

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

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## "As for Me. . ."

Joel Portman

Jim Flanigan, ("What the Bible Teaches, Psalms"), notes that "'As for me'" is a recurring expression in the Psalms. A perusal of the circumstances in which the phrase is used will be rewarding. See Psalms 5:5; 17:15; 26:11; 35:13; 41:2; 69:13; 73:2. The Psalmist avows that he will not be as his enemies. He will not meet evil with evil. He will not descend to their level, to an imitation of their subtlety and their guile. "As for me", he says, "I will call upon God". The pronoun "I" is emphatic. "I, on my part". Let his enemies do as they will, he will be different."

## Constant Dependence on God

Psalm 55:16 is the psalm that we would like to consider. Some may question the authorship of this psalm, but nothing in the psalm would not apply to David's experiences or not express his great desires. It is a psalm that expresses his deep concern of heart, as he was surrounded by enemies and unfaithful "friends", with uncertainty about his future and welfare. It describes his disappointment in being abandoned by his "friend" who was likely Ahithophel, who sided with Absalom in his rebellion. It is a psalm that expresses what many of the saints experience in their exercise for God in the midst of the ungodly environment of this world. It is very helpful to learn that there is really no new experience for the child of God. What we pass through and the sorrows of heart that we might experience have also been the portion of those who have gone before. We can also recognize the aspect of the

psalm that applies to the Lord Jesus in His humanity. He was uniquely constantly surrounded by foes and those who sought occasion against Him, and then abandoned and betrayed by one, Judas, who had been one of His disciples. How often have the godly been betrayed or abandoned by those who should have supported them! So we can learn from and receive strength from these conditions of the past.

David expresses the longing of many hearts in times of trouble in v. 6-8. How often has a godly soul, when faced with the enemy's oppression and afflicted by the fear and horror that he describes in vs. 3-5, wished for a means to escape from the problems. Escape is often one way of deliverance, as he expresses the unceasing efforts of his enemies to cause sorrow, vs. 9-11. However, it may not be the Lord's will. But the greatest source of sorrow was the failure of one who was "a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance," v. 13. They had enjoyed happy times of closest communion and worship together in the house of God, and this only magnified his soul's distress when he turned traitor and allied himself with his enemy. This is an aspect of our Lord's sorrow during life that we may fail to consider; the one to whom He had given every opportunity, and who He had warned subtly and overtly, was the one who betrayed him in an act that required his giving testimony against his own Master. Do we appreciate this aspect of His sufferings? If we could, it would also fortify us

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against similar disappointments from men. Repeatedly, we are warned not to put confidence in men or to trust in their promises. But it is extremely sad when brethren with whom you may have had close fellowship, in times of crisis turn against and side with enemies. This has been the experience of more than one. A brother who had been encouraged to participate and who was helpful in profitable Bible readings was abandoned and turned against when he had been falsely accused and evicted from his assembly by those who should have supported him. This is indeed most sad, but it is an indication of the failure of human nature, even in those who profess to know the Lord.

David's resource in such times, as it is with others, is to express complete dependence on his God and assurance of His deliverance. God never abandons his saints, and in their affliction, He is also afflicted (Isaiah 63:9, Hebrews 13:5-6). What a blessing to know One who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24)! May we know the same assurance of the constant, unfailing presence of our blessed Lord, and rest in His desires to go with us through the trial and to give support and strength (Psalm 23:4).

### **Faithfulness amidst Departure,**

We will consider one more of these expressions, this one in Jeremiah 17:16. Reading Jeremiah's prophecy gives an insight into the sorrows of a deeply spiritual man who, despite his sensitive nature, was called of God to deliver scathing messages of judgment to his own people. His heart drew back and felt the oppressive efforts of his own people to condemn and destroy him on every hand. He would have avoided it if possible, but the Word from God was in him as a fire that required him to speak, (Jeremiah 20:9). Other false prophets spoke messages of peace and safety, and the people loved to hear them. But they were false and produced a false sense of assurance that was contrary to God's messages for them. God's message in times like these is designed to stir and convict.

