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Have We Lost Our Song?

Grace Leonard Klahr

(Contributed by Jim Beattie,

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Copies can be obtained from Jim Beattie

Email: jimbeattie@me.com

"Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing" (Psalm 100:2)

A Christian who has lost his spiritual glow is like a rose without fragrance, or a bird without song. The only people who have the birthright of joy are the children of God. A believer, saved by grace, kept by the power of God, and destined for an eternity of bliss has every reason to rejoice. The angels must marvel that we can be silent when we have so much about which to be jubilant! Someone has said, "The Lord meant us all to be walking doxologies!" Joy was intended to be one of the distinguishing marks of the child of God.

The statement has been made that during the Boxer Rebellion in China, the Christians could be distinguished from those who were not by their shining faces. A radiant Christian cannot be hid. In Matthew 5:14 we read, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." Years ago a man of God wrote something like this, "If Christ be dwelling in the heart, He will be seen looking out at the windows." There is a glow on the countenance and a shine in the eyes that invariably sets apart from his fellows, the one indwelt and filled by the Holy Spirit.

From the pen of Dr. F. B. Meyer comes this amazing statement: "It is a peculiar thing," said an embalmer as he stood by a woman's casket, "but it isn't necessary to tell me she was a Christian; I always know as soon as I see the body. The glory leaves its stamp on the face."

All too often, however, the Christian who possesses this spiritual glow, seems to be the exception

rather than the rule. Wherever such an one is found, his life is a testimony to old and young alike. Years ago there was a believer so noted for his joyous Christian life, that a child said of him that she believed he went to heaven every night because he was so happy every day!

The secret of the joy and power of the early church is found in Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Bible scholars tell us that the word used for power in the preceding verse is "dunamis" in the original Greek. It is the source of our English words, dynamics and dynamo. When the Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, it was as though a great dynamo of power had been placed within their being, and they were henceforth transformed from weakness to strength, from cowardice to courage, and from failure to victory.

The radiance of first century Christianity seems largely lost today. A minister once said, "We have lost our spiritual ecstasy in a world of afflictions." Our twentieth century prospective is so far removed from the day when the church was in its infancy, that we are unaware of how far we have drifted. We have become accustomed to conditions as they are, and think them normal.

The church of today has a multiplicity of activities. It is highly organized, its workers well trained, and its talent abundant. In spite of all this, however, do we not share in our Lord's indictment against the church at Ephesus: "But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love" (Revelation 2:4 Revised Version). If the love of Christ is no longer the motivating factor of our service, we may stand one day before the Judgment Seat of Christ and see our works ascend in flame (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

There are two passages of Scripture which form an intensely interesting study in contrasts. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, we read, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father" (Revised Version). In His message to the church at Ephesus our Lord said, "I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love" (Revelation 2:2-4 Revised Version).

At first glance we note a similarity of wording between the passage in 1 Thessalonians and the first

part of the second verse of Revelation 2. Both churches were said to possess work, labor, and patience. But note the words omitted in the message to the Ephesians. They had works - but no mention is made of their faith. They labored - but the motive power of love was lacking. They possessed patience - but the hope of Christ's coming had grown dim. The Ephesian church carried on their activities as usual, and a casual observer might have detected nothing amiss.

Indeed, they possessed many commendable qualities. They were active in Christian work, thoroughly orthodox, and vigorously contending for the faith. The machinery was all there-but the power was gone; and He whose eyes are as a flame of fire knew that the spiritual dynamo was inoperative.

Many years ago John Newton expressed this truth, in a very striking manner in one of his poems:

"Thus saith the Lord to Ephesus,
And thus He speaks to some of us:
'Amidst my churches, lo! I stand,
And hold the pastors in My hand.'

'Thy works to Me are fully known,
Thy patience and thy toil I own;
Thy views of Gospel-truth are clear,
Nor canst thou other doctrine bear.'

'Yet I must blame, while I approve;
Where is thy fruit, thy fervent love?
Dost thou forget My love to thee,
That thine is grown so faint to Me?'

'Recall to mind the happy days
When thou wast filled with joy and praise;
Repent, thy former works renew,
Then I'll restore thy comforts too.'

'Return at once, when I reprove,
Lest I thy candlestick remove,
And thou, too late, thy loss lament;
I warn before I strike--Repent.'"

The early church was a joyful church-a singing church! In times of revival and awakening there has always been a return to the radiance of New Testament Christianity. Someone has said that the Welsh Revival was a revival of song. The Welsh had no song leader and needed none! As the Holy Spirit moved upon their hearts, song burst forth spontaneously in mighty waves of melody.

