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"THERE AM I" ch. 1

(Matthew 18:20)

Alan Davidson

(This series of articles will give the readers all the material that our brother has written in a booklet that also will be made available after it is published, D. V.)

God has always sought to dwell among His people. In the **GARDEN**: "They heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8).

In the **TABERNACLE**: "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony" (Exodus 25:22).

In the **HOUSE**: "For the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 8:11).

In the **FUTURE**: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:3).

In the **PRESENT** day of God's Grace, when God is pleased to reveal Himself in the Person of His Son, has God abandoned any thought of testimony on earth? Has God made no provision for His people collectively, to enjoy His presence today? We turn to the promise that is the title of this book; "There am I" (Matthew 18:20). Why does this text only occur in Matthew's Gospel? Why is this the only occasion in the four Gospels when these words of the Lord Jesus Christ are recorded?

The answer is that Matthew's Gospel is the Gospel of His presence. At the beginning; "They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). At the end, His last words; "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of

the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20). In the central section; "For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

In the O.T. there was **AUTHORITY** for the **PLACE** where they gathered. God was the gathering centre; "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice" (Psalm 50:5). In the N.T. there is **ATTRACTION** to the **PERSON** to Whom we gather.

1. THE PRE-EMINENT PERSON – "There am I".

2. THE PEERLESS NAME – "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name".

3. THE PRECIOUS PROMISE – "In the midst of them".

1. THE PRE-EMINENT PERSON

The little word "in" occurs twice in the English text: (i) "In" (eis) means "unto", or into "My Name". (ii) "In (different word) the midst" stresses the Person, the Presence, the Preeminence of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot claim His Presence and His Promise unless the company of gathered saints are marked by the Prerogative of His Lordship and Headship. The emphasis is upon love; attraction; appreciation of Him. We gather because He is there. He is in the Centre of His people who confess His Name, who are attracted to His Person; own the Authority of His Word and love Him because He first loved us. Peter said, "To whom can we go?" There is none else. When they found Him, the disciples said, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" They wanted to spend more time in His presence. How good to be where He is.

2. THE PEERLESS NAME

"Where two or three are gathered together in My Name". This is not a name which we call ourselves. It is not our name. It is His Name. We are a local company of believers obedient to His Word gathered unto or into His Name. This is an assembly of the Lord's people corporately, formally and habitually gathered unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is in this verse the thought of ownership. When a son is born into a family he takes as his surname the family name. He belongs to the family. When a man sets up in business he establishes the company in his name. He owns the firm. When a

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bride marries her bridegroom, she takes her husband's surname as her married name. They belong to each other in marriage. This teaches the truth of the uniqueness of a N.T. assembly of the Lord's people, gathered in simple obedience to keep His command until He comes.

There are objections to this teaching:

(i) Some say that the verse does not contain assembly truth. Answer: In Matthew chapter 12, The King is rejected officially by the leaders of the nation of Israel; *"This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils"* (v 24). He left the wicked generation to themselves. He went out of the house, and began to speak to the multitudes in parables of the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:1-3). In subsequent chapters He is preparing His disciples for the period of His absence, when Israel is set aside. In this present day of Grace how can we bear testimony to His blessed Name? The answer is, God's assembly.

(ii) Others object that no assembly existed when these words were spoken so this refers to the church which He is building. *"Upon this rock I will build My church"* (Matthew 16:18); the church which is His body (Ephesians 5:25). The Answer is found later in Matthew 18:17, *"Tell it unto the church"*. This must be different from the Church which is His body because most of the members are already in Heaven and the rest are scattered throughout the world. Eight Scriptural differences between the Church which is the Body of Christ and the Church of God locally are given in Chapter Three (§3 THE PATTERN) of this book.

(iii) Others point out that the context is personal offences not assembly fellowship. Answer: In spite of human failure and individual faults, God will maintain local church testimony until the end of the age.