Jeremiah, like David in the psalm above, desired to flee away and to avoid his responsibility, but to do so would have been to leave them without a voice from God. Many preachers who seek to bring a clear message to the

saints are not appreciated as they should be. They may be considered to be "hard" or "legalistic" by others. But let us remember that messages at the end of Israel's Old Testament history were what they needed to hear and were designed to preserve them from judgment. Such is the case today. Under conditions that prevailed in Laodicea (Revelation 3), the Lord clearly reveals their real problem and His solution for it, but it wasn't likely what the majority in that assembly wanted to hear. They were, as Israel, satisfied with their condition of life and heart. Beware of self satisfaction and complacency! As Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" This also describes our hearts; they can deceive us and make us think that all is well, when the opposite is true. Many today feel that assembly testimony is flourishing and progressing when the opposite is more realistic. Let us be honest and recognize our own spiritual state! There is a remedy for it if we come before the Lord with a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:7).

Despite such opposition by the people, Jeremiah says in v. 16 (translation from "Jeremiah, a Commentary," Charles Feinberg), "I have not run away from being your shepherd; you know I have not desired the day of despair. What passes my lips is open before you." He had been faithful to them, and his concerns were so profound that he could assert his constancy despite their unstinting opposition. These are marks of a true shepherd, one who has a deep, abiding love for and longing for the welfare of the saints. He may be called upon by God to deliver messages that are not desired by most, but they are as important as a doctor's dire diagnosis delivered to a patient. Anything less would be unfaithfulness. Even toward those who might be considered troublesome, one must act as Paul could say to the elders of the Ephesian assembly, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house," (Acts 20:20). Those who seek to warn the saints are not being divisive, but they are showing a spiritual longing for the continuation of faithful testimony among the saints today.

May those who seek to continue this

shepherding work in our day not abandon that important task. May they continue, out of love for their Lord and for His people, to warn and to teach so that His Name might be honored and His truth maintained. This alone will preserve us and strengthen testimonies to go on until our Lord's return.

**"The Essence of Idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him."**

A. W. Tozer

## Romans 12

### Our Attitude Toward God

This 12th Chapter brings us to the practical summing up of the Apostles' teaching throughout the former portion of the Epistle. He has been bringing their condition as guilty sinners before them, and then the manifold mercies that God had bestowed upon them, so that when he reaches this chapter he begins to give a very practical application to all that has gone before.

"I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God." The "therefore" of this verse links it on to all that has gone before, and the mercies of God in particular are emphasized, and used here as that which should lead to a whole-hearted surrender to God. Let us therefore refresh our minds with some of these mercies. In Chapter 3 we are seen as guilty sinners before God. This then was our state when God showed us mercy for it's only the guilty that need mercy. In chapter 4, Christ is delivered for our offenses. What a mercy this is. All our blessings flow from this great mercy.

Ch.5 We are justified and have peace with God.

Ch.6 We are raised with Christ to walk in newness of life.

Ch.7 We are freed from every claim of the law and married to Christ.

Ch.8 We are in Christ where there is no condemnation, no separation.

Ch.9 We are called into the place of the people of God who were not a people.

Ch.10 We are partakers of the fatness of the true Olive tree.

These are some of the mercies God has lavished upon us. And by reason of them we should present our bodies a living sacrifice unto Him, living in contrast to Israel's dead sacrifices, holy in contrast to the unacceptable sacrifices offered when they were away in heart from God.

What does it mean to present my body a living sacrifice? It means a whole-hearted surrender of myself and all that I have to God. This may be illustrated by Abraham offering up Isaac. He put his all on the altar for God when he put Isaac there; Jonathan giving to David all his armor, all that was dear to a soldier, but David had won Jonathan's heart by the slaying of Goliath. And again we have an illustration in David's three mighty men who at the risk of their lives got him the water out of the well at Bethlehem. Having presented our bodies we are to remember that this is only our reasonable service. Well might we sing truthfully:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine  
That were an offering far too small  
Love so amazing, so divine  
Demands my heart, my life, my all."

The three Hebrews in the fiery furnace also presented their bodies as living sacrifices.

### Our Attitude Toward the World

'Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed"; thus our attitude toward the world is negatively and positively stated, in this sense we should all be strict nonconformists in three ways; religiously, politically and socially. We have been taken out of this world. John 17:6. We profess to have died to the world, and like Paul the cross stands between it and us, therefore we don't need to be conformed to it in any sense. But we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This simply means the adjusting of our spiritual and moral vision to the mind of God, with the purpose in view of proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. This we can never know if we conform to the world.