G. Campbell Morgan visited the scene of the Welsh Revival and in a sermon in Westminster Chapel reported: "In connection with the awakening there were no hymn-books, no choirs, no organs. There were organs, but silent...No song books, but ah, me, I nearly wept tonight over the singing of our last hymn. When the Welsh sing they abandon themselves to their singing...No choir, did I say? It was all choir! And hymns! I stood and listened in wonder and amazement as the congregation sang hymn after hymn, without hymn-books."

Whether serving or suffering, living or dying, the early Christians rejoiced in the Lord. It has been said that the martyrs entered the arena singing-and died smiling! Like a buoy, this joy carried them triumphantly over the crest of the angry waves of hate and persecution which broke about them. We are told in Acts 5:40, 41 that, after the apostles had been beaten for their testimony, "They departed from the presence of the council, REJOICING that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."

Neither the cruel stocks nor their bleeding backs could quench the joy of Paul and Silas, and the foul prison walls re-echoed to the unwonted sound of prayer

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Editors: Joel Portman & Jim Brown

Publisher: Joel Portman
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and songs of praise. Stephan's face shone like the face of an angel as he faced the council, and he seemed scarcely to have heeded the pelting stones that hastened his entrance into the glory which already flooded his soul.

We have a modern day example of all this in tragedy-ridden Korea. Before dawn, the Korean Christians meet for prayer in unheated buildings. Among the number are widows of Korean pastors who have been recently martyred. Others are refugees who have escaped from the enemy with their lives and little else. In spite of all that they have suffered, they not only pray but they SING and PRAISE the Lord. Satan may do his worst to destroy such a people, but the hosts of hell have always found them unconquerable. Even martyrdom cannot destroy them, for where one has fallen a score will arise to fill up the ranks behind him.

It is impossible to measure the unconscious influence and blessing of a life controlled by the Holy Spirit. The story has been related of a bigoted Chinese who never could be induced to attend a Christian service. One day, however, he called on the missionary and said, "I want to hear about your religion. I never have heard the words of it but I have the laughter in your house and in the houses of my countrymen who have embraced your faith. And if you have anything that makes people so joyous I want it."

So often the unsaved, particularly the young, will say when the claims of Christ are presented to them, "I don't want to be saved now. I want to have a good time. I want to enjoy life." Yet very often these same young people have hungry hearts and long for real joy and satisfaction. They are like a young man who once wrote to the question and answer department of a newspaper saying, "I'm puzzled about life, and I wonder if you could help me. Am I different from everyone else my age, or not? Or do they wear a false mask as I do? I go to parties and dances and ACT as if I were enjoying myself like everyone else I know. But I am not enjoying myself at all. I always feel that there is SOMETHING MISSING and I don't know what it is."

To see a life filled with the joy of the Lord and satisfied with Christ, is the only effective answer to these young people who find something missing in life. What a joy it is to see young folk who have found Christ all-sufficient for every need of their hearts. A young girl had just been saved and was radiant in her new-found joy. When giving a testimony she said, "I feel as though I had swallowed an electric light bulb, and it was all lit up!" Beecher once wrote, "Christians, it is your duty not only to be good, but to shine; and, of all the lights which you kindle on the face, joy will reach farthest out to sea, where troubled mariners are seeking the shore." The story has been told of a minister and his wife who invited to their home a young woman whom they were anxious to win for the Lord. As they prayed about the matter, they felt led to refrain from urging a decision upon her at that time, but rather to make her visit just as joyous as

possible. After the girl returned home she wrote, "I always thought that to be a Christian meant to sacrifice all joy and happiness, and to become sad and long-faced; consequently, I had no desire to be one. But the day which I spent with you showed me how mistaken I was. I never have been in a home more joy-titled than yours. You have shown me, not only that one can be a Christian and still be joyful, but also that one cannot be really joyful without being a Christian. I want you to know that I have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my own personal Saviour, and I am just beginning to learn what true joy and happiness mean."

The joy of the Lord, unlike mere happiness, is unaffected by circumstances of adversity. Years ago in a home for aged and helpless ones lay a woman who was completely paralyzed. She was known far and wide for her radiant Christian life. They called her "Sunbeam." Ministers and missionaries loved to spend a few moments at her bedside. All who visited her came away with fresh joy and blessing in their hearts. She had learned the truth of Habakkuk 3:17, 18 "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD, I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION."

A minister often called to see an aged invalid who was both deaf and bedfast. He went to bring comfort to her, but always came away with a blessing in his own soul. One day when he asked her the secret of her happy Christian life, she smiled and said, "I am learning to enjoy the comfort of the Holy Spirit." Yes, God has made abundant provision for every experience of life. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, nor from the joy and peace which He can bestow. Even the dark valley of the shadow of death is made bright with the presence of our Lord. As the Psalmist wrote, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; FOR THOU ART WITH ME." Psalm 23:4. A lad in his teens lay dying. His father asked, "It is all peace and joy, Frank, is it not?" "Oh," he replied, "It has been peace and joy all along; but now it's OVERFLOWING."

