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power of God. We may well sing:

" O Lamb of God, still keep me near to  
thy wounded side!  
'Tis only there in safety and peace I can  
abide;  
What foes and snares surround me,  
what lusts and fears within!  
The grace that sought and found me,  
alone can keep me clean."

## Four Important Truths

W. P. Douglas  
John 17

**1. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,"** (v. 4). On the cross He said, "It is finished." There is nothing left undone for the sinner's salvation. It is a perfect **salvation**. Sinner you cannot add to its perfection by your prayers, or sighs, or tears. Stop your doing, and simply trust. We love that grand old hymn that says:

"It is finished, yes indeed; finished every jot:  
Sinner this is all you need, tell me, is it not?"

Trust Christ, Rest your soul upon His finished work now as you are and where you are, and you will be saved.

**2. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth,"** (v. 17). The Lord is not praying for the world, but for His own. There are two sides to **sanctification**, the Godward and the manward. The very moment that we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ we were saved forever from the penalty of our sins: and we were sanctified forever in Christ Jesus, by God the Father, (1 Corinthians 1:2). The word sanctify means to set apart: and the moment we were saved we were set apart once and forever, unto God. Nothing can be added to that sanctification; and nothing can be taken from it.

As to the manward side; how much we need the daily application of God's holy word for our every day practical sanctification from the defilement contracted as we journey through the wilderness. There is not a sin that we may not fall into unless kept by the mighty

There is not a sin but what we can be preserved from if we allow the word of God to have its place in our hearts. Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found and I did eat them." The result was that he sat alone: he was separated from the assembly of the mockers.

**3. "Even so have I sent them into the world,"** (v. 18). Here we have **representation**. Over forty times the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as being sent by the Father. Now He is going back to the Father; but He is leaving His own to represent Him. He might have taken us all home when He saved us, but He has left us for a purpose. That purpose is not that we should get along in the world, and make the best of it. If we go in for living for this world the time will come when we will cry out, like Saul, from a disappointed heart, "I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly," (1 Samuel 26:21). He has left us here that we might represent Him. There is a real living man at God's right hand representing us; how are we representing Him? Are we representing Him in the home? in the shop? in the office? in the assembly? He represents us well; we by His grace should seek to represent Him well. No matter how menial our service is let us do it as unto the Lord: let us do it well for His sake.

**4. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am,"** (v. 24). This will be **glorification**. He was ever the obedient one, God's perfect Servant; His will was swallowed up in the will of Him that sent Him; but here He says, "I will." He stands in anticipation on the resurrection side of the cross as He says "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," and He might have taken up the language of Psalm 2:8, "Ask of me and I

shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," did He ask for that? No, He asked that His own might be with Him where He is.

"And this I shall find, for this is His mind,  
He'll not be in glory, and leave me  
behind."

What will make heaven heaven to us will be the presence of the Lord Jesus. What constitutes a

home is the presence of the loved ones; if they are removed it is only a house. He'll not be satisfied until He has us at home with Himself, when He will present us without spot to the Father saying, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." Hebrews 2:13.

Christ was before God during the whole of His life, as the bread was before God in the Tabernacle seven days. The number seven is the symbol of perfection; it is a complete period. And as God discovered no leaven in the bread during the time it was before Him on the table, so He found no evil in Jesus during His life on earth.

## "Truths for our Day"

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

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## Why Local Assembly Fellowship

*Joel Portman*

My experience was much like other young people whose parents enjoyed active fellowship in a local assembly. They had passed through a long period of searching, both searching the Scriptures to know the truth and then for a Scriptural place before they finally found a local assembly and left the denomination they had attended for many years. But growing up in an assembly and knowing nothing else, there were many times when I questioned if the local assembly was really the right place for a Christian to be. Why not other places? I had friends who I enjoyed, and they claimed to be saved but went to other places. Those places had more activities, more people, and much more to offer than the little assembly of 10-12 Christians that met at the hall where I was the only "young person." So the time came that I left home and also left the assembly. I found that there were Christians in the place I began to attend, and they were interested in the Word of God and were seeking to live for the Lord in some way. The preacher was a good man who tried to serve the Lord in that place. However, in time, I found that when I considered what the Bible said and what I had experienced at the little assembly with those places, there were elements and practices that I knew were not right. I sorely missed the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day morning when believers gathered to remember the Lord in that simple way. This spoke to me more than most other things at that point, but I also missed the brethren taking part as they were exercised and local men giving ministry to

the saints, though they weren't as polished in their presentation or as educated in their studies. I knew they had something that this man didn't have, and I also realized that the Lord intended for local brethren to develop exercise and to participate publicly in the assembly, something that wasn't practiced where I was going. Many other aspects continued to come together in my mind as the Lord dealt with me until there was nothing else that I could do to be responsive to the Word of God except to seek fellowship in the local assembly once again and be obedient to the Word of God.