### Our Attitude Toward Self

Our attitude toward ourselves should be

characterized by sober-mindedness. Note the words of verse 3, not to think highly of himself but to think soberly. We are all in danger of thinking highly of ourselves and putting a high value on our ability, our service; but this comes from the lack of sober thinking. There are three minds in this chapter. The first is in verse 2, "The renewed mind;" verse 3, "The sober mind;" and verse 16, "The lowly mind." This is a good state of mind for one to be in, having a renewed mind, a sober mind, a lowly mind, and if this is my state of mind it will keep me from becoming vain in my own conceits.

### **Our Attitude Toward One Another**

Let love be without dissimulation or hypocrisy. This is to be our attitude toward one another. What hypocrisy there is in most of us, but my love for the people of God must be free from that, for God hates hypocrisy. If I am to avoid it, I must abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good. "Love that makes no discrimination between that which is good and that which is evil, is merely sentimental." Note three things about this attitude of love that we are called upon to manifest.

It is a preferable love. We read in honor preferring one another. Oh, what room there is today for that kindly, brotherly love which in honor prefers one another. This would save the Church of God from most if not all of her troubles.

It is a liberal love. We read, "Distributing to the saints, given to hospitality. This word given to hospitality is rendered prosecute, and simply means that instead of waiting for an opportunity to show hospitality, we should be earnestly seeking an opportunity. Some know very little of this, but thank God others know much of it.

It is a sympathizing love. We read rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. There is always much to rejoice over, and there is always much to weep over, what a blessed example of this verse our Lord left us. We see Him performing His very first miracle when He was rejoicing with those that rejoiced at a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. Then we find Him performing His greatest miracle when He wept with those that wept at the grave of Lazarus. May we then follow His example and this exhortation.

### **Our Attitude Toward All Men 17-21**

Recompense to no man evil for evil. This then is to be our attitude toward all men whether saint or sinner. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. What a poor testimony it is for a child of God to be dishonest. Live peaceably with all men. Some Christians quarrel with their workmates, some with their neighbors, and some quarrel with their brethren, but God says, live peaceably with all men.

If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink, but don't avenge yourself on him, for vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. David would not put a hand on Saul. He left him to God, and that is what we should do.

WIS June 1943

Justification deals with condemnation;  
sanctification deals with contamination.

## **Railing**

*Robert Surgenor*

**M**y wife exclaimed, "How could anybody do that if they were Christians?" I had just related to her a most unfortunate incident that took place in an assembly. I then explained to her that Christians are capable of many gross sins. I went on to explain to her that the Scriptures enumerate various sins, such as, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, drunkenness, revelings (Gal. 5:19-21). Also, malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and all evil speakings (1 Peter 2:1).

Why the mention of these sins? Simply because Christians have the capability of committing them, the reason being that the flesh is still within us. Paul exclaimed, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). True, the old man was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6). The old man represents our former standing before God. Through trusting Christ, we have become a new creation in Him, and the former things, relating to our standing before God, are gone (2 Corinthians 5:17). But, alas, the flesh is still

within us, and it is very prompt to spring into action.

### **Different Activities of the Flesh**

There are various ways in which the flesh can gain control of the believer. Through neglect of prayer, they can lose communion with the Father. If this takes place, the flesh will raise its ugly head within, causing them to sin. Yielding to the world's lures can draw us away from the good Shepherd, thus causing the flesh to rise and cause us to fall. However, there are many brethren who seem to be walking a straight path for God, and seemingly are sensitive to the commandments of Christ, however, they too are susceptible to falling, the reason being that they are not serious students of the Word of God, and do not fully understand the precepts laid out in the Holy Scriptures. They are following the pattern only because they have been exposed to it since their conversion. Let me give you an example. There are sisters, who if asked, why they wear a hat in the assembly gathering, could not give you a scriptural answer. They wear a head covering simply because it has always been done, and that is the extent of their knowledge. They know nothing about angels, headship, administration, and government being connected with the wearing of a covering. These Christians are not "rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith" (Colossians 2:7).