(iv) Some objections limit this passage to a case of discipline. Answer: The teaching indicates a sphere of Scriptural order, Dignity of the Divine Presence, the spirit of prayer and shepherd care that is consistent with His Name. "Two or Three" – This is the number of Testimony not weakness. Even the smallest assembly can function in a way that is true of all assemblies whether small or large that are gathered to His Name. Some say, "What does it matter about a name"? In Genesis 11:4, the people said; *"Let us make us a name"*. Meaning, let us make a name for ourselves. This was the beginning of Babel, the city and the tower, grand and big, the focus of central control. *"Up, make us gods"*

(Exodus 32:1). So they made a golden calf. This was bigger than the slain lamb. It had more glitter. They got the pattern in Egypt. *“Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations”* (1 Samuel 8:5). The people wanted a visible head. The flesh always needs the visible. Faith needs the spiritual. “My Name” is not a name we give to ourselves. The denominational systems of Christendom take upon themselves many names. Sometimes the name of a leader, or some form of church order, or some Bible practice, or a location or a party. To give it a name is to denominate and denominationalism is sin. The name “Gospel Hall” indicates in the community a building where the Gospel is preached. If a soul desired to hear the Gospel it is good that a public ‘notice board’ indicates the hour when they can come to hear how to be saved from their sin. The name “Christian Brethren” is a name of a sect.

Why do we meet as we do? When we meet unto the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, this is not in a negative spirit. We do not boast that “we are the people” to the exclusion of all others. In the absence of sectarian terms of fellowship we meet in separation from all that is dishonouring to His Name, Lord Jesus Christ.

“**My Name**” announces all that is involved in His Person and Work:

Salvation: *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other NAME under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). This announces authority and assurance through the uniqueness of His Person and Work.

Prayer: *“Whatsoever ye shall ask in my NAME, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son”* (John 14:13). This foresees access and acceptance. Through mentioning His NAME in prayer we are in the audience chamber of Divine power. Through His merits and rights we spread our prayers before the Father.

Worship: *“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His NAME”* (Hebrews 13:15). We worship because of what He is in His Person, Character and Work expressed in His Name.

Suffering: *“They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy, to suffer shame for His NAME”* (Acts 5:41).

Assembly Judgement: *“In the NAME of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit (says Paul), with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved*

in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

Baptism: *“Baptizing them in the NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”* (Matthew 28:19). This is the acknowledgement of ownership. As saved, we are purchased by blood; as baptised, we proclaim His ownership. In the fellowship of a Scripturally gathered, called out company, we are attached to His Person in obedience to His request.

If a man sets up a business with his name above the shop, this shows that he owns this business. If he must leave for a few days to make purchases abroad, he may leave the manager temporarily in charge of the shop. If on his return, he found that the manager had torn down the owners name and put up his own name, the owner would be understandably displeased. If Mr A. got married, his bride would become Mrs A. If he had to leave home on a journey for a period and on his return found that Mrs A. had become Mrs B., he would be very upset.

Do we gather, “In My Name”, with conviction? The assembly of the saints gathered alone to His NAME is not the best of the churches of Christendom; it is a contradiction to denominationalism, it is a denial of sectarianism.

“For where are two or three having been assembled” (Lit. Greek text translating the word “Sanago”.) This word is used concerning the first gathering of believers after Pentecost. *“The place was shaken where they were having (lit.) been assembled (Sanago) together”* (Acts 4:31). It is used again relative to the first recorded local assembly at Antioch when on that momentous occasion, Jew and Gentile believers, *“assembled (Sanago) themselves with the church”* (Acts 11:26). In Acts chapter 20, it is recorded that Paul and those who were with him, *“Abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples having been assembled, [as we were assembled] (lit.) to break bread, Paul preached unto them”* (v 7).

In every occasion the word “Sanago” basically means a gathering together of a select group, to a particular place, for a distinct purpose. Grammatically, these references are in the passive voice. We do not activate our gathering but we are drawn by Divine command and loving response to the blessed Person in our midst. In passive obedience, drawn by the power of the Spirit of God, we are gathered together, assembled, “In My Name”. This acknowledges headship and Divine order necessitating corporate physical gathering, distinguishing an assembly meeting from home groups or communications by electronic media to

circumvent the blessing and unique privilege of an assembly gathering. This is not a casual temporary gathering. It is not the place where two or three meet expressing human will. It is not just a text on the wall. The principles are not handed down from our ancestors. The pattern was not established in Plymouth or Dublin in the nineteenth century. The practices are not just the ideas of men however godly from past generations. As we ponder the Scriptures in this book, we shall find the privilege of assembly fellowship to be such that there is nothing else like it because He is there.