The joy of the Lord should be deeper and the song in our hearts sweeter, as we near the journey's end. Our lives should be like the book of Psalms. The crescendo of praise swells as the book nears the conclusion. The last Psalm is a veritable hallelujah chorus! Thirteen hallelujahs in six short verses! This song of praise, begun in earth, will reach its grand finale in heaven.

In the book of the Revelation the curtains of glory are parted, and we catch a glimpse of the glorified throng of the redeemed as they gather before the throne, singing praises of the Lamb who washed them from their sins in His own blood. Though our feet still stand on the

shores of time, earth's discordant clamor seems momentarily hushed as we hear them saying, "Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the lord our God. Alleluia! For the lord God omnipotent reigneth." Amen!

The believer is so blessed in himself that he has a surplus and overflow of blessing for others.

Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

Leviticus 23:15-22, Deuteronomy 16:9-12 ,
Feast of Weeks v. 10)

Acts 2:1-4, Ephesians 2:14-15, 1 Corinthians 12:13
Larry Steers

This feast is identified by three names:

1. Cha Shavuot means "Feast of Weeks" Exodus 34:22, Deuteronomy 16:10, 2Chronicles 8:13. The significance of "weeks" will be noted when we note the word "count" in Leviticus 23:15.
2. Yom Habikkurim means "Day of First Fruits" Numbers 28:26
3. Hag Hakatzir " means "Feast of Harvest" Exodus 23:16

The uniqueness of this feast is emphasized in Deuteronomy 16 when we meet three truths expressed in the feasts for the first time: Verse 19 "corn", meaning wheat. This was the second "Feast of First Fruits". The first was the sheaf of barley. Here it is the wheat harvest. Verse 10 "free will offering". Other previous feasts were the response to a command. Here it is the offerer's exercise with an overflowing heart when he presents his offering. Note verse 11, "rejoice" This indicates that the significance of the feast floods the soul.

This was also, as we have noted previously, one of the three feasts that required the men of Israel to make their way up to Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16).

The Feast of Weeks was a one day feast and required the first of the wheat harvest to be presented to the Lord, but in a very different manner. Also note that no servile work was allowed (Leviticus 23:21, Numbers 28:26).

We must notice the counting of seven Sabbaths (Leviticus 23:15). From the barley sheaf having been waved, seven Sabbaths were to pass which would be 49 days or 7 weeks. Because of the importance of the day after the Sabbath one day is added which brings the count of the number of days to 50. How wonderfully remarkable that in these feasts emphasis is for the second time placed on the Lord's Day. Remember that

the waving of the barley sheaf was on "the morrow after the Sabbath". So again, the feast of weeks was to be observed on the "the morrow after the Sabbath" (Leviticus 23:16).

Here in Leviticus 23 our God is clearly unfolding His purposes for time, and when we come to the feast of tabernacles, for eternity. The feast of first fruits, the barley sheaf, of which the anti type is the resurrection of the Lord, occurred fifty days before the feast of weeks.

Again consider the word "count". The Passover was on the 14th day of the first month. The Passover is a beautiful type of the crucifixion and death of our Lord. We have noted in a previous article the feast of unleavened bread commenced on the 15th day of the same month. When our Lord was crucified the Passover was on a Friday and the feast of unleavened bread was on a Saturday. The feast of unleavened bread must always be "on the morrow after the Sabbath", the 16th day of the first month.

Consider, in view of the above, an interesting issue the passage of time presents. Most times through the centuries the 14th was not on a Friday. In 2017 the Passover was on Tuesday, in 2012 it was on Saturday, in 2019 on Saturday again and in 2020 on Thursday. Note another problem. If the 14th was on a Tuesday, the barley sheaf would be waved five days later but the Word of God demanded that the sheaf be waved the morrow after the Sabbath. What may seem to be a difficulty with limited mortal man is no problem with God.

Notice that in Galatians 4:14 "When the fulness of the time was come God sent forth His Son." Your Bible states that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". In creation our God established night and day. It greatly rejoices the heart to consider that from the creating of day and night our God ordered from the beginning of His creation that when His son was on this earth the fourteenth of the first month would be on a Friday and the feast of weeks would come 50 days later.

(The above was written with our solar calendar in view but also realizing that Israel was using a lunar based calendar. Sir Robert Anderson in his book on Daniel goes into great detail for any who would be exercised to search out more information on the lunar year.)

Notice the significance of the forty days. At the commencement of our Lord's public earthly ministry He was forty days in the wilderness facing Satan, the enemy who He would defeat on the cross. We have three temptations recorded, but continually for forty days He faced a mighty effort from Satan. But the Lord remained impeccable, perfectly holy and without sin.