### **Dealing Intelligently with Sin**

When it comes to dealing with sin in the assembly, in most cases there is no problem. When a Christian commits adultery, the case is pretty much "cut and dried." The man has been discovered and has confessed his sin and consequently is excommunicated from the assembly as a wicked person. However if the accusing woman has no witnesses and the accused flatly denies her accusation, he cannot be charged and dealt with, for the Scripture plainly states, that only in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established (2 Corinthians 3:1). However, if there are false witnesses, wrongfully charging the man with adultery, the law calls for them to be questioned individually to see if all their stories agree. If there is a discrepancy in their witnessing, then the ac-

cused cannot be convicted. If the witnesses are telling the truth, then all their words will agree, but if their witness conflicts with another witness, they are not telling the truth.

### **The Definition of Railing**

Regarding the sin of railing, I am afraid that some among us do not fully understand what railing is. They may be God-fearing, and seeking to please the Lord, but they are not students of the Word, thus not firmly grounded in the doctrine. Let me relate to you the commentaries of godly men regarding railing.

Jack Hunter, ("What the Bible Teaches") "The noun describes one who uses abusive and violent language against another; he is a vicious talker, an evil speaker, who persists even when warned of his sin. A person who does not hold any person's reputation as sacred, he is habitually marked by strong, intemperate language."

"KJV Dictionary." "One who scoffs, insults, censures or reproaches with opprobrious language."

J. R. Caldwell, ("The Charter of the Church"): "The railer is not one who merely utters hasty, inconsiderate, and unkind remarks. Few would not be "railer" if this constituted the character so described. The ingredient of personal animosity is a necessary part of it. It is a course of personal and malicious abuse carried on with the intention of discrediting and detracting from the influence of the one aimed at. It is a deep-seated evil, and like all the rest of the sins here enumerated indicates a total departure in heart from God and an effort to carry out the will of the flesh by unscrupulous carnal means."

Harry Ironside: "What is a railer? It is a person who has a tongue loose on both ends and on a pivot in the middle, a vicious talker, and evil speaker, one who can destroy the reputation of another just as a murderer drives a dagger into the heart and destroys a life."

William Hoste, ("Bible Problems and Answers") "Some Christian brethren's cure-all seems to be to "cut off"; it is certainly very effective, though at the same time destructive. Besides, one fall does not necessarily constitute a man a railer or a drunkard. No one would style Noah a drunkard or Peter a profane

swearer, though we know they both fell into these sins on one occasion. The expressions referred to are by no means to be confounded with excommunication, and are important as showing, that there is a preliminary procedure to be carried out against an erring brother, at all events, for certain failures, before he is cut off from the assembly, which is only the extreme resort. Such a one may be "avoided," "cut off from our company," etc. though rightly continuing to break bread. But, of course, if his conduct does not improve, these lighter forms of discipline may lead on to excommunication. It is noteworthy that some brethren will cut off from the Lord's table, while showing fellowship in other things, even sometimes in the gospel or ministry of the Word. This is to reverse God's order. The breaking of bread is the last thing to go."

Albert Barnes, ("Notes on the NT") "A reproachful man; a man of coarse, harsh, and bitter words: a man whose characteristic is was to abuse others; to vilify their character, and wound their feelings."

W. E. Vine, ("The Collected Writings of W. E. Vine Vol. 2") "A reviler, or railer is one who uses abusive or violent language against another."

Thus we see that railing can be abusive language intended to wound and defame another. It is persistent, with the motive of character assassination, and can even involve statements that are true.

### **Dealing with the Sin of Railing**

When it comes to dealing with the sin of railing there may be more difficulties arise. First of all, some brethren do not fully understand what railing is. Some think that a sudden outburst of temper and a few unwise words uttered is railing. Not so! Let me remind you of the exposition of William Hoste; "No one would style Noah a drunkard or Peter a profane swearer, though we know they both fell into these sins on one occasion." I also think of Moses. Would you term him to be a railer? Hardly! Yet, on one occasion he lost his temper and called God's people "rebels."

