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Shepherds and the Sheep, pt. 5

Joel Portman

New Testament Shepherds

One of the gifted men that the victorious, ascended Lord has given to the church is pastors, or shepherds (Ephesians 4:11). Their being in the same context along with evangelists and teachers in this epistle strongly suggests that they function in a wider sphere than a local assembly, though the assembly is the primary focus of their ministry. The "elder function" is limited to a local assembly, but the heart of a shepherd would embrace all who are the Lord's sheep.

As has been emphasized, there is always a great need for shepherds wherever there are sheep. God's character includes His desire to shepherd His people, and this was true in the life of our Lord Jesus. That need exists today, but sadly, as in past eras, there is a lack of those who truly have the heart of a shepherd and who can function in this capacity. We find two men in the New Testament who exemplify the character and work of a shepherd, and neither of these were recognized as elders in a local assembly, and we refer to Paul and Peter.

Peter's Commission as Shepherd

The Lord, in publicly restoring Peter in the presence of the other disciples, challenged Peter's professed love for Him three times, and each time He charged him to feed and tend His sheep and lambs (John 21:15-17). There may be an interplay of words used in this context that one can study, including the two Greek words for love, two words for feed,

two words for the sheep or lambs, and two words for know. The extent of the difference when the Lord spoke them may be questioned, since He likely spoke in Hebrew or Aramaic, but John has written them, as the Spirit inspired him, using two words. This may indicate his understanding of what the Lord meant when he heard His words in that he caught the nuances of His words. Just notice that there are two descriptions of God's people, for there are "lambs" and "sheep." These two suggest that the shepherd and feeding care must be determined by those who are being cared for. One wouldn't act toward the lambs as they might toward the sheep, for the sheep are more mature and have progressed more than the lambs. Among believers there are both, and a discerning shepherd will recognize the needs of each. Sadly, often the lambs are not fed and tended, and we find them wandering away from a local assembly fellowship. One can criticize them, but perhaps it is because they were not cared for as they should.

Peter took the Lord's commission seriously. This commission is in the form of a command, and he willingly obeyed. He was a broken, repentant man, who had realized his own potential for failure despite his vociferous protestations earlier. It is a man who has had to face his own potential to fail and fall who is most capable of expressing the love of the Chief Shepherd for the Lord's sheep. We notice how that expression is emphasized, "MY sheep." One cannot call them his own and treat them as one might desire in any selfish manner, for they don't belong to any of us. They

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are the Lord's, and how they are cared for will be assessed at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Hebrews 13:17). In Peter's epistles we find references to his own failures as well as his manifested love for the saints as he writes to encourage and strengthen them. In the last chapter, Peter turns to the elders who were among them (5:1), associates himself with them in a wider sense, and then charges them to "feed the flock of God which is among you" (5:2). The word "feed" is the same word as the Lord used in John 21, and it means the entire work of leading, governing, caring for, tending, and feeding the flock. This is a descriptive word that embraces the entire function of shepherds, and it is a work most needed.

Peter's two epistles give us glimpses of his personal shepherding care for the saints. He writes the first epistle to encourage them in view of the degree of opposition that they were experiencing, and to do so, he always seem to introduce the example of the Lord Jesus in His suffering (1:11; 2:21-25; 3:17-18; 4:1, 12-13). Then he also reminds them of what they have been called to and what they are before God (1:3-9, 13; 2:9-10; etc). So his is an epistle of encouragement and edification, which was sorely needed among them. The theme is God's government in the lives of believers.

The second epistle considers, rather, God's government with relation to the world and the ungodly, but there is yet the note of encouragement for the saints and his exhortation for them to continue to grow spiritually (3:18). Problems and opposition are not minimized, but every aspect of spiritual instruction is given them to strengthen them in view of the developing opposition of ungodly men to the things of God.

Peter directs his teaching in 1 Peter to the elders in chapter 5. It is interesting that Peter says that it is the "flock of God that is among you" (1 Peter 5:2) which seems to indicate a close relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. They are not his sheep, for Peter says that it is the "flock of God", so they are to be tended with kind care and consideration of what the Lord Himself would do for them. They are to do it with a right motive that includes having a "ready mind", which Vincent says indicates "a forward spirit, denoting not mere willingness, but zeal." This would exclude a lackadaisical attitude toward this work and emphasize an earnestness to be occupied in it with great desire. This would exclude one's being occupied with personal pleasures when there is a need to care for the Lord's people,

or simple performing out of consideration for personal gain.

