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The Lack of Power

Franklin Ferguson

This is a relevant article that is applicable to believers in every period of time, even though it was written in 2007.

The complaint is made that there is a sad lack among the saints of the power of the Holy Spirit in life and testimony. Admitted that this is so, what then is the cause and what the remedy? We will consider the subject in the light of Holy Scripture.

The normal state of every soul "born again" is that he has a supernatural life (John 3:3-8), and his body has become a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), without which he has no part in Christ (Romans 8:9). Moreover, at his new birth he is by the Spirit baptized (immersed) into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, whether bond or free, and is made to drink into one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). There is no second baptism of the Spirit; this is done once for all for every member of Christ's body.

But there is the filling of the Spirit, with varying degrees of fullness. Its extent is governed by the measure that the Spirit is ungrieved within us (Ephesians 4:30); by how truly the "branch" abides in the Vine (John 15:4); and by how closely we walk in the truth (3 John 3). "Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). "Be filled with the Spirit" is as much a command as "love one another" (John 15:12).

Given these essential conditions, the believer then comes under the controlling power of the Spirit, and, unmistakably, there will be a life filled with God. The real point at issue is not that we shall have more of the Spirit, but rather that He shall have more of us. Consequently the more we remove the obstructions of sin, worldliness and unbelief, the more will the Divine Power be in evidence in our life. There may be nothing spectacular; but a holy and serene power will be there, which will tell for God continually.

Everything is known by its fruits (Matt. 7:16). The proof of being full of the Spirit, is "the fruit of the Spirit" "produced in the believer, which is "love, joy, peace, long-

suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22-23). A Spirit-filled soul will undoubtedly exhibit conformity to the image of God's Son (Romans 8:29), and in him will "the life of Jesus" be manifest (2 Corinthians 4:10). More time given to prayer and confession and meditation in the Word, with a closer walk with God, will make us, in a very real sense, "vessels meet for the Master's use" (2 Timothy 2:21).

Now that the Spirit has come, according to promise, and taken up His abode in all saints, we have no induement of power to tarry for, as before Pentecost; but now simply to yield ourselves to God (Romans 6:13), that He, unhindered, may work in and through us, "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). We shall not need to think or talk of "power," it will be there in the life for certain; because God Himself will verily be in us and with us, and His realized presence is power.

Hallmarks of Revival as Seen in the Reign of Hezekiah

David McKinley

Revival among God's people is essential and represents God's loving purpose to enable the testimony to His Name to continue. We see it in this article by our brother from Vancouver, BC.

Esteem for God's House

"He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them." (2 Chronicles 29:3)

The Devil had triumphed in the reign of Ahaz in having the doors of God's house closed up. The place where God's honor dwelt was a cold, dark and silent monument to Israel's sin of turning to other gods. The place of which God had said: "My house shall be called the house of prayer" (Mark 11:17), now for years had no ascending incense, no offerings of a sweet-smelling savor, no tithes brought into the storehouses of God's sanctuary; not even sin offerings were brought, as an admission of failure and departure! Now Hezekiah comes into responsibility in the kingdom and his first concern is for God's glory- for God's house. No doubt he had many other pressing matters, but he displays the principle later set out by the Lord Jesus: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." (Matthew 6:33)

Today, a high value on the "house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of

the truth" (I Timothy 3:14) is a hallmark of a revival. This will preserve us from treating the assembly as if it were just one of a number of evangelical groups, but as it is indeed, a unique gathering founded by God and maintained by God for God's glory. Its function is for the worship of the God of Salvation, the blessing of the saved who have the privilege of maintaining the testimony and to bear witness to the lost and perishing world in which it has been established.

Sanctification and Exercise to Purify God's House

"Hear me ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place." (2 Chronicles 29:5)

Before we can begin to sanctify God's house, we must be prepared to search our own hearts and exercise self-judgment. Are we practically set apart for God? Do

we order every day under his all-seeing eye? Do we allow ourselves to be defiled by the "entertainment" of the day. Today's media is permeated by licentiousness, making light of sin and the blatant flaunting of things of which God has said: "Let it not once be named among you" (Ephesians 5:3), "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting" (Ephesians 5:4), and "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret" (Ephesians 5:12).

Only when we are self-judged can we then seek to sanctify God's house. These noble Levites had the courage and strength to carry the filthiness out of God's house. Have we allowed things into the assembly which have no sanction in God's word? A hallmark of revival is for holy men and women to seek in God's fear to purge out things that are unscriptural and worldly. Is there a cry to introduce games to amuse the younger generation? Let us keep it out where it rightly belongs – in the world! Would some wish to introduce the trained singer, the gospel group, the instrumental music to cover up our poor efforts in singing our hymns of praise or gospel truth? Let us keep such outside of God's house- it belongs to a religious world that lusts for entertainment rather than spiritual edification. The praise which reaches God's ear is from the heart- not in mere melodic sound!