To excommunicate a Christian from the assembly simply because on one occasion they lost their temper and spoke inadvertently is a

miscarriage of justice. Yet, it has been done. When occasions of such nature arise, that hot-tempered individual must be taken aside and warned of his unbecoming behavior. If that individual persists in his unbecoming action, repeatedly rising in the assembly and shouting out accusations, that is a different matter altogether. That person has now set himself up against the warnings of the oversight, and with premeditation is continuing his verbal accusations. He has now positioned himself as a railer, and consequently must be dealt with as such. He is to be excommunicated from the assembly.

### **The Persistent Brother**

I remember a case in Canada in the 1960's. A brother in the assembly objected audibly to the assembly his objections over certain things being done that he thought to be unscriptural. He was taken aside by the oversight and told that his objections were not appreciated. However, that was not the end. He repeatedly rose up during the gatherings of the assembly and continued to voice his objections. He was warned not to do so again, but heeded not the brethren's request. Consequently, he finally was put away under the charge of railing. The interesting thing is, his accusations against the things being done were justified. The assembly was introducing things that were not scriptural.

Brother William Warke and I visited the man a few years later. He was still out of the assembly. He was very friendly to us and repeated to us his case. I remember brother Warke explaining to him, that even though he was right in his convictions, yet his actions were wrong. He explained to the brother that when he saw things being introduced that were unscriptural, he should have had a meeting with the responsible brethren and voiced his opinion, and then rested his case, leaving it with the Lord. But instead, he took the matter into his own hands and continued his railing on the brethren to change their ways. He was repeatedly warned to cease his actions, but heeded not, consequently he was finally put away, and rightly so. Strange to say, a man can be lawfully excommunicated for standing for the truth, as was the case here.

Even though the brethren were introducing unscriptural things, yet they must be commended over the scriptural way they dealt with the offender. They were not hasty in their actions. I believe that they loved the offending brother and sought to spare him from being put away, but he refused to heed their advice to stop his misconduct, until they had no recourse but to excommunicate him.

### **Diotrephes vs. Sainly Men**

However, there are cases that are quite the opposite. When carnal men are brought into the oversight, strange things can happen. There was an assembly in Asia, perhaps near Ephesus where there was a man on the oversight named Diotrephes. He loved to have the preeminence and lorded it over God's heritage.

He was a man who would say, "You do it my way, or else." Being a domineering individual, if any disagreed with him, he would cast them out of the church. His dictatorial spirit prevailed. Read 3 John 1:8-9.

I am ashamed to confess, that I have seen similar situations in some assemblies even in our day. Years ago when brother Warke and I were in Northwestern Canada, a saintly man came to us with a severe problem. The assembly he was associated with had put him away for railing. The problem was, he had never railed. The assembly had a domineering man that could have well been named Diotrephes. This carnal elder had a disdain and strong dislike for this humble man, and consequently he charged the man with railing. Of course, the leading men under this Diotrephes joined in and supported the charge, thus the man was put away. He sat back for a few years, and with tears requested fellowship. His requests were denied. Finally he approached us, and brother Warke advised him to move to another location and have an interview with the brethren of another assembly, which he did. He presented his case to the overseers. Consequently, the overseers contacted the assembly from which he was put away, and wanted to talk to them about the case to get their side of the story. Would you believe it, this is what they were told; "We don't want to discuss the case, and we don't want the man here and you can have him if you want!" How can you reconcile this to

the spirit of Christ? You can't! The attitude of the disciplining assembly was vicious. The other assembly's eyes were opened, and they warmly received the supposed railer, who proved to be a blessing to that assembly until the day of his home-call. I was appalled to see such an attitude among Christians. Worse yet would have been the case if other assemblies within 500 miles of the receiving assembly had cut off that assembly for receiving a man that had been dealt with as a railer. Thankfully, that was not the case.

(continued)

*In New Testament terms peace means also right relationships between man and God, and between man and man.*

W. T. Purkiser

## **EVERY MAN**

The beautiful picture presented in Psalm 133 of "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," deserves our best attention, for the truth thus set forth depends for its realization in God's people today in the measure in which each one "endeavors to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). It behooves us, therefore, to give earnest heed to the testimony of the Word of God, regarding our individual responsibility in this matter.

(1) Every child of God is loved with a special love. John 11:5, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus," from which we gather that the Savior loves His own individually. This the apostle confirms in Galatians 2:20, where he writes, "Christ, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

(2) Every believer has his proper place in the body of Christ—the church. In 1 Corinthians 1:21 we read "that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," and concerning them that are saved the Holy Scriptures state "that God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him . . . that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another" (1 Corinthians 12:18-25). What a great

responsibility rests upon us.