They are to be "ensamples to the flock." They set the standard personally for what the saints should be and manifest the character that they are seeking to instill in believers.

Peter's life and service to the believers can be studied to learn how he devoted his life to their care wherever he was found. But we look at the apostle Paul's example next.

Paul as a Shepherd

We usually emphasize Paul's apostolic ministry in evangelism and teaching, but when we turn to his words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, we find a description of his activities among them that indicate a shepherd's care. We can note 12 descriptive phrases that he uses when he speaks to them of his faithful ministry among them. We will briefly mention them for our consideration.

1. He said "**I have been with you**" (v. 18). This suggests his personal presence, he was one of them "at all seasons". How he was able to accomplish this is uncertain, but it surely emphasizes that a true shepherd of God's flock is one who is from them and with them in his work. We never read of Paul going away on a vacation to the beach or to some amusement center, nor of being separated from them for lengthy periods of time. It would seem that if a man cannot be with the assembly, but must spend months away for various reasons, perhaps he should allow another to fulfill that responsibility.

2. He had been "**servicing the Lord**" (v. 19). He was responsible to the Lord for their care and felt that burden in his soul. Service to the saints is service to the Lord, and if that is not being carried out with one's eye on doing what is pleasing to Him, then all is in vain and will not meet His approval now or in the day of reckoning.

3. He had done so with "**all humility of mind**" (v. 19) which would be in line with Peter's instruction in 1 Peter 5:3, "neither as being lords over God's heritage." This was his attitude toward himself. He was a servant, taking a lowly place among them, seeking their welfare in all things, and devoting his time and efforts to that ministry to strengthen and build them up.

4. He had "**many tears**" (v. 19) in that service. He had a deep exercise of soul for the welfare of the believers individually and for the assembly. Their condition weighed heavily on his mind and he felt a continual "care for the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28). How many brethren

weep tears over those who are wayward, those failing to grow and progress, or for those who are sick and suffering. Likely more than we realize, and we are thankful for them.

5. He had known many **"temptations"**, or trials (v. 19) in this service. We would understand this as the trials that he had experienced, including the attacks of Satan and the afflictions from Jewish opposition that he had received in that service, even, sadly, from those in some assemblies, such as in Corinth. If they were under attack by spiritual foes, he had known the same and could fully sympathize with them in their trials and difficulties.

6. He had **"kept back nothing"** (v. 20) that was profitable for them. His ministry had been complete, without holding back from teaching truths more difficult, and perhaps unacceptable, to them. The teaching function of a shepherd, whether in public or in private, must include his handling of truths that are needed in every case, to guard from error and departure, to strengthen the weak and to encourage the depressed, to instruct the sheep in every truth from God's Word. This is essential, and it sometimes involves speaking about those things that the sheep may not want to hear. He was faithful in every aspect of his ministry toward them.

7. His teaching and care had been **"publicly and from house to house"** (v. 20), so that in every aspect of his work, public or private, he had faithfully warned them and encouraged them. Often the work of a shepherd is not from the platform in public, but it is in the homes of the saints, or in his own home, where personal needs can be addressed and particular problems dealt with. It is in such venues that the believers recognize the personal care and interest of a shepherd in their welfare and will also respond more openly to correction.

8. He had testified **"repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ"**. The need for repentance and faith would remind us that there is a needed evangelical work that one must engage in, but these two terms also include the need that believers have. There is a constant need for repentance on our part. This isn't an act or attitude that ceased with salvation, but is a necessary part of recognizing our sins and returning to God in faith. So that Paul's ministry exemplifies the need for men such as he to continue this work in our day as well.

9. He could say, with regard to the opposition and anticipated suffering, that **"none of**

these things move me" (v. 24). What a pattern for us in our faithfulness to our Lord, for him to be able to say that the prophesied sufferings would never deter him from faithful obedience to the Lord and his continued service to the saints. It can be possible to let circumstances, opposition, lack of appreciation, failure to receive recognition for service, or other hindrances to prevent us from continuing in our service to the Lord and His people, but they should never hinder our faithfulness to the purpose of God and the pathway of service that He has determined. Paul had been told at the beginning, when converted, that he would suffer many things for the Lord's sake (Acts 9:16), so this prophetic utterance was no surprise to him, and he was prepared to suffer for Christ and His people.

