

Articles	Page
Last Passover	1
Consequences of Obedience	3
Prepared, pt 1	5
Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats?	8
The Presence of God	9

## The Lord's Last Passover – The Lord's Supper

Larry Steers

"When the hour was come" (Luke 22:14)

With desire I have desired to eat this passover  
with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15).

In writing on the Passover with references to the Lord's Supper no attempt has been made to produce originality. Many respected brethren have written and spoken on these two subjects. We are certain that there will be repetition here. Peter would remind us *"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things though ye know them, and be established in the present truth"* (2 Peter 1:12). It is our prayerful exercise that the following will be helpful to all believers and that our souls may be deeply moved with greater devotion and worship for our Redeemer.

Here we will consider certain aspects of the Passover and the relationship these have to the Lord's Supper. It will be suggested that while on the night of our Lord's betrayal the two events are intimately associated, the Lord's Supper is uniquely different.

Our Lord anticipated the last time (during His earthly sojourn) when He would gather with His disciples to observe the Passover. The keeping of the Passover was vitally important to the Lord. He alone perfectly observed every requirement of the law.

The little company of 12 disciples and the Lord made their way to Jerusalem before the 14th of Nisan. Two of the group, Peter and John, were sent ahead to make preparations (Luke 22:8). Every step of the Lord was perfectly

ordered and in fellowship with His Father in Heaven. It could not be any room, but must be "the room". The specific location of "the room" on this momentous occasion was of great importance.

Massive crowds would fill Jerusalem during the Passover. There would normally be great difficulty to locate any available area or house in such large crowds. The two disciples were instructed by the Lord to look for an unusual sight. *"There shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house he entereth in"* (Luke 22:10). This man would be easily identified since usually women would carry a pitcher on their heads. Likely the man did bear the picture of water on his head so that it would stand out in the crowd. The Lord indicated that the man was to "meet" them which suggests that he was anticipating such a meeting.

This man with the pitcher of water would lead them to a house. The Master of the house was evidently also waiting and prepared to grant the use of the furnished guest chamber which was an upper room. Peter and John were assigned the solemn responsibility to commence the preparation for the Passover.

With the Passover on the 14th of Nisan and the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th of Nisan, both were intricately linked. Peter and John would be well aware of the requirement, *"Ye shall put away leaven out of your houses"* (Exodus 12:15). Leaven speaks of sin, hence the room would be searched for evidence of leaven. The Apostle Paul takes us to the Feast of Unleavened Bread in 1 Corinthians 5:8, *"Let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"*. The feast in this verse is not the Lord's Supper but the life of the believer that has been searched for leaven - for sin. There is the searching cry from the heart of of a child of God *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me"* (Psalm 139:23-24). Like the two disciples would search the upper

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room for leaven, the saints of God, with a tender conscience and before God would search their life. It has been said keep short accounts with God but far better have no accounts with God concerning known but unconfessed sin.

Coming to the Lord's Supper the Apostle would remind us "*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*" (1 Corinthians 11:28).

The disciples would secure a lamb which would be readily available in Jerusalem at the Passover. Today, the lamb which was tremendously important that first Passover in the land of Egypt, is missing from the Jewish Passover table. A number of other items found on that table today may also have been prepared by Peter and John.

Today it is recognized that the lamb can only be sacrificed and eaten in Jerusalem. How intensely sad - no lamb, no sacrifice, no savior. The lamb may be replaced with a bone. But how gloriously precious, viewing the bread and the cup each Lord's Day, we can sing with all of our being, "Worthy is the Lamb". The two who prepared for that Passover wrote about the lamb. John gives us the words of the Baptist "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Peter writes about "*the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Peter 1:19). How very sad that today that the Jewish people have no Lamb.

For the last Passover in the upper room they would need to secure a cup and wine. While in succeeding years three cups have been added, in the upper room there was one cup of wine on the Passover table. Also they would secure unleavened bread. In the Meal Offering of Leviticus 2 the contents were important since the offering is a type of Christ. However the bread used at the Lord's Supper is an emblem and not a type so the ingredients are unimportant. In the guest chamber only unleavened bread would have been available.

They would need a pitcher of water. Perhaps it was that which the man bore on his head and led them to the house. They also needed a basin and a towel.