3. THE PRECIOUS PROMISE

"There am I in the midst of them". Today we are blessed with the Holy Scriptures to guide and obey. They will direct us to; *"The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15). We have the Holy Spirit; *"Whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things"* (John 14:26). The risen glorified Lord walks in the midst of the golden lampstands. *"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle"* (Revelation 1:13). May we focus on our blessed Lord in the midst of the two or three. Soon we shall see Him, *"In the midst of the Throne"* (Revelation 5:6).

(continued)

We must bear in mind that in Assembly life also God always punishes departure from Himself and His Word; let us not, therefore, be so foolish as to imagine that we can drift into laxity and not reap the consequences.

Knowing God, pt 7

Joel Portman

As we continue our study of God's attributes, we have arrived at a group of attributes displaying God's essential character expressed in His perfect attitude against and unchanging actions to deal with sin and establish perfect righteousness in His universe. Presently, unrighteous conditions exist that He allows for a time, but which will one day result in the fulfillment of His perfect desires and purposes. He will arrive at the expression of that purpose when the rightful Man is revealed who will put down *"all rule*

and all authority and power," (1 Corinthians 15:24). Then the dazzling display of God's holiness, His righteousness and justice, and His wrath will be manifested. His purpose is such that He will not rest or cease working until conditions exist and righteousness dwells (at home) in His universe (2 Peter 3:13).

God's Holiness

Holiness is an essential part of God's nature. Many people like to emphasize God's love (showing that they little understand this type of love), but they fail to realize that an intrinsic expression of God's person is His holiness. If God is love (*"God is love"*, 1 John 4:8), we cannot forget that God is holy (*"Be ye holy, for I am holy"*) (Leviticus 11:44, 1 Peter 1:16). God's love is held and expressed in His absolute holiness and in expressing His love, He will not violate His holy character.

God's holiness goes far beyond our ability to conceive or to grasp, even as is also true of His other attributes. His is not a high and exalted expression of purity in every aspect, but it is also infinite and thus man cannot comprehend how holy He is. His holiness is the absolute opposite of any possible form or expression of moral blemish, of any spiritual defect, nor of any smallest defilement. Lehman Strauss (*"The Godhead"*) says, "Holiness is that natural and essential attribute of God whereby He is absolutely and essentially perfect and righteous. He is necessarily holy because He is holiness in the highest degree. He is infinitely and eternally holy, and in this He is unique, different from all creatures, men and angels. God's holiness is not an acquired perfection; it is essentially God Himself. As He was God from eternity, so He was holy from eternity, therefore He is as necessarily holy as He is necessarily God. He cannot be God and not be holy. His nature could not subsist without holiness. God only is absolutely holy."

The root of "holy" in the original language is "pure, devoted," with a secondary meaning of "to be separate", i.e. from all that is contrary to that nature. In Anglo-Saxon English, "holy" means "well, sound, whole". This helps us to understand that holiness is equivalent to moral wellness, soundness of person that has no defect nor can there ever be.

God is more often called holy than any other term that is used for His person. This is God's transcendent attribute, His "attribute of attributes." He is never spoken of without some reference to this attribute as well. All that He does is in Holiness. It is a Holy Arm of Power (Psalm 98:1), Holy Name (Psalm

103:1), Holy Judgment, Holy Law (Romans 7:12), Holy Promise (Psalm 105:42). All is Holy if of God.

Holiness is God's beauty. It is His moral attractiveness. Notice Psalm 27:4, "...*behold the beauty of the Lord*" with Psalm 29:2, "...*worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*" Psalm 93:5 says, "*Holiness becometh (is the beauty) of thine house, O Lord, for ever.*" The song of Israel at the Red Sea was, "...*who is like thee, glorious in holiness...*" (Exodus 15:11). This beauty cannot be truly appreciated by men, not even by believers as it ought to be. God's holiness is not the purest thing that we can imagine, then increased to its ultimate degree. Man cannot know or imagine Divine Holiness. It is beyond his capabilities. It is a holiness of absolute purity, unattainable, and incomprehensible. God dwells in light that no man can approach unto (1 Timothy 6:16) and that light is set in contrast with man's sinfulness in 1 John 1:5.