10. He had been faithful to exhort them (**"feed the church of God"** (always local assembly) (v. 28) and to warn them (**"take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"**). He knew that there were and always would be enemies that would attack from without (**"grievous wolves"**) (v. 29) and from within (**"of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things"**) (v. 30). His spiritual foresight has been verified many times in church history, and often the most damage has taken place as a result of those from within who would arise to seek followers of their particular teaching or example. Shepherds of the Middle East always had to be on guard, watching the condition of the flock lest those who were more aggressive would seek to dominate the weaker ones and then group separations could occur. But they had to be alert for the grievous wolves, the lion and the bear, such as David encountered (1 Samuel 17:34-35) in his shepherding of his father's flock. The need for alert awareness of dangers has never minimized and will continue until the end of this age.

11. Paul could honestly look them in the eye and say that he had **"coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel"** (v. 33) so that his service clearly didn't stem from avarice or desire for material gain (1 Peter 5:2). He said to the Corinthian believers in 1 Corinthians 4:8-13 that they were full, reigning as kings, rich, honored and strong in contrast to his condition as he labored in the gospel, being poor, considered a fool, weak, despised, enduring hunger, thirst, etc. He had left a family connection that was undoubtedly well to do and honored, counting it all as

refuse (Philippians 3:7) for the sake of Christ. He willingly gave rather than receiving (v. 35), and for their sakes, he had given all that he had, as Christ had done for him. No, Paul wasn't a shepherd who was a hireling as in John 10:13, but a true servant of Christ who was willing to endure all things for their sake without considering any gain for himself. What a pattern of a true shepherd of the sheep of God's pasture!

12. Finally, Paul was, to the end, concerned to establish the believers in God Himself and in His Word, saying, **"I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified"** (v. 32). What more could he do? He had said that he was sure that he would never see them again, so that his final expressed words (apart from what he wrote to them through the first epistle to Timothy), expressed his certainty that even after he had been taken from them, what they needed as well as we was the confidence in God and His unfailing word.

His last words to the elders contained four essential elements that are necessary for the safety of believers. He said **Watch** continually, **Remember** what has been taught, **Depend on God** in all things, and **Obey His Word**. Our times are different and elements of our world have changed, but the need of the saints is the same. We would do well to take heed to Peter's and Paul's examples and continue this work that is still needed among God's people today.

There can be no headway in holiness until there is first the absolute renunciation of every known sin.
W. Lincoln

"Sitting down they watched Him there" Matt.27:36

Larry Steers

We use a common expression often in every day conversation e.g. "they say ". "They" seem to be an expert in many areas of life but are

rarely identified. One often desires to ask "Who are they"?

"They" appears sixteen times in ten verses in Matt. 27:27 to 36. Verse 27 clearly identifies "they" as the soldiers of the governor. In the same verse the Lord was delivered to the whole band of soldiers. If that band was at full complement there would have been two hundred men. These soldiers were not gentlemen but were rough, calloused, unfeeling individuals.

They stripped the Lord Jesus of His outer garments and adorned Him with a with a scarlet robe of mockery (v.27). What is unfolding is a mock coronation of the beloved Son of God.

A king must have a crown. One of these men platted a crown of thorns and no doubt laughingly and forcefully place it upon the Saviour's head (v.29). A king must have subjects so they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him saying with ridicule, "hail, King of the Jews" (v. 29) and for a sceptre they place "a reed in His right hand".

Kings must be anointed. Samuel anointed Saul with a vial of oil (1Sam.10:10), and later he anointed David with a horn of oil (1Sam.16:13). These cruel men anointed our Lord with their spit (v.30) without the slightest comprehension that in so doing the Old Testament scriptures were being fulfilled (Isa.50:6) "I hid not my face from shame and spitting". In wondrous humiliation He gave His face to them. Our Lord never attempted to protect His face with His hand nor did He move His face He stood silently and allowed the men of the Roman band to spit in His face. One can hardly grasp that lovely face with the foul spit of men running down it. This still is the lowest mark of disdain that one man can inflict upon another.