Before enlarging on the basin or other preparation we would take special notice of

Luke as a historian. No historical writer in Luke's day or today is tied to a chronological order. They present an event, skip over several details to refer to that which enlarges on the main thought that is being considered. They then may go back to consider details not touched on.

For "supper being ended" Newberry gives the rendering "supper having come". Before us are the moments at the commencement of the Passover. Peter and John had made certain there was a basin, water and a towel in the guest chamber. Could we suggest that twelve men waited for one of their number to wash the feet of the others. Having given them time to consider washing the feet of their brethren our Lord rose, laid aside His garments, girded himself with the towel and commenced to wash the feet of the disciples. What a scene that should melt the heart of every saint. The Lord of glory bowing and washing the feet of earthly men. Did Peter realize his Lord was doing what he should have done when he exclaims "Thou shalt never wash my feet" (John 13:8)?

Luke never forgot those precious moments when the Lord initiated the supper, and as he writes he revisits the guest chamber. Luke records "*He took the cup and gave thanks*" (Luke 22:17). It will quickly be noted that with this cup there is no bread. The cup in this verse is the Passover cup. In verse 19 he took bread introducing His supper with the words "*This is my body which is given for you*". Likewise He took the cup. This bread and cup were not part of the Passover preparation of Peter and John. We believe the Lord in His own marvelous way provided them. This was His supper which He alone could make preparation for.

The historian now turns to the Lord's words as they sat at the Passover table. "*Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table*" (Luke 22:21). Peter and John never thought that the sauce (charoseth) which they had prepared would become so very significant. The betrayer would be identified as the Lord dipped the sop and passed it to Judas. The sop was a piece of unleavened bread wrapped around a piece of the Passover lamb and dipped into the sauce. Receiving the sop Judas rose and left with the words of the Lord ringing in his

ears, "*That thou doest do quickly*" (John 13:27).

Thirteen men entered the guest chamber. One of them, Judas, left before the Lord instituted His supper. Perhaps a solemn lesson to be grasped here. A sinner, never having repented of their sins, a stranger to the saving grace of God but received to the fellowship of an assembly, would be a great hindrance to worship at the Lord's Supper.

How terribly solemn that one man left the upper room and went to his own place, down to hell. 12 men left singing but eleven of them not knowing the imminent events soon to encompass them.

*"There is no such thing as either foreknowledge or afterknowledge with God. All time, or rather all eternity (for time is only that small fragment of eternity which is allotted to the children of men), being present to God at once, He does not know one thing from another, or one thing after another; but sees all things in one point of view, from everlasting to everlasting. As all time, with everything that exists therein, is preset with Him at once, so he sees at once whatever was, is, or will be to the end of time"*

John Wesley

## Consequences of Obedience

### 2 Timothy 1: 12

*"For the which cause I also suffer these things..."*

How many times, in the history of the human race, has a parent taught and warned his child of the consequences of disobedience? Many a father has told his son or daughter, even at an early age, of the proper conduct and behavior that he expects, or has laid upon them a responsibility that they must carry out, and then, in faithful love, warned them what will be the certain consequences of disobedience to his

charge. Likely most, if not all of us, have experienced this, either as a child or as a parent, and even in our early formative years, the fear and respect for those consequences motivated us along in obedience. Only as the years went by did maturing experience teach us to choose proper conduct because it was correct in principle, rather than out of fear of the consequences of disobedience.

Were any of us ever warned by our fathers about the consequences of obedience? Can any recall a father teaching them the tenets of proper personal conduct, or detailing to them the needful diligence in carrying out a task, whether specific or more comprehensive, then warning them that there would be certain and severe consequences to their obedience to his words and charges? The very nature of this almost seems reprehensible to us, especially since every influence on our lives has taught us, whether directly or insidiously, that celebration and success always follow diligence, obedience, faithfulness, and good stewardship. We have come to believe, albeit tacitly, that negative consequences are indications of prior improper behavior on the part of the recipient. Much sadder indeed, we have transported that unspoken belief into our understanding of spiritual truths and principles, and our consequent behavior. With our lips we declare that obedience to God may bring suffering and rejection, but in our hearts and practices we steer very wide of it, and shun those who experience it in their lives, not unlike so many in Paul's day.

