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Paul's Metaphors: ARCHITECTURE:THE BUILDING

Alan Davidson

One of the features of the last days will be that, "they builded". This is seen in the growth of every city, town and village where green fields are developed to streets, avenues and estates at an increasing pace.

Paul was from Tarsus, "a citizen of no mean city". As he moved among the cities of his day, he visited great cities such as Corinth, Athens and Ephesus. He observed the buildings; some old and strong, some poor and shabby, some classical, some oriental. He saw Temples and houses to live in; he thought of their foundations and structure; the builders and the people who lived in them; the materials they were built of and the purpose for which they were built. In Paul's writings he observes the great edifices of the Temple of Jerusalem and that of Diana of the Ephesians; he also mentions the contentment of the believer as having a house to eat and drink in.

From Genesis, God has ever had a desire to dwell among His people. How marvellous that God is pleased to dwell among men and what a wonder it is that we are going to dwell with God eternally. "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph 2:22).

In Paul's epistles, we notice four types of buildings of which God is the Architect, Builder or Overseer.

1. THE CHURCH IN ITS ENTIRETY.

"In whom all the Building fitly framed together

groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:21). The Church in its entirety, Jew and Gentile in one, all who are saved forming God's dwelling as all united through the Cross. All barriers horizontally are removed; "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph 2:14). All barriers vertically removed; "That they might reconcile both unto God" (Eph 2:12). The Ephesian believers had left their great Temple but they now had a building far more magnificent. No palace on earth can compare with this great edifice, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone. This is bigger than the assembly, all assemblies together do not make the house. Grouping assemblies together does not make anything in the New Testament. It is composed of living stones cut out from nature's quarry, saved by the Grace of God, shaped by the quiet workings of the Holy Spirit to be to the eternal Glory of the Heavenly Workman and soon the last stone will be added.

"View the Great Building, see it rise
The Scheme how great,
the Plan how wise".

2. THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY.

"Ye are God's building" (1 Cor 3:9). "According to the Grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder (architect), I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:10-11).

The local church is **not** a miniature of the Church in its entirety. This is practical and local not spiritual and mystical. I enter the assembly not at conversion but through obedience, moral and doctrinal fitness, baptism and fellowship. In the church local, there is a distinction between male and female; there is the possibility of corruption doctrinally or morally; it can be marred by division and sadly there can be

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occasion of excommunication. In the local assembly we meet regularly in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayer but it can cease to function and the building can be destroyed.

The Church of God at Corinth was **not** a visible building but a called out company built upon no other foundation than Jesus Christ and gathered in no other name than owning Jesus Christ as Lord. In this building only the very best of God given materials are to be used. These are the gold of Divine origin, the silver of Redemption's costliness and the precious stones of all that is of true value to God. This material, though very costly, will produce a real work of God which is sturdy, solid, steadfast and will stand the test of Divine approval. Any attempt to erect a structure using inferior materials such as wood, hay and stubble may be cheaper, easier and certainly quicker but as with all that man produces, will only be a fire risk.

Paul had in mind, two types of building. One building is spiritual, strong and costly. The other is perhaps larger but rough and cheap which will quickly deteriorate and go to ashes when tried by the fire. Paul was just as sure of his crown as he was of his conversion. The type of foundation, materials, builders, pillars, walls and doors are clearly specified in the scriptures. Doing God's work in God's way will be more costly and may require more prayer and patience but will abide at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Some want to do God's work with cheap materials, casual labour and careless construction comprising of few sticks, some thatch and a bit of straw.

In the assembly there can be two types of activity, constructive and destructive. "I commend you to God and to the Word of His Grace which is able to build you up" (Acts 20:32). "Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Cor 14:26). To 'edify' is to 'build up', 20 times in the NT, all except Acts 9:31, used by Paul. Believers obedient and skilled in the Word of God will be able, through diligent labour, to play their part in building up that which is to the Glory of God.

