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Paul's Metaphors; Animal Creation

Alan Davidson

The Lord's teaching was full of illustrations from every day living and interests which forcibly focused the attention of His hearers upon subjects spiritual and eternal. Likewise, Paul's utterances arrest attention and stimulate thought by his graphic style and frequent employment of figurative language. He was a master of metaphors gathered for the most part from circumstances and facts with which his readers were familiar, for example, animals.

Sheep

Jacob, Moses and David kept flocks of sheep which were not their own possession. The Lord said, "Feed My sheep". The Lord Himself was the Good Shepherd and the OT worthies learned much from the keeping of the sheep. Likewise in the NT Paul used Pastoral illusions to compare the church to a flock and to the dangers to which it was exposed from ferocious foes.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over (in) the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" Acts 20:28. Shepherds must be careful themselves not to lead the flock astray. Their minds must be alert, not sleepy or careless, watch for the sickly and take the spiritual temperate of the sheep. Good pasture is most important for a healthy flock. The sheep are naturally weak, timid, indolent and tend to stray.

"Support the weak" Acts 20:35. Whether in spirit, body or mind the sheep and the lambs require constant untiring care and support. "In" (correct translation) not "over". Revised Version says "in", JND translation has "wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers" v28. This is a work among the flock, by Divine commission, not by self will or vanity, keeping a watchful eye on the well-being of the flock. It is to be noted that the word "overseers" is plural, and they are to "feed" not manage the flock. There is no such thing as a non teaching overseer or elder. The "Flock" is defined as the "Church of God". He has acquired the local assembly of saints as a prize possession at great cost, "The blood of His own One, His own Son". Observe the work of the Trinity, the emphasis that is upon the price, and the preciousness of the flock. Put your best into caring for and tending the sheep, nothing cheap will do.

Wolves

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the (little) flock" Acts 20:29. Wolves are sharp sighted large animals of keen smell and hearing. They are handsome creatures of different colors which blend in with surroundings. Sheep can wander close to a well hidden wolf pressed against a rock or concealed in the vegetation and not see it. Paul was echoing the warnings of the Lord Himself. *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep"* John 10:11-13.

Sheep are defenseless creatures often exposed to great dangers. Paul said; *"We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter"* Rom 8:36. The thief is cunning and works secretly to steal the lambs from the flock. The hireling is hired to make profit from the flock. He has

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no sense of responsibility or care for the sheep. His function is to make gain, he has no interest in his duties toward the sheep. He will avoid difficulties and when the wolf comes, he will leave the flock exposed and flee for his own safety because he cares more for himself than for the sheep. David slew the lion and the bear because he loved the lamb. 1 Sam 17:34-36.

Paul warned of these dangers night and day, for three years. *"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"* Acts 20:30 (lit. "mouthing things which have been distorted and corrupted"). This prophecy was fulfilled at Ephesus as Paul foretold. *"Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars"* Rev 2:2. These are vain men within the assembly seeking eminence and position who come forward to distort the truth of the Word of God. Inside six years, all Asia had turned away from Paul. Today we must reject party leaders and have no compromise with division makers. They are leaders of unscriptural fellowships who seek to organize the Lord's people and to control the ministrations of finance. They seek for their own base profit to impoverish the flock. Paul warns of such *"false prophets, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ"* 2 Cor 11:13.

They are "false" in what they claim to be, "deceitful" in what they do. They work active corruption. These are imposters, wolves in sheep clothing, a clerical class doing the devil's work.

Oxen

Other metaphors from pastoral care are used by Paul in 1 Cor 9:7-9. Dealing with the maintenance of those who labor for God he uses three illustrations:

Vinedresser; who partakes of the proceeds of labor.

Shepherd; sheep in the East were kept for milk. The more the shepherd feeds them, the more milk he will obtain.

Oxen; feed as they toil and so receive sustenance in the sphere of their labor.

It is probably to Epaphroditus that the apostle addresses the words denoting intimate fellowship in the work of the Gospel: *"I be-*

seech thee also, true yokefellow" Phil 4:3. This refers to the yoke which united two oxen together in common toil.

Dogs

"Beware of dogs" Phil 3:2. The word does not refer to little pet dogs but to wild scavenging dogs. The warning is against the impurity of false teachers prowling about, engaged in the mutilation of the true Gospel. The metaphor is of that which is fleshly, degraded, unclean impure and defiling. The figure of that which is ferocious, greedy, contentious and quarrelsome is one of the strongest condemnations which Paul uses against false teachers who corrupt the Gospel for their own advancement and for the sake of filthy lucre.