God's Holiness is an incidental proof of the Divine inspiration of Scripture. Man, conceiving and creating "gods" has never worshiped a self-made god who is infinitely holy. His gods are capable of evil deeds and capriciousness that merely express an exalted image of what man is in himself. Man's mind cannot rise to such a level necessary to create a god that is totally unlike himself, nor can he conceive such a Person. Only God can reveal the depths of truth pertaining to Himself. The "god" that most men worship, even professing Christians, is not a Holy God. He is a god of their imagination who, like a kind, indulgent grandfather, will wink at and pass over their sins and evil deeds in his love and kindness, never judging. This is a concept of God that has been created by man's evil nature and through the insidious suggestions of the devil. We must absolutely reject all of man's concepts of God and rely entirely and solely on Divine revelation to know the God of absolute holiness.

Holiness isn't what God does; it is what He is. He doesn't conform to a standard, He is the standard. It is His nature to be holy, and when He acts in a holy manner, He is acting according to what He is. He can do or be nothing else. Holy is our God and the seraphim cry in His presence, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts...*" (Isaiah 6:3) even as the earth is marked by a "*people of unclean lips,*" (v. 5).

God expresses His holiness in all of His actions. All that He does is done in genuine holiness. He judges sin and sinful men because He is Holy. His is a perfect hatred of sin, all evil, moral and spiritual darkness, and all deviousness of man. Habakkuk writes in his prophecy (1:13), "*Thou art of purer eyes than to*

behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity..." So that sin is incompatible with God's character, it is an offense to His standards, and has caused ruin to His creation, and the result will be that He will utterly and completely eradicate it from His universe.

Because God is holy, He gives laws that are perfectly holy and just. Paul writes in Romans 7:12, "*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*" Again, the psalmist says in Psalm 19:7-8, "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*"

As already mentioned, His purpose is to ultimately deliver the universe from sin. Sin has brought ruin and moral corruption to God's creation, and His unending work will not be fully accomplished until it is entirely eradicated from all creation. We read that "*he will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.*" (Romans 9:28).

In practical terms, we know that what He expects from His people is that they will also be holy, perhaps not to the degree that He is holy, but yet displaying a holiness of life and conduct that corresponds to His. We read among Israel that they were a holy nation (Exodus 19:6, Isaiah 62:12), and the same is expected of us (1 Peter 2:9). He gave them holy laws and commandments and they offered holy sacrifices in God's holy house around which they camped, so that God told them that it was a holy camp (Deuteronomy 23:14). The truth of God's holiness produces in us a conviction of our sinfulness and awareness of our own sinful deeds since we can see sin to some degree as God sees it. It produces in our souls an eagerness to be delivered from sin and all its results in our lives.

God's Righteousness/Justice

These two words are essentially the same in the original Hebrew and are often used interchangeably. We think of justice as an essential and relative attribute that flows from God's holy nature. It is His holiness applied in moral government. The word originally meant "to be stiff, or straight" and "it implies conformity with the line or rule of God's law" and in terms of God's own character, it is conformity to the infinitely holy standard of His own person. He cannot deviate from His standard of right, and that standard is far superior to anything that man's mind or laws can conceive. It is absolute moral equity, the complete oppo-

site of all inequity. We read in Hebrews 1:9, *"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity..."* Again, in Ezra 9:15, *"O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous..."* Nehemiah prayed in Nehemiah 9:33, *"Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly."*

God's righteousness also demands that He judge sin, not only the more gross expressions of sin, but every form of sin. Man may differentiate between mortal and venial sins, but the Bible never does so when it has to do with God's judgment on sin. The sin that introduced death and separation into the world was only a sin of disobedience of God's revealed will, and in one sense, all sin falls into that category. *"...sin is lawlessness..."* (1 John 3:4 Darby trans.) We read in Exodus 34:7 concerning God, when Israel had sinned and rebelled against His authority at Sinai, *"Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty..."* We also think of Jeremiah's words in 11:20, *"...O, Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously..."* And finally, in Revelation 19:11, we see the Lord revealed from heaven, *"...and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."*

When we turn our minds to the gospel of God's grace, we learn that it is a declaration of God's righteousness in not passing over and ignoring man's sins, but rather, dealing with them in judgment that was endured by His eternal Son at Calvary so that in the gospel, *"the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith..."* (Romans 1:17). Again, in the same book, chapter 3:26, we read that God has set forth Christ Jesus to be a propitiation *"to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed, through the forbearance of God, that he might be just (righteous) and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* Space doesn't allow us to expand on God's display of His righteousness in saving sinners, but only to say that all of man's alternative methods for supposedly making it possible for sinful men to reach heaven and obtain favor with God compromise God's righteousness and fall short. Only God's provision of salvation to all through faith in His Son maintains His righteous, holy standards and allows Him to display His grace to the undeserving. It is an expression of Divine wisdom!