As we read 2 Timothy, and understand that we are listening in silence to the final words of a spiritual father to his son, we soon become captivated by the scene unfolding before us. The old father is in prison, and it's not the hired house in which he had spent a previous incarceration as he awaited trial, where dear friends came and went, and where he knew much of the conveniences and joys of relatively normal living. No; now it is suffering alone in a cold, damp Roman prison cell, and experiencing the deprivation of all that is not only essential, but what is dear as well. He is cold, and the cell is dark. None of his beloved books are there, in which he may pasture his mind and soul with their lush grasses. No friends and acquaintances come and go,

whether from fear or abandonment, to refresh him with their companionship and conversation. Such is his longing to see the face of his son, and to hear his voice, that he twice exhorts him to come to him with all diligence. He has stood before his accusers once, and the Lord delivered him from their voracious anger, but not from their grip. From that cold prison cell he knows that he will be brought before them again, and that he is now nearing the moment when his life will be callously ended by wicked yet powerful men. As we witness this unfolding saga, and comprehend in a measure what was taking place, we can't observe Paul in prison ready to lay his life on the altar of sacrifice, and read his tender last words to Timothy without also noticing his resolve of obedience to His Lord.

He never once laments that it was any general error or particular misstep of his which led to his captivation and imprisonment. In fact, so silent is his pen on this, that we do not even know the circumstances that brought that about (there is possibly a window into this in ch. 4: 14, 15, which words had clear meaning to Timothy but not so to us). He is able to look back on a life lived—step by step moving in willing obedience to the Lord's claims on him—and to say to Timothy without any hesitation, *"For the which cause I suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed..."* So far removed is this expressed principle from the notion that 'perceived failure is evidence of error or disobedience' that the two cannot rest on the same soil. The one is a concoction of this world and its systems—the other emanates from divine counsels and teaches us that *"all that will [cognitively determine to] live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* (ch 3: 12).

But to grasp this yet further, we must listen to the father's words to his dear son, for surely, we think, he will counsel him to change course, that the son might avoid the troubles that the father has found himself in. We look for Paul to tell Timothy to go thus far and no further, or to avoid such and such, for it will certainly bring undesirable consequences. Surely the old man has learned from his mistakes and the misery that he is enduring, and he will steer his son into more moderate or

contemporary paths which will be less offensive and irritable to others, so that he might avoid such severe trials and continue to enjoy the liberties of life and happiness.

And yet he exhorts Timothy to obedience. Rather than any indication, whether evident or insinuated, towards modifying his conduct so that he might avoid coming troubles, the father charges the son, with some of the strongest personal words in the New Testament, to move forward in obedience to the Lord with the same resolve that characterized his own life. And he does this as he warns him that there will be severe and difficult consequences to such obedience. As if the plight of the father wouldn't warn the son enough, he countenances his charges and warnings in military language, without any hint whatsoever of the possibility of Timothy choosing NOT to obey because of the coming consequences. Even if the words regarding Alexander are a reference to personal injury by him towards Paul, or if Alexander was even so much as the instrument that caused Paul's apprehension and captivity, Paul doesn't warn Timothy to alter his obedience to God in carrying out his labors and responsibilities. Rather he tells Timothy to beware particularly of Alexander; his person and his evil deeds.

Can we learn from this before we completely fail another generation? Where are the spiritual fathers among us who will stand firmly upon obedience to God and His word, whether men and women around appreciate it or not? Where are the spiritual fathers who will faithfully teach divine principles and doctrines both publicly and privately, even if that leads to isolation and abandonment? Where are the spiritual fathers who will exhort the sons to be faithful to divine claims on their lives and on their stewardships, regardless whether the majority favors them or finds them offending to their consciences and ears (ch. 4:3)? Where are the spiritual fathers who will charge the sons to unswerving obedience even while warning them that the consequences of such will be nearly unbearable? If such are not our spiritual fathers, will we wonder that the sons choose their course favoring pleasant consequences rather than obedience to God?

May the Lord, who knew such unswerving obedience and the consequences of it to an

extent which we cannot plumb (Phil. 2: 8), help us to *hold fast* (ch. 1:13), to *be strong* (ch. 2:1), to *continue* (ch. 3:14), to *preach the word* (ch. 4:2) that we may *finish our course having kept the faith* (ch. 4:7).