A little later in life, I was faced with circumstances that forced my thinking another step. Being discouraged with some things in the local assembly and also enjoying warm fellowship with brethren from another gathering worked strongly to make me consider leaving the assembly to attend that place. For some reason, I determined to wait on the Lord for guidance, not making any move, but praying and searching the Word for something that would show me what to do. After what seems like a year of this exercise, two simple things came to my mind very abruptly, not from anything that anyone said but just as simple thoughts. One was that these brethren with whom I enjoyed so much happy fellowship were the best spiritually that this other "assembly" had, and if I were to go to that place, I would have to accept fellowship with all those who were there. This, I knew, I could not do. I knew there were those in that meeting that did and thought things that I could not agree with. Secondly, I realized that in any gathering, if the principles were right, then one could seek to do something about the practices that failed to measure up to those principles; but if the principles upon which they were gathered were wrong, then there was virtually nothing could be done about the practices.

These two thoughts possibly may seem very small or insignificant to some, but to me then and now, they appeared as if God had built a solid foundation under me that has settled me firmly in the fellowship of a local assembly where we gather today. It seems that those truths have never wavered or changed, and they continue to speak to me in the same way today.

Along with these experiences, there are many truths that the Lord has used to make me absolutely convinced that the local assembly is the only Scripturally correct gathering for saints today. Notice a few of these:

### **1a. The Local Assembly is the Only Gathering Taught in the New Testament**

We find other gatherings of individuals in synagogues and pagan temples, but for the believers, there was only one place they were gathered, and that was the assembly. Search as one might, we can find no other instructions given except for the assembly and its gathering; we cannot find any practices of believers in gathering except in a local assembly. The inevitable result of our examination of the Scriptures is that we learn that God has only one place for His saints to gather and that is unto the Lord Himself, in His Name alone, and in subjection to Divine authority.

This is taught in Matthew 18:20, and a careful study of this passage shows us that, while it may not give a definition of a local assembly, it certainly give us its principle. It is a very important passage in the context of this gospel to show us the place where the Lord's people gather in a hostile environment as is the world, to honor the Lord and to obey the Word of God. It is the consistent practice of all believers in Acts. 1 Corinthians gives the teaching that describes the distinctiveness and functioning of that assembly. I Timothy 3:15 teaches us that, in contrast to the Jewish synagogue and the pagan temple in Ephesus, only one place was "house of God" and was recognized by God. There is only one gathering for believers today that is taught by the Word of God and if one departs from the local assembly, he would have to disregard the clear, simple teaching of this blessed book.

### **1b. It is the only Gathering that Acknowledges the Lordship of Christ**

and gives Him the place of supreme authority that He deserves. A. W. Tozer, who was a great preacher of a past day in a denomination, wrote a chapter in a book and titled it, "The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches." In this book he says that in all his experience of sitting in church meetings to make decisions, he never heard any person say, "Why don't we see what the Word of God has to say about it?" The only gathering that seeks to know the teaching of the Bible and allows it to determine the functioning of the gathering is a local assembly. It is the place where His will is sought and His mind is carried out within the limits of our exercise and ability. Matthew 18:18 teaches that the assembly is responsible to carry out on earth what has been determined in heaven, and that will is made known through the Word of God to spiritually exercised believers on earth.

**1c. It is the only Gathering that Seeks to uphold Scriptural Doctrine,**

for any other place that one might attend usually has serious problems with doctrine, often doctrine that touches on the person of Christ. Prominent leaders of denominations often do not believe in the impeccability of Christ, that He could not and did not sin. Many do not believe in the virgin birth, the eternal, essential Deity of Christ, His eternal Sonship, and many other fundamental truths. Many places have serious problems with Charismatic teachings. Doctrine is very important, and these are not the only ones (every doctrine of Scripture is very important) so that we must seek to be in a place that teaches and upholds the truth. 1 Timothy 3:15 again tells us that the assembly is “Pillar and Ground of the Truth”, and this is vital for its preservation.

**1d. Allows the Control of the Holy Spirit,** since it is in a local assembly that the Spirit of God is allowed to direct and control those who would rise to give out a hymn, lead the saints in praise and prayer, speak a word for the purpose the Spirit designs or to act Scripturally in other ways (1 Corinthians 12:7-9, 14:26). He is not only Present, but He is to be President in the gathering. That also means that man’s arrangements ahead of time are often contrary to the Spirit’s control in the gathering. Some assemblies are forgetting this important principle. In any other gathering, where one or two men control, there is no room or possibility for the Spirit of God to cause other men to rise and take part. This is likely the most grievous sin against the Holy Spirit in our day.