"Wondrous thy humiliation to accomplish our salvation"

They further mocked Him (v.31), and removed the robe from Him and compelled Simon to carry His cross.

Arriving at Golgotha, the place of execution, they, the soldiers, offered Him vinegar to drink. This was not an act of compassion by the women of Jerusalem.

But "they", the Roman soldiers, never offered this drink to dull the pain of crucifixion. The whole purpose for which this manner of execution was conceived was to inflict as much pain and suffering as could be inflicted upon the victim. Most likely the drug in the sour wine was intended momentarily to make it easier to crucify

struggling men, "But when He had tasted thereof He would not drink" (v.34).

"They crucified Him" (v.35). Two struggling thieves with their oaths and curses were crucified. But as the Lord from heaven was placed on the cross there was no struggle. He willingly laid His hands upon the cross. No mortal man took His life. He declared, "I have power to lay it down" (John 10:18). Even the Roman soldiers had seen nothing like this before. They must have marvelled as they drove the nails through the hands and feet of a man who came to die.

As a further mark of degradation and dishonour at the foot of the cross they parted His garments and gambled for them. (v.35).

Their work was finished. "Sitting down they watched Him there". As their reward wine was provided. David prophetically writes, "I was the song of the drunkard" (Psa.69:12). They made up their little song no doubt laughing and as they sang as they gambled for His garments. Others reviled Him (v.39). In an undignified manner a man at the foot of the cross with the priestly garments, Israel's High Priest, had no encouraging words for a dying man. The High Priest mocked" (v.41).

Let me remind the reader of a touching scene in the Old Testament. Jacob was convinced that Joseph was dead. The brothers who had sold Joseph have discovered that he is the governor of the land of Egypt. Joseph has provided his brothers with the good things of Egypt to take to his father with the instructions, "Tell my father of all my glory" (Gen.45:13).

Seeing the good things of Egypt and hearing of Joseph's glories Jacob responds, "It is enough"(Gen.45:28). God has seen all that wicked men have done to the Son of His love. The song of the drunkard, the ridicule, the mockery, were all heard and seen by God. Could I suggest that it is as if God said "It is enough". He will now close the mouths of men and still their tongue and song. An awful silence will settle upon the scene.

What we would refer to as a natural phenomenon puts fear into the hearts of the bravest of men now, and even more so in this period of time. They looked up and saw the sun growing darker and darker. This was no eclipse. The sun was responding to its crucified creator (v.45).

The earth began to quake (v.50). The rocks beneath their feet rent (v.50). Graves were open (v.52).

Listen to and meditate upon the prayer of the Lord as He looked down upon men from the

cross. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). He was not praying for the High Priest nor was he praying for the Jews. They should have known. Remember the words of the Lord to Nicodemus "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10). He was praying for the soldiers who drove the nails through His hands and feet. They thought they were crucifying a common criminal. To these men the Lord was a common sentenced by a Roman judge justly to die. They did not know who He really was. "They know not what they do:

The Lord prayed for these men. One must believe that the Lord always prayed perfectly in the mind of God. One must also be convinced that His prayers were answered.

Let me quote all of verse 54. "Now when the centurion, and they that were with Him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly saying, Truly this was the Son of God." Note both the centurion and "they", the soldiers, feared greatly. Roman gods and idols evaporated from their thinking. The solemn reality of what they had done settled upon their hearts. The man the had so callously crucified had was revealed to them. They had crucified the Son of God.

We have crucified the Son of God. What marvellous grace was displayed at the cross. Surely the prayer of the Lord was answered. The eyes of the centurion and they that were with him were opened to see the Son of God on the cross. The writer is convinced we will see these men in heaven.

**The Bible doesn't need defenders;
it needs Practitioners.**

Seeing the Glory of God

Edwin Adams

The Christian's highest privilege is to know the Lord. Regeneration means a revelation from the Divine Spirit to the human spirit, which is awakened out of its sleep of death and endowed with a new power of perception. "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," was the intense longing of Moses. And our Lord's desire, as expressed in His High Priestly prayer, was that those who belonged to Him should see His glory. The glory of God is

in His character, His Word, His works; it is His "self-expression." We discern God's power and intelligence in nature: "The heavens declare the glory of God." It is well to cultivate openness of soul towards God's great picture-book of nature; the things that are seen are representations of the things not seen, as our Lord constantly pointed out. But the Word of God satisfies as the works of God never can do, for in the Word we have the inspired record of what God told men about Himself. "A glory gilds the sacred page," the glory of the self-revelation of its Author. Every regenerate person sees the glory of God in the Bible because he knows its Author. It is chiefly in Christ, the living Word, that we see the glory of God. Through Him we know God as Father, and of Him John wrote, "We beheld His glory . . . full of grace and truth." To the believer the name of Jesus is a song in one word, a strain of heavenly music.