**In assembly gatherings, when Entertainment for the soul replaces Exposition of the word from the Spirit, Extinction of a scriptural testimony lies just around the corner.**

R. Surgenor

## Prepared, pt 1

*Robert Surgenor*

**I**n my younger days when I had energy in abundance, on occasions I would take "spying out the land" trips, driving far away from any so called, "Gospel Hall Assemblies," looking for places that appeared open to the gospel. This was one of the many avenues employed in a sincere effort to fulfill the Lord's commission recorded in Mark 16:15; "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*" To be facetious I would mention that the new "Brethren Version" reads differently, stating; ""Go ye into all the Gospel Halls, and preach the gospel to every creature." However, the KJV remains the true guide for the "sent forth" gospel preacher.

It was on one of my spying trips that I came across a little coal mining village in Pennsylvania, named Antrim. That "rang a bell" for that was the name of the county my father hailed from in Northern Ireland.

Driving up the twisted, narrow road I reached the town. Not making any progress, I returned down the road, but just outside of that village I noticed a large tree along side the road. Stopping, I removed my stepladder and placing it against the tree, I nailed an enameled steel text to the tree, above a formerly nailed "Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco" sign. My text read; "Prepare to meet thy God." About a year later I returned to check on my sign, only to find it riddled with bullet holes, while the Mail Pouch

sign was untouched. That was the attitude toward God in that area.

It was in 1952 that I prepared to meet my God. I was not ready, but upon trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as my own Savior, I was immediately prepared to meet God, who upon that occasion became my Father.

Coming to the Scriptures we find saints preparing in other ways, and so that is what this little booklet is all about – people who prepared.

### **WORK - Ezra Prepared**

*"For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10).*

The children of Israel, under Zerubbabel, had come up from Babylon in 536 BC to Jerusalem to re-establish a testimony for God. Under the exhortations of Haggai and Zechariah, they finished the construction of the house of God in 513 BC, 23 years later. In 457 BC, About 57 years after the completion of the temple, Ezra came up from Babylon to set up an administration that righteousness might be maintained in the nation. History records that Ezra could quote all the scriptures that were available at his time, which would have been all of the Old Testament except Malachi. The same was recorded of Nicodemus, and Fanny Crosby of our day. What a tremendous accomplishment!

Scripture tells us that he was *"a ready scribe in the law of Moses,"* and that the hand of the LORD His God was upon him (7:6). That simply means that he was skillful and diligent in the scriptures. He was diligent in his study of the scriptures, and skillful in the way that he taught the scriptures. The statement that the hand of the LORD his God was upon him, indicates two things. First, the Lordship of his God was acknowledged in his life and conduct. He was totally submissive to His God. Second, God's ability was upon his servant Ezra. This man had power with God. In Ezra 7:25 it is not God's hand that is mentioned as in verse 6, but rather Ezra's hand, meaning that wisdom gave him tremendous ability in the management of his affairs. Artaxerxes said of Ezra that the law of his God was in his hand. This heathen king

observed a uniqueness in Ezra, probably not seen in others.

When news came to Ezra informing him that the children of Israel had not separated themselves from the people of the lands and that the princes and rulers were chief in the trespass (Ezra 9:1), notice his godly reaction. *"I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (9:3-6).*

Notice, first he expressed complete remorse and distress of heart. He then assembled godly saints with himself, and while the evening sacrifice was being offered he prayed to his God, and included himself in the sins of God's people. What a holy and humble man! Nehemiah plucked off the hair of his adversaries, but Ezra plucked off his own hair. This conduct was the result of his diligent study of the scriptures. This lovely teacher in Israel wept and cast himself down before the house of God over the sin of God's people (Ezra 10:1).

Then we read; *"Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem" (Ezra 10:6-7).* That gathering, resulted in a great cleansing in Israel that day — all because of a man who studied the scriptures, obeyed the scriptures, and proclaimed the scriptures in love to his God and to the people of God.