God's ideal was that his house "should be called of all nations the house of prayer". (Mark 11:17) He intended that Israel should have a drawing power on the heathen who would seek God. What attraction had a closed up house on the seeking soul? None! So, when the doors were opened and the house purged, those men would not want to leave anything that would not be in keeping with God who dwelt therein. So today the assembly should have a drawing power on those who genuinely seek after God. It should not be ordered to accommodate the worldly-minded children of indulgent and spiritually insensitive parents but should display a purity, obedience and godly order that will make the unlearned "fall down on his face and worship God" (I Corinthians 14:25). If a genuinely exercised soul, seeking to know where he should gather, should come into an assembly today and see the casual dress of men who profess to be in the presence of "the high and lofty one who inhabiteth eternity whose name is holy" (Isaiah 57:15), would they not be stumbled? The real presence of the living God calls for becoming dress and deportment! If such a seeker after God should see the shorn hair and showy dress of some women in assembly fellowship today, would they not rightly wonder if the assembly is really God's house? What shall we say about the temptation to wear jewelry and even Jezebel-like make-up seen in some quarters? In light of clear scriptural injunctions: "Not with gold or pearls or costly array" (I Timothy 2:9). These are surely some of the things which exercised souls in a time of revival will see eliminated from God's dwelling place!

"Truths for our Day"

A monthly publication that is freely available on the Internet and is intended to help believers who appreciate the timeless truths of God's Word and who recognize the unchanging principles of God's will for His people. It is primarily intended to strengthen those who enjoy fellowship in local assemblies of believers who are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Earnestness in Confessing Sin

"Our fathers have trespassed and done evil...and have forsaken him and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord and have turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch and have put out the lamps and have not burned incense." (2 Chronicles 29:6-7)

Here is a twofold confession: (a) What they had done- trespass, evil, forsaken him, turned away from the habitation. This is the confession of acts of sin and wilful disobedience! How awful to be a party to putting out the lamps of testimony and shutting up the doors of the house of prayer. While Hezekiah was himself clear of all of these evils, he identifies himself with the failed testimony of the past and confesses it as if it were his own sin. This is a true mark of revival. (b) What they had failed to do- "not burned incense not offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto God of Israel" (2 Chronicles 29:7). This side of failure in testimony is often not grasped by some of the Lord's people. Most can readily detect positive contravention of scriptural principles but we must also grasp how serious it is to deprive our God of his portion. In a later day, Malachi had to cry: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say "Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings." (Malachi 3:8)

Do we feel the burden of failure in corporate testimony or do we think that all is going well and there is no need for confession? Laodicea had a high opinion of their assembly condition: "Rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing". However, the risen Lord, whose assessment is unerring, said: "Wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked" (Revelation 3:17). How many Lord's days do we meet to remember Him and have to confess that there has been little real heartfelt praise rising from the company? The breaking of bread meeting should be the high point of the whole week. Our thanksgiving should be fervent, our hymns sung with heart and feeling; our whole demeanour, one of alertness and attention so that we are ready to move with the guidance of the presiding Holy Spirit. Let us remember the Old Testament injunction: "None shall appear before me empty" (Exodus 23:15).

Energy to Reinstate Scriptural Order

"My sons be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him and that ye should minister unto him and burn incense." (2 Chronicles 29:11)

It has been well said, that if we want to move forward we must go back! To progress in spiritual things, we must go back to simple, spiritual obedience to the scriptural pattern. Standing before God, allowing an all-seeing God to search us out through and through is fitting precursor to serving him. Here is no room for negligence- it takes spiritual energy from God to do God's service. Are we half-hearted when the call comes to give out tracts or texts door-to-door? Are we negligent when there are gospel series in progress? Do we only

attend occasionally when it "suits us" or are we whole-hearted at all the meetings, helping in prayer meetings, in bringing friends, neighbours and family to hear the good news? Are we diligent in study in preparation for bible reading? Do we give of our time and energy to have food for God's people as opportunity arises after the breaking of bread? Spiritual energy is another clear hallmark of revival.