**1e. Encourages and Permits the Priesthood of all Believers** in the functioning of the meeting, allowing brethren to rise and take part as they are exercised, qualified, and gifted by the Holy Spirit. Most fundamental gatherings profess to believe in the Priesthood of all believers, but not Priesthood in the collective gathering. Private priesthood of believers is one thing, but the Scriptures also teach the Public, collective functioning of that priesthood (Hebrews 13:12-15). One man ministry is a grievous thing and is contrary to this principle.

**2a. Any other Gathering Requires me to Compromise Essential Truths of the Word of God** since one cannot accommodate the teachings of men in church gatherings without compromise of Divine

truth. Many of the things already mentioned, for example, require compromise on the part of any believer who would be a part of such a gathering. They require compromise in the teaching of the Lord’s Supper as a weekly observance of the local assembly alone, the truths concerning the Lord Jesus and the place He is to have among His people, truths having to do with fellowship and what the Lord requires for His people. Compromise is the call of our day and outside the assembly, one must continually compromise to be able to remain in such a place.

**2b. Fellowship with those who do not give Clear Testimony of Salvation,** because most church gatherings outside the assembly do not preach a clear, searching gospel and as a result, many are brought in or accepted in that fellowship who do not have a clear testimony or give evidence of Divine life. To be in fellowship in any place like that requires me to be in fellowship with all who are there, no matter what they are or practice.

**2c. Practice Activities that Contradict the Principles of the Word of God** and by this we mean involvement in interdenominational activities, participation in functions that are not Scriptural in the local gathering, and many other elements that would be part of such a fellowship. In addition, the principles of separation must be compromised or ignored, including mingling with and associating with those who not saved and being affected by their practices that only tend toward an association with the world and its practices. Inevitably one becomes like those he associates with, and in time, one attending such places outside the local assembly becomes like those of that place.

**Solution to Questions**

What is the solution to questions about the local assembly? **Search the Scriptures** to learn and make sure that the local assembly, with all its faults and failures that one might see, is the place that the Word of God teaches. There is only one place that can properly claim the presence of the Lord in the midst, and an exercised believer should be most concerned to be where **HE** is. We do not gather in an assembly just because the brethren are pleasing to us. We should be there regardless, because that is where our Lord is. Remember that the coming day of review at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be according to our faithfulness to the Word of God and the Person of

Christ so that what may seem like gain now will be exposed then as a great and eternal loss in comparison with what one might receive from the hand of our Lord in that coming day.

It is natural to compromise conscience and follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty.

## Baptism, pt. 2

*J. A. McColl*

(from "Assembly Testimony", Mar/Apr 200

### **Baptism docs not bring us into newness of life!**

Romans 6:1-11 eloquently shows the present relationship of the believer to sin in view of his justification as stated in chaps. 1-5 Does the justifying grace of God, and the propitiatory work of the Savior, lead to a life of sin or a life of holiness. This is answered by Paul in 1-11 by the statement that the believer died to sin in the death of Christ Christ died for us and for our sins, but it is also true that we died with Him as to our sin, and all that we were in Adam was put to an end then In Him the believer died and in Him the believer rose We were associated with Him in His death and we were associated with Him in His resurrection That fact became a blessed reality to us when we believed Baptism is the symbolic expression, or illustration of death, burial and resurrection In it the believer affirms, expresses and declares his death, burial and resurrection with Christ If it is observed that water baptism is the counterpart of the believer's spiritual union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, the teaching of this great passage will be held in proper balance Let it be underscored that faith alone brings us into spiritual union with His death and into newness of life with a risen Lord.

In baptism the believer confesses the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, not merely as historic facts, he also confesses to a spiritual experience, that he himself, through faith in Christ, has become associated with Him in His death, burial and resurrection, and

that henceforth he is to reckon himself "to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus," Rom 6:11