Serpent

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtily, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" 2 Cor 11:3. Satan was using craft upon the Corinthian believers through a display of gift, oratory, organization and human ability which was appealing to nature, as the forbidden fruit was to Eve. Anything in doctrine or deed that corrupts the purity of the assembly v2, or seduces the saints unto unfaithfulness to the "simplicity as to the Christ" (JND) is doing the work of the serpent.

Paul's reference to the "sting of death" 1 Cor 15:56, may have an allusion to the same metaphor of the poisonous venom of sin.

**THE LORD THINKS MOST OF THEM WHO
THINK LEAST OF THEMSELVES; HE LOOKS
UPON THE CONTRITE WITH PLEASURE,
AND TAKES UP HIS PERMANENT
RESIDENCE WITH THE HUMBLE.**

Quality of Divine Love, pt. 3

Robert Surgenor

Labrador Shooting

Years ago in Labrador, preaching brethren pulled into the port of a small fishing village with their Missionary Gospel Messenger boat, and started to preach the gospel to the town's folks. However, an enemy of the gospel opened fire on them, shooting holes in their P.A. system, which of course ended the event. The brethren sailed away, happy to be alive. Later on, the enemy who shot at them lost his home due to a fire. As far as I know, he was not insured. He lost all. However, the Christians in that village banded together and built him a new house totally at their expense. What prompted that? Why the words of their Lord, "Bless them that persecute you." The love of God shed abroad in their hearts certainly manifested itself on that memorable occasion. Their actions spoke far louder to that man than the words of a hundred preachers. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16).

Ordained Unto Good Works

Christians can say *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* (Eph. 2:10). "Workmanship" has the thought of the work of God as a Creator. "Ordained" simply means that God has prepared before, He has made ready before certain good works for us to do. God has a plan for our life, and we are to walk in His will and fulfill His plan. It is very shallow thinking to believe that the only reason God saves us is to deliver us from hell. No! Salvation involves more than that. God saved us that we might bring glory and praise to His holy Name. Good works is one means to accomplish this. Christians are not saved by good works, but they are saved to good works. The unbeliever *"walks according to the course of this world"* (Eph. 2:2), but the believer walks according to the good works that God has prepared for him. That is an immense difference. The love of Christ is the divine motivation accomplishing this in the believer's life.

Paul reminds the Colossian saints *"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled"* (Col. 1:21). They were reconciled to walk according to good works. Paul exhorted the Corinthian saints, writing, *"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work"* (2 Cor. 9:8). The good work in that case was the giving of their substance to others. This was seen immediately in Zacchaeus the moment He received Christ. He exclaimed *"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor"* (Lk. 19:8).

Paul reminds Timothy in speaking of Christ *"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."* If you are a true Christian, are you zealous of good works? Are you burning with zeal to manifest good works? Only love to Christ can energize this. Remember, good works are actually spiritual sacrifices that we offer to God. *"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased"* (Heb. 13:16). Good works are the result of God working effectively in our hearts. *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13).

I cannot work to save my soul.
That work has all been done.
But I would work like any slave,
In LOVE to God's dear Son.

Everybody seems to recall Peter's denial of his Lord at the crucifixion, but they don't recall his love inspired words *"Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee"* (Lk. 18:28).

Thomas Charles Studd

Consider the man who wrote these well-known words. "Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." Thomas Charles Studd, was a world-famous sports star, living in the lap of luxury. However, God saved him. Through much exercise and prayer before God, he gave his whole fortune away to various Christian organizations, and sailed to Africa to

live in a mud hut among natives. His love inspired desire was to win them to Christ. He gave away (in today's money) over a million dollars and had only five dollars left in his pocket when he landed in Africa. Was he crazy? The world would say, "Yes!" However, Studd was not looking at the things that are temporal. He had his eyes fixed on things that were eternal, and his appreciation of Christ's love to him constrained him to act as he did.

Paul continues from his preceding remark. *"And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."* (2 Cor. 5:15). "They which live." That is, the Christians who were physically alive at the time of this writing. The exhortation is first negative - what they were not to do - and secondly, it was positive - what they should do. The word "henceforth" indicates that, before conversion, they lived completely devoted unto themselves. Salvation changes things drastically. Where there is confession of salvation, yet no change - there is actually no salvation - just a lamp without oil (Matt. 25:2). People in that category are truly in a perilous position, for being self-deceived they are blinded as to their true condition, and consequently see no need to seek a cure.