"If any man defile the Temple of God, him will God destroy" (1 Cor 3:17). The assembly can be corrupted by false teachers or

immoral offenders. There are bad builders who will destroy God's assembly. God will order the punishment to meet the crime and in order to preserve the sanctity of the assembly, the offender himself or herself, may be pulled down by Divine judgement. One can be a hindrance rather than a help and the labour of a past generation can quickly be pulled down by the next. If there is anything more harmful than the demolition squad, it is those whom Paul exposes as building up the wrong thing. *"If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor"* (Gal 2:18). Some, rather than building walls of separation, are building bridges of convenience back to denominationalism.

The buildings which Paul wrote about, had strong pillars; *"pillars of the Church"* (Gal 2:9). These were men of God, secure, settled, steadfast to withstand any storm of opposition.

Paul also spoke about the door. *"A great door and effectual"*, for the furtherance of the gospel (1 Cor 16:9). The spread of the gospel is always from the assembly with a view to the assembly. *"From you sounded out the Word of the Lord"* (1 Thess 1:8).

The soundness of what is built will be seen when the testing time comes. *"Every man's work shall be made manifest....what sort it is"* (1 Cor 3:13). You will observe that what is valued is "what sort" not what size. *"If any man's work abide"* (1 Cor 3:14), not *abound*. The righteous judge will reward faithfulness not so much successfulness.

Paul also observed the furniture and vessels in the house and emphasised that they should be kept clean. *"A vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use"* (2 Tim 3:21). It is better to be a clean earthen vessel than be a dirty golden vessel.

3. THE HOME.

"One that ruleth well his own home" (1 Tim 3:4). This home is not bricks and mortar, not riches but rule, not ornaments but order, not greatness but godliness. The home, marriage and the family is under attack in society. Sympathetically, we commend the homes of God's people to godly exercise and restraint. *"I will therefore that the younger woman marry, bear children, guide the house"* (1 Tim 4:14).

How good it is to have a home so ordered by both parents where the scriptures are read, they pray with the family and it is an accepted thing that the whole family go to the meetings. We cannot save the children but we are exhorted to so order the home that the adversary have no occasion to speak reproachfully.

4. THE BODY OF THE BELIEVER.

"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor 6:19). It is essential that we behave properly in the 'house' which we inhabit for the short space of life. We have a Divine Visitor in this house Who is sensitive to sin. It would be sad to see Him grieved by the unlawful use of the house. It is so essential that we give notice to all who look on, that our present abode is temporary, transient and terrestrial because soon we shall be changing our address to that which is permanent, heavenly and eternal. *"If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"* (2 Cor 5:1).

"Moral compromise always makes one vulnerable to temptation. We see this in Samson's case and in Delilah's in these verses. Temptation usually comes in attractive packages. The wrong companions can lead us into temptation (cf. 1Co_15:33). Temptation is persistent (cf. Matthew 4). Yielding to temptation starts us on a toboggan slide. We find ourselves going faster and faster downhill, and soon we can get off only with great personal pain."

Constable

Things that Differ: "Days" of Scripture

Joel Portman

Those who interpret Scripture dispensationally distinguish the different "days" of God's Word. This word has a varied meaning in different contexts, sometimes meaning a literal day-night period, and sometimes an undetermined

period. For example, we believe that the days of Genesis 1 were literal days, whether exactly 24 hours each or not isn't important. The clearly descriptive "evening and the morning" expression makes it certain that they were days as we know them and not long geologic periods. However, we note that the definition placing the evening before the morning sets the format for the day periods that are typical of longer epochs. Many begin with darkness and end in light. The day of salvation begins with the darkness of sin's judgment at Calvary, and ends with the glorious light of the Lord's return for the church. Also, the day of the Lord begins with a dark scene of judgment and ends in light. We will try to notice that in our study.