### **Water cannot save us, but what baptism in water symbolizes can, 1 Peter 3.20-22.**

Verse 20 reads, "when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water, or, were brought safely through the water". The reference in Hebrews 11:7 reads, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house". The flood waters were not a type of baptism, it is not a type and an antitype but of two types corresponding with each other, ie. the ark in the flood waters and baptism. The ark going through the waters was a figure of that which our baptism as believers is also a figure, ie, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Just as Noah and his family in the ark were separated by the waters of the flood from the sinful and doomed world in which they formerly lived, so believers are separated from the world and its sinful associations by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, of which baptism is the symbolic expression. In this way baptism is the answer (demand) of a good conscience toward God. That which my conscience demands (requires) in order to have a good conscience toward God, is found in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, which is symbolized in my baptism. It declares that I am no longer in Adam, fallen, but in Christ, risen. The flood fell upon the Ark, and so all the waves and billows of divine wrath went over Christ when He stood as Surety at Calvary. But the Ark did not remain under the deluge. It was by these same waves of death borne to a new world, including all who were in it. As believers, all our sins have been put away, all that we are as sinners has been ended, put out of sight, and we are now raised up in Christ to a new life, in a new world. Therefore, water baptism is the expression of the believer's identification with Christ in all this.

### **Household Baptism and Infant Sprinkling.**

#### **What does the Bible teach?**

The baptizing of a household is one thing but 'Household Baptism' is something else. The former is fully supported by Scripture, the latter is answered by a stony silence from the Word of God. There is not a single verse in support of such a theory. What are the supposed benefits of household baptism? It professes

to introduce unregenerate persons into a sphere of external profession. But this is to change a divine ordinance into a mere ceremony, and encourage hypocrisy.

The practice of the book of the Acts is clearly consistent, and abundantly plain: "Then they that received his word were baptized," Acts 2:41; "When they believed ... they were baptized ... both men and women," Acts 8:12; "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest," Acts 8:37; "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized," Acts 18:8. This connected sequence must not be tampered with or changed in any way. The argument based on Acts 16:31, that the household of the jailer at Philippi was baptized on the ground of the faith of its head, is fallacious, for the words are not, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be baptized, thou and thy house, but "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.' The household believed, therefore the household rejoiced, and the household was baptized. Otherwise we have a picture of a household baptized and rejoicing, not because its individual members had believed, but because one of them had! Nothing is said of the composition of the household, but if there were an infant in it then that infant must have shared in the rejoicing as well as in the baptism.

The argument drawn from 1 Corinthians 7:14, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband else were your children unclean; but now they are holy," is equally an argument for the baptizing of an unbelieving wife or husband. The argument is rather that as no woman would think of leaving her children because she had become a Christian, but would remain with them because of her love for them and to discharge her obligations to them, and as remaining with them is not inconsistent with her new relation to Christ, neither then is remaining with her unsaved husband inconsistent with it. The only question is whether the husband is willing to remain with her, a question that does not arise in the case of her children. The passage has nothing whatever to do with baptism.

Baptism of children, baptism of adults, and baptism of a household in virtue of the faith of the head, or both parents, are practices unknown to Scripture; they are defended not by appeal to the plain meaning of the Word of God, but by arguments drawn from alleged Scriptural analogies. The only baptism to be found, whether in the teaching of the Lord or of his apostles, is the baptism of believers,

those who by their own act of 'receiving Christ,' John 1:12, have become Christians.

To support the theory of 'household baptism' and 'infant baptism' reference is usually made to "the house of Stephanas," (I Corinthians 1:16) baptized by Paul, and in I Corinthians 16:15, it is said they "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. Babies do not normally serve, they need to be served. There is also the "house of Lydia," Acts 16:15 and the advocates of "infant baptism" make much of "Lydia's baby." But all this is speculation, and we have to suppose that she had a family and brought them all the way to Philippi from Thyatira. The 'household' mentioned could have been her retinue of servants, who could carry her merchandise. We are told in Acts 16:40 that there were "brethren" in the house of Lydia, who were comforted by Paul and Silas, before they departed. On the matter of the 'sprinkling of infants' do not let us be deluded by the superstition that such an act of sprinkling a few drops of water on a child's face, and whatever words may accompany the act, can in any way regenerate that child's spirit, or in any way affect its spiritual welfare in time or its destiny in eternity. See how the truth of the Gospel is disguised out of recognition, and its purpose thwarted, and how myriads of people are deceived into supposing that all is well with them because they have been baptized, whereas they are still in their sins, the wrath of God abiding on them, John 3:36.

(Continued)

"Godliness with contentment is great gain" wrote the apostle Paul. One could possibly be content without godliness, but it seems clear that godliness will always produce contentment. Godliness is the attitude of soul and spirit that is directed toward, centered upon, and occupied with God. He is more than enough to fill and satisfy the heart. JNP

## **"The Feast"**

**"Therefore let us keep the feast"**

(1 Corinthians 5:8)

*Larry Steers*

**W**e sing some well written, beautiful, and scriptural hymns. However believers should be aware that our theology is not founded on the language of hymns

or the hymnbook. Likely hymn writers had before them and upon their heart the words of I Corinthians 5:8 "Let us keep the feast" when they wrote concerning the Lord's Supper as a feast. As a result, many brethren in their expressions of worship at the Breaking of Bread refer to these precious moments as a feast. While sitting in the quietness of my study typing these words, I can hear objections loud and clear. Brethren will be discouraged from taking part or it is the liberty of the hymn writer. In response while we may sing words, let us be certain that we understand what the Word of God teaches.