Christ As Lord

Lately, I have been receiving distressing reports of departure in some assemblies and I believe that, in many cases, the presence and activity of strange children in the assembly is the reason. Being in a so called "fellowship" in an assembly is no guarantee of heaven. James is blunt and clear; - "faith without works is dead." (2:20).

There is a statement in Romans 14:9 worthy of our consideration. "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living."

Consider for a moment that word "Lord." The word is "kurieuo," meaning; "to be lord of, to rule, have dominion over, to exercise influence upon, to have power over." In other words, one of the reasons Christ died was that He might have us as His servants, doing His will regardless of the cost. He expects us to be absolutely and unequivocally devoted to Him.

Having reconciled us to God, and imparting to us the Spirit of God, we are fully equipped to carry out His commandments. We should never be the object for which we live. We should live solely for Christ. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

John Gill's Remarks

John Gill appropriately remarks "Whatsoever ye do; in a natural, civil, or religious respect, in preaching, hearing, praying, fasting, giving of alms, &c. whatever in the closet, in the family, in the church, or in the world, in private, or in public: do all to the glory of God; God's glory is the end of all His works and actions; in creation, providence, and grace; in election, in the covenant, in the blessings and promises of it, in redemption, in the effectual calling, and in bringing many sons to glory. The same is the end of all Christ's actions, as man and Mediator, of His doctrines and miracles, of His obedience, sufferings, and death in this world, and of His interceding life in the other; who, as He lives to make intercession for us, lives unto God, to the glory of God; and therefore the glory of God should be the end of all our actions: besides, without this no action can be truly called a good one; if a man seeks himself, his own glory, and popular applause, or has any sinister and selfish end in view in what he does, it cannot be said, nor will it be accounted by God to be a good action."

Words of Charles Hodge

Charles Hodge makes an excellent comment on this subject. "He is not a Christian who is simply unselfish, i. e. who lives for some object out of himself. He only is a Christian who lives for Christ. Many persons think they can be Christians on easier terms than these. They think it is enough to trust in Christ while they do not live for Him. But the Bible teaches us that if we are partakers of Christ's death, we are also partakers of His life; if we have any such appreciation of His love in dying for us as to lead us to confide in the merit of His death, we shall be constrained to consecrate our lives to His service. And this is the only evidence of the genuineness of our faith."

To those who merely profess salvation, but do not possess it, the Lord would say "And why

call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Lk. 6:46). As emphasized before, the love of Christ, flooding the heart and soul of the believer, is the great motivating factor. The Lord affirms this, saying, "*If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him*" (Jn. 14:23). The opposite is true of the unconverted. "*He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings*" (Jn. 14:24).

When the Lord's people dwell on the love of Christ toward them, the results are manifold. One of those lovely results is a love for the brethren. Paul complimented the Ephesian believers, saying "*Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints*" (Eph. 1:15). "ALL the saints, not just the godly, but the carnal as well. Misbehavior on the part of some saints may cause me to lose my respect for them, but it should in no way diminish the quality of my love to them. Our love to the brethren is just one of many proofs that we have passed from death unto life as John relates; "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*" (1 Jn. 3:14).

Love in a believer produces "*lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, and a forbearance of one another*" (Eph. 4:2). It is not hard to get along with a Christian who is enjoying the love of Christ.

Charles Taz Russell

Years ago, a man applied for fellowship in one of our assemblies in the Boston area. He seemed to have a good story, and the brethren were satisfied with his testimony. However, one old brother told his brethren, "I don't know what it is, but there is just something about that man that doesn't smell right." Honoring the old godly brother's feelings, they waited. The applicant continued to come, sitting back. This went on for weeks, and becoming impatient, he finally asked when they were going to receive him. The older brother kept telling his brethren for some reason the man didn't smell right. After waiting for a long period of time, the applicant, in disgust, finally left. But that's not the end of the story. That man that left in

disgust, went out and formed "The Watchtower Society," known today as Jehovah's Witnesses. His name — Charles Taz Russell.