Before the commencement of His heavenly ministry as our Great High Priest and after His resurrection, He was another forty days on earth (Acts 1:3). During these forty days He was never seen by ungodly eyes. The last sight this world saw of Him was as a man in shame, terribly suffering on a Roman cross. But in the

forty days after He rose from the sepulcher, He made a number of appearances to His own. A few on the slopes of the Mount of Olives saw him leave earth and go up to heaven. He was ten days in heaven before keeping His promise and sending the Holy Spirit.

Note again, with a spirit of worship, that what is wonderfully recorded in Leviticus 23 is the death of Christ (the Passover), His lying in a garden tomb (the sheaf of barley laid up in the temple while the Lord lay in the garden tomb), the Lord in heaven, and as we will notice His sending of the Holy Spirit.

As I write these words I feel like shouting, and so record in capital letters, REVERENCE YOUR BIBLE, read it prayerfully and thankfully as you rejoice in the wonder of the Book God has given to us.

Ye "shall number fifty days and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord" (Leviticus 23:16). This offering consisted of two loaves of bread composed of the first of the wheat harvest. What must have shocked the children of Israel after clearly being warned and taught the significance of leaven they are now told that these two loaves would incorporate leaven. They would remember that the meal offering of Leviticus 2 would be composed of fine flour with no leaven. While unknown to the offerer but very precious to us is that the meal offering is a precious type of our Lord in all the perfections of his blessed person. The two loaves of chapter 23 speak loudly of both Jew and Gentile. Both have sinned and come short of the glory of God in contrast to the offering of Leviticus 2.

The only answer for sin for both Jew and Gentile is the death of Christ and the shedding of His precious blood. The apostle Paul could write "He is our (plural, both Jew and Gentile) peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Ephesians 2:14) and "to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Ephesians 2:15). The partition that separated Jew and Gentile has been broken.

How has this union between Jew and Gentile been made possible? Perhaps Paul, for the fourth time (see previous articles) will take us back to Leviticus 23 when he writes "For by one Spirit are we all (Jew and Gentile) baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

There can be no question when we consider again that fifty days after the resurrection the Lord sent from heaven the Holy Spirit. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place (Acts 2:1). Note that in Leviticus 23 there are two loaves and on the day of Pentecost there were cloven tongues of fire, or a divided tongue. Notice here that the Holy Spirit came as "a mighty rushing wind". Tongues of fire suggests the purging power of the Holy Spirit. In John 3:8 the Holy Spirit is again likened to the wind powerfully producing the new birth. In Leviticus 23 and Acts 2 the Holy Spirit in mighty manifest power produced the birth of

the Church which is His body. In both Leviticus 23 and Acts 2 we are reminded that this precious moment was fifty days after the resurrection.

This day of grace is different from any other age. First, there is a living man in heaven who once was obedient unto death but lives in the power of an endless life. The Lord said He would send "another" (John 14:10) comforter. The word "another" is allos which means another like me.

Our souls should be filled with the wonder of the scriptures and the beauty of Divine inspiration. Here in Leviticus 23 there are two loaves of bread corresponding to two tongues in Acts 2.

Armor of the Soldier

Carlos Fariñas, Venezuela

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6:11)

Perhaps never before have the attacks of the devil against the people of God been so evident. At the dawn of Christianity, the greatest manifestation of the devil's attacks was from the Jews themselves against those early believers. The persecution unleashed in Jerusalem led to the dispersion of many families. The magnificent and prosperous church of the early days was diminished in number, and although this resulted in the sowing of the gospel in fields beyond Judea, as announced by the Lord Jesus Himself before His ascension to heaven (Acts 1:8), it is no less certain that there was pain among the saints for the harsh treatment to which they were subjected. A little later, when the church had already been established in various parts of Europe, the persecution was accentuated by the emperor of Rome himself and this led to the death of many martyrs, who were made a spectacle for the maddened people who cried out for the blood of Christians. Thus it continued for years, under different excuses and with different methods; the devil did what he could to exterminate the church, but without success. But the lack of success in no way means that this terrible being stopped persecuting the saints of God, only that in recent years and as we approach the evil time of the manifestation of the Anti-christ, the devil has stopped seeking extermination in the violent way he did in the past. Let us look at the inspired recommendations of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian believers. First we notice the recommendation to wear armor, the armor of God, similar to those worn by the warriors of that time to face the hardest battles. Paul assures us that the devil is still lurking today, but that there are ways to confront him; it is not by ignoring him that we will be victorious, brothers, but by putting up a good fight.