First note that in 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul gives us nine chapters before touching the Lord's supper in Chapters 10 and 11. In those instructive chapters there is no reference to a feast.

Secondly, notice that while there are different words for feast in the New Testament, this particular word for feast (heortazo) is found only once in the Bible. Quoting "Vine's Expository Dictionary", Mr. Vine writes of heortazo, "This is neither the Lord's Supper, nor the Passover, but has reference to the continuous life of the believer as a festival or holy-day in freedom from the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"

Here note the context in which the word "feast" appears. Note secondly that Paul is clearly referring to the Old Testament and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Notice that Paul reaches back hundreds of years to at least three of the "feasts of the Lord" from Leviticus 23 in writing to the Corinthians. The first feast in Leviticus 23 is the "Feast of the Passover" and is referred to in I Corinthians 5:7 "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us". Also, "The Feast of Unleavened Bread", the second feast in Leviticus 23, is on the heart of Paul when he writes to the Corinthians, "let us keep the feast" (1 Corinthians 5:8). He then turns to the third feast of Leviticus 23 which is the "Feast of First Fruits" with the words, "Christ the first fruits: afterward they that are Christ's at his coming". (1 Corinthians 15:23). The stirring truth presented here is that the resurrection of Christ is the first fruits. "afterwards" has reference to the resurrection of believers at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The context, as always, is vitally important. The illustration being used is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The grievous sin of fornication had raised its ugly head among the Corinthians in the assembly fellowship at Corinth. Rather than mourning, the Corinthians were puffed up (v. 2) and never sensed the

violation of a holy place by this act. They allowed the guilty brother who had had a vile relationship with his father's wife to continue in assembly fellowship. The woman involved was likely his stepmother. Since no discipline is required in her case, she was not likely in Assembly fellowship, but the man must be "taken away from among you" (v.2). They are solemnly reminded that as leaven spreads throughout the dough, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (v. 6).

Paul solemnly tells the Corinthians that he has already judged the evil deed. He demands that the assembly be gathered together for a discipline meeting to excommunicate the sinning brother by "delivering him unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (v.5). The feast here is a life of a restored believer because sin has been judged.

Again, the apostle has gone back over hundreds of years to Leviticus 23 and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In verse 7, he has gone to the Feast of the Passover in the same chapter in Leviticus to remind the Corinthians that, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us". In the Passover we see Christ's death for me, while in the Feast of Unleavened Bread we see Christ working in the saint to produce a holy life enjoying the rich blessings of salvation.

When sin enters the life, joy is lost, the sweet song of redemption disappears, and precious time is wasted.

"The old leaven" (v.7-8) refers to the life before conversion. Corinth was a wicked, immoral city. Regarding that old life they are reminded "and such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:11). All believers face the danger of the old sins of the preconversion life being resurrected. This is the "old leaven" (v.8) of malice and wickedness, the opposite of love, a life of bitterness, an unforgiving spirit. "Wickedness" (v.8) is the opposite of purity, expressing pride, a puffed up attitude, jealousy, and envy. In contrast, life in the feast should be characterized by sincerity and truth.

In Luke 12:1, our Lord warns of "the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy". Hypocrisy is the opposite of sincerity. Achan (Joshua 7:19-21) hid a goodly Babylonish garment, some silver, and some gold in the earth in the midst of his tent, pretending he had never taken them. Ananias and his wife Sapphira gave a little of their substance, pretending they were giving all like the others did. The feast is a life of honesty and sincerity, not hypocrisy and deception.

Our God is omniscient, He sees all and knows all. He says in Jeremiah 17:10 "I the lord search the heart". We are reminded in Hebrews 4:12 that the

word of God “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”

In Exodus 12:18 to 20, and in preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they were to search their kneading troughs, their cupboards, and even their pockets for leaven. Leaven was not to be eaten. It was linked with the food of Egypt, which causes the question to be raised as a believer, “What am I feasting on?” Leavened bread was not even to be seen in their houses. Just a practical word here. In years past at conferences, we were exhorted about the dangers of the TV. That warning has not been heard for a long time because everyone of us has a computer which has far more wickedness at the finger tips. An unconverted radio announcer warned to never let children have a computer in their bedroom with the doors shut. Parents should insist on the computer being in an open space so they can see how it is being used.