Consider His moral glories as revealed in the Gospels. In Him truth is mellowed by grace, and grace is strengthened by truth. In Him we see a perfect blending of majesty and meekness, dignity and humility, holiness and compassion, righteousness and love. "O the love of Christ," said one, "we cannot understand it now, but what a beautiful study it will be for eternity!" In the ages to come we shall enjoy the boundless wealth of the lovingkindness of God in Christ. And here and now, as we grow in grace, we are learning more and more of its everlasting strength.

The Cross is the supreme achievement of the Captain of our salvation. The Cross tells us how much God cares for righteousness, and what He thinks of sin; and the Cross is the supreme act of God's self-giving love; it tells how much He loves His world, and how much He suffers for it. The Cross solves the stupendous problem, "How can a just God forgive sins?" Let us make the Cross central in our thinking; it is the foundation of all our hopes. We see the glory of God in our own redemption. When Barnabas saw "the grace of God" in the disciples at Antioch, he rejoiced.

The Church is God's supreme achievement, His masterpiece. And each individual Christian is a fresh thought from God to the Church, and a living illustration of His power and love. And all progress and victory in the Christian life exhibits the glory of God; it is the result of the impact of the grace of God upon human personalities. It is a great joy to see God at work in the life. When Israel was being

pursued by Pharaoh, and when destruction seemed inevitable, God through Moses commanded His people to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

And we today behold His glory as He changes the things that oppose, and works deliverance for those who trust and obey. According to John 11:40 it is those who believe that see the glory of God. For faith is "the evidence of things not seen." And the Lord reveals Himself especially to the obedient. Faith is a condition of His working in and through us. God is active where faith is. May it be our ambition to grow continually in the knowledge of God and of His will, and to see His glory, with ever increasing perception.

John answered . . . one mightier than I cometh. (Luke 3:16). Some thought that John was "the Christ" and were ready to crown Him king! But in beautiful self-reununciation, John brushes it aside as if to say, "The honor is not mine. Place it on the One coming after me!" We can be willing to accept honors for ourselves in doing the service of God today. We like to receive human praise! May we say with God's servant, John, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30).

Oh, to be but emptier, lowlier,
Mean, unnoticed and unknown;
And to God a vessel holier,
Filled with Christ, and Christ alone.

Frances Bevan

Prologue to John's Gospel

Joel Portman

We have looked at vs. 1-2 of this remarkable portion of Scripture, but there is more that follows as John builds upon the wonderful truths that he has already expressed about the "Word". We saw that he emphatically emphasizes the eternal character of the Word, the essential Deity of the Word, and the Word's personality as an individual. Now we look at v. 3 and learn other truths that are intended to further enlighten us

regarding Him, who is the complete expression to men of all that God is.

The Creatorial Power of the Word, v. 3

V. 3 declares that all that exists came into being (egeneto) at a particular point of time as one great event, and that nothing exists that did not come into being through Him. The tense of these verbs is especially intended to emphasize this truth, and that nothing that exists came into reality by a gradual process such as is taught in our world and popularly supported by unbelieving men. A literal rendering of the verse, as F. F. Bruce has given it, reads, "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing has come into being that came into being." The verse expresses the same truth in both parts, first positively and then negatively.

If He is the creator of all things, then He is greater than all that He has made. Two heresies are countered in this verse: One is that matter is eternal, nothing has always existed, but there was a definite point in time when they came to be. Even evolutionary scientists realize that matter cannot be eternal (though there are some who tend to think so because of the insoluble problems of evolution). The other heresy that John refutes is that angels or any other being had a share in creation. He, and He alone, made all things with no assistance from any other being. There were those, such as the Manichees, who taught that the material world was formed by an evil spirit, and others among the Platonic school believed that some part of creation was made by angels and demons. This verse overthrows such heretical notions by declaring that all things that exist came into being through Him, and nothing is excluded.