We are assured that we do not have to fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities,

against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (v.12). Note that the fight is not against human beings, although they are linked to them, but the real battle is against the angelic legions of wickedness, against the hosts of demons who rule the darkness of this present evil age. Another important thing to note is that the heavenly regions, which in the previous chapters describe the place of blessing and exaltation of the believers, is precisely where those infernal beings develop their attacks. It may seem strange to a Christian, that in the sphere where we enjoy great blessings we have hard and painful trials. But that is precisely the tactic that Satan uses today, so we must be prepared at all times because the time when we are apparently more blessed is the time when attacks can be more intense.

We may have a good job and have the absolute certainty that it was the Lord who granted it to us, but suddenly everything changes and the day turns into night, and the expectations of progress suddenly augur a resounding failure. Well, brothers, it is the devil who is attacking. A happy relationship, a home of peace and happiness, is transformed overnight into a battlefield, harmony ends and it seems that everything will end in tragedy; it is the devil who has deployed his hosts of evil to make us shipwrecked. So we should not be surprised that such things happen but we should be alert and prepared. What to do then? Verse 13 says, "Put on the whole armor of God", complete and not part of it. The Apostle assures us that clothed in this way we will be able to resist and stand firm in the end. Let us see what that armor consists of:

1. v.14: Having girded up the loins with truth and the breastplate of righteousness. The loins refer to the part of the waist, where the sheath for the sword was placed, and in a spiritual sense it refers to the seat of our passions and emotions. The loins are where the pants fit, in an allusion to courage, strength of character and authority. Truth is undoubtedly an allusion to the Word of God, as the Lord said in John 17:17. All our emotions and passions must be controlled by the pure Word of God. The breast, which is the seat of our affections, must be protected by a breastplate of righteousness, faith and love (1 Thessalonians 5:8). That is to say, that "sentimentalisms" must be regulated and protected not only with that which is just according to God, but also absolute trust in our God and Lord, and the exercise of love for Him, complete that armor that prevents us from acting moved by mere sentiments.

2. V.15: The feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. The feet make us think of conduct, our daily walk. The preparation is nothing other than the disposition and the foundation of our feet. The Gospel and all that its message of peace implies for the world must be the regulator of conduct. Sometimes we might feel the desire to protest against injustice and to take revenge for the evil done to us, but such a thing is in the

plans of the enemy and not in the purposes of the Lord who has constituted us ambassadors of peace (2 Corinthians 5:19-20).

3. V.16: But above all, the shield of faith must be hoisted; that is, let us run to the battle front with faith in our blessed Savior with absolute confidence. The enemy will shoot fiery darts, but these will be extinguished with that shield.

4. V.17 and 18: Now three more parts of the armor are mentioned to complete our protection: One part is for defense, and two are for attack. First the helmet of salvation. The helmet is the covering of the head which protects the thoughts, ideas and reason. It is not a helmet for salvation, but the helmet of salvation. Romans 1:16 tells us that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation, and the idea of security, liberation, preservation are included in that salvation. It is that hope (or better yet, assurance) of salvation (1Thessalonians 5:8) that will keep our heads clear to make the best decisions. The offensive or attacking parts are the sword of the Spirit, which in v.14 girdles our passions but here is an offensive weapon. The other is the prayer, which as in 1 Samuel 17:45 is a javelin, a weapon used for attacks from a distance, while the sword is for the melee attack.

In this way, beloved brethren, by using all that our blessed Lord has provided us, we are assured of victory in this spiritual battle. He will enable us to effectively use this armour to resist and vanquish our spiritual enemies and to triumph in the battle instead of being overcome by the enemy.

It is when a man has the heroism to stand morally and spiritually alone and independent, that he begins to exercise a powerful influence over the lives of others.

Grace and Gift

The words "grace" and "gift" in the New Testament, sometimes are very similar as to their meaning. But the word grace appears to be a wider and richer expression giving more glory to "the God of all grace." It is possible to have considerable "gift" and very little "grace".

The apostle Paul, in speaking of his ministry, very frequently refers to it, not as his gift, but as the grace of God bestowed upon him. In many respects he is a pattern man; and surely in this respect in lowliness of mind concerning his ability he is an example of what all ought to be who seek to serve the Lord. In referring to his labors, he says "yet not I but the grace of God which was

with me," (1 Corinthians 15:10). It is the same grace that saved us to begin with that is required to enable us to serve God acceptably. We are just as unable to serve without grace as to be saved without it. If we keep this in mind it will help to keep us from being puffed up. How frequently the consciousness of this would drive us to the throne of grace?

The apostle in writing of the trust that was committed to him says, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward," (Ephesians 3:2): "whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God," (5:1,7), "unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given," (3:8). What a mercy it would be if all who take the place of being the Lord's servants were characterized by the same humility, and consciousness that all that they have has come to them as grace.

In the second epistle of Corinthians the word grace is used a number of times, not in connection with preaching, but of giving, (see chapters 8, and 9). He speaks of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: of how, in their deep poverty they were willing beyond their power. He desired Titus to finish in them at Corinth the same gift of grace also. As an incentive to this he reminds them of 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).