The feast to be kept is the Feast of Unleavened Bread lived in holiness before God. Let each saint, in the presence of a holy God, examine their life. Perhaps one of the hardest prayers to breathe in the presence of God are the words of David recorded In Psalm 139:23-24 “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”.

### Personal Life: The Heart

Samuel, in the house of Jesse, was impressed with Jesse’ sons for various reasons. He was to anoint one of them as the future king of Israel. The sons that appeared were all disqualified because “Man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Again in Proverbs 17:3, “The fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold but the Lord trieth the hearts”.

### Spiritual Life: Holiness

1 Peter 1:16, “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Here Peter is in perfect agreement with Paul. These words suggest the very essence of the “feast” referred to by Paul in I Corinthians 5:8.

### Moral Life: Habits

Here the Corinthians failed. In Corinth it was a case of the old life being resurrected and others in the assembly gloated over the practice. But all believers need to walk carefully in these scenes of time. There is no delete button to the human mind. What we may have thought had disappeared from our minds has a strange way of rising again.

### Assembly Life: Harmony

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” ( Psalm 133:1).

In conclusion, there is no, exception, leaven always illustrates sin. “The feast of Unleavened Bread is a life preserved from defiling sin, from the old leaven.

"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." This remark of the devil was once quoted in court by a barrister, wishing to further his case. He prefaced it by saying, "As a great authority has said..," feeling he was quite safe in his authority since he quoted from the Bible! The judge knew his Bible better than the counsel, so he quietly said, "I am interested to observe **who** the learned counsel quotes as, 'a great authority!'"

## Propitiation and Substitution

*F. B. Hole.*

**T**he Old Testament abounds with types of the sacrifice of Christ, but not until we come to the doctrines of the Gospel as presented in the Epistle to the Romans do we meet with the first of the two words that stand at the head of this chapter. The words themselves express the two great aspects of His atoning death.

First, let us recall that all sin is against God. It affects Him and not only us who are sinners. Truly, it ruins us and brings us under the power of death and judgment; but it is also an outrage upon His holy nature, a flouting of His authority, an attempt to dishonor Him in the sight of His creatures. Hence the sacrifice of atoning virtue must not only be such as shall relieve the sinner by removing his sin, but shall also, and *first*, meet all the demands of God's holy nature, and of His righteous throne, and so thoroughly vindicate Him.

This is clearly recognized as a righteous principle among men. If an offense arises between two parties both are affected, and the first consideration must be for the offended party. Take the matter of debt, for instance. The debtor, if a right-minded man,



is oppressed. He acknowledges the debt but cannot pay it and is miserable. We are sorry and anxious to relieve him, but we must not expend all our pity upon him. What about the creditor? He perhaps is not a man of wealth and cannot afford to lose what is rightly his, and hence he is oppressed as much if not more than, the debtor. How can the situation be relieved? Only by the intervention of a third party in such a way that the creditor's claims are properly met. The deliverance of the debtor follows as a matter of course. There can be no question as to the relative order: it is, *first* the creditor's claims, *second* the debtor's necessities.

All this is quite simple, yet when we turn to the work of Christ, with which we as sinners are so vitally concerned, how easy for us practically to forget God's side of the question in occupation with our ch. 4 as an antidote against this.

The first two and a half chapters of that Epistle reveal the total bankruptcy of mankind, and from Romans 3:21 we read of the steps God has taken to meet the situation; for the great Creditor Himself has acted in the matter. What has He done? He has manifested his *righteousness* in such a way that it rests as a shield of protection "upon all them that believe" (v. 22) instead of falling upon them as an avalanche of destruction as we might have expected.

But *where* was righteousness of this kind manifested? we may well ask. The answer is — at the cross.

But *how*? We further inquire. What particular feature in and about the Cross of Christ accounts for righteousness of this character? What is it that has enlisted God's righteousness on our side, and not merely sheltered us by the wing of compassion and mercy from the onslaught of the righteousness which otherwise would condemn? The answer is propitiation.

At the Cross God "set forth" the Lord Jesus "a propitiation through faith in His blood" (v. 25). The word used here is "propitiatory" or "mercy seat" — not propitiation exactly but rather the *place* where, under the law of Moses, the propitiation was made. The force of this will be apparent if we turn to Leviticus 16:1-34 where we have the appointed order of the offerings on the great day of atonement in Israel, which occurred annually on the tenth day of the seventh month. On that day the high priest slew a bullock as a sin offering for himself and his house, and a goat as a sin-offering for the people. The blood of these two victims was not applied in any way to the people but was carried into the holiest of all and sprinkled on and before the mercy seat, and later was sprinkled on the altar of burnt offering. Thus in type, God's claims were met and His

character was vindicated in view of the sins of the people.