Scripture states, *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning"* (Romans 15:4). The conduct of Ezra is a model for every saint today, especially elders. Ezra did not prepare for gaining wealth, prestige, honor, power, or any other thing connected with the flesh. He was far above that. The primary concern in his life was to know the Lord his God in an intimate way, that he might be of help to God's people. Is this your goal in life? If not, why? Let us search ourselves honestly and ask ourselves, why are we as God's people becoming overcome with so much weakness? Why do we hear "mechanical prayers"? Why are we seeing so few souls saved today? Why are things coming in that would have shocked us thirty years ago? Why are we becoming so "programmed" and politically correct? Why is our gospel preaching becoming like a dripping faucet instead of like a thunderous waterfall? What is the reason? Could it be that we have so many irons in the fire that we have very little time for God? Ask yourself, how many hours a day are Christians studying their Bibles? Since when have you heard of an all day prayer and fasting meeting in a Gospel Hall? I never have. How many times at a conference have you heard brethren rise in prayer, confessing our sinfulness and departure? Yes, it used to be done, believe it or not. But today we are so sophisticated and self confident, such prayers are seemingly out of place.

Ezra prepared his heart for three major things. One - "to seek the law of the Lord." Two - "and to do it." Three - "and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Ezra ordered his heart, it was a fixed purpose. God says; *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). We must guard our heart against all worldly influences, or we will be worthless for God.

Ezra was a seeker. He investigated the scriptures. It's one thing to look at something, but quite another thing to investigate something. Ezra approached the scriptures like a detective; digging, searching, comparing, and drawing godly conclusions. Paul places ministry into two categories; "gold, silver, precious stones," then "wood, hay, and stubble," (1 Corinthians 3:12). God has produced the first

three elements and buried them deep in the earth. To obtain them, there must be the toil of digging. The last three lie on the surface and are quite common. So it is with ministry. To obtain ministry that is of any value, one must dig for it. Ezra's ministry was "gold, silver, and precious stones," certainly not just wood, hay, and stubble. The OT prophets "inquired (to investigate, scrutinize) and searched diligently" the sacred writings (1 Peter 1:10). One is reminded of those Jews who listened to Paul in Berea; *"they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched (investigated) the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (Acts 17:11).

However, there is something more necessary than just possessing a knowledge of the scriptures, and that is obedience to what one gleans. Ezra's heart was prepared to DO what the law of God said. Paul exhorts Christian teachers at Rome; *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching"* (Romans 12:6-7). In other words, a man teaching must be conformed himself to his teaching. Ezra would never expect a person to conform to his teaching, if he himself was not conformed to it. It is not a matter of, "do as I say," but rather, "do as I do." The late David L. Roy said; "The man in the message, is worth more than the message in the man." How true. What good is the teaching of a man who tells you not to love the world, yet he himself is engaged in events and pleasures? His teaching holds no weight, and produces little, if any affect, in his listeners. Ezra "taught in Israel statutes ("engrave," marking out our way) and judgments" (Judicial rulings, what's right and what's wrong).

Shepherds have the responsibility to feed the flock. The food is varied. There is exhortation, exposition, guidance, rebuke, and many other avenues of ministry. The need is great, and can only be met by men that, like Ezra, have prepared their heart to investigate the scriptures, obey the scriptures, and teach the scriptures in the fear of the Lord. Failure on their part will only help in launching the assemblies into the vile ocean of Christendom, with

sacred testimonies for God completely lost. Brethren, pray for godly "Ezra-like" elders.

(Continued)

## Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats

by C. H. Spurgeon

**A**n evil is in the professed camp of the Lord, so gross in its impudence, that the most shortsighted can hardly fail to notice it during the past few years. It has developed at an abnormal rate, even for evil. It has worked like leaven until the whole lump ferments. The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them.

From speaking out as the Puritans did, the church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of reaching the masses.

My first contention is that providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the church. If it is a Christian work, why did not Christ speak of it? *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). That is clear enough. So it would have been if He had added, "and provide amusement for those who do not relish the gospel." No such words, however, are to be found. It did not seem to occur to him.

Then again, *"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers . . . for the work of the ministry"* (Ephesians 4:11-12). Where do entertainers come in? The Holy Spirit is silent concerning them. Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people or because they refused? The concert has no martyr roll.

Again, providing amusement is in direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ and all His apostles. What was the attitude of the church to the world? We are not sugar candy, *"Ye are the salt"* (Matthew 5:13) --- something the world will spit out, not swallow.