Then again, the brother whose praise was in the Gospel was chosen by the churches to travel with the apostle when taking this grace, or gift, up to Jerusalem. Nor were the churches the poorer for their giving, for "God giveth more grace", so to the cheerful givers God was able to make all grace abound toward them, so that they might abound to every good work, (9:7-8). Their giving is called "service," "ministration," "distribution," yet it was "the exceeding grace of God in them," when traced back to its source, causing him to exclaim out of a full heart, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift," (2 Corinthians 9:14-15).

If this "grace" were but entered into more fully, how it would add to the joy of giving to the work of the Lord; and to humility of mind in those who preach the Gospel! David said "of thine own have we given thee." Those who now give with little exercise of heart would be made to rejoice, and abound in this grace. Doubtless many Christians and assemblies are lacking in this grace, and so the work of the Lord is at a standstill in their midst. It is sometimes said that the assembly prayer meeting indicates the spiritual condition of the believers. The assembly offerings do the same. "God loveth a cheerful giver."

H. F.

False Teachers Among You

Paul Van Noy

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you... And many will follow their destructive ways... They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you... they speak great swelling words of emptiness...." (2 Peter 2:1-2, 13, 18).

To the world it might appear that all is well in the Christian realm. Much-beloved speakers hold forth from the pulpits of some of the largest churches in the world. Believers and nonbelievers alike buy their books, avail themselves of their programs, and utilize their methodologies. One might come to the conclusion that Peter must not have been referring to the church in our day regarding false teachers. Tolerance is the word of the day. We hear admonitions on a regular basis to "just get along" with those of opposing faiths. "Love" reigns supreme.

But what is this "love" of which they speak? What about those who identify a false gospel or a false teacher among some of the popular speakers these days? Does this "love" still apply to those who expose the ones who are actually deceivers among the flock? We find that those who point out error and apostasy in the church are, in fact, considered divisive and judgmental. Some are told that their criticism will bring harm to the Christian church. They are perceived as arrogant and "negative." It is clear that the trend among evangelicals to embrace the "politically correct" thinking of the day will have egregious effects on the Body of Christ.

This "state of the church" forces me to ask a few simple questions. If Peter said that there would be false teachers in the church, where are they? How can we identify them? Who will warn others? It stands to reason that if the Word of God warns us that false teachers will be present in the church, doesn't it follow that we are expected to expose them? How will we recognize them, and what are we to do about them?

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:30). So we see that these false teachers will bring in things that are corrupt, contrary--opposed to biblical doctrine (teaching). Their purpose is to gather disciples to their own folds, separating them from the true Body of Christ. Paul's concern was not only that this would occur, but that the church would tolerate it: "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!" (2 Corinthians 11:4).

True religion is a willing, cheerful obedience to God.

The very thing that Paul warned about has come to pass! Most Christians not only tolerate those who speak “perverse things,” but they ostracize believers who won’t accept them. Do we think that we are wiser than Paul? Are we more mature than Jude? Are we really called to leave the evils of error alone and allow the church to be polluted by the lies? Not according to the Scriptures!

Some may say, “But there are good men and women out there whose ministries have been damaged when others pointed out errors in their teachings.” Couldn’t the same have been said about Paul when he called Peter to account for his error and “withstood him to his face” (Galatians 2:11-14)? Paul didn’t intend to bring condemnation upon Peter but rather to move him to repent of his actions. Paul saw the need to keep the message of the gospel pure so that both Peter and those who heard him teach would know the truth--the truth that makes men free!

In the early church, the elders of the church were responsible to give correction and instruction through the Word of God. Today we are fortunate to have greater individual access to the Scriptures, which are every believer’s authority. We know that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Every epistle in the New Testament was written to correct error in the church. Did Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude not understand that to correct those who were in error was in truth a failure to love them? Did they believe that it was none of their business to bring correction to the false teaching? Do we consider them divisive for confronting error and holding fast to the truth? No! They boldly addressed the error and at times even named the offenders.

Paul instructed Titus (an elder) regarding the standards by which other elders should be appointed--and function. He said, “For a bishop must...[hold] fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not....therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth... and [are] disqualified for every good work” (Titus 1:7-16). It is those in leadership who are called to the task of identifying error. Sadly, these are primarily the very ones who are promoting the error from the pulpits and publishing houses.

Jude wrote, “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Paul told the Romans, “Note those who cause divisions

and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). This is what the Bible says, but the trend today is to “avoid those” who are pointing out the ones who are spreading error!

Every God-called leader is told, “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Peter said, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers...” (1 Peter 5:2a). Along with the calling of God comes gifting and passion. One of the gifts given to every godly shepherd is love for the church. If we truly love people, we don’t want to see them fall into error. Error causes harm, and “love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10).