The great result of God's righteousness will be the perfectly righteous administration of the world during the Millennium. Think of Isaiah 32:1, *"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment."* Note also Psalm 9:8, referring ultimately to the coming kingdom of Christ, *"And he*

shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness". That will be the day for which all creation is longing, when its groaning will cease (Romans 8:20-22).

Of course, we must never forget that God expects His people to live and demonstrate righteousness in their lives. Righteous living should characterize every child of God in these days.

God's Wrath

God's wrath is a subject that men generally want to avoid or deny, since they feel uneasy with this attribute, either out of personal fear of its exercise toward them or because they feel as if it is a defect in God's attributes. They find it impossible to accept that a God who is love is also a God who has wrath. Those attributes, in their minds, are incompatible. Yet they are both scriptural and both must be believed, taught, and emphasized.

God's wrath is not a passing emotion or a flare up of His anger. It is not irrational or fitful, not vindictive or malicious. Neither is it impersonal. His wrath is a personal manifestation of His holy, moral character moving in righteous judgment against sin. Holiness **DEMANDS** that God must be angry with the wicked every day (Psalm 7:11). It requires that God's anger must burn against sin (Psalm 89:46). If it didn't, it would mean that He didn't love His creation, didn't prize holiness and righteousness. True perfection of character can only be expressed in one's embrace of all that is right and true according to a divine standard, and a complete abhorrence of all that is contrary to it. It is an expression of His steadfast, consistent determination to maintain standards that will not deviate or compromise. As we have noted, all of His attributes are perfectly expressed at all times in equal measure, so that this is an attribute that He must display equally with His love and grace.

God's wrath is an indication of the perfection of the divine character. It is not a defect; rather it is a manifestation of the perfect expression of all that God is. If He is holy, then He must be angry with all that has introduced and maintains ruin and disorder that is contrary to His purpose. Indifference to sin is a moral defect; how can God be holy and not burn against sin? The nature of God makes His wrathful judgment a necessity. We read in Romans 1:8, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..."* It has always been thus; God has continually shown His hatred of sin in judgments on every form of wickedness, whether it was seen in Sodom or in Jerusalem.

His wrath is a requirement of His justice. God's wrath is always judicial, that is, it is expressed in righteous judgment. It is God's resolute action to punish sin. It is necessary for Him to be right. Notice Abraham's question in Genesis 18:25, "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" Of course, and Abraham knew it. It would be unrighteous for God to pass over sin when it deserves His judgment. His righteous throne would not be vindicated if He didn't display His wrath against sin and iniquity. He would actually be partaking of the evil in the hearts and lives of men, approving of it, rather than hating it. Men's deeds cry out for the wrath of God! Think of Ephesians 5:6, Colossians 3:6, "*...for because of these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience...*" Notice Exodus 32:11, Moses' plea before the Lord, "*...why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people...*" at Mt. Sinai when they had sinned. Nahum, the prophet, later in history writes, "*God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.*"(1:2-3).

God's wrath is actually an expression of God's love. He couldn't truly love righteousness if He didn't hate lawlessness, (Hebrews 1:9). It is because of His righteous love that His anger burns against sin. God's love isn't a worthless sentimentality; if there is no wrath of God, then the suffering and agony of His Son on the cross was unnecessary. His wrath was revealed in the display of His love when sin's judgment fell upon Christ, the sinless substitute for sinful men.

His wrath should have an effect on our hearts. Meditation on this subject makes us consider more clearly what we have been delivered from and what the Lord Jesus bore in our place. It should cause worship to rise in our hearts. It should also cause a genuine concern for the lost who will one day be under the eternal wrath of an almighty God. It should cause anxiety in their hearts to anticipate such suffering. It should also stir a righteous fear in our hearts and should stimulate our praise and thanksgiving for this great deliverance for the coming wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 1:10), whether it might be during the Great Tribulation or for eternity.

(continued)

How can I realize God' presence?

Let no one think that God's presence is unreal or impractical, or only for mystics. Many Christians today enjoy the Lord's presence almost constantly. Here are some plain and practical things to do.