An actual day of the week that is important for us is the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10), which is also called the "first day of the week." Christians recognize this as the day when Christ arose from the dead, as well as the day in which many other important events occurred. The precedent that the Lord rose from among the dead, and that the early Christians met on this day forms the basis why we meet for fellowship and to remember the Lord Jesus on that day of the week (John 20:1, 19, 26; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10).

Some prophetic days that are important to recognize are, the

1. Day of the Lord, (1 Thess. 5:2, 2 Pet. 3:10), which occupies much of the prophecy of the Old Testament.

2. Day of Salvation (2 Cor. 6:1-2), or Man's Day (1 Cor. 4:3, JND), the present day.

3. Day of Christ (Phil. 1:6, 2:16), also described with other terms such as "the day", or "Day of our Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. 1:14).

4. Day of God (2 Pet. 3:12), which we believe refers to eternity

Day of Salvation (2 Cor. 6:1-2)

Or also called "man's day" (JND trans) in 1 Cor. 4:3 and sometimes referred to as "the day of grace" or "church age" as well as other terms. This day encompasses the entirety of the period that began upon the suffering and death of Christ, His resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and continues until the day when Christ returns for His people. In the context of 2 Cor. 6:1-2,

it is not defined, but it is the period of time when the appeal of God to sinners to be reconciled to Him is being announced (2 Cor. 5:20-21) and a like appeal is being expressed toward believers, that, having received that grace in salvation, they might not fail to experience the full reality of its effect in their lives. The latter seems to be a problem in Corinth, and the apostle is identifying this so that they might correct it by a change in their behavior.

Paul was quoting from Isa. 49:8, and the context of that passage is the rejection of Jehovah's Servant, (clearly referring to Christ) and the evident failure of His work. However, He receives reassurance that the result of that rejection and His work would be that greater results would take place affecting more than the nation of Israel, but the entire world. Paul applied this prophecy to the present day in which he was appealing to men and to the believers to respond to the grace of God and the work of grace in their lives. The expanse of Isaiah's prophecy obviously continues into the future, but the day of which Paul speaks was the beginning of that world-wide result. "The rejection of the Messiah, foretold in verse Isa. 49:7 would result in His death and He would be "heard" and "helped" by resurrection from the dead, and this was to inaugurate the "acceptable time" and the "day of salvation". Almost exactly nineteen centuries later, Paul reminded the Corinthian saints that they were living in that wonderful epoch: it was NOW. The epoch of grace and salvation still persists. It is still NOW." (F. B. Hole). That day, Paul says, had begun at that time, but not everything was fulfilled or completed then. Isaiah indicates that it is the Servant who is heard, but Paul applies those words to the believer in Christ. The response of the individual is on the same principle, in that blessing results from a response to God's Word.

It is "man's day" (1 Cor. 4:3) because man is allowed to pass judgment on God's servants, whether right or wrong, but Paul indicates that man's judgment is subject to erroneous results that don't reflect the Lord's assessment. In fact, man's judgment of Christ at the beginning was wrong and unjust, as is man's judgment of the gospel and Christ's servants.

It is described as the day of grace by many, because the main dealings of God with men are on the ground of His expressed grace in Christ and in salvation. His judgment toward sin and sinners isn't immediately expressed during this time, but rather it is delayed. It is the church age, because divine purposes are emphasizing His activities in the church universal, and those who respond to the gospel during this day become a part of the church by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the age of the Holy Spirit, because it is marked by a distinct work of this holy Person in the world (John 16:7-11).

Day of Christ

This day always seems to refer to events linked with the rapture of the church and the heavenly sphere when all believers of this present age will be manifested before the Judgment Seat of Christ. It includes the events that begin with the rapture and the assessment of believers at the judgment seat of Christ, the marriage of the Lamb, and all events in heaven preceding the return of the Lord Jesus to this earth in His power and glory. Paul says in Phil. 1:6 that the work that has begun in the believers will be continued in view of that day of manifestation. In 2:16, he anticipates his own rejoicing in that day when he will view the results of his ministry verified through the development of believers then manifested as genuine and with eternal results. Their character of life also must be lived in view of that day (Phil. 1:10), when all will be examined and actual reality revealed.