Short and sharp was the utterance, *"Let the dead bury their dead"* (Matthew 8:22) He was in awful earnestness. Had Christ introduced more of the bright and pleasant elements into His mission, He would have been more popular but, because of the searching nature of His teaching, many turned away. I do not hear him say, "Run after these people Peter and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow, something short and attractive with little preaching. We will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it. Be quick Peter, we must get the people somehow." Jesus pitied sinners, sighed and wept over them, but never sought to amuse them. In vain will the Epistles be searched to find any trace of this gospel of amusement! Their message is, "Come out, keep out, keep clean out!" Anything approaching foolishness is conspicuous by its absence. They had boundless confidence in the gospel and employed no other weapon.

After Peter and John were locked up for preaching, the church had a prayer meeting but they did not pray, "Lord grant unto Thy servants that by a wise and discriminating use of innocent recreation we may show these people how happy we are." If they ceased not from preaching Christ, they had not time for arranging entertainments. Scattered by persecution, they went everywhere preaching the gospel. They turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). That is the only difference! Lord, clear the church of all the rot and rubbish the devil has imposed on her, and bring us back to apostolic methods.

Lastly, the mission of amusement fails to effect the end desired. It works havoc among young converts. Let the careless and scoffers, who thank God because the church met them halfway, speak and testify. Let the heavy laden who found peace through the concert not keep silent! Let the drunkard to whom the dramatic entertainment has been God's link in the chain of the conversion, stand up! There are none to answer. The mission of amusement produces no converts. The need of the hour for today's ministry is believing scholarship joined with earnest spirituality, the one springing from the other as fruit from the root. The need is biblical

doctrine, so understood and felt, that it sets men on fire.

Our strength is in the knowledge of our weakness; the weak ivy clings to the oak, and the weak Christian clings to Christ; therefore Paul said, "When I am weak then I am strong."

## The Presence of God

(Assembly Testimony Magazine July/August 1957)

By Harold Paisley

The words of our Lord Jesus Christ, *"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,"* are precious and cheering. His presence is promised to His people throughout all their earthly journey, but to enjoy it and have it evidenced with us in our service, should be a matter of exercise on our part. In the following Scriptures we have the presence of God seen in a variety of ways, all worthy of our attention:

1. Acts 10:38; In Our Lord's earthly Ministry
2. Gen. 39:2; 1 Sam. 3:19; 2 Tim. 4:17; With certain men.
3. Mark 16:20; In the preaching of the Gospel.
4. 1 Cor. 14:25; In the assembly of God.
5. Psalm 23:4; In the sorrows of life.
6. Psalm 16:11; In the future glory.

### **"For God was with Him"— (Acts 10:38)**

Here we have five words spoken by Peter, which cover the life and ministry of our Glorious Lord, in His pathway from the manger to the tree. Every day, in every scene, alone and in public, God was with Him. His enemies acknowledged *"no man can do these miracles except God be with him."* God found perfect delight in His Beloved Son as He moved here amidst unfaithfulness and sin. He did always those things which pleased the Father and God was with Him. How wondrous then to contemplate the awful moment when from the soul of *this perfect One came that cry of untold meaning: "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani!"* He was forsaken on account of Sin not His own, that we might have his presence forever. Those who fail

to obey the good news, however, will in a future day be *"punished with everlasting destruction from The presence of The Lord"* (2 Thessalonians 1:9). What a fearful thing it will be to be banished eternally from His face!

### **"We saw certainly that the Lord was with Thee"— (Genesis 26:28)**

Such was the striking witness borne of Isaac by Abimelech, Ahuzzath, and Phichol (Genesis 26:28). The same too was the testimony borne to Abraham when Abimelech and Phichol said unto him, years earlier, *"God is with thee in all that thou doest"* (Genesis 21:22). It is refreshing to read the same thing of Joseph in Genesis 39. He was sold as a slave, and was far from home, yet *"The Lord was with Joseph"* (v. 2) and his master *"saw that the Lord was with him"* (v. 3). Other eyes also saw this fruitfulness. Although tempted and misrepresented from day to day, he came out of the trial an overcomer, proving that *"The Lord was with Him"* (v. 23).