1. Read the Word often and attentively and meditate thereon. Listen to the Lord's voice in the Word. He will surely speak to the loving heart.

2. Talk to the Lord often and habitually. Don't wait for formal times of prayer. The Lord is by your side if you walk with Him. He is your dearest and greatest Friend. Tell Him your innermost thoughts. Ask Him for help in every difficulty. Nothing is too small to matter. Nothing is too great for Him to do.

3. Let praise be the habit of your life. Cultivate the habit of thankfulness in everything. You will be astonished at how much you have to be thankful for.

4. Praise will produce joy, and the joy of the Lord is your strength. The world, the flesh, and the devil do not have much hold on a happy Christian. We can always be joyful in the Lord even if there is nothing else to rejoice in. We joy in the God of our salvation.

5. There is power and ecstasy in worship. Worship God! Think of Father, Son, and Spirit and your wonderful relationship to each Divine Person.

6. Take times of quietness before God. Say, "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." God does speak to attentive hearts. Our memories are wonderful storehouses of God' Word. If you have read the Bible through several times, it is all filed away for the Spirit of God to call to remembrance as may be needed.

7. The daily routine should be planned to constantly recognise God's presence. At night we read the Word and pray just before going to sleep. Our last conscious thoughts sink into the unconsciousness to affect our future thinking. If we wake during the night, we say, "Lord, hast Thou something to say to me?" He often does. It is a good habit to wake before rising time to commune with God. The whole person is at rest and the Spirit calls to mind His plans for the day. It is good to begin each conscious day with praise.

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,

Early in the morning my song shall rise to Thee."

Consciousness of God's presence is the supreme stabilizing influence of a Christian's life. If I am in His presence, success will not spoil me, neither will trials get me down. I can do all things, or bear all

The more we know of God, the more unre-servedly we will trust him; the greater our progress in theology, the simpler and more child-like will be our faith. J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937)

things, through Christ who strengthens me.

To walk with God is the "Blessed Life," and the most wonderful thing about it is that it leads to Heaven and eternal glory. *"In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"* (Psaalm 16:11) —from "Help & Food." as quoted in "Wholesome Words, #17".

The Palm Tree

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree"
(Psalm 92:12).
(WIS Feb 1942)

The palm tree is typical of the believer as regards his gifts and service. It is called "tamar" in Hebrew, meaning to be erect, upright. It is called "phoenix" in Greek, which may suggest resurrection.

I. **Its presence INDICATES MOISTURE.** *"And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and three-score and ten palm-trees: and they encamped there by the waters."* (Exodus 15:27). Palm trees like water. They cannot thrive well apart from moisture. The believer is God's indicator. He is called to be salt and light. As Israel found wells of water beneath the palms, so sinful, thirsty souls should find Jesus, the fountain of life, through the testimony and invitations of us, God's spiritual palm trees.

II. **IT IS ALWAYS UPRIGHT.** *"They are as upright as the palm-tree."* (Jeremiah 10:5). *"This thy stature is like to the palm tree."* (Song 7:7). Heavy weights cannot bend it down. Seek to divert a palm of its growth, and directly that the pressure is removed, it will assume its former uprightness. So barriers, so far from retarding, should give impetus to the Christian life. The grandest saints in Rome were those who lived in Nero's household, serving God in spite of their master's baneful influence. (Philippians 4:22; Hebrews 12:1).

III. **PALMS ARE MOST FRUITFUL IN OLD AGE.** At fifty years the palm begins to be truly valuable to its owner. With advancing age comes increasing fruitfulness. Like the palm, the believer's life ought to steadily increase in fruitfulness. Graces, to which the young convert was a stranger, should be the glory of the mature saint, even as Peter grew in courage as he grew

in years; as Paul increased in zeal, as he found the Christian battle harder to fight, because of persecutions; as John grew more lovely and loving to the very close of life.

IV. **PALMS ARE ENDOGENS.** Unlike the Exogen, this tree increases by new developments of tissue in the center. Hence, while the heart of the oak (an exogen) is the hardest portion, the heart of the palm is the softest part. Externally, shedding all undergrowth of leaves, the bark becomes smooth and firm, affording little holding ground for any parasite.