What the mercy seat was in this typical system, this region of shadows, the Lord Jesus is in the great reality itself. The mercy seat was the place where God met with man (see Exodus 25:21, 22) and He is the One in whom God has put Himself into touch with men in a manner and degree altogether unknown before. All, too, has become effective "in His blood" just as the "mercy seat" only became effectively a seat of mercy because of the sprinkled blood. Otherwise, it would have speedily proved itself to be a seat of *judgment*.

What, then, is the effect of Christ's propitiation as recorded in Romans 3:1-31? Just this, that God has been vindicated as regards His dealings with sin and with sinners, as shown in verses 25 and 26. In times past He had passed over the sins of His saints in anticipation of those sins being dealt with at the Cross; in this present gospel age He is not merely "remitting" or "passing over" sins, but positively justifying believers in Jesus. Propitiation thus fully made, His righteousness in both these actions is fully declared. No voice can now for one instant be rightly raised to criticize what He has done. Before the death of Christ unbelief might question, though faith, even when confronted with God's dealings which seemed most perplexing, always said with Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Still, now such a question is needless. He has done right. In Christ's propitiatory work, we see every satisfaction due to Divine righteousness and holiness rendered in supreme and surpassing degree. We see every sanction of the law upheld, and every attribute of the Divine nature displayed in harmonious completeness.

The consequence of all this is that God now presents Himself to men universally as a Saviour-God. Verse 22 of our chapter speaks of "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe . . . for all have sinned." The preposition "unto" indicates the scope or bearing of the thing in question, whereas "upon" indicates rather its actual effect. The need to which the Gospel addresses itself is absolutely universal. No less universal is the bearing of the Gospel offer. The actual effect of the Gospel is more limited; the words now are "all that believe." The Gospel offer in its universality thus rests upon propitiation as its basis. Because God has been completely satisfied as to all that sin is and has done, and therefore every hindrance on His side is removed, He presents Himself to man universally as a forgiving, justifying God. Except, however, the hindrances upon

man's side be removed — hindrances such as pride, self-complacency, and unbelief — the gracious Gospel offer does not come to fruition. It is only when a sinner comes to repentance and faith in Christ that Divine righteousness is "upon" him in blessing. Justification belongs to "all them that believe," and to them alone.

But this brings us to the second aspect of Christ's atoning death. The actual word "substitution" does not occur in Scripture. That which the word expresses is found again and again: indeed in one Old Testament chapter it is found quite ten times. We refer to Isaiah 53:1-12. In one verse of that chapter, we get it four times:

"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (v. 5)

The essence of substitution is that one is put in the room and stead of another, and each of the four clauses of this great verse contains that idea. The great and glorious "He" stands in the room and stead of the poor and sinful "us." The transgressions and the iniquities were *ours*; the wounding and the bruising were *His*. Ours are the peace and the healing; *His* were the chastisement and the stripes, that purchased it.

Now if we turn to the closing verse of Romans 4:1-25 and the opening verse of Romans 5:1-21 the same truth confronts us, only stated with a clearness of detail impossible in Old Testament times. "Jesus our Lord . . . was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here note again the "our" and the "we." He truly was delivered up to death and judgment, but it was for our offenses and not for everybody's, though as the propitiation He has settled the whole question of sin so that the Gospel can be offered to all. He was raised again for our justification, i.e. the justification of all who believe; for we are "justified by *faith*," as the next verse shows.

When we consider Christ's death in its substitutionary aspect, then, we are looking at it not from God's side but from ours. The point is not how His sacrifice has satisfied the Creditor, but rather how fully He has intervened on behalf of the debtors and of the full clearance which is theirs as a result; always bearing in mind that only those who believe can reckon upon Him as their substitute.

An illustration may help to set the two aspects more clearly before us. Years ago a popular accident insurance scheme was much advertised in the daily press as offering benefits for practically nothing. All

you had to do was to give a definite order for the paper in question to a newsagent, and then register as having done so. "A *registered* reader is an *insured* reader," is what one of the papers said.

"How very simple!" you might have exclaimed, "have I nothing to do beyond that?" Nothing! But you must not overlook the fact that the newspaper proprietors had a very big thing to do before the offer was made. The thousands of little registration transactions cost but the stamp that posts them to the office, but behind these lies the great transaction when the newspaper proprietors drew the big check running into many thousands of pounds in favor of the insurance company that undertook the liability.