This day also seems to be in view in other portions which refer to "that day" (1 Cor. 3:13, 2 Tim. 1:12, 4:8), "the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5, 2 Cor. 1:14,), and possibly other expressions, all of which indicate the culmination of Christian life and service. The assessment of life and service by our Lord with subsequent reward should markedly affect our present life and character as believers.

Day of the Lord

(1 Thess 5:2, 2 Pet. 3:10)

It would seem that there is a partial overlap between the day of Christ and the early part of the day of the Lord. The day of Christ includes heavenly events already described after the rapture, while the day of the Lord describes

earthly events that apply to Israel and the nations. References to this day are numerous, too many to cite in this context, and they form the substance of much of the Old Testament prophecy. They describe it as a day that begins with darkness, anguish and distress among nations. One of the oldest prophets, Joel, described it as "*A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: . . . the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?*" (2:2, 11). Paul writes in 1 Thess. 5:2-3, "*For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*" This is a day that begins with the darkness of judgment, but it ends with the brightness of the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. Joel 3:16-18, "*the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.*"

Commentators differ on exactly when it will begin. Some, like Schofield and others, taught that it will begin with the rapture of the church, but others believe that it will begin with the Great Tribulation. It is the period of events on earth that will express God's righteous judgment on the nations for their unbelief and ungodliness and on Israel for rejecting their Messiah. It will have the purpose of bringing about the restoration of Israel and their repentance in view of receiving their rejected Messiah (Zech. 12:10-14, Isa. 53:2-6, etc.). It is a period that will encompass the entirety of tribulations that will come on all the earth, including the aspect called the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21) and eventually the manifestation of Christ in His glory (Rev. 19:11-15), His victory over all His foes (Rev. 19:19-21), and establishment of the righteous rule of Christ

through His victory over all His enemies. 2 Pet. 3:10 makes clear that it will only terminate with the complete transformation of all things, *"the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up."* This great conflagration will result in the day of God that will follow.

Day of God (2 Pet. 3:12)

This passage indicates that the day of God refers to eternity, when all of the events of the previous days will have run their course and come to an end. It is the day when *"God shall be all in all,"* (1 Cor. 15:28), after Christ in His millennial rule will have subdued all things, including death (1 Cor. 15:24-28) and brought them under Divine authority in a perfectly unified state. The previous verses describe events in the day of the Lord, so this is that period of complete rule of God over everything, when there will no longer be any residual evidence of the curse of sin (Rev. 21:4, 22:3). That will be the glorious day unto which God is working, *"new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"* (2 Pet. 3:13). Peter says it is also the day for which believers are earnestly looking, (2 Pet. 3:12). Our hearts are drawn in anticipation beyond the rapture and its events, and beyond the glorious manifestation of Christ on the earth, to that day when all events of time have run their course and God's purposes will be completely perfectly.

"Cain rebelled against God's authority in salvation, for he refused to bring a blood sacrifice as God had commanded. Balaam rebelled against God's authority in separation, for he prostituted his gifts for money and led Israel to mix with the other nations. Korah rebelled against God's authority in service, denying that Moses was God's appointed servant and attempting to usurp his authority." (Wiersbe)

The Little Maid.

John Riddle, Cheshunt, England

Notice the background: Naaman had been used by God to give deliverance to Syria, and that evidently included success against Israel. God controls the affairs of nations, and takes account of character. Naaman was not only 'a great man with his master', he was also 'honourable'. Acts 10. 34-35 state, *"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him"*. It is a sad reflection on Israel, that the Syrians were able to bring back captives from their raids. The overall lesson of the passage lies in the significant words: 'A mighty man . . . a little maid'

The 'little maid' from Israel might seem very insignificant when compared with mighty Naaman, but she played a vital role in his life, and through this, in the life of Syria! She is a wonderful example of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 1. 26-29, *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence"*.