High Esteem for the Value of Sacrifice

"Then Hezekiah the king rose early and gathered the rulers of the city and went up to the house of the Lord. And they brought seven bullocks and seven rams and seven lambs and seven he goats for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah, and he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the Lord." (2 Chronicles 29:20-23)

Every true revival has this clear feature: a deep appreciation for the value of Christ's sacrifice. An older generation had less of this world's goods and much less of this world's education, but it was not uncommon for early saints to weep in deep heartfelt appreciation of Christ's death when gathered round himself. Do we sit down consciously in the presence of our once crucified – now exalted Lord and feel our hearts well up in true appreciation? Do we mean with our hearts what we sing with our lips when we repeat the words:

Nought, nought I count as pleasure,
Compared, O Christ, with thee;
Thy sorrow without measure
Earned peace and joy for me.
I love to own, Lord Jesus,
Thy claims o'er me divine;
Bought with thy blood most precious,
Whose can I be but thine?

(S.G. Kuster.)

Does love to Christ and an unfeigned appreciation of his death, bow our hearts before him day and daily? Does this daily occupation with him result in the spontaneous overflow of worship at His table each Lord's Day? Well it is for that assembly that knows this experience on a regular basis. This is another hallmark of revival.

Evaluation of the Importance of Unity according to God's Mind

"They made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel." (2 Chronicles 29:24)

Had not ten tribes revolted against the house of David in the days of Rehoboam and followed a false leader, "Jeroboam who made Israel to sin?" Had they not followed the ways of the heathen and dishonored God? Why then would Hezekiah trouble to include all

Israel in his offerings? Every true revival is marked by a grasping in some degree of God's ideal for his people. Here was an understanding of God's purpose to have all the sons of Israel giving united testimony to Israel's God of redemption.

We never expect to see every genuine child of God separated from religious Babylon around us, but it should be our deep desire to see all God's true children gathered in the only scriptural gathering centre- the assembly of God. Today, we have two problems in this regard. Firstly, we have known of slackness in reception resulting in the unconverted gaining a place in a circle of fellowship which only rightly belongs to true converts. Elders responsible for interviewing prospective candidates for fellowship in an assembly should be looking for evidence of the Holy Spirit's activity in that soul, not just a well told story of conversion!

Secondly, we have the problem of such false professors lusting for worldly ways to be introduced into the assembly thus providing a stumbling block to genuine souls seeking to find their way out of the confusion of religious Babylon! Let us have hearts as wide open as God's book, but no wider! Let us gladly embrace all who have true marks of a heavenly birth and encourage them to obey the Lord in gathering only to his blessed name!

Enrichment of Worship in Spiritual Songs

"And he set the Levites in the house of God with cymbals, with psalters, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet. For so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets. ...and when the burnt offering began the song of the Lord began also." (2 Chronicles 29:25)

Every true revival has been marked by outbursts of praise in song. In the nineteenth century, when the truths of gathering to the Lord's name alone and of the rapture of the church were "rediscovered", there was an accompanying proliferation of deeply spiritual hymns which have enriched the praise of assemblies until this day. Hezekiah's retinue of people involved in praise, demonstrate a wide variety of harmony in worship: should we not experience just as wide a scope, in a spiritual sense, in our thanksgiving? We often note the frequent announcement of the same few hymns, Lord's day after Lord's day, linked with a muted reluctance to trying unfamiliar hymns or tunes. Is this a mark of revival? We judge not! A happy spirit of enjoying Christ in the soul will result in a thirst for fresh ways of expressing our appreciation in song. Do we give out a familiar of favorite hymn just to fill a "lull" in the worship? Do we just give out a hymn because a familiar expression in someone else's worship has suddenly brought it to mind? Such reasons for announcing a hymn are unworthy of the high privilege we enjoy around the Lord himself. If hymns are a vital component of the full round of activity in worship at the Lord's table, then they should

be given out under the guidance and motivation of the Holy Spirit. Our participation in song may not be the most pleasing to the ear of a music critic, but it is for the ear of God and should involve our spirit and our intellect. "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also." (1 Corinthians 14:15)

Come thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing thy praise.
Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

R. Robinson.

If singing is the audible expression of joy, **and it is**, then what joys are in store for us who will sing the new song eternally: "Thou art worthy...for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." (Revelation 5:9-10)

Exhortation of Others to come to God's Center

"And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh that they should come to the house of the Lord." (2 Chronicles 30:1).

This is the practical outcome of grasping God's purpose for unity as mentioned above. If we are experiencing renewed joy in revival in God's center, we will express our love for all who have a right to enjoy that privilege, in seeking to see them gathered with us around the risen Lord himself. Note that Hezekiah did not invite the heathen around to come! They had been a source of trouble and departure in the past. Likewise we must be careful and discerning in who we encourage to seek a place in God's assembly, but we will be burdened about any saints we know who are not gathered unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God will teach them their place "outside the camp". Many who loudly profess love for Christ, yet remain in unscriptural sects may well repeat the sin of Ephraim and Manasseh in that day: they laughed Hezekiah's messengers to scorn and mocked them (2 Chronicles 30:10). We look for the humble-minded seeker after truth who will be like the few who responded in that day. "Never the less, divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." (2 Chronicles 30:11)

Engagement in Supplication and Prayer

"Then the priests and Levites arose and blessed the people and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven" (2 Chronicles 30:27).