Such profound truth is further emphasized in Colossians 1:15-18. He is the firstborn of all creation, not the first one born, but the One who has preeminence over all things that have formed a part of creation. These things that exist were actually created "in Him" (A.V. "through Him"), and this emphasizes that He is the sphere in which these things were made, and v. 17 shows that all things "in Him" (A.V. "by Him") consist. He is also the Creator all them all (v. 16), emphasizing that He is the instrument who effected the material aspects of this universe. Paul goes on to say that they were created for a purpose, since they were created "for Him" so that all elements of creation are intended by God for His glory and to fulfill His great purposes. He is the goal of all

creation and it is for this object that they were made. This great truth, if understood by men, would enhance their appreciation for the created universe and cause them to seek to know Him, who is the entire reason why all things exist.

We naturally tend to see and think of things from man's viewpoint, and can lapse into the tendency that pervades humanity, to think that man is the center of creation and he has a right to use it as he pleases. Rather one should see it as an expression of what is to be for His glory and the honor of His person. All created elements came forth from His hand in perfection, man included, but sin marred them and brought them to ruin. However, that creation still retains a great expression of its original glory, and it will one day be brought back, along with mankind, to the condition that God intended it to be.

The "Vitality" of the Word, v. 4

The word used in this verse is "zoe" in place of "bios" so that John is saying that life in its truest sense resides in Him. Vincent's Word Studies explains that "zoe means existence as contrasted with death, and bios, the period, means, or manner of existence". All life that we observe in creation, including our own life, is derived from another source, but life eternally resides in the Word. It is the life of God manifested in all that He has made, for He not only made it but also sustains it. In Genesis 2:7, we read that God breathed into man the breath of life (plural in the original). So that life in all forms is derived from God's creative power and purpose, and the use of the plural seems to indicate that His work with regard to man was distinct, with man receiving a kind of life that makes him responsible to God personally. "This is what Paul means by the perfect passive verb "ektista" (stands created) in Colossians 1:16. This is also the claim of Jesus to Martha (John 11:25). This is the idea in Hebrews 1:3, "bearing (upholding) all things by the word of His power." (Robertson's Word Studies). "Usually in John, "zoe" means spiritual life, but here the term is unlimited and includes all life, only it is not "bios" (manner of life), but the very principle or essence of life." (ibid).

It was and is that life that is the light of men at all times. John uses "light" to express that which is true and pure, the expression of what and who God is. It is in contrast, in this context, to the darkness of evil, lies, deception and wrong that exists in the world (v. 5). There is a sense in which all that man knows of good or evil is from

God, and He has revealed Himself and His truth imparted through creation by the things that are made (Romans 1:20). John's use of the present tense indicates that this life has always been the light of men. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). Arrowsmith, as quoted in Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, says that "Christ hath shined in all ages in the works of creation and providence. He left not Himself without witness. Every creature is a kind of professor that readeth man a lecture concerning God, of His wisdom, and power, and goodness."

His coming into the world personally expressed the truth of God in a man in a manner far different and more clearly expressed than creation ever could. "The light in which men are to walk is not merely that of creation, wonderful as that is, but in that which has been displayed in the actions and words of the Word" (F. B. Hole Commentaries). If creation has shed light on mankind, the the Old Testament prophets added further, how much more in the end of these days, when God has spoken to us "in Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2)? John emphasizes the light of truth that had come into the world through the incarnation, but the Pharisees and scribes rejected that light, and it became darkness (John 9:39-41, 12:35). John enlarges on this initial thought in 1:9, in emphasizing that He was the true light that lighteth every man through His coming into the world.

Verse 5 emphasizes the continuing conflict between light and dark in their spiritual conflict. We notice again that John uses the present tense ("shineth") and this may possibly suggest a truth that is revealed from the beginning of sin in this world. However, it is interesting that with reference to darkness, it is in a tense that seems to indicate that the darkness never has comprehended it at any time. There has been an on-going battle between the truth that God has revealed and the prevalent darkness that opposes it. The light continues to shine in the sphere of darkness, so that it has entered as a gracious act of God to dispel the total darkness that would control this entire sphere. God has never left Himself without testimony, as Paul declares in Acts 14:17. The background of the shining light may reside in the creation of God and the things that He has made, but John is clearly moving forward in the context to the clarity of light that entered when the Word was made (became) flesh in v. 14. If the darkness or evil and unbelief and error was opposed to all revelation of God in the

light, how much more was that opposition manifested when He became flesh.