(3) We also learn that everyone has his proper gift from God. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us" (Romans 12:3), and the grace given is "according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7). For this cause the Apostle Peter exhorts us thus, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

(4) Again we read "to every man his work" (Mark 13:34). The same Lord that gave ability to His servants has also given to each his work which doubtless will correspond to the ability of each one, so that the servant is responsible to his Lord to do the work He has appointed him, therefore, no one can clear himself of his responsibility by leaving his work for someone else to do.

(5) Everyone shall have to give an account of his service. The parable of the pounds (Luke 19:13) teaches that the Lord has given something in common to all His servants to be used for Him in His absence, and at His coming again He will call His servants to render an account of their stewardship. The difference in the servants in this parable does not appear to be the amount each had received, as occurs in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, but in the measure of faithfulness of each, which shall be duly recompensed. In view of this solemn truth "it is required in a steward that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

(6) "Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). Hence our behavior as Christians in the measure it has been according to the Word of God, is that which shall determine our reward in the day of Christ, "for every one shall receive the things done in his body whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

(7) Every one shall receive his own reward (Revelation 22:12). The figure of the sower in Psalm 126 is that of one that goeth forth weeping bearing precious seed, and as a reaper coming again rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him : but we learn from other scriptures that the sower does not always have the joy of reaping what he has sown, for we read in John 4 "that one soweth and another reapeth." It sometimes happens now that the

reaper gets the honor, but the Lord is taking notice, and on His return everyone shall receive his own reward according to his labor, then both sower and reaper shall rejoice together and the faithful servants shall have the Lord's approval, and enter into His joy. May the God of all grace enable us to "look to ourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

There is no place where earth's sorrows are so felt as up in heaven; There is no place where earth's failings have such kindly judgment given. (quoted in Pulpit Commentary)

## Overseers

No sooner were the children of Israel taken out of Egypt and formed into "the congregation of the Lord," than it became necessary that rulers should be appointed to look after the affairs of the people, and especially to settle the disputes that were continually arising.

What a sad commentary upon human nature, that when God brought a people out of bondage, it was but a few days until Moses was nearly worked to death, settling their disputes. It is hard to conceive what they had to dispute about when God provided them their daily food, and their clothes never wore out: but wherever pride is found, there will be found plenty of cause for disputes, for "only by pride cometh contention," Proverbs 13:10.

Settling disputes? what a thankless job! Those who have a care over God's people are so frequently called to this thankless job, and engaged in it, that it is no wonder that every once and a while we hear the cry, "Most of the troubles are among the leaders." We are far from saying that the leaders are never to blame, for unless they walk humbly before God, the pride of their hearts will soon break out in contentions with one another: and when this takes place the trouble assumes greater proportions than

amongst the rank and file, because they are more able to enlist sympathizers. Have we not all much reason to judge ourselves in this matter?

"Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? Why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: When they have a matter they come unto me; and I judge between one and another: and I do make them know the statutes of God, and His laws," Exodus 18:13-16. Moses was the sole overseer of the congregation: and he settled their disputes by "making them to know the statutes of God, and His laws." This is the only proper way to settle disputes amongst God's people. Moses was a faithful servant over God's house: but Christ, as a Son, is now over God's house (Hebrews 3:5-6), and He will settle every dispute in His own time and way, and it will be settled according to the statutes of God and His laws. Let us remember that "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Reaping is done here and now in part: but everything will be finally settled at the judgment seat of Christ.

Moses taught the people to know the statutes of God; and this is still one qualification of an overseer, "apt to teach," 1 Timothy 3:2. They are to "feed the flock of God," 1 Peter 5:2. This does not mean, able to get up in public and talk. Some can do this, and their talk is but empty words—words only; whereas others whose voice is never heard in public teach both by actions and words, the right ways of the Lord.