No revival has ever been devoid of these clear distinguishing marks- the felt need of prayer! Self-sufficiency, human organization and expediency are unmistakable evidences of departure. Do we grasp the fact that God and God alone is the author of revival? When we do, then will we turn to Him in prayer and supplication for the maintaining of what has been established for His

glory. Are we constantly aware that even in "holy things", we have failed? If we are, we will feel the need for God's forgiveness and the continuance of his grace upon us in all our frailty and failure. So it was in Hezekiah's day: "But Hezekiah prayed for them saying: The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary" (2 Chronicles 30:19). It is prayer that brings the blessing and every revival has known this distinguishing mark of fervency in prayer. Do we feel a burden to pray collectively as well as individually?

Is the prayer meeting important and well attended in the assembly? When God is giving help to pray, does time lose its importance or is there a fleshly unrest evident in the company when the "normal" time to conclude is exceeded by someone enjoying special help in prayer? Happy is that assembly which enjoys in a practical way the truth of I Timothy 2:1: "I exhort therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men". Happy was Judah in Hezekiah's day. Is it any wonder the Holy Spirit records: "So there was great joy in Jerusalem for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem" ? (2 Chronicles 30:26).

Elimination of False Gods

"Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all." (2 Chronicles 31:1)

Revival and the toleration of "other gods" are diametrically opposed; they cannot co-exist! Idolatry and declension are sisters; false gods and failure walk hand in hand; departing hearts embrace devotion to wrong objects of worship. Restoration is the bosom companion of single-hearted devotion to God. Recovery is always marked by rejection of all that displaces God in the affections of his people.

Today, we are surrounded by idolatry on a scale that probably exceeds that day. The great idol of "Self" calls for worship from almost every billboard! "Enjoy yourself", "Indulge yourself", "You owe it to yourself", "Feel good about yourself" are commonplace expressions in our society and many of the professed people of God seem to accept this philosophy as quite right and proper. Have we forgotten our Lord who said: "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Again, He said: "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34). If we worship the false idol called 'self', we will be sadly disappointed--it can never save us in a crisis or satisfy us in life; if we follow our Lord, we will "receive an hundredfold now in this time houses and brethren and

sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the world to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:30).

Self has many subordinate idols for men to worship. For example, the idol of 'Sport'. This whole sphere of human interest has many sub-idols. Some are intoxicated with baseball yet have not the slightest interest in golf; some live for hockey, watching its contests and discussing its participants; they spend exorbitant amounts of money on tickets and trappings. It is their life; it is their idol. Every branch of sport has its heroes and icons. Young Christian, it is time to follow the example of Hezekiah and pull down the posters and trophies of 21st century idolatry.

Another major branch of modern idolatry is the 'Music Industry'. Has any Christian worthy of the name not been moved with pity and sorrow to hear of thousands of young people screaming out their adulation of their 'idols' at a rock concert? The fact that tongues, created by God to express his praise in harmony with heaven, are perverted to the use of praising those grotesque, unclean and unworthy 'stars' should be enough to make us weep and long for the day when "everything that hath breath" shall "praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:7). Should any young Christian then be found singing the world's music? Let none be deceived, the modern evangelical radio programs that have all the trappings and instrumentation of the secular "music industry" are not Christian; they are just as much of the world, only they are more subtle because of the veneer of religion.

True revival is marked by a clear discernment of everything idolatrous and a repudiation of all that will displace our blessed Lord in our hearts.

Nay world I turn away
Though thou seem fair and good,
That friendly, outstretched hand of thine
Is stained with Jesus' blood.
If in thy least device
I stoop to take a part,
All unaware thine influence steals
God's presence from my heart."

Margaret Mauro

Encouragement of Sound Teaching

"Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord." (2 Chronicles 31:4)

Sound teaching is an essential component of a work of revival. The formation of assemblies in a widespread way, especially in the English-speaking world close to 200 years ago was accompanied by a prolific production of good, sound, written ministry, as well as an energetic effort to provide many opportunities for oral ministry, all for the edification of the people of God. Men of vision labored incessantly to bring God's truth to his

people; their motto: "All the truth of God for all the people of God".