Let us consider firstly her captivity

"And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife". So we are made aware that:

i) Her early life had been shattered by tragedy. She had been uprooted from home and family, and carried off to a strange land. Humanly speaking, it was all without rhyme or reason.

ii) There is no hint of resentment against God. Her words, *"would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria!"* strongly suggest that she did not blame God for her circumstances.

iii) God was in complete control of the situation. He was going to use her in a very wonderful way. Paul would similarly maintain in Philippians 1. 12, *"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel"*. Paul was in prison! In an epistle written about the same time, he calls himself "the prisoner of Jesus Christ" and "the prisoner of the Lord", Eph. 3:1; 4:1. God had pronounced judgement against the throne of Israel in 1 Kings 19, but one of Ahab's sons was still king, and it is a child that suffers. It all looks so terribly unfair. But as we shall see, this poor child was, notwithstanding, in the right place, at the right time, with the right objective, and in the right spirit to do the right thing. All the happy results that followed turned upon her words so fitly spoken, *"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy"*.

iv) The little maid was evidently highly regarded. *"She waited on Naaman's wife"*, and when she said *"Would God my lord (i.e., Naaman), were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy"*, people took notice. If she had been an unreliable, ne'er-do-well, it is extremely unlikely that her mistress would have bothered to think any more about it! As it was, Naaman went to the king of Syria about it! This is the sense of verses 4-5, where J. N. Darby renders it in his translation, *"And he went and told his lord saying 'Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. And the king of Syria said, Well! go, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel'"*.

Her commendable life, even as a slave, gave value to her testimony. How much does our conduct commend our testimony? See Colossians 3:22-25, and Titus 2:9-10.

Now consider her concern.

She displayed no vindictiveness. She could have rejoiced in Naaman's misfortune. After all, it was his army that had carried her away from home and family. But she was obviously deeply concerned about his welfare. Listen to her again. *"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy"*. She seeks nothing for

herself. Her master, with all he possesses, is more wretched than she, and her heart yearns over him for blessing. She knows the character of the plague that is destroying him, and that none but God can heal it. He is an idolater, and lost, and she longs that he should be with Elisha. Her philanthropy is of a high and far-reaching order. She says not, "Would God my lord were relieved of his misery", but that he "were with the prophet". That is the first thing with her; the bodily healing would follow.

What an example for us! Here is a slave, in the spirit of grace, desiring the blessing of her master. She is a daughter of Israel. He is an enemy of her nation. The Lord Jesus taught, *"Love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye might be the children of your Father which is in heaven for he maketh his sun, (so the sun belongs to Him), to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"*, Matt. 5. 44-45. He was, of course, the perfect example of His own ministry, see Luke 23:34.

The analogy between leprosy and sin is well established, and we are immediately confronted with the question of our concern for people stricken by sin. Do we really care that most of those we daily come in contact with are perishing?

Now view her courtesy.

"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria!" She refers to Naaman in the most courteous terms. Titus 2 again demands of us that servants *"be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again"*, v. 9.

Notice she is not without her convictions. Her words, *"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy"*, speak volumes. As we shall see, she spoke with great confidence, but that confidence was based on convictions formed from her earliest years. Although in a foreign land, she had not forgotten early teaching. Her faith, tested by captivity, proved very real. Her early convictions helped and sustained her in captivity and bondservice. This should encourage us in several ways:

i) It shows the value of teaching the word of God to young people. Witness Paul to Timothy, *"But continue thou in the things that thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus"*, 2 Tim. 3. 14-15.

ii) It shows the value of receiving the word of God whilst young. The 'little maid' not only remembered what she had been taught, but she displayed her conviction that God could heal Naaman. Are we really people with convictions like that? Or do we just pay lip service to what we hear and read? There was nothing cosmetic about her faith!

We marvel at her confidence

It was her deep conviction that enabled her to speak with such confidence. *"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."* The 'little maid' had no doubt about it, "he would recover him of his leprosy!" She had an intelligent faith. She knew that it was by the prophet alone that her master could be blessed, and that if he were with Elisha, he would be blessed. Paul exhibited a similar confidence, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth', Rom. 1. 15.

