have passed away. No longer we see “as in a mirror darkly.” Obscureness no more limits

the vision of God's full revelation. Now we have a close-up perfect view of the mind and will of God concerning us. In the "in part" stage they knew in part; now that the "perfect" stage is come we may know even as we are known.

God's earthly people were warned against supernatural signs (Deuteronomy 13) which might be used as credentials by those teaching contrary to the Word of the Lord which Israel had received. Even if a miracle were genuinely wrought, no heed was to be given to the teaching associated with it. Instead judgment was to be meted out to the one who gave the sign, because he had sought to lead away the people from following the Lord. "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet: . . . for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart, etc." In the epistles specially suited to these last days, we have warnings equally plain. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils (demons)."

Latter day cults seem to depend on some miraculous signs as tongues, healing and prophecy. All this is claimed to be in the Name of Christ, but is, alas, in reality spiritism. Our only guide is the perfect Word of God, the Bible. And these cults appeal to the senses. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned." Let us not be misled by sensational things, religiously presented. 2 Thessalonians 2 ought to be sufficient warning. There we see that the Man of Sin will be introduced by the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, etc.

How much we need to heed the warning of Acts 20:28-33. "I commend you to God, and the Word of His grace." The Church at Philadelphia (Revelation 3) is twice commended by the Lord for keeping His Word. Once it is called the Word of His patience. Then He gives the promise to those who patiently keep it, "Behold I come quickly." Lastly He warns "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown!"

Once again—the "Perfect" is come. We have a complete revelation. The Bible is all sufficient. The written Word is our only reliable Guide.

WIS Jan 1941

## Eternal Life

Anonymous  
(AT Mar/Apr 1980)

**E**ternal life has been erroneously regarded by some as synonymous with immortality. The mistake is a serious one, because it confounds what God has given to all men in the way of nature with what His grace bestows on those who believe in His Son. By the divine in-breathing at the beginning God was pleased to confer upon our race a character of

being which is inextinguishable. This we call immortality ; and it is possessed by all men alike, whether their eternal destiny be one of bliss or woe.

Eternal life is a totally distinct thing. It is most certain that the contemporaries of our Lord regarded it as an immense boon to be earnestly desired; the various questions that were addressed to Him concerning it leading us to this conclusion. All his enquiries seemed to be of one mind in supposing it to be the reward of human effort; the earnest young ruler of Mark 10, and the cautious lawyer of Luke 10 both putting their question in the same form: "Master, what must I DO to inherit eternal life?" It was natural that they should speak thus; for among men every desirable thing is only obtained by money or toil. Yet if they had realized man's true condition in God's sight, and their own condition in particular they would have expressed themselves differently. Has not the Spirit of God described men as "dead in trespasses and sins?" (Ephesians 2:1). What can the dead do? Did not the Savior liken men to a debtor who "had nothing to pay?" (Luke 8:42). What price can bankrupts render?

The truth is, eternal life is the gift of God. As Paul expresses it: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Here we have the principle on which God grants this inestimable boon. It is not the reward of good works, or it would be a debt (Romans 4:4); it is the gift of sovereign love to those who could neither do nor pay anything in order to secure it. The ground on which eternal life is given is fully expressed in our Lord's familiar words to Nicodemus, recorded in John 3:14-16. His cross the satisfaction of God's righteousness and the mighty expression of God's love, has made it possible for Him to confer eternal life on all who obey the Gospel.

Eternal life has two aspects. Scripture speaks of it both as a present possession and as a prize to be gained at the Lord's coming. The one aspect is to be found in the writings of John; the other in the writings of Paul. John's words are most explicit: "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:11-12). This is a great reality, to be enjoyed here and now by every believer. Its grand characteristic is the knowledge of the Father and the Son. Paul's language runs differently :

"The end, everlasting life" (Romans 6:22). Is this contradiction of the teaching of the beloved Apostle? By no means. Paul's thought includes the body as well as the soul; it looks on, therefore, to the glorious moment of the Lord's return when the bodies of all the objects of His love will be instantaneously transformed, and become instinct with eternal life even as their souls are now. As the same inspired writer strikingly puts it in 2 Corinthians 15:4 :

**"Mortality will be swallowed up of life."**