Hezekiah knew the value of God's word. He knew the principle, later committed to writing by Malachi: "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:7). Hezekiah's concern was that such men would be supported and encouraged to make known God's mind. Are we less in need of priestly men today? Men who know what it is to move in worship and appreciation in God's sanctuary and who also know how to come out from God's presence and teach his people what they have received from God. We have many sermons, but far, too few messages from above with the warmth of heaven's love and the stamp of heaven's authority upon them. The Lord Jesus taught "as one having authority and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29). Men who stand in God's counsels, to discern His mind and bring forth messages suited to present needs perhaps known only to God, will carry with them that authority which only heaven can impart. All others are but beating the air and wasting their own time and that of those who must listen. A people in a revived state will encourage men through whom they hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and will not "suffer gladly" or support men who have not heaven's unction on their efforts.

Exhibition of True Devotion in Giving

"The children of Israel brought in abundance the first-fruits of corn, oil, wine and honey and of all the increase of the field, and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly." (2 Chronicles 31:5)

Here is large-hearted liberality of hearts touched by the grace of God in revival. Precious things, formerly squandered in idolatry, are now laid up in God's house for his service and the sustenance of his servants. If our God is a liberal, giving God, and of this we are assured, then his people in a revived state will also be liberal in giving of their material things as well as their time and energy. When we think of what Christ gave for us, how can we be cold and unresponsive? "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9)

And thou hast brought to me,
Down from thy throne above,
Salvation full and free,
Thy pardon and thy love;
Great gifts thou broughtest me;
What have I brought to thee?

Frances R. Havergal

We read: "The liberal soul shall be made fat" and "He that watereth shall be watered himself" (Proverbs 11:25). Liberality feeds on itself, rewarding the giver with spiritual increase and refreshment. May we experi-

ence and increase of this God-like characteristic which is a clear hallmark of revival.

Enjoined Faith and Courage in the Face of the Enemy

"Be strong and courageous, be not afraid or dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him. With him is the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles" (2 Chronicles 32:7-8).

Hezekiah saw beyond mere force of numbers or might of man. Here is a clear-sighted assessment of the real situation from heaven's viewpoint. Here we have a leader who is thinking God's thoughts and speaking God's mind. These were noble words of faith giving glory to a faithful God. What foe can stand before a little company, if God be with them. One man with God is greater than the greatest warrior. This is a living faith that brings the living God into the circumstance; a revived Israel under Hezekiah saw Sennacherib's vaunted strength wither in a night, showing the mighty arm of the Lord to be infinitely superior to the arm of flesh. "Thus, the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side." God's glory was thus enhanced and his people cheered; this is yet another clear feature of a revived company.

Dangers to Beware of in Times of Revival Exaltation of Heart

*"But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for **his heart was lifted up**: therefore was wrath upon him".* (2 Chronicles 32:25)

Alas, alas, the human heart is so base that as a result of God's rich, sovereign grace in restoration and recovery we can begin to pride in it as if something in us had initiated it! No sinner would ever be saved apart from God's first moving in grace. No saint or assembly would ever know revival apart from God drawing graciously near and granting it. Should we ever dare think that "our meeting is really doing well" and secretly, or maybe even audibly, credit the recovery to what we did or how we prayed? Let us ascribe **all glory to God**, if things have improved and let us humbly pray that the improvement may continue. The moment we take credit for progress is the very same moment that revival stops; there is no standing still, declension has already begun again.

Ingratiation of Self

"And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor and he made himself treasuries for silver and for gold". (2 Chronicles 32:27)

The man who so admirably promoted the enrichment of God's house earlier is now surrounding himself with much which pandered to the pride of his heart. Everything that tends to pamper the flesh or promote self

has a chilling effect on spiritual growth. Let us ask ourselves if we, who profess a heavenly birth and a heavenly destiny, are matching the poor worldlings in the playthings we choose. Does a Christian need a pleasure boat or a stable of racehorses? Does a child of God need a Dune-buggy or a dirt-bike? With so much to do for God and so little time in which to do it, how can we Christians find time for the poor toys of a blind, perishing world? Let us beware of "things" and be occupied with the "one thing" that was the apostle Paul's ambition: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

Revival is precious, but let us beware of relaxing our exercise when the "crest of the wave" has passed and things seem to be running smoothly and prosperously.

Exposure to Failure

"Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon...God left him to try him that he might know all that was in his heart". (2 Chronicles 32:31)

Here is the danger of self-reliance. It will surely lead to an exposure of the false center of our trust! Hezekiah, who had known much of reliance on God in earlier, more difficult, days, is seen relying on his own judgment, his own discernment, his own wisdom. Did it turn out well? Ah, no! Sad, sad day when a good king who had known much of being in God's mind in spear-heading revival, is found judging matters by the sight of his eyes and not looking to the Lord for guidance. What would any of us be, if left to ourselves? We need God in our personal life, our assembly life- in all of our trials and tests. Woe betide us in our public testimony, if God discerns a spirit of self-sufficiency and leaves us to our own devices, to prove our total inadequacy to carry on testimony without divine aid.