The darkness not comprehending it could be seen as its incapacity to understand it, or its desire to overcome it. Isaiah 9:2 says, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light", and this is similar to the expression in Luke 1:78-79 with reference to the coming of Christ. There are different opinions of those who comment on the expression, and all have a degree of truth in them. Considering v. 10, one could conclude that seeing this expression as indicative of the inability of the darkness to recognize and receive the light appears to be more in the context. Even when the clear light of truth that was expressed in the incarnation of the Word appeared to men, they failed to receive Him. Without the divine illumination of the Holy Spirit through the Word, man is incapable of understanding and properly evaluating the truth of

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." (Acts 1:1-2)

Grace in the Son of Man going out in its address to all of Adam's fallen race and beyond Jewish limits being one grand feature of Luke's Gospel, makes it peculiarly attractive.

The Savior is presented to us in Luke in His character as Son of Man, displaying the power of Jehovah in grace in the midst of man. At first, doubtless, we find Him in relationship with Israel, to whom He had been promised; but afterwards moral principles are brought out which apply to man as such, wherever he might be. And indeed, what characterizes Luke's account of our Lord and gives special interest to His Gospel, is that it presents to us Christ Himself, and not His official glory as in Matthew, nor His mission of service as in Mark, nor the peculiar revelation of His divine nature as in John. It is Himself, such as He was, a Man upon the earth, moving among men day by day, and who nevertheless was "God over all, blessed forever, Amen"

(Romans 9:5).

JND

God. True it is, also, that the revelation of divine light in Christ only increased their opposition and rejection of it, and that rejection of divine truth is continuing to express itself in our day, and we anticipate its ultimate repudiation of it in the future.

One thing is clear; in the battle between light and darkness, the light always prevails. If there were a place that were totally dark and obscure, only a little light is sufficient to dispel the dark, at least partially. A very little light overcomes a great deal of darkness. The light also makes the reality of the darkness more evident. The Lord says in John 1:9, as we see in this present age, darkness may seem to prevail, but how much more dark would it be had it not been for the light of God's revealed truth penetrated that sphere?

Neither the judgment seat of Christ or the judgment of the great white throne is to determine the eternal destiny; all at the first are in heaven, all the others are going to be in the lake of fire. One determines reward, and the other determines degree of punishment.

W. Gustafson

Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ

J. G. Bellett

The life of the Lord Jesus was the bright shining of a candle. It was such a lamp in the house of God as needed no tongs or snuff-dishes. It was ordered before the Lord continually, burning as from pure, beaten oil. It was making manifest all that was around, exposing and reproving; but it ever held its own place uncondemned.

Whether challenged by disciples or adversaries, as the Lord was again and again, there is never an excusing of Himself. On one occasion, disciples complain, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" but He does not think of vindicating the sleep out of which this challenge awakes Him.

On another occasion they object to Him, "The multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, 'Who touched Me?' But He does not need this inquiry, but acts upon the satisfaction of it. At another time, Martha says to Him, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" but He does not excuse His not having been there, nor His delaying for two days in the place where He was; but instructs Martha *in the wondrous character which His delay had given to that hour*.

What a glorious vindication of His delay that was! And thus it was on every like occasion, - whether challenged or rebuked, there is never a recalling of a word, not the retracing of a step. Every tongue that rises in judgment against Him He condemns. The mother rebukes Him in Luke 2; but instead of making good her charges, she has to listen to Him convicting the darkness and error of her thoughts. Peter takes upon him to admonish Him: "This be far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee;" but Peter has to learn that it was Satan himself in Peter that prompted the admonition. The officer in the palace of the high priest goes still further -- correcting and smiting Him on the cheek; but he is convicted of breaking the rules of judgment in the very face and place of judgment.