Beautifully does this characteristic describe the manner of Christian growth. With him it must be heart-growth, or no growth at all. Neither the world, nor any of the externals of life, can minister to Christian advancement. Prayer, communion, meditation on the Word of God and Ways of Jesus Christ, all heart exercises,—these are the only sources of Christian increase. Then comes the result,—stature, beauty of foliage, waving far up in the blue heavens, and abundant yield of choice fruits. Yet towards the world the Christian will present the palm's peculiar trunk;—a life which has long shed its undergrowth of besetting sins, and a character firmly defiant towards any parasite evil, that would cling to it and impoverish it.

V. **THE PALM IS EVERGREEN. Its beauty outlasts seasons.** Hence it is the symbol of victory. Jesus was greeted with palm branches, as he entered Jerusalem; while the people shouted, *"Hosanna! blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord."* (John 12:13). In the Apocalypse, the great multitude which no man could number, redeemed from all kindreds, stand before the throne, with palms in their hands, emblematic of their deliverance out of the great tribulation. (Revelation 7:9).

So the life of faith is to be a life of constancy, not chilled by winter frosts or wilted by summer heat. God's palm-trees ought to be ever green. Drawing their supplies from a never failing fountain, no Christian need know seasons of winter barrenness.

VI. **SOME SPECIES OF PALM ARE TO BE FOUND ON EVERY CONTINENT ON THE GLOBE.**

One kind never blossoms till it is about to die. Then from the seeds that one tree scatters, there springs up a whole forest of palms.

God has His saints in every nation under

heaven,—black men, white men, red men, yellow men, male and female, bond and free, rich and poor, learned and unlearned,—all one in Christ Jesus. When they shall gather from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, to meet in the kingdom of God, what a forest of goodly trees! to beautify the place of His sanctuary, and make the place of His feet glorious. (Isaiah 50: 13).

To some, like the blossoming palm, it is given to glorify the Lord, by their death, more than by their life. Jesus said, *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me.”* (John 12:32). The thoughtful centurion, who beheld his marvelous death, cried out, *“Certainly this was a righteous man.”* Peter was told *“by what death he should glorify God.”* Tabitha's garments had even love and admiration from the widows; but her death and resurrection caused many more to believe on the Lord. So the victorious death of hosts of martyrs has achieved, for the honor of Christ's kingdom, far more than ordinary lives of faith ever could. (John 12:24).

VII PALMS ARE IN GREAT VARIETY

The Arabs mention three hundred and sixty varieties, all useful; some, strong and sturdy, are used for timbers and masts of vessels; others, of very fragile fibre, are woven into mattings. Some yield oil; some, sugar; some, milk.

The Church of Christ is likened to a human body. There are various organs and diversities of gifts. All Christians cannot be Boanerges, but all may love like John and all may pray like Epaphras. God may please to exalt some. He may humble others to be walked over. But usefulness He desires from all His saints. We are to blend the Tamar-like uprightness of Mordacai with the Phoenix-like hope of Paul, who preached resurrection as a truth, lived resurrection as a fact, and waited for resurrection as a hope.

The Love of David & Jonathan

T. Johnstone

In 1 Samuel 17:17, we see David sent by his father to visit his brethren at war against the Philistines with the armies of Saul. In verse 28, his eldest brother, Eliab, finds fault with him coming, though he turned out to be their deliverer.

How like our blessed Lord, when *“he came unto His own, His own received Him not, but to as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the Sons of God.”* (John 1:12)

David risked his life to deliver Israel, and in the name of God (verse 45) he met and slew Goliath the great champion, and came back victorious and was received by Saul. Now Christ risked not His life, but **gave** His life a ransom. He, in doing so, that *“he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* (Hebrews 2:14). Rejected by His brethren, the Jews, He met the devil at Calvary, and fought the fight alone, gained the victory for us His people, and not for us only, but for everyone who accepts Him and His finished work.

As David came back to the place he left, so also Christ came back and showed Himself to some of His own for forty days before He ascended to His Father.

Now we see (chap. 18:1) when David had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was **knit** with the soul of David and he loved **him** as he loved his own soul. They made a covenant with each other, and Jonathan stripped himself of his robe, even his bow and girdle, and could say from his heart—all for David.

How like you and me when we first came to know our blessed Lord as Savior, and saw the great victory He achieved at Calvary, we could sing "All for Jesus, All for Jesus," away with my false robe of righteousness, away with all my former habits, let me step out of everything that is not for His glory. Alas, could not many of us truthfully pray the prayer of the Psalmist, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy Salvation" (Psalm 51:12).