May we be found exhibiting these hallmarks of revival in the testimonies with which we are associated and may we be preserved from the pitfalls that this good king sadly experienced, remembering that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Men of God Series:

Abel, God Testifying of His Gifts

"Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice"
(Hebrews 11:4)

Alan Davidson

Our Brother continues this series that gives us God's record of those who pleased Him by faith in their lives.

In the great portrait gallery of faith the first name mentioned is that of the man ever associated with sacrifice.

Enoch *walked* with God; Noah was *warned* of God, Abraham *went* out for God, but Abel *worshiped* God.

The narrative is short but his fragrance remains. His life was brief yet he lives on. No words that he uttered are recorded but he still "speaketh". The Lord described the first martyr as; "Righteous Abel" (Matthew 23:35).

This early lesson from our Bible is that God is to be worshiped. The primary privilege of faith is to worship God through the offering (first mention) and death of a victim. We need to learn that worship is giving not getting, ascribing not appropriating, blessing God not blessing ourselves, the emphasis is on the character not the cost. The wording is to be noted; "And the Lord had respect unto Abel (the offerer) and to his offering" (Genesis 4:4). The LORD said, "True worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4:23).

The chapters of Genesis are not biographies of great men. We are not reading the details of historical events seen after Creation and the Fall, in fact we are not told many details because we do not need to know them. These chapters reveal the workings of God in human affairs to accomplish His great work of Redemption. God has not abandoned His first thoughts relative to Creation but His Sabbath of rest has been disturbed by sin. Through His Son, the promised seed, God is unfolding the great program of Redemption which He had planned before the world began.

For a **presentation** to God: Abel brought of the firstling of his flock, (Genesis 4:4).

When **provision** was required: Abraham said, "God will provide Himself a Lamb" (Genesis 22:6).

When **protection** was needed: Moses said, "Your Lamb shall be without blemish" (Exodus 12:5).

When **peace** was to be made: Israel drew near in the good of the Lamb of the peace offering (Leviticus 3:7).

The **prophet** foretold; "He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7).

John Baptist, **pointed** and said: "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

The **program** of Redemption has reached out in the N.T.; "Not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold ... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Heavens **praise** to the lamb shall be: "Thou art worthy ... for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood" (Revelation 5:9).

"The LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Genesis 4:3)

"Respect" means acceptance, approval, God's favour, God's regard for the offerer and his offering. Abel would have learned as a boy why his parents were driven from Paradise. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt

surely die" (Genesis 2:17). The wages of sin is death; separation from God. The way back to God must be by the way of death. This is a repentant sinner placing the death of the victim between himself and the consequences of his sin before God. Sin and the fall brought a great chasm from God by the distance of death. Faith recognises the fact of sin; repentance acknowledges the just penalty of sin and the requirement for the death of a substitutionary victim. "Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Without blood the edifice of salvation has no foundation. Without blood the structure of propitiation has no keystone. Without blood we have no Gospel.

"Respect" has the thought of propitiation rather than justification. God has found satisfaction in the death of Christ and has raised Him from the dead. "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus; Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith, (punctuation) in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past" (Romans 3:24-25). God saved O.T. saints in view of Calvary, even as He had respect unto Abel and to his offering.

"God testifying of his gifts" (plural) (Hebrews 11:4). This indicates the continual, habitual practice of Abel's approach. "The firstlings of his flock", the firstborn, choicest, he gave the best to God. "The fat thereof"; a burnt offering unto God. This gave a standing of imputed righteousness before God. He was a son of God. "He being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). Does this anticipate resurrection?

"The blood of righteous Abel" (Matthew 23:35)

The first martyr suffered because of his testimony to the necessity of the death of a victim. The first martyr of the church age died because of his witness to the truth of resurrection.

Sin ruined the first man and stirred the second man to slay the third man.

The name "Abel" means "vapor", breath, soon passing, hence mounting into a higher atmosphere. This was true of his short fleeting life.

He was "A keeper (feeder) of sheep" (Genesis 4:2). At an early stage Abel choose a pastoral, peaceful lifestyle, providing the basics of life, food and clothing. A shepherd is one of the most frequently used metaphors in Scripture, later developed with fondness in Hebrew writings and prophetic of the Lord Himself (John 10:11).