If we have to choose between everything on earth that the heart counts most dear and our obligation to God, the claims of earthly relationship must yield to the superior claims of God and duty, even though the surrender almost breaks the heart.

Ministry According to the Pattern

Order versus Confusion

1 Corinthians 14:26, 40; 16:14

A. P. Klabunda, deceased

There are three similar expressions used here, yet each has its own distinctive ministry to fulfill in the “perfecting of the saints, in the work of the ministry, in the edifying of the body of Christ,” and when each is observed by those who minister in the Church, the beauty and harmony of God’s order is enhanced, and is in contrast to that seen as of man in our day.

FIRST: “Let all things be done unto edifying”, or THE PURPOSE OF MINISTRY. The context shows the various gifts ministering in the Church as governed by the Head through His Spirit for the edifying, the building up of the Church which is His Body. The gifts here employed are men with spiritual enablements, each functioning according to his several ability unto edification. There is the possibility however, of some attempting to give ministry which is not of a constructive nature, hence the exhortation follows: “Let all things be done unto edifying.” Anyone holding views and practices contrary to sound doctrine is unfit to minister in holy things, the overseers are responsible before God to prohibit all

such. Great care and wisdom is needed to guard against men who have, not only removed the ancient land-marks and walk no longer in the old paths, but rather encourage not alone toleration, but association with, loose principles in church fellowship teaching new things and things that are not "most surely believed amongst us". Regarding such who cause occasions for stumbling (to trip up) contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, there is one command, AVOID THEM. When the purpose of ministry is for the use of edifying and not for party spirit, exaltation of self or gain, it always exalts the Head through the members; thus minis-try that exalts Christ is not a great flow of beautiful words ABOUT HIM, but ministry coming FROM HIM that searches the heart, corrects our ways, and leads in paths of holiness; fitting us to enjoy communion with Him and enabling us to appreciate and adore His excellent worth. No believer who is out of fellowship with the Lord can exalt Him, either by words or by actions. How needful then for ministry to correct, reprove, rebuke and instruct us in our erring ways. Such ministry comes through gifts operating in subjection to the Head, which will then react on the members. No doubt the apostle had this in mind when he wrote those words in his first epistle: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever" (1 Peter 4:11).

SECOND: "Let all things be done decently and in order", or the ORDER OF MINISTRY. Here we have that which, if recognized, would control both the time and order in which such ministry is given. To minister "decently", is to do so in a becoming manner, worthy of the Head from whence it comes. To minister "in order", is to minister in keeping with God's mind and arrangement, being led by the Spirit into all truth. In Corinth disorder marked the day, and confusion followed; among some of the evils present was the diversity of words and opinions. It became so pronounced that the apostle beseeches them to "all speak the same things", and to be "all perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." What could be more out of order than when one ministers after this manner and another after that, agreeing neither in doctrine nor in practice. Is there a remedy? Yes, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," one of humility, esteeming others better than ourselves. (R. V. "counting others better than ourselves"). This would in a definite way result in unity of thought and action. The observance of this practice would highly commend the order of our meetings, locally or at conferences, to every man's conscience. Instead of that rush to the platform (which has resulted in man supplanting the Holy Spirit by appointing those who are to minister, whether he be an Ahimaaz or a Cushite), there would be a waiting on God, a fear upon those to whom the burden of the Lord is committed; a fear, not that another will step up before

him, but a fear lest he err either as to time or as to a message. Ahimaaz ran and was first to David, but he had no tidings ready; Cushite was not as fast on foot but he had the message, though not to David's wishes. Thus invariably, a message that comes from God first kills and then makes alive, wounds and then binds up. May God deliver us from minis-try that does not reach our life. To transgress the exhortation then can only result in confusion, for such ministry is unprofitable, and tends to disrupt rather than to build up, and is likened unto the talk of the lip which tendeth only to penury; but ministry given "decently and in order" is like a "word spoken in his season, how good is it"; yea, it is like "apples of gold in pictures of silver".