Surely solemn and needful lessons are before us here. How many have fallen in the hour of temptation! When we consider Samson, for instance, of whom it is recorded that, *"he wist not that the Lord was departed from him,"* how we should eschew evil and cleave to God for grace. In this connection, the words of Azariah to Asa call for our earnest consideration, *"The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him, and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you"* (2 Chronicles 15:2).

Joshua's fame was noised abroad, because *"The Lord was with him"* (Joshua 6:27). Concerning Samuel also we read, *"The Lord was with him"* (1 Samuel 3:19), the result being that his words were weighty. David is said to have been *"prudent in matters, a comely person, and The Lord was with him"* (1 Samuel 16:18). When all others had forsaken the faithful and beloved Paul, what joy it must have been to him to know that *"The Lord was with him"* (2 Timothy 4:17).

### **"The Lord working with them"— (Mark 16:20)**

The present days are marked by gross indifference to eternal realities and only preaching in

the Spirit's power can arouse the sinner's conscience. This necessitates the presence of God. Where it is noised that He is "in the house" sinners will be drawn to hear the truth. "

*"The hand of the Lord with them"* at Antioch caused a great number to repent and believe the Gospel. (Acts 11:21). God has wrought wonders among the Gentiles of other days by men who gave Him and His Word their proper place in their labors. These men were guided and supported by God. They preached the Word without ornamentation of any kind, and the whole commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 being proclaimed and practiced, the Lord was with them. It cannot be otherwise in this day. The promise to those who carry out the divine pattern in its entirety, i.e., *"make disciples, baptizing them in The Name of The Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them (those saved and scripturally immersed) to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you"*, is, *"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

**"God is in you of a truth"— (1 Corinthians 14:25)**

This is the testimony borne to an assembly gathered in the Name of the Lord by those witnessing its order and ministry. God's assembly is not a secret society. Everything practiced in it can be reviewed and examined by those without. The whole church is gathered together in one place (v. 23) and now two other classes have come in and are present, i.e., the unlearned (one newly saved and seeking light) and the unbeliever. From this we may learn that there is a within and a without to the local assembly. The "back seat" is no formal tradition. In those early assemblies there was such a place, from which spectators of the gathering could observe and learn Divine order. The character of the meeting should always lead those without to say, *"God is in you of a truth."* The Lord Jesus is always "in the midst" of such a gathering, but often His presence is not realized fully because His Lordship is not owned and consequently the Spirit's guidance is hindered.

**"Thou art with me"— (Psalm 23:4)**

This ' Pearl of Psalms,' as it has been called, is precious to all the people of God. Three thou-

sand years have passed since David first sang this song of the Shepherd care and presence of God, yet it has outlived the Sword of Goliath and the harp on which it first was played. David possibly composed it when musing over the victory of Elah. When looked at in this historical setting, the source of the stripling's courage and faith in God are seen. "The valley of the death shade" seems to be an allusion to the Valley of Elah, in which connection the clause, *"Thou art with me"*, reminds us of David's words, *"I am come in the Name of the Lord of hosts."* God was with David in the day of Israel's sorrow and perplexity. The saints of God pass home by a path of sorrow, but the Lord is with us every step of the journey. The shades may hide Him from our apprehension at times but neither death nor life can sever our souls from the unchanging place we have in His affections. *"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."* He cannot break His word, He cannot forget His own.

**"In Thy presence is fullness of joy" — (Psalm 16:11)**

In Heaven, of which we know but little, the presence of our Savior will fill our spirits with infinite delight. The cup of joy will overflow. Sin and sorrow, pain and parting will be over. The Lamb will be seen in all His beauty and glory. Such will be our happy, eternal portion.

*"The light hath there no evening;*

*The health hath there no sore;*

*The life hath there no ending;*

*It lasteth evermore.*

*The Cross is all Thy splendor,*

*The Crucified Thy praise;*

*His laud and benediction*

*Thy ransomed peoples raise."*

Well might we even now rejoice with joy unspeakable, for soon we shall be "forever with the Lord." The pilgrimage could end for the Redeemed at any moment. In the twinkling of an eye we could be caught up to meet our glorious Lord. May we live in the constant expectation of that blissful event when we shall rise to be in His own immediate presence to drink of the fullness of joy for all Eternity.