Again, Jonathan, in his first love (19:2), delighted much in David. Also (verse 4), Jonathan spake good of David, (20:4); how beautiful—Jonathan said *“whatever thy soul desireth I will even do it for thee.”* There are many other beautiful things between Jonathan and David which we will not mention now.

When we come to chap. 23 verse 16, Jonathan goes out to David to the rejected place in the wood, but in verse 18, we are told that David abode in the wood and Jonathan went to his house. He fought for David but did not fight with him. How easy it is, and sadly true of many of us, we go out to meet with the Lord and with His people on the first day of the week, but go to our house or to the world the remainder of the week. If Jonathan had taken his rejected place with David, he would not have fallen on Mount Gilboa. He is the first mentioned as falling in the battle. How careful we should be to take the separated rejected place with our Lord now in the day of His rejection.

We may get on in many circles with the world or with worldly Christians if we do not mention our Lord or His people. When Jonathan spake good of David to Saul his father (chap. 20 v. 33), Saul cast a javelin at him. We may get on in such places if we don't mention our David.

In 2 Chronicles 1:12-18, We see who took their stand with David. When the question was put *"Be ye come peaceably or to betray me to mine enemies?"* the answer was *"thine are we David and on thy side, thou son of Jesse."* We do not want to go on Lord's day to you, and the remaining time to Saul, or to help those who are not with us. How we should question many who would wish to join themselves to us? What do you hold as regards—the Deity of Christ; eternal punishment of the wicked; Inspiration of the Scripture! Neither let us compromise like Jonathan, but make a clean cut with every sect and system of man

As truly as David came to the throne and reigned instead of Saul, so truly will our rejected Lord come in all His power and glory, and reign over this very earth, and we who are with Him in His rejection will also reign with Him then. But He will come first and take us home to be forever with Himself.

Servants of God

Franklin Ferguson

"But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:22).

In relationship we are children of God through faith in our Savior Jesus Christ; in work we are servants to God. Let no one suppose that this title is reserved for prominent Christians only. Every believer can be a servant as truly as Luther, Wesley, Spurgeon, Muller, Chapman, or any other. We have the privilege of turning into service for the Lord whatever the hand finds to do (Colossians 3:23-24). We may sweep a floor, prepare a meal, milk a cow, paint a house, and do it as much to the glory of God as though we were preaching in darkest Africa, or caring for the fatherless and destitute. Whatever honest calling we are in, let us therein abide with God, so working as if He had specially placed us there, saying, "serve Me in this place, doing this work for Me." This ennobles common duties, and takes away all feeling of drudgery. The angel Gabriel would glorify God as truly in

sweeping a street crossing (if such were the Divine will) as in flying on the errands of his Creator. Do each daily task as unto the Lord; so will it become service to God, and the reward will be sure.

The believer has been made free from sin, that he may serve God. This is not freedom from the possibility of sinning, but from sin as a master, quite another thing. There was a time when we were *"sold under sin"* (Romans 7:14) and could not free ourselves. We groaned under our bondage and cried, *"who shall deliver me?"* Thank God, deliverance has come through the Lord Jesus Christ by His death on the Cross. Now we take up His words with joy, *"If the Son shall make you free, then are ye free indeed"* (John 8:36).

We now have our fruit unto holiness. Since his conversion the apostle Paul could say of the Lord, *"whose I am, and Whom I serve"* (Acts 27:23), regarding himself as the Lord's in spirit, soul and body; consequently his life yielded, in abundant measure, the *"peaceable fruit of righteousness"* (Hebrews 12:11). In like manner our lives also should be producing *"much fruit,"* *"for herein is our heavenly Father glorified"* (John 15:8).

The life of service here below will not be for ever; death or the coming of the Lord will end it. Opportunities are becoming fewer as the days quickly pass, therefore it is our wisdom to make the best use of the time that remains. Yet, how blessed! the end will be everlasting life— life in Heaven never to end. Here we toil and labor under difficulties; yonder is our rest and sure reward.

The Bible must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God. However, it was not written by good men, because good men would not tell lies by saying 'Thus saith the Lord;' it was not written by bad men because they would not write about doing good duty, while condemning sin, and themselves to hell; thus, it must be written by divine inspiration.

Charles Wesley