The N.T. references to Abel all emphasise that he was righteous. "He obtained witness that he was righteous" (Hebrews 11:4). Cain slew his brother; "Because his own works were evil, and his brothers righteous" (1 John 3:12). The Lord Himself referred to; "The blood of righteous Abel" (Matthew 23:35).

"I will put enmity between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). In subsequent chapters in Genesis, the inspired

writer traces two lines, two ways and two races of humanity. The character of the devil is seen in Cain, he was a murderer (Genesis 4:8), and a liar (Genesis 4:9). The serpent was the source of ruin. The seed of the woman was the seed of redemption. In the rest of the book the emphasis is not on the details but on the difference between the two lines of men. Evil is exposed and dealt with in brevity, then the good is expanded to the glory of God. The pattern is to increasingly develop the line of faith manifest in the men of God: Abel (10 verses) to Joseph (13 chapters).

Cain tilled the cursed ground. Soon the stained earth was hiding from sight the awful evidence of fratricide. "Thy brother's blood (plural) crieth unto Me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10). This cried to God, the avenger of murder. Pollution of the land by the shedding of the blood of the innocent, for which there was no expiation, drove Israel into exile. "Cain went out from the presence of the LORD" (Genesis 4:16). Cain believed in God, and evidently went to a specific place of worship to present his offering and sought acceptance in a spirit of selfhood and satisfaction with his own produce. He now goes out to cultivate the cursed earth and to improve conditions without God, outside of Paradise, taking steps to circumvent his punishment. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain" (Jude 11).

His descendants seek to make a ruined world happy without God; building cities called after the names of their sons; establishing a society in murderous defiance of God, saying where is the God of judgement? Tubal-Cain was an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron. These are basic metals characteristic of the image of the last world empire of end times with feet of iron and clay. Sin drove man from Eden, "Where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good" (Genesis 2:11-12). The carnal still seek to improve this world that has rejected God. The God-fearing "Call upon the name of the LORD" (Genesis 4:26). The line of Seth were the sons of God. As believers, we identify by faith with the death and resurrection of Christ in baptism. Bearing reproach with Christ, the spiritual handle gold, silver, and precious stones reaching out to the new earth of the covenant sealed rainbow.

"He being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4)

Abel's life and death speak to us of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the Good Shepherd; "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). His blood crimsoned the soil of earth in the garden of Gethsemane, (Luke 22:44). Pilate, "Knew that for envy they had delivered Him" (Matthew 27:18). Pilate said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. ... Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:24,25). Cain would not slay the blood of the offering but he would stain his hand in his brother's blood. Such was the horrendous choice of the nation.

Christ is the promised seed. In Him is the Secret of Life, promised to Eve, Abraham, and David. He is the Source of Life; "In Him was life" (John 1:4). He is the Substance of Life; "I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28). This is the Harvest at Calvary; "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

The voice of the first martyr, whose life seemed to be prematurely cut off, speaks though the risen Lord. We come; "To Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24).

Sanctification

An Explanation of Ephesians 4:22-24

God's will is your sanctification. (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

Carlos Fariñas

It is important to note the Apostle's statement, expressing God's will for His people, or what He expects of the Church. It is necessary to define sanctification as the process of becoming holy, which results in a change in the believer's lifestyle. Through this process, we adjust to a way of life that pleases God (Ephesians 5:10, 17). There is an aspect of sanctification that is positional in that it sets a believer apart entirely as the Lord's possession, no longer a part of the old life or having to do with the "old man", which is what we were in Adam. This article refers to the progressive and practical aspect of sanctification, which is our responsibility to carry out in our lives and to be progressively conformed to the image of Christ by availing ourselves of the resources provided us.

Doubts often arise about the practical way to understand this process of becoming holy, as we often associate it with the mystical aspect that popular religion has planted in the minds of the vast majority of people. If we consider the Scripture mentioned at the beginning, which serves as the basis for this article, we will see a simple illustration of the meaning of sanctification.

Let's see that Paul uses the figure of the changing of clothes that we commonly do: undressing, cleansing, and dressing again. In verse 22, he commands us to "put off the old man," although we must remember that our old man was crucified with Christ on the cross (Romans 6:6). That is, positionally with God, our natural man has already been crucified and therefore "dead to sin" (Romans 6:11). So, in verse 22, which we are discussing, we are exhorted to make this truth a reality by examining our conduct before the Lord each day; to look in detail at those things that were not pleasing to Him according to the teachings of the Bible, and before God, confess them and receive forgiveness for the faults committed, in addition to being willing to put them away and not do them again. This symbolizes the putting off of the old man; it is

like taking off a dirty garment and discarding it completely; trying not to even think about it again.