Jethro saw that the burden of the people was too heavy for Moses alone, so he advised him, "Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God. And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way, wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear

God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers over thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge." Exodus 18:19-22. Moses was to be for the people to Godward: he was to be a man of prayer: a man who could carry the peoples' difficulties into God's presence. Solomon prayed, "Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according to all his ways, whose heart thou knowest: for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men," 2 Chronicles 6:30. The judges might be partial, might err, but God would not: and God will settle quarrels, not by outward evidence, but by the evidence which He reads upon the tablets of the heart. May this solemn truth search us, and make us real! The true overseer is a man who takes the troubles of God's people into God's presence, and seeks light from God to judge righteous judgment.

Moses was not only to teach them ordinances and laws, and to pray, he was also to shew them the way wherein they were to walk. The apostles, in the New Testament, not only brought us the true teaching, they also shewed how that teaching was to be put into effect. Faithful men followed, and still follow them, shewing us the same things. What a grand record the apostle gives Timothy? "My beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church," 1 Corinthians 4:17. Even a man's right teaching becomes an abomination if he does not shew that teaching in his own life.

Then they were to be able men. Not every godly Christian is an able man, any more than every godly Christian is able to lead the singing; it requires well balanced men to give well balanced judgment. Nor is it sufficient that a man be an able business man: in fact successful business men are often least able to guide God's people. Money-making is apt to feed pride and wither the soul. Ability to oversee men is apt to make

men bosses, and this is to unmake them for guides to the flock. Able men are such as are fitted by nature, as well as by grace, to lead God's people in the way in which they should go, that is in obedience to the word of God.

Moreover they were to be men that feared God. God asks the question, "If I be a Master, where is my fear?" Malachi 1:6. Men that fear God own the Lordship of Christ: they honor His Name, and His name stands for what he is as revealed in His word. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Corinthians 7:1. This is the proof that men fear God, and characterizes all who do fear Him: they depart from evil: and only such are fit to lead God's people.

Then they were to be men of truth: men whose word could be relied upon. "Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in the holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart. .he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not," Psalm 15:2-4.

Closely connected with this is the last requirement mentioned here, "hating covetousness," or as the R.V. has it, "unjust gain." To defraud creditors in order to put money into one's own pocket: to refuse to pay creditors when one has sufficient to pay them: to live in luxury while creditors go unpaid: or to charge exorbitant. prices are proofs of covetousness. Greed for gain withers the soul and unfits men to be leaders of the people of God.

Such men as met the requirements here given were appointed to be "rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, or of tens". They all needed the same requirements whether for a larger or lesser office: and a man might be over thousands, as was Joab, and not be as honorable as was, "the armor bearer to Joab," 2 Samuel 23:37. God measures by how well men fill their offices, not by the size of the office. Well might we test ourselves by the requirements of these judges who were set over the congregation to administer the law of God.

(to be continued)

## The Lost Day

**T**hat day is lost, in which I have not learned something from the Word of God! Every day I should open the sacred volume, and every time I open it I should seek to discover some treasure of knowledge which I never possessed before.

That day is lost in which I have not done some act of benevolence! Where this can be done as a part of my regular calling, I ought to thank God for an employment which offers such occasions of serving God. I cannot live aright without looking forward to that solemn award, in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Doing good to the soul is better than doing good to the body; but both may be attempted every day. "Pure religion," or pure religious service, as the word there means, consists largely in visiting "the fatherless and widows in their affliction"— (James 1:27).

That day is lost, in which I have not gained some victory over sin! Our indwelling corruption is to be put to death by repeated strokes. The conquest of one habit marks any day with colors of joy. The sensible lessening of any evil temper, or the denying of any evil propensity, is better than all the gains of business. Every sin that is mortified is so much weight thrown off in the race.

That day is lost, in which I have not enjoyed some communion with God! This is the very life of the soul. He is not living aright, who does not seek this heavenly intercourse day by day.

That day is lost, in which I have not sought in prayer some spiritual blessing for myself and others! Such prayers ought to be earnest and importunate, and we ought to remember them, and look for gracious answers.

That day is lost, in which I have allowed myself to remain unreconciled to a brother! The sun should not go down upon our wrath.

That day is lost, in which I have not made some advance on my way to heaven! The traveler justly regards it a day lost when he lies by, and does not go forward in his journey.

Alas, how many lost days are marked in the calendar of our past life! The time is short— Christ is coming: Shall I not begin this day to do some of the neglected work for which I was sent into the world?