THIRD: "Let all your things be done with charity", here we have the POWER FOR MINISTRY, the love of Christ con-straining. It was love that moved the heart of God to give His Son to the death of the curse; it was love that led Him on to deep poverty, shame and the cross. This love is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, and if not restrained will direct ministry that will reach the hearts of the Lord's people, in every circumstance. "Love seeketh not its own," therefore ministry that seeks not the good of others comes from a selfish motive. Sometimes ministry is given which is more like a battle of words, using the people of God for the battleground; and the man that can speak great swelling words, having men's person in admiration because of advantage often carries away the greatest spoil Paul the apostle kept back nothing that was profitable, a help to God's people, ministering the whole truth without fear or favor, yet mingled with tears and temptations, speaking the same things in all the churches. It is this kind of ministry that will give morale to individual believers and assemblies so that they will not be deceived by "good words and fair speeches", tossed to and fro, and "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" "for of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." The question may be asked "How are we to know or discern if ministry is given with charity?" Ministry that is not according to truth is destructive, and ministry which does not lead the people of God in a path of separation religiously, socially and politically from that which tends to mingle the holy seed with the unholy, and weakens our power for God, leaving no clear and definite tone of testimony unto His name can readily be discerned as carnal. Ministry given with charity has a three-fold responsibility: love for Christ, love for the truth, and love for the brethren. Love for the truth is to minister the word in uncorruptness, not handling it deceitfully, nor holding it down in unrighteousness; love for Christ is to minister Christ to the heart, unfolding His person, work and worth; love for the brethren is to so minister as to reach the heart and conscience, effecting a more godly

life and walk, and greater devotion to Him. Love is so closely associated with keeping His commandments that they are not to be divorced. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them he it is that loveth Me." It is said that we should love all the people of God, and have fellowship with those who are clean in life and sound in doctrine. To this we most heartily agree. Love for the brethren is one of the marks of the Divine nature within, and should be in evidence toward the whole family of God at all times, regardless of race or creed. As for "fellowship with them all", that depends not alone on life in Christ and light from the Word, but upon the measure in which they walk in the light. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" There is but one Divine principle by which fellowship is enjoyed, as John the apostle says: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). As to being "sound in doctrine", could it be said of one who denies both His Word and His name, that he is sound in doctrine and in practice? Obedience means denial of self, that the life of Christ might be lived over again through us before the world. It is, written of John the apostle that he was in the "Isle of Patmos for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Also it is written of others in Revelations 20:4 who were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God". It was love for Christ and His Word that took away the liberty of some, and the heads of others, whereas many today have not obeyed the first principles of Christian obedience, among which are: baptism, gathering in His name alone, and the keeping of the feast. Thus it becomes self-evident, that fellowship with all the people of God is restricted and restrained, due to the lack of practiced light. In the Lord's message to the church of Philadelphia in Rev. 3, who was it the Lord was going to make a pillar in His temple, having the name of His God and the city of His God upon him? Was it not to those who had "kept His Word and had not denied His name"? After Moses had made the tabernacle in all things "according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount", we read, "The glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle"; so when we carry out all things after the pattern given us in His Word, men will say: "God is in you".

On Conscience

W. Hoste

It would be correct, I believe, to say that a conscience was the only thing our first parents got by the Fall; and of course man has a conscience still, though its voice, through repeated disregard, may become very weak, or indeed be silenced. But it will make itself heard one day.

The actual word "conscience" does not occur before the Fall, nor indeed in the Old Testament at all except in the doubtful marginal reading of Ecclesiastes 10:20. But though the word is not there, the working of conscience is referred to in Romans 2:15, the Gentiles' "conscience also bearing witness," surely a retrospective reference. Possibly we have a reference to this very conscience in the devil's words in Eden, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"—the knowledge of sin without avoiding it, and the knowledge of good without attaining it. If this be a correct definition, it is clear our first parents had no conscience before the Fall.

Conscience has been compared to a sundial, which will only work in sunlight. By any other light, at night say, you can make it say what time you like. Someone has defined conscience as "something supernatural within the natural" or "the Divine Imperative in the soul." Like the sundial, it will only work correctly if enlightened by the Word of God.

The Lord warned His disciples that the time would come when men, in killing them, would think they were doing God service: that is, with a perfectly easy conscience. Thus a man may have "an easy conscience" and do wrong, like Saul of Tarsus, who thought he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus Christ. In John 8:9 the accusers "were convicted of their own consciences"; they knew they were not without sin in this respect, and they were aware that God knew it too.

Then a conscience may be weak: that is, excessively morbid and punctilious, through not being enlightened, as those in Romans 14 who would not eat certain meats owing to religious scruples. Our Lord's accusers would not go inside the law-court at Jerusalem "lest they should be defiled" (see John 18:28).

A conscience may be evil through not being purged by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:22), and good through being purged by that blood from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14), or as it is described in verse 9, "perfect as pertaining to the conscience." But when we read in chapter 10:2 that the worshipers once purged should have "no more conscience of sins," we are not of course to understand that they are not conscious of evil within or of failure without, still less that they have no conscience: but that they see that the sacrifice of Christ has so fully met all God's holy claims, that He is fully satisfied as to the sin question, and they are satisfied too. They rest where He rests.

Then again, a man's conscience may become defiled through sinning with a high-hand (Titus 1:15), or "seared with a hot iron" through sinning repeatedly against the light (1 Timothy 4:2).

We ought to live "in all good conscience," that is, with a tender and enlightened conscience. We ought also to "exercise ourselves to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man."

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