Then comes the figure of cleansing in verse 23: the verb "renew" is a translation of the word "ananean," which means to make something new or new. In Romans 12:2, the word "renewal" is a translation of the word "metamorphosis," which means to make something different, a complete transformation, and is related to the transformation of the new birth that occurred on the day of our conversion. In verse 23, it means that we should use the Word of God as "the detergent" that cleanses our minds and helps us not to think about the natural things of our Adamic nature (Philippians 4:8). The Holy Spirit is the one who, through the Word, cleanses us from sinful practices. In Romans 7:15-25, Paul says that he was constantly at war between his flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:17), and that only Jesus Christ made him victorious. Returning to the illustration, when we take off the filthy garment, we must cleanse ourselves, or we will dirty the new garment. It's not enough to resolve to abandon harmful practices; we must use the help of God's Spirit through the Word to ensure that we will not sin again. The next step is in verse 24. Now, after being cleansed, we must put on the new garment, which is related to the new man. This new man is the regenerated man who partakes of the divine nature (Colossians 3:3-4; 2 Peter 1:4). This new man is Christ, who is formed in the Christian according to Galatians 2:20; 4:19. We are told that this new man was created in true righteousness and holiness.

Consequently, the believer must be willing to walk according to the dictates of God's Word, and as Christ is formed in us, we will experience the peace of God.

The following verses in Ephesians 4 tell us that we must renounce resentful thoughts and forgive. If we have had differences with a brother, only by using forgiveness and the steps outlined above can we live in peace with God and men.

Desirable Local Assembly Conduct and Responsibilities

Joel Portman

All Believers:

1. Be exercised to submit to the Control of the Holy Spirit and to manifest Christ in life.

I Pet. 2:11-12, 3:8-17, 4:14-15, Eph. 4:22-5:4, Gal. 5:22-26, Acts 4:13

2. Seek to maintain Spiritual exercise before the Lord. (Reading Word, prayer, meditation)

Col. 3:16, Gal. 5:18, 25, I Tim. 4:12-16, II Tim. 2:15, 3:14-17

3. Be concerned to uphold a Scriptural standard of life that represents the Assembly.

I Thess. 1:6-10, 2:11-14, I Cor. 6:19-20, Titus 2:11-3:2, 8, Gal. 6:10, Heb. 13:16

4. Recognize importance of personally being present at all assembly gatherings.

Heb. 10:25, I Cor. 11:18, 20, 14:23

5. Participate with interest in all scriptural assembly exercises.

Acts 2:46, 4:32, I Cor. 12:18-20, Rom. 15:14, Col. 3:23-25

6. Express Subjection to Assembly Elderhood as unto the Lord

Eph. 5:21, Heb. 13:17, I Thess. 5:12-13

7. Contribute to the upbuilding and harmonious, united working of the assembly.

I Cor. 16:15, II Thess. 1:3

8. Be an active participant in the gospel work of the assembly.

Acts 9:20, 28-29, Phil. 1:27, I Thess. 1:8

Brethren:

Leadership and Public Participation!

1. Lead personally, privately (homes) and publicly by assembly participation (worship, ministry, prayer, etc.)

I Tim. 2:8, I Cor. 14:26

Exercise GIFT that the Holy Spirit has given for all service (gift not required for prayer or worship) Rom. 12:6-8

Come **prepared** to take part in whatever function is required for that particular meeting.

2. Lead in gospel testimony, actively seeking to use opportunities to testify for Christ.

3. Seek to develop spiritually on a continuous basis in view of present service and potential for future work.

Sisters:

1. Acknowledge and Express Headship by Long Hair of everyday life and covered head in assembly gathering I Cor. 11:1-16

Silence in gatherings of the assembly, not teaching or speaking publicly. I Cor. 14:34, I Tim. 2:11-12, I Tim. 2:12

Subjection to leadership, not in assembly position of authority

2. Exercise Priesthood Silently (1 Pet. 2:5,9), a very important aspect of our worship before God.

Spiritual Exercise required and seen of God as of equal value and importance.

3. Support all assembly activities, participate according to the sphere God has given her.

Give personally from her means to the Lord 1 Cor. 16:2. Luke 8:3

Support in fellowship, assembly gatherings, participate in work of the assembly. 1 Cor. 16:19

4. Function in the very important work of the Home.

Support her husband and encourage his spiritual exercise Acts 18:26

Raise children subject to the fear of the Lord. 1 Tim. 5:14

Entertain Saints and use opportunities to bring witness toward others

Privately teach others in home, especially older women to younger (Acts 18:26) Tit. 2:3-5, 1 Tim. 5:13-14, 2 Tim. 1:5, 2:15)