As far as shepherding was concerned, they labored at it. Elders would be helping the flock regarding their physical, financial, and spiritual problems. We must admire their strictness, and activity. However, underneath it all was one great cancerous problem — they had left (divorced) their first love. To come into that assembly, instead of being warmed, you would have been chilled. "The furnace was there, but the fire had gone out." The machinery was grinding away, but the oil of love was lacking to make that machinery run smoothly. The assembly's service was mechanical, but lacking reality.

There are assemblies today that are simply going through the motions. Meetings are carried out scripturally and when their little program is over, everybody is quick to leave and return home. Could these be called "Ritual Meetings?" Let us all examine ourselves. When was the last time a few tears were shed at the Lord's Supper? When was there such warmth in a brother's thanksgiving that you were affected? Ah yes, many prayers are very scriptural and full of Biblical knowledge, but they are mechanical. No warm feeling.

Going Through The Motions

A gospel-minded brother in the midwest complained to me that as far as his assembly's gospel meetings were concerned, they were simply going through the motions. The saints would come, sing the opening songs, listen to the message, sing a closing song, and return home, never having brought a sinner with them to hear the gospel. Then the question arises, do saints of this caliber ever ask their neighbors, workfellows, or relatives or friends to come and hear the gospel? Or do they just feel the duty to fill a seat for one hour. I will grant you, it is becoming more difficult to influence sinners to come and hear the gospel, nevertheless, we have a solemn responsibility to try and do so. Perhaps we need more "Samaritan-well-women" in our assemblies who are quick to leave their waterpots and run to the unsaved announcing, "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not

this the Christ?" (John 4:29). Could the reason for such failure perhaps be that we have left our first love?

Let me quote from my book, "The Seven Churches of Asia," (p 17), concerning Ephesus. "Their zeal for Christ was not the outcome of love, thus worthless. The freshness of their emotion and the fervor of their devotions was gone. Their consistent performance, their ceaseless toil, their undeviating orthodoxy had become a formal fulfillment of obligation without inspiration or warmth. How different from their beginning." Let us all cry to 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, and lead me in the way everlasting.*" (Psalm 139:23-24).

Our last consideration of that expression "The love of Christ" is found in Ephesians 3:17-19. "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*"

The simple explanation of this profound statement is this: Paul's desire was that Christ might have His proper place, being received with the embrace of our souls, that He might take up His abode within us, having been rooted and grounded in love. He goes on to say, that they may be fully able to comprehend every dimension of all that God has revealed or done in and for us. That they might know (understand) the love of Christ which surpasseth all intelligence and understanding. The natural man's mind cannot understand the love of Christ, but the Christian, through the working of the Spirit within, can, by study of the word, and prayer, come to a fuller understanding of the love of Christ. With Christ abiding in their hearts, being raised up to the awareness of the vastness of God's mercy in Christ and of His love, saints will be filled to their utmost capacity, even as God is full, with divine wisdom, might, and love. May we all experience this blessedness, and may our heart ever be dwelling on the love of Christ. This will make us godly saints, and it will make God's assemblies richer spiritually.

Outstanding Women of Scripture, pt. 1

Joel Portman

The Psalms, that wondrous book of praises, closes with a psalm in which the people are exhorted to praise the Lord 13 times in various ways. The last verse summarizes the overriding theme of the Psalms, *"Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."* God's people have every reason to be praising the Lord, but every soul should render praises to Him, and will (Mal. 1:11), the One who alone is worthy of praise. Praising the Lord will be our occupation eternally, so it is proper that we should *do so now*. Though there are public functions that are restricted due to God's order, this is an activity that is open to all who are redeemed and who recognize the greatness of our God and the honor due to His Name. Worship can be expressed silently or audibly, privately or publicly, by men or by women, in every place and at every time. God's people are to be a joyful, praising people who render honor to Him Who has done all things well.

Outside of the Psalms, it could be said that there may be as many recorded praises expressed by godly women as there were by men. God takes note of their expressions and they are as fragrant to His heart as those that men like David uttered. We should have a deep appreciation for the expressions that rise from the hearts of our sisters in an assembly, for, while we cannot hear them, surely they are heard and valued by the heart of our God. They may be expressing a degree of appreciation that exceeds that which men express as they lead the company in worship, and all, blended together, rises to the heart of God and brings great joy to Him. Women are not given functions of leadership or public responsibility as men are, but their contribution is equally valuable. One has said that silences during our remembrance of the Lord Jesus are important in that they give mental freedom to sisters to meditate, and this results in their silent praise and worship to our Lord. Consideration should be given to these important aspects of our worship.