Now that big premium payment, in view of which the offer went freely forth to all buyers of the paper, is not a bad illustration of propitiation. The offer of God's forgiveness goes forth on the ground of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice, and its scope and bearing is nothing less than *all* men.

When the premium was paid no questions, as to any particular individuals benefiting under the scheme, were raised. The point was that the insurance company was so satisfied that it was able to issue the offer upon a sound basis.

The act of registering under the scheme was on the other hand, purely individual. After all, only the registered reader was the insured reader, and therefore only the one who had registered had the right to speak of the premium paid by the proprietors as a *substitute* for the premium they otherwise must have paid, had they as individuals approached the insurance company to insure against similar risks. The registration very well illustrates what takes place when a sinner turns to God in repentance and faith. He registers, so to speak, under God's great salvation scheme. Such a one alone can rightly speak of Christ as being a Substitute for himself and bearing his sins in His own body on the tree.

We have not labored this point at unnecessary length, for it is a matter of vast importance. The Gospel can only be declared with clearness and consistency by those who see the relative place of propitiation and substitution, and thus make the former the great theme of their preaching when addressing themselves as heralds to men at large, and give to the latter its distinctive place as instruction to those who believe. And, further, a correct grasp of these things goes a long way towards solving those intellectual difficulties which so many have found in putting together the two things equally taught in Scripture — the sovereignty of

God and the responsibility of man, connected with the free offers of God's grace.

### Need for Propitiation

It is in the essential holiness of His nature and the righteousness of His throne. It must never be forgotten that God is the supreme Governor of the universe. If He permits any moral laxity, any deviation from strict righteousness, who will maintain what is right anywhere? God's righteousness, maintained unflinchingly and without compromise, is the sheet anchor upon which everything depends. If that drags the whole universe would drift upon the rocks of utter wrong.

Therefore it is that the maintenance of righteousness and holiness always stands first with Him, and nothing in the way of blessing can reach sinners except their every claim and demand is first met.

Propitiation is the meeting of all those prior claims in such full fashion that instead of righteousness being totally against man it is now "unto all" (Romans 3:22). On the ground of propitiation righteousness stands, as it were, with outstretched arms bidding any and every man to find shelter in its bosom. And the propitiation itself is the fruit of the love of God.

Clearly propitiation is linked with appeasing the wrath of a holy God. Righteousness and wrath stand closely connected as a matter of eternal fact. Wrath gives sanction to righteousness and enforces it. Without it righteousness would be impotent. The practice of government among men is an illustration of this. No matter how righteous and virtuous a government may be, without powers and penalties to enforce its decrees it comes to grief.

Righteousness and wrath are also closely connected in Scripture. Verses 17 and 18 of Romans 1:1-32.

In the presence of sin, God's righteousness has tremendous claims. He also has infinite power and will execute wrath and vengeance as Romans 2:2-9 states.

**However, propitiation does not authorize us to tell any man that his sins are forgiven. But it does authorize us to go to any man and tell him that Christ has died for him, and consequently forgiveness is preached to him (Acts 13:38). This we can do because as a propitiation He gave Himself "a ransom for all," He died "for the ungodly." The forgiveness of sins, however, is the portion of those who believe only, since it involves substitution.**

Forgiveness may indeed be freely preached to all men, but only those who believe *are forgiven*.

**We must keep in mind that** teaching that Christ died as a *Substitute* for all would obviously lead to universal salvation as a logical conclusion, but the Bible teaching is not that, but that He is the *propitiation* for "the whole world" (1 John 2:2). This no more involves the ultimate salvation of everybody than the newspaper's big premium payment involved the definite insurance of every one of its readers.

It did involve this: That every reader was eligible for the insurance and had the offer of it; just as propitiation involves an open door into salvation for all and a worldwide gospel message. But definite insurance was secured by registration. "A registered reader is an insured reader," was the slogan adopted. We may take upon our lips the statement that "a repentant and believing sinner is a forgiven sinner." This, thank God, is the truth of the Gospel.

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**JOHN 17:21. THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE; AS THOU, FATHER, ART IN ME, AND I IN THEE, THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE ONE IN US: THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME."**

"This verse is a favorite of promoters of the ecumenical movement. However as the content and context of this verse clarify, Jesus was not speaking about institutional unity but personal unity among genuine believers. He was praying that all true believers would be one in their love for one another, their submission to the authority of Scripture, and their commitment to their mission. Disunity among professing Christians has frustrated Jesus' purpose that the world might believe on Him. Nevertheless the solution to this problem is not to impose an artificial institutional unity that ignores the bases of true unity and presents a hypocritical facade of oneness. It is to promote love for one another among genuine believers."

2012 Edition

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