All this tells us of the way of the perfect Master. Appearances might have been against Him at times. Why did He sleep in the boat when winds and waves were raging? Why did He loiter on the road when Jairus' daughter was dying? Or why did He tarry where He was when His friend Lazarus was sick in the distant village of Bethany? But all this is but appearance, and that for a moment. We have heard of these ways of Jesus - this sleep, this loitering, and this tarrying, -- but we also see the end of Jesus, that all is perfect. Appearances were against the God of Job in patriarchal days. Messenger after messenger seemed too much, unrelenting and inexorable; but the God of Job had not to excuse Himself, nor has the Jesus of the evangelists.

Therefore, when we look at the Lord Jesus as the lamp of the sanctuary, the light in the house of God, we find at once that the tongs and snuff-dishes cannot be used. They are discovered to have no counterpart in Him; consequently, they who undertook to challenge or rebuke Him when He was here had to go back rebuked and put to shame themselves. They were using the tongs or snuffers with a lamp which did not need them, and they only betrayed their folly; and the

light of this lamp shone the brighter, not because the tongs had been used, but because it was able to give forth some fresh witness (which it did on every occasion) that it did not need them.

And from all these instances, we have the happy lesson that we had better stand by, and let Jesus go on with His business. We may look and worship, but not meddle or interrupt, as all these were doing in their day, -- enemies, kinsfolk and even disciples. They could not improve this light that was shining; they had only to be gladdened by it, and walk in it, and not attempt to trim or order it. Let our eye be single, and we make the whole body full of light.

(A.A. Nov. 1939)

**The joy of the Lord is our strength.
Where heavenly joy is on the wane, Satan is
preparing for a victory.**

Let us go Forth unto Him.

By W. E. Vine, M.A.

(This was one of the last articles our brother wrote).

Two contrasting circumstances are indicated in this exhortation. The first is separation, the second is attraction. It is the drawing character and power of Christ that inspires the act of turning our back upon all that is contrary to Him. He suffered for us "without the gate." To realise this and all it meant for Him leads to a whole-hearted separation from all that is inconsistent with His mind and will.

To go forth to Him is to go "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). This has a far wider significance than abstention from mere Judaistic observances. Truly it means abstention from all that substitutes outward legal observances and ritual for that which is ministered by the Holy Spirit, but more than this is involved in going forth to Him. In one aspect the camp consists of every form of religion systematized and arranged by the traditions of men, the result of denominational departure from the teachings of the Word of God. As Judaism established its own religion as a substitute for what God has prescribed in His Word, Christendom has become a sphere in which human tradition, ecclesiastical and otherwise, has

replaced the instructions and principles of the New Testament by teaching and practices adopted by religious leaders. Everything of that sort is represented by "the camp."

To come out from it all and go forth to Christ has meant and still means reproach; but it is "His reproach" and it is the privilege and joy of the true follower of Christ to bear it for His sake and in identification with Him.

In the wider sense of the exhortation, we are called upon to be separate from everything that would corrupt our minds "from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3, R.V.). Simplicity means singleness of mind, that singleness by which "we make it our aim ... to be well-pleasing unto Him" (2 Cor. 5:9).

The cross of Christ was "outside the camp." During the days of His flesh He had borne a faithful witness against both religious and moral departure from God. His testimony, by life and lip, brought Him reproach and bitter hatred, and at length He turned His back upon it all, giving Himself up voluntarily to go forth "outside the gate," to endure the Cross. All was in undeviating devotion to the Father. "For Thy sake," He says, "I have borne reproach."

When we remember that all this was on our behalf, not only to deliver us from eternal doom, but that He might "sanctify us with His own blood," how can we refrain from going forth "unto Him"? His very sanctifying grace, making us His own, and separating us unto Himself, is enough to inspire us with the utmost devotion to Him. It is easy to avoid reproach. Demas avoided it, loving this present world. It meant his eternal and unutterable loss hereafter.

We have a triple foe against our highest interests of loyalty to Christ—the world, the flesh, and the Devil. To go forth to Him means victory over the world in all its aspects. It enables the true believer to say, "The world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world," and to realise the fact that "they that are of Christ Jesus (those who not only belong to Him, but partake of His mind, His character, His will) have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof" (Gal. 5:24, R.V.).

Let us then awaken to a fuller response to His attracting power, to a deeper apprehension of our indebtedness to Him, and to a more loyal identification with Him "outside the camp." For "here we have no abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come."

(W. W. #1)