We find those who, though only two bore

the name "mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7, 2 Sam. 20:19), also had an equally important role in maintaining a godly testimony for Jehovah. Though only these carried that name, we know that many others could be so identified. Often, the women in God's Word were more faithful to the LORD than were the men, especially during times of lethargy and departure. It is interesting how many times, when God is speaking about some man who either lived for God and served Him in his life, or, to the contrary, who failed miserably in this function, mention is made of his mother. In the case of most, if not all the kings of Judah (not of the northern kingdom, because those kings were all evil), the mother is mentioned. This seems to indicate that her influence on the young prince as he was developing was what shaped his character, either for good or evil. Likely they were the ones who were most involved in the lives of these young men, much more than the father who was sitting on the throne. We should learn that, though now many mothers work outside the home, some out of necessity and some because of desires for one thing or another, the influence that they have on the children may determine whether or not that child grows up to be spiritually exercised to serve the Lord, or who fails to recognize the importance of divine principles and purposes. We have been in many homes where it was evident that the wife/mother had more spiritual discernment and exercise than the husband/father.

Outstanding Women in Scripture

All women of the Bible had an important function, either for good or evil, beginning with the first wife and mother, Eve. But to name a few who were noted for what they did to further God's purposes, we think of Miriam in Exodus 2, who stood watch over Moses when he was a baby in the ark floating in the Nile. She not only watched, but she also recommended Moses' mother to Pharaoh's daughter to be his nurse for those early developmental years of his life. Jochebed was vital in those early years and, with her husband, Amram, was the one who imparted to Moses the truths of God and God's future for the nation of Israel. This exemplifies the importance of parents giving spiritual instruction to children in the early days of their

development. This is the responsibility of parents and shouldn't be solely delegated to the Sunday School or to others.

We also think of Deborah, in Judges 4, who functioned as a judge in Israel, possibly because of the weakness of men and their unwillingness to take responsibility. It was she who prodded Barak to raise an army to fight against Jabin and the Canaanites, going with him to the battle and sharing in the victory. We would wonder if Israel would have been delivered, had it not been for her actions to initiate the conflict and that of Jael to close the victory over Sisera with a tent stake. Men need to rise to their God-given responsibility and take the lead to deliver and preserve God's people in these days as well as in the past. Others may function outside their proper sphere to fill the need when those who should be failing in their responsibilities, but this is not as it should be.

Another remarkable woman was Hannah in 1 Samuel 1-2. Seeing the need and responding to it, she earnestly besought the Lord for a son, and she received a Samuel, whom she dedicated to the Lord and who was used mightily to bless Israel. Despite the adversity in her home and the failure in Eli's family, she realized that there was a need for a "man of God" to move according to God's will to restore Divine principles in the nation. Then, for the first time after hundreds of years, the people began to hear God's voice among them (1 Samuel 3:20-4:1), all the result of God's response to a woman's earnest plea. I wonder how many of our sisters realize that this is what is needed in our day also. We remember Timothy's mother and grandmother, recognizing that Paul acknowledges their influence on this young man in Acts 16:1 and 2 Tim. 1:5, (no mention of his father), that resulted in his knowing the sacred writings (2 Tim. 3:15) and having the potential that he displayed. We need men to be raised of God who have deep exercise to be used by God and yielded to His will. If so, such sisters would also appreciate their role in bringing such a person into reality, the result of their personal exercise and seeking God's face.

We can think of other women, such as Esther, who Mordecai told had come to the position she occupied for such a time. And she was used of God to deliver God's people from

the evil designs of Haman to eradicate them, doing so at the hazard of her own life (Est. 4:13-14). Another was Jehosheba in 2 Kings 11, the wife of the high priest, Jehoida, who hid young king Joash in the temple to preserve him from the evil designs of Athaliah when she killed all the seed royal. It was through her exercise that a good king was preserved to sit on the throne of Judah and to initiate and oversee work to restore the deteriorating temple. We remember Elizabeth, in Luke 1-2, who, with her husband Zacharias, were righteous and godly, but childless in their old age. Their prayers were heard (Luke 1:13), and the result was the birth of John, the forerunner of the Messiah. He was the last of the prophets of the Old Testament, but functioned to open the way for the public appearing and ministry of the Lord Jesus. How important she and her husband were, as they were involved to fulfill prophecies concerning John's work in Isaiah 40:3-5, Mal. 3:1, Luke 3:4!