Notice

i) She was a first-class ambassador. After all, an ambassador is away from home in a foreign land, and represents his (or her) home sovereign. The 'little maid' did this exactly. She spoke eloquently about the blessings and excellence of her homeland! She could almost sing:

"I am a stranger here, within a foreign land,
My home is far away upon a golden strand.
Ambassador to be of realms beyond the sea,
I'm here on business for my King".

ii) She had confidence in God. *"Would God my lord was with the prophet that is in Samaria!"* The words, 'would God', are a short wish or prayer.

iii) She recognized the ability of the servant of God. *"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy"*. She was referring, of course, to Elisha. She acknowledged that he was a man of God, v. 8, who had the word and power of God. Perhaps she felt like the 'great woman' of Shunem who said to her husband, *"I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually"*, 2 Kgs. 4. 8-9.

iv) She was far greater in spiritual intelligence than both Naaman and the king of Syria. The 'little maid' made it quite clear that her master could only be blessed through, "the prophet that is in Samaria". But Naaman was sent to the king of Israel armed with a letter from the king of Syria. It was addressed only to him and not to the prophet, *"Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy"*! No wonder the king of Israel panicked! The 'little maid' had *"an unction (anointing) from the Holy One"*, and knew 'all things', 1 John 2:20. Compare 1 Corinthians 2:6, *"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought"*.

Now be thrilled with her compensation

i) God was honoured by her faith. We often forget that faith is always honouring to God.

ii) She initiated a series of events that led to Naaman's cleansing. She was not involved in his actual cleansing. She did not play anything like the part played by Elisha, but it all started with her! Following her testimony, *"one (i.e., Naaman), went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel."* She pointed out the right place to go, and the right person to see. She could not heal Naaman herself, but she knew who could! What is more, she didn't keep it to herself. So it is with us as we read 2 Corinthians 4:5, *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake"*.

We have the answer to the most serious human problem of all, but are we pointing people to Christ who can meet every need? The 'little maid' could rejoice that her seemingly

little role brought such a marvelous result! She first linked Naaman with the living God whom Elisha served.

The lesson for us is clear. The Lord Jesus taught that, *"he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth"*, John 4. 36-37. We might feel very small and insignificant, like 'the little maid', but faithful witness for Christ will bear fruit beyond our wildest imagination!

We should not be surprised at her concealment. The Scriptures say nothing more about her, not here, or anywhere else. She has played the part given her by God, and now disappears. We do not even know her name! But although we do not know what ultimately happened to her, (did Naaman send her back home out of gratitude?), she will never be forgotten. God has made sure of that! Her record is 'on high' Job 16:19, as well as in 2 Kings 5.

Hers was a hidden ministry. Not public like Daniel and his three friends, who were also captives in a foreign country. After all, Daniel, 'continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus', Dan. 1. 21. Some servants of God have a quiet and hidden ministry, others are constantly before the public eye. But both are vital. The work of sisters could be likened to the former, and the work of some brothers to the latter. But both are alike precious to God. Both are invaluable and essential. Both are mutually complementary.

The 'little maid' beautifully illustrates the exhortation in Ephesians 4. 16, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly (carefully), not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil'. J. N. Darby points out that the expression 'redeeming the time' means "seizing every good and favourable opportunity". She is an example to us all in doing just this.

The altar stands in the foreground of every life, and can be passed by only at the cost of all that is noblest and best. There is more grandeur in five minutes of self-renunciation than in a whole life-time of self-interest and self-seeking.

The Cross is a Radical Thing

A. W. Tozer

The cross of Christ is the most revolutionary thing ever to appear among men.

The cross of the Roman times knew no compromise; it never made concessions. It won all its arguments by killing its opponent and silencing him for good. It spared not Christ, but slew Him the same as the rest. He was alive when they hung Him on that cross and completely dead when they took him down six hours later. That was the cross the first time it appeared in Christian history.

After Christ was risen from the dead the apostles went out to preach His message, and what they preached was the cross. And wherever they went into the wide world they carried the cross, and the same revolutionary power went with them. The radical message of the cross transformed Saul of Tarsus and changed him from a persecutor of Christians to a tender believer and an apostle of the faith. Its power changed bad men into good ones. It shook off the long bondage of paganism and altered completely the whole moral and mental outlook of the Western world.

All this it did and continued to do as long as it was permitted to remain what it had been originally, a cross. Its power departed when it was changed from a thing of death to a thing of beauty. When men made of it a symbol, hung it around their necks as an ornament or made its outline before their faces as a magic sign to ward off evil, then it became at best a weak emblem, at worst a positive fetish. As such it is revered today by millions who know absolutely nothing about its power.

The cross effects its ends by destroying one established pattern, the victim's, and creating another pattern, its own. Thus it always has its way. It wins by defeating its opponent and imposing its will upon him. It always dominates. It never compromises, never dickers nor confers, never surrenders a point for the sake of peace. It cares not for peace; it cares only to end its opposition as fast as possible.

With perfect knowledge of all this Christ said: Luke 9:23 (NIV) *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his*

cross daily and follow me." The apostle Paul also wrote, *"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."* (Gal. 2:20). Again in that epistle, we read, *"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."* (Gal. 6:14).

So the cross not only brought Christ's life to an end, it ends also the first life, the old life, of every one of His true followers. It destroys the old pattern, the Adam pattern, in the believer's life, and brings it to an end. Then the God who raised Christ from the dead raises the believer and a new life begins.

This, and nothing less, is true Christianity, though we cannot but recognize the sharp divergence of this conception from that held by the rank and file of evangelicals today. But we dare not qualify our position. The cross stands high above the opinions of men and to that cross all opinions must come at last for judgment. A shallow and worldly leadership would modify the cross to please the entertainment-mad saintlings who will have their fun even within the very sanctuary; but to do so is to court spiritual disaster and risk the anger of the Lamb turned Lion.

We must do something about the cross, and one of two things only we can do--flee it or die upon it. And if we should be so foolhardy as to flee we shall by that act put away the faith of our fathers and make of Christianity something other than it is. Then we shall have left only the empty language of salvation; the power will depart with our departure from the true cross.

If we are wise we will do what Jesus did: endure the cross and despise its shame for the joy that is set before us. To do this is to submit the whole pattern of our lives to be destroyed and built again in the power of an endless life. And we shall find that it is more than poetry, more than sweet hymnody and elevated feeling. The cross will cut into where it hurts worst, sparing neither us nor our carefully cultivated reputations. It will defeat us and bring our selfish lives to an end. Only then can we rise in fullness of life to establish a pattern of living wholly new and free and full of good works.

The changed attitude toward the cross

that we see in modern orthodoxy proves not that God has changed, nor that Christ has eased up on His demand that we carry the cross; it means rather that current Christianity has moved away from the standards of the New Testament. So far have we moved indeed that it may take nothing short of a new reformation to restore the cross to its right place in the theology and life of the Church.

**There is a Man on yonder throne
Who suffered once for me;
My sin, my guilt, He made His own
On dark, dark Calvary.
That blessed Man, of Calvary,
I'll praise Him more and more.
And still throughout eternity
That peerless Man adore.**

**One pierced hand was on the throne,
The other laid on me.
The Man betwixt my cause has won,
On dark, dark Calvary.
He reconciled the sinning one,
The wrath of God appeased;
The grief, the pain, He bore alone,
That peerless Man, for me.**

**At times, my heart within me melts,
And words I cannot speak.
When dwelling on the pain He felt
On dark, dark Calvary.
But, Oh, sweet thought, I'll see Himself
He's coming soon for me.
The object of all worship then,
That peerless Man, shall be.**