When the angel appeared to Mary in Nazareth, he announced that she would have the privilege of being "most blessed among women", to be the instrument through which the Messiah would come into the world. How this would take place in her, a virgin, was a mystery, both to her and to us, but the marvelous ways of God and prophetic anticipation were accomplished by this divine act. We see in her a young woman who was willing to be chosen for this purpose, but who also learned that it would cause her much suffering of soul (Luke 2:24-25), much more than others. Her humility and yieldedness to the will of God is remarkable, and we call her blessed as well, though not sinless.

Only a few more that we will mention; we remember Priscilla, who with her husband Aquila, dedicated their lives to the Lord's service and who were instrumental privately to teach young Apollos in their home (Acts 18:26). Theirs was a home that provided hospitality to those like Paul (Acts 18:2) and who used their home as a meeting place for a local assembly (1 Cor. 16:19). When I was young, I knew a couple like this, who began in a simple way to speak to people where they lived, even while they continued to drive many miles to a local assembly. As a result of their Bible studies in

the home, gospel work, and children's work in their area, an assembly was established that met in their home. This couple added a large room to a corner of their house where the growing assembly could meet while they used other rooms for classrooms for the Sunday School. All this continued until the assembly believers built a hall where they could meet, but it all began with a believing couple using their home for the work of the Lord. We need other Priscillas and Aquilas in our day as well, those who dedicate their lives and use their possessions for the work of the Lord, right in the area where they live.

We would like to continue in the future to look at some of the expressions of praise that are recorded by women in Holy Scripture, knowing that the Lord has appreciated them and has left them on record for our admonition and encouragement.

(to be continued)

Nothing supports the mind in trouble and danger like faith in God; and yet faith needs to be constantly supported by the Holy Spirit in answer to the intercession of Christ.

Judgment Seat of Christ

Franklin Ferguson

It is well ever to keep in mind the "day of account" that is coming for us all. We are "stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10), and as such shall have to render to our Lord an account of our stewardship. All that we are accountable for must needs be brought before the appointed Auditor, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God has announced, "We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ," and "every one of us shall give account

of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10-12); moreover, "God shall bring every work into judgment" (Eccl. 12:14). There can be no exemptions.

The idea held by some is that the Judgment Seat will be simply the joyous occasion of the distribution of rewards, and the conferring of honors, and the giving of praise and glory to all who deserve it; which is far from being the full truth of the matter. It will certainly be all this, but more. There will also be "hidden things of darkness" come to light; "counsels of the hearts" made manifest (1 Cor. 4:5); the wrong materials used in our building operations will be revealed and burned; great losses suffered; rewards arid honors forfeited for ever (1 Cor. 3:10-15). Oh, think of it! How sobering to our minds should be this serious aspect!

All the redeemed family will share equally the Father's love and the many glorious privileges of His Home on high, the eternal abode of His myriad hosts of sons and daughters. But in the Kingdom to come, the places of honor and the rewards are apportioned to those who have merited them, according to their degrees of faithfulness on earth (Matt. 25:23, Luke 19:12-19).

The question of our eternal salvation will not be raised at the Judgment Seat; that was long since settled at the Cross for every believer. The fact of our standing before Christ in our bodies of immortality disposes completely of such an idea. It is the Lord judging His people as to their testimony, works and service down here; approving and disapproving; rewarding and withholding rewards; adjusting all things by His perfect standard, once for all.

With everything finally settled and all the Lord's people having received their due, tears wiped from weeping eyes, then will the eternal glory be ushered in. No more will a cloud cross our sky, sorrow and pain will be felt no more at all, and the Church will appear "as a Bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). Happy day that will never have a night!

Though solemn and searching as this subject is in certain respects, yet we can thank God for the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will mean much to have had the mind of Christ upon everything; with His correct estimate of all; so that never a question shall ever be raised again; but there will be the feeling of full

acquiescence with all His judgment, without a tinge of jealousy at others receiving more honors than ourselves; all saints perfectly happy together, for ever, in the eternal glory of God!

The Lord often teaches His people by the thorns and briers of the wilderness what they would never learn if surrounded by the comforts and enjoyments of the city. May we be willing to learn what God wishes to teach and to learn by whatever means He pleases.

Grace and Gift

The words "grace" and "gift" in the New Testament are sometimes 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 Cor. 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,"* Eph. 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 Cor. 